

Motifs of Soqotri Narratives: Towards a Comparative-Typological Analysis¹

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[Abstract: The article is an attempt at comparative analysis of motifs and plots of the oral literature of Soqatra (Gulf of Aden, Yemen). Both the early recordings made in the beginning of the 20th century by D.H. Muller and the recent ones, carried out by V. Naumkin and his team, are involved. For each story we have tried to find parallels in the oral traditions of the Old World, previously collected and analyzed in the framework of Yu. Berezkin's electronic database. The main directions of the cultural links between Soqatra and the external world have thus been established. Not unexpectedly, most of the parallels connect Soqatra with the Near East, but some plots and motifs are also known – sometimes exclusively – in South Asia and North-West Africa. Truly archaic plots and motifs are very rare and typically reflected in lower mythology only. Etiological stories are rare, and no cosmological myths have been recorded.]

Keywords: Soqatra, Yemen, oral literature, motifs and plots, comparative folklore studies.

1. Introduction

The oral literature of the inhabitants of the island of Soqatra (Gulf of Aden, Yemen) has a long history of research – if often punctuated by lengthy interruptions. At the beginning of the 20th century, the great Austrian orientalist David Heinrich Müller was able to record, analyze and publish an outstanding collection of narrative and poetic specimens of the traditional oral lore of the Soqotrans (Müller 1905). For various reasons, Müller's publication has had little impact on Semitic linguistics and philology, and, in spite of the fact that Müller himself was able to produce a few pioneering and for their time highly advanced comparative-folkloristic sketches², no serious theoretical analysis of his legacy has been undertaken so far.

1. Naumkin and Cherkashin's contributions to this article were made in the framework of projects 14-01-18048 (РГНФ/RFH) and 15-06-07613A (РФФИ/RFBR). Berezkin and Kogan's work was carried out in the framework of project 14-18-03384 (РНФ/RSCF). Our most sincere gratitude goes to Kevin McNeer for his care and devotion in correcting the English style of this article.

2. Müller 1902:189–226. Müller's lengthy survey ("Zur Sagen- und Märchenbildung"), encompassing both Mehri and Soqotri texts known to him by that time, comprises the following essays dealing with individual plots and motifs: "Des Knaben Richterspruch", "Geschichte zweier Brüder", "Der Lebensbrunnen", "Der närrische Mann", "Aschenputtel", "Treue wird belohnt", "Geschichte dreier Brüder", "Die Portia von Soqatra". The latter plot is further discussed in Müller 1907:159–165 ("Die Wanderung der Portia-Sage").

It was not before the mid-seventies of the past century that the study of the Soqotri oral literature was resumed through the efforts of one of the present authors³. Since 2010, Naumkin has been carrying out a comprehensive project of collecting and analyzing the oral literature of Soqatra, in collaboration with Kogan and Cherkashin. The first fruit of this multi-faceted enterprise is the recently published first volume of the *Corpus of Soqotri Oral Literature* (CSOL I = Naumkin et al. 2014), which offers to the reader 30 carefully annotated specimens accompanied by a detailed Soqotri-English-Arabic glossary. Two further volumes of CSOL are now in preparation. Some of the texts collected by the Russian-Yemeni team have striking forerunners in Müller's corpus, which testifies to an extraordinarily high level of preservation from the old oral legacy among today's islanders⁴. Yet many other compositions (including a few very archaic pieces) were virtually unknown before.

To collect and philologically analyze Soqotri folklore is not the researcher's only task: a quest for a more theoretical assessment of the islanders' legacy inevitably suggests itself. In 2013, the members of the Russian-Yemeni research team approached Yuri Berezkin to analyze the extant Soqotri texts from a comparative, structural-typological point of view. The proposal was enthusiastically accepted and, by the beginning of 2015, Berezkin had prepared a comparative sketch for more than 30 motifs attested in the Soqotri texts and, incidentally, known from other narrative traditions of Eurasia and Africa. Our other authors subsequently elaborated on Berezkin's draft. The final result, jointly prepared by Berezkin and Kogan during a personal meeting in St. Petersburg in June 2015, is now presented to both folklore theoreticians and Semitic philologists.

The importance of individual motifs for elucidating the historical background of Soqotri folklore is not uniform. For some, outside parallels have proved too scarce and chaotic. Others, conversely, are both too simple and too widespread to enable one to speak of any historical connection. Most of the motifs, however, are specific enough to be seriously considered in a comparative-historical perspective, and their forerunners, even if sufficiently common, are by no means ubiquitous. Taken together, they provide us with precious clues as to cultural links between Soqatra and other parts of the world: it is our contention that the incidence of links between folklore traditions can be taken as a proxy for the degree of information exchange between cultures (Berezkin 2015a; 2015b).

Below, we describe the potentially relevant motifs from the Soqotri texts recorded by Müller and by the Russian-Yemeni research team. The following principal sources have been used:

- Müller 1902 = SAE IV (Mehri and Soqotri texts recorded by D.H. Müller during his fieldwork trip to South Arabia in 1898; as far as the Soqotri material is concerned, the only original narrative piece relevant for the purpose of our investigation is Text K on pp. 149–161⁵)

- Müller 1905 = SAE VI (Soqotri texts recorded by Müller in 1902, in Vienna, from a single informant from the village Kam on the northern coast of Soqatra, not far from the capital Hadibo)

- Naumkin et al. 2014 = CSOL I (30 Soqotri texts recorded by Naumkin and Kogan from 1974 up to now from various individuals, mostly, but not exclusively, from the Da'arho tribe, in the north-eastern part of inland Soqatra)

- Naumkin–Bulakh–Kogan 2013 (two erotic stories recorded by Naumkin in the 1970s and originally conceived as part of CSOL I, but then excluded from the volume because of the moral sensitivity of today's islanders)

3. For a list of Naumkin's early publications on this subject v. Naumkin–Kogan 2013:197 (particularly on Naumkin–Porkhomovsky 1981, the only substantial collection of Soqotri folklore between 1905 and 2014).

4. In sharp contrast to the deplorable degree of deterioration in oral narrative among the coastal Mahra, as described by the late Alexander Sima (2009:30).

5. Other Soqotri texts in this volume are either poetic or translations from Mehri and Arabic.

- CSOL II and III (mostly unpublished texts scheduled to appear in the forthcoming volumes of the series; the corpus of CSOL II is now complete, cf. Naumkin–Kogan–Cherkashin 2014 for a preliminary catalogue of the 30 texts involved; regarding CSOL III, c. 15 texts have been collected and analyzed thus far).

2. *Motifs as Analytical Units*

“The Thematic Classification and Areal Distribution of Folklore-Mythological Motifs. The Analytical Catalogue” (<http://www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/berezkin>) with a set of accompanying files (not yet available online) is a resource created during the last 25 years for the study of the human past. For this purpose, folklore texts from 6.500 books and articles written in a variety of Germanic, Slavic, Romance and Baltic-Finnish languages, as well as some unpublished materials, have been processed. The textual part of this database is in Russian and, therefore, inaccessible to most of the scholarly community. In 2014, an online version was created with the English wordings (i.e. definitions) of motifs and maps of their geographic distribution globally. It is expected to be publically accessible as soon as a careful re-examination of the evidence has been completed.

In the presentation below, the term “motif” will be conventionally applied to analytical units which can be isolated in a narrative composition. We are aware that this designation is far from satisfactory, but all suggested alternatives had to be rejected for a variety of reasons. For example, the seemingly suitable term “episode” is not a fitting label when concepts (such as “The Sun Is Female” or “Personified Death”) rather than (sequences of) events are involved. When further terminological clarification is needed, the designations “motif-episode” and “motif-image” can be used.

We define a motif as any episode or image which is registered in at least two (but normally, in many more) different narrative traditions. Some of our motifs find correspondences in standard indexes used by folklorists. For motif-images, the relevant tool is S. Thompson’s index of elementary motifs (1955–1958), whereas for motif-episodes it is the index of types of international folklore (ATU = Aarne 1910; Aarne and Thompson 1961; Uther 2004). However, none of the two systems can be regularly used for our purposes.

Thompson’s index was created with the declared aim of refraining from any historical perspective (Thompson 1932:2). Thompson’s goal was to reduce any text to a kind of standard combination of minimal units. It is symptomatic, however, that while an expert can easily extract a set of registered units from a given text, it is usually impossible to reconstitute the content of any real text on the basis of the set of units extracted from it. Descriptions of root motifs (on which clusters of more particular motifs are based) are intentionally shorn of details in Thompson’s index, with typical wordings such as “Origin of Frog” (A2162), “Dwarfs in Other World” (F167.2) or “Self-Mutilation” (S160.1). Particular motifs are, on the contrary, too specific and often created ad hoc for a particular text: cf. A1730 (“Creation of Animals as Punishment”) and A1731 (“Creation of Animals as Punishment for Beating Forbidden Drum”). As a result, Thompson’s index indiscriminately combines truly universal units with those of a more restricted, localized distribution.

The tale-type was originally understood as a narrative plot with a more or less precise origin in space and time. This concept has been severely criticized (e.g. Jason 1970), and today the ATU tale-types are primarily used as reference points for finding parallels for particular texts.

There are several reasons why the ATU index is not suitable for our study, that is, for assessing the similarity/dissimilarity between different folklore traditions.

In view of its manifestly Eurocentric nature, ATU's suitability for classifying the folklore of Sub-Saharan Africa, Siberia, Southeast Asia and Oceania is restricted, with Australia and America completely beyond its scope. The ethnic attribution of texts is systematically provided only for Europe. For other areas, it is (practically) absent not only in the reference index itself (Uther 2004), but also in some regional indexes that use the ATU system⁶. A still more significant problem is related to how ATU tale-types are defined. In many cases, sets of episodes found in particular variants of the same tale-type are so different that it is impossible to assess the degree of similarity between particular texts of the same tale-type without consulting the original sources or publications. Finally, mistakes in the index are relatively numerous, not surprising considering its compilers often had no direct access to primary texts, and had to content themselves with secondary and even tertiary sources.

In the presentation below, three systems will be applied to designate the units (mostly narrative episodes) found in the Soqotri (and other) texts under scrutiny.

The first is our own system as used in the Analytical Catalogue (<http://www.ruthenia.ru/folklore/berezkin>; also <http://newstar.rinet.ru/kozmin/berezkin/>). Wordings of the units (called motifs), as well as their numbers, refer to this system. One of its strict requirements is that all the texts in which a particular motif appears must display every detail in the corresponding wording's heading. Yet every text may also contain an indefinite number of other motifs. For some of them, the areal distribution has been systematically processed before, which enables us to further analyze them in the scope of the present article, but under separate entries. For many others, however, presence or absence in different Old World traditions has not yet been determined, thus they are omitted or only briefly referred to (sometimes with a quick reference to Thompson's index directly embedded into the summary of the plot).

Our analytical units (motifs) will be designated with a letter followed by a number (sometimes with further additional letters and numbers): K194, K27nn, K33a1, L100C, etc.

Two other systems, namely ATU's tale types (designated as ATU 552.1, ATU 1730, etc.) and Thompson's elementary motifs (designated as Th D2006.1.1, Th H1091, etc.) are used for the purpose of reference.

The ATU system (after Uther 2004) was of much help as long as we were searching for parallels to particular Soqotri tales. However, the wordings of our motifs almost never completely overlap with those of ATU, which usually contain optional details not relevant to all texts cited under the corresponding number. Our motifs may include several ATU tale-types merged together or only a specific fragment of a particular type.

As far as the elementary motifs of S. Thompson's index are concerned, the corresponding numbers will be provided, whenever suitable, as reference points for many details of any narrative. However, no systematic quest for such correspondences has been undertaken. On the one hand, it would be practically impossible to check the presence or absence of each and every Thompson's motif across the whole body of Old World folklore. On the other hand, there are hundreds of simple, non-specific features with a high probability of emerging independently in different oral traditions, which cannot, therefore, be used as a proof of historical connections between them.

Last but not least, a preliminary attempt has been made to place the Soqotri oral tradition in the narrower circle of the folklore of the Arab world. For this purpose, we conducted a systematic overview of

6. For example, the Arabic index of el-Shami (2004) attributes the texts according to modern political-administrative boundaries rather than by language or ethnic group. Thus, "Yemen" can refer to Arabic speakers from either Sana'a or Hadhramaut, or to Mehri speakers from the Yemeni Mahra. In a similar vein, "Oman" can refer to Arabic, Mehri, Jibbali, Harsusi or Soqotri (!) speakers.

el-Shami's compendium of 2004. References to el-Shami's work are usually provided side by side with those mentioned above.

3. *The Texts and their Motifs*

1)

The motif: "Secrets Accidentally Overheard" (L37B, ATU 613); "The Two Travelers" (Th N451.1). A person accidentally overhears a secret from animals or demons and thus gets to know the causes of his and other people's misfortunes.

Soqatra: CSOL I No. 22. Full exposition below at No. 3.

Parallels and notes (fig. 1). The motif is distributed over a large but continuous area: throughout Europe, North Africa, Near and Middle East, Central Asia, South and East Asia, northern part of Indochina. It is also present in southern Siberia, in the Amur basin, on Madagascar and in sub-Saharan Africa. One Peruvian attestation, recorded at the beginning of the 17th century, is almost certainly due to early Spanish influence (Berezkin 2014).



Fig. 1. Secrets Accidentally Overheard

2)

The motif: "The Envious Minister" (K27nn, ATU 513C, el-Shami 2004:270). Somebody close to a powerful person tries to get rid of the hero by suggesting to his master that he assign difficult tasks to the hero.

Soqotra: SAE VI No. 2. A widow's son persistently asks his mother about his deceased father's profession (Th P401). The mother gives a series of false answers (traveler, palm cultivator, shepherd), and the boy unsuccessfully tries to practice these occupations. One day he suddenly puts his mother's hand in a serving of hot food, and the woman inadvertently shouts: "May God burn you, the fowler's son!" The boy buys a cage and catches some birds, gives half of them to an old woman. One day he catches a turtle-dove, leaves it alive at his home, and in the morning finds gold and silver near it. The vizier learns about what has happened and reports it to the sultan. The sultan orders the youth be brought before him and forces him to hand over the turtle-dove. The boy obeys, but in the morning the sultan finds nothing beside the bird. The vizier orders the boy to bring a male dove. The boy comes to the old woman, she shows him a cave in which there is a spot of light where he has to shoot: in the middle of the light, a cage with the male dove is hanging on a human hair. Seeing the light, the boy shoots, takes the cage, leaves it with the old woman, and brings the male dove to the sultan. Yet the riches still do not appear. The vizier says he needs the cage. The old woman hands it over, but to no avail. The vizier says the boy has to bring the Daughter of the Sunshine. The old woman orders the boy to ask the sultan for a ship made of silver and gold and manned with 40 girls. The ship reaches the country of the Daughter of the Sunshine. When the Daughter of the Sunshine learns about the ship, she wants to see it. She boards the ship, and it leaves with her to the country of the sultan. The boy says to the sultan that the girl will only descend from the ship, if at her every step, a man is killed, and also if a carpet be laid from the shore to the palace. All the expenses must be covered by the vizier (Th K1633.2§). When the girl sees the first man killed, she says she will



Fig. 2. The Envious Minister

proceed normally (without killing anybody). She promises the sultan she will marry him if he kills the fowler's son, but not with a sword or rifle or poison. The boy is thrown into a pit where a fire is lit, but he has a talisman to protect him from the fire. The sultan sees the fire does not burn, jumps into the pit and is burned up (Th J2411.6). The boy marries the Daughter of the Sunshine.

Parallels and notes (fig. 2). The Soqotri text does not differ substantially from its parallels elsewhere in the Old World: having learned about a precious object which the hero accidentally comes to possess, a man in power (often incited by his counselor) demands the hero obtain even more valuable things. The final demand is for a beautiful girl, but it is the hero, not the person in power who gets her in the end. The protagonist's profession (a fowler, Th K143) is noteworthy: this motif is missing from both Africa and India, but widespread in the Middle East (Arabs of Southern Yemen and Iraq, Turks, Azeris, Pashto). A parallel from Philippines (Manobo) looks like a coincidence.

3)

The motif: "A Faithful Servant" (K100, ATU 516). A man learns about dangers that threaten his master or friend of a higher status. He helps his master/friend to escape the dangers, though his own behavior seems strange or hostile. Facing either execution or being turned to stone for revealing his secret, the helper chooses the second option. In many versions, the master's child must be sacrificed in order to turn the statue back into a man.

Soqotri: CSOL I No. 22. Muhammad, the son of the sultan, looks for a true friend. He puts the youths from the neighborhood to a test: he invites them to lunch and then suddenly disappears. Time and again, the candidates do not dare to touch the meal, and all are expelled until one day a boy named Saleh eats the lunch alone and is accepted as a companion. Muhammad and Saleh go out hunting wild goats. When they reach the top of a hill, they see a ship in the sea and a beautiful girl looking at them from the ship. Muhammad falls in love with the girl and wants to marry her. The friends look for the girl everywhere. When Eyna is finally found, it turns out she is a daughter of a foreign ruler and lives in a hall made of human skulls. The sultan imposes difficult tests on his potential son-in-law, but thanks to Saleh's intelligence and patience, Muhammad wins the girl's hand. On the return journey, however, further troubles emerge. Saleh is warned each time by magic birds speaking human language, who also caution him that he will be turned to stone if he reveals the truth. When a snake spits on Eyna's cheek and Saleh wipes off the poison, Muhammad nearly kills him as he suspects Saleh has kissed his wife. When Muhammad gets thirsty on the way, he meets a man with a vessel full of (presumably poisoned) milk; Saleh knocks the vessel out of his hands, provoking Muhammad's anger. Muhammad finds a golden stick and is about to spur his horse with it, but Saleh is aware that this would kill the beast and breaks the stick. Muhammad's anger has reached a boiling point, and when the travelers arrive home, the sultan, Muhammad's father, sentences Saleh to death. Saleh publicly reveals the truth of all that happened and is turned to stone. When Eyna becomes aware that Saleh was transformed into a stone to save her and her husband, she resolves to bring him back to the world of the living. The magic birds inform her that to do this, she must slaughter her own first-born son and smear the stone with his blood. She performs the task and Saleh is brought back to life (Th S268). The two friends are reconciled.

Parallels and notes (fig. 3). The motif is widespread in Western Europe, somewhat less so in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Near East, and South Asia. It is attested in Northern and Eastern Africa, in Central Asia, and in Korea.



Fig. 3. A Faithful Servant

4)

The motif: “The Sun Brings All to Light” = “The Cranes of Ibycus” (K80C, ATU 960A). A person is about to be murdered and just before dying calls on some animate or inanimate beings (animals, celestial bodies, etc.) to bear witness to the crime. Some time later, the murderer encounters these beings and inadvertently reveals himself; or else, these very beings (e.g. birds) lead the investigators to the murderers.

Soqatra: CSOL I No. 4. In a time of famine, two men deprive a woman of what meager food she has managed to gather and are about to kill her to dispose of the only witness. Before dying, the woman addresses the moon, relating what is about to happen and entrusting to its care her only son, the moon’s “nephew”, as she says. When the boy grows up, the murderers chance to pass by his house. During an open-air dinner, the full moon attracts the attention of one of the visitors and prompts him to remember the story of the poor woman, which he proudly relates to his host. The man recognizes the name of his mother and kills the murderers.

Parallels and notes (fig. 4). This is a widespread motif (from England to Northern Myanmar, and from Kazakhstan to Eritrea). Its distribution agrees with that of many other pan-Eurasian motifs, but its frequency is comparatively low. The Soqotri attestation is the southernmost, and most of its details have no exact matches elsewhere. Arabian versions from Maghreb are totally different, and only in one Bulgarian specimen does the moon act as witness to the crime. The presence of the motif in classical sources does not necessarily mean that it migrated to Soqatra in antiquity.



Fig. 4. The Sun Brings All to Light = The Cranes of Ibycus

5)

The motif: “Children Born in a Well” (K33a1, Th T581.2). A pregnant woman is thrown into a well (pond, hole) where she gives birth to a son (or to more than one child). In the end she and her children are saved.

Soqatra: CSOL II No. 28 (forthcoming, brief contents in Naumkin–Kogan–Cherkashin 2014:418). A man has two children, a boy (called Hamed) and a girl. When their mother dies, the man’s second wife proposes slaughtering the children. The girl learns of the plan, and the children flee. The wife accuses the man of revealing her plan to the children, which the man denies. Then the step-mother goes to look for the children, approaches the cave where they have hidden, throws a stone into the darkness, and hits Hamed’s forehead – but his sister prevents him from shouting by putting her hand on his mouth. The stepmother leaves the cave, the children get out, reach a tamarind tree, and sit in its shadow. The girl bathes in a nearby brook, where her hair floats downstream and is picked by a servant of the local sultan and brought to the sultan. The sultan orders that the owner of the hair be found; the two children are found and brought to the sultan. The sultan marries the girl and she becomes pregnant; a jealous maidservant pushes her into a well, threatening Hamed with decapitation if he tells what she has done. The sultan’s wife remains alive in the well and, after a week, gives birth to a boy and a girl. Hamed calls his sister, she replies: “The sultans’ daughter is upon my thighs, the sultan’s son is upon my neck”. Hamed starts to bring food to his sister, the sultan notices his strange behavior, interrogates the boy, takes his wife and children out of the well, and cuts off the maidservant’s head.

Parallels and notes (fig. 5). The motif is attested from North Africa to Pamir, as well as in southern Indochina (Koho and Jarai). There is at least one record from South India (with no ethnic attribution), but

as a whole the motif is unpopular in South Asia. The motif “Children Born in a Well” is always attested as part of the more general motif “Drowned Woman Remains Alive” (K33): a young woman is transformed into an animal, pushed into the water or the underworld, or she herself has to plunge into water; she is not dead, answers a call, comes out to nurse her baby, to help her children; and typically, her husband discovers her, brings her back to earth or helps her to acquire her human form. This latter motif, in its turn,



Fig. 5. Children Born in a Well

is an offshoot of the still more general one “The False Wife” (K32), known in most of the Old World: an ugly, old, lazy woman or a male trickster comes to a man disguised as his wife, bride or (more rarely) sister, who is driven out, confined to the underworld, killed, etc.

6)

The motif: “Cinderella” (K57, ATU 510A). A girl who conceals her beauty and/or is poor and oppressed by her stepmother puts on splendid attire and comes incognito to a feast where a man of high status falls in love with her. He marries her after identifying her by recognizing an object given to or lost by her, or (more rarely) by observing how she changes clothes.

Soqatra: CSOL II No. 20 (forthcoming)⁷. A fisherman’s wife dies, a woman from the neighborhood feigns kindness with his daughter, and the girl persuades her father to marry the woman. After the

7. Müller’s famous quadrilingual Cinderella story, masterfully edited by M. Bittner (1918), is no independent witness of this motif in Soqatra, as it was translated upon Müller’s request by his informant from an Arabic original.

marriage is finalized, the step-mother and her two daughters start to oppress the girl. One night, while they attend a feast thrown by the sultan, the woman orders her step-daughter to separate rice from barley that she purposefully mixed together, to catch a special kind of fish, and to sweep the house. The girl manages to catch the fish, but the fish starts to cry, asking the girl to let it rejoin its offspring⁸. The girl releases the fish and desperately starts to separate the grain. Three little birds come, give her festive clothes and promise to fulfill all the tasks, upon the condition she return before the sultan's feast ends. When the girl leaves the feast, the sultan's son, overwhelmed with her charms, runs after her and picks up a lost sandal. The sultan orders all the girls in the town to try on the sandal, but the step-mother shuts Cinderella⁹ in a storeroom. The three little birds reveal the secret, the guards release the girl, she tries the sandal, and it fits. She dons the festive clothes previously hidden – at the birds' command – and becomes the wife of the sultan's son.



Fig. 6. Cinderella

Parallels and notes (fig. 6). Cinderella is among the most widespread motifs of European, Near Eastern and Central Asian folklore. It is also known in North and North-West Africa, East Asia and Indochina, but rare in South Asia (the Goa version must be due to recent Portuguese import). The motif of

8. The expected continuation of this motif (B470, "Helpful Fish": the fish would later help the girl in one of her trials) is not attested in our version, where the fish does not reappear.

9. The Soqotri name of the heroine, known all over the island, is *Maḥazélo*, literally "The-Little-Oppressed-One".

sorting grain (No. 7 below) is often incorporated but also exists independently, and with a broader geographic scope, covering almost the whole area of Old World cereal agriculture.

7)

The motif: “To Sort Grain” (K27hh, Th H1091). The protagonist is given a task: to sort a large amount of small particles of different kinds (usually seeds of different plants) mixed in a container, or to count them, or to pick up spilled grain (fig. 7).

Soqotra: CSOL II No. 20 (see above under No. 6).



Fig. 7. To Sort Grain

8)

The motif: “Younger Brother Transformed into an Animal” (K33A, ATU 450). Siblings (typically a younger brother and an older sister) leave home. One of them (usually the brother, rarely several brothers) turns into an animal (usually an ungulate) or (rarely) a bird, but in most cases ultimately regains his (or her) human shape.

Soqotra: SAE VI No. 20¹⁰. A man's wife dies, he is left with a son and a daughter, marries another woman and proposes they slaughter one of the children as a sacrifice for Immolation Day (Th S10.5.1§, cf. el-Shami 2004:222). The boy learns about the plan and reports it to his sister. She puts her comb, some cosmetics and a mirror into a little bag, and in the night the two siblings flee. Soon they reach a cave with two entrances. The next day, the man and his wife come to the cave and enter from different sides. The step-mother spots the children but asks them to remain quiet. The husband asks her who she's talking to, and she says she stumbled and is talking to herself. When the man and his wife leave, the children leave the cave and come to a pond. They bathe in the pond and then find a tamarind tree, which they climb. The girl wants to comb her hair, but discovers she has forgotten her comb at the pond. She sends her brother to pick up the comb. When he arrives, he finds some women near the pond; one of them is combing lice out

10. The earlier part largely paralleled by CSOL II No. 28, see above under No. 5.

of her hair with his sister's comb and gathering the lice in a broken pot. The woman asks the boy to eat the lice and bathe in the pond, promising to give him back the comb. When the boy obeys, he turns into a bull, and the women "lead him away". In the meantime, the sultan's servant comes to the tamarind tree, the girl throws down a fruit to attract his attention, and the servant notices the girl and reports to the sultan. The sultan goes to the tamarind tree together with the servant (having sworn to kill him if the girl is ugly). When the girl weeps for her lost brother, the sultan says he is with him and promises to show her the boy if she agrees to become his wife. After the marriage, the girl forgets about her brother.

Parallels and notes (fig. 8). The motif "Younger Brother Transformed into an Animal" is attested throughout Europe (except for the Far North), the Mediterranean, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Near East (including South Arabia: Yemen, Hadramaut, Mahra). The Soqotri text differs substantially from the "canonical" versions of the motif, where the girl's younger brother turns into an animal after he drinks the water from a pool, and regains his human shape in the end of the story. Under ATU 450, the tale-type "Little Brother and Little Sister" is not limited to the motif of the heroine's little brother turning into an animal, but includes many more episodes (all of them optional). In the Mustang valley (Nepal) and in Japan, to which ATU also refers, the motif "Younger Brother Transformed into an Animal" is actually missing. It is also unattested in North-East Africa. In other words, the Soqotri text displays exclusively Near Eastern, not South Asian, nor African connections.



Fig. 8. Younger Brother Transformed into an Animal

9)

The motif: "A Faithful Wife Mocks Men Who Come to Buy Her Love" (L100C, Th D2006.1.1)¹¹. A woman pretends to be a prostitute. When a man comes to her, she uses magic on him, and the man spends all night in her room unable to leave. The episode is repeated with another or (rarely) the same suitor. Usually the first suitor tells the others that everything was satisfying, thus they are subsequently humiliated in the same way.

¹¹. Not to be confused with ATU 1730, dealt with below under No. 25.

Soqotra: CSOL I No. 1 = SAE IV Text K (latter part)¹². A man leaves his wife at home and goes on a journey to work overseas, getting rich there. Back home, three men want to seduce his wife. The first seeks a meeting with her, and she agrees to meet him the next day. When he comes, she lulls him to sleep with a potion, cuts off his testicles, puts them in a vessel, and stitches up the wound. When, on the next day, his friends ask him about his date, he replies that everything was wonderful. The woman then performs the same operation with the other two. To take revenge, the three men travel to her husband's new country with the purpose of depriving him of his possessions. The woman learns of the plan, disguises herself as a man, beats the three men to the foreign land, presenting herself in the sultan's house as a *sharif*, for whom "all is visible". During the trial, the sultan first supports the case of the three guests,



Fig. 9. A Faithful Wife Mocks Men Who Come to Buy Her Love

but then the *sharif* suggests checking whether they might not be eunuchs (which would nullify their testimony). The three men are examined, their vice detected, and sent to prison. The husband promises the *sharif* any reward he may ask, and the *sharif* asks for his wife. The man angrily refuses. Then the *sharif*

12. The former part of this composition is the "Pound of Flesh"-type story dealt with below under No. 23, to which the "Faithful Wife" tale is somewhat mechanically appended. The plot of Müller's "Faithful Wife" hardly ever differs from Naumkin's.

asks him for his finger-ring, and the request is granted. The man and the *sharif* return to the man's country, the woman acquires her normal shape and reveals the whole story to her husband.

Parallels and notes (fig. 9). Closely related stories come from Mahra and Dhofar (Müller 1907:23–33, 73–87, Nos. 10 and 19). Elsewhere, the motif is attested in North Africa (the Kabyle) and in Western Europe (mainland Italy, Sicily, Spain including the Basque Country, France, Denmark, Norway). In Eastern Europe, only Tatar versions are known. Quite enigmatic is the background of the Yakut and Yukaghir texts recorded in 1945 and in 1959 in the northeastern Sakha-Yakutia (Ergis 1964–1967 I No. 63; Kurilov 2005 No. 24). While thematically similar to the European versions, they contain scarcely any episode which could be reliably considered a borrowing from any of them.

10)

The motif: “Girls Who Married Animals” (K84, ATU 552.1). A boy's sisters marry animals or demons. Later on, their husbands help their brother-in-law when he finds himself in difficult situations.

Soqotra: SAE VI No. 1. A boy's father, on his deathbed, orders his son to marry his four sisters to four brothers who will one day come to ask for their hands: the elder sister with the elder brother, the middle with the middle one, and so forth. The father also orders him to dig under the camel stable after the father's death. The father dies, the boy is left with his four sisters and a servant. The girls indeed marry the four brothers who come; and the servant reminds his master to dig under the camel stable. They find a jar there with a living hen in it, which they sell at the market. A few days later the servant comes back to the market and sees that the buyer of the hen is going to slaughter it. The servant asks the man to give him the hen's stomach, where he finds Solomon's ring (Th D849.10.1§). He gives the ring to his master and asks him to keep it, lest the two die. One day the servant asks for the ring back, puts his master on his back and, with the help of the ring, flies to the boy's brothers-in-law. They promise to help him if the ring is lost. One day the boy gives the ring to a certain woman who comes to visit him, she takes it and returns home, ordering her house to rise and stand between the heaven and the earth. The servant dies when he learns about this, while the boy goes to his brothers-in-law. The oldest sends refers the boy to the second oldest, and down the line to the youngest, who asks for five days to look for the ring and sends birds to find it. All the birds come back with no result after five days, but one bird comes back after seven days and says it has found the ring in a certain man's house. It takes along a mouse and flies to the house. With its tail, the mouse tickles the man's nose, he sneezes, and the ring (which he kept in his mouth) flies out. The mouse picks it up and gives to the bird, and the two fly back to the man's house (Th K431.1§, cf. el-Shami 2004:314). As a reward, the bird becomes king of the birds, whereas the mouse is given the right to damage human houses as it wishes.

Parallels and notes (fig. 10). This motif is typical for Europe, the Caucasus and the Arab world (both the Near East and North Africa). All Iranian versions are from the northwestern part of the country. The easternmost Eurasian versions are recorded among the Mansi, Uzbek and Even. In the latter case, a Russian borrowing is possible, although no detailed parallels with any Slavic texts have been revealed. In Uther 2004, the data on ATU 552 are merged with the data on our motif M38 (= Th J2411.3, “Unsuccessful Imitation of Magic Production of Food”), originally separated by A. Aarne as ATU 552A. Because of this, cases that we could not check using other sources are shown with white rings.



Fig. 10. Girls Who Married Animals

11)

The motif: “The Magic Ring” (K33H, ATU 560). A man obtains an object that grants wishes. The object is stolen but brought back by animals saved by the man earlier.

Soqotra: SAE VI No. 1 (see above under No.10).

Parallels and notes (fig. 11). In Europe, ATU 560 is one of the most popular tale-types. It is also known in the Caucasus, the Near East, Iran, South, Central, Southeast and East Asia, as well as in Southern Siberia. Its spread across Africa is likely due to Arabic influence.



Fig. 11. The Magic Ring

12)

The motif: “The Effectiveness of Fire (Roasting the Meat)” (M197, ATU 1262). Either in seriousness or to demonstrate an absurdity, a person tries to cook something using a fire (or a source of light) that is far away from the object to be cooked.

Soqatra: CSOL I No. 16. A poor boy bets a group of merchants that he can spend a whole night standing in the chilly water of the sea. The boy wins, but the rich men refuse to honor their bet because the boy’s mother lit a fire on the shore. Ali Botil decides to help the boy and invites the merchants to lunch. In the presence of all, he starts to prepare rice, only he puts the cooking pot a few meters away from the fire. Everybody wonders: how will the rice be cooked? Ali’s reply is straightforward: exactly the same way as the fire on the shore warmed the boy in the sea.

Parallels and notes (fig. 12). The episode is common in the folklore traditions of various Arab countries (el-Shami 2004:723). References to several Mehri versions, on which the Soqotri tale almost certainly depends, can be found in Naumkin et al. 2014:6.



Fig. 12. The Effectiveness of Fire (Roasting the Meat)

13)

The motif: “One-Legged People” (L85E). A person (or supernatural being) has only one leg (and/or one arm) but without limiting mobility.

Soqatra: SAE VI No. 6 = CSOL II No. 18 (forthcoming, see Naumkin–Kogan–Cherkashin 2014:416 for the contents). Müller’s text is a brief description of an iron-legged jinni woman: when she runs, the iron foot sinks deep into the ground. Naumkin’s longer account is an informant’s report of a personal encounter with the “nail-legged” jinni woman.

Parallels and notes. No parallels in the Near East could be uncovered. In Africa, the motif is attested among the Swazi and the Nandi; in Micronesia – on Ulithi; in Eurasia – in the Scandinavian-Baltic region (Lithuanians, Setu, Karelians, Sami). It is relatively common in Siberia and Central Asia (Yugur, Oirats, Khalkha-Mongols, Shirongol, Khanty, Kets, Nivkhs, Negidals, Yukaghirs). In Japan, it is attested on Hokkaido and in Tohoku (perhaps due to the Ainu substratum). In the New World, the motif is common only within the Columbian Plateau.

The present motif is not easily distinguishable from “One-Sided People” (people with only a left or right half of the body: one leg, one half of the head, etc.), known across most of the Old World and in some Amerindian traditions.

14)

The motif: “Potiphar’s Wife: False Accusation of Sexual Abuse” (F70, Th K2111, el-Shami 2004:583). A woman makes vain overtures to a young man and/or falsely accuses him of sexual abuse. Her husband believes that he is guilty, kills or tries to kill him.

The extended plot of “Potiphar’s Wife” across Africa and the Near East typically contains the following elements, together or in different combinations.

a. “Disordered Clothes as Evidence against an Innocent Man” (F70A): to accuse a man or boy of sexual abuse, a woman tears her clothes, smears or scratches her body, breaks her household vessels, pretending to have been attacked.

b. “Revenge of a Rejected Woman” (F70B): a woman takes revenge on a man who has rejected her love.

c. “A Castrated Youth Becomes a Man Again” (F70C): a young man falls victim to an intrigue and is mutilated (usually castrated), but later on his penis is restored by magic and he marries happily.

d. “A Disgraced Informer” (F70D): a castrato or a girl pretends to be a man, but someone learns about it and plans to expose the deception; at the last moment, the hero or heroine magically becomes a real man and the informer is disgraced.

Sogotra: SAE VI No. 16 = CSOL I No. 19¹³.

Naumkin’s version of the story, more straightforward and less fraught with subplots, reads as follows. There were two brothers who loved each other very much, but this all changed when the elder brother got married. The elder brother’s wife approaches the younger brother while her husband is away and asks him to lie with her. When the boy refuses, she resolves to take revenge by persuading her husband that it was his brother who desired her. The man asks his wife what punishment she wishes for the transgressor, and she proposes his penis be cut off. Her husband duly obliges, cuts off his brother’s penis and throws him out of the family home. After a while, the boy recovers from the wound and reaches a certain country where the sultan’s daughter is about to marry. The prospective husband is to be selected through a trial: the girl throws a pebble three times at a crowd of pretenders, and the one whom the pebble hits thrice will marry the girl. The pebble hits the protagonist, and he marries the princess. On the wedding night, he reveals his deficiency to his wife, but she is willing to accept him as he is. To simulate the blood marking consummation of the marriage, she makes a cut on her thigh and smears the bed-sheet with it (Th K1913.1§, el-Shami 2004:528). After some time, the vizier notices that the man has no penis and reports it to the sultan. The sultan orders all the men in the city to bathe naked in the sea (Th H1582.7.3.1§). The boy flees in panic and comes to a group of “old men” who restore his penis, but at a high price: his firstborn child must be delivered to the “old men”, who will slaughter him. The boy comes back to the city and bathes together with the other men. His virility is proven; the vizier is killed. His wife gets pregnant and gives birth to a male child. The father secretly takes the baby to the “old men” who slaughter it and give him a piece of his child’s flesh. The protagonist returns home, throws the piece of baby flesh onto his wife’s lap, and his son reappears alive.

13. Another recent recording of the story appears in Agafonov 2009 and 2010. The differences between Naumkin and Agafonov’s versions are mostly insignificant.

The main elements of Müller's more sophisticated version are as follows. An unmarried younger brother stays with his elder brother and his wife. One day, the elder brother sets off for a journey, leaving his wife behind with his brother. The woman makes overtures to her brother-in-law, but he refuses. When her husband returns, she reports that his brother tried to rape her. When the younger brother goes to milk his cows, the elder brother cuts off his penis. The boy flees, comes to an old woman and asks her to cure him. The old woman sends him to four ogresses, whose breasts hang down beyond their backs, and orders him to suck the breast of one of them. The boy carries out the order, and the ogress approves (saying she would have eaten him otherwise). The ogress' son comes in and smells a human, but his mother says the visitor is one of his brothers. The son takes the boy along and brings him to the second ogress, who restores his virility when he promises to bring her his firstborn son, whom she would slaughter and eat. The boy agrees, leaves the ogress and comes to visit a certain man who has a nubile daughter. On the next day, two more men come, and the father submits the three to a marital trial: they must retire into a barren desert and somehow prepare for him breakfast there. The two men are unable to fulfill the task, whereas the boy fills his cooking pot with the spittle of his camel and burns his walking stick to fuel the fire. The boy marries the man's daughter, a son is born to them, and the youth brings the baby to the ogress. Then he comes back to his wife, they leave their land and go the husband's native land, where they meet his brother. When the woman starts "to joke" with her brother-in-law, the hero scolds her in a poem.

Parallels and notes. The Soqotri texts are more similar to the Egyptian tale of "Two Brothers" and its parallels in African and Near Eastern folklore than to the Joseph story of the Old Testament (on which most of the later versions in both Christian and Muslim traditions depend). Let us briefly summarize some of the most remarkable related texts, particularly those displaying the most specific element of the plot — the magic recovery of the castrated youth.

The Shahris (Dhofar). The sultan leaves for the Hajj; his wife is pregnant. He orders his son to kill the newborn if it is a girl. A girl is born, but the brother gives her to an old woman to nurse and buries a sheep instead. When the sultan comes back and asks the boy about what happened in his absence, he shows him the false tomb. The girl grows up. One day the old woman leaves some grain out to dry and orders the girl to protect it from the hens. The girl tries to scare the hens by throwing her jewels at them, then goes out to re-collect the jewels. The sultan notices her and wants to marry her, so his son (that is, the girl's brother) is compelled to reveal the truth. The sultan orders the boy to kill his sister, but the boy flees with her. A cat leads them to a house near a brook. The boy goes to hunt everyday and brings meat to his sister. One day the girl goes to bathe and a strand of her hair sticks to the comb; she throws the comb into the brook, where it floats downstream; an old woman picks it up and reports it to a *kafir* (non-Muslim). The *kafir* asks the old woman to lead him to the owner of the comb. When they come, the girl agrees with them to kill her brother by luring him into a trap: they will play and the rule of the game shall be that the one who loses will be bound to a bed. The girl wins, the boy is bound; the *kafir* cuts off his penis and takes the girl along with him. The cat releases the boy, he recovers from his wound and sets off on a journey. The sultan's daughter sees him and promises to marry him in spite of being castrated. The *kafir* reports to the sultan that his son-in-law is a castrato¹⁴, the sultan promises to execute his own daughter and her husband if this is true and to kill the *kafir* and himself (sic!) if this is false. In the evening the woman lets her husband down from the window with a rope; he leaves the city and meets three angels, who promise to restore his virility upon the condition that he give them half his future children. The angels go to sleep and ask the boy to wake them when the sea becomes green (rather than black or white). The sea becomes

14. With the following wording: "Dieser ist lediglich ein Weib". This is remarkably similar to what we find in the Egyptian story below (cf. Th T315.2.6.1§, el-Shami 2004:528).

green, the angels wake up and throw the boy into the waves, where his genitals are restored. He comes back to his wife and sleeps with her, then shows up naked at the court, decapitates his sister and the *kafir*. His wife gives birth to three children. The husband, trying to keep the promise he has given to the angels, cuts one of the children in two pieces, but the angels bring the two halves together and release the man to his wife, together with his three children (Müller 1907:102–110).

The Arabs (Iraq). Two of the sheikh's sons, the middle and the younger, are unable to find grass for their cattle. The elder brother finds grass, then meets a girl who gives him a sword with which to kill an ogre. The boy brings the grass to his father, and the sheikh orders that they resettle to the place where the grass has been found. The elder brother marries the girl. The father orders the middle son to kill the elder brother, but he is unable to do this. Then the younger brother castrates the elder while he is sleeping. The elder brother flees to another oasis, kills seventy Bedouins. But one of his servants claims to have performed the feat himself, yet proves unable to lift the stone under which the boy has put the harnesses of the Bedouins' camels. The local sheikh wants the boy to marry his daughter; the boy asks for a one-month delay. The Prophet and Ali meet him, restore his virility and endow him with the art of healing. The boy marries the sheikh's daughter. After a while, in his homeland, his father and his brothers fall ill, and the Bedouins persuade the boy to heal them (Weissbach 1908:92–104).

Ancient Egypt. There were two brothers, Anubis and Bata. Anubis, the elder brother, was married and had a house, and Bata, the younger brother, was staying with him and working for him. One day the two brothers are working in the field, and they run out of seed. Anubis sends Bata to the village to fetch the seed, and he meets his sister-in-law in their house; she proposes that he lay with her. Bata refuses and blames the woman, but promises to keep silent. When the two brothers come back home in the evening, Anubis' wife pretends she has been beaten and claims that the younger brother tried to rape her. Anubis wants to kill Bata, but one of Bata's cows warns the younger brother of the danger. He flees, and Anubis follows him. Bata prays to the Sun-god, who creates a great body of water, full of crocodiles, between the two brothers. The next morning, Bata shouts the truth out to his brother, cuts off his own penis in despair and throws it into the water, where a catfish swallows it. Then he sets off to the Valley of the Pine, urging his brother "to come and look after him when he learns that something has happened to him". And he will know that something has happened to him if a jug of beer ferments in his hand. Anubis returns home, kills his wife, throws her corpse to the dogs and sits down to mourn for Bata. Bata comes to the Valley of the Pine, puts his heart on top of the blossom of the pine, and spends his days hunting desert game. Then the god Khnum creates a woman for him. Bata warns his wife not to go outdoors lest the Sea snatch her away¹⁵. One day the woman goes outdoors, the Sea tries to snatch her, but does not succeed, and asks the Pine to catch her; but the Pine only snatches a lock of her hair. The Sea brings her hair to Egypt and lays it where the Pharaoh's servants wash his clothes. The sweet scent of the woman's hair enters the Pharaoh's clothes, the scribes of the Pharaoh tell him that this lock of hair belongs to the daughter of the Sun-god. The pharaoh sends his men to the Valley of the Pine to fetch the woman, but they do not return home as Bata kills them. The Pharaoh sends another group of soldiers and charioteers, together with a woman "into whose hand one had given all kinds of beautiful ladies' jewelry". This time Bata's wife does come to Egypt. The Pharaoh "loved her very much" and kept asking about her husband. The woman suggests felling and cutting up the pine where Bata's heart is. The Pharaoh's soldiers fell the pine, the blossom with Bata's heart falls down, and Bata dies. In his home, Anubis is given a jug of beer, and it ferments in his hand. He travels to the Valley of the Pine, finds his brother dead on his bed, and starts to look for his heart

15. "Do not go outdoors, lest the sea snatch you. I cannot rescue you from it, because *I am a woman like you*" (italics added, cf. the wording of the Jibbali parallel above).

beneath the pine that has been cut down. He looks for it for three years, but doesn't find it. In the fourth year, he decides to return to Egypt, but on the day of departure he goes to walk under the pine and finds a fruit, which is Bata's heart. Anubis puts it into a bowl of cool water, and in the night the fruit "swallows" the water and Bata reappears. When Anubis gives him water to drink, his heart reappears. Bata arranges a plan to take revenge on his wife: he will turn into a great, beautiful bull, and Anubis will lead him to the Pharaoh's palace. On the next day they carry out the plan, the Pharaoh welcomes the bull and takes it for "a great marvel". One day the bull comes to the kitchen and finds there his former wife, now The Great Lady. He reveals his identity and confronts her with her betrayal. The woman is frightened and asks the Pharaoh to slaughter the bull and prepare its liver for her. The Pharaoh duly obeys. Two drops of the bull's blood fall at each side of the portal of the palace, and two Persea trees grow out of them. One day, the Pharaoh and the Queen sit down below the trees, and one of the trees addresses the woman, saying it is Bata and berating her for her crimes. Some time later, the woman asks the Pharaoh to fell the trees and make furniture out of them. The Pharaoh duly obeys. A splinter of the tree flies into The Great Lady's mouth, she gets pregnant and gives birth to a son. The boy grows up (presumably, in the shape of Bata) and rules the land after the Pharaoh's death. He puts his former wife to judgment. After 30 years, he dies and Anubis becomes the Pharaoh (Lichtheim 1997:85–89).

Songhay. Kelimabe, the ugly elder brother, gets married, but his wife offers her love to his younger, handsome brother Kelikelimabe, promising him cattle as a reward. She brings him into her bedchamber, but he refuses. The woman dishevels herself and says to her husband that her brother-in-law was going to rape her. The elder brother cuts off his brother's penis and runs away to the forest. The younger brother goes to look for him and comes to a village. The local chieftain's daughter, struck by his beauty, asks her father to marry her to him. Kelikelimabe reluctantly agrees, but tries to drown himself. A certain man takes him to the spirits, who restore his penis. His marriage is now happy, his wife bears him a son, and they name him after the elder brother (Kelimabe). The wife allows her husband to look for his brother; the two brothers meet and reconcile (Belcher 2005:24–30).

Soninke (the Mande language family, the Senegal-Mali border). The elder brother's wife tries to seduce the younger brother, but he rejects her advances. She complains to her husband that his brother has tried to rape her and asks that he be castrated. The elder brother tries to approach the younger brother twice during the night, but dogs alarm the boy and the plan fails. On the third try, the dogs do not bark, and the elder brother cuts off the younger's genitals and brings them to his wife. After recovering, the younger brother leaves home. After a while, the elder brother and his wife become poor and go blind. The king's daughter falls in love with the younger brother and asks her father to marry her to him. For two nights, the boy does not touch his wife. The wife sends her maid to inspect him while he is sleeping, and she discovers that he has no genitals. The woman reports this to her father. The king asks his servant to check and promises to execute his son-in-law if it is true, or the maid if false. The spirits order the boy to catch a certain animal, which offers to the youth seven sets of genitals to select from in exchange for its freedom. The boy recovers his manhood, then kills the animal and takes all seven sets. During the night, he enters his wife. The wife gives birth to a son. The younger brother, together with his family, cattle and gold, returns to his homeland (Dantioko 1978:109–119).

Mofu-Gudur (the Biu-Mandara branch of the Chad language family, North Cameroon). The elder brother's wife, when her husband is away, gives no food to the younger brother. One day, however, she prepares a good lunch and invites the youth. He doubts her sincerity, invites his friends to the meal but does not eat himself, hiding his portion in a calabash. The angry woman dishevels herself and complains to her husband that she was raped. The man rushes to castrate his brother, but recognizes his fault when the younger brother calls witnesses and shows the calabash with his meal untouched. The boy flees home,

and on his way the Daughter of the Darkness, Daughter of the Moon, Daughter of the Water Spirit and Daughter of the Sun join him. In the forest, the four women create a homestead, but are surprised that the boy does not sleep with them. The boy desperately tries to conceal his deficiency, then flees and meets an old woman, who shows him four boxes with penises: some for old men, some for children, some for adults, and some for youths. The old woman orders him to take from the last box, attaches the new penis to the boy's body and asks him to copulate with her. The boy duly obeys. Then she asks him to bring her his first-born, whom she will eat as a reward for the restored penis. The boy and his wife bring their newborn child; the old woman puts her knife to his throat, but the child laughs and the old woman releases him to his parents (Sorin-Barreteau 2001:200–226).

15)

The motif: “Thrown Apple Hits the Chosen One” (K75A, Th H316, el-Shami 2004:528).

A person selects somebody from a crowd by throwing an object (often an apple) at him or her (a woman chooses her future husband from among many suitors, a boy identifies his father, etc.).

Soqatra: CSOL I No. 19 (full exposition under No. 14).

Parallels and notes (fig. 13). This episode is reasonably well attested in Central Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Near East, and Central Asia. It is popular in Iran. Not so many cases have been recorded in North Africa and Northern India. At least two Chinese versions, one of them from a written source, are reported (Cosquin 1922:327, Eberhard 1937:54). While no trace of this motif could be found on the



Fig. 13. Thrown Apple Hits the Chosen One.

Iberian Peninsula, a version from the French Basque Country mentions that the men who married the elder sisters of the hero's wife received from them golden apples, but the choosing of a husband by throwing an apple is not described (Webster 1879:111–120).

16)

The motif: “Hair Picked up From a River” (K136A, Th H75.1, Th T11.4.1). A person finds a strand of hair carried by a waterway, decides to marry its owner and looks for him/her using the hair as the identifying feature. This motif is not to be confused with the much more widespread motif of a woman's hair found by a hero (or his antagonist) in various situations, which is used as a constructive element in many different tale types.

Soqotra: SAE VI No. 3¹⁶. A man's wife gives birth to a son, then after three years, to a daughter. The father kills the newborn girl and drinks her blood. After some time, the woman becomes pregnant again. The father must leave on a journey and orders his son to kill the baby if it is a girl and to collect its blood in a bottle. A girl is born, her brother takes her away and leaves her under the protection of an old woman. Then he kills a cat and collects its blood in the bottle. When his father comes back, he gives him the bottle, secretly leaves the house and goes to his sister. The girl grows up, and one day goes to bathe in a river. Her hair floats downstream and is picked up by the sultan. The sultan looks for the girl, and the old woman says she is with her. The girl's brother refuses to marry her to the sultan, who sends his soldiers to take the girl and to kill her brother. The soldiers think they have carried out the order and that the boy is dead, but he is only wounded. The old woman nurses him until he recovers. After a while, he comes to visit the sultan as a beggar; the sultan takes him into his service, gives him weapons and a horse. The boy kills the sultan and his own sister, and returns to his father. The father reminds him that he should not have left his sister alive at the moment of her birth.

Parallels and notes (fig. 14). The present motif connects Soqotra with North and North-East Africa (the Somalis, the Arabs of the Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, as well as the Egyptian version of the “Two Brothers” story as related above under No. 14) and South Asia, where it is particularly popular (Chins, Lepcha, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Hindi texts from North India, Pahari, Nepali, Assamese, Santals, Ho, Oraons, Tamils, Singhalese). To Indonesia (the Toradja), the motif could be possibly have been brought from India. Less prominent are links to the Near East and the Caucasus, where the tale is found among the Abaza and the Turks (in a slightly different form: what floats downstream is a sandal, whereas the hair is carried away by the wind). In Central Asia, the motif is known among the Khalkha-Mongols. The floating hair typically belongs to a girl, and only in a few South Asian versions (Pahari, Assamese, Oraons, Ho) a boy's hair is involved. In the New World, the North Californian versions are unlikely to be genetically related to the Asian versions, although it is noteworthy that the underlying theme of an incestuous relationship between siblings is present both here and in many of the Old World versions. A variant nearly identical to the Soqotri one has been recorded on the Arabian mainland (Dhofar), see above No. 14.

16. In a somewhat different context, the motif is also found in CSOL II No. 28 (for which see above, No. 5).



Fig. 14. Hair Picked up From a River

17)

The motif: “Father Was Right” (K102A). A man tells his son to kill the son’s sister, mother, or wife. The hero does not do it, but later regrets it. Most of the texts that contain this motif also correspond to ATU 315 (“The Faithless Sister”) and our K102 (“Demonic Paramour of Mother or Sister”).

Soqotra: SAE VI No. 3 (full exposition of the contents at No. 16).

Parallels and notes (fig. 15). The Soqotri version has close correspondences among the Mehri and Jibbali narratives (Hein–Müller 1909:20–28, Johnstone–Stroemer 1999:62–67, Müller 1907:102, Rubin 2014:428–436¹⁷). Variants most similar to these (the hero’s father orders his son to kill the father’s baby daughter, i.e. the hero’s sister) have been registered in South Asia among the Singhalese and Kuttia Konds (Elwin 1954:410–413, Parker 1914:293–298), in the Caucasus among the Dargwa and Azeris (Bogoyavlenski 1899:109–120, Ganiyeva 2011:275–278), among the Kazakhs (Daurenbekov 1979:223–224) and the Khanty of Vasyugan River (Lukina 1990:237–240). In one of the Kabyle versions (Frobenius 1922:11–24) the son tries to save his mother, and in still another Kabyle story (Dermenghem 1945:69–75) as well as in the Nepalese version (Heunemann 1980:84–91) he saves his wife.

17. As explained by Rubin, “the Mehri version [that is, Johnstone–Stroemer 1999:62–67] was translated from Jibbali, but not exactly”.



Fig. 15. Father Was Right

18)

The motif. “Men and Women: Exchange of Anatomical Characteristics” (F16). In bygone times, men possessed women’s biological traits (menses, breasts, bearing children), and vice-versa.

Soqatra: SAE VI No. 23. Long ago, women had no menses, whereas men used to have blood under the armpit, which they would collect in a vessel. One day a woman found such a vessel, took off the lid and thought it was honey. She put her finger into the pot, and it came out smeared with the man’s blood, which could not be washed off. The woman went to a wise man who suggested she put her finger into her vulva. Then the blood came off. Since then, women have had menses.

Parallels and notes. The Soqotri text finds a strikingly detailed parallel among the Kabyle of Algeria: in former times, men had menses under their right armpit; one day a man and his wife went to a feast, and the man’s menses began; he put a napkin under his armpit, but in greeting the other men at the feast, he lifted his arm and the napkin fell out; to hide her husband’s shame, the woman picked up the napkin and put it between her legs. In this way menses were transferred to women (Arezki 2010:148–151).

The motif of menstrual blood among women coming from a woman having smeared her genitals with somebody else’s blood does not seem to be found anywhere else in the Old World (which may be at least partly accidental in view of the delicate nature of the plot, likely to be deliberately disregarded by both narrators and folklore collectors). The more general concept of menses being transferred from men to women is somewhat more common: it has been registered in Nepal and North-East India (Lepcha, Adi), Middle India (Gonds, Halba, Baigas), in the Balkans (Bulgarians, Macedonians), the North Caucasus (Karachays and Balkars), the Carpathian Mountains (Hutsuls), Middle Volga (Chuvash), and on Sakhalin (Ainu). In North America, it is no more frequent than in the Old World (registered only among the Shuswap, Upper Chehalis, and Seneca), but quite widespread in South America.

19)

The motif. “Jumping Penis” (F28a1). A penis lives as a separate being, mobile and capable of attacking people.

Soqotra: Naumkin–Bulakh–Kogan 2013:527–563¹⁸. The “angel” Diheko comes to visit the owner of a large palm grove and asks him “what he is growing”. The owner is reluctant to talk about his precious palms, saying only that he is growing useless mangrove trees. As a punishment, Diheko transforms the man’s palms into actual mangroves. The man becomes desperate, but then the “angel” returns to give him valuable advice: he should cut the branches of the mangroves, make from them wooden phalli and sell them to girls from rich families in town¹⁹. One girl buys a phallus for a huge amount of money and learns from the man how to use it: to activate the phallus, one must say *bismilla*; and to deactivate it, one must say *‘ud billa*. For several nights, the girl enjoys her new companion, until it starts to react whenever anyone else happens to say *bismilla*, striking the girl’s family members (male and female alike), passers-by and, finally, the local imam.

Parallels and notes. This motif has detailed parallels in Middle India (Baigas, Bharias, Gonds) and among the Mofu-Gudur (North Cameroon).

Mofu-Gudur. Upon his death, a husband orders his wife to cut off his penis. The woman obeys and keeps the cut-off member in a calabash. One day she sets off for the savannah (where sex is banned), taking the calabash along with her. She opens it, and the penis jumps out and enters her vulva to her gratification. On another occasion, the woman leaves for the savannah in the company of her daughter, but forgets the penis at home and asks the daughter to fetch it. The daughter opens the calabash, and the penis jumps out and tries to enter her vulva. The girl hits it with a stone and kills it. The mother takes the penis to a blacksmith and asks him to resuscitate it. The smith, unable to do so, fries the penis and eats it, then becoming an ogre. Only after numerous metamorphoses is the dangerous member finally exterminated (Sorin-Barreteau 2001:106–111).

Baigas. When the owner of a cucumber garden is asked by a Brahman what he is growing, he answers: “Penises”. When he comes to visit the garden, he finds there a penis called Chanduwa and sells it to a woman in the market. The woman keeps the penis under a roof and calls it when she wishes to make use of it. One day her little daughter learns about this and calls the penis herself. It jumps into her vulva. The girl begins to cry; her mother comes and sends the penis back. A certain man who is driving his ox, named Chanduwa, calls it by name, and the penis leaps into the man’s anus. When the woman gets married, her husband finds the penis and burns it (Elwin 1949:392–393).

Bharia. A young man suffers from impotence. Coming back from fishing, he shows his wife his penis, saying it is a fish. The woman begins to pull at it, tears it off and throws it into the fire. The husband dies; the penis jumps into the woman’s mouth and comes out her vagina; and she dies. The same happens to her mother. Then a boy catches the penis, binds it and hides it in his pocket (Elwin 1949:393).

Gonds. In a forest, a man asks a girl to stand naked beside a tree, then with a running start, tries to jamb his erect penis into her vulva. The girl jumps out of the way, and the penis is broken. A few drops of the man’s semen fall onto a stone, which man gives to two passers-by who start to copulate with the girl. The broken penis hits the anus of the first man, and then of the second. The two men flee. The first one grabs a tree root to use as a phallus, and follows the girl, who jumps into the mouth of an ogre and then flees from out of his anus. The root-phallus sticks in the ogre’s throat, and the ogre swallows the man (Elwin 1949:393–394).

18. This text was to be published as part of CSOL I, but upon the informants’ insistent request, was excluded from the corpus because of its obscene nature. Together with another erotic story, it appeared in a separate article (Naumkin–Bulakh–Kogan 2013) with a detailed linguistic commentary by Dr. Maria Bulakh.

19. Unambiguous reports on the use of wooden phalloimitators among Soqotri women can be found in two poetic texts published by Müller in SAE VI (Müller 1905:208, 317).

20)

The motif. “To Guess What Material an Object Is Made of” and “The Louse Skin” (M90, M90A, ATU 857). Somebody wagers that others cannot guess what material a certain object is made of (the material being unusual and not easily discerned). Someone else (usually a monster) learns the secret and forces the hero or heroine to make good on whatever he/she has wagered.

*Soqotra*²⁰: CSOL II No. 4 (forthcoming, brief summary in Naumkin–Kogan–Cherkashin 2014:412). A father orders his son to cut off one of the father’s fingers and bury it upon the father’s death. A tree will grow from the finger, which will bring wealth to the boy. The son follows the father’s instruction. When the tree appears, he bets passers-by they cannot guess from what it grew (Th A2611). Nobody can, and the boy thus wins the losers’ possessions. When he becomes rich, he marries a girl, who, however, is in love with another man, to whom she promises to reveal the secret of the tree, which she will pry from her husband. She starts to pester the man: if he loves her, he must tell her the secret. In the light of the rising sun, the husband makes her swear she will tell no one. Yet the woman breaks her oath, so that her lover solves the riddle. The man is then forced to hand over all of this wealth to the intruder. Roaming through a valley in despair, he meets a woman whose body glitters supernaturally. The woman says she is the Sun, in whose presence the man’s wife had sworn. She advises the man to ask of his rival whether on the next day the sun will rise from the east or from the west. The other man willingly agrees to take part in the new contest. But the sun rises from the west, and so the protagonist gets back his own possessions as well as all the wealth of his opponent. The woman is punished with purulent ulcers covering her body.

Parallels and notes (fig. 16). This motif is widespread in the Mediterranean and the Near East; it is also found in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Tibet, North India, and the Amur valley. It has been registered on Bali Island, as well as in North America (Cree of North Manitoba). Most typically, the object in the riddle is made of the skin of a gigantic louse or flea (fig. 1), whereas the magic tree is involved in three cases only (fig. 2): among the Kurds, the Albanians and the Ho (speakers of a Munda language close to Mundari, on the border of Jarhanda and Orissa in Middle India, v. Osada–Onishi 2010:90). In view of the close similarity between these three versions and the Soqotri text, it seems worthwhile briefly to outline their contents in the present context.

The Ho. Seven daughters of a rajah are accustomed to bathing in a certain pond, burying in the earth the dirt from their skin. A tree grows there. The elder princess promises to marry whomever guesses from what the tree has grown. A poor shepherd has seen the girls bathing, answers the riddle, and marries the princess. At night he sheds his skin, turns into a handsome man and goes to dance at the rajah’s court. His wife’s servant sees him and tells her mistress, who throws the skin into the fire. Thus the husband keeps his beautiful appearance, but shows up only in the night, when his body produces an overwhelming glittering light. The rajah comes to see him, and upon beholding him falls unconscious; his son-in-law resuscitates him, his glittering disappears, and he moves to the palace together with his wife, becoming heir to the throne (Bompas 1909:474–475).

The Kurds. Avci Ahmad sets off on a hunt. He encounters a white snake that implores him to protect it from a black one. In shooting at the black snake, Avci Ahmad accidentally shoots off the tail of the

20. A completely different realization of the same motif is found in another Soqotri story, viz. SAE VI No. 14 (“Die Gattenmörderin”). A woman’s husband poses a riddle to her brother: to guess what the rope of their baby’s cradle is made of. If the brother guesses right, he gets to kill his sister’s husband; otherwise, the converse. The man tries valiantly but does not succeed (the rope is actually made of dog hair, unseen on Soqotra, where no dog has ever set foot). When the woman sees her brother is close to death, she reveals to him the solution encoded in a lullaby. Thus the brother wins, and the husband is killed. Later on, the woman’s brother starts to treat his sister badly, and she must flee to her sisters, who do not accept her either. For a new edition of this text, v. Naumkin et al. 2015:10–11.

white snake. The white snake returns to its father, the *shah* of the snakes, who sends cobras to bite Avci Ahmad. But the snakes hear out the protagonist, who tells the story to the *agha* and report to their master, the *shah* of the snakes, that the man is innocent. The shah of the snakes summons Avci Ahmad and asks to show him the black snake which has attacked its daughter; the black snake is killed. The white snake advises the hero to ask for the venom from the mouth of her father as a reward. The request is granted, Avci Ahmad now understands the language of stones, plants and animals. The white snake orders him to bury its shot-off tail in the earth; after a while, a tree with hitherto unseen fruits grows out of it. Avci Ahmad asks people what kind of tree this is, and when nobody is able to answer, he acquires their possessions. A caravan-driver plots with the protagonist's wife, and she comes to learn the secret for him. The caravan-driver solves the riddle and takes Avci Ahmad's house and wife. The white snake orders Avci Ahmad to sleep near the *mazar* (a saint's grave). The saint suggests from the grave that Avci Ahmad bet the caravan-driver that the sun will rise in the West and set in the East, and gives him a jar full of gold to wager on. The sun indeed rises in the West, and Avci Ahmad gets back his house (Džalil et al. 1989:238–247).

The Albanians. A poor man saves a snake from the fire. The snake orders him to plant a magic fern in his courtyard, the man starts to get rich. A rich neighbor bets half of his business if he can ascertain what the plant is, but fails. The rich man's wife tells the poor man's wife that her husband is going to leave her. The woman asks her husband to swear he will be faithful to her, and he swears by the "snake's herb", thus revealing the name of the plant. The poor man's wife reports this to the neighbor's wife, and now the rich



Fig. 16. To Guess of What Material an Object Is Made: [1] It is the skin of a louse of flea; [2] It is a tree grown from part of a human or animal body.

man wins the contest. The snake advises the poor man to bet once again: if the sun rises in the west, the rich man will have to hand over all his wealth and depart. Then the snake sends the poor man to “The Mother of the Sun”. On his way, the man comes across a pear-tree, which asks him to learn why it cannot bear fruit; a snake, which asks him to learn why it cannot move from its place; water in a pond, which asks him to learn why it does not flow; and a princess, who asks him to learn why nobody will marry her. “The Mother of the Sun” promises the poor man that tomorrow her son (the Sun) will rise in the west. For all wishes to come true, the princess must sweep her courtyard before dawn, someone must drown in the pond, the snake must catch someone, and something must be dug out from beneath the pear-tree. The poor man passes on the suggestions to those whom he has met on his journey. He digs out a treasure from beneath the pear-tree, and takes his rich neighbor to the snake, which catches him and drags him to the pond. The poor man comes to the princess and marries her, then he sends his former wife and the rich man’s wife to the pond where they drown in the (now running) water (Lambertz 1952:138–144).

In nearly all versions outside Soqotra, the magic plant grows from the body (or body part) of a snake. “Growing from the finger” is found among the Indian Bhumia, but in a different context: a woman cuts off her sixth finger and buries it in the earth; a bamboo stalk grows from it, containing the seeds of all cultivated plants in each segment (Fuchs 1970:27–34).

21)

The motif. “The Sun Rises from the West” (M90B). A person fails to believe that the Sun can rise from the West and loses a contest.

Soqotra: CSOL II No. 4 (for the contents see No. 20).

Parallels and notes. Outside Soqotra, the motif is known among Albanians, Greeks, Kurds, Nogais, and Armenians, and in each case the rising sun motif is connected with a riddle about a magic tree (brief contents of the first two versions see above under No. 20). In the Ho version, also reproduced above, the sun motif is absent, while the tree riddle motif is well developed and comes quite close to the Soqotri and other versions. The Armenian version summarized below does not directly present the riddle motif, but its ultimate connection with the two-element tale under scrutiny is not in doubt. El-Shami (2004:319) refers to a few sporadic Levantine attestations (Palestine, Jordan), which effectively combine the “treasure from the father’s hand” and “sun rises in the west” elements and thus come remarkably close to both the Soqotri text and its external parallels mentioned above. Cf. also Kozan 2:258.

The Armenians. A snake orders a poor man to cut off its head and leave it in his house. A pomegranate tree grows from the snake’s head, bearing precious stones as its fruits. The poor man obtains wealth and then becomes a king. After a while, he is deprived of his wealth by other people and goes to complain to God. Midway along, he meets two women who ask him to inquire of God why they suffer headaches, and three horses who want to learn why they have mange. God (disguised as an old man) explains that the women have to get married, whereas the horses must serve the people. As for the man who had deprived the protagonist of his precious pomegranates, the poor man must visit him again and propose a new wager: whether the sun can rise from the west. In the end, the hero’s kingdom is restored to him, yet he declines to deprive his challenger of wife and children (Khachatrians 1933:246–252).

22)

The motif. “Bargain Not To Become Angry” (K67b, ATU 1000).

Soqotra: CSOL III No. 7 (forthcoming). A man hires a laborer to care for his cows. The man warns his prospective master that one day the master may get angry with him. The master, however, promises his servant that if this happens, the servant may cut off a pound of flesh from the master’s buttocks, but the

same applies to the laborer if he be the first to get angry with his master. One day they pasture their cows and a heavy rain starts. The two men find refuge in a village, but the cows are left unprotected. The master asks his laborer to bring them under a shelter and, using a figurative expression, enjoins him that “the cows’ heads must be under a roof”. The laborer slaughters the cows one after another, cuts off their heads and throws the heads into a cave²¹. The master sees what has happened and confesses to the laborer that he is angry with him. The laborer cuts off a pound of flesh from his master’s buttocks and disappears.

Parallels and notes (fig. 17). The episode is often linked to others that describe labor contracts between a servant who is poor but smart and a master who is stupid and cruel, or between a man and an ogre (ATU 1000–1029). We consider only texts which include the “Bargain not to Become Angry” motif *sensu stricto*. The Soqotri text consists of relatively few episodes and, therefore, displays few precise parallels with other versions. The motif is very popular across Europe (with the remarkable exceptions of France and Britain), widespread across North Africa, the Near East, the Caucasus and, probably, South Asia. Though some Central Asian parallels might have escaped our attention, the motif is definitely rare in this region. The “pound of flesh” theme, prominently figuring in this Soqotri narrative, is not a core element and must have been transplanted from the “Merchant of Venice” tale-type dealt with below under No. 23.



Fig. 17. Bargain Not To Become Angry

23)

The motif: “A Pound of Flesh” (C30A, ATU 890).

Soqotra: SAE IV Text K (former part). On his death-bed, an old man orders his son to marry a girl whose bride-price would be her weight in silver. When the father dies, the boy visits a certain man who has two daughters. The bride-price for the elder daughter is 700 talers, the bride-price for the younger one

21. Cf. Th K2310.1§ (“Deception by Literal Following of Instructions”).

is her weight in silver. The boy opts for the younger daughter, but at the moment of delivering the bride-price he discovers that he misses six pounds of silver. He asks the girl's father for a delay, but the father refuses. The boy goes to an Indian merchant (*banyan*) and asks him to lend the remainder. The *banyan* gives him a term of one month, after which, if the debt is not paid, a pound of flesh is to be cut out of the boy's thigh. The boy agrees, takes the silver and marries the girl. When the one month term elapses, the *banyan* comes to ask for his money, which is not at hand. The wife suggests to her husband that the matter should be decided in court. When she learns about the place and the time of the hearing, she disguises herself as a nobleman and appears before the court, proposing both parties accept "her" verdict as definitive. When they agree, she states that the *banyan* is free to cut the pound of flesh out of her husband's thigh, but if the amount is more or less than exactly one pound, the *banyan* shall be executed. Faced with this condition, the *banyan* promptly forgives the debt.



Fig. 18. A Pound of Flesh

Parallels and notes (fig. 18). This motif is mostly recorded in Western Europe and the Near East. The earliest version is in the Tripitaka, an early collection of Buddhist texts translated into Chinese in 492 A.D. (Liungman 1961:236). The Korean version is geographically isolated from the remaining ones and may go back to a written source.

24)

The motif: “A Cow and a Ewe”.

Soqotra: SAE VI No. 21, CSOL II No. 22 (forthcoming, preliminary publication in Naumkin–Kogan–Cherkashin 2014:425). The longer version of the story as recorded by Müller reads as follows. In by-gone times, animals were able to talk. A man’s wife got pregnant, and in those times women had to carry their babies in the womb for ten months, and cows had to carry their calves for nine months. One day the woman became so heavy that she could not stand up to release her tethered cow, so the cow had to take upon itself one month of her pregnancy so that she could release it. Since then, the term of pregnancy among humans has been nine months and among cows, ten months. When the cow was released, it went to graze together with the ewe, which in those times had four teats, whereas the cow had just two. The cow ate its fill, but the ewe was not sated, so the cow took from the ewe two of its teats so that the ewe could be more easily satiated. When the two animals came to their keeper in the evening, the woman revealed to the ewe that the cow had cheated it and deprived the animals of the gift of speech to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Naumkin’s shorter version only mentions the transfer of the two teats from the ewe to the cow, and the strategy of cheating is somewhat different: the ewe is unable to quickly eat its fill, the cow reminds it of its hungry lamb and proposes feeding the lamb on the ewe’s behalf if the ewe will lend it two of its teats; later, the cow refuses to give them back.

Parallels and notes. Stories about animals who have exchanged their body parts for a while, but then one of them refuses to give back what it has taken, are widespread throughout the Old and New World. Nothing can be said about a possible common origin. No exact parallel to the Soqotri text (two teats lent by a ewe to a cow) has been located, even though such a plot might be expected in other Near Eastern pastoralist environments.

As far as the duration of the pregnancy theme is concerned, our motif B49A (“How Many Cubs in a Year?”), typical for Indochina and the adjacent parts of Yunnan, deserves attention. The most remarkable parallel comes from Lisu (along the border between western Yunnan and Myanmar). First a cow and then a buffalo cow ask a pregnant woman how many (lunar) months she must carry a child. The woman answers: ten; and the cow and buffalo cow decide to imitate her. At this moment, her other children playing nearby overturn her cooking pot with all its contents. So when an elephant comes and puts the same question, the angry woman says the duration of pregnancy should be 24 months. Because of this, cows and buffalos give birth after 10 months and elephants after 24 months of pregnancy, whereas the latter supposedly hate pregnant women (Dessaint–Ngwâma 1994:184–185). Other versions (the Tibetans of Sichuan, the Karens of Myanmar and the Thai of Thailand) are about tigers who once bore many cubs (one, seven or twelve in a year), but because of a misunderstanding it was decided that they should have fewer (one in seven or twelve years). Records of etiological texts of this kind are rare and a potential historic link between Soqotra and Indochina in this case remains unproven.

25)

The motif: “The Entrapped Suitors” (L100D, ATU 1730). A woman courted by three men invites them to a private rendezvous. Before the first man’s wishes are gratified, the second arrives, so the first must hide in an uncomfortable position. When the three lovers are caught, they are killed or meet a humiliating punishment.

Soqotra: CSOL I No. 26. There was a beautiful woman who did not want to marry. The sultan, a judge and a merchant begin to spread rumors about a secret vice of hers, allegedly the reason behind the woman’s strange behavior. To defend herself, the woman tricks the men: each of them comes for a tryst at

a certain appointed time, but then, scared by the approaching maidservant (who follows her mistress' instructions), hides in a chest, which the woman subsequently locks. She then brings the three chests to the market and sells them for a high price to the three men's relatives on the condition that the chests will be immediately opened in public. The three men, angry and humiliated, try to take revenge. The merchant marries the woman and asks her to give birth to a son the next morning. The woman asks him, in return, to plant a date palm seed and get a blossoming palm-tree the next morning, which her son can pollinate. The merchant divorces his wife, and the sultan marries her. He wants to kill his wife in secret, but she tricks him with a skin of honey disguised as a woman, into which the man thrusts his dagger. The judge does not dare to experiment any further, so the three men surrender.

Parallels and notes (fig. 19). The motif is very popular in Europe, parts of the Caucasus and in the Near East, being also known across North and Northeast Africa, Kazakhstan, Iran and the Pamir–Hindu Kush region, as well as in Northern India. The easternmost attestation belongs to the Chinese Muslims (the Hui). Since no Southern Indian versions could be ascertained, it stands to reason that the story reached Soqatra either from Southern Arabia or from the Horn of Africa. That the person bringing panic upon the suitors is the woman's housemaid (rather than her husband) is a rare detail paralleled in the



Fig. 19. The Entrapped Suitors

Somali version (Reinisch 1900:162–165). The latter part of the Soqotri text is an independent story (“a request which cannot be fulfilled meets a similarly unrealistic one in response”) which still awaits its typological assessment.

26)

The motif. “The Mysterious Housekeeper” (E9, N831.1). A man (rarely, a woman) lives alone. In his or her absence, somebody puts his or her house in order, prepares his or her meals (or, rarely, eats up the master’s food, creates disorder, etc.). After a while, the master discovers that a woman (or a young man) lives unrecognized (as an animal, or hiding in an object) in or near the house and comes in during his or her absence.

Soqotra: SAE VI No. 7. There was a fisherman who ate only the fish he was able to obtain. And he would throw the remains of his meals outside his house, and a female Egyptian vulture (*sou sîdo*) would come and feed on them. Whenever the man would come back home from the sea, he would find his house swept, the water drawn, firewood collected, and the cooking pot set on the fireplace. One night, when the man was fishing, a ship approached his boat, and the captain invited him onboard. The man refused under the pretext that there was an old woman under his care at his house on the shore. The captain released the fisherman, but when he reached his house and sat down for dinner, three men from the ship came and took him by force to the captain. The ship brings the man to a remote city, where he flees from his captors and stays in the city as a beggar. One day a certain man meets him and offers him work as a laborer. He offers him different kinds of work, but the man rejects all of them and is left without an occupation. After half a month he becomes nostalgic and wants to go back to his homeland. At midnight, a certain woman comes to him and suggests that, at dawn, he should go down to the coast where he will meet a big fish with its mouth open. He must jump into the fish’s mouth and, with God’s help, it will bring him home. In the morning he is back in his house, where he finds an old woman who has been waiting for him.

Parallels and notes. A nearly universal motif. In the Old World, it is most widely spread over the continental South-East Asia and the adjacent regions of India and China, being sufficiently well attested also in the Near East and Central Asia, in the Caucasus, on the Balkans, in East Africa, and in Melanesia. The only areas it is entirely missing from are Australia, Polynesia, Micronesia, the south of South America, and northern Siberia. Detailed parallels to the Soqotri text could not be located.

27)

The motif. “The Unfinished Prayer” (H7C). Personified Death promises to take a man’s soul after he has finished a prayer (ATU 1199) or a song (formerly ATU 1199B, in Uther 2004 this motif is merged with ATU 1199). The man begins to pray/sing but does not finish his prayer/song, so the Death cannot take his soul.

Soqotra: CSOL I No. 25. A poor man wants “to die or get rich”. The first proves impossible: even throwing himself over a precipice does not produce the desired result. Thanks to the advice of a wise man, the second option turns out to be more feasible: the man enters a cave where a gigantic snake lives, picks up its excrement (which turns out to be the precious ambergris), sells it, gets rich, and is about to marry, but just before the wedding night the angel of death comes to take his soul. The man divorces his wife and donates his possessions to the poor, but then the angel says he has got a new order from God – to leave the man in peace. The whole story repeats itself. Eventually, the man comes up with a trick: he asks the angel not to take his soul before he finishes a prayer, but then leaves his prayer unfinished and decides not to pray anymore for the rest of his life. After many years, the man (who used to be the imam of his community) is asked by his friends to perform a funeral prayer for a woman who has died in the neighborhood. The man tries to refuse, but then feels compelled to perform the prayer and dies.

Parallels and notes (fig. 20). The concept of Death as an anthropomorphic being different from the supreme deity is widely attested in Europe, Africa and South-West Asia. The motif of the unfinished prayer preventing Death from taking away the hero’s soul has a more restricted geographic scope: Europe

west to Western Dvina and Dnepr, the Caucasus, the Near East. It is also known among the Kazakhs and in South India (Telugu). Judging from el-Shami 2004:713–714, in the Arab world the prayer version is unpopular, registered only among the Moroccan Jews and in a medieval literary source. More widespread (Palestine, Iraq) is a version involving an unfinished song. The end of the Soqotri story, where circumstances force the hero to read the complete prayer and die, has no parallels known to us.



Fig. 20. [1] The Unfinished Prayer; [2] The Unfinished Song (or no precise data available)

28)

The motif: “The Sun and the Moon Are Female” (A6)

Soqotra: CSOL II No. 4 (see No. 20 for the contents).

Parallels and notes (fig. 21). The appearance of a personified Sun in CSOL II No. 4 is one of the very few cosmologic relics in Soqotri folklore. A personified Moon is attested in CSOL I No. 4, where the heroine addresses the celestial body to put her son under Her care, designating the boy as the Moon’s “nephew” (thus implicitly recognizing the Moon as her sister).

The Sun personified (deified) as a female is an old West Semitic feature attested in the majority of the literary traditions of this branch (Ugaritic *Špš*, Sabaic *S₂ms₁*) and also reflected in the feminine grammatical gender of the majority of the WS reflexes of Proto-Semitic **šams-*²². This WS usage contrasts with the East Semitic (Akkadian) one where *Šamaš* is a male deity and *šamšu* ‘sun’ is masculine²³. Conversely, the female appearance of the moon (and, accordingly, the female gender of the corresponding word *ére* in Soqotri) is, in the Semitic perspective, a rare feature shared by this language only with its continental sister tongues Mehri and Jibbali (Kogan 2015:540).

As far as the gender of the celestial bodies outside the Semitic world is concerned, “male sun” vs. “female moon” is the commonest combination, widespread across the world and absent from (or at least

22. Cf. HALOT 1589 in connection with the somewhat contradictory Hebrew evidence.

23. Cf. CAD Š₁ 336, where the feminine gender of *šamšu* in Western peripheral sources is rightly attributed to WS influence.

not very typical for) Northern Eurasia, north-western regions of North America, Australia, and South and North Africa. The interpretation of both bodies as female (as in Soqotri) is the least common combination. This combination is almost completely absent from the New World (with only four or five cases in both continents) and in Africa (one case among the Congo Pigmies). Regions where it is relatively well known are the non-Aryan Middle India (the Munda and Dravidian peoples like Turi, Bondo, Oraons, Gonds) and Southeast Asia, including the Northeast Indian frontier (Miji, Kachin, Burmese, Thai, Viet, Semangs, Mantra, Andaman, Maloh Dayaks, Tagalok, possibly Minahasa and Bataks). The same concept was probably typical of ancient China (Yanshina 1977:202–203, 206) and has been also registered among Central Asian, Siberian and Middle-Volga peoples (Mongols of Ordos, Oirats, Darkhats, Buryats, Nanai, northwestern Evenk, Mansi, Nganasans, Yukaghirs, Bashkirs, Mari, Udmurts).



Fig. 21. The Sun and the Moon are Female

In Europe, the Dutch case (*Maan* and *Zon* are both feminine) is unique among the Germanic languages and can be a recent transformation. More significant from the historical point of view is the Basque tradition where the Sun and the Moon are addressed as “grandmothers” (Baroja 2000:292). In the Caucasus, the only case seems to be the Dargwa of Dagestan: the Sun is a “mother” and the Moon, her daughter (Gamzatov–Dalgat 1991:303–304). This tradition was probably borrowed by Russian migrants to Dagestan (Naurskaya settlement, Vostretsov 1907:2, 4).

The Soqotri interpretation of both sun and moon as female can be explained either as an independent deviation from the West Semitic norm or, less probably, as a result of a South/Southeast Indian influence of undetermined age.

29)

The motif: “The Predestined Death” (K144, ATU 934A, 934B). It is predicted that a certain animal or (rarely) a man will become the cause of death of a certain person. When this animal (or man) is already dead or faraway, its (his) remains or image become the cause of the person’s death (Brednich 1964:83).

Soqotra: CSOL I No. 28²⁴. An orphan boy lives with the family of his paternal uncle who, together with his sons, constantly humiliates the boy and wastes his inheritance. The boy decides to feign madness and, through an elaborate stratagem, exterminates his cousins, his uncle and a good portion of his fellow tribesmen, but only at the cost of his own life. Yet even the only cousin whom the orphan spared (because he had treated him well, unlike the others) could not escape a violent death caused, though indirectly, by the dead protagonist: a splinter from the dead boy’s bone accidentally, yet fatally, hits the cousin in the eye one day when he is passing by and angrily strikes at the bones with his stick.

Parallels and notes (fig. 22). In the ATU index (Uther 2004:575–576), different kinds of tales with predestined death as their central motif are clustered together. R.W. Brednich (1964:83–91) selects, among others, the types 934A (*Tod durch ein Pferd*) and 934B (*Tod durch einen Wolf*). In both cases the nature of the mortal animal (a horse vs. a predator) is taken as the key feature. More important for us, however, is another prominent detail: the person dies not because of the animal (or another person) itself/himself, but rather because of its/his remains or image (not all the versions included into ATU 934B fit this definition). The motif is sporadically found across the Old World from Scandinavia to Korea and Indonesia. Most of the Eastern versions (Oraons, Lao, Koreans) speak about the image of a tiger (Brednich 1964:90, Fleeson 1899:29–30, Hahn 1906:61–62), while the Iranian ones, about the image of a wolf (Marzolph 1984:174). The Persian, Bakhtiari and Indian versions are close: in both cases, a youth is killed on his wedding night when a representation of a tiger or wolf in the room turns into a real animal.

Among the European versions, well known are the Old Scandinavian stories about a man bitten by snake when he comes to see the remains of his horse, which, it has been predicted, will become the cause of his death (Brednich 1964:83). In the Slovenian versions, a man warned to beware of horses is killed by a figure of St. George on a horse (ibid. 84). There are two of Aesop’s fables containing the motif in question (nos. 162 and 339 of the Perry Index). According to one of them, a fortune-teller predicts that a woman’s son will die because of a raven. She puts her son into a chest, and when the boy tries to climb out, a heavy clasp on the chest in the shape of a raven falls on him and he dies. In the second story, an old man has a dream that wild animals will kill his son on a hunt. He builds a palace and imprisons his son inside. When the youth tries to break through a wall with wild animals painted on it, a splinter pierces his hand and he dies. The Indonesian version (Simeulue Island) is different from the continental Asian ones and, incidentally, most similar to the Scandinavian stories (and, ultimately, to the Soqotri text in question). According to it, a seer predicts a newborn will perish “because of a buffalo”. In the end, the boy does indeed die by kicking a buffalo skull (Kähler 1952:98–99).

Geographically, the following Somali tale is closest to the Soqotri version. A man is dying of thirst in a desert. A were-hyena gives him a magic stick with the power to transform him into a hyena and back into a man. At night the man overhears the hyenas making arrangements to attack a village and warns the inhabitants. The hyenas are killed, the were-hyena is among them. Later the man steps on a sharp bone from the hyena, his foot gets infected and he dies (Hanghe 1988:197–198).

24. The motif is also found in a slightly different, less elaborated form in SAE VI No. 32: the last man of the exterminated Eter tribe finds refuge in the house of a man who has two nubile daughters. The old man promises to hide the survivor on the condition he not approach the girls. The man agrees, but then breaks his promise, copulating with both. The old man kills the ungrateful visitor, but after some time, passing near his remains, strikes his skull with a stick. A splinter from the skull flies off into his eye, and he dies.

The Soqotri story is more similar to the western (Somali and, to a lesser extent, Aesopic and Scandinavian) than to the Asian versions, sharing with the former two particular details: death due to a splinter and the dead remains of a person or animal as the cause of somebody's death.



Fig. 22. The Predestined Death

30)

The motif. “The Wise Brothers” (M198, ATU 655). Brothers (rarely, one single man) have extraordinary powers of observation and can describe objects, animals or people they have never seen before. Further events and/or investigation confirm that their vision was correct.

Soqotra: CSOL I No. 17. A man has a wife and two sons. When the man grows old, his wife dies and he decides to take a second, very young wife. The old man dies during consummation of the marriage, yet the woman conceives and gives birth to a boy. When the boy grows up, the elder brothers refuse to acknowledge him as a legitimate heir, asserting that he was conceived out of wedlock. To establish the truth, the three brothers travel to a wise man, and along the way, it becomes clear that the young boy is as gifted as his brothers: not unlike them, he is able to describe a camel that he has never seen, to detect that the lunch offered to them is made of unclean ingredients, and to establish that the local ruler is a bastard. In the end, the wise man has no trouble determining the truth: the youngest brother is a legitimate heir of his father.



Fig. 23. The Wise Brothers

Parallels and notes (fig. 23). The motif is common in the Arabian traditions of the Near East and North Africa (el-Shami 2004:360). Most of the versions include the same episodes as the Soqotri text: a detailed description of a camel or other domestic animal whom the heroes have never seen; a deduction concerning the impure source of bread and meat served to them by the king (or other official), and, finally, the illegitimate origin of the ruler himself. In this respect, there is not much difference between the versions recorded in Portugal, West Africa (Malinke), Iraq, Georgia, or Tuva. A special status for the youngest brother (the most clever and brave of them, or rather a thief, or a bastard, etc.) is also well attested in the Caucasus, the Near East, Central Asia and India.

4. Conclusions

The extant evidence on Soqotri folklore allows us to confidently attribute the local narrative tradition to the nuclear Eurasian circle. The motifs of Soqotri folklore are usually those characteristic of Europe, North Africa, the Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and partly also East and Southeast Asia. It is approximately the same territory where complex societies of the state and middle-range level (Bondarenko et al. 2012, Grinin et al. 2004) existed during several millennia, where the network of intercultural communication was highly developed and the demographic density was usually high or very high. Truly

specific, “endemic” plots and motifs are practically unattested on the island. There are, admittedly, some simple plots (few of which are considered in the present article) for which no external parallels could be detected. These elements either did emerge locally, or, because of their simplicity and lack of conspicuous features, have escaped the attention of authors of motif indices and other folklore typologists (including ourselves). In terms of motif variety, Soqotri folklore is poor in comparison with such well-known Near Eastern traditions as the Levantine or the Iraqi, and also those of its closest Arabian neighbors (Yemen and the Mahra). Detectable international plots on Soqotra are almost half as numerous as in Mahra, from four to five times less than in Syria and Iraq, from six to seven times less than in Turkey and Iran. Some of the international plots appear in simplified form. Still, it must be conceded that the published evidence from Soqotra is very modest compared to that of many other regions in the Arab world and the Near East in general.

Not unexpectedly, the strongest external ties of Soqotri folklore point north, putting it in a broader Near Eastern context. Not infrequently, however, the pertinent motifs are also attested in South Asia and in North East Africa, and their route to Soqotra is often hard to establish with exactitude.

In a couple of cases, specifically South Asian and African links are clearly in evidence. These parallels cannot be separated from archeological and linguistic data on the cultural exchange between South-East Asia, India and East Africa (but excluding Mesopotamia and Egypt), which began as early as in the second millennium BC (Fuller et al. 2011) — that is, long before the Austronesian colonization of Madagascar. Indeed, exclusive parallels in mythology and folklore between South West and South Asia, on the one hand, and Tropical Africa, on the other, are numerous and telling. For a long time, it seemed that these trans-continental maritime contacts left no trace in the oral traditions of southern Arabia, but the “Jumping Penis” tale, newly discovered on Soqotra, must be considered an unassailable example of this kind, as the complexity and originality of the motif totally exclude the possibility of its independent emergence in geographically and culturally remote areas. That the only Black African version is far removed from the continent’s eastern coast (the lake Chad area) should not surprise us: the oral traditions of Chad, the Sudan, and the Horn of Africa are still poorly described. The date of this motif’s appearance on Soqotra is difficult to establish; it is equally hard to say whether it was introduced directly from India or rather via a non-attested South Arabian intermediary.

Another possible Indian link is the motif “Hair Picked up from a River”, but in this case a Near Eastern source is not to be ruled out.

One thing is certain: truly archaic folklore, potentially traceable to the epoch before the spread of the “international” fairy tale motifs throughout Eurasia and Africa, is – as far as the currently available evidence allows to establish – very rare on Soqotra (and in South Arabia in general). Only a few elements of lower mythology (an iron-legged jinni woman or a devouring snake²⁵) may point to such an origin. Cosmological motifs are entirely missing.

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25. For the latter, v. CSOL I No. 24.

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