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War against the witch

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2 WAR AGAINST THE WITCH

The following pages are dedicated to another mythological theme, a military conflict of androcentric elite with an army led by a witch. Though it is textually subtler, less frequently occurring than the former creation matter, it still seems to be attested among different IE traditions significantly enough to be examined in the field of IE mythological studies.

From a certain point of view, it could be seen as a variation on the well-known theme of IE “class conflict”; Indra’s quarrel with *Aśvins*, Romans’ war against Sabines etc. However, these narrations will not be reflected. Even though the activity of elite woman can be recognised there, it is neither of central importance nor of a military nature. Besides, they have been already well examined so there is no need to bother with them once again. Instead, in this chapter I intend to deal with the less famous variations on “class conflict” theme, in which the struggle takes the form of battle or war against the forces led by a demonic woman.

Nevertheless, in spite of (or thanks to?) the narrowed focus of the chapter, some of its conclusions should be useful for interpretation of the class conflict concept as a whole. The military variation seems to contain several of its basic motives, perhaps only hyperbolised, and so more accessible for further examination, through their highly political conceptualisation.

Firstly the theme’s possible mezzo-contextual background will be considered. As the myths in question recount the tale of the quarrel between noble warriors and baseborn rebels led by a female witch, evaluated will be especially processes and structures associated with the identity of androcentric military elites and their attitudes towards the members of marginalised social groups.

Then the two layers of texts themselves will be analysed and interpreted along the identified contextual lines. The first one is represented by the trinity of medieval

narrations; the war between Æsir and Vanir of Old Norse tradition, mainly in its *Völuspá* version; the war between Īsung and Hertnið of Scandinavian *Piðreks saga af Bern* based on medieval Low German oral tradition; and the conflict between Devāḥ and Asurāḥ of Indian *Devī Bḥāgavata Purāna*. The latter group are texts of the 19th century's Slavic folklore tradition; rarely, though systematically occurring Eastern European folktale on the hero's war against the demonic hordes of Baba Jaga, Russian bylina on bogatyrs and she-demon Krivda and several Slavic folklore variations on the Saint George theme. Despite the late date of their recording, all the analysed Slavic examples seem to be archaic in their nature, probably being the latest preservations of ancient IE witch-war theme.

2.1 Mezzo-Context: Indo-European Rulers and Their Villains

Big Man elites in general inhabit the world of strong grid and rather weak group; in the competitive cosmos the individual achievement prevails over the interpersonal bounds. However, as was discussed in the previous chapter, (pre)historical IE populations produced rather an alternative form of Big Man System, known also from other parts of the world, in which the principle of group is still significant. Essential for their existence were the *männerbund* structures; androcentric elite war bands with exclusively constructed group identity.

2.1.1 Expel the Heretics

It can then be assumed that the worldview of ancient IE elites did not always show the open-mindedness otherwise typical for Big Man System. According to Douglas (1996/1970/), in communities with clearly delineated boundaries, i.e. with a strong group, the witchcraft belief, or dualistic cosmogony in general, is often present. All the insiders are seen as the “good guys”, while outsiders and strangers are suspicious and dangerous. The archenemy is a witch; someone who pretends to be an insider, but in fact hides the perverted nature of the outside world. As Douglas (1996 /1970/) demonstrated, during the social crisis, this kind of society used to organise witch-cleansing movements. Finding and defeating the common enemy is presented as universal communal cure, the means of social revival.

This tendency of ancient IE elites to adore *us* and to refuse all the others could be only strengthened by their cultic nature, since religious and ritual activities often formed their constitutional backbone. In the previous chapter the cultic nature of early PIE nobility was examined. The importance and central position of priestly *Manu- in IE creation myth or crucial function of a heavenly androcentric

father-like god in the IE dragon-slaying myth could be another demonstration of this situation. The more so that such a state of affairs is far from being culturally exclusive for IE populations. The cultic construction of a group as well as individual identity of AMH males is known in many a culture, regardless of their technological or economical background.

And it looks like in historical times the situation in IE world hardly changed. Whitaker (2011) demonstrated that during the Vedic period the identity of Indo-Aryan war bands and their members were created as well as expressed, first of all, through their religious activities, through ritually demonstrated devotion to manly gods. Almost the same message seems to be brought by some Old Norse sources. *Ynglinga Saga*, mainly the depiction of Oðinn and his host, could be a fair demonstration of priestly and religiously based identity of early medieval North Germanic elites.

It is possible, therefore, that in the case of the ancient IE elites general witch-hunting tendencies were strengthened by the exclusiveness of cultic thinking itself. For this reason, a villain is not only depicted as a regular stranger, a common outsider who dares to infiltrate. His or her perversity is far more dangerous, because it is rooted in distinct cultic affiliation; he or she is a heretic, follower of blasphemous ideas and hostile demons.

2.1.2 Burn the Witches

The early societies used to be androcentric by their nature.

In both hunter-gatherer and early agricultural societies, while women contributed substantially to the subsistence of the group by frequently collecting and controlling the essentials for survival, there is no known society in which women, as a group, have had control over the political life of the community, the community interactions with out-groups, or the technology and practice of warfare, witch is arguably the ultimate arbiter of political power. (Sidanius & Pratto 1999:36)

According to Schrijvers (1986), Big Man System communities represented no exception to these universal androcentric tendencies. Their men were supposed to engage in the affairs of politics, war, hunting and sports, and these activities were the direct source of social prestige and influence. Women, on the contrary, were expected to avoid all these manly tasks. They were to nurse children and take care of the household, sick and the old ones and these activities did not improve their social position at all.

It implies a rather delicate situation for a socially ambitious woman in this kind of society, especially in its elite segment. Cultural norms were constructed in or-

der to limit her access to power. It was not appropriate for mothers, sisters, cousins, daughters, wives, concubines or mistresses of influential men to participate in public affairs. (Schrijvers 1985, Schrijvers 1986)

Therefore, the politically ambitious woman was forced to manipulate the social environment through a man, and first of all non-publicly, non-formally; by means of unofficial contracts and donations, emotional blackmail, flirtation etc. *The strength of this power was mainly in its hidden quality, in the capacity subtly to influence the men closest to her* (Schrijvers 1986:18). It was the only sustainable strategy to fulfil, at least to some extent, her political ambitions.

It was only natural to use these non-formal strategies along the lines of the officially accepted patterns of behaviour. A politically ambitious elite woman, according to Schrijvers (1985, 1986), developed her own client network, so-called *shadow network* (see Figure 5). It was woven of unofficial, non-public bonds and operating parallel to the formal public relations maintained by male patrons.

Shadow networks were created, especially of other women, mostly situated alongside other subordinated though still socially significant men. Through the manipulative strategies of all her female clients, she was able to multiply her influence on the elite environment; her dominant man was influenced (consciously and openly) by his official male clients, who were in turn influenced confidently

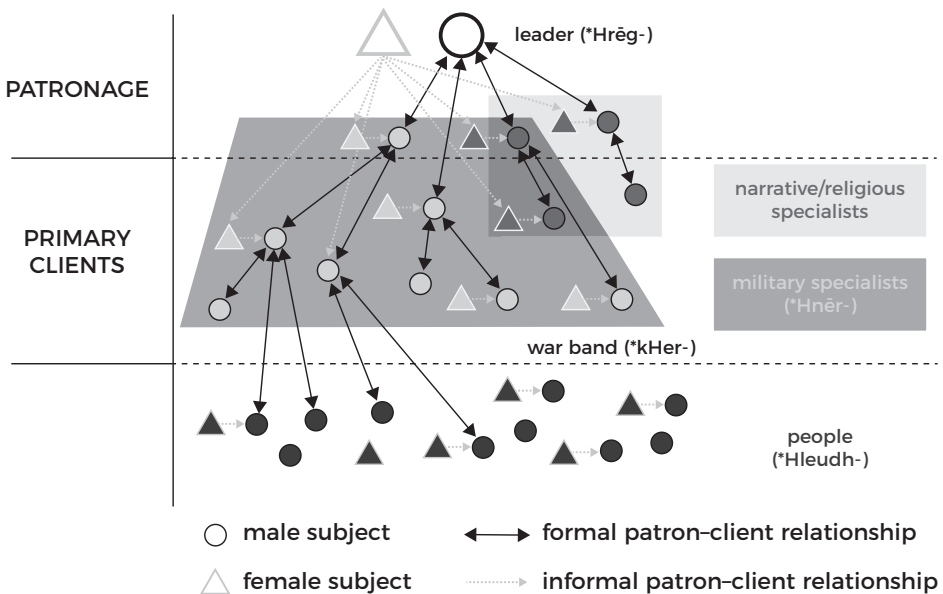


Figure 5

(unconsciously) by their women. However, also some elite men themselves, especially those less powerful, could join shadow network with the prospect of possible improvement of their social position in an alternative way (Schrijvers 1986).

This kind of behaviour occurred cross-culturally (Schrijvers 1985, Schrijvers 1986). Probably it was as necessary as a common response to the widespread phenomenon of androcentric organisation of (pre)historic societies. Politically ambitious women all around the world, facing the same recurrently appearing restrictions, had no other choice than the way of shadow network.

Alongside the social stimuli, also something like “woman’s nature” supported, perhaps, occurrence of these behavioral patterns. Anthropological research suggests that women generally exceed men in their empathy, their ability to compute chains of hypothetical intentions of persons (levels of intentionality) operating in their social environment (Dunbar 2004). Thus, women seem to be suited better than men to realize hidden manipulative strategies and to build shadow networks.

As for the IE *männerbund* elites, their androcentric nature was highly likely. They represented an example of a social environment which openly discriminated women, distrusting and sanctioning their official social activities. For this reason, any socially ambitious woman in an IE elite environment could be easily considered a threat to its fluent operation.

And here can be found other possible impulses to construct the cultural representation of a villain. It is someone who, lurking in the shadows for an opportunity, builds the non-public alliances and schemes the secret plots against the men of power. The perverted nature of an infiltrated heretic is only naturally intensified by the emphasis on the confidentiality and unfairness of performed deeds. All the social experience, as well as cultural stereotypes, then nominate woman, being the typical provider of shadow network, to be one of the hottest candidates for the “evil guy” in folklore narratives.

And again, this aspect is well in accord with the witch-hunting and crusading sentiments discussed above. The villain then could be depicted as a female witch. She is close to the elite environment by her power as well as location or origin, but actually dwells on the periphery and performs foreign, blasphemous, unofficial non-manly activities – in folklore texts conceptualised as cowardly scheming, dark magic, witchcraft etc.

2.1.3 Fight the Rebels

As was discussed in the previous chapter, a Big Man System usually produced a dually stratified society. There existed a cream of shiny and self-confident priests and warriors; pragmatic and formalistic self-made men obsessed with personal

success and fame. And under their reign were situated masses of undifferentiated people, who often felt disintegrated, neglected and oppressed by their rulers and therefore yearned for an alternative, better world. And these attitudes and feelings represented a permanent source of social tension. The elite was prone to see their commoners as losers and incompetent daydreamers while commoners tended to see their lords as the reckless formalistic snobs. Douglas describes and explains the masses' disappointment in the following passage, which is, by the way, fairly in accord with the mentioned examples describing historical reality in Tacitus's *Germania* or Caesar's *Galia*.

The unsuccessful may find themselves forced to move from leader to leader in the attempt to get a better deal and as they move they break their social ties. Or they find themselves unable to move, located with other people who also would like to move but cannot, and with whom they form an undifferentiated mass. The delicate differentiations by which they structure their relations with each other are of no significance to the people who operate the rules against them. Although they themselves discriminate the claims of age, sex, relationship, these distinctions make no difference to the impersonal principles which ruthlessly separate them or force them to huddle together. What they experience is a failure of other people to recognize their claims as persons. Persons in control behave to them mechanically and treat them as if they were objects. This, I suggest, is the experience which has always predisposed to the millennial cult... (Douglas 1996 /1970/:153-4)

According to Douglas (1996 /1970/), an ultimate outcome of commoners' restlessness, particularly in the time of the social crisis, was a millennial movement. As soon as the power of an elite had weakened, whether because of the change in economic conditions induced by environmental factors or due to the power struggles, masses in their general disappointment (strengthened by decreasing well-being due to the system's decline) felt their chance to eliminate supposed originators of all their frustration. And so previously marginalised social entities, with their alternative hierarchies and worldviews now started to gain the upper hand. Leaders of millennial cults preach to refuse the grid, the external ritualism and formalism of obsolete rulers. They claim to replace it by opposite values, by the ideas of an all-embracing borderless group - egalitarian solidarity, emotionality, the intimacy of inner experience. *Religion of ecstasy* gains the upper hand over the *religion of control* (Douglas 1996 /1970/:79).

One of the most important among all the social groups (slaves, serfs, base-born commoners, women) which tended to join the millennial rebellions with their cults of alternative, non-ritualistic, inner and emotional experience, were women.

It is no accident that women so often form the main membership of possession cults. The social division of labour involves women less deeply than their menfolk in the central institutions—political, legal, administrative, etc.—of their society. ...their social responsibilities are more confined to the domestic range. The decisions they take do not have repercussions on a very wide range of institutions. The web of their social life, though it may tie them down effectively enough, is of a looser texture. ... This is the social condition they share with slaves and serfs. ... A small setback can harm them more irrevocably than those whose more complex links give a better chance of recovery. Their options are few. They experience strong grid. Therefore they are susceptible to religious movements which celebrate this [inner, ecstatic, non-ritualistic] experience. Unlike those who have internalized the classifications of society and who accept its pressures as aids to realizing the meanings they afford, these classes are peripheral. They express their spiritual independence in the predicted way, by shaggier, more bizarre appearance, and more ready abandonment of control. (Douglas 1996 /1970/:154; brackets added)

Thus, among all the potentially rioting “losers”, from the point of view of masculine elite women appeared to be one of the most dangerous elements. Serfs and lowborn ones suffered the restrictions only due to their culturally defined status. Although it was often determined biologically by birth, still it was changeable under certain conditions. Women, however, were discriminated against due to their biological characteristic of sex, or corresponding gender limitations to be more specific. And even though gender restrictions were also culturally constructed by their nature, still their basic prerequisite – sex – was established biologically and could not be changed in any way.

And so, even if women were formal members of the highest rank, no matter if their position was ascribed (by birth) or achieved (by marriage or as concubines), their frustration did not ease. Quite the contrary, it was strengthened by the fact that their physical location in society did not correspond to their social opportunities. Unlike the slaves or commoners, they dwelled in the centre of social life, surrounded by power, often being educated and well trained. They were full of untapped potential, yet still forbidden to touch the power flowing around. There were only duties, the oppression of the grid, but no satisfaction, no way to use the grid like their male counterparts did. No wonder then that particularly *the females of the rich and privileged classes, ... the throng of well-to-do women ... so often predominated* in alternative religious movements (Douglas 1996 /1970/:90). Worlds and hierarchies of alternative communities were a good opportunity to escape the discriminative fatality of her sex.

All these moments represent another set of reasons to depict the traditional villain as a scheming witch, a woman bewitching the restless masses and using their power against the current system and its rulers.

2.2 The Texts

In sections below the texts of different IE speaking traditions, which probably mirror the aforementioned mezzo-contextual processes, will be examined. Their brief introduction will be followed by an attempt to analyse significant contextual aspects, all in order to identify possible specificities of each text. Subsequently they will be textually analysed and anthropologically and comparatively interpreted. At the very end of the chapter I will present the comparative conclusive IE interpretation of witch-war theme.

2.2.1 *Æsir* and *Vanir*

A narration on these two groups of Norse deities and their military conflict is known via several sources. The two of them, medieval Icelandic manuscripts Codex Regius (end of 13th century) and Hauksbök (first third of 14th century) provide it in a poetic form, as a part of famous eddaic song *Völuspá* (Prophecy of the Seeress).

The former one is anonymous, found by the bishop of Skálholt in the middle of 17th century and then sent as a gift to King Frederic III (hence the name Codex Regius or Konungsbök). Nothing is known about its earlier history. *Völuspá* has a prominent position here, being the first item of this manuscript (Nordal 1978:1).

The latter one is assumed to be written or redacted, by Haukr Erlendsson (hence the name Hauksbök), a leading politician of Iceland and later of the Norwegian Kingdom. However, the poem seems to be a later addition, made after Hauk's death and written by the same scribe who wrote another important eddaic mythological manuscript Codex Wormianus (Nordal 1978:1).

Prosaic versions are included in the two works of Snorri Sturluson (first half of 13th century), another politically influential man of Iceland. A brief one can be found in *Skaldskaparmál* (Language of Poetry) and rather extensive reworking in *Heimskringla* (Circle of the World), or in its opening part called *Ynglinga saga* to be more specific. *Skaldskaparmál* is preserved in various medieval, mostly Icelandic manuscripts, in Codex Regius and Codex Wormianus as well, while the latter is preserved in a single written record.

Both of them seem to be related to the older *Völuspá* tradition. However, the text of *Skaldskaparmál* is rather aimed on post-war events while in the case of *Heimskringla* the strong euhemerization of the story raises certain doubts about the measure and nature of its supposed relation to older tradition. For all these reasons, in the following analysis the versified *Völuspá* versions is kept in my primary focus and the prosaic reflections are taken into account only occasionally.

No direct information about the background of the poem, circumstances of its oral emergence and transmission, are available. This kind of knowledge can be only inferred from the analysis of the poem's text and its comparison to other contemporary Old Norse literary heritage. Some additional, and only extra-textual information, provides the "curriculum vitae" of the manuscripts in question as well as character and career of their authors.

As for the language of *Völuspá*, its uniqueness seems to be evident. As Nordal demonstrated (1970-73), it lacks a certain rudeness and straightness of other Eddaic mythological poems. It is characterised by a sophisticated style; use of opening invocation, refrains, elaborated poetic images. Difference lies also in the overall mood, mainly the presence of solemn existential fatality. All these features make it closer to skaldic poetry or to the heroic poems of Poetic Edda.

This textural as well as textual relatedness of *Völuspá* to the courtly Scandinavian environment of the Viking Age is noteworthy. On the other hand, there is also a group of language features which bear witness to its origin in Iceland (Nordal 1970-73). This indication of poem's mixed ancestry supports the assumption about its skaldic background. According to Hollander (1968:5), it was typical for the offspring of influential Icelandic families to strive for a skaldic career overseas, especially in higher social strata of continental Scandinavian areas, often as a courtly poet and adviser of a local ruler.

Perhaps the author of the poem was an Icelandic skald or even the Law speaker, like Snorri or Haukr, i.e. the head of regional administration, legislature (Head of the Thing) and judiciary (Bjørshol 2011, Derry 1979:56). The main task of Law speakers was to memorize and proclaim the traditional law. They were recruited among *góði*, the official Thing representatives of certain population bodies. The etymology of their label, its relation to the gt. *gudja* 'priest', seems to indicate also their religious function, at least originally (Aðalsteinsson 1998). Moreover, these men traditionally operated overseas, being familiar with higher social strata of continental Scandinavian areas.

Thus the preservation of the story in the manuscript produced by the Law speakers themselves suggests the elite as well as rather traditional origin of *Völuspá*. Even in the case of the *Hauksbók* its later addition does not seem to neglect this assumption. On the contrary, *Codex Wormianus*, another product of *Hauksbók's* editor, contains prominent pieces of high Norse mythology; parts of Snorri's Prose Edda and the single preserved exemplar of *Rígsþula*, an elitist text depicting the warlike nobles and keepers of the heathen tradition (*Rígr*) on the most prominent social position in traditionally hierarchal society. It can be then assumed, that the scribe who preserved *Völuspá* of the *Hauksbók* was also close to the traditional elite environment, its ideas and cultural patterns.

Anyway, regardless of possible political background, the author of *Völuspá* seems to be an open-minded educated man, someone who had knowledge of

classical Christian culture though was still familiar with (or even believing in) native Norse tradition. According to Nordal (1970-73), *Völuspá* could then be the syncretic response to apocalyptic moods present in the Christian world at the turn of the millennium. Perhaps it was an attempt of a heathen educated in a Christian environment to produce a syncretic theology of millennial hope. Nonetheless, there are also other, less speculative hints (comparison to other related works for instance; Nordal 1970-73) to assume an origin of *Völuspá* about the year 1000.

A sustainable interpretation of the poem's general framework was proposed by Nordal (1970-73). The author of *Völuspá* puts all the text into the mouth of the supernaturally old and powerful *völva* (Seeress), who in an ecstatic trance performs the prophetic song to *Óðinn* and his retinue. She starts with a call for silence and attention in a skaldic manner. Apart some retrospective insertion in the storyline, in general it can be said that in the first half of her monologue she reveals the events of the past, probably to prove the enormity of her knowledge. In the latter half she prophesies the future fate of gods and men.

The story of the war between *Æsir* and *Vanir* is situated in the past. She depicts it as the first war in the world, caused by the activity of a *travelling spaewife* (Nordal 1970-73:97) called *Gullveig*, and nick-named *Heiðr*, of the *Vanir*. Noble and priestly *Æsir* feel insulted and threatened by the social rise of this baseborn witch and her cult. Since she is the leader of rebellion, first they try to eliminate her personally, by burning her to death. They fail, however, probably due to her magical regenerative power. Therefore warlike *Æsir* decides to destroy the movement as a whole by military force, but their troops encountered extraordinarily the stiff resistance of otherwise peaceful *Vanir*. Again, the strongly expected *Blitzkrieg* victory seems to be delayed by the regenerative magic of their opponents.

The vain war ends without a winner, as *Skaldskaparmál* and *Ynglinga Saga* inform. The result of the peace negotiations is, among other things, the exchange of "hostages". Most important characters of the *Vanir*, *Njörðr* and his twin children *Freyr* and *Freya*, are accepted as a genuine part of the noble *Æsir*. There exists widespread speculation, that *Freya* and *Gullveig* – *Heiðr* is the same person. However, regardless of a certain level of its legitimacy, this connection remains uncertain.

As for the very literary text of this episode, there is no significant divergence between *Hauksbók* and *Konungsbók* versions, except the case of a single word substitution, signified with italics in the following quotation. For this reason the normalised *Codex Regius* based edition (*Völuspá* 1978) is sufficient to demonstrate the original manuscript shape of the episode.

þat man hon folkvíg fyrst í heimi,
er Gullveigu geirum studdu
ok í höll Hårs hana brendu –
þrygvar brendu þrygvar borna,
opt, ósialdan – þó hon enn lifir.

(Vøluspá 1978:42)

She remembers that war of people, the first in the world,
when Gullveig with spears they stubbed
and in the hall of the Grey One they burnt her,
thrice they burnt her, thrice she was born,
often and again, yet still she lives.

Heiði hana hētu hvars til hūsa kom,
völu velspā, vitti hon ganda.
Seið hon kunni, seið hon leikinn,
æ var hon angan illrar *brūðar* / *þjōðar*.

(Vøluspá 1978:44)

The Bright One they called her wherever she came to the houses,
a seeress of good prophecy, she conjured with wand;
seiðr she knew, with seiðr she gambled,
always the delight of the wicked *brides* / *people*.

þā gengu regin öll ā rökstōla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættuz:
hvārt skyldu æsir afrāð gjalda
eða skyldu goðin öll gildi eiga.

(Vøluspá 1978:46)

Then all the rulers went to council seats,
the all-holy gods, and contemplated thus,
whether should Æsir pay the tribute
or all the gods should the tribute receive.

Fleygði Óðinn ok í folk um skaut –
 þat var enn folkvíg fyrst í heimi;
 brotinn var borðveggr borgar Ása,
 knáttu vanir vígspā völlu sporna.

(Völuspá 1978:47)

Óðinn hurled, into the ranks he threw,
 that was the war of people the very first in the world;
 breached was the wooden wall of Æsir's stronghold,
 Vanir with their war-magic reborn at the battlefield.

Like in some other places of the poem, völvu speaks of herself in the 3rd person (Nordal 1970-73). In the first stanza of the quoted sequence, and the twenty-first stanza of the poem according to the Codex Regius redaction, the unsuccessful attempt to burn the witch Gullveig ('Power of Gold'; Völuspá 1978:42) to death is described. The execution takes place in *Höll Hårs*, i.e. in the 'Hall of the Grey One', whereas *Hārr*, the 'Grey One', is heiti for Óðinn. It can be inferred then that Æsir themselves were the executors.

In the second stanza of the quoted sequence the audience is informed about the person and life of the witch; her nickname *Heiðr* ('The Bright One'; common name for völvu in other sources; Völuspá 1978:44), her career of traveling sorceress, the common popularity of her magical practice, *seiðr*, as well as her habit of equipping herself with *gandr*, a wand, probably as a marker and instrument of her profession.

As for the proponents of her cult, both sources slightly differ in this regard. In *Hauksbók* they are labelled as *brúðar*, 'young wives', 'ladies' or 'brides', while in Codex Regius they are referred as *þjóðar*, 'people(s)', 'tribes', or generally essentialised groups of people. Anyway, regardless of this variation, her fans are depicted as *illrar*, 'wicked', 'dirty' or 'ugly ones'. It indicates the background idea of their social marginality (/recently married/ woman, the wicked one) as well as their mass character (women, people(s)).

According to Nordal (Völuspá:23-24,44-45), the collocation *illrar brúðar* refers directly to the *þrjár ...þursa meyjar*, 'three giant-maidens' of the eighth stanza of the poem, whose appearance among the Æsir brought quarrels, most likely the lust for gold, and ended the golden age of the world. This interpretation seems sustainable (note the meaning of the witch's name Gullveig), particularly if one would accept another sustainable assumption (Völuspá 1978:23-24) about the later or misplaced addition of all the text between the eighth and the twenty-first stanza of the Codex Regius redaction. On the other hand, the variant *illrar þjóðar* rather suggests a more general meaning of the peripheral social groups proposed above.

In the third stanza of the sequence the social jealousy of Æsir is depicted. They hold council about how to deal with the rise of an alternative power; whether to accept it (pay tribute) or subjugate it (receive tribute).

In the final stanza of the sequence the consequences of their decision for the latter option are described; Æsir's unsuccessful war against the Vanir. Even the magical spear of Óðinn, which is referred to in the first line, is not powerful enough to break the enemies' ranks. The final line is crucial as to comprehend the source of Æsir's causalities. The compound word in nominative plural form *vīgspā*, where *vīg* is the neuter noun meaning 'fight', 'battle' or war and *spā* is the feminine noun translated as 'prophecy', is traditionally translated as the 'war-spell' or 'battle-magic' (Vøluspá 1978:47-48; Dronke 1997:43).

Another important moment here is the interpretation of the collocation *völlu sporna*; where *völlu* is the accusative plural of the masculine noun *völlr*, 'level', 'ground' or 'plain' and *sporna* is the infinitive of the verb meaning 'spurn', 'tread upon'. According to Nordal (Vøluspá 1978:48) it should be read (in connection with *knáttu*, 'could') as 'tread'/'walked over the (battle)field', i.e. it simply refers to marching armies of Vanir. According to Dronke's interpretation (1997:42-43), however, the collocation means 'kicking the ground' and it is a metaphor for birth, used also in other Norse sources, referring to the typical behaviour of a newborn baby. Therefore, especially in connection with *vīgspā*, it all makes reference to Vanir's resurrective magic practised on the battlefield. This kind of interpretation seems to be in accordance with the general ideology of the episode. The Vanir are unbreakable just because of their death-preventing regenerative magic; in the case of their leader as well as their rank-and-file warriors.

This episode seems to be a fair folklore reflection of the social processes considered above; mainly the crisis tension between rulers and their subordinated masses resulting in the witch-hunting solution.

The supposed audience of the tale seems to be obvious. Its narrator stands on the side of exclusively organised masculine militaristic elite. Naturalising the discussed model of social behaviour by transferring it into the supernatural world, the world of gods, he demonstrates the idea of the elite's rightful struggle for their traditional social domination. From the socio-anthropological point of view, the poet depicts the elite's typical response to the social crisis; a witch-cleansing movement organised in order to renew the traditional social order. The physical elimination of the perverted witch is believed to be the cure to a common disorder.

Perversity of all the world of the witch is obvious. Opponents are depicted as anything but the circle of noble warriors. They are expected to be ill-suited for the battlefield, they are wicked and numerous, they are followers of inappropriate cultic practices and, to make their inappropriateness final, under the command of a woman.

It is possible, that the presented concept of Heiðr cult refers to the real folklore representations similar to those attested in folk belief of German Europe during the high and late medieval period. According to Ginsburg (1992:40), the earliest 10th century account is from Regino of Prüm. This man speaks against the superstitious women, who claim they join the night raids of Diana, the *pagan goddess*.

This is the first of the several accounts referring to the existence of popular and complex folk belief. Its core is the following: during certain nights of the year certain women are able to enter a sleep trance, in which their spirit flies to the gatherings under the command of the supernatural female being called Diana, Abundia, Satia, Holda, Frau Precht, etc. For random uninvolved people the accidental encounters with these gatherings often resulted in contradictory outcomes, especially when the phenomenon took the form of a *wild hunt* (Perchta as a leader of the dangerous host of untimely dead), which suggests rather its ambivalent reputation.

Ginsburg (1992) also demonstrated the connection of this “cult” with petty prosperity magic as well as communication with the world beyond. It was believed that participating women were allowed to see the hidden treasures or communicate hidden information with the dead ones. Thus, by its social localisation (lower strata, women) as well as overall character (ecstasy, prosperity, necromantia), this German medieval folklore concept seems to be similar to Heiðr cult described in *Völuspá*.

Note that even the attitude of the contemporary priestly elites corresponded with the view of the *Æsir*. As Ginzburg showed (1992), these superstitions soon became an object of inquisition, being rather forcibly interpreted along the lines of the standard black Sabbath patterns. It can be assumed then, that eddaic reference to the Heiðr cult mirrors the real folklore patterns, which circulated especially among the lower strata of ancient Germanic societies, Scandinavian as well as continental.

So the depiction of the crisis rebellion in *Völuspá* is probably based on popular folklore complex of the folk goddess cult, though narratively hyperbolised according to the poem’s ideological demands. From the anthropological point of view, it refers to a crisis situation, in which folk are massively attracted towards the alternative, previously marginalised ideology and its representatives. Ecstatic and prophetic practices, traditionally ascribed to a few eccentric individuals on the periphery of society, most often women, now gain common popularity. Non-formal powers of the world beyond, magic of prosperity, (re)birth and regeneration, being an opposition to formal, military and priestly activities, are emphasized. Alternative power structures are built, using those alternative ideas as well as the groups of population previously deprived of power – especially women.

The hierarchy legitimising message of the narrative is communicated mainly through its happy all-satisfying ending. Despite the rulers’ rather unsuccessful

crusade, they remain in their positions. The advent of the witch's millennium, the replacement of the traditional elites, is prevented. Millennialistic disorder is eased and the cooperative hierarchy is re-established and confirmed. Previously rioting commoners are appeased by the formal admittance, mainly through the honour and pledge shown to their beliefs and representatives, of their importance for the society. To put it in other words: the witch-cleansing movement prevails but the witch survives.

Hence the educative message of the narrative. It verbalises the typical crisis situation in the society, its possible consequences as well as the only solution. Cooperative hierarchy is a must. Commoners are required to tolerate a certain measure of oppression while the elite tolerates a certain amount of their heresy.

The power of this vision is probably strengthened by the fact, that for the conceptualisation of both sides it uses the patterns of their own self-identification. It is built out of the themes significant for real social and folklore life. And what is more, both their viewpoints are mutually interwoven. Genuine witch-cleansing ideology of elites and traditional and complex goddess cult of the masses are combined in one story, being as impressive as socially constructive and educative. Even the fact that the tale stands slightly on the side of rulers makes it in accord with their needs as well as with their social dominance in real life. Perhaps this is the source of the story's power. The reason of its successful diachronic and synchronic transmission is rooted just in its contextual authenticity. The tale is prone to be relevant as well as believable to any member of society, regardless of his or her social rank.

Note that the most informative among all its preserved variants, that is in *Völuspá*, is put in to the mouth of the witch herself, i.e. one of the archetypal enemies, even according to the text itself, of the primary supposed elite audience. Perhaps the social experience itself urged the author to put the text containing several heretic themes, like witchcraft (sorcery behind success of Vanir's rebellion) and millennialism (resurrection of an ideal world after Ragnarök), into the mouth of its traditional proponent. Perhaps it would be inappropriate for a noble skald or priest to deal, at least directly and openly, with this kind of knowledge. Whereas the Ragnarök matter is well in accord with pragmatism and heroic fatalism of Big Man System elites, millennial hope of a better world after Ragnarök is typical rather for their counterparts, non-elite masses and especially ostracised groups and individuals among them.

Apart from the discussed example of Æsir-Vanir war, there are other hints for the existence of alternative worldviews coexisting with official elite ideology and associated with the "world of women" in ancient North Germanic society. In the Codex Regius' heroic poem *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* (The Second Lay on Helgi Hundingsbane) it is said:

Pat var trúa i forneskju, at menn væri endrbornir, en þat er nú kölluð kerlingavilla.
(De Gamle Eddadigte 1932:220)

It was believed in old times, that people were born again, but that is now called old wives' folly.

Instead of high and elaborated Valhalla-Hell concept, where the personal eschatology is associated with masculine lifestyle of feasting and fighting (Valhalla) or generally waiting for the final battle (Valhalla, Hell) and the idea of the future worldly life is irrelevant, here a competing theme of eschatological hope for future reincarnation is presented. And once again, the idea of resurrection/rebirth is literary contextualised as socially marginal (obsolete lore, old wives' folly), just like in the case of *Völuspā* (vision and deeds associated with feminine witchcraft).

Perhaps it is not by accident that just the *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* is the medium of this alternative non-masculine eschatology. Comparing to the two other songs of the Codex Regius' Helgi cycle, in this poem the matters of warfare are less important. The depictions of battles, for instance, which are present in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, are in this second variant of Helgi struggle against the king Hunding omitted. On the contrary, emphasis is put on the matters of love between man and woman; lament of a maid for her dead beloved one, his temporal return from beyond the grave to talk to each other for a last time as well as the aforementioned motif of hope of living together in lovers' future incarnation. These passages are also typical for their highly elaborated poetic language. Thus, as these sophisticated lines bring the romance of death-defeating love rather than themes of warfare, military duty and camaraderie, it can be assumed, that it was mainly intended for the courtly female audience.

But perhaps the feminine literary contextualisation of witch-war theme (as well as the whole *Völuspā* prophesy) has also something to do with possible Christian background of the *Völuspā* poet. Still being familiar with heathen tradition, yet slightly remote from it because of his Christian background, perhaps in order to bring the idea of millennial hope it seemed not inappropriate to the Christianised author of *Völuspā* to combine originally competing pre-Christian concepts.

2.2.2 *Īsung* and *Hertnið*

Another significant representative of witch-war theme is the high medieval tale of the war between king *Īsung* and king *Hertnið*, which can be found in *Piðreks saga af Bern*. This source was written in 13th century at the court of the Norwegian kingdom (Haymes & Samples 1996:71). Nevertheless, language and geographical origin, as well as the title saga, represents the only (and rather formal) points of its relation

to the Norse tradition. *Þiðreks saga* is a large compendium of heroic matters mostly based on the high medieval German tradition of the hero Dietrich of Bern.

The saga's textual dependence on narratives of the German Dietrich cycle and *Nibelungen* cycle, geographical references as well as several direct mentions in the text, all suggest its affiliation to the contemporary Low German narrative tradition of Northern Germany. It is not clear whether it was composed using the literary sources or orally transmitted narratives. The direct mentions in the text itself (see also the quoted sequence below) speak, nonetheless, for the latter possibility. The very phenomenon of export of north German narrative matters to the Scandinavian environment was probably connected with the rising power of Hanseatic League, the spread of its merchants out of the epicentre in the north German area (Haymes & Samples 1996:71).

Thus the conditions for transmission of heroic matters seemed to be friendly here, as certain militaristic and masculine character of hanseatic guilds can be assumed (Benveniste 1973:63-64). And hardly a more fertile environment for further preservation of German medieval epos performed on board hanseatic ships could be found, than the Scandinavian court used to the skaldic performances and solemn saga tradition.

Among the side episodes of the main storyline of the *Þiðreks saga* the bitter war between King *Īsung* of Bertangaland (Britain) and King *Hertnið* of Wilkinaland (perhaps some north-eastern territory of Europe) can be found.

Īsung, being a friend and ally to the main saga hero, is a “good guy” of the episode. On the other side, *Hertnið* represents rather a “dark side”; he stands against the *Þiðrek's* coalition, without any formal declaration initiates a marauding war on *Īsung* and is married to the dreaded eastern witch *Ostasia*.

Hertnið konungr var ríkr maðr í Vilkinalandi ok mikill höfðingi fyrir allra hluta sakir. Hann er allra kappa mestr. Hans kona var Ostasia, dóttir Runa konungs af Austrríki. Hennar stjúpmóðir var svá fjölkunnig, at hún fyrirgerði henni í barneskju ok kastaði til hennar sinni fjölkynngi, svá at hún er nú jafnkunnig sem fyrir henni var hennar stjúpmóðir. Ostasia er eigi at síðr allra kvenna vænst ok vitrast, ok ærit er hún illgjörn. Hertnið konungr ann henni mikit.

Í þenna tíma ræðr Bertangalandi Īsungr konungr inn sterki með sínum sonum. Hann er mikill óvinr Hertniðs konungs ok hefir veitt mikit lið jafnan Attila konungi ok gert margt illt Vilkinamönnum. Hertnið konungr vildi þess gjarnan hefna, er drepinn var Ósantrix konungr, hans föðurbróðir, fyrst Attila konungi eða Þiðreki konungi ok þar næst Īsungu konungi, er inn þriði var inn mesti höfuðsmaðr at drápi Ósantrix konungs.

Nú safnar Hertnið konungr saman her miklum ok ferr með herinn, til þess er hann kemr í Bertangaland í ríki Īsungs konungs. Þar brennir hann ok drepr menn ok tekr mikit fé. Īsungr konungr ok hans synir sitja í Bertangaborg ok verða ekki við varir, hvat Hertnið konungr hefir gert. Ok þá er Hertnið konungr hefir fengit svá mikit

herfang ok svá víða farit sem hann vildi í Bertangalandi, ferr hann heim aftr ok hefir haldit öllum sínum mönnum.

(Piðreks saga af Bern 1962:392-393)

King Hertnið was a powerful man of Wilkinaland and a great leader in every way. He was the best of all the warriors. His wife was Ostasia, the daughter of king Runa of Eastern Empire. Her stepmother was a very potent sorceress; filling her childhood with spells she bestowed all her witchcraft upon her and so Ostasia was as good in witchcraft as her stepmother. Ostasia was the wisest and most beautiful of all the women but very malicious as well. King Hertnið loved her much.

At this time king Īsung the Strong ruled in Bertangaland with his sons. He was a great enemy of King Hertnið and had helped King Attila a lot and caused a lot of pain to men of Vilkinland. And King Hertnið wanted revenge for the death of King Osantrix, his uncle, first on king Attila but also on King Piðrek and King Īsung, as he was the third ruling man when King Osantrix was killed.

Now King Hertnið assembled a large army and marched with it until he came into Bertangaland, the king Īsung's kingdom. There he burned, killed and took a lot of wealth. Īsung and his sons dwelt in Bertangaland Castle and were not aware of what King Hertnið's was doing. And when King Hertnið plundered enough and gathered sufficient booty, he went home and kept all his men at hand.

Īsung answers with a war campaign and successfully invades the Wilkinaland, supported with a couple of young champions of Piðrek's court, Þéttleif the Dane and Fasold the Proud.

Īsungr konungr ok hans synir spyrja, hvat gert hefir Hertnið konungr af Vilkinlandi, er þeira var inn mesti óvinr. Þeir safna her um allt sitt ríki, ok ferr eftir Hertnið konungi ok vilja hefna sín. Hann sendir orð sínum inum góða vin, Þéttleif danska, ok öðrum manni, Fasold stolza. Þeir verðast við vel orðsendingina ok fara með sínum mönnum til móts við Īsung konung ok koma nú allir saman í Vilkinland ok brenna þar mörg heröð ok stór ok drepa margan mann. Fyrir þeim flýr allt, þar sem þeir fara. Engi maðr er svá djarfr, at þori at skjóta einu spjóti móti gegn þeim. Alk flýr, sumt á mörkina, sumt á skip ok sumt á heiðar óbyggðar. Sumir flýja til Hertniðs konungs ok segja honum, at kominn er í hans ríki Īsungr konungr af Bertangalandi með sína sonu ok þar er með honum Þéttleifr danski ok Fasold stolzi ok alls hafa þeir fimm þúsundrað hermanna ok engi fylking stendr fyrir þeim ok engi kappi þorir at bíða þeira.

(Piðreks saga af Bern 1962:393)

King Īsung and his sons heard what King Hertnið of Vilkinland, their greatest enemy, had done. They assembled an army from their entire kingdom, and went for Hertnið

and wanted revenge. Ísung sent word to his good friend, Þéttleif the Dane, and another man, Fasold the Proud. They received the message well and went with their men to meet King Ísung and then all together went in Vilkinaland and burned many a large area and killed many a man. And everyone was fleeing, wherever they came. No man was bold enough to throw a spear against them. All fled, some into the woods, some to ships and some in to the unpopulated moors. And some fled to King Hertnið and told him that King Ísung of Bertangaland and his sons had come into his kingdom, and Þéttleif the Dane and Fasold the Proud are with them, and they have five thousand warriors and that no army can stand against them and that no warriors dare to stop and wait for them.

Hertnið gathers an army for an ultimate battle. Ostasia, using her magic wand, assembles secretly the hordes of wild as well as supernatural beasts.

Hér eftir safnast saman með Hertnið konungi mikill herr. Ok hans kona Ostasia ferr út ok hrærði sinn gand. Þat köllum vér, at hún færi at seiða, svá sem gert var í fomeskju, at fjölkunngar konur, þær er vér köllum vödur, skyldu seiða honum seið. Svá mikit gerði hún af sér í fjölkynngi ok trollskap, at hún seiddi til sín margs konar dýr, leóna ok björnu ok flugdreka stóra. Hún tamdi þá alla, þar til at þeir hlýddu henni ok hún mátti vísa þeim á hendr sínum óvinum. Svá segir í kvæðum þýðerskum, at hennar herr væri líkr fjöndum sjálfum. Flún sjálf var ok sem einn flugdreki.

(Þiðreks saga af Bern 1962:394)

Then king Hertnið gathered a large army. And Ostasia, his wife, went out and waved her magic wand. We would say that she practiced seið, as it was done in ancient times by women skilled in magic we used to call *vödur*. So much she practiced seið and witchery that she conjured up many kinds of animals: lions, bears and large flying dragons. She tamed them all so they obeyed her and she could send them to attack the enemies. It is said in German songs, that her army was like the devil himself. She herself was like a flying dragon.

Ísung has the upper hand in battle and his victory seems to be within reach. Yet Ostasia appears, leading her demonic hordes to Hertnið's aid.

Ísungr konungr ok hans synir með sín merki ganga hart fram ok drepa margan mann, höggva á tvær hliðar sér hesta ok menn, ok fyrir þeim fellr herrinn, allt þar sem þeir kómu fram. Í öðrum stað ríðr fram Þéttleifr danski með sína fylking. Hann veitir ok mörgum manni bana, ok fyrir honum standast ekki Vilkinamenn. Ok ina þriðju fylking hefir Fasold stolzi. Hann berst þenna dag af miklu kappi ok skilr margan mann við sinn hest, svá at aldri sá sik síðan. Vilkinamenn falla í þeiri orrostu, svá sem þá er akr er skorinn.

Í þessu bili kemr til Ostasia með sína sveit, þá er hún hefir saman dregit af fjölkynngi. Drekararnir flugu yfir herinn ok veita mönnum bana með klóm sínum ok með munni, ok leónar berjast ok bíta ok slíkt sama birnir, ok sjálf Ostasia flýgr sem dreki yfir herinum ok þínir til öll dýr ok alla dreka at berjast.

(Þiðreks saga af Bern 1962:394-395)

King Īsung and his sons went hard forward with their standard and killed many a man, they cut in two pieces both horses and men and the army fell away in front of them as they moved forward. At another place Þettleif the Dane rode forward with his retinue. He was a bane for a lot of men and no Vilkinas stood against him. The third host was of Fasold the Proud. That day he fought with great bravery and many a man he parted from their horses, so they never saw each other again. Men of Vilkinaland fell in this battle as a field being mowed.

At this moment came Ostasia with her flock gathered through her witchcraft. Dragons flew over the army and with their claws and mouths attacked the men fatally, lions and bears fought and bit. And Ostasia herself flew like a dragon over the flock and commanded all the animals and all the dragons to fight.

Īsung, all his sons and both of Þiðrek's champions fall before the witch's dragons and Hertnið, though heavily wounded, is victorious.

Īsungr konungr ok hans synir sjá nú, hversu þessi mikla ok in illa sveit gerir þeim mikinn skaða. Hann keyrir sporum sinn hest ok spennir fast sitt spjótskaft. Þat er hátt ok svá digrt, at í þrjú er klofinn askrinn, ok hans spjótskaft er einn hlutrinn af inum digra aski. Hann sér, hvar flýgr inn illi dreki. Sá er meiri ok hræðiligri en allir aðrir. Hann skýtr spjótinu at drekanum. Drekin sér, hversu þetta mikla spjót flýgr til hans, bregðr sér undan. Flýgr spjótit hjá honum, en drekin steypir sér ofan at konunginum ok tekr með sínum munni ok klónum ok gleypir hann. Þetta sér hans ellsti son, sá er allra þeira var sterkastr. Hann leggir drekan með sínu spjóti gegnum fótinn uppi við búkinn. Drekin snarast við laginu ok þrífir sínum klóm hann svá fast, at gegnum gengr brynjuna ok búkinn. Svá fær hann bana, ok áðr hefir hann drepit león ok björn. Nú í þessu bili hefir Lórantin, inn yngsti sonr konungs, drepinn einn león ok orðit sárr, ok einn dreka særði hann til bana, ok þessi dreki veitir honum banasár með sínum klóm. Svá lengi stendr þessi orrosta, at drekararnir ok leónar hafa látit nálíga allir sitt líf af stórum höggum sona Īsungs konungs. Ok Īsungr konungr er nú dauðr með alla sína sonu fyrir dýrunum ok drekum, ok engi maðr veitti þeim bana annars kostar en með fjölkynngi Ostasie.

Fasold stolzi lætr bera sitt merki fram í miðjan her Vilkinamanna í gegn Hertnið konungi, ok stendr þar snörp orrosta milli þeira tveggja höfðingja. Fasold hefir nú drepit annarri sinni hendi mörg hundrað Vilkinamanna. Hann er nú mjök sárr ok móðr í

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víginu. Nú ríðr at honum sjálfr Hertnið konungr ok leggri ril hans sínu glaðel í hans brjósti, svá at út gekk um herðarnar. Fellr nú Fasold dauðr af sínum hesti, ok fallinn er nú áðr mestr hlutr liðs hans.

Þetta sér Þéttleifr danski, þar er hann berst ok hefir fellt Vilkinamenn, svá at eigi liggri lægra valköstrinn en söðul hans bar. Hann hefir látit ok flesta alla sína menn, ok sjálfr er hann nú mjök sárr. Eigi at síðr ríðr hann nú djarfliga fram í her Vilkinamanna ok vill hefna Fasolds, síns ins kæra vinar. Hann keyrir hestinn sporum ok ríðr at Hertnið konungi, leggri sínu spjóti í hans skjöld, svá at sundr tekr skjöldinn ok brynjuna tvöfalda ok undir höndina ok sneið í sundr herðarnar allt á hol við herðarblaðit, ok fellr konungr þegar af hestinum til jarðar. Þéttleifr drepr þar með sínu sverði margan góðan dreng yfir Hertnið konungi, ok margir flýja nú, en fáir standa eftir. Þá flýgr einn inn verstí dreki yfir Þéttleif með gapanda munn ok vill veita honum bana. Þéttleifr leggri sínu glaðel upp í gegn drekanum í hans munn, svá at út gekk um hálsinn. Drekin spennir hann með sínum klóm ok lýstr með vængjunum ok fellr allr yfir hann ofan, ok svá fær Þéttleifr danski bana ok hestrinn undir honum.

(Þiðreks saga af Bern 1962:395)

Now King Īsung and his sons saw the damage caused by that numerous and evil horde. He spurred the horse forward and grabbed the spear shaft firmly. It was so long and thick, that it had to be made out of one third of a huge ash. He saw how the evil dragon flew. It was bigger and scarier than all the others and so he threw his spear against it. But the dragon noticed this great spear flying towards it and dodged. The spear flew past it, but the dragon fell from above upon the king and seized him with mouth and claws and devoured him. This saw his oldest son, he was the strongest of them. He drove his spear through the legs and into its belly. The dragon pushed itself down along the spear and caught him with his claws so strongly that they went through the armour and body. This was the prince's doom, yet before his death he managed to kill both a lion and a bear. In the meantime also Lorantin, the king's youngest son, killed a lion, though already wounded; and it was a dragon, which hurt him mortally, and this dragon dealt him the death-wound with his claws. The battle lasted until all the dragons and lions had been killed from the mighty blows of King Īsung's sons. But also King Īsung and all his sons were now killed by beasts and dragons; and they were killed by no man, they died only because of the sorcery of Ostasia.

Fasold the Proud moved with the banner forward into the center of Vilkinas army to king Hertnið and there was a fierce fight between both lords. But Fasold killed by his hand hundreds of Vilkinas so far. Thus he was seriously wounded now and exhausted by the battle. King Hertnid rode towards him and drove his spear into his chest so, that it went out between his shoulders. Here Fasold fell dead from his horse, just like majority of his men before.

Pëttleif the Dane saw this as he fought and slayed so many Vilkinamen that the pile of dead men reached the saddle that bore him. And he also lost most of his men and suffered major wounds. Nevertheless, he rode boldly into Vilkinas army determined to avenge his dear friend Fasold. He spurred his horse, rode at King Hertnið and drove his spear through his shield so that it broke, and so did also the double breastplate; the spear went under the hand and cut through the shoulders under the shoulder blade and the king was immediately smitten from his horse to the ground. There Pëttleif killed with his sword many a valiant man of King Hertnið and many others fled and so only few were left. Then with open jaws flew one of the most monstrous dragons determined to bring doom upon him. Pëttleif thrust his spear into the dragon's mouth so that it stuck out of the neck. But the dragon grabbed him with his claws, beat with its wings and fell upon him; thus Pëttleif found his death as well as his horse under him.

It is only after the battle, when king Hertnið realises the true nature of his wife's support.

Vilkinamenn hitta sinn herra, Hertnið konung, mjök sáran með stórum sárum, flytja hann með sér, ok koma til lækna þeir, er beztír eru í Vilkinalandi, ok græða hann. Þá er Hertnið konungr er heim kominn í sína borg, þá er hans kona Ostasia sjúk, ok þá verðr Hertnið konungr varr við, hvaðan af honum er komin liðveizla sú. er drekarnir eða dýrin hafa honum veitt, ok hversu hans kona var fjölkunnig, ok þrim dögum síðar deyr hún með litlum orðstír.

(Þiðreks saga af Bern 1962:395)

Vilkinamen found their lord King Hertnið seriously wounded and took him with them; and the best doctors of Vilkinaland came to him and healed him. Then King Hertnið came home to his castle and found his wife, Ostasia, sick. Now the king realised where the help had come from, who had given him the dragons and beasts and how potent a sorcerer was his wife. Three days later she died with little honor.

Unlike in *Völuspá*, in this case the witch-war theme takes a form of conventional rather than civil war. The reason for this innovation could be rooted, among other things, in certain contextual changes. This time the primarily supposed audience are kings and knights of high medieval society rather than Big Man princes and members of their warrior bands of earlier periods. Among the elites of firmly established feudal order, where the power is more ascribed than achieved and the social position depends on translocally established social rank rather than on local exclusive group, there is no more need to search for the enemies within. As the rank boundary is weakened or is delineated formally, the enemy may stay outside. Therefore, the more useful is the depiction of inter-

elite conflicts, i.e. the geographical delineation and externalisation of perverted social periphery.

Nevertheless, even though high medieval elites are not forced to structure their identity in exclusive local circles, still the economic and political conditions (relation between social influence and physical and martial power) allows them, as well as requires of them, to emphasize the exclusivity of their manliness. Since their androcentric orientation is preserved, woman can be still designed as one of their most dangerous enemies.

For this reason, the motifs of old witch-war tradition are still useful enough to form a relevant narrative concerning the feminine dangers lurking in the world of ruling men. Politically ambitious woman, styled according to the pre-Christian tradition of witchery and sorcery, remains an ideal vehicle to express and personify the peripheral elements threatening Christian chivalrous elite.

Thus one of the central and most important comparative moments of this tale is the depiction of the military opponent in the form of a politically active female witch, who, equipped again with *gandr* and practicing seið, leads a supernaturally disposed and militarily efficient army into the battle. However, instead of the powers of resurrection emphasized in *Völuspá*, in this case another traditional feature of feminine sorcery, typical for Germanic pre-Christian tradition, is preserved. Like eddaic valkyrjas or idises of the Old High German First Merseburg Incantation, who are able to bind the minds of enchanted victims, Ostasia has the power to overmaster the minds of beasts.

But also other comparative relations are present; her supernatural army is large in numbers and therefore it is difficult (in fact, in this case impossible) to overcome. And this moment is directly connected with *Völuspá*-like motif of the war's senselessness. Despite all expectations as well as justness and legitimacy of their fight and even their initial success, the "good guys" represented by *Ísung* and his warriors are simply exterminated. And their craven opponent, though prevailing in the end, also pays the high price for his victory; his attractive wife, powerful witch and the only true originator of his victory, is dead.

Also the peripheral nature of the witch's side seems to be present, though its expression changed, as it was discussed above, being structured geographically-horizontally rather than socially-vertically. The marginality of *Vilkinas* is, first of all, expressed through their close connection with another, foreign, eastern world. But also many socially encoded signs of marginality are at hand; feminine leadership and participation in battle, use of magic and non-human beasts controlled through magic, which is literary contextualised as dark and obsolete art trained by the step-mother, or non-chivalric behaviour (craven incursion, usage of secret non-formal strategies to achieve the victory).

It can be then concluded, that the tale of the war between *Ísung* and *Hertnið* of *Þiðreks saga* represents another Germanic manifestation of the witch-war theme.

Unlike in *Völuspá*, where both sides prevail here both sides fail; witch-cleansing crusade is suppressed just like the witch herself. The presence of this significant variation, along with the time and spatial gap between both texts suggests their mutual independence, being the two autonomous variants of the same older tradition. The more so, the story of *Īsung's* fall contains some unique motives. The most significant among them are the importance of the young champion allied with the leader of “good guys”, his breakthrough into the centre of enemy’s army as well as subsequent duel with the main villain. The relation of these motives to the structure of the other archaic narratives of IE language area is discussed below and speaks significantly for its proper membership in the group of IE witch-war narrations.

2.2.3 *Devāḥ* and *Asurāḥ*

Manifestations of the witch-war theme, comparatively close particularly to edaic variant, can be found also in the Indo-Iranian area. Namely in the tradition of war between divine *Devāḥ*, led by *Viṣṇu* and *Indra*, and demonic *Asurāḥ* (*Daityāḥ*, *Dānavāḥ*) under the patronage of the family of yogic sorcerers; *Śukra* (*Śukrācārya*, *Kāvya*), his mother *Kāvya*māta and his father *Bḥṛgu*. It is known via several recounts and references in puranic and heroic epic literature. It seems to be an important narrative complex, as it explains one of the key concepts of Hinduism, the cause of *Viṣṇu's* obligation to experience a large number of worldly incarnations.

The most comprehensive recount of this mythological conflict can be found in the so called *Devī Bḥāgavata Purāna* (*Purāna* of the Supreme Goddess). It was probably composed between 12th and 16th century by the group of Goddess’ followers gathered in some of her pilgrim centres (Brown 1998:7). It is an important piece of puranic tradition, as it is one of the key texts of Shaktism, the branch of Hindu tradition worshipping the Supreme Goddess as the ultimate originator of all the creation. All the traditional gods and goddess of Hindu pantheon, even the supreme trinity *Brahmā* – *Viṣṇu* – *Śiva*, are perceived as being only the partial manifestation of the Goddess.

The myth, just as the whole *Devī Bḥāgavata Purāna* after all, is recounted in the conversation between *Vyāsa*, the legendary sage of Indian tradition and King *Janamejaya*, distant descendant of Prince *Arjuna* of *Mahābhārata*. In this case *Vyāsa* reveals the chain of all the events leading to *Viṣṇu's* curse of repeated incarnations. According to the sage’s words, for generations there was a constant war between the *Devāḥ* and *Asurāḥ*, in which the *Devāḥ* clearly had the upper hand.

vyāsa uvāca: śṛṇu rājanprava śyāmi mṛgīḥ śāpasya kāraṇam
 purā kāśyapadāyadī hiranyakaśipurnṛpaḥ /
 yadā tadā suraiḥ sārḍ^haṃ kṛtaṃ samk^hyaṃ parasparam //
 kṛte samk^hye jagatsarvaṃ vyākulaṃ samajāyata /
 hate tasminnṛpe rājā prahlādaḥ samajāyata //
 devānsa pīḍayāmāsa prahlādaḥ śatrukarṣaṇaḥ /
 saṃyramo hyab^havadd^horaḥ śakraprahlādayostadā //
 pūrṇa varṣaśataṃ rājamllokavismayakārakam /
 devairyudd^haṃ kṛtaṃ cograṃ prahlādistu parājitaḥ //
 nirvedaṃ paramaṃ prāpto jñātvā d^harmaṃ sanātanam /
 trirācanasutaṃ rājye pratiṣṭ^hāpya baliṃ nṛpa
 jagāma sa tapastaptaṃ parvate gand^hamādane /
 prāpya rājyaṃ valiḥ śrīmānsurairvairaṃ cakāra ha //
 tataḥ parasparaṃ yudd^haṃ jātaṃ paramadāruṇam /
 tataḥ surairjitā daityā indreṇāmitatejasā //
 viṣṇunā ca sahāyeta rācyab^hraṣṭāḥ kṛtā nṛpa /
 tataḥ parājitā detyāḥ kāvyasya ṣaraṇaṃ gat^hāḥ //

(4.10.33-40; Śrīmaddevībhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam: 208-209;
 transcribed from devanāgarī)

- 4.10.33-34. Vyāsa said: Hear, O king! the cause of the curse; I will narrate to you. In days of yore, the king Hiranyakaśipu, the son of Kāśyapa often quarrelled with the Devāḥ; owing to this incessant warfare, the whole universe was much alarmed and perplexed.
- 4.10.35. And when Hiranyakaśipu was slain by the Man-Lion incarnation [of Viṣṇu], Prahlāda, the tormentor of the foes, continued his enmity towards the Devāḥ and began to annoy them.
- 4.10. 36. Thus one hundred years dreadful battle occurred between the Devāḥ and Prahlāda, to the astonishment of all.
- 4.10.37-38. O king! The Devāḥ fought very hard and were victorious. Prahlāda was defeated and was sorely grieved. Hearing that the Eternal Religion is the best, he handed his kingdom over to his son Bali and went to the Gandhamādan hill to practise tapasyā.
- 4.10.39-40. The prosperous Bali, too, on gaining his kingdom, began to quarrel with the Devāḥ and the war thus went on. Ultimately the powerful Indra and the Devāḥ defeated the Asurāḥ.
- (The Srimad Devi Bhagawatam: 285; Sanskrit nouns standardised)

Frustrated Asurāḥ ask their traditional mentor, the powerful yogic sorcerer and healer Śukra, to support them. Devāḥ, being aware of a new danger, hold a council

and decide rather to finish the decimated Asurāḥ in a final attack, this time aided by Viṣṇu himself, than to risk the enemy's rearrangement under the new leader.

vyāsa uvāca: tataste nirbhāyā jātādaityāḥ kāvyasya saṃśrayāt
 devaiḥ śrutastu vṛttāntaḥ sarvaścāramukhātkila /
 tatra saṃmaṃbhāya te devāḥ śakreṇa ca parasparam //
 mantraṃ cakruḥ susaṃvignāḥ kāvyamantraprabhāvataḥ /
 yoddhum gaccāmahe tūrṇaṃ yāvanna cyāvayanti vai //
 prasahya hatvā śiṣṭāṃstu pātālaṃ prāpayāmahe /
 daityāñjagmustato davāḥ samruṣṭāḥ śarṇrapāṇayaḥ //
 jagmustānviṣṇusahitā dānavā hariṇoditāḥ /
 vadhyamānāstu te daityāḥ saṃtrastā bhāyapīditāḥ //
 (4.10.45-48; Śrīmaddevībhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam: 209;
 transcribed from devanāgarī)

- 4.10.45-47. Vyāsa said: O king! The Daityāḥ became fearless under the patronage of Śukrācārya. The Devāḥ had their spies and knew all about these. They held councils with Indra and settled that before the Daityāḥ had time to dislodge us from our Heaven with the mantra of Śukrācārya, we will speedily go and attack them. Thus attacked suddenly, they will all be slain by us and we will drive them down to the Pātāla.
- 4.10.48. Thus forming their resolves, with fully equipped arms and weapons, they went out in rage to fight with the Daityāḥ and ordered by Indra and aided by Viṣṇu, they began to kill the Demons.
 (Srimad Devi Bhagavatam:286; Sanskrit nouns standardised)

Śukra realises his power is not sufficient to resist Viṣṇu's armies. Therefore he advises to negotiate peace, while he visits Śiva and asks him for powerful mantras to make himself a deadlier oponent. Peace negotiations are successful as well as Śukra's request, though Śiva promises to give him mantras only after a thousand years of highly demanding asceticism; hanging upside down and inhaling the smoke of burning husk (Śiva knows Śukra's aim of destroying Devāḥ and therefore he tries to make the task as difficult as possible). Nevertheless, after some time Devāḥ become aware of Śukra's effort and decide to break the peace and attack the Asurāḥ once again. Demons flee in fear without fight, searching for shelter in the abode of Kāvyamāta, Śukra's mother.

śaraṇaṃ dānavā jagmurbhītāste kāvyamātaram /
 drṣṭvā tānatisaṃ taptānabhāyaṃ ca dadāvata //
 kāvyamātovāca:

na b^hetavyaṃ na b^hetavyaṃ b^hayaṃ tyajata dānavāḥ /
matsatrid^hau vartamānātra b^hīrb^havitumarhati //
tacc^hrutvā vacanaṃ daityāḥ st^hitāstatra gatavyat^hāḥ /
nirāyud^hā hyasaṃb^hrāṃtāstatrāśramavare ' surāḥ //
(4.11.38-40; Śrīmaddevībhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam: 211;
transcribed from devanāgarī)

- 4.11.38. And they took refuge under Śukrācārya's mother. She saw the Daityāḥ very much fearstricken and at once guaranteed to them protection from fear.
- 4.11.39. The mother of Kāvya Śukrācārya said: Don't fear; don't fear; cast away fear. O Dānavāḥ! In my presence, no fear can overtake you.
- 4.11.40. The Asurāḥ on hearing her words were free from anxiety and pain and remained in that hermitage, in no way now bewildered or agitated, though they had no arms.

(The Srimad Devi Bhagawatam:289; Sanskrit nouns standardised)

Devāḥ pursue Asurāḥ right into sorceress' hermitage and start to slay them there, ignoring all the warnings of Kāvya-māta.

devāstānvidrutānvīkṣya dānavāṃste padānugāḥ /
ab^hijagmuḥ prasahya tānavicārya //
tatrāgatāḥ suraḥ sarve haṃtuṃ daityānsamudyatāḥ /
vāritāḥ kāvyamātrā ' pijag^hnustānā tramast^hitām //
(4.11.41-42; Śrīmaddevībhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam: 211;
transcribed from devanāgarī)

- 4.11.41-42. Here the Devāḥ, seeing the Daityāḥ flying away, pursued them and entering the hermitage were ready to kill the Daityāḥ, not taking into account what strength they gained there. The mother of Śukrā warned the Devāḥ not to kill; but, in spite of her hindrance, they began to slay the Daityāḥ.

(The Srimad Devi Bhagawatam: 289; Sanskrit nouns standardised)

Therefore Kāvya-māta uses her mystic power to bring sleep upon all the Devāḥ.

hanyamānānsurairdṛṣṭvā kāvyamāta ' tivepitā /
uvāca sarvānsanidrāṃstapasā vai karomaṃyahaṃ //
ityuktvā preritā nidrā tānāgatya papāta ca /
seṃdrā nidrāvaśaṃ yātā devā mūkavadāsthītāḥ //
(4.11.43-44; Śrīmaddevībhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam: 211;
transcribed from devanāgarī)

- 4.11.43. Seeing the Daityāḥ thus attacked, the mother was furiously irritated and told them she would make all of them overpowered by sleep by her tapas strength, clarified intellectual force.
- 4.11.44. So saying she sent the Goddess of sleep who at once overpowered the Gods and made them all lie down on the ground senseless. Indra with the other Devāḥ lay there dumb, and miserable.
(Srimad Devi Bhagawatam:289; Sanskrit nouns standardised)

Besides Viṣṇu, only Indra, with help of the Viṣṇu, is able to overcome the sleeping spell and regain his lost consciousness. For this reason, Kāvyamāta intends to eliminate both leaders of the Devāḥ physically.

mag^havaṃstvām b^hakṣayāmi saviṣṇuṃ vai tapobalāt /
paśyatām sarvadevānāmodraśaṃ me tapobalam //
vyāsa uvāca:
ityuktau tu tayā devau viṣṇivaṃdrau yāgavidyayā /
ab^hib^hūtau mahātmānau stabd^hau tau staṃbab^hūvanuḥ //
vismitāmstu tadā devā drṣṭvā tāvatibād^hitau /
cakruḥ kṛilakilāśabdaṃ tataste dīnamānasāḥ //
(4.11.48-50; Śrīmaddevībhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam: 211;
transcribed from devanāgarī)

- 4.11.48. O Indra! I will devour you with Viṣṇu today by my tapas force. All the Devāḥ will presently see all this and my extraordinary power.
- 4.11.49. Vyāsa said: O king! No sooner than the mother spoke thus, both Indra and Viṣṇu were both stupefied under her magical spell, superior thought power, and a thorough learning of the art of warfare.
- 4.11.50. The Devāḥ, seeing them very much overpowered and bewildered, were greatly struck with wonder; they became desperate and began to cry aloud.
(Srimad Devi Bhagawatam:289; Sanskrit nouns standardised)

Indra feels himself inferior to Kāvyamāta's power and therefore he asks Viṣṇu to slay her in order to prevent the destruction of all the Devāḥ. Viṣṇu decides to hear Indra's request and decapitates the sorceress.

ityukto bhāgavānviṣṇuḥ śakreṇa prat^hitena ca /
cakraṃ sasmāra tarasā dhṛṇām tyaktvātha mād^havaḥ //
smṛtamātraṃ tu saṃprāptaṃ cakraṃ viṣṇuvaśānugam /
dag^hāra ca kare krudd^ho vad^hāt^ham śakranoditaḥ //

ṣṭhītvā tatkare cakram śiraścic^heda raṃhasā /
 hatām dṛṣṭvā tu tām śakro muditaścāb^havattadā //
 devāścātīva saṃtuṣṭā hari jaya jayeti ca /
 tuṣṭuvurmuditāḥ sarve saṃjātā vīgatajvarāḥ //
 (4.11.53-56; Śrīmaddevībhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam: 211-212;
 transcribed from devanāgarī)

- 4.11.53. When thus requested by Indra who was very much perplexed, Bhagavān Viṣṇu quickly remembered his Sudarśana disc, casting aside the thought that it is hateful to kill a woman.
- 4.11.54-55. The disc, the ever obedient weapon of Viṣṇu appeared instantly at his remembrance; and Viṣṇu, becoming angry as prompted by Indra held the disc in His hand, and, hurling it at Śukrā's mother, severed off her head quickly. The god Indra became very glad at this.
- 4.11.56. The Devāḥ became free from sorrow, became very pleased and heartily exclaimed victory to Hari and worshipped Him and began to chant His praises.
 (Srimad Devi Bhagawatam: 290; Sanskrit nouns standardised)

Bhṛṅgu curses Viṣṇu for his sinful act of feminicide to suffer frequent earthly births. Subsequently he resurrects his beheaded wife.

iti śaptvā hari roṣāttadādāya siramtvaran /
 kāyaṃ saṃyojya ta rasā bhṛṅguḥ provāca kāryavit //
 aca tvā vipṇunā devi hatām saṃjīvayāmyaham /
 yadi kṛtsno mayā dharmo jñāyate carito 'pi vā //
 tena satyena jīveta yadi satyaṃ vpravīmyaham /
 paśyaṃtu devatāḥ sarvā mama tejobalaṃ mahat //
 adb^histām prokṣya śītābh^hirjīvayāmi tapobalāt /
 styaṃ śaucaṃ tat^hā vedā yadi me tapaso balat //
 vyāsa uvāca:
 adb^hiḥ saṃprokṣitā devī sadyaḥ saṃjīvitā tadā /
 utthitā paramaprītā bhṛṅgorbhāryā śucismitā //
 tatastām sarvabhūtāni dṛṣṭvā suptost^hitāmiva /
 sad^hu sād^hviti taṃ taṃ tu tuṣṭuvuḥ sarvato diśam //
 ēvaṃ saṃjīvitā tena bhṛṅguṇā vararvaṇinī /
 vismayaṃ paramaṃ jigmurdevāḥ seṃdrā vilokya tat //
 (4.12.11-17; Śrīmaddevībhāgavatam Mahāpurāṇam: 212-213;
 transcribed from devanāgarī)

- 4.12.11. Vyāsa said: O king! The sacrificer Bhṛgu angrily cursed Hari and next took that severed head and quickly placed it over the body as before and said:
- 4.12.12-14. O Devī! Viṣṇu has slain you today; I will make you regain your life just now. If I am acquainted with all the Dharmāḥ and if I have practised these in my life and if I have spoken truth always, then dost thou regain your life by my religious merit. Let all the Devāḥ witness my power and strength. If I know the Truth, if I have studied all the Vedāḥ and if I have realised the Knowledge of the Vedāḥ, then I, sprinkling your body with this cold water, charged with my mantras, will revive you.
- 4.12.15. Vyāsa said: O king! Sprinkled by the water by Bhṛgu , his wife regained her life and rose up at once and felt herself glad and smiled.
- 4.12.16. All the persons and living creatures seeing her stand, as if awoken from her sleep, at once exclaimed from all sides “well done, well done!” thanked Bhṛgu and his wife very much and highly praised them.
- 4.12.17. Thus seeing the fair complexioned wife regain her life through Bhṛgu , Indra and all the Devāḥ were very much struck with wonder.
(Srimad Devi Bhagawatam:291; Sanskrit nouns standardised)

For this moment the war is over but Indra still worries about the future, when Śukra would gain the requested mantras. Therefore he sends his daughter Jayantī to Śukra to win his heart. Jayantī is successful. After obtaining the mantras Śukra marries her and their honeymooning delays his return to Asurāḥ. Indra schemes further and sends Bṛhaspatī, who magically take the shape of Śukra, to Asurāḥ themselves to teach them the pacifistic ideas of ahinsā. His disguise is so efficient, that Asurāḥ believe his teachings and even witnessing the direct verbal confrontation between impostor and their true guru, who returns to them meanwhile, they refuse true Śukra. Seeing that their enemies banish their true leader (and the only hope to prevail in war), Devāḥ march on Asurāḥ to finish them. But Śukra hold the speech to both sides and explains that there is no need to fight as Devāḥ are necessarily predestined to replace Asurāḥ in their rule over the universe. Both sides agree and part in peace. Yet after a while Asurāḥ change their minds and attack the Devāḥ. Now it is the gods, who are paralysed by fear and so they call for an aid to Devī. She answers their prayers; she arrives accompanied by her heavenly army and defeats the demons.

In this case, the innovative Shakti redaction of the older Vaishnavaist narrative is obvious. Through the entire story the narrator stands on the side of Indra and Viṣṇu worshiping brahmanas, sages, yogis and kṣatriyas, only to find out in the end that it is all nothing compared to the reality and presence of the Devī. All the traditional masculine concepts of obtaining the power through warfare, fighting

and hard religious practice are abruptly subordinated to the supreme feminine power of the Great Goddess and the passive acts of Bhakti devotion dedicated to her. Thus, the final motiveless attack of Asurāḥ with subsequent intervention of the Great Goddess seems to represent an appendix, as obvious as it is awkward, to the original narration's structure.

Anyway, the conservative part of the story shows the structural closeness to the formerly examined Germanic cognates of witch-war theme, especially to Völuspā. There is a long and tedious conflict between two groups of supernatural agents, between warlike rulers (Devāḥ; Æsir) and their magically disposed opponents (Asurāḥ; Vanir). The expected victory of rulers is insecure particularly because of the appearance of a new opponent's leader, gifted with mystic magical powers (Heiðr; Śukra). Rulers hold a council and decide to eliminate their opponents by means of military action. However, their promising offensive almost turns to catastrophe due to intervention of a powerful female witch. As in Low German tradition, the key moment is the appearance of Kāvyaṃāta on the stage in the position of the war leader of the demons. It completely changes the situation and the previously victorious "good guys" are abruptly turned to losers. As in the case of Ostasia or generally the Germanic idises, the success of the witch's intervention depends on her mind-controlling sorcery or an ability to paralyse the enemy on the battlefield. But also in the North Germanic variation, all the problems of Æsir seem to be connected with the power of the witch, her ability of magical regeneration.

The most striking comparative moment is the killing of the witch and her subsequent resurrection through the supernatural regenerative powers of the demonic side (Gullveig three times unsuccessfully burned to death, Kāvyaṃāta beheaded and resurrected). Here this sequence is textually structured even more "logically" (in the end) than in the case of Völuspā (at the beginning). After the war, most serious of the war crimes, the highly sinful act of feminicide, the potential source of future intergroup hostility *par excellence*, is overcome. And so the reunion itself sounds much more realistic.

The exchange of the hostages is another striking moment, common for both Indian and Old Norse tradition. The role and the nature of Bṛhaspatī are close to that of the Mimir, as Oosten (1985) noticed, both of them being a *hollow wise-man* sent by rulers to their opponents. And again, in Indian tradition, the marriage of Jayantī as well as the mission of Bṛhaspatī occurs after the resurrection of the witch, i.e. in the moment which structurally resembles final peace negotiations of Old Norse tradition, as discussed in the previous paragraph.

The motif of hanged man, the Ōðinn-like character of Śukra, represents also an interesting match with Old Norse tradition (Oosten 1985). Although from the point of view of eddaic text Śukra stays on the inappropriate side, still the overall nature of the event shows strong textual resemblances; voluntary self-tormenting

to reach the enlightenment, hanged nature of the procedure, etc. Though transformed into Hindu context, Indian variant of witch-war theme still shares with its northern Germanic counterpart the significant amount of complex textual patterns. This makes the assumption of the existence of its PIE narrative model highly likely.

The idea of genetically rooted resemblance of the two narrative cycles can be supported also by well-known reflections on possible etymological connection (though not entirely clear) between Asurāḥ and Æsir, proposed by H. Güntert and subsequently accepted by J. Pokorny, J. de Vries and others (Lincoln 1981:51). And so, if the obvious shift of Asurāḥ from their supreme position and positive function to inferiority, at least in comparison to the preserved supremacy of Hittite *haššuš*, Old Norse *áss*, or Iranian Av. *ahura-*, will be considered, then in both cases the hanged man motif appears in the structurally equal position.

Anyway, when it comes to the overall point of the Indian variation, both sides are again winners in their own way. Just like in *Völuspá*, one group showed they are fair warriors while the other proved they are true sorcerers and healers. Dignity of both sides is maintained. The witch-cleansing crusade is successful while the witch remains alive.

Perhaps it is not by chance that Devī's final attack is by its nature similar to the appearance of Ostasia on the battlefield. The innovative Shakti story could well be woven out of many older, yet still available, folklore themes and motives of militarily and politically active woman. Probably not by an accident, to fulfil the purpose of Shakti reinterpretation the traditional story was chosen, in which are discussed moments like the legitimacy to rule and the problem of hierarchal competition of two rival sides, all connected with the phenomenon of feminine (Gullveig, *Kāvyamāta*) political activity.

The last groups of motives to mention are those briefly noticed in the case of *Þiðreks* saga variation. Viṣṇu and Indra represent the striking couple of main heroes who closely cooperate to defeat the witch and her supporters. While in the case of *Þiðreks* saga couples like *Īsung* and *Þettleif/Fasold* or *Þettleif* and *Fasold* are only slightly sketched, in *Devī Bḥāgavata Purāna*, for the ultimate victory the interaction between both hierarchically organised leaders, the supreme lord Viṣṇu and his "first knight" Indra, is essential. It will be shown that this is the moment typical for Slavic variants of witch-war theme discussed below.

2.2.4 Popelvār and Ježibaba

In this section the possible penetration of witch-war theme into the genre of European peasant fairy tale is discussed. To make things clear right from the start; folk tale is primarily and generally a peasant narrative genre recorded in modern

times, as Stitt (1992) pointed out. Anyone should be cautious of interpreting its textual structures as the descendants of genres of different social context and function, as well as generally earlier historical appearance, like mythos or epos. Change in context causes the change in text. The general mythological interpretative approach to fairy tales has more to do with ideologies and wishful thinking of romanticism than with serious scientific research. No European fairy tale preserves Grimm's *aryan myth*.

On the other hand, textual exchange between genres is not entirely impossible. Occasionally, under favourable contextual conditions, an inter-genre textual communication may occur. This seems to be the case of Slavic fairy tale of a hero who leads an army against the hordes of a demonic hag. Its non-fairy tale content and rare though extensive occurrence indicates that it perhaps evolved outside the fairy tale tradition and only secondarily entered the genre.

The character of a supernaturally disposed hag is typical for western and eastern Slavic fairy tale tradition. She is a demonic creature dwelling in the wilderness or in another world (beyond the sea, bridge etc.). She is a keeper or mother of various fairy tale items or creatures, often dragons. Sometimes she takes the position of a villain, though in many cases she acts rather like an ambivalent trickster and/or donor; it is dangerous for a hero or heroine to interact with her but it is necessary for the final success of the quest.

As Johns summarised a long discussion concerning the matter of etymology (Johns 2004:9-12), her name, though dialectally varied (rus. Baba Jaga, slk. Ježibaba, pl. Endzibaba), used to show a common Slavic pattern, being a compound of (p)sl. *baba* '(old) woman' and, most likely, psl. **engga*, converging by its meaning to terms like 'illness', 'anxiety' or 'misfortune'.

Slavic Jaga shows several archaic traits reaching beyond the limits of folk tale genre in general, as countless authorities of ethnology, linguistics and religious studies demonstrated (Johns 2004:8-43). Nonetheless, these aspects scarcely take the form of anything more than semantic ornaments on Jaga's depiction. From the viewpoint of the sujet, she still occurs and operates within the limits of the standard textual structures of peasant fairy tales. Certain exceptions in this regard occur particularly in tales depicting Jaga as a warlord who leads an army against the host of the tale's main hero.

The first and most important exception here is, of course, the very motif of battle with Jaga's army. Unlike in other recurrent cases, where the hag acts in usual non-militaristic context, as an individualistic villain or trickster, in the role of a field commander she appears rarely (Johns 2004:179). Nonetheless, occurrence of this rare militaristic fairy tale is documented systematically across the Slavic-speaking areas of eastern and central Europe.

Johns (2004:179-182) identified various features typical for this topic, as they appear in variants documented in eastern Slavic tradition.

As for the battle theme, the hero usually performs this task together with a companion, who is commonly known for being in a long war against the hag. The hero yearns for the worldly fame of a warrior. Therefore, he deliberately looks for this foreign character and together they defeat Jaga's army.

Another common moment is pursuing of fleeing hag after the defeat of her army in a way typical for dragon-slaying fairy tale sujet AT 301 (Three stolen princesses/Three underground kingdoms; Aarne & Thompson 1961); they follow her to the hole in the ground through which, with the help of the companion, the hero descends into Jaga's underground realm.

Underground the hero first finds and slays groups of the witch's craftsman (smiths, tailors, shoemakers etc.), who are constantly producing (hammering, weaving, stitching etc.) her warriors. Then he fights Jaga herself and defeats her by deceit; for example before the fight he lets the inattentive hag drink the potion of weakness, which was originally intended for him. The hero is often aided by a woman close to Jaga, usually her own daughter.

The very act of Jaga's elimination is most commonly connected with a regeneration motif. After the decapitation, her rolling head asks the hero to be slashed once again. The hero refuses, as he knows, usually from the hag's maid, that a second strike would resurrect the hag. In one variant the hero decapitates her, as she is lying in the cradle, being rocked and nursed by nannies (Johns 2004:181).

This whole hag-war episode is often a part of a longer story; it is embedded between other more or less standard fairy tale subjects. Most often it is interwoven into the textual patterns of AT301 and followed by AT 302 (Ogre's heart in the egg). After Jaga's elimination, the hero sets out for the quest to kill the famous and powerful sorcerer (AT302), as this is the last creature which prevents him from being the mightiest man in the world.

As an illustrative example for this comparative analysis, one of the two western Slavic variants of this sujet, both unnoticed by Johns (2004), will be considered. An earlier one (Polívka 1923:247-256) was recorded by Slovak priest and folk tale collector Samuel Reuss about the year 1840 in the mountainous region in the eastern part of central Slovakia, most likely in the surroundings of the town Revúca (Hlôšková 2009:16). The latter (Mišík 1913:83-86) was written down by another priest and folklore collector (and the head of Slovak Museum Society) Štefan Mišík. It was recorded seventy kilometres farther east and three generations later, in the small mountain village of Hnilec about the year 1910 from the literate forty six year old local miner Ludvig Olexa (Mišík 1913:86).

Both variants contain features even less typical for fairy tale genre. While in eastern Slavic renderings the battle with Jaga is interwoven into AT301 structure (wounding the villain on the battlefield – pursuing the villain to the entrance into the underground – descent into the underground – slaying the villain – betrayal of companion during the return from the underground), in both Slovak variants the

war against the Ježibaba is represented by an encapsulated sequence independent on any folktale textual models. It is organised around the core motif of epic battle finished by elimination of the hag right at the battlefield. Thus, from the point of view of fairy tale tradition, general structure of the earlier Slovak variant can be expressed by the formula X + AT301 + AT302 and of the latter by X + AT302, where X stands for the hag-war sequence.

Within the limits of spoken rural language, the earlier variant is typical for its relatively elaborated structure and language. On the contrary, the more recent one is rather a plain narrative of raw style even according to the criteria of a rural speech community. Perhaps this difference is rooted in the declining social utility of folk tale storytelling art; decreasing frequency and prestige of storytelling occasions lowers the storyteller's motivation and the time of practice, which leads to the decline in his skill. For these reasons the earlier variant is used in the following lines for the purpose of textual analysis and the more recent one is considered only as an auxiliary source.

Nonetheless, from the comparative point of view the important moment is, that the war sequence – though slightly varied – shows in both variants the same basic elements as well as resemblance to eastern Slavic variations. It suggests that both stories are the local and authentic representatives of a broader Slavic fairy tale tradition concerning the unique hag-war theme.

The text starts with typical fairy tale motif; a king sends his three sons to prove their quality in foreign land. Both the oldest one and the second-born son return without any significant success, reaching only the copper and silver forest. Lastly the underestimated thirdborn prince *popelväř* ('cinderer', from common wsl. *popel* 'cinder'/'ash') is allowed to go, being equipped only with a scabby horse and an old rusty sabre. However, shortly after the departure the magical nature of the equipment is revealed; the poor horse is turned into a fiery flying stallion and the sabre to a fine weapon with special powers. Flying the magical horse, the prince travels further than any of his brothers. After crossing the copper, silver and golden forest, the horse explains that they are approaching the kingdom of an old friend and ally of the prince's father. Both kings together used to make war in vain against Ježibaba and her three dragon sons. After being welcomed warmly at the court of the allied king, the prince offers to fight against the hag.

Zase za chvíľku zastal Tátoš a povedal: „Tu je zlatá hora; za tóto horó bývá tvojho Otcóv dobrý prijateľ, tam pojdeme na noc.“ Na niekoľko skokó preskočil calú horu, a pred zámkom, kde dobrý prijateľ princovho Otca býval, zastane. Jako prišól do zámku a uvidel ho jeho Otcov prijateľ, hned sa ho spítá, že jako on sem prišól. On mu vyrozprável šecker; bars sa zaradoval na tom, že je on jeho príteľov syn. I to povedal, že ho sem Tátoš zaviedol, který často sem nosil jeho otca, který s vámí, krále – lebo i tento ból

kráľom – proti Ježibabe i jé troch synó bojoval, ale že vždycky darmo. A že by on tješ mal chut proti této potvore bojovat a že se mu asnád poštestí prevladat.

(Polívka 1923:248)

In a while stallion stopped again and said: 'Here is the golden forest, behind this forest lives a good friend of your father, we will stay there overnight.' With a few leaps they crossed the whole forest and in front of the castle where the good friend of the prince's father dwelled, they stopped. As they came into the castle and the father's friend saw them, immediately he asked the prince, how it is that he came to visit him. He recounted everything and king much rejoiced that the prince is his friend's son. The prince also told him that he traveled here by the stallion, which often carried also his father, who with you, o king – as this one was a king as well –, against Ježibaba and her three sons, fought, but always in vain. And that he is also ready to fight against this monster and maybe he will be lucky enough to prevail.

First the king is sceptical, reminding the supernatural regenerative abilities of hag's warriors. But he decides, after all, to march with the prince's support once again against his archenemy.

„Ei, ašdaj se poštestí, ale ja neúfam, lebo z toho Ježibabinho vojska čím vjac človek pobije, tim viacej vojákú povstane“, povedal Popelvára otcov prijatel, „ale ešte i já oprobujem proti té potvory bojovat.“

(Polívka 1924:249)

'Well, perhaps you will be lucky, but I do not have hope, because the more of Ježibaba's army one cuts down the more soldiers will rise.' said Popelvár's father's friend, 'but I will try to fight against that monster once again.'

The next morning both armies clash in an open battle. Ježibaba gains an upper hand as all her fallen warriors are immediately resurrected.

Jeho Otcov prítel pozberal, čo mohol vojska, a včas rano šli proti neprítelovi. Zdaleka videli ne jedné veliké lúke plno vojska. „Tam, hle“, povie Popelvárovho Otcov prítel jemu, „sedí na tom rozštokovanú Ježibaba a odtial rozkazy vydává. Poďme na ných!“ zavolá na vojsko svoje; tu všetci do skoku a ten Popelvár vytjahne z pošvy šabličku a povjé jej: „Šablička, rúbaj neprijatela!“ Tu začne šablička rúbat, že len tak hlavy frkaly, ale čím vjacej neprijateló pobili, tím ich vjacej bolo.

(Polívka 1924:249)

His father's friend assembled as large an army as he could and early in the morning they went against the enemy. Already from afar they saw a huge army standing on the

large meadow. 'Over there', says Popelvār's father's friend, 'is sitting Ježibaba on that construction and from that place she gives her commands.' He calls to his army, 'Let's charge them!', and they all leap ahead and Popelvār unsheathes his sabre and says to it: 'Sabre, hew the enemy!' And as the sabre starts to hew the heads were falling one after another, but the more enemies they slayed the more were around them.

Nonetheless, prince leads a successful breakthrough into the centre of the hostile army where he eliminates the hag. After the fall of the leader all the enemies surrender and the long war is finally over.

Oni len vždy k Ježibabe postupovali, až k samému drevu, na ktorom ona stála, prišli. Vtom povje princ svoje šabličky: „Šablička, zotni to drevo!“ a hned padlo aj s Ježibabó na zem. Zase povje šabličky: „Rozsekaj Ježibabu na drobnje kusy!“ a hned jú rozsekala. Ak videli vojská, že jim vudce padnú, hned sa všetci poddali.

(Polívka 1924:249)

They still moved closer to Ježibaba and finally they came to the very wood on which she was standing. Now the prince says to his sabre: 'Sabre, cut down that wood!' and immediately it fell down to the ground and Ježibaba as well. Again he says to the sabre: 'Cut Ježibaba to small pieces!' and immediately she was cut up. As the armies saw that their leader is fallen they all surrendered immediately.

Shortly after the victory the prince leaves the grateful kingdom and returns home to report his achievements. The father appreciates his deeds and reveals him that this old friend of his also had the three daughters, but they have been kidnaped by three šarkans (humanoid polycephalic winged dragons), the sons of the slayed Ježibaba. Since the prince strives to be the mightiest man in the world, he travels to the allied kingdom once again to rescue the stolen princesses. The king tries to dissuade the hero to undertake so dangerous a mission, but seeing his resolution, he finally shows him the way to the entrance into the underground where the šarkans dwell. With the help of the princesses (being presented with magical rings of strength) the hero slays their husbands one by one and then returns the princesses to their father. Ignoring all the favours, even the offer to marry the youngest and fairest princess and rule the kingdom, he returns to his father to recount about his success. But after a short time of rest, the hero asks the father whether, in spite of all his achievements, there is a man in the world who is mightier than the hero himself. The father unwillingly reveals that in the distant castle standing on the chicken leg lives an all-knowing wizard called Vašbarāt ('iron monk', from hun. *vass* 'iron', hun. *barát szerzetes* 'monk'), who is the mightiest man in the world and who actually intends to eliminate Popelvār as his most serious competitor. The prince travels to fight Vašbarāt. Right at the

start of their encounter the wizard turns the hero to millet and feeds him to a rooster. Vašbarāt's wife, the kidnaped daughter of another allied king (Polish according to more recent variant), using the knowledge spied from her husband, turns the hero back into the human shape and reveals to him the secret of the wizard's power. Its source is hidden in the egg inside the golden duck floating once every seven years on the lake nearby the castle. The hero hunts down the duck, eats the egg and with the newly gained power he turns Vašbarāt into a wild boar. As the mightiest man in the world he marries the wizard's wife at the court of her father and then he returns home and rules the father's kingdom.

The text contains several features common in the European fairy tale tradition. The main hero bears the common non-personal label *popelvār*; he is a cinderlad, a typical thirdborn *unpromising youth* and/or *bear's son* of the fairy tale tradition. Also the whole sequences of the sujet, elimination of Ježibaba's dragon sons (AT301) as well as the all-knowing wizard (AT302), are shaped more or less in accordance with fairy tale tradition.

Another layer of motives and themes varies from fairy tale tradition, but still it is in accordance with the aforementioned features of eastern Slavic hag-war fairy tales. The hero wants to gain world fame and therefore seeks out the foreign character famous for his war against the hag. Another moment is the resurrection theme. In the analysed variant it is slightly varied; instead of the hag herself this ability is reserved only for her warriors, who are able to resurrect themselves right on the battlefield. In a younger Slovak variant this theme is even less directly expressed, being reduced to the unending flow of hostile soldiers. However, paradoxically, here the common Slavic pattern is more recognisable. In the middle of hag's army the hero finds a hut in which she sits and constantly 'weaves' her warriors. Thus the regeneration motif, though less explicitly expressed, bears the stamp of artisanal origin of hag's soldiers common in eastern Slavic variants.

Third textual layer is represented by moments which are uncommon even for the eastern Slavic realisation of hag-war theme. Military conflict takes place within the aristocratic and even political (note the presence of Polish king) context; the companion takes the form of a foreign king, the good old friend and past wars ally of the hero's kingly father. After the warm invitation the external hero offers his services in struggle against the deadly archenemy. The general Bēowulf-like character of this plot is striking.

But this is not the only resemblance to the Bēowulf epos. In the AT301 sequence which follows the elimination of Ježibaba and in which the hero deals with her dragon sons living underground the motif of pursuing the wounded villain to the underground entrance, which is one of the most typical components of AT301 fairy tale ever, is substituted by the motif of a royal escort similar to Hrōðgār's accompaniment of Bēowulf to the underground of Grendel's mother.

And as it was suggested above, also the very battle shows several features alien to fairy tale tradition but typical for heroic epic genre. One of them, as Karbusický suggested (1995:108-113), is certain kind of *berserkr scene*; the hero's exceptional martial performance during the battle expressed through the scene of *mowing* the hostile warriors. Popelvār performs, just like Fasold of *Þiðreks saga*, the same performance.

Other examples of the epos' features are the motif of meeting of the heroes, often of the ruler and his external younger loyal champion, in the hour of need before the fatal battle (*Bēowulf*, *Song of the Warhost of Igor* – quoted sequence, etc.) or the hero's breakthrough into the centre of hostile army with subsequent elimination of the main villain (*Þiðreks saga* – quoted sequence, *Jegorij Xrabryj* and *Krivda* – see below, etc.).

All these moments support the assumption, that the Slavic hag-war theme, and especially its western variants, can be considered a relic of different and more archaic folklore genre. Coexistence of several factors, i.e. non-fairy tale heroic content and rare but territorially extensive occurrence combined with textual stability, suggest that 1) by its nature it is alien to European as well as Slavic fairy tale and 2) probably it originated in a tradition of extensively disposed and complexly developed militaristic narratives. Thus the certain layers of the archaic IE (Slavic) epos seem to be the most likely candidate for its original environment.

And truly, there are many comparative matches with heroically and historically disposed witch-war theme discussed above. Like in its other representatives analysed so far, the central moment is a war or battle of masculine elite against the army led by a demonic female being. Especially the western Slavic variants with the unusual storytelling focus on the recounting of the fatal battle (of course within the limits of fairy tale genre), the motif of the king and his allied champion or the breakthrough of this champion into the centre of the hostile army are close to epic monumentality of *Īsung's* fight against *Hertnið*. *Ježibaba* herself acts as a field commander similar to *Ostasia*.

Moreover, the war itself is a long and risky business, mostly because of the ability of the otherworldly enemy to provide constant refilling of its fallen warriors. In some variants it is depicted as magical regenerations of the hag's troops right on the battlefield, like in *Völuspā*. Other variants speak about the supernatural regenerative power of the witch herself, her ability to survive her own death, like *Gullveig* or *Kāvyamāta*.

As for this regeneration motif, the interesting moment is the eastern Slavic depiction of *Baba Jaga* being laid in cradle and nursed by nannies. Perhaps it could be interpreted as symbolical expression of *Jaga's* regenerative abilities as well. Note the birth metaphor used in *Völuspā* referring to the supernatural regenerative powers of *Heiðr's* warriors.

Worth attention is also the image of soldier-producing artisans under the command of a hag. Perhaps there is more about this motif than only a picturesque fairy tale way to express the unlimited amount of the hag's human resources. Perhaps it refers to another common aspect of witch-war theme identified above, to the witch's tendency to dominate the baseborn and marginalised groups within the population. Jaga's working-class servants then could be interpreted as structurally equal to loosing Asurāḥ destined to failure under the patronage of Kāvya-māta or the *illrar þjóðar* under the leadership of Heiðr.

2.2.5 Witch-War Theme in Other Slavic Folklore

If the assumption of the significant and territorially extensive existence of witch-war tradition in archaic non-fairy tale and the high layers of Slavic narrative folklore (epos) is accepted, then its traces should be identifiable also in other folklore texts outside the fairy tale tradition. And indeed, in the Slavic speaking territories several sources of different folklore genres contain textual structures which can be easily interpreted as relics of witch-war theme. Comparatively the most significant among them are the stories woven around the character of Saint George.

2.2.5.1 Fight of Saint George Against the Winter

The cult of Saint George originated in the eastern part of the Roman Empire during the 4th century CE. The rapidly rising popularity of this trivial legend (the martyrdom of a Roman soldier) suggests that right from the start it probably infiltrated older concepts and beliefs and then spread on the wings of their popularity. This assumption can be supported by the connection of the cult to generally popular and important agricultural rites and beliefs of the spring season; the death of the hero correlating with the date of Roman Paralia, patronage over the herding and spring agricultural rites, etymology of name Geōrgios, from cgr. *geos* 'earth', cgr. *orge* 'cultivate' (Pilát 2007).

Byzantium seemed to remain the cult's spiritual centre, at least during all its medieval history. Even the George's dragon-slaying mission, an invention of 11th century (probably as a response to the warlike spirit of the crusade period), later on popular especially in Western Europe, is first documented in byzantine Capadocia. Also in this case it is assumed, that it originated in non-Christian mythological cycles of eastern Roman cultural areas (Pilát 2007).

Probably the domination of the Saint George cult in the Byzantine Empire caused its subsequent popularity among Slavic populations of eastern and southern Europe, as these were during the 2nd half of the 1st millennium CE naturally

Christianised from byzantine centres. Perhaps the very syncretic character of the cult, with its emphasised agricultural aspect (yet still without the dragon-slaying theme), made it an ideal matter to further syncretism, this time with Slavic heathen concepts (Pilát 2007).

And indeed, in the Slavic speaking territories the appearance and function of Saint George differs from the tradition known in the rest of Europe. Instead of the dragon slaying career the responsibility for the wellbeing of plants and animals is emphasized. Saint George is conceptualised as a patron of livestock and wolves, as a distributor of dew through which he “unlocks” the spring season (gate to paradise) and covers the country with the green of the grass and leaves. A Saint George Day ritual song from the Czech territory, being a representative of many other similar examples from the Slavic-speaking area, goes as following:

Stává svatý Jura a s klúči sa šúrá,
co by tráva vyrostla nám hrubá.
Tráva pro kravičky, růža na voničky,
růža červená a fijala modrá.
(Václavík 1950:33)

Saint George rises and with keys slowly approaches,
to make the thick grass grow for us.
Grass for cows, rose for the parfumes,
the red rose and the blue violet.

Across the majority of the Slavic territories a common subject of these rituals was the Saint’s ride around the country, usually represented by village procession led by young man clad in leaves and flowers as Saint George himself, to awake the world from the winter attenuation. Even when the dragon-slaying episode is rarely present, by its motives (three headed she-dragon, rivers of prosperity) it often differs from the western European patterns.

Reasons for the divergence are probably two; the early spread of stabilised yet archaic (pre-dragon-slaying) byzantine form of a cult into the Slavic areas combined with further syncretism with congruent Slavic heathen concepts (Pilát 2007). Thus it is possible, that in the Slavic periphery of Europe the original eastern Roman syncretic form was conserved as well as enhanced by genuine Slavic ideas. On the contrary, in other areas of progressive western European development the original syncretic form was replaced by new concepts, especially those organised around the dragon-slaying episode popularised via the Golden Legend.

Information brought by the medieval sources describing the western Slavic heathen communities inhabiting the coastal region of Pomerania provides significant support to the assumption about the infiltration of Slavic pre-Christian ideas into

the Slavic Saint George cult. According to Ebbo and Herbordus, the two 12th century bibliographers of Otto von Bamberk, towns like Stettin, Wolgast (Hologost) and Havelberg were the centres of the cult of Slavic heathen god Gerovit.

Ebbo informs that on a certain occasion Gerovit's priest, who for certain reasons pretended to be the god himself, uttered the following words.

I am your god, I, who clothe the plains with grass and the woods with foliage, the produce of the fields and the trees, the offspring of the flocks and everything that is of use to man are in my power. (The Life of Otto 1920:132)

Regardless of whether this text is based on real utterance or it is rather a matter of the biographer's invention, it is likely that at least to some extent it mirrors the authentic folklore textual structures associated with Gerovit's cultic tradition. The important moment then is – as Pilát (2007) suggested – that by its content it entirely corresponds to the Saint George texts of modern Slavic folklore, particularly that notoriously recurrent part about the bringing of grass and tree's leaves into the post-wintery world as well as the Saint's patronage over the wellbeing of livestock.

According to Ebbo, the main feast of Gerovit took place a few weeks after Easter (The Life of Otto 1920:116), probably in the second half of April according to Ivanov and Toporov (1965). This also matches with the date of Saint George's Day in modern Slavic folklore (Pilát 2007).

Nonetheless, Herebordus mentions also a significant military aspect of Gerovit's cult; patronage over the luck in military affairs, sacred shield as an attribute or god's interpretatio romana labelling Mars.

There was there hanging on the wall a shield of great size and of marvellous workmanship, covered with sheets of gold, which no human being might touch, because there was in it something sacrosanct and which betokened their pagan religion, so that it would never be moved out of its place save only in time of war. For, as we afterwards found, it was dedicated to their god Gerovit, who in Latin is called Mars, and the people were confident of success in every battle in which it went before them. (The Life of Otto 1920:135)

Perhaps a certain military aspect of Saint George in modern Slavic folklore is not entirely dependent on Golden Legend, especially the motives diverging from the standard dragon-slaying pattern. This matter will be discussed below. So far it is important, that medieval sources prove a non-trivial measure of continuity between Slavic pre-Christian tradition and modern Slavic Saint George cult. This only increases the comparative significance of textual structures discussed in following subsections, which describe the martial conflict between this Saint and his supernatural female adversary.

2.2.5.1.1 Cveten Gəorgi and Juda Samodiva

Typical for the rural areas of Eastern Balkan territory (mainly Bulgaria, Macedonia and partially Serbia) was a homogeneous tradition of spring agriculture rituals connected with Saint George Day. The central event was the offering of a white lamb. Other common rites were the first spring driving of the herd to the pasture or the feminine fertility rituals like bathing in the dew or ritual swinging. Rituals were often accompanied by special ritual songs used only for this occasion.

The main hero of these texts is Cveten Gəorgi (bul. цветен Гьорги) ‘George of the Flowers’, who, being sent by his mother or sister, rides across the country and spreads the morning dew in order to cover the post-winter landscape with the vegetation green. Cveten Gəorgi often sets on his journey very early in the morning; common is the motif of shoeing his horse still in the dark of the ending night. On his morning ride, he meets representatives of several agricultural professions (herders, ploughmen etc.), who beg him to provide the coming of the spring green in exchange for offered sacrifices (Pilát 2007).

According to the majority of the songs Cveten Gəorgi performs a peaceful ride. Sometimes, however, his action against the winter takes the form of a fight against a villain. Usually the hero’s opponent is a three-headed she-dragon (bul., mak. lamia) which *locks the streams*. Gəorgi decapitates the monster to release from the crippled necks the three rivers of certain agricultural products. Nonetheless, in one recorded song the dragon is replaced by a supernatural female being called Juda Samodiva (bul. юда самодива), ‘Juda the she-elf’.

Тръгнал ми е цветен Гьорги,
 Цветен Гьорги, милен Гьорги,
 Рано сутрин на Гергьовден
 Да обиди нивен сънор,
 Нивен сънор, честа гора.
 На път среща стара юда,
 Стара юда, самодива.
 Тя си кара три синджири,
 Три синджири черно робе:
 Един синджир се орачи,
 Други синджир се овчари,
 Трети синджир се копачи.
 Орачи се мило молят:
 - Отърви ни, цветен Гьорги,
 Ще те дарим амбар жито.
 Цветен Гьорги отговаря:

George of the Flowers went out,
 George of the Flowers, the kind George
 Early in the morning of the Saint George Day,
 To inspect the borders of his domain,
 Of his domain, of the deep forest.
 On the way he meets the old Juda,
 The old Juda, the she-elf.
 She pulls the three chains,
 Three chains of the poor prisoners:
 The first chain is of the ploughmen,
 The second chain is of the herdsmen,
 The third chain is of the winemakers.
 The ploughmen beg him woefully:
 Set us free George of the Flowers,
 We will give you a granary of grain.
 George of the Flowers replies:

- Не ще Гьорги амбар жито,
 Ноло ище превит кравай,
 И то да е преди слънце,
 Преди слънце, с право сърце.
 Овчари се милно молят:
 - Отърви ни, цветен Гьорги,
 Ще те дарим стадо овци.
 Цветен Гьорги отговаря:
 - Не ще Гьорги стадо овци,
 Ноло ище рудо ягне,
 Рудо ягне преди слънце,
 Преди слънце с право сърце.
 Копачите милно молят:
 - Отърви ни, цветен Гьорги,
 Цветен Гьорги, милен Гьорги,
 Ще те дарим бъчва вино.
 Отговаря цветен Гьорги:
 - Не ще Гьорги бъчва вино,
 Ноло ище ведро вино,
 И то да е преди слънце,
 Преди слънце с право сърце.
 Тръгна сабля цветен Гьорги,
 Та посече стара юда,
 Та оттъмна черно робе.
 Рукнали се до три реки:
 Една река бяло мляко,
 Бяло мляко по овчари;
 Друга река жълто жито,
 Жълто жито по орачи;
 Трета река руйно вино,
 Руйно вино по копачи.
 (Marinov 1994:605)

George does not want a granary of grain,
 But he wants the plait of bread,
 Yet right before the sunrise,
 Before the sunrise, out of the pure heart.
 The herdsmen beg him woefully:
 Set us free, George of the Flowers,
 We will give you a flock of sheep.
 George of the Flowers replies:
 George does not want a flock of sheep,
 But he wants a shaggy lamb,
 The shaggy lamb, before the sunrise,
 Before the sunrise, out of the pure heart.
 The winemakers beg him woefully:
 Set us free, George of the Flowers,
 George of the Flowers, the kind George
 We will give you a barrel of wine.
 George of the Flowers replies:
 George does not want a barrel of wine,
 But he wants a jar of wine,
 Yet right before the sunrise,
 Before the sunrise, out of the pure heart.
 George of the Flowers unsheathed his sabre
 And splits open the old Juda
 And unties the poor prisoners.
 They turned to three rivers:
 The first river of a white milk,
 The white milk for herdsmen;
 The second river of a yellow grain
 The yellow grain for ploughmen;
 The third river of a red wine,
 The red wine for winemakers.

In its trivial folklore layer the text, as all the other of its kind, forms an explanatory background to the feast's offering practice. Nonetheless, in the second plane the conflict of a hero with the female demon is presented. And even though it takes the form of a duel rather than war, the collective social context of the event, identified in previous IE examples of witch-war theme, seems to be preserved. The hag is dominating the whole baseborn population. The enslaved representatives

of the three types of commoners' professions could be well interpreted as symbolising the complementarity of the working segment of the society. Thus the motives, which have been identified as typical for the witch-cleansing ideology of the witch-war theme, are present; positively depicted young masculine hero is restoring the prosperity of the society through the witch-cleansing action, i.e. the physical elimination of the witch associated with the baseborn masses.

Johns (2004:69) mentions earlier studies (N. V. Novikov), according to which Juda can be considered to be the south Slavic counterpart of the aforementioned western and eastern Slavic *baba *enğa*. Given the reality of Slavic hag-war fairy tales analysed above, this moment strengthens the comparative relevance of this Bulgarian variant for the witch-war theme.

These facts also suggest that the significant moment in military function of the Slavic heathen predecessor of Saint George probably was not a fight against a dragon but rather a clash with a supernatural female enemy. Several texts discussed in the following subsections seem to bring further support to this assumption.

2.2.5.1.2 Jegorij Xrabryj and Three Snake Herdesses

One of the typical and socially significant folklore genres of medieval Russia was the tradition of so-called spiritual verses (rus. *духовные стихи*). Spiritual verses were the orally transmitted songs dealing with various Christian historical, biblical as well as apocryphal themes. Verses were performed by *skomoroži* (rus. *скоморохи*; uncertain /greek?/ etymology), wandering professional entertainers (singers, actors and jugglers) and above all by *kaleki perehožie* (rus. *калеки переhoжие*), the wandering (disabled) beggars.

One of the popular subjects of these songs was the character of Saint George, in spiritual verses named as Jegorij Xrabryj, 'George the Valiant'. He is usually depicted as a bogatyr, the knightly heroic warrior, who travels Russia and fights the villains and monsters. Jegorij, however, shows a special appearance of heavenly warrior; his feet are clad in silver, hands in gold, head is covered with hair of pearls and on his head (face, forehead, nape) dwell heavenly bodies like the sun, the moon or stars.

As Pilát (2007) summarized, there are two basic types of spiritual verses on Jegorij Xrabryj. Historically the more recent layer deals with the dragon-slaying theme and textually is more or less dependent on the Golden Legend rendering. An earlier layer of texts, which probably originated in times before 12th century, lacks the dragon slaying theme and contains several unique motives unknown even in archaic byzantine tradition.

From the comparative viewpoint of the witch-war theme the songs of the earlier layer are important. They deliver the tale, which can be divided into two parts.

The first one is loosely based on pre-dragon-slaying byzantine tradition. The heathen emperor Damian torments Jegorij to make him deny his Christian belief. Nonetheless, the hero, being protected by the power of his belief, supernaturally resists all the harm done to him. Therefore the emperor at least buries George alive in the grave, in some variants together with his mother, where he stays for decades.

The second part of the song, textually independent of any byzantine model, describes the hero's relief and subsequent marvellous journey to revenge on the emperor. The entombed Jegorij is released by the winds which answer his request, often commanded to do so by Virgin Mary, and blow away all the sands covering his prison. With blessing which he asked for and obtained from his mother he travels to emperor.

On his journey he encounters several obstacles; the impassable sleeping forests, fiery river, pass between mountains constantly crushing into each other, a pack of hostile wolves and snakes, enchanted hostile sisters, etc. These events are often conceptualised as if to demonstrate, along the mandatory theme of the power of Christian belief, the hero's power over the natural phenomena. He commands the sleeping forests to awake, hostile mountains or wolves to step aside, etc.

Да што святой-то Егорий тогда поезжаючи,	In that time Saint George rode,
Да што святую веру Егорий утверждаючи,	George who the holy faith strengthened,
Да што святой Егорий тогда наедучи,	In that time Saint George encountered,
Да што на те леса дремучие.	Those the sleeping forests.
Да што ко сырой-то земли леса клонятся,	The forests to the wet earth slant,
Дак от сырой-то земли леса ту отклонятся,	The forests from wet earth lift,
Да што святому Егорию нельза проехати,	Thus it is impossible for George to pass
Да што свет и Храброму нельза и подумати.	Impossible for the light and the Valiant one to muse.
Да што святой-то Егорий проговаривал,	So the Saint George uttered thus,
Да што свет и Храбрый проглаголивал:	The light and the Valiant one spoke thus:
„Дак вы, гой еси, вы леса дремучие,	‘O you sleeping forests,
Дак отделяйтесь, леса, дак от сырой земли.	Rise, o forests, from the wet earth.
Да я из вас, леса, да буду строити,	For I, o forests, will build of you
Да буду строити церкви совборныя	I will build churches the congregational
Да церкви совборныя богомольныя.“	Congregational churches the prayerful.’
Да за Егорьево всё видь умоление,	For all the George's prayer,
Да за Егорьево всё видь претерпение,	For all the George's martyrdom,
Дак отделялись леса от сырой земли.	The forests rose from the wet earth.
Дак вот святой-то Егорий тогда поезжаючи,	In that time Saint George rode
Дак святую веру утверждаючи,	And the holy faith strengthened,

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Дақ што святой-то Егорий тогда наехавши,
Дақ он на стало на серых волков,
На серых волков на прыскучих.
Да што нельзя Егорию проехати,
Да што нельзя никак и подумати.
Да што святой-то Егорий проговаривал,
Да што свет и Храбрый проглаголивал:
„Да уж вы, гой еси, волыки прыскучие,
Расходитесь, волыки, по всёй земли,
Да вы по всёй земли, по святой Руси,
Да где вы по тры, по два, по единому,
Да покушайте, волыки, всё по-веленному.“
Да всё за Егорьево умоление,
Да за его, за святого, претерпение,
Расходилися волки по всёй земли,
Да што по всёй земли, да по святой Руси,
Да где оны по тры, по два, по единому,
Дақ оны кушали волки по-веленному.

(*Stij Duxovnye* 1991:114)

In some variants the motif of hostile snakes and sisters are joined; the hero encounters a pack of snakes herded by his three heathen sisters. Jegorij persuades his sisters to go and baptize in the river Jordan and then slays unprotected snakes of theirs by his magical arrows. This fight with the sisters' snake army is usually depicted as a last and most serious obstacle before the very encounter with the emperor:

Да видь што святой-то Егорий поезжаючи,
Дақ он святую веру утверждаючи,
Да видь святой-то Егорий тогда наехавши,
Да видь он на то на стадо на змеиное,
Да змеиное стадо, на лукавое.
Да што пасли это стадо три пастыря,
Да три пастыря, да красия девицы.
Да што святой-то Егорий проговаривал,
Да свет и Храбрый Егорий проглаголивал:
"Дақ ой уже вы, гой еси, да три пастыря,
Да три пастыря, да красия девицы,

In that time Saint George encountered
A pack of grey wolves,
The swift grey wolves.
So it is impossible for George to pass
It is impossible in any way to muse.
So Saint George uttered thus,
The light and the Valiant one spoke thus:
'Now, you, the swift wolves,
Scatter, o wolves, across the whole earth,
across the whole earth, across the holy Russia,
in trinities, in pairs, one by one,
And feed, o wolves, all as commanded.'
All for George's prayer,
All for Saint's martyrdom,
Scattered the wolves across the whole earth,
Across the whole earth, across the holy Russia,
In trinities, in pairs, one by one,
And they fed, the wolves, as commanded.

As in that time Saint George rode,
As the holy faith strengthened,
In that time Saint George encountered
He encountered a herd of snakes,
The herd of snakes the cunning.
The herd herded the three herders,
The three herders, the beautiful maidens.
So Saint George uttered thus,
The light and Valiant George spoke thus:
'Now, you, the three herders,
The three herders, the beautiful maidens,

Дак вы откудова, да три пастыря,
 Дак вы которого дак вы и города,
 Дак вы которого да отца-матери?"
 "Дак уж мы города Ерусалимова,
 Дак отца Фёдора до Благоверного,
 Дак наша мати София да Премудрая."
 "Дак уже и гой еси, да трии пастыря,
 Да трии пастыря, да красия девицы,
 Да видь вы поднимья да мои сестрисы,
 Да видь вы пасли стадо змеиное,
 Да видь вы окаяанного духу нахваталися,
 Да вы сходите в Ердан-реку искупайтесе."
 Да видь святой Егорий свет и Храбры,
 Да видь стругал Егорий стружки дубовья,
 Да видь ко стружкам проговаривал:
 "Да видь обращайтесь, стружки, в калены стрелы,
 Да видь што побейте змеёньшей,
 Да видь змеиное стадо лукавое!"
 Обращались стружки в калёны стрелы,
 Побили стадо змеиное,
 Змеиное стадо лукавое,
 Да всё за Угорьево умоление,
 Да за его, святого, претерпение.
 (Stijǎ Dušovnye 1991:114–115)

Where you come from, the three herders,
 From which city you come from,
 From which father and mother?"
 'We come from the city of Jerusalem,
 From father Fedor the Pious,
 From mother Sofia the Wise.'
 'So, you, the three herders,
 The three herders, the beautiful maidens,
 You appear to be the sisters of mine,
 And you herded the flock of snakes,
 It is because you had breathed the ocean air,
 Now go to the river of Jordan to bath.'
 Then Saint George the light and the Valiant,
 George started to grate the chips of oak,
 And to those chips he told:
 'Turn, o chips, to the hardened arrows,
 To defeat the snake kin,
 The herd of snakes the cunning!'
 The chips turned to hardened arrows,
 They defeated the herd of snakes,
 The herd of snakes the cunning,
 All for George's prayer,
 All for Saint's martyrdom.

Again, the basic pattern of a witch-war theme, an open battle of a masculine hero against a supernatural army commanded by a supernatural anti-system female element, seems to be preserved. And again, as in the case of Cveten Gьorgi, the entire theme is conceptualised around the figure of a hero, who is depicted as the holy warrior of nature. And even though the restoration of the prosperity theme takes the form of Christian belief consolidation, probably due to the orientation of the genre, still the Christian aspect seems to remain rather superficial here. And conversely, Jegorij's power over nature, markedly along the lines identified above (reign over the forests and wolves, awakening the vegetation) appears to be the narrative's textual core.

The basic pattern of the narrative resembles the Bulgarian variant; with the support of a positive female element (help of the Virgin Mary, blessing of the mother Sofia), out from the dark (of the prison), the hero sets out on the journey

to restore the order of nature (to wake up the forests) and to perform the fight against the anti-system female principle. The image of the hero's field battle against the female-commanded demonic hordes (the herd of snakes) makes this Russian tradition closer to the identified pattern of a witch-war theme than it is in the case of its Bulgarian cognate.

2.2.5.1.3 Jegorij Xrabryj and Krivda

For some peripheral parts of Russia, even in the first half of the 20th century the presence of bylina tradition was common. Bylina (rus. *былина*), '(some)thing that was/happened', is the word chosen by Russian folklorists of Romanticism to name the orally transmitted heroic poems circulating among the peasant population, especially in the north-eastern territories of Russia. The narrators and the audience itself used to call these poems *starina* (rus. *старина*), 'an old thing'. The singer of bylina tradition was called *skazitel'* (rus. *сказитель*), 'a narrator'; usually a member of a local community specialised (though not professionalised) in singing bylinas at various communal events.

As any narrative tradition kept by a community of narrative experts, bylinas were textually systematised and stabilised across relatively large areas. It consisted of more or less standardised, if varied, textual patterns; each of the main heroic characters, bogatyrs, was associated with a fixed set of features and *sujets* more or less unique to him.

The existence of the bylina tradition was noticed in the 17th century, though systematic research and collections emerged only during the 19th century. Among scholars (De Vries 1963, Oinias 1971, Karbusický 1995) it is commonly agreed, that at least the core of bylinas historically originated in the courtly epic of eastern Slavic princedoms during the high or even early medieval period. It is assumed, that after the destruction of these princedoms due to the Mongol incursion in 13th century, remnants of their courtly epos were preserved in the repertoire of *skomorozi*. Officials' repressions, which intensified from the 17th century, pushed *skomorozi* to peripheral parts of the Russian state where they gradually perished. However, before their extinction some parts of their heroic epic repertoire were adopted by local narrative specialists, like *skaziteli* for instance.

The assumption of the medieval origin of bylina tradition is based on textual as well as historical evidence (De Vries 1963, Karbusický 1995, Oinias 1971). Textual evidence is obvious; for the songs typical are positively depicted scenes of hunting, fighting and warfare, of princes and their retinues and nobly feasting heroes boasting about their military achievements, all the typical medieval aristocratic amusements. As for the evidence of historical sources, the existence of courtly professionals providing the panegyric songs to their lords is directly mentioned in

Russian sources since the 13th century (Oinias 1971). Also in the aforementioned *Điðreks* saga the eastern heroes Ilias and Valdemar are mentioned; no doubt the predecessors of Prince Vladimir and his “first knight” Ilja Muromec, the main characters of the modern bylina tradition (De Vries 1963). Therefore it can be reasonably expected, that some bylinas deliver the ancient textual structures of narrative folklore, even common IE topics.

Perhaps this is the case of a song depicting the battle of the main bylina heroes against the Mongol/Islamic (Tatar) hordes led by she-demon Krivda (‘Falsehood’) and the Antichrist himself. It was recorded by N. Mišejev in 1925 in Vologoda District (rus. Вологодская область). Mišejev had the luck, at least he claims so, to watch its performance in a truly natural context; being an unnoticed member of the evening storytelling session, which used to take place in the hut of an eighty years old *granny Pelageia*, the famous local bylina singer (Proročeskaja bylina ... 1992:19).

As for its general genre content, the song is textually heterogeneous. First, it represents a mixture between warlike Kiev bylina cycle (heroes like Ilja Muromec, Dobryňa Nikitič and Aloša Popovič) and more mercantile-oriented Novgorod bylina cycle (Vaska Buslajev, Ivan Gostinov). Second, it shows an influence of spiritual verses tradition; presence of the motive of the destruction of Russia due to the incursion of heathen nomadic army connected with hope for final Reconquista as well as presence of the characters like Archangel Michael, Virgin Mary, Antichrist and, again, Jegorij Xrabryj.

As for its context of tradition, the song is a variation on a traditional sujet depicting the last battle of Russian bogatyrs and their final extinction. According to tradition, one day they performed a light-headed attack on a supernatural enemy whose warriors are capable of resurrection. Sooner or later the heroes were outnumbered. They were forced to retreat and finally turned to stone as a punishment for their sin of pride.

In this case the stone-turning moment is varied to the motif of imprisonment in the caves of the Holy Mountains. In accordance with bylina tradition, the Holy Mountains are depicted as transformation or alter ego of giant bogatyr Jegor Svjatogor, the former close friend and mentor of Ilja Muromec.

The sujet begins with the scene of heroic watch. Patrolling on the border of Mother Russia, the five heroes encounter a couple of heavenly warriors, namely Jegorij Xrabryj and Archangel Michael. Blinded by the self-confidence, bogatyrs are unable to recognise their identity and decide to attack them. However, every slayed enemy is immediately resurrected twice. Soon they are heavily outnumbered and forced to retreat. They are received and sheltered by Svjatogor. Within his caves they all fall asleep magically, except Ilja. Being the oldest and most serious of all the bogatyrs, he stays awake and prays for forgiveness. He is listened to by Virgin Mary, who feels pity for the bogatyrs’ fate as well as for the fate of

Russian people left unprotected against the hordes of she-demon Krivda. Therefore she approaches the Throne of God and begs Christ to forgive the heroes their vanity. Christ agrees and Svjatogor is commanded to release the prisoners. Being free again, they build a camp near the river Safat. Next morning they witness the arrival of a huge army from beyond the river. Il'ja recognizes that it is led not only by Krivda, but also some other dark, yet unknown character, who stands behind the she-demon.

Bogatyr's start to fight her host but even after the thirty days of heavy battle the number of enemies does not decrease. Il'ja gets close to the Krivda herself and intends to attack her but in the final moment the she-demon disappears.

Стали они силу Кривды колоть-рубить.
Не столько витязи рубят,
Сколько добрые кони их топчут.
Как взмахнет меч булатной Ильи - просека видна!
В лоб на Кривду пошел Муромец.
Показалась она... Огромная вся...
Одним глазом глядит... Кривобокая!
Песье рыло заместо лица,
Языком, что с версту, обтирается.
Булавой в сорок пуд размахнулся Илья...
Потемнело в глазах, подвернулась нога,
-С пустым местом борьба не под силу...
Когда встал, Кривды нет... На просеках везде
Полным-полно опять черной рати...
Тридцать ден, три часа, три минуточки
Смертным боем таким бились витязи...
Утомились их плечи могутные.
Уходились их кони добрые,
Иступились мечи их булатные,
А Кривда все с боем идет,
Все новую силу с боем ведет,
(Proročeskaja bylina ... 1992:52)

They began to hew and slaughter the army of Falsehood.
Not so much did the heroes hew it,
As the good steeds trampled it down.
As the steel blade of Ilya swings, a gap is seen.
The Muromets bore straight on the front of Falsehood.
There she stood all enormous,

Facing him with her one eye, standing lopsided,
Muzzle of hound instead of face,
And licks herself with her tongue a verst long.
The thousand-pound mace of Ilya went swinging.
His eyes grew dizzy, his food stumbled.
To fight an empty space was beyond his power.
When he stood up, Falsehood was not there...yet everywhere
in the gaps the black army stood full as full again.
...For thirty days, three hours and three minutes
The heroes fought in so deathly a battle.
Their sturdy shoulders flagged,
Their good steeds gave way,
Their swords of steel were blunted,
And Falsehood still came on to the attack.
Always she brought new hosts into the battle,
(A Heroic Legend... 1935:20)

Ilja calls the weary heroes to take time-out and hold a council. Here Jegorij Xrabryj himself appears among them. Bogatyrs recognise him, and realising their past sin of fight against the heavenly characters, they ask George for forgiveness.

Почал звать эсаулов - своих товарищей
На последний совет, на завещанной.
Побежали они вчетвером, становилися:
Усталые, исхудалые, почерневшие, потемневшие.
Только слово свое Илья молвил, вздохнув,
Как приметил, что витязей больше: всех пятеро!
Диво-дивное! Чудо-чудное!
Захотел опросить, да, взглянув, опознал
Одного из воителей, от которых бежал в горы каменные.
Опознали все витязи, опознав, признали
Вернова брата своего названного - Егория Храброва.
Склонились от стыда жгучева головы витязей.
Над кем хвастались?... С кем боролись? Ково испужались?
(Proročeskaja bylina ... 1992:53)

He started to call his captains, his comrades
To a last and secret council.

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They ran up, all four, they stood around him,
Weary and faint, blackened and darkened.
But he saw there were more of them, five in all.
Marvel of marvels, wonder of wonders.
He wanted to ask, but as he looked he knew.
'Twas one of those warriors from whom he had run
to the stony mountains.
It was their faithful brother, George the Valiant.
The heroes bowed their heads with burning shame.
To whom had they boasted, with whom had they
fought, of whom were they afraid?
(A Heroic Legend... 1935:21)

Jegorij Xrabryj forgives them and introduces Archangel Michael, who also joined the meeting but remained unseen so far. The Archangel accepts the heroes' apology as well. With new heavenly support bogatyr's renew the fight. Both celestial warriors successfully break into the centre of the hostile army where this time Jegorij intends to attack Krivda herself.

В напередней стороне к шатру высокому самой Кривды,
Кривды самой одноглазой и хранителя ее незнаемова,
Архангел Михаил и Егорий Храброй без устали пробиваются.
Вот уж и малое поле, чистое-невеликое,
Чистое-невеликое между силами нездешними,
Силами небесными, силами пододонными
Для Беликова боя, не людскова боя, взору открывается.
И возгорелось сердце ретивое, юное у Егория Храброва,
И соколом ясным наперед Михаила Архангела
Бросался он на Кривду одноглазую...
(Proročeskaja bylina ... 1992:56-57)

On the front, toward the high tent Of one-eyed Falsehood
herself and her unknown guardian,
Archangel Michael and George the Valiant
Are tirelessly making their way.
And see now a small place, bare, not great,
Bare, not great, between the unearthly forces,
Between the powers of heaven and the underground forces,
Opens to the eye for the great battle, the more than human battle.
And the leaping, youthful heart of George the Valiant was aflame,

And like a sharp-eyed hawk, in front of Archangel Michael,
He threw himself on one-eyed Falsehood...

(A Heroic Legend... 1935:25-26)

In the last moment Jegorij is paralyzed by the sight of Antichrist, who appears to stand behind Krivda, being disguised as Christ himself.

...затряслися ноженьки серебряные у Егория,
Занемели рученьки его золотые,
Замораживалось сердце Святова Егория,
Замалкивал он, как молотом пришибленной,
Заволакивались глазки ево прекрасные,
Закрывались ушки ево под кудрями светло-русыми,
Делался Егорий камнем мертвым, железом окованным...
Увидел Егорий рядом со Кривдою
Самова Христа, Цара Небеснова,
Темным взором на него,
На Егория Храброва, гневно глядевшего...

(Proročeskaja bylina ... 1992:57)

...his silver-clad legs trembled,
His gold-clad arms went numb,
The heart of Saint George was freezing,
And he fell dumb, as if crushed by a hammer,
And his beautiful eyes were clouded,
His ears were shrouded beneath his bright chestnut curls,
George became like a dead stone, like beaten iron.
George had seen at the side of Falsehood
Christ himself, the King of Heaven,
Gazing at him with darkened eyes,
Gazing in anger at George the Valiant...

(A Heroic Legend... 1935:26)

But not so Archangel Michael; in spite of the Antichrist power he attacks Krivda and decapitates her.

То не вихрь-буря с окіяна-моря вырвалась,
То не гром-молнія дуб могучий в клочья расщепила!
То Архаигел Михаил орлом взвился над Кривдою,
Мечом огненным ей снося голову.

(Proročeskaja bylina ... 1992:57)

It was no whirlwind of storm, rushing from the sea of ocean,
It was no thunder and lightning splitting the mighty oak to pieces,
It was the archangel Michael soaring like an eagle over Krivda,
And with his sword of fire cutting off her head.

(A Heroic Legend... 1935:26)

Jegorij Xrabryj recovers from the paralysis and all the hostile army, being deprived of its commander, is routed. The Antichrist steps out of his disguise and takes the form of a giant raven. Michael duels with him and banishes him from the country.

The general textual pattern of witch-war theme seems to be clear. Bogatyrs are representatives of the community par excellence. They are positively depicted, being the defenders of the holy Mother Russia, her people and religion. And these “good guys” are engaged in war with a hostile army led by a she-demon.

In spite of the expectation resulting from the context of tradition, though entirely in accordance with the identified witch-war pattern, even though they are the best warriors in the world, they are unable to defeat Krivda’s forces by conventional military means. Like in former comparative counterparts, the motif of crisis meeting is present. Astonished heroes hold a council to decide how to deal with the unexpected problems. Subsequently, their final victory is secured only by the crucial support of powerful supernatural agents.

Again here emerge a cooperative couple of main heroes, supernatural beings par excellence, whose presence is essential for the final victory (Indra & Viṣṇu; Jegorij Xrabryj & Archangel Michael). Paralysis of the “next best” of this heavenly couple (Indra, Jegorij Xrabryj) is overcome only by the power of the supreme leader (Viṣṇu, Archangel Michael).

On the villain’s side operates a male-female couple of leaders (Hertnið & Ostasia; Śukra & Kāvya-māta; Antichrist & Krivda). Due to the magical powers of the evil side (Gullveig Heiðr), particularly the bounding/paralysing ability (Ostasia, Kāvya-māta), in this case realised as the paralysis of Jegorij Xrabryj caused by the sight of Antichrist, the “good guys” are almost turned to losers.

The Slavic *out of the dark* motif with certain feminine aspect is present as well; just like Cveten Gæorgi or Jegorij Xrabryj of spiritual verses, heroes are imprisoned within the dark caves and then released with the help of positive female element. The comparative relevance of this resemblance is only strengthened by the fact, that bogatyrs perform their subsequent war against the witch under the leadership of Jegorij Xrabryj himself.

Perhaps the main difference between this bylina and analysed Bulgarian text is then the return to the original political character of the witch-war theme. The prosperity of the nature, so typical for Slavic Gerovit/Saint George tradition, is missing

here. In this regard the text is closer to rather politically engaged aforementioned cognates of Germanic and Indic epos or to the Slavic hag-war fairy tale tradition.

The assumption about the ancient origin of this bylina seems to be supported also by its textual closeness, and especially through this *out of the dark* motif, to the background story of another archaic IE epos. According to Mahābhārata, its five main heroes represent the incarnations of five personalities/aspects of Indra, who had been imprisoned inside the cave for their lack of respect shown to the heavenly majesty of Śiva. The last, fifth Indra is imprisoned after he is paralysed by the touch of Śiva's female companion. They all are allowed to leave the prison and regain their celestial status only through living in the bodies of mortal men. Thus, in both cases the committed crime is of the same nature; the abusive behaviour towards the superior supernatural agent. In both cases heroes are released in order to perform the purifying war against the evil in the world of mortals. An interesting moment is also the presence of paralysis cast on hero (Jegorij, Indra) by the superior yogic-sorcerous male-female couple, usually by its female part (Śiva's female companion, Śukra's Kāvyaṃāta, Antichrist & Krivda).

Through this comparative connection to Mahābhārata, in this story the general feminine aspect of the witch-war theme is more obvious. Heroes fight the army of a supernaturally disposed female being (Heiðr, Ostasia, Kāvyaṃāta, Ježibaba, Krivda, Juda) and their success is sometimes associated with the support of another supernaturally disposed female being (hag's maid, Virgin Mary, Saint George's mother). In this light the function of the Devī in the above analysed variant of witch-war theme in the Devī Bhāgavata Purāna appears to be not so unnatural after all. Though emphasised awkwardly, considering the structure of the sujet, perhaps the motive of her intervention as a crucial moment in salvation of losing masculine heroes is truly based on original narrative background of witch-war theme.

The sex of the storyteller seems to be less significant in this regard. A feminisation of storytelling was the general tendency of modern times, caused by the decreasing social prestige and functionality of this art. However, to some degree this moment could help to emphasize themes, which would be otherwise, for instance in the case of masculine-disposed storytelling, left peripheral. Thus the previously noticed feature of textual as well as contextual peripherality of the witch-war theme is preserved also in this bylina.

2.2.5.2 Banishing Winter

In Slavic speaking territories since the medieval period the occurrence of the special sort of spring rituals of *banishing winter* is attested. A dummy figurine of a hag, symbolising winter, was carried away out of the village in a procession. After reaching the borders of the village, sometimes bank of the river, it was ritually

destroyed; stoned, torn apart, burned, buried or thrown into the water. The hag figurine was called differently, depending on the region, though most often by variations on name Morena (perhaps from pie. **mer-* ‘to harm’, ‘to die’).

In the eastern Slavic area an interesting ritual variant of banishing winter ritual is attested (Slavjanske drevnosti... 1999:83; Slavjanske drevnosti... 2004:182). Here the destruction of a dummy hag was preceded by the ritual battle. One group of participants, usually girls, defended Morena, while the other one, boys, tried to take off her parts, clothes or decorations, seize her etc. The defending side lost after all and together they destroyed the figurine as usual.

This kind of rite seems to be comparatively important. It can be easily interpreted as a ritual counterpart of Slavic witch-war narratives. Representatives of the community make a collective battle against the army of disorder led by the female principle of death, winter and witchcraft personified in the single female character – in this case a figurine of winter hag. Note that in analysed western Slavic variant of hag-war fairy tale Ježibaba is shouting her commands from the wooden construction, being lifted over her army. This scene possibly refers to ritual battle when Morena, traditionally made on a wooden stick and carried in procession lifted above the heads, is defended by an “army” of girls against the “army” of boys.

There is no intention here to enter the never-ending debate concerning the mutual myth and ritual relationship, the issue of possible connection between certain rite and certain myth as its possible archaic though already unnoticed narrative background. However, the eastern Slavic battle variation on banishing the winter is one of the examples, when ritual behaviour seems to express the narrative patterns typical for the Slavic variations on witch-war theme. In the following section certain aspects of this matter are briefly discussed.

2.2.5.3 Broader Folklore Background

It was demonstrated that a certain group of rare but extensively occurring and mutually coherent Slavic narratives behind the rites associated with Saint George Day tell the story of a positive masculine hero, who battles the forces of infertility and nature’s disorder associated with female demonic principle, often supported by the demonic army. At the same time, variants of a different feast’s rite, banishing winter ritual, simulate the struggle, and sometimes explicitly battle, of the community’s representatives against the (army of a) dummy hag associated with dark powers and infertility of the winter. The semantic connection of both ritual concepts suggests that they are possibly rooted in the same archaic tradition.

This assumption cannot be easily rejected as an *ex post* construction. There are folklore texts which prove that the people themselves were aware of their possible intrinsic relationship. In the following verses from the Moravian territory (eastern part of Czech Republic), Carling Sunday, a day traditionally reserved for banishing winter ritual, is put into the direct connection with the ideology of Saint George Day:

Smrtná neděla, kdes klíče poděla?
 Dala sem ho, dala, svatému Juří,
 aby nám otevřel do ráje dveří,
 aby Juří vstal, pole odmykal,
 aby tráva rostla, tráva zelená.
 (Vetterl & Jelínková 1955:110)

Carling Sunday, where have you lost the key?
 I gave it, I gave it, to Saint George,
 To open for us the door to Paradise,
 To George to rise, to unlock the fields
 To make the grass grow, the grass of the green.

Concerning this connection, even more interesting is the text of certain Slovenian ritual song of Saint George Day. It was sung a procession of five lads, walking through the village. The most handsome amidst them, with clothes all covered by flowers or ivy, represented the Zeleni Jurij, 'Green George'. The ritual was finished on a meadow outside the village, where Jurij symbolically fought and defeated demon Rabolj, another masked boy clad in fur or straw. It all clearly refers to the theme of Saint George's fight against the winter, but this time winter season's Morena-like female agent was in lads' song explicitly titled Ježibaba.

Zelenega Jurja vodimo,
 Ježibabo zganjamo.
 Maslo in jajca prosimo,
 mladoletje trošimo.
 (Štrekelj 1904-1907:141)

With the Green George we walk,
 Ježibaba we drive away.
 For butter and eggs we ask,
 Young year we bring in.

Seasonal as well as semantic correlation of both the Saint George and Morena/*Enġa concepts suggests that they probably represented the two relic branches of the same tradition, Slavic variation on the witch-war theme.

And perhaps it is not only the matter of traditionally Slavic areas. Also in Tyrolian folklore the existence of a ritual is attested, in which the two groups of people, *the beautiful ones* and *the ugly ones*, fought each other for the fertile harvest (Ginzburg 1992:57). In certain Swiss areas on the first of March two groups of young people used to battle ritually each other to demonstrate the defeat of winter in order *to make the grass grow* (Ginzburg 1992:185).

As Ginzburg (1992:25) noted, Slavic banishing winter ritual can be considered a part of a broader group of archaic rituals relating to the theme of struggle with the powers of infertility. Among the European peasant population their existence is attested since the medieval period up to modern times. A part of these rituals were performed seasonally, especially during the spring. Their variations were more or less similar to the presented Slavic pattern of a dummy hag procession.

Another group was represented by less directly ritual, rather narrative tradition. The typical example here is the concept of northern Italian Benandanti, Baltic werewolves or south Slavic Zduhaći (Ginzburg 1992, Začević 1981, Đorđević 1953) to mention only few examples. These names designate the groups of people, usually viewed positively by their communities (pious, just, cooperative), who were believed to practice individual as well as collective fights against the forces of agricultural infertility. Clashes were spiritual by their nature; these crop defenders performed their actions either in a night sleep or trance, through their spirits detached from their bodies. Hostile forces were mostly represented by hordes of witches, demons, souls of the dead people, foreign crop defenders etc. In certain cases the presence of female principle on the demonic side, sometimes even in the leading position, is mentioned (Ginzburg 1992, Začević 1981). Victory of the crop defenders meant the repudiation of incoming drought, crop failure or storms threatening the yield.

In the year 1580 a Benandanti of Cividale described his mission during the inquisition interrogation as following.

'I am a benandante because I go with the others to fight four times a year, that is during the Ember Days, at night; I go invisibly in spirit and the body remains behind; we go forth in the service of Christ, and [against] the witches of the devil; we fight each other, we with bundles of fennel and they with sorghum stalks. ... In the fighting that we do, one time we fight over the wheat and all the other grains, another time over the livestock, and at other times over the vineyards. And so, on four occasions we fight over all the fruits of the earth and for those things won by the benandanti that year is abundance.' (Ginzburg 1992:6)

Interesting about the southern European crop defenders' tradition is also the existence of functional hierarchal pairs, similar to those recognised in previously analysed texts. Groups of Benandanti/Zduhaći were usually commanded by a captain. He often visited his men "personally" (though in a spiritual form) to call them to battle. But in some cases, especially when it was the first, initiation experience, they were called by supernatural being (God, Angel, Devil), namely by an angel in the case of Benandanti:

The angel of God...at night, in my house, perhaps during the fourth hour of the night, at first sleep...an angel appeared before me, all made of gold, like those on altars, and he called me, and my spirit went out. ... He called me by name, saying: 'Paolo, I will send you forth as a benandante and you will have to fight for the crops.' I answered him: I will go, I am obedient.' (Ginsburg 1992:10)

These functional hierarchal pairs, captain & soldier or angel & soldier are similar to already identified couples of supreme element and his protégé. In the case of bogatyr's battle against Krivda there is resemblance even in the mixed worldly-heavenly character of the couple; in a special situation they are supervised by arch-angel/heavenly warrior (Michael/ Jegorij Xrabryj) just like benandante is called to his service by an angel.

And there is also mutual consistency, at least with Slavic Saint George tradition, concerning the general ecological, pro-agricultural character of crop defenders' activity.

Thus the folklore concepts of crop defenders seems to be important, as it presents once again, and with certain striking comparative parallelism, the theme of a fight against the forces of disorder, often directly the theme of collective battle against she-witch's demonic army.

In the case of Benandanti, the anti-female character of their activities does not seem to be emphasised. Also the adversaries of Baltic werewolves (of German, Livonian as well as Russian ethnicity), who, according to tradition, were able to free their spirits in night trance in the form of a wolf in order to fight the demons and witches stealing the yield and taking it away to hell (Ginsburg 1992:29-32), are sexually undifferentiated. The very contra-feminine aspect of defenders' action was present especially in Slavic environment. In some South Slavic territories the crop defender was known as dragon man. His archenemy was female demon Ala, who flies with the storm clouds (a feature typical also for Baba Jaga) and casts torrents and hail upon the crops. A dragon man was believed to fight her in a spiritual dragon form in order to protect the local harvest (Začević 1981).

Together with the banishing winter rituals, the tradition of crop defenders can be interpreted as another traditional folklore concept referring to the theme of a martial struggle, often battle, against the disorder represented by demonic fe-

male principle. Since the spring prosperity battle rituals, and especially the concept of crop defenders, were rather less common in Western Europe, Ginzburg (1992) persistently considered their possible Balto-Slavic origin. However, broader European occurrence of crop defenders tradition as well as its semantical connection to witch-war theme identified in ancient narratives across all the IE linguistic area, speaks rather for their assessment in broader territorial as well as semantic context.

And truly, an interesting example in this regard is provided by Iranian Zoroastrian tradition, namely in the concept of Fraçaši. Fraçaši are supernatural beings of general functionality. In some texts they are described as spirits of the dead or unborn humans. In other occasions they act like genuine angel-like servants of supreme god Ahura Mazda. They provide the broad portfolio of tasks; from ensuring the proper function of the universe to supporting the supernatural as well as earthly beings in fights and battles. Generally, their military nature is often emphasized.

However, in the Fraçardīn Jašt of Avesta, which is dedicated directly to Fraçaši, there are verses referring to these spirits in a way close to European crop defenders tradition.

65

āaṭ, yaṭ, āpō. uzbarəṇte.
spitama. zarađuštra.
zraiiəṇhaṭ, haca. vourukašāṭ,
xvarənasca. yaṭ, mazdaḍātəm.
āaṭ, frašūsəṇti.
uyrā. ašāunəm. frauuašaiiō.
paoiriš. pouru.satā.
paoiriš. pouru.hazaṇrā.
paoiriš. pouru.baēuuanō.

66

āpəm. aēšəmnā.
hauuāi. kāciṭ, nāfāi.
hauuāiiāi. vīse.
hauuāi. zaṇtauuē.
hauuāiiāi. daiṇhauue.
uitiiaojanā.
xvaēpaiṭe. nō. daiṇhuš.
niḍātaēca. haošātaēca.

67

tā. yūidiieiṇti. pəšānāhu.
hauue. asahi. šōiḍraēca.
yaḍa. asō. maēḍanəmca.
aiβišitē. daḍāra.
māṇaiiən. ahe.
yaḍa.nā. taxmō. raḍaēštā.
huš.həm.bərətaṭ, haca. šaētāṭ,
yastō.zaēniš. paiti.ynīta.

68

āaṭ, yāšca. āṇhəm. niuuānəṇte.
tā. āpəm. parāzəṇti.
hauuāi. kāciṭ, nāfāi.
hauuāiiāi. vīse.
hauuāi. zaṇtauuē.
hauuāiiāi. daiṇhauue.
uitiiaojanā.
xvaēpaiṭe. nō. daiṇhuš.
fraḍātaēca. varəḍātaēca.

(Jt 13.65-68; Avesta)

65. And when the waters come up from the sea Vouru-Kaša, O Spitama Zaraθuštra! along with the glory made by Mazda, then forwards come the awful Fraṇaši of the faithful, many and many hundreds, many and many thousands, many and many tens of thousands,
 66. Seeking water for their own kindred, for their own borough, for their own town, for their own country, and saying thus: 'May our own country have a good store and full joy!'
 67. They fight in the battles that are fought in their own place and land, each according to the place and house where he dwelt: they look like a gallant warrior who, girded up and watchful, fights for the hoard he has treasured up.
 68. And those of them who win bring waters to their own kindred, to their own borough, to their own town, to their own country, saying thus: 'May my country grow and increase!'
- (The Zend Avesta...:196; Avestan nouns standardised)

The Fraṇaši of these lines are fighters, and again in spiritual form, for the prosperity of their own community. They are able take part in battles to secure the wellbeing of their land through bringing certain commodities, namely water, from neighbouring areas.

2.3 Composing the Indo-European Witch-Hunting Myth

Previous analysis demonstrated that the witch-war theme appears recurrently in different time and space locations as well as in various social contexts, while still maintaining its internal structural (textual, ideological) coherency. Even its rather peripheral character, i.e. an occurrence in geographically (peripheral areas of Europe), socially (bhaktism in India, peasant Slavic environment) or ideologically (feminine aspect and witchcraft) marginal settings shows the systematic recurrent nature. All this indicates that even if the witch-war myth probably did not represent a dominant part of IE traditions (like the dragon-slaying or creation myth), it can still be considered to be a germane concept, popular at least among certain groups or social strata of IE populations.

Again, myth is not the record of history. It would be naïve to see in this kind of narratives an account of real war by which society was created. It is rather a story to legitimise social hierarchy, as Mallory remarked in the case of the class conflict theme (Mallory 1989:139). If certain impulses from historical reality should be searched for, then perhaps it could be the occasional local rebellions of subordinated masses. Nonetheless, I suppose that the "off-line" socially educative nature of the text still is more important.

Anthropological analysis suggests that myth's dualistic witch-hunting ideology is typical for groups with strong boundaries. In the previous chapter it was demonstrated that since the earliest times, IE communities were dominated by elite male groups, professionally specialised to the affairs of warfare and politics. Exclusivity of these groups predestines them to be one of the hot candidates for dualistic witch-hunting thinking. Nevertheless, dualistic *us and them* worldview is often typical also for the local "petty" reasoning of simple egalitarian communities. From the viewpoint of folkloristics, since the early PIE period there can be assumed a continuous pressure of favourable circumstances, across all the strata or local types of IE communities, to create and maintain the folklore narratives concerning the theme of witch hunt. Perhaps in some narrative variants the first archetypal witch appeared already on the side of *ǵemo-, as his wife, mother, sister or concubine.

This basic socio-contextual duality is perhaps the reason why the witch-hunting theme used to be verbalised in two basic ways; either in political (Völuspá, Piðreks saga, Bhagavat Devī Purāna, Slavic hag-war variations /Krivda/) or in agricultural (Slavic Saint George cult, concept of the crop defenders) realisation. In an elite environment, political aspects are stressed; evil is associated with penetration of foreign cult, social disorder/rebellion or foreign military threat. Here the need for a world restoring witch-hunting action is justified and generally conceptualised socially; witch is the enemy of the state. On the other hand, in professionally non-specialised environment, naturally focused on basic economic activities, rather the dominance of agricultural aspect can be expected; evil is primarily associated with agricultural infertility. The witch is the enemy of nature. This case theme was probably associated mainly with spring fertility rituals. The witch-hunting myth is then constantly and continually reinterpreted according to the needs of its actual performers and audiences.

Contra-feminine content, the depiction of a villain as a female, could be well preserved regardless of specific environment. Masculine tendencies can be reasonably expected in the worldview of conservative archaic societies in general. For them a woman, and especially socially active woman, always was one of the most typical representatives of peripherality and non-conformity, categories traditionally reserved for the evil.

Therefore the undifferentiated masses could represent the everlasting refuge of witch-war theme. As for the elite environment, theoretically, there can exist periods or locations, where the social status is more ascribed than achieved and/or is less locally dependent and thus, due to the explicitness and formal nature of social hierarchy, the dualistic witch-hunting ideology becomes more or less obsolete. However, among non-elite masses the formal hierarchies are less necessary or less complex, especially when the oppression of elite counters any natural attempt to establish them. And so the idea of a witch hunt is still more or less up to date here.

For this reason it can be suggested, that the basic narrative potential or basic narrative elements, which are eventually responsible for the occasional formation of more complex witch-war narratives, are rather situated among the lower social strata. And truly, certain inclination of the above analysed texts towards the demotic environment is obvious. Even when the witch-war theme is realised politically, the connection with reality of subordinate masses, use of their folklore concepts for example, remains.

The overall social overtone of the witch-war theme seems to be never entirely omitted, regardless of actual contextual realisation. Even in explicitly agricultural context the suffering brought by the witch has its significant social dimension. The idea of negative winter reign is expressed through Juda's enslavement of the whole groups of population. And note that also in Russian spiritual verses tradition the theme of awakening the nature is mingled with a fight against the subversion of religious (i.e. social) principles.

The cause of this state of affairs is perhaps the fact that even in rural environments the concept of witch still preserves a non-trivial portion of social content; for example social-spatial range aspect (witch among us; witch coming from neighbourhood; witch of different community), social marginality (witch as a young woman; witch as a widow; witch as extraordinary attractive/ugly/clever woman) etc.

Yet there is one more moment about the witch-hunthing myth. In certain sorts of northern Germanic narratives, namely in eddaic texts as well as in some sagas (Stitt 1992), the hierarchically structured heroic couple (Pörr & Þjálfir to mention an eddaic example) occur. Here the subordinated hero (mortal peasant Þjálfir) fights along the side of his superior mentor (divine Pörr) the dummy figurine representing the crucial enemy (a clay figurine of Mökkurkálfir representing a giant). As Lincoln (1981:128; 1991:12) suggested, these narratives could represent a relic of an archaic narrative complex behind initiation rituals practiced by (P) IE männerbünde. Reactualising the IE dragon-slaying myth, the initiate ritually becomes a mythical human hero *Trito- and being guided by his initiation mentor, the manly god *H₂ner-, he fights ritually the dummy representing the cattle-threatening serpent *Og^{uh}i-.

It is noteworthy in this regard that also in some variants of the witch-war theme the hierarchically stratified couple of heroes is present; the mentor (Īsung, Michael/Jegorij, Kr̥ṣṇa) and his protégé (Pēttleif, Jegorij/Il'ja, Indra). The text on bogatyr's battle against Krivda as well as Benandanti tradition show the strongest connection to this muster; they preserve the motif of mixed heavenly-worldly character of the couple. What is more, in certain Slavic variants of narratives as well as rituals the motif of a battle against the dummy figurine (Ježibaba, Morena) can be identified. And note also that a background myth of supposed PIE männerbund initiation probably contained strong agricultural accent; *Og^{uh}i- was a serpentine

demon guilty of stealing the agricultural commodity and taking it away to his cave, just like in the case of Slavic Saint George tradition and especially in the crop defenders tradition.

All these moments indicate the possible connection of witch-war theme to archaic initiation rituals. Perhaps in some IE areas during certain periods as a background ideology of youth *männerbünde* the dragon-slaying myth was replaced by more demotic, though still semantically related, witch-hunting myth. Again, from the point of view of anthropology and folkloristics, the exclusive initiation bands, naturally prone to simplified (dualistic) black-and-white worldview, would represent a fertile environment for adoption of witch-cleansing ideology. But also less militaristic realisations are possible, for example as narrative background for prehistoric (P)IE groups of crop defenders.

Figure 6 recapitulates textual structure of the witch-war theme, focusing on variations across all the analysed examples.

	CENTRAL CHARACTERS		PERIPHERAL CHARACTERS		WAR/BATTLE	RESURRECTION	BINDING MAGIC	HOLLOW ENDING	WITCH ASSOCIATED WITH BASEBORN/ MARGINALISED
	MENTOR (RULER)	PROTÉGÉ (FIRST KNIGHT)	WITCH	WITCH'S PARTNER					
Æsir and Vanir	Oðinn	-	Gullveig - Heiðr	-	Æsir vs. Vanir	burned Gullveig / Vanir warriors resurrected	Heiðr charms brides / people	reconciliation and exchange of hostages	Heiðr attracting wicked (brides, people) and leading non-noble (Vanir)
Īsung and Hertnið	Īsung	þéttleif / Fasold	Ostasia	Hertnið	Bertangas vs. Vilkinas	-	Ostasia conjures/ controls beasts	Īsung's elimination and Hertnið's hollow victory	Ostasia coming from eastern periphery
Devāḥ vs. Asurāḥ	Viṣṇu	Indra	Kāvymāta	Śukra / Bhṛgu	Devāḥ vs. Asurāḥ	decapitated Kāvymāta resurrected	Kāvymāta casts magic sleep upon Devāḥ	reconciliation (and exchange of hostages)	Kāvymāta leading demonic Asurāḥ predestined to lose
Popelvār and Ježibaba	foreign king	Popelvār	Ježibaba	-	foreign kingdom vs. Ježibaba	Ježibaba's warriors multiply resurrected	-	-	Ježibaba associated with craft (weaving, artisans) and periphery (underworld)
Cveten and Geōrgi Juda Samodiva	Cveten Geōrgi	-	Juda Samodiva	-	Cveten Geōrgi vs. Juda Samodiva	-	(Juda Samodiva enchains baseborn professions)	-	Juda Samodiva enslaving representatives of base-born professions
Jegorij Xrabryj and three snake herdeses	Jegorij Xrabryj	-	three snake herdeses	-	Jegorij Xrabryj vs. snake herd	-	(three snake herdeses control snakes)	-	three snake herdeses unbaptized
Jegorij Xrabryj and Krivda	Archangel Michael / Jegorij Xrabryj	Jegorij Xrabryj / bogatyrs	Krivda	Antichrist	bogatyrs vs. Krivda	-	Antichrist casts paralysis upon Jegorij Xrabryj	(Antichrist left unbaptized)	Krivda of anti-Christain nature, from beyond the river

Figure 6

