

Father-Son Combat

An Indo-European Typescene and its Variations

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“Father-son combat” was a Proto-Indo-European typescene, possibly a storm-god myth as illustrated in a Hittite myth of Zaskhapuna and Illuyanka. In early Indo-European “canonical” sources (in Persian, German, Irish, and Russian), the focus was the shocking inability of father and son to recognize each other, a failure that led to a tragic denouement. Considered as an oral-compositional typescene in Indo-European and Arabic narratives, “father-son combats” exhibit a diversity of traditional themes, and usually end in mutual recognition and reconciliation.

Our topic is the “father-son combat” typescene in which a heroic father fights with his son, wounds him mortally, and learns of their kinship too late to avert tragedy. Scholars who think that this was an early or Proto-Indo-European theme cite four sources as primary, “independent” witnesses: the combats of Hildebrand and Hadubrand in the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, Cú Chulainn and Connla in the Old Irish *Aided Óenfir Aífe* (“The Death of Aífe’s Only Son”), Rostam and Sohrāb in Firdausi’s *Shāhnāma*, and Ilyá Múromets and his son Sokol’nichij (“Falconer”) in 130 collected specimens of a Russian *bylina*.¹

Often these sources are cited as avatars of an Indo-European myth. The term “myth” implies that father-son combat symbolized a religious ideology, or re-enacted a

¹For *Hildebrandslied*, Dickens 1915: 78-85 (text and translation). For Cú Chulainn and Connla, *Aided Oenfer Aif* in *The Tain*, Kinsella 1970; translation of the Old Irish text in Van Hamel 1955: 1-15. For Rostam and Sohrāb, Firdausi, trans. Warner and Warner, 1905-25, 2: 130-78; trans. Davis 2006: 185-214. For Ilyá Múromets and Sokol’nichij, Bailey and Ivanova 1998: 37-48 (“Ilya Muromets and Falconer”).

sacrificial ritual. This is possible, but we prefer “typescene,” a neutral term that focuses on the technology of oral-composition without ruling out a mythic aetiology. Our goal is to reconstruct the (possibly mythic) prototype of “father-son combat” and explore its thematic diversity, which flourished due to the exigencies of oral composition and cross-cultural diffusion. “Secondary” sources are indispensable to this goal. Among these are Hildibrand’s fight with Alibrand in the Old Norse *Thidrekssaga*, the Middle English *Sir Degaré*, Saul Levanidovich’s fight with his son Constantin in a Russian bylina named for the hero, Andronikos’s fight with Konstantin and Tsamathòs’s fight with his unnamed son in two Byzantine Greek ballads, David of Sassoun’s fight with Pokr Mher in the Armenian *Sasna C’rer*, and Amīr Hamza’s fights with three of his sons, Amar, Alam Shah Roomi, and Badiuz Zamar, in three separate episodes in the Urdu *Dastan-e Amīr Hamza*. These combats appear in the Arabic *Sīrat Hamza*, too, although the details vary. In Arabic folk-epics, father-son combats always end in mutual recognition and reconciliation.

Did the “father-son combat” typescene ever exist as an early or Proto-Indo-European convention? If so, have Indo-Europeanists successfully identified its extant “primary” sources? Certainly there have been attempts to do so. To put these questions in methodological perspective, we are dealing with the problem of “resemblance.” Resemblant themes, when they appear in literatures across cultures, may be due to four possible causes: universal archetypes or typologies, cross-cultural diffusion, genetic transmission, or direct borrowing. Rival scholarly traditions tend to favor one or two of these in preference to the others. Joseph Campbell in his *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), and a host of other Jungian critics, attribute formal resemblances to psychological archetypes. V. M. Žirmunskij (1975), the innovative student of epics in central Asia, attributed them to either “historical typology” or genetic transmission. According to our analysis, all four causes played a role in the prehistory of the “father-son combat” typescene, but the most important one was cross-cultural “area” diffusion.

In the earliest scholarship, father-son combat was said to be a universal theme² whose origin was explained variously in terms of myth, anthropology, or psychology. The combat was interpreted as the rationalized myth of a conflict between older

²Uhland 1867-70, 1: 170; Grégoire 1942: 26 called it *to pancosmio thema*.

and younger generations of gods,³ as a mythological nature-allegory,⁴ as an intergenerational conflict arising from the practice of exogamy in a matriarchal society,⁵ and as an allegory of the “Oedipus complex.”⁶ Bowra regarded father-son combats, accompanied by the failure of one or both combatants to recognize their kinship, as a round-the-world archetype. In addition to the four “canonical” sources mentioned above, Bowra cited three others: the Ossetic Nart saga of Uryzmæg and his son, David of Sassoun’s combat with Pokr Mher in the Armenian *Sasna C’rér*, and the story of Oedipus and Laius, in which the son killed the father (surely a different story!). All seven examples were drawn from Indo-European sources, but Bowra thought that the theme was “born independently in more than one place from some fundamental element in human nature.”⁷

Intergenerational conflict, universal in human experience, manifests itself in diverse ways, one of which might be a combat in which a father slays his son (or conversely), especially in cultures where fosterage, infant-exposure, and dynastic conflicts are common. Taking this as a start, M. C. Lyons argued that universal human experiences are transmuted into an indeterminate number of “narrative particles” in oral and literary narrative traditions. According to his “quantum theory” of literary criticism, these particles lend themselves to grouping and regrouping into larger “narrative waves” that represent the “interests and attitudes” shared by authors and audiences. These “narrative waves” derive emotional impact from “an external impulse [that comes] from their points of origin” in human experience.⁸ Lyons applied “quantum analysis” to the “father-son duel” in nine Arabic folk-epics and compared these

³Miller 1863: 259. According to Potter (1899: 92), Jessie Weston interpreted the typescene as a myth of combat between older and younger generations of vegetation gods.

⁴Hapgood 1886: 339 interpreted Sokol’ nichij’s slaying of his mother as an allegory of lightning striking a cloud; she interpreted Sokol’ nichij’s attempt to slay Ilyá Múromets as allegory of combat between the heavens and lightning.

⁵Potter 1899: 205.

⁶Reim (1952; 1983) interprets Cú Chulainn and Connla as an Oedipal story. Goldman’s oedipal interpretation of the story of Arjuna and Babhrūvāhana (1978) has led to continuing debate, in Obeyesekere 1990: 79-84 and Sax 2002: 77-90.

⁷Bowra 1952: 399.

⁸Lyons 1995, 2: 4-7.

to some thirty or forty examples from narratives around the world, without discriminating between stories in which the father slays his son, the son slays his father (Oedipus and Laius, Telegonos and Odysseus, *Dede Korkut*, a tale of Soulaiman king of Arabia and his son⁹), father and son slay each other (Arthur and Mordred), or father and son reconcile, as is typical in Arabic folk-epics¹⁰ and in “secondary” examples of the Indo-European typescene. In quantum analysis, these variable outcomes are interchangeable particles that shift from one “narrative wave” to another. But it seems to us that in such stories, the death of a father has different thematic implications compared to the death of a son. The death of the father is more at home in the “Oedipus complex,” or in the ancient “kingship in heaven” scenario in which a tyrant-king is deposed and sometimes slain by his son.¹¹

Some scholars thought that father-son combat was a Persian epic theme that migrated west-northwest to Slavic, Germanic, and Celtic lands, finding fertile ground in warrior-cultures where a champion often served a foreign king and therefore was separated from his family.¹² Rejecting speculation that the theme might have an “indogermanischer Herkunft,” Georg Baesecke characterized it as “eine Wanderfabel.”¹³ Magnus argued that the Russian bylina of Ilyá Múromets and Sokol’nichij was an adaptation of the story of Rostam and Sohrāb.¹⁴ Lyons, writing about Cú Chulainn and Connla, says that this story was “ultimately derived, both in its main features and in all important details, from the Persian story of Rustem and Sohrab.”¹⁵ Because father-son combat is so dramatic, M. L. West thinks that the theme was transmitted diffusionally rather than genetically,¹⁶ although he does not speculate about its precise origin. West employs strict criteria for “Indo-European” themes, but he uses cross-cultural diffusion as a criterion-free default position, much as other scholars have used universal archetypes as a default position to explain resemblant themes.

In 1953, Jan de Vries proposed that father-son combat was

⁹Chauvin 1892-1922, 8: 87 (no. 57).

¹⁰Lyons 1995, 2: 288 and 386.

¹¹Littleton 1970a and 1970b.

¹²Thurneyson 1921; Cross 1950.

¹³Baesecke 1945: 51-55; cf. Baesecke 1940a.

¹⁴Magnus 1921: 41.

¹⁵Lyons 1995, 2: 386.

¹⁶West 2007: 440-42.

an early Indo-European or Proto-Indo-European “myth” whose independent witnesses were the Persian, Old High German, Old Irish, and Russian sources mentioned earlier.¹⁷ This was not a new idea, but de Vries was the first influential scholar to argue the case. Writing in vigorous opposition, A. T. Hatto (1973) argued that neither Baesecke’s diffusional theory nor de Vries’s genetic one was subject to proof. Hatto proposed to redirect his scholarly efforts, and ours, to more constructive aesthetic pursuits, and left the debate about Indo-European origin at a stalemate. That stalemate persists, notwithstanding efforts by Indo-Europeanists to break it.

Hittite and Sanskrit sources: Zaskhapuna and Arjuna

The earliest extant father-son combat appeared four thousand years ago in the Hittite season-myth of the storm-god Zaskhapuna or Zashapuna, his unnamed son, and the serpent Illuyanka.¹⁸ The cross-cultural sources of this myth are reflected in the Hattic name “Zaskhapuna” and the Hurrian name “Illuyanka,”¹⁹ but its major narrative elements, the storm-god’s Indra-like combat with a cosmic serpent and a father’s tragic combat with his son, have Indo-European origins. According to this myth, Illuyanka defeated Zaskhapuna, the storm-god of the city of Nerik, and robbed him of his heart and eyes. Zaskhapuna subsequently married a human peasant’s daughter, Zaliyanu. Their (unnamed) son, coming of age, married Illuyanka’s daughter. As a bride-price, Illuyanka returned Zaskhapuna’s heart and eyes to him. Restored to courage and sight, Zaskhapuna slew Illuyanka in a seaside combat, but in the course of fighting, he also had to fight his own son, who had sworn allegiance with his father-in-law. Caught between conflicting obligations of kinship and oath-keeping, Zaskhapuna’s son told his father to slay him. Just so, “the Storm-god killed both the Dragon and his own son.”²⁰ The Hittite analogue lays to rest Hatto’s assertion that “as everybody knows, there *is* no Indo-European myth, extant or reconstructable, in which a good father slays a good son in

¹⁷De Vries 1953 and 1963: 50-51.

¹⁸Professor John Colarusso (private correspondence) suggested that this well known myth should be included in the father-son combat dossier.

¹⁹Laroche 1947: 38-39. These cross-cultural elements are emphasized in Anderson 2005: 6-9. Zaskhapuna’s storm-god counterparts include Hurrian *Teššub* and Hittite *Tarawa*.

²⁰Güterbock 1961: 150-52; cf. Colarusso 2002: 122-23.

battle.”²¹

Zaliyanu took her name from a mountain, the source of rain for Nerik; perhaps she became a mountain deity, a suitable role for a storm-god’s spouse.²² This detail finds its Russian cognate in Sokol’nichij’s mother, who is named Zlatygorka (“Golden Mountain”) in some versions and Semigorka (“Seven Mountains”) in others. Some Russian scholars suggest that her name points to a connection with the otherworld or the supernatural—a recurring theme in *byliny* and always a prelude to tragedy.²³ If the name “Seven Mountains” or “Hills” alludes to Rome and by extension to the Catholic Church,²⁴ it could imply that Sokol’nichij was brought up as a schismatic or an infidel, part of his profile as an evil son rather than a good one. (In some versions, the son’s name is “Zolotničanin,” “Man of Gold,” which identifies him as a Tatar, a member of the Golden Horde.²⁵) But “seven mountains” is an epic theme in the Sumerian Enmerkar-cycle, where a messenger from Unug (Uruk) is said to have “crossed five, six, seven mountain ranges” to reach Aratta, and in the Lugalbanda-cycle where the hero, endowed with the gift of superhuman speed by the Anzud-bird, “crossed five, six, seven mountain ranges” to Unug and back as Enmerkar’s courier.²⁶ Gilgamesh and his retinue must cross seven mountain ranges to reach Huwawa, the monster-guardian of Cedar mountain, in the Sumerian *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*.²⁷ This Mesopotamian theme migrated into early Indo-European cultures. In Firdausi’s *Shāhnāma*, Rostam traversed seven mountains to Māzandarān to fight White Dev, the last and greatest of his seven labors.²⁸ In *Sasna C’er*, Msrah Melik ordered his henchmen, Buła Bat’man and Chabahar Kamy, to take David “beyond seven mountains / To Bat’man bridge and kill him.”²⁹ Earlier in the Armenian epic, King Gagik’s daughter Covinar was described as beautiful like the “fortnightly moon”

²¹Hatto 1973: 821.

²²Güterbock 1961: 150-51.

²³Bailey and Ivanova 1998: 37-38.

²⁴Magnus 1921: 43 and 201, no. 35.

²⁵Pliseckij 1975: 59.

²⁶*Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* 509, and *The Return of Lugalbanda* 344, in Vanstiphout 2003: 85 and 155. The second of these poems is also called *Lugalbanda and the Anzu(d)-Bird*, in Black et al. 2004: 29.

²⁷*Gilgamesh and Huwawa* 61-67, in Black et al. 2004: 345.

²⁸Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 160-61.

²⁹*Sasunc’i Davit’* 3.1.18, in Shalian 1964: 178 and Feydit 1964: 217; cf. Surmelian 1964: 115.

that “rises beyond seven mountains,”³⁰ alluding to the terrain that must be traversed to reach the edge of the world. When it comes to traditional themes and typescenes, cultures have porous borders, as the transmigration of “seven mountains” illustrates.

The story of Zaskhapuna and his son is not the earliest version of the Hittite-Hattic myth of combat between the storm-god and Illuyanka. In an earlier liturgy of the New Year’s festival at Nerik, instead of a son the storm-god had a daughter, Inara,³¹ who came to his aid after Illuyanka had defeated him. She seduced a man, Hupasiya (a Hurrian name), and recruited him as her father’s champion. After having intercourse with him, Inara prepared a banquet and invited Illuyanka, who came with his offspring and drank so much at the banquet that, immobilized by drunkenness, he could not return to his underground lair. Hupasiya, who had kept himself hidden during the banquet, bound the serpent with a rope. The storm-god then slew him.³²

The storm-god’s dependence upon Hupasiya looks like a prototype of epic narratives about a king who depends upon a champion to protect him from external enemies. Sometimes the hero is the king’s son-in-law, as is illustrated in the relationship of Shah Naushervan and Hamza in *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*, and of Saul and David in 1 Samuel. Even so the Hittite story, unlike those of Achilles and Agamemnon, Siegfried and Gunther, and Rodrigo and Alfonso, does not include episodes of conflict between “the hero and the king” arising from the hero’s continued presence in the court, which threatens its stability. This scenario, illustrated in the relationship of Rostam and Kay Kāvus in Firdausi’s *Shāhnāma*, and of Hamza and Naushervan in *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*, is arguably an early Indo-European story, although not exclusively so, since it is seen, too, in David’s relationship to King Saul in 1 Samuel.³³

Be that as it may, the earlier myth of Zaskhapuna and Illuyanka, with Hupasiya as its human hero, eventually was superseded by a later version in which the storm-god had to fight his own son as well as the cosmic serpent. Apart from the

³⁰ *Sasunc’i Davit’* 1.1.2, in Shalian 1964: 6 and Feydit 1964: 55; cf. Surmelian 1964: 34.

³¹ Green 2003: 136n. Inara is named in another Hittite source.

³² Beckman 1982; Hoffner 1990: 11-12.

³³ Jackson 1982, for ancient Greek and western European examples of “the hero and the king”; Davis 1992 discusses this theme in Firdausi’s *Shāhnāma*.

obvious scenario in which a heroic father slays his son in combat, this later myth exemplifies four secondary themes: a battlefield setting, exogamy, separation, and a heroic ethos. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Zaskhapuna and his son found themselves fighting on opposite sides in a larger conflict, as happened with Rostam and Sohrāb, and with Hildebrand and Hadubrand. In three of the “canonical” Indo-European sources, the relationship between the father and the boy’s mother is explicitly exogamous: the woman is a stranger from a foreign clan or caste. *Hildebrandslied* is an exception, only because this work survives in a fragment that does not disclose the status of Hadubrand’s mother. Separation is a third theme: the son was separated from his father during his childhood and/or youth due to the father’s exile, wanderlust, warfare, feudal obligations, or (in the Hittite example) due to the conditions of the son’s marriage. Fourth, Zaskhapuna’s son’s desire for honor, torn as he was between conflicting obligations owed to his father and father-in-law, exemplifies an attribute shared by most of the other primary sources, which present a specific kind of tragedy in which a good father slays a good son. This is quite different from other intergenerational conflicts in which an evil father slays his son, or in which a father slays an evil son. Thus we may exclude from our study an anecdote in the seventeenth-century Persian *Dabistān*, illustrating the “Farhang law” which called for vengeance against anyone who slaughtered a harmless animal. During the reign of Yāssān, “an elk had been slain by some tyrannically-inclined person, on beholding which the father of the insane criminal, with the ruthless sword, immediately dismembered his son’s head from his shoulders” and was justified in doing so.³⁴ Even so, the Russian *bylina* of Ilyá Múromets is an exception: Sokol’nichij feigned reconciliation with his father, then snuck into his tent at night and threw a spear at him while he slept, forcing Ilyá to slay him in self-defense.

Another early variant of “father-son combat” is the story of Arjuna and Bahruvāhana in book 14 (the “Book of Horse-Sacrifice”) the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*.³⁵ While living in exile in the kingdom of Manipur, Arjuna engendered a son on princess

³⁴Moshan Fānī, *Dabistān-ul-Mazāhib* 1937: 100. This anecdote is matched with another in which a son kills his father after he accidentally shot a deer (p. 101).

³⁵*Mahābhārata* 14.78-80, trans. Ganguli 1990-91, 12: 134-40.

Chitrāngadā. Their son was fostered by his maternal grandfather, and subsequently reigned as king of Manipur. After the catastrophic war between the Pāndavas and the Kauravas, when it came time to prepare for *aśvamedha*, Arjuna accompanied the sacrificial horse on its one-year circumambulation of India. His duty was the guard the horse from any interloper who might capture it and thereby disrupt the *aśvamedha*. Arjuna himself challenged Babhrūvāhana to a fight, and Ulūpī the snake-goddess, one of Arjuna's wives, egged him on. They fought ferociously, and the son slew his father with a poisoned arrow. Despondent about his parricide, Babhrūvāhana fainted and contemplated suicide (or, alternatively, died and was revived), but further tragedy was averted with the aid Ulūpī, who revived Arjuna with a talismanic gem. At the conclusion of this episode, father and son reconciled, when Ulūpī explained that Arjuna had been living under a curse, which could be lifted only if he was defeated by his son.

The Arjuna-Bahrūvāhana episode has five probative features in common with the Hittite myth of Zaskhapuna: exogamous marriage, separation of father and son, heroic ethos (a good father, a good son), and tragic necessity, such that against his will, the son was compelled to fight his father. Indeed it was Arjuna himself who first rebuked him for attempting to avoid combat, followed by Ulūpī, and it was Arjuna who praised him for fighting ferociously. In an obvious deviation from the classic "father-son combat" scenario, Bahrūvāhana slew Arjuna rather than the converse, but later the father was resurrected, and father and son reconciled (as happens in virtually all "secondary" examples of the typescene). As in the Hittite source, so in the Sanskrit one, father and son recognized each other from the outset. Mutual recognition was not an issue at the earliest, Proto-Indo-European stage in this typescene.

Reaching their conclusions independently, Ruth Katz, Nicholas J. Allen, and Dean Miller quite rightly nominated the Arjuna-Bahrūvāhana episode for inclusion in the canon of Indo-European father-son combats.³⁶ Taking this a step further, Anne Ranero compared the episode with Cú Chulainn's fight with Connla and argued that the Old Irish and Sanskrit examples are closest to Proto-Indo-European myth because

³⁶Katz 1990: 198; Allen 1995: 146-50, 1996: 8-9, and 2000; Miller 1996: 115.

both include supernatural details, while the other “canonical” sources are rationalized or naturalistic. According to Ranero, the primal PIE father-son combat was a myth of ritual sacrifice.³⁷ We are inclined to a different view, namely, that in the Arjuna-Bahruvāhana episode, “father-son combat,” a contribution of the PIE substratum, was drawn into the Indic adstratum of sacrifice, as one of Arjuna’s diverse adventures as “follower and protector of the sacrificial horse.”³⁸ Arjuna and Cú Chulainn are complex mythic figures who lend themselves to comparison at many levels, but in the limited context of typescene-analysis, we find it more probative to compare Arjuna with Zaskhapuna, as fathers whose sons were forced into combat against their will.

The hero as storm-god

The Zaskhapuna-myth raises a question: do other fathers in our tragic stories have a storm-god in their mythic past? Speculation along this line is unfashionable, in the long aftermath of negative reaction to nineteenth-century interpretations of medieval epics as nature-allegories. Even so, at critical moments Rostam and Ilyá Múromets are homologized to storm-gods.

At the start of his combat with White Dev, the last and most important of his seven “heroic labors” (*haft kh‘ān*) Rostam “mounted [his wonder-horse] Rakhsh, drew his sword from its scabbard, and roared out his name like thunder.”³⁹ When he captured Olad and his retainers (his fifth labor), he mounted his wonder-horse, “drew his glittering sword and rode toward them like a threatening cloud,” and when Olad asked him his name, he said, “My name is cloud, if a cloud can fight like a lion; it’ll rain down spears and sword blows and lop noblemen’s heads off.”⁴⁰ Earlier still, Rostam gained possession of his horse, as a colt, by scaring its mare-mother off with a stentorian roar;⁴¹ together they often seemed like Thunder and Lightning. During his combat with Sohrāb, Rostam had the strength and ferocity required to “tear rock from the mountain crags.”⁴² Just so the giant Tork’ Angeł, Polyphemos’s Armenian cousin, was

³⁷Ranero 1998.

³⁸*Mahābhārata* 14.78, trans. Ganguli 1990-91, 12: 134.

³⁹Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 161.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Davis 2006: 157.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, Davis 2006: 132.

⁴²*Ibid.*, Davis 2006: 204.

credited for repelling an armada of enemy ships on the Pontus by tearing off mountain cliffs and throwing them into the sea, creating a storm that sank many ships and sent others adrift. The eighth-century Armenian historian Moses Khorenats'i, in a discussion about "Fables of the Persians," discredited Tork' alongside Rostam as unhistorical strongmen in oral epic tradition.⁴³

Tork' Angel's literary kinsmen include Polyphemos (*Odyssey* 9.471-86), Talos in Apollodorus's *Bibliotheka* (1.9.26) and in Apollonius of Rhodes's *Argonautica* (4.1638-93), an unnamed giant in the third voyage of Sindbad, another in the *Arabian Nights* tale of "Sayf al-Muluk and Badia al-Jamal,"⁴⁴ and Ankylos (< Arm. *Angel*, cf. Hittite *Ingalava*, Greek *Argilene*), one of Basil's opponents in *Digenes Akritas*. But Tork' Angel's direct ancestor is the Anatolian storm-god **Tarkhon-* (< verb **torh-* "conquer, vanquish"), attested in Luwian *Tarhunza*, Palaic *Taru*, and Hittite *Tarhunna*, *Tarnunta*, *Tarawa*, the equivalent of Hattic *Zaskhapuna*. Hittite engravings depict him with a club, and ax, or a trident symbolic of lightning.⁴⁵ His name was preserved in Latin *Tarquinius*, the Etruscan royal dynasty, two of whose members were Roman kings. Lucumo Tarquinius Priscus (ca. 616-579 B.C.) and Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (ca. 534-510 B.C.) ruled as the fifth and last of the seven kings of Rome.⁴⁶ According to a Lydian aetiology reported by Herodotus (1.94), Etruria, which he calls Tyrrhenia, was colonized by Pelasgian settlers led by prince Tyrrhenus, a son of the Lydian King Attys, during a time of famine when it was necessary to reduce the population by drawing lots for exile. The Anatolian storm-god **Tarkhon-* thus gave his name to Armenian Tork', to Lydian Tyrrhenus, and to the Etruscan dynastic family of Tarquinia, whose infamous scion, King Lucius's son Sextus, brought down the kingship by raping his cousin's wife Lucretia, causing a general rebellion in Rome. Just like thunder and lightning, the image of Rostam scraping cliffs off of mountains, as Tork' Angel had done, links him with the storm-god.

As for Ilyá Múromets: Isabel Hapgood (1851-1928), the pioneering American translator of Russian literature and Old

⁴³Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, "Fables of the Persians," trans. Thomson 1976.

⁴⁴Von Grunebaum 1953: 302-4.

⁴⁵Gurney 1977: 22; Watkins 1995: 430; West 2007: 251.

⁴⁶Livy 34.2-7; see Russell 1979: 31 for the etymological link to Tarquin.

Church Slavonic service books, first noted that this bogatýr was equated with St. Ilyá (Elijah, Elias), the prophet who rode to heaven on a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2: 1-12). St. Ilyá, whose medieval iconographic attributes include thunder, lightning, rain, and the shaggy beard and gaunt face of an ascetic, by a process of religious syncretism took over the functions of Perun, the Slavic storm-god. Bogatýr and prophet became one by the sixteenth century, when travelers reported seeing images and memorials of Ilyá Múromets among saints in the churches of Kiev. The earliest known report of this appeared in the diary of Eryk Lassota von Steblau (1550-1616), who in 1594 visited the tomb of “Elia Morowlin, a distinguished hero and bohater,” in a chapel of St. Sophia.⁴⁷ Then, too, unlike some other bylíný heroes, Ilyá Múromets was a purely legendary figure, notwithstanding de Vries’s speculation that he might have been a Viking in the court of Vladimir I, Grand Duke of Kiev (ca. 980-1015).⁴⁸ Had the two Ilyás already merged by the twelfth century, when Russian bards began composing bylíný about Ilyá Múromets?

Arguing the case that Ilyá Múromets was an avatar of the storm-god Perun, Hapgood applied the familiar nineteenth-century method of nature-allegory. For example, she proposed that the “male Cinderella” story about Ilyá’s first thirty years as a paralyzed, unpromising youth, who lay in a bunk over the stove while his two older brothers plowed the fields, allegorized “the absence of the Thunder-deity in winter.” In the story of Ilyá and Sokol’nichij, Ilyá symbolized heaven, Zlatygorka or Semigorka symbolized the clouds, and Sokol’nichij’s slaying of his mother symbolized lightning striking the clouds.⁴⁹ It is difficult to follow her logic, since the mother’s names mean “Gold Mountain” and “Seven Mountain” respectively. Nature-allegory no longer has claim to validity, but Hapgood supplemented this with allusions to details symbolic of a storm-god. In “Ilyá of Múrom and Falcon the Hunter,” for example, the hero shot a fiery arrow that shattered an oak tree, symbolic of lightning.⁵⁰ Disparaging this argument, L. A. Magnus rejected her attempt “to turn Ilyá Múromets into the Thunder-God, merely because

⁴⁷Hapgood 1886: 336-40, “Ilyá of Múrom,” at p. 336.

⁴⁸de Vries 1963: 120.

⁴⁹Hapgood 1886: 338.

⁵⁰Hapgood 1886: 248 and 339.

the speed of his arrow is compared with the lightning flash.”⁵¹ Even so, Magnus concedes the merger of Ilyá Múromets, St. Ilyá, and Perun in early modern (if not in medieval) Russian culture. It may be that Hapgood’s conclusions deserve a more sympathetic hearing, even though her argument from nature-allegory has not withstood the test of time. In several byliny, Ilyá’s wonder-horse, named “Cloudfall,” had the ability to fly over fields and seas; in “Ilyá of Múrom and Nightingale the Robber” he leapt across a bog in one bound. Ilyá often used a club as his weapon,⁵² like storm-gods in the eastern Mediterranean (*Tarkhon-, Baal) and in Indo-European mythic traditions (Indra, Thor, Perun).

Another attribute of the father in these stories is his status as a famous hero. The story of how he slew his son is tragic, to be sure, but it is only one of his many adventures and is never seen as the focal point of his career. The Anatolian storm-god’s antagonist was Illuyanka, not his son, whose death was incidental, and anyway Zaskhapuna was the protagonist in many Hittite myths.⁵³ In the Hurrian-Hittite “Song of Ullikummi,” the storm-god’s antagonist was his father Kumarbi, progenitor of the stone-monster Ullikummi, whom he (Teššub) had displaced from the throne in protracted “kingship in heaven” conflicts.⁵⁴ Cú Chulainn’s most tragic misadventure was the slaying of his foster-brother Fer Diad during the cattle-raid of Cooley;⁵⁵ by comparison, his slaying of Connla was a minor episode. Rostam’s slaying of White Dev, the last of his seven “trials,” was his most important heroic achievement, and while his slaying of Sohrāb brought him sorrow, for many years afterwards he continued his career as champion to the shahs. Ilyá Múromets is the hero in nine extant byliny; his most important achievement was his capture and execution of Solovej the Brigand (“Nightingale the Robber”).⁵⁶ His fame spread to two thirteenth-century Germanic epics: the MHG *Ortnit*, in which Elias von Reuzzen (Riuzen, Reuczen) was the warrior-companion of King Ornit of Lombardy,⁵⁷ and the Norwegian *Thidrekssaga*, where Ilias is the youngest of the three

⁵¹Magnus 1921: xix.

⁵²Hapgood 1886: 42, 78-81, and 209.

⁵³Güterbock 1961: 141-79.

⁵⁴Güterbock 1951-52; cf. Burkert 1987: 19-24 for Greek parallels.

⁵⁵*Táin Bó Cúailnge*, in Cross and Slover 1936: 281-327, and Carson 2008.

⁵⁶Bailey and Ivanova 1998: 25-36; earlier, Hapgood 1886: 77-87.

⁵⁷For *Ortnit*, see Kofler 2001: 55-117; English translation, Thomas 1986: 1-42.

sons of Hertnid, co-ruler of Rus, whose successor was Ilias's older brother Valtimar (Vladimir I, the first Christian ruler of Kiev, ca. 980-1015).⁵⁸ In the Old Norse saga it was Valtimar, not Ilias, who played a major role. Still, his identity as the "earl of Greece"⁵⁹ perhaps reflects his fictional role, well established in Russian byliny, as a militant defender of the Greco-Russian Orthodox Church. The role of Hildibrand in *Thidrekssaga*, too, makes it clear that this hero was famous for many adventures, quite apart from his combat with his son Alibrand (earlier Hadubrand), even though the *Hildebrandslied* fragment isolates this one episode.

The canon of "primary" sources for IE father-son combat

If the Hittite myth of Zaskhapuna and the Sanskrit story of Arjuna and Babhrūvāhana are accepted as the earliest extant examples of Indo-European father-son combat, they would be fifth and sixth in a canon of "primary" sources that traditionally has included the Persian, Germanic, Irish, and Russian episodes. Because of its late date, some scholars have viewed the Russian source as secondary, derived either from the Rostam-cycle or from a hypothetical western source that had also influenced the story of Cú Chulainn and Connla. Even so the bylina of Ilyá Múromets and Sokol' nichij has both "eastern" and "western" features, and Ilyá's Zaskhapuna-like storm-god features might be another direct link to Indo-European myth.

There is, in fact, a seventh primary source, long overlooked, which would have been included in the IE canon from the outset if scholars had been aware of it: Parthenius's epitome of the ancient Greek story of Odysseus and Euryalus, in *Erotika Pathemata* 3.⁶⁰ We would have missed it too, had not Professor Nicholas Allen (Oxford) called our attention to it in two important articles.⁶¹ After Odysseus returned to Ithaca and reclaimed his rightful estate and position, he traveled to Epirus, where he seduced (or possibly, raped) Euippe, the daughter of King Tyrimmas. When their son, Euryalus, grew to manhood, Euippe sent him to Ithaca with some recognition-tokens sealed in a wax tablet. Odysseus was not home at the time, but his return was expected, and in the interval Penelope, intent on

⁵⁸Hapgood 1886: 337; Baesecke 1940b, 1: 238; de Vries 1963: 120.

⁵⁹*Thidrekssaga* chapters 25, 31, and 241-42, in Haymes 1988: 24, 26, and 148.

⁶⁰Parthenius 1992: 9 and 1999: 312-13 and 384-90.

⁶¹Allen 1995: 149-50 and 2000.

Medea-like revenge for her husband's infidelity, persuaded him to slay Euryalus as a conspirator. On his return, he did so, and subsequently killed himself with the spine of a stingray. Here, five probative features link Odysseus with Rostam, Cú Chulainn, and Ilyá Múromets: (1) a heroic father has a son by an exogamous union, (2) the son is raised in absence of the father; (3) the mother sends the son on a quest in search of his father; (4) she gives him recognition-tokens; (5) the father fails to recognize his son, and slays him in combat. The parallel with Arjuna-Bahruvāhana is less detailed, but in a related context, Professor Allen has discovered parallels between Odysseus's five encounters with women during his return from Troy, Arjuna's five marriages during his penitential journey in book 1 of the Mahābhārata, and Cú Chulainn's marriage and four liaisons.⁶² Father-son combat is one of several ancillary themes that link these heroes, whose journeys take us deep into Indo-European waters.

In comparative myth, nothing is ever easy once the Greeks get involved. Parthenius represents his epitome as a synopsis of Sophocles's *Euryalus*. The existence of this lost tragedy is confirmed in a fragment by Eustathius, who gives the mother's name as Euippe but says that Euryalus was killed by his legitimate half-brother Telemachus, not by Odysseus.⁶³ Then, too, the Odysseus-Euryalus story as a whole has its double in the lost epic of *Cypria*, Apollonius, and elsewhere, where Odysseus's combat is with Telegones, his son by Circe,⁶⁴ whose role matches the part played by Ulūpī in the Arjuna-Bahruvāhana story.⁶⁵ Telegones, armed with the spine of a stingray provided by Circe, fought Odysseus unbeknownst and slew him; one of several rival legends about Odysseus's death. Thus Parthenius's trio of Odysseus, Euippe, and Euryalus is matched in *Cypria* by Odysseus, Circe, and Telegones, and the Eustathius-fragment adduces another rival trio: Telemachus, Euippe, and Euryalus. There is no way to tell from Greek sources alone which trio had priority, but Parthenius's version comes closest to the Indo-European model. If Parthenius summarized *Euryalus* correctly, Sophocles dramatized a Greek heroic story that followed the

⁶²Allen 1996 and 2000.

⁶³Lightfoot, in Parthenius 1999: 385 and 387.

⁶⁴Frazer 1919-27, 2: 203 collects fifteen classical sources for Telegones; cf. Allen 1995: 149.

⁶⁵Allen 1996: 150.

early Indo-European model.

Another possible source might be an Ossetic Nart saga about Uryzmæg, mentioned by Bowra and nominated by Miller as a “primary” Indo-European witness.⁶⁶ Uryzmæg had a son, the youngest of three and the only one who was engendered naturally by means of conception with his wife Satána. His status as Uryzmæg’s only legitimate son calls attention to a recurring theme that is either explicit or implied in most “canonical” sources, namely, that the father slays his only son, or at any rate his only legitimate son. Uryzmæg’s unnamed son was born while the hero was abroad on a long journey. Satána sent the son to an underwater kingdom to be fostered by the sea-god Don Bettyr. As Uryzmæg journeyed homeward, a gigantic vulture seized him and deposited him on a rock at sea. He sat there in sorrow and shame, until the three daughters of Don Bettyr approached him and invited him to their underwater court, where a lamb was slaughtered and a feast was prepared in his honor. Unbeknownst to Uryzmæg, his unnamed son, a delightful boy, was present in the court. The hero skewered a piece of mutton on his spear and offered it to the boy, who jumped about in delight and by misadventure fell into the spear, such that it pierced his heart and he died. Sacrifice is an implied theme here, as in the Arjuna-Babhrūvāhana episode: when the Nart hero offered a portion of mutton on the point of his spear, he imitated a sacrificial ritual. Whether by mischance or miracle, his son replaced the mutton as the sacrifice. So it misfortuned that Don Bettyr’s hospitality gave way to the boy’s funeral feast. When Uryzmæg returned home and reported his misadventure to Satána, she told him that the boy who died was his unnamed son.⁶⁷

As is the case with other fathers in this tragic typescene, Uryzmæg (Circassian Warzameg) is a famous hero, whose misadventure with his son is one of many episodes in his active career as a champion. However, Uryzmæg’s story differs from the other Indo-European sources in two respects. First, its setting, an underwater kingdom or court, appears in other Caucasian Nart sagas, in the Armenian *Sasna C’rér*, and in folktales around the world,⁶⁸ but not in other “father-son combat” typescenes, where the setting is either a battlefield or a

⁶⁶Bowra 1952: 399; Miller 1996: 111.

⁶⁷Dumézil 1930: 32-34, and Dumézil 1965: 44-47.

⁶⁸Anderson 2005: 27-30.

frontier outpost. Second, the tragic death of the son was due not to confrontation or combat, but to an accident at a feast. This saga does not play a role in our reconstruction of the Indo-European typescene.

Another candidate that Miller nominates is David of Sassoun's combat with his son Pokr Mher, in the third cycle of the Armenian *Sasna Crer* (also mentioned in Bowra 1952). An excellent specimen, to be sure, this story exemplifies the common themes of exogamy, separation of father from son, heroic ethos, problematic kinship-recognition, and a patrimonial armband, but the episode is modeled on the Rostam-Sohrāb combat in the Rostam-cycle, and cannot count as an independent witness of the Indo-European typescene. We discuss this episode below.

Miller renames the typescene *Sohnes Todt*, "son's death" (instead of *Vater-Sohnes-Kampf*), and proposes additional "primary" sources as independent evidence of this supposed Indo-European theme. In the Old French *Gormont and Isambard*, Isambard and his father Bernard, fighting opposite each other on Saracen and Frankish sides, unbeknownst to each other engaged in combat. Isambard was slain in this battle, not by his father, but by four Frankish knights. In the Old French *Perlesvaus*, Lohort or Lohout, Arthur's son by Guenevere, was killed by Sir Kay, not by Arthur. In the Old Norse saga of Arrow-Odd, the hero's son Vignir was slain by a troll named Ogmond Eypjofskiller, who blamed the father for a killing that he did himself. In these examples a son is slain, but not by the father. It is difficult to follow the logic of displacement that would admit these stories to the canon of the "father-son combat" typescene.

Other candidates are stories that end in reconciliation rather than tragedy. In *Landnámabók* the quarrel between the Norwegian-born Icelander Æfar Ketilsson and his son Vefrod, who had been fostered in Norway, ends in mutual recognition and reconciliation. Resembling Uryzmæg's unnamed son, Vefrod was the youngest of Æfar's three sons, and his only legitimate one. If this story owes anything to the Indo-European typescene, it would have been through imitation of a secondary source—something like the fight and reconciliation between Hildibrand and Alibrand in *Thidrekssaga* and in *Die jüngere Hildebrandslied*.⁶⁹

⁶⁹*Saga of Thidrek of Bern*, chapters 406-9, trans. Haymes 1988: 248-50. As a

In summary, early Indo-European literatures provide seven independent witnesses of Indo-European father-son combats, viz.: stories about the Hittite storm-god Zaskhapuna, Arjuna in *Mahābhārata*, Odysseus in Parthenius's synopsis of Sophocles's *Euryalus*, the Russian Ilyá Múromets, the Persian hero Rostam, the Old Irish Cú Chulainn, and Hildebrand in the Germanic Dietrich-cycle. These are the "canon" of Indo-European heroes whose adventures exemplify the father-son combat typescene.

Evolution of the "father-son combat" typescene

This brings us to our first conjecture about father-son combat, namely, that the typescene evolved in three stages. At stage I, the "Proto-Indo-European" stage represented by the Hittite and Sanskrit sources, the central focus was the son's unwilling combat with his father, undertaken as a tragic necessity. To judge from the Hittite source, the hero was a storm-god (like Zaskhapuna), or an avatar of the storm-god (like Rostam and Ilyá Múromets), who begot a son on an exogamous wife or mistress. In the Hittite, Sanskrit, and most other sources the hero was separated from his son due to fosterage, exile, or the exigencies of his military career. The ethos was heroic: a good father engaged in combat with a good son. Most likely the father slew his son, although, as we have seen, in the Sanskrit source the father was slain by his son. The setting, too, at stage I most likely was a battlefield (in the Hittite, Persian, and OHG sources) or a frontier outpost (in the Irish and Russian ones), although the Sanskrit source already exemplifies an alternate setting, "on the road" to a destination (Arjuna on the *āsvamedha* route; Pokr Mher and David on the road to Gurjistan; Hildebrand and Alibrand on the road to Bern).

During stage II, an "early Indo-European" stage, the thematic focus shifted from the son's unwilling combat and death to the failure of one or both combatants to recognize their kinship. The Greek, Persian, Germanic, Irish, and Russian sources reflect this stage of development. The typescene still included, as themes, (1) occasional vestiges of the storm-god, (2) exogamy, (3) separation, (4) a battlefield or frontier setting, and (5) heroic ethos. To these, four themes were added: (6) failure of mutual recognition, (7) a recognition-

thirteenth-century text, the *Thidrekssaga* would not have influenced *Landnámabók*.

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token, such as an armband or ring worn by the son, (8) the son's prodigious growth and extreme youth at the time of the combat, and (9) the circumstance that (sometimes) the father fought with his *only* son. The death of the son at the hand of his father continued to be important, as an inevitable, tragic denouement due to the scandalous failure of father and/or son to recognize their kinship. This failure occurred under circumstances where mutual recognition was expected: usually the son went out in search of his father, and wore a recognition-token that had been given by the father for this purpose. Moreover, it occurred in a culture that cultivated a mystique of "family charisma," such that two noble kinsmen would be expected to recognize their kinship intuitively.

At stage III, "dialect differences" set in. The recognition-token, originally given by the father to his pregnant wife or mistress, in *Hildebrandslied* was offered by the father to his son during their combat. This token could be a patrimonial armband, a ring, or a cross. The "heroic ethos" of the good son disappeared from the Russian bylina in which Sokol' nichij, resentful of his bastardy, murdered his mother and tried to murder his father by stealth. In the process of oral-compositional transmission, "dialect diversity" is inevitable, and even more differences will appear when we turn to the "secondary" sources.

It is natural to wonder what the underlying motive of this tragic typescene might have been. Was it an allegory of human sacrifice, like the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, in fulfillment of some cultic requirement that eludes us?⁷⁰ Was it the cruelty of fate in a heroic environment? The son's impulsive desire to test his strength against an established champion, matched by the father's compulsive desire to put down an unknown upstart?⁷¹ The stubborn pride of the son, or of both combatants, who refused to disclose their identity?⁷² The "ultimate solipsism" of the epic hero, who passed his heroic status down to his son as heir in the next generation, only to retrieve it by slaying him?⁷³

All these were possible motives, but the most powerful one was the scandalous failure of one or both combatants to

⁷⁰Miller 1996: 121-23.

⁷¹Grégoire 1942: 26.

⁷²de Vries 1963: 50-51.

⁷³Miller 1996: 124-26.

recognize their kinship, under circumstances that were favorable to kinship-recognition. The primary and secondary sources present seven separate themes that provide for the possibility of mutual recognition:

(1) **Recognition-token**, usually borne by the son. In the Odysseus-Euryalus story, Euipe gave her son tokens to take with him to Ithaca. In *Shāhnāma*, Rostam gave Tahmineh an armband for their son to wear, but during his combat with his father, Sohrāb wore it under his armor. The futility of the patrimonial armband is emphasized when Sohrāb recalls that his mother had “bound a clasp on my arm and said, ‘Take this in memory of your father, and watch for when it will be useful to you’; but now it shows its power too late, and the son is laid low before his father.”⁷⁴ Patrimonial armbands appear elsewhere in *Shāhnāma*. When Bizhan, during his adventure in the Ermani (Armenian) mountain forests where he hunted down mammoth boars, prepared to cross the border into Tur to spy on a festival there; he wore jeweled armbands that his father, Giv, had given him.⁷⁵

In *Sasunc’i Davit’*, David gave his wife Khandout an armband for his son to wear. Pokr Mher wore it during his combat with his father, but David did not seem to notice it. The armband is omitted from a variant version of this story. In *Hildebrandslied* it was Hildebrand who had the armband; he offered it to his son in earnest of good faith, but Hadubrand feared that the old man was up to some treachery and rejected it. In the early version of “Ilyá Múromets and Sokol’nichij,” the recognition-token (in most collected specimens) was a cross if the unborn infant was a son, or a ring for a daughter; this scene is omitted from the later version.⁷⁶ In the Irish story, Cú Chulainn gave Aífe a gold ring, and told her to send their son in search of him as soon as he had grown big enough to wear the ring on his finger (or thumb).⁷⁷ In the Middle English *Sir Degaré*, the token was the eponymous hero’s sword, with a chink missing from the blade-point. Degaré’s father carried the chink with him, and when the two met in combat, the father

⁷⁴Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 210.

⁷⁵Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, in Davis 2006: 311.

⁷⁶Bailey and Ivanova 1998: 37-38 and 40, lines 15-16.

⁷⁷The recognition-token is a finger-ring in “The Wooing of Emer” (Cross and Slover 1936: 153-71, at p. 167) and a thumb-ring in “Death of Connla” (ibid. 172-75, at p. 172).

recognized his son by matching chink with sword.⁷⁸

(2) **Heraldry** provides the possibility of recognition in two sources, *Thidrekssaga* and Firdausi's *Shāhnāma*. Prior to the meeting of father and son in *Thidrekssaga*, Konrad told Hildibrand that his son rode a white horse, and carried a shield "white as flour and there is a castle painted on it." On the road to Bern, he met a man out hawking, who "had a white horse and his trappings were white with an image of Bern with golden towers."⁷⁹ In the Rostam-cycle, too, heraldry offered the possibility of mutual recognition. Prior to the meeting of father and son, Rostam anticipated that his unnamed antagonist would recognize him from his battle banner, a green field with a dragon, and a golden lion atop its staff. When Rostam received a written summons from Shah Kay Kāvus to join his army and fight this unknown Turanian champion, he laughed and said, "when this young warrior sees my banner, his heart will know his revels are all ended; he won't be in such a hurry to fight anymore," knowing that his opponent is Rostam.⁸⁰ On the night before their single combat, Sohrāb spied on the Persian encampment from a height, accompanied by the Persian commander Hejir, his prisoner. Sohrāb wanted Hejir to point out the most illustrious Persian commanders by their banners, "men like Tus, Kāvus, Gudarz, Bahrām, and the famous Rostam." Hejir identified the banner of Kay Kāvus, "emblazoned with the sun and topped with a golden moon [on its staff]." He pointed out Tus's elephant-banner, Gudarz's lion-banner, Giv's wolf-banner, and Gorāz's bear-banner, but when Sohrāb asked him about the exceptionally tall champion with a green dragon-banner, Hejir said it belonged to a mercenary from Tartary whose name was unknown to him. Sohrāb asked about this twice, and Hejir lied twice, fearing that if this youth singled out Rostam and slew him, Persia would be without a champion and Sohrāb would seize the throne.⁸¹

(3) **The son set out to find the father** when he was old enough to leave home, usually at the behest of the mother. So Euryalus sought Odysseus in Ithaca, and Connla sought Cú Chulainn in Erin.⁸² Sohrāb pursued a military career among the Turanians,

⁷⁸ *Sir Degaré* 99-119 and 934-68, in Rumble 1965: 45-78, at pp. 48-49 and 76-77.

⁷⁹ *Thidrekssaga* 406-7, in Haymes 1988: 248.

⁸⁰ Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 194-95.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, trans. Davis 2006: 200-1.

⁸² "Woing of Emer," Cross and Slover 1936: 167; "Death of Connla," p. 172.

expecting to meet Rostam eventually. In *Sasna Crer*, Pokr Mher set out for Gurjistan to seek his father David, but they failed to recognize each other when they met on the road.⁸³ Sokol' nichij set out to conquer Kiev, not to find his father, but his mother had told him that when he encountered an old man in a field, that would be his father.⁸⁴ In the Russian bylina of "Saul Levanidovich," Constantin was born while his father was held captive by Saracens. The son went in search of him, and ended up fighting him in single combat until Saul recognized him.⁸⁵ Among "primary" sources, Hadubrand was an exception, for sailors had told him that Hildebrand had been killed in battle.⁸⁶

(4) *The mother warned the son, or father, or both, to avoid combat.* When Sokol' nichij set out for Kiev, his mother warned him to show deference to an old man whom he would meet in an open field, for "that old Cossack is your dear father."⁸⁷ At the beginning of his combat with Connla, Cú Chulainn is warned by his wife Emer, playing the part of a substitute mother, "Do not murder thy only son! It is not fair fight nor wise to rise up against thy son."⁸⁸ In the Greek ballad of Adronikos, the boy's mother alerted him that he would know his father from his black pavilion, in contrast to the red tents of other men.⁸⁹

(5) *A warrior-companion alerted the father or son that his opponent is his kinsman.* After Rostam's and Sohrāb's second combat, the Turanian warrior Humān told Sohrāb that his opponent was Rostam. Because Sohrāb had trapped his opponent, but then released him, Humān admonished him, "Now watch for the consequences of this foolishness of yours when you face Rostam again."⁹⁰ In *Thidrekssaga*, Hildibrand was alerted by Konrad that his son would be a knight on a white horse, bearing a white shield blazoned with a castle.⁹¹ In the Persian and Urdu Hamza-cycle, just before Amir Hamza's fight with his son Alam Shah Roomi, commander Landhoor advised

⁸³ *Sasunc'i Davit'* 3.7.1 and 3, Shalian 1964: 326-27 and 329-30; Feydit 1964: 356-57 and 359-60. Surmelian 1964: 244-45 omits the detail that David expected Pokr Mher to go in search of him.

⁸⁴ Bailey and Ivanova 1998: 41 (lines 36-49).

⁸⁵ Bailey and Ivanova 1998: 39.

⁸⁶ *Hildebrandslied* 42-45, in Dickens 1915: 82-83.

⁸⁷ Bailey and Ivanov 1998: 41, lines 36-49.

⁸⁸ Cross and Slover 1936: 174.

⁸⁹ Garnett 1896, 1: 231; Potter 1899: 84.

⁹⁰ Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 208.

⁹¹ *Thidrekssaga* 406, trans. Haymes 1988: 248.

him, "I believe that this prince is your son, for his features and physiognomy reveal that," but Hamza responded, "If he were my son, he would not battle with my companions." Landhoor reminded him that his eldest son, Amar, also fought with him on one occasion, but Hamza ignored this advice.⁹²

(6) *Epic name-exchange*. In Indo-European epics it was customary for champions to disclose their identities to each other when meeting on the road, and for combatants to do so prior to combat. Alternatively, the name-exchange might occur after their initial combat, during a respite, as is the norm in Arabic folk-epics. Epic name-exchange might have prevented father-son combat had it not been honored more in the breach than in observance. In *Hildebrandslied*, the hero asked Hadubrand about his father and family and the son replied, "Hiltibrant hætti min fater; ih heitto Hadubrant" (17: my father was called Hildebrand; I am called Hadubrand). Hildebrand replied obliquely: "never hast thou sought the wager of battle with one so near of kin" (31-32). Maybe Hadubrand understood what he was saying, but it is possible that he didn't. In *Thidrekssaga*, the epic name-exchange convention turned into a comic contest of "outdoing," in which each man told the other, in effect, "tell me your name first and maybe I'll let you live."⁹³ In "The Wooing of Emer," the possibility of "epic name-exchange" was cancelled by the Celtic practice of *geasa* ("taboo"). Prior to Connla's birth, Cú Chulainn named the boy and charged Aífe "that he should not make himself known to any one man; also, that he should not turn out of the way of any man; nor refuse combat to any." In *Aided Óenfir Aífe*, when seven-year-old Connla arrived at King Conchobar's gathering near Tracht Eisi (Track Strand), commander Condere asked him his name. Connla refused to give it, in obedience to a *geasa* that his father had laid on him: "Let no man put him off his road, let him not make himself known to any man, nor let him refuse combat to any."⁹⁴ In the Greek ballad of Andronikos, the father asked his son Konstantin, "now say who are thy kindred? / Tell me of what stock thou art come, and say what is thy birthplace." Only after Andronikos questioned him

⁹²Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007: 791.

⁹³*Thidrekssaga* 408, trans. Haymes 1988: 249. This is one of many episodes in epic that show that Curtius's analysis of "outdoing" (1953: 162-65) is far too restrictive.

⁹⁴Cross and Slover 1936: 167 and 172-73.

three times did he dismount and disclose his identity to his father.⁹⁵

At the start of their single combat, Sohrāb invoked the tradition of epic name-exchange, but Rostam, like Hildebrand, responded with evasion:⁹⁶

Then Sohrab said, "I'm going to question you.
Your answer must be honest, straight, and true:
I think you're Rostam, and from the clan
Of warlike Sam and noble Nariman."
Rostam replied, "I'm not Rostam, I claim
No kinship with that clan or noble name:
Rostam's a champion, I'm a slave—I own
No royal wealth or crown or kingly throne."

Rostam's "battlefield humility," an epic tradition in its own right, has its counterpart in sir Gawain's combat with the prideful Priamus, who identified himself as a descendant of Hector, Alexander, Joshua, and Judas Maccabeus, four of the Nine Worthies. Gawain replied that he was just a servant in King Arthur's armory, charged with the duty of sewing doublets and quilting jerkins. They fought, and when Priamus yielded, their combat became an allegory of humility triumphant over false pride.⁹⁷ Even so, Rostam's case was tragic, for his self-denial led Sohrāb to conclude that his search for his father was futile.⁹⁸

And Sohrab's hopes were changed then to despair,
Darkening before his gaze the sunlit air.

(7) *Family charisma*. The Indo-European notion of family charisma was based upon the belief that the luck or blessedness of a family was transmitted genetically from one generation to another, such that marriages had to be arranged with care to ensure the continued vitality and aristocratic status of the family. Sexual liaisons, too, had to be restricted to prevent "charisma" from passing into the bloodlines of enemies. Family charisma is both a genetic essence and a quality of character.

⁹⁵Garnett 1896: 233-34; Potter 1899: 85.

⁹⁶Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 203.

⁹⁷Middle English *Alliterative Morte Arthure* 2593-2637, in Gardner 1971: 3-113, at pp. 69-70, repeated in Malory's *Morte Darthur* 5.10, 1967: 231-32.

⁹⁸Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 204.

Gentillesse in medieval French and English romances, for example, means both “noble birth” and “virtuous character.” In Pindar’s Odes and in the *Iliad*, *eugeneia* was signified by athletic and military victories, complemented by other markers, such as noble demeanor at court, rhetorical ability, and courtly accomplishments.⁹⁹ *Eugeneia* has its Persian counterpart in *farr*, an aristocratic refulgence that is manifest as radiance in the countenance and in the eyes of a successful shah, and also in Rostam, the hero who champions a succession of (sometimes undeserving) shahs. *Farr* was transmitted genetically from a hero to his descendents, but was dependent upon divine favor, and could be lost as punishment for wrongdoing, as happened to Jamshid when he boasted that he, rather than God, was the font of social order and prosperity.¹⁰⁰

In *Shāhnāma*, part of the mystique of family charisma was an innate ability of noble kinfolk to recognize each other as family. When Queen Homāy was reunited with her son Dārāb, who had been fostered by a fuller after Homāy had sent her infant son adrift on the Euphrates river in a wooden casket, “her maternal breasts flowed with milk” and she suspected that this might be her son.¹⁰¹ Dārāb, in contrast, disclosed to the fuller that “There’s something I’ve kept hidden. I don’t feel any instinctive love for you.”¹⁰² But the most telling example is the test of the polo-game, organized by Shah Ardeshir when he was first united with his seven-year-old son Shāpur, who had been raised secretly by his vizier. As a test to verify their kinship, Ardeshir arranged for Shāpur to play polo with 99 other seven-year-old boys, all dressed alike and similar in stature and build. “We’ll see if my soul responds at the sight of my own boy,” he told his vizier. “My heart will bear witness to the truth of what you’ve said, and acquaint me with my son,” and his vizier replied, “Your heart will tell you which is your son.” This happened.¹⁰³ The same theme appears in the tale of *Culhwch and Olwen* in the Welsh *Mabinogion*, when King Arthur’s cousin, Culhwch, visited his court and Arthur felt a premonition of

⁹⁹Anderson 1996: 98-99; cf. Anderson 1979.

¹⁰⁰Firdausi, *Shāhnāma* VS.23-27 in Warner 1905-25, 1: 132-35; Davis 2006: 6-8. The story is alluded by in the Georgian *Visramiani* 301 and 375 (chapters 53 and 60), trans. Waldrop 1914: 269 and 330.

¹⁰¹Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 446.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 445. This episode is repeated in the Persian *Dārāb Nāma*, chapter 2; cf. Hanaway 1970: 291.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 558-59.

kinship. “My heart grows tender towards thee,” Arthur said to him; “I know thou art sprung from my blood.”¹⁰⁴

Sohrāb, too, experienced this intuitive premonition of kinship. Despite his public display of contempt for Rostam’s old age, after their first combat he confided in a fellow Turanian warrior, Humān, that “he felt himself drawn” to his opponent, and suspected that he was Rostam.¹⁰⁵ Firdausi does not refrain from moral commentary about Rostam’s failure to recognize his son: “How strange the world’s ways are! All beasts will recognize their young—the fish in the sea, the wild asses on the plain—but suffering and pride will make a man unable to distinguish his son from his enemy.”¹⁰⁶ In *Sasunc’i Davit’*, too, the bard implies that it is unnatural for the father and son to fail to recognize each other. Khantout had been alerted to their fighting when their battle-blows propelled David’s handkerchief to her door in Sassoun. At once she “recognized its scent” as David’s. Her ability to do so contrasts with David’s and Pokr Mher’s failure to recognize each other, and with their stubbornness when they ignored her attempts to stop the fight.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *Culhwch and Olwen*, in *Mabinogion*, trans. Jones 1906: 95-136, at p. 100.

¹⁰⁵ Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 207.

¹⁰⁶ Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. David 2006: 204.

¹⁰⁷ Shalian 1964: 331-32 (3.7.3).

Father-son combat in Arabic folk-epics

In Arabic epic cycles, as in Indo-European counterparts, a father-son combat is one adventure among many in the military career of a famous hero. In his “Narrative index,” Lyons counts nineteen such combats in nine different epics; El-Shamy cites three folktale sources.¹⁰⁸ Many of these, embedded in a network of interlaced plots, are difficult to summarize, but we present some representative examples below. The inventories published thus far (Lyons 1995, El-Shamy 2004), while not exhaustive, disclose a wider distribution than most Indo-Europeanists might have imagined. Of course there are differences between the Arabic and Indo-European typescenes. One is that the Arab hero typically has several wives who, during his long absence, raise sons who are unknown to him, thereby increasing his chances for unwittingly engaging in combat with one or more of them. Another is that the combat always ends in mutual recognition and reconciliation, often celebrated at a feast. This happens in most “secondary” Indo-European sources, too.

The patrimonial armband plays a critical role in some Arabic epics, as it did in *Hildebrandslied*, *Sasunc'i Davit'*, and the Rostam-cycle. In *Sīrat al-ʿAlmīra Dhāt al-Himma*, an armband led to mutual recognition and reconciliation of the Hilālī champion ʿAbd al-Wahhāb with his Christian son Saif al-Nasrānīya, when they fought a duel to decide the fate of Hilālī prisoners in the camp of the Byzantine army. Saif (“Sword”) had been exiled as an infant because of an ill omen, and brought up by his Christian mother, Mairūna, in the Byzantine court. Unbeknownst to each other, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and Saif fought to a stalemate, killed each other’s horses, and started to wrestle. During their wrestling, they discovered that they wore identical armbands. Saif told his opponent that his mother Mairūna, the daughter of the Patriarch of Byzantium, said that his father wore an armband identical to his. Saif converted to Islam, and told his father to pretend to flee the battlefield. This was done, and when Saif returned to the Byzantine camp under cover of a feigned victory, he freed the Hilālī prisoners.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Lyons 1995, 2: 288, F 4 (9), father-son duel. El-Shamy 2004: 500-1, no. 873A, “The King (Chief, etc.) Meets his Unrecognized Son in Combat.”

¹⁰⁹ *Sīrat al-ʿAlmīra Dhāt al-Himma* 40-41, in Lyons 1995, 3: 341; Hamilton 1819-20, 1: 272-82. Underlying this episode is another migratory typescene that had its origin in ancient Mesopotamia: two champions engage in combat, usually wrestling, find themselves equally matched, and become companions or sworn brothers, as happened with Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Arabic folk-epics

Conversion to Islam was part of the reconciliation scene in the combat of Ma'rūf and 'Arnus in *Sīrat Baibars*, too.¹¹⁰ In *'Alī al-Zaiḅaq*, Alī and his son Asad fought unbeknownst to each other. Later, Asad was captured by Fātima, who recognized him as Alī's missing son from an amulet strapped to his arm.¹¹¹ *Sīrat 'Antar*, an epic from the tenth-century or earlier about a pre-Islamic hero,¹¹² tells the story of Sayyid, who lost his wife Salmā and settled in Mecca with his young son Nazih. The boy was kidnapped by a band of Qahtānid brigands from Yemen, was raised by them, and became their leader. The same brigands captured Sayyid and his brother Zuhair, but 'Antar intercepted them. Just as Nazih was about to be executed, Sayyid recognized him as his son from his patrimonial armband. The episode ended in mutual reconciliation.¹¹³ After his capture by 'Antar in the same epic, Damhār was spared execution when he recognized an amulet that one of his captors, Ghasūb, wore on his arm. The discovery that Ghasūb was Damhār's nephew led to reconciliation and a celebratory feast.¹¹⁴

The black knight 'Antar was the strongman par excellence of Arabic folk-epics, the Arab equivalent of Rostam, Herakles, Samson, or Gilgamesh. Like David he was also famous as a poet. 'Antar fought in father-son combats not once, but several times. Once he intervened in a bridewinning dispute by capturing a black champion, Maisara, who had rescued a maiden from death at her father's hand; 'Antar then learned that Masaira was his son.¹¹⁵ Twice, 'Antar fought unwittingly with his son Ghassūb, once during a battle between Arabs and Persians, and again as a precondition for 'Antar's right to hang up his ode beside the odes of six other great poets at the Ka'ba in Mecca. Ghassūb had left his own tribe, along with fifty retainers, after his mother Ghamrā refused to acknowledge him and claimed that he was a foundling whom she had rescued from the jaws of a lioness. During the father-son combat, Ghamrā intervened to

offer many examples. Recognition-tokens are met with often in Arabic epics and folktales, quite apart from father-son combat episodes; see El-Shamy 2004: 499-500, no. 0873.

¹¹⁰ *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baibars* 79, in Lyons 1995, 2: 71 and 3: 144-45.

¹¹¹ *Kitāb Qissat al-Muqaddam 'Alī al-Zaiḅaq* 27, in Lyons 1995, 2: 16 and 3: 13-14.

¹¹² Kruk 2006: 23-24. For narrative summaries: Lyons 1995, 2: 18-44 and 3: 17-76.

¹¹³ *Sīrat 'Antar* 21, in Lyons 1995, 2: 23-24 and 3: 29.

¹¹⁴ *Sīrat 'Antar* 48.19 in Heath 1996: 207.

¹¹⁵ *Sīrat 'Antar* 49, in Lyons 1995, 2: 32 and 3: 48.

stop the fight by telling her story.¹¹⁶ In another episode, 'Antar defeated a black champion, Ghadbān, who had captured a Byzantine tribute-caravan in order to use the proceeds as a dowry. Ghadbān achieved many other adventures, and only 'Antar was strong enough to capture him, but Ghadbān's mother Sarwa stopped the fight and disclosed that he was 'Antar's son.¹¹⁷

"Mother's intervention" is a recurring theme in Arabic epics. In *Sīrat Saif al-Tijān*, Saif defeated his oldest son, Mulhib, in single combat during a dynastic controversy between Mulhib and his younger brother Sa'd. Because Mulhib had slain his paternal grandfather, Saif intended to slay him, but Mulhib's mother, the jinn princess Dal'jō, intervened, and Saif spared Mulhib on condition that they acknowledge his two younger sons, Sa'd and Liwā, as his heirs.¹¹⁸

In *Sīrat Banī Hilāl al-Kubrā*, we learn of the hero Rizq bin Nā'il, who married Khadrū, daughter of King Qirdāb of Mecca. She bore him a daughter, Shīha, and afterward a son, Baraka (or Barakāt; also known as Abū Zaid), but because the son was black, he was fostered by "one of her father's enemies," a generous man named al-Zahlān. (In an alternate version published by Lane in 1834, Khadrā returned to Mecca with her son Barakāt. There he was raised in the house of his maternal grandfather. In this version, Sheehah [Shīha] was Baraka's half-sister by another wife, along with 'Ateemeh, another half-sister.¹¹⁹) After his youth as an *enfant terrible*, Baraka became al-Zahlān's champion, and drove away tribute-collectors. This activity led him into single combat with Rizq. One morning they fought until noon. Rizq requested a rest period, during which time he planned a sneak-attack on Baraka with a javelin, but Shīha prevented this by calling out a warning. Baraka then captured Rizq and was about to slay him, but freed him at Shīha's request.¹²⁰ In this episode, Shīha, the daughter and older sister, played the mediator's role usually played by the mother. (In the version summarized in Lane 1834, Barakāt's

¹¹⁶ *Sīrat 'Antar* 55, in Lyons 1995, 2: 34 and 3: 51-52; *Sīrat 'Antar* 44.7-8 in Heath 1996: 203, and pp. 146-47 for discussion.

¹¹⁷ *Sīrat 'Antar* 63, in Lyons 1995, 2: 376-37 and 3: 58. *Sīrat 'Antar* 50.6-8 in Heath 1996: 210.

¹¹⁸ *Saif al-Tijān* 21-22, in Lyons 1995, 2: 271-72 and 3: 649-50.

¹¹⁹ Lane 1834: 391-99, "The Romance of Aboo-Zeyd," at p. 394.

¹²⁰ *Sīrat Banī Hilāl al-Kubrā* 3-4, in Lyons 1995, 2: 120-21 and 3: 238-39. Discussion of father-son combat: Norris 1980: 23-29.

mother intervened to stop the fight.)

Intervention by a mother or mother-figure is a theme in Sanskrit, Armenian, and Persian-Urdu epics, too. In *Mahābhārata* it was Ulūli who effected reconciliation by explaining to Babhrūvāhana that Arjuna was under a curse, which he could escape only by being defeated by his son.¹²¹ In *Sasunc'i Davit'*, Khandout Khanoum saw the dust of battle and David's handkerchief blown to her door, ran to the scene, and appealed to David, "do not strike, David, do not strike / Our young and only child." Then she appealed to Pokr Mher, "do not strike, Mher, do not strike / Our brown-bearded David."¹²² David and Pokr Mher ignored her and continued fighting. In Surmelian's variant version, Khandout's intervention is transferred to a *second* father-son combat (discussed below).¹²³ In *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*, Quraisha, Hamza's daughter by the otherworldly princess Aasman Peri of Qaf, stopped the fight between Hamza and his son Badiuz Zamān, who was born to princess Gili-Savar but raised by Aasman. Their combat in the tournament arena ended in reconciliation and a celebratory feast.¹²⁴

In Arabic folk-epics, most father-son combats take place under chivalrous circumstances in which the combatants fight unaware of their kinship, but this is not always so. Saif bin Dhī Yazan and his son Damar brawled over a girl, after Damar complained (rightly) that Saif married every pretty maiden that he saw, leaving the ugly ones for other men. Saif overpowered his son, but released him.¹²⁵

Father-son combat in "secondary" Indo-European sources

We are now in a position to review father-son combat episodes in "secondary" Indo-European sources. By "secondary," we mean sources that are obviously derived from "primary" ones. But the closer we get to this material, the more obvious it becomes that the distinction is misleading, not because there are no "secondary" sources, but because there are no "primary" ones, at least not in the context of oral-compositional diffusion. There is no way to know, for example,

¹²¹ Allen 1995: 147 emphasizes the point.

¹²² *Sasunc'i Davit'* 3.7.3, trans. Shalian 1964: 331-32; Feydit 1964: 360-61.

¹²³ Surmelian 1964: 249-50.

¹²⁴ Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007: 834-35.

¹²⁵ *Sirat Saif bin Dhī Yazan* 91, in Lyons 1995, 2: 262 and 3: 635. This episode is omitted from Jayyusi 1996.

whether *Hildebrandslied* or *Thidrekssaga* comes closest to the “original” combat between Hildebrand and his son. Does the ballad of Andronikos reflect the Greeks’ Indo-European heritage? Or is it a composite of themes that migrated within the Indo-European and Middle Eastern oral-compositional *Kulturbund*?

Hildebrand and his son. The combat of Hildebrand and his son Hadubrand (or Alibrand) is attested in six German and Scandinavian sources that bear witness to two separate versions, one in which the combat ended with the tragic death of the son, and another that ended in reconciliation. The earliest source, the early ninth-century Old High German *Hildebrandslied* fragment, breaks off after the pre-combat dialogue between Hildebrand and Hadubrand. Most likely this version ended in tragedy: Saxo Grammaticus alludes to Hadubrand’s death in *Gesta Danorum* (ca. 1202), and in “Hildibrand’s Death Song” in the Old Norse *Ásmundarsaga Kappabana*, Hildibrand alludes to his slaying of his son in combat.¹²⁶ In contrast, the father-son combat ends with a happy reconciliation in the thirteenth-century Norwegian prose *Thidrekssaga*, in *Die jüngere Hildebrandslied* (a fifteenth-century German ballad), and a broadsheet ballad (ca. 1515). In these texts, the father’s name takes the forms Hildibrand, Hildebrant, Hillebrant; the son is Alibrand, or Alebrant; the mother is Frau Utè.¹²⁷ These three versions were derived from a common German source in which the combat ended in reconciliation. Both the tragic story, in which Hadubrand is killed, and the happy one in which Hildibrand and Alibrand are reconciled, were known in west Germanic and north Germanic dialects.

In *Thidrekssaga*, a young knight named Konrad informed Hildibrand of his son Alibrand’s fame as a warrior and as duke of Bern (=Verona). He said that Alibrand could be recognized by his white horse and his white shield emblazoned with an image of Bern castle. Alibrand was out hawking when

¹²⁶Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* 7, ed. Holder 1888: 244. *Ásmundarsaga Kappabana* ch. 8-10, “Fall Hildibrandz,” ed. Dettler 1891: 98-100.

¹²⁷For *Thidrekssaga*: Haymes 1973. For *Die jüngere Hildebrandslied*: Meier 1935-36, 1: 35-38 (version A); in version B (pp. 38-41) the father’s name is given as Hillebrant. English translation, Wood 1914: 7-11. For the early sixteenth-century version, a ballad set to music, see von Liliencron 1885: 84-89. Meier 1935-36, 1:41-42 discusses the relationship between *Thidrekssaga* and the German ballads. We are indebted to Professor Edward Haymes for references and advice about these sources.

Hildibrand met him on the road; in this detail he resembles Sokol' nichij, whose name means "Falconer" and who, in some versions of the bylina, was hawking in a field when Ilyá Múromets first saw him from a distance.¹²⁸ They jostled, and Alibrand asked, "Who is this old man who is standing before me? Tell me your name quickly and give up your weapons; then you might retain your life." Each man demanded that the other divulge his name first, until Alibrand, wounded, tried to deal Hildibrand a treacherous blow under cover of feigned surrender, but was overpowered by him, "defeated by...an old gray goose," as he put it. After their mutual recognition and reconciliation, father and son rode off together to visit Alibrand's mother.¹²⁹

Apart from the themes of hawking, heraldry, and epic name-exchange discussed above, the Hildibrand-Alibrand story shares four details with other secondary sources. Their encounter takes place on the road to the father's destination, as happens with David of Sassoun and Pokr Mher (below), rather than on the battlefield as in *Hildebrandslied*, the Rostam-cycle, and most Arabic folk-epics. The son taunts the father for his old age, as do Hadubrand, Sohrāb, Sokol' nichij, and Pokr Mher. One of the combatants, Alibrand, fought unfairly or practiced deception, as did Cú Chulainn, Rostam, and Sokol' nichij, and as Hadubrand suspected Hildibrand might do. After they reconciled, father and son set out to visit the boy's mother, as happens in *Sir Degaré*, *Die jungere Hildebrandslied*, the Greek ballad of *Tsamathòs*, and occasionally in Arabic folk-epics. There are more differences than similarities between the Hildibrand-Alibrand episode and *Hildebrandslied*, although both derive from a common Germanic source.

Sir Degaré and his father. Roughly contemporary with *Thidrekssaga* is the thirteenth-century Middle English *Sir Degaré*, whose eponymous hero was the son of an unmarried princess and a knight who raped her and left her with a sword with a chink in it to give to their future son when he came of age. Degaré slew a dragon with a club, defeated a king in combat as a bridewinning test, fled from his newly-won bride after learning that she was really his mother, and sojourned in search of his father. He met his father, unbeknownst, in a forest, where the knight accused him of poaching deer. During their combat,

¹²⁸ Hatto 1973: 826-27.

¹²⁹ *Thidrekssaga* 406-9, trans. Haymes 1988: 248-50.

the knight noticed the chink in Degaré's sword and recognized their mutual kinship. Father and son returned to the princess, who married the knight.¹³⁰ *Sir Degaré* is a composite of folktale story-types and motifs,¹³¹ among them a father-son combat that ends in mutual recognition and reconciliation.

Saul Levanidovich and Constantin. In this Russian bylina, King Saul Levanidovich ("son of Leo") left his pregnant wife in order to fight against Romans, Lithuanians, and Saracens. He told her that if they had a daughter, she must raise her properly; if she had a son, she should send him in search of his father when he reaches age nine. Their son, Constantin, was a prodigy, as strong as a twenty-year-old at age seven. Moreover he was an *enfant terrible* who injured playmates at school. Impugned as a bastard at age nine, Constantin asked his mother about his paternity, and set out in search of his father. As happened with Sohrāb, rumors about his strength spread far and wide. When he approached the Saracen camp, where Saul was held prisoner, the Saracens freed him on condition that he fight the intruder. Their single combat lasted for a long time, like Rostam's and Sohrāb's, until Saul threw his opponent to the ground and demanded to know his name. The scene ended with a tearful reconciliation.¹³²

Andronikos and Konstantin. In a Greek ballad *To tragoudi tou giou tou Andronikou* ("Tragedy of the Son of Andronikos"), the emir Andronikos's wife raised their son in prison after they had been captured by Saracens. Like Sohrāb, Connla, and Pokr Mher, the son was a child prodigy who dueled with a sword at age one, and wielded a lance at age two. At age three, he won his freedom in an athletic contest against Saracens, and set out in search of his father. His mother forewarned him how to recognize his father: Andronikos had a black pavilion while other warriors had red tents. Andronikos and his son met, brandished spears and swords, and exchanged boasting taunts, until the son told his life story and Andronikos recognized him. A tearful reconciliation ensued.¹³³

Tsamathos and the "Widow's" Son. In another Byzantine Greek ballad, the hero Tsamathos appeared as an unwelcome

¹³⁰Rumble 1965: 45-78.

¹³¹Rosenberg 1975.

¹³²Potter 1899: 70-71; Bailey and Ivanovich 1998: 39.

¹³³The ballad of Andronikos is translated in Garnett 1896, 1: 230-35, and discussed in the context of father-son combats by Potter 1899: 83-85 and 182, Grégoire 1949: 140-41, and Miller 1996: 111-18.

intruder at a festival at St. George's monastery (or church), brandishing an uprooted tree whose branches were filled with wild beasts. Tsamathòs upended the tables and stopped the dancing, but an unnamed "Widow's" son challenged him to a protracted wrestling match: "Where fell the blows of Tsamathòs the red blood flowed a river; / And where the youngster's blows did fall, the bones were cracked and broken." (Wrestling often substitutes for armed combat in Arabic folk-epics. This detail might reflect Arabic influence.) Tsamathòs then asked his opponent to name his mother and father. He said that he was born to a widow, "But to my father like am I, and I will yet surpass him." After their mutual recognition and reconciliation, Tsamathòs and his son went to the Widow's home for a reunion, just like Hildibrand and Alibrand had done. The Widow had already prepared dinner for them, and filled the wine-cups: "She filled her son's with rosy wine, but Tsamathòs' with poison."¹³⁴ Except for the poisoned wine, this ending is similar to the final stanza in *Die jungere Hildebrandslied*, where Frau Utè filled the wine-cups for the reconciled father and son, Hildebrant and Alebrant. The Greek ballad, like the byliny of Ilyá Múromets, is a self-denying text in which mutual reconciliation is a prelude to murder.

Hamza-cycle. Although the Persian Hamza-cycle has suffered from philological neglect in modern times, in cross-cultural diffusion and influence it ranks fourth among epics in the ancient and medieval Middle East, after Gilgamesh, the Alexander Romance, and the Rostam-cycle. Like the Rostam-cycle, the Hamza-cycle was developed and diffused through complex interactions of oral and literary forms, such that it is difficult to reconstruct its compositional history. According to a Persian legend, *Qessa-e Hamza*, its earliest surviving literary form, was composed at the command of the Sīstāni brigand Hamza ibn Āzerak Shāri, also known as Hamza ibn Āzerak Khārehi, "the Kharijite" (d. A.H. 213, A.D. 828/29),¹³⁵ supposedly a historical model for the hero. Although Hanaway accepted this early ninth-century date,¹³⁶ Rostam-cycle

¹³⁴Garnett 1896, 1: 253-55.

¹³⁵*Qessa-e Hamza*, ed. Shoār 1968-69. Although Farsi *qessa* ('story', pl. *qessas*) is a loanword from Arabic, the Hamza-cycle is Persian in origin. The *qessa* survives in three manuscripts, one in Berlin, one in Oxford University, and one in the Tehran University library.

¹³⁶Hanaway (1970: 10) attributes this view to Shi'ār (sic; =Shoār) 1968-69, vol. 1, introduction. There, however, Shoār emphasizes the pervasive influence of

influences on it require a date sometime after Firdausi's *Shāhnāma* (ca. A.D. 1010). The Persian *qessa* must have reached Georgia, either in written or oral form, prior to Mose Khoneli's prose romance-epic *Amiran-Darejaniani* (late 12th century), which derived the names of principle characters and some of its episodes from the Hamza-cycle.¹³⁷ An Urdu teacher in Fort William College, Calcutta, Khalīl 'Alī Khān, writing under the pen-name Ashk, asserted that the Persian *qessa* was composed during the reign of sultan Mahmūd Bādshāh of Ghazna in the early eleventh century.¹³⁸

The Hamza-cycle represents its hero as Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib (d. A.D. 625), the prophet Muhammed's paternal uncle, whose epithet, "Sahibqiran," refers to a person born under the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus, an omen of good fortune. Hamza's name means "Lion" (in Arabic), so "Hamza Sahibqiran" means "Auspiciously-Born Lion."¹³⁹ According to Shoār, the Hamza-cycle began as a religious epic "contemporary with the emergence of Islam," but was reconstituted as a romance-epic, in which the hero fought *peris* and giants, under the influence of Firdausi's *Shāhnāma*. This two-part compositional history of the Persian *qessa* is supported by the juxtaposition, in the *qessa*, of two different prose styles, which are marked by contrastingly early and late idioms and vocabulary. The syntax is paratactic; sentences are short and lucid. Grammatical and spelling errors indicate that the author or scribe was not a man of learning.¹⁴⁰

Hamza's identity as Mohammed's uncle conferred prestige, contributing to the epic's longevity, its diffusion across Islamic cultures, and its ability to attract other stories into its orbit during the process of oral and literary diffusion. The *qessa* in its earliest, "heroic" form was the source of the Arabic *Sīrat Hamza*,¹⁴¹ but there are many differences due to the exigencies of oral transmission. A late eleventh or twelfth-century

Firdausi, and argues that Hamza's character is modeled on Seyāvash in *Shāhnāma*. Hanaway also cites Safā 1948. We have not seen the first edition, but in his third edition, Safā (1973), does not discuss the possibility of a ninth-century date for *Qessa-e Hamza*.

¹³⁷ Mose Khoneli, trans. Stevenson 1958.

¹³⁸ Ashk 1801: 2; Pritchett 1991: 11,

¹³⁹ This Hamza appears in Ibn Ishaq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allah*, a biography of Muhammed; cf. Guillaume 1955: 131-32, 283, 375-87, 553.

¹⁴⁰ Shoār 1968-69, 1, introduction.

¹⁴¹ Van Ronkel 1895: 41-90; Weil 1905.

Georgian oral version was a source of *Amiran-Darejaniani*, along with the Rostam-cycle and Caucasian Nart sagas. There might have been an Armenian oral version, too, for in *Sasna Crêr*, Hamza was one of the forty pahlevans who were rival suitors for the hand of the amazon-warrior Khandout Khanoum. David of Sassoun slew him in single-combat and presented his head to Khandout's father as a bride-price, along with the heads of two other rivals, Ołam and Tołam.¹⁴²

As time went by, the Hamza-cycle was expanded greatly with the addition of popular *'ayyar*-tales (trickster-tales) and tales of *tilism* (magic). The Hamza-cycle became much longer, diverse, and flexible in its contents from one edition to another, and more fantasy-romance than epic, often called *Romüz-e Hamza* ("Subleties of Hamza").¹⁴³ A seven-volume edition of this was published in Tehran in 1857.¹⁴⁴ Its diffusional range included a 24-volume Ottoman Turkish *Hamzevî* (ca. 1400);¹⁴⁵ Persian illustrated manuscripts prepared in India under the patronage of the Mogul emperors Humāyūn (reigned 1530-1556) and Akbar (1556-1605);¹⁴⁶ sixteenth-century Malay and Javanese translations; a Balinese translation of the Javanese version; and a Sudanese translation.¹⁴⁷ Another diffusional strand in Persia was *Sabiqiran-nāma*, an anonymous religious epic about "auspiciously-born" Hamza in 62 parts, which Safā dates A.H. 1073 (A.D. 1688-89). The Turkish *Hamzai Sagao Kirain*, an oral-compositional tale by the bard Behçet Mahir, is derived in part from this source, and in part from the Rostam-cycle.¹⁴⁸ In Tabriz in 1903, an 800-folio Persian edition was published in lithograph, with 360 cartoon illustrations modeled after illuminations in the Akbar manuscripts.¹⁴⁹ *Qissah-e jang-e amir Hamzah* (1784), a Dakhani translation of a Persian source, was the foundation for Ashk's 500-page Fort William College version in Urdu, *Dastan-e Amir Hamzah* (1801). This in

¹⁴²Surmelian 1964: 211, 231, and 233-37. This "variant" episode is not included in *Sasunc'i Davit'* (discussed below).

¹⁴³Farsi *ramz* ('mystery, subtlety'), plural *romüz*.

¹⁴⁴Virolleod 1948: 225-26.

¹⁴⁵Lang and Meredith-Owens 1959: 472-80.

¹⁴⁶Glück's (1925) attempt to summarize the Hamza-cycle known to Akbar is superceded by Faridany-Akhavan 1989. Cf. Egger 1969; Seyller 2002.

¹⁴⁷Van Ronkel 1895; Pritchett 1991: 6-8.

¹⁴⁸Safā [1948] 1973: 159 and 379; Walker 1996 for the Turkish *Hamzai Sahip Kiran*. This version of the Hamza-cycle does not include father-son combat typescenes.

¹⁴⁹Virolleod 1948: 225-34; rpt. 1958-59.

turn was one of Ghalib Lakhnavi's sources for his Urdu text of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* (1855), subsequently enlarged by Abdullah Bilgrami (1871).

The modern editor of the eleventh- or twelfth-century Persian *Qessa-e Hamza*, Ja'far Shoār, describes the work as a collection of stories that "have moral aspects [that] will improve the spirit of resistance, truth-seeking, courage, love of the homeland, promise-keeping, justice, kindness, and mercy in the reader."¹⁵⁰ Even so, the *qessa* is not well known in modern Iranian popular or literary culture. This is in sharp contrast to the Rostam-cycle, which continues to be performed in coffeehouses in Iran, by bards who rely on memory, sometimes supplemented by pictures of scenes from *Shāhnāma* painted or hanging on the walls. The Rostam-Sohrāb combat is featured in "The Rebirth of Rostam" (2006), a Dreamor animated film.¹⁵¹ While it is true that editions of *Shāhnāma* are expensive and rare, and few Iranian families possess copies, Firdausi is revered in the national consciousness, whilst the Hamza-cycle is all but forgotten. However that may be, in medieval Persia the Hamza-cycle was influential, and provides us with varied examples of the "father-son combat" typescene.

Hamza's combats with three of his sons were part of the eleventh- or twelfth-century "heroic" *qessa*. These episodes continued on in the expanded romance-epics, although with variations in detail. In the first episode, Hamza fought with his son 'Omar. In the Persian *Qessa-e Hamza*, 'Omar ibn Hamza was Hamza's son by the daughter of Nāser, brother of the ruler of Egypt, with whom he was betrothed. One night in the palace in Egypt, Hamza experienced a nocturnal emission, wiped himself with a cloth that he left next to his bed, and left his bedchamber to bathe. During his absence, his bride-to-be and her maid crept into his bedroom to observe him. Finding his bed empty, she lay down in it, and conceived while cleaning herself with the cloth left by Hamza. This happened prior to Hamza's eighteen-year sojourn in Mount Qaf. The father-son combat occurred after Hamza's return from Qaf, during the wedding-festival at Ctesiphon, when Hamza finally married his first love, Mehr Negār, Shah Naushiravān's daughter. 'Omar

¹⁵⁰ Shoār 1968-69, 2: 307 (introduction to vol. 2). Vol. 1 presents stories or episodes 1-32; vol. 2, stories 33-69.

¹⁵¹ "The Rebirth of Rostam," Dreamor, 2006, distributed in the United States by IranianMovies.com.

ibn Hamza arrived in Ctesiphon, intent upon avenging the death of his father, for he had heard a false report that his father had been killed, just like Hadubrand in *Hildebrandslied*. 'Omar slew several courtiers in the Naushiravān's court, and at last, father and son dueled, unbeknownst to each other. Following a scene of mutual recognition and reconciliation, 'Omar became part of his father's retinue.¹⁵²

The Urdu *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* gives quite a different story about the combat between Hamza and his son by Naheed Maryam, daughter of Faridun, the king of Rum (rather than Egypt). Hamza won Faridun's support by slaying a dragon and a Nubian champion who had disturbed the peace in his kingdom. He married princess Naheed, spent two weeks with her in the harem, and departed for adventures in Egypt.¹⁵³ Years later their son, Amar bin Hamza, joined his father's retinue. One evening during a banquet, Amar bin Hamza intervened in a drunken quarrel between his father's top commanders, Aadi and Landhoor, thereby insulting both men. Hamza made amends by leading Amar to the tournament arena for single combat. There he overpowered Amar and lifted him high by the cummerbund, an example of "lift and toss" combat that appears often in the Rostam- and Hamza-cycles. Instead of dropping Amar, Hamza let him down gently, kissed his forehead, and explained to him that Aadi and Landhoor were capable of sorting out their dispute without interference from him. Great champions like Aadi and Landhoor must be granted every possible indulgence, he said, for "we enjoy all manner of privileges because of them,"¹⁵⁴ an astonishingly clear exemplum of the solipsism of epic heroes.

The second episode has a narrative structure similar to the story of Rostam, Tahmineh, and Sohrāb: the hero has a liaison with a king's daughter,¹⁵⁵ has a son with her, and departs leaving instructions that the son should seek him out when he comes of age. When he does, he challenges his father to combat. Hamza sojourned for a time in Kharsala, under the pseudonym Sa'ad Shami. Contrary to the tribal custom of exogamy-avoidance, he courted and married King Fata Nosh's

¹⁵² *Qessa-e Hamza*, ed. Shoār 1968-69, vol. 1, chapters 19, 27 and 29, summarized by Hanaway 1970: 343-48. (Hanaway did not have access to volume 2).

¹⁵³ Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007: 325-29.

¹⁵⁴ Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007: 715-16.

¹⁵⁵ In copyists' interpolations, Rostam and Tamineh are married before they spend a night together: Davis 2007: 90, n. 32; cf. Davis 2001.

daughter, Rabia Plas Posh, and won the support of his in-laws by slaying a dragon. Hamza named their son Alam Shah Roomi, and forty days after his birth, he disclosed his true identity to Rabia and told her, “When this boy comes of age you must send him to the camp of Amir Hamza.”¹⁵⁶

The meeting of Alam Shah Roomi and his father was an intermezzo during warfare between Hamza and his father-in-law, Shah Naushervan, whose relationship resembles that of Rostam and Kay Kāvus, “the hero and the king,” in Firdausi’s *Shāhnāma*, as we noted earlier. During a series of single combats between Naushervan’s warriors and Hamza’s, his son Alam Shah Roomi, the “prince of Rum (Byzantium),” arrived with his retinue, interposed himself between Naushervan’s camp and Hamza’s, and demanded single combat from champions in both camps—including Landhoor, and Hamza’s grandson Sa’ad bin Amar. Observing Alam’s combat, Hamza compared him to Rostam, about whom it was said that “he could lift his adversary along with his elephant and slam both to the ground.” When Alam challenged Hamza to single combat, Naushervan’s evil vizier, Bakhtak, said to the shah, “I have not the least doubt that this prince is Hamza’s own progeny.... Let us watch this bout, for it will be a historic one like the battle fought between Rustam and Sohrab.” “It would be little wonder,” the shah replied, “if the prince turned out to be Hamza’s son; we are witnessing a truly momentous event.” Quite apart from the obvious allusion to *Shāhnāma*, this discourse has an uncanny resemblance to the *Mahābhārata* poet’s comment about the fight of Arjuna and Babhrūvāhana: “The battle that took place between sire and son was incomparable. It resembled the encounter between the deities and the Asuras of old.”¹⁵⁷ In the arena, father and son struggled unbeknownst to each other until Hamza bellowed his stentorian war-cry, lifted Alam by his cummerbund, and prepared to toss him. Just then, Alam cried out, “Amir, do not kill me! I’m your son!” Amir Hamza lowered Alam to the ground and asked him his name. He identified himself as Alam Shah.¹⁵⁸

In the Urdu version, the fight between Amir Hamza and Alam Shah Roomi was stopped by an angel, who called to him

¹⁵⁶ Lakhnovi and Bilgrami 2007: 786-87.

¹⁵⁷ *Mahābhārata* 14.79, trans. Ganguli 1990-91, 12: 136.

¹⁵⁸ Shoār 1968-69, 2: 378 (story 42).

from heaven, “O Hamza, do not throw him down cruelly, for he is your own son.” (Just so, the angel Gabriel stopped the fight between David of Sassoun and Pokr Mher in *Sasunc’i Davit’*). In both the Persian and Urdu versions, Hamza gave his son the titles “Rostam-e Peel Tan” and “Sher-e Saf-Shikan.”¹⁵⁹ “You are Rostam-Peel Tan,” Hamza said in the Farsi version; “Why did you come here and kill my army?” and Rostam replied, “I had heard that my brother, ’Omar ibn Hamza, had fought with Amir, so I became rude.” In the Urdu version, Amir Hamza scolded his son: “You committed a grave wrong by humiliating my friends in the battlefield and fighting me.” Alam defended himself by noting that his older brother Amar had also fought Hamza, thereby linking this episode with the first father-son combat.¹⁶⁰ These Farsi and Urdu scenes of remonstrance are matched in *Sasunc’i Davit’*, when David of Sassoun scolds Pokr Mher for fighting him, and punishes him for this offence by imposing a curse on him.

In Hamza-Alam episode appears in *Sīrat Hamza*, though with some differences. In the Arabic epic, the son was called Rustem prior to his encounter with his father, and he did not seek out his father for the purpose of challenging him. Instead, a certain sultan Bihzād sent Rustam to Hamza with a threatening message, which was the cause of their fight.¹⁶¹

We turn now to the third father-son combat. Hamza married Gili-Savar, the princess of Gilan, and left her, pregnant, in the care of her father, King Gonjal. The king ordered the infant to be slain at birth, but his nurse put him in a wooden chest and floated him down the river, where he was found and fostered by Aasman Peri, Hamza’s otherworldly wife from Qaf, who raised him alongside Quraisha, her daughter by Hamza. By divine intervention, Khizr appeared to Aasman, and told her to raise the boy “in the best tradition, send him to Hamza when he comes of age, and name him Badiuz Zamān.” (The name is Badiu Zamān in the Farsi version, and Badī in the Arabic version.) At age eleven, Badiuz asked Quraisha about his parentage and birth, then set out to find his father, and found him after surveying two hostile military encampments from the

¹⁵⁹Rostam-e Peel Tan: ‘Rostam of the elephant body’, (*peel* < Arabic *feel* ‘strong’, referring to strength, not size. Sher-e Shaf Shikan, ‘Rank-Destroying Lion’.

¹⁶⁰Shoār 1968-69, 2: 378; Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007: 789-91. The Urdu episode is also translated in Pritchett 1991: 233-34.

¹⁶¹*Sīrat Hamza* 45, in Lyons 1995, 2: 234-35 and 3: 575-56.

height of Mount Alburz. The *peris* who accompanied him to Alburz pointed out Hamza's camp. Badiuz Zamān went there and challenged a succession of Arab champions to single combat, among them Alam Shah Roomi (now called Rostam-e Peel-Tan), and Hamza's grandson Sa'ad bin Amar. When Badiuz and Hamza finally dueled with swords, Quraisha appeared on the scene and stopped the fight by revealing their kinship.¹⁶² Quraisha played no such role in the corresponding combat between Hamza and Badī in *Sīrat Hamza*, where after a thirty-day duel, Badī himself stopped the fight by revealing his identity, because he did not want to defeat his father.¹⁶³

Like the Hamza-Alam episode, this one has distant echoes of the Rustam-Sohrāb story. Badiuz's military training began at age seven, about the same age as Sohrāb's, and at age eleven he set out in search of his father and engaged in combat with champions (Sohrāb was ten). Badiuz's dialogue with Quraisha about his parentage, which led to his departure in search of his father, recalls Sohrāb's with Tahmineh.¹⁶⁴ Badiuz's observation of Hamza's encampment from Mount Alburz, accompanied by *peris*, resembles Sohrāb's observation of the Persian camp in the company of Hejiz.¹⁶⁵

Ossetic Rostom. Lang and Meredith-Owens (1959) refer to an Ossetic Amiran-cycle whose sources include the Hamza-cycle, Caucasian Nart sagas, and the Rostam-cycle. One of its tales, "Daredzanty Rostom, how he killed his son," was derived from Firdausi, indirectly through the medium of oral-composition.¹⁶⁶

Sasna C'ér. The story of David of Sassoun's combat with his son Pokr Mher ("Little Mher") appears near the end of the third cycle of *Sasna C'ér* ("Reckless Ones of Sassoun"), an Armenian folk-epic in four cycles that most Armenists date to the tenth century, although the twelfth century is more likely as a formative date. The epic exists in two published forms, as *Sasna C'ér* (1936-1999), a three-volume collection of prose episode variants in several dialects, and as *Sasunc'i Davit'* (1939), a "poetic" literary form of the epic based upon episodes selected from *Sasna C'ér*, edited for narrative coherence and

¹⁶²Laknavi and Bilgrami 2007: 831-35. Farsi *badiea* 'new, innovative'; *zamān* 'time' (from Arabic). Badiuz Zamān means 'New Age'.

¹⁶³*Sīrat Hamza* 47, in Lyons 1995, 2: 235 and 3: 577-78.

¹⁶⁴Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 190.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., Davis 2006: 200-2.

¹⁶⁶Lang and Meredith-Owens 1959: 467-68.

dialectal consistency. Hovsep Orbeli's second edition of this (1961) was the basis for Shalian's poetic English translation, *David of Sassoun* (1964) and Feydit's poetic French translation, *David de Sassoun* (1964). Leon Surmelian's *Daredevils of Sassoun* (1964) is a prose translation based upon the author's independent selection of episodes from the second volume of *Sasna C'rer*. The epic's editing and translation history is relevant to the present study because its printed sources and translations present two very different versions of the father-son combat episode.

Sasna C'rer was the work of several bards over a long time. Some of them can be identified because they contributed unique perspectives to the story of the Sassoun heroes. One of these was a "Prosimetric-Bard" who transformed several passages of rhythmic prose into poetic lines in cycles III and IV; another was a "Poetic-Bard" who inserted songs into the narrative, especially in cycle III. Another was a "Mantzkert-Bard" who contributed the story of Sanasar and Baldasar's cattle-raid in Mantzkert, and who attributed the founding of Sassoun to settlers from Mantzkert rather than from Blue Castle (Kapoyt Berd) as does *Sasunc'i Davit'*. A relatively late "Biblical-Bard," departing from conventional typescene-composition, applied his biblical learning to several episodes by remodeling them on biblical texts or commentary. An earlier bard was familiar with the Rostam-cycle, and imitated it in several important episodes. The contributions of this "Rostam-Bard" include Sanasar's quest to Copper City (imitating Esfandyār's quest to Bronze Fortress), Medz Mher's selection of a colt in prince Gorgik's stable in Bitlis (imitating Rostam's selection of his wonder-horse Rakhsh), Medz Mher's rescue of Armañan and his slaying of White Dev in a remote mountain cave (imitating Rostam's rescue of Kay Kāvus and his slaying of White Dev), aunt Saryeh's two seduction attempts and false accusations against David (imitating the story of Sudābeh and Seyāvash), and the father-son combat of David and Pokr Mher.¹⁶⁷ The David-Mher combat is only one of several instances of Rostam-cycle diffusion throughout the Middle East. Sohrāb, in the form

¹⁶⁷The Prosimetric-, Poetic-, Mantzkert-, Biblical-, and Rostam-Bards are personifications of distinctive layers of composition within *Sasna C'rer*, and could represent the work of more than one bard in each case. Some of these bards can be placed in a relative chronology in relation to each other, thereby sketching out a compositional prehistory for *Sasna C'rer*.

“Zawrhap” (Georgian “Zurab”) was a personal name in Armenia from the early sixteenth century, evidence that the epic was known in popular culture.¹⁶⁸ A Kurdish Rostam-cycle includes two unpublished versions of the father-son combat: “Sharee R’oostam uu kurree wii Zoolhraab” (“The Fight of Rostam and his Son Sohrāb”), and “R’oostam Zuhraavee kurree xwa dikuzha” (“Rostam Kills his Son Sohrāb”). The Kurdish cycle is marked by Armenian influences, which suggests diffusion from Iranian to Kurdish culture indirectly by way of Armenian oral tradition.¹⁶⁹

Sasunc’i Davit’ presents the David-Pokr Mher episode in the version that is closest to the story of Rostam and Sohrāb, its source by means of oral-compositional diffusion. In our summary here, we illustrate the source relationship. In an elaborate bridewinning adventure at Blue Rock (Kapoyt Koł) in Tabriz, David won the amazon-warrior Khandout Khanoum as his bride, beating out forty rival suitors. David and Khandout went to live in Sassoun. Soon after Khandout became pregnant, David decided to travel to Gurjistan to win brides for his forty rivals. As he departed, he gave her a golden armband encrusted with gems, to use as a dowry if their child was a girl, and as a patrimonial armband if it was a boy. She was to name the boy Mher after his father, and send him in search of his father if David was too long on his quest. Rostam’s liaison with Tahmineh, or their marriage in some versions, took place under different circumstances: Rostam crossed the Turanian border while hunting, lost his horse Rakhsh to a band of Turkmen, took shelter in the palace of the king of Samangan, and spent the evening drinking wine and regaling the king with stories about his adventures while the king’s servants searched for Rakhsh. Princess Tahmineh eavesdropped on Rostam’s stories, fell in love with him much as Desdemona did with Othello, came to his bed that night, and conceived a child by him. As they parted at dawn, Rostam gave Tahmineh an arm-clasp for their child to wear. “Take this,” he said, “and if you should bear a daughter, braid her hair about it as an omen of good fortune; but if the heavens give you a son, have him wear it on his upper arm, as a sign of who his father is.”¹⁷⁰ In both stories, the father’s armband served as a recognition-token, and

¹⁶⁸Russell 2004: 1067.

¹⁶⁹Arakelova, n.d.: 7.

¹⁷⁰Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, in Davis 2006: 189.

the father directed the mother what to do with the armband depending on the gender of the child. The naming of Pokr Mher reflects David's concern for family continuity and fame, an important theme in Cycle II¹⁷¹ and in the Rostam-cycle, for Rostam prophesied that his son "will be like Sam, the son of Nariman, noble and chivalrous."¹⁷²

As infants, Pokr Mher and Sohrāb grew prodigiously. "When a month had gone, [Sohrāb] seemed a year old; at three, he played polo; and at five, he took up archery and practiced with a javelin."¹⁷³ Pokr Mher "grew as much as / Other children grew in a year. / In an hour he grew as much as others grew in a month" (*DS* 3.7.2).¹⁷⁴ Pokr Mher was born clutching a blood-clot in his hand. The parallel is inexact, but in some versions of *Shāhnāma*, Rostam was born with bloody hands; this migratory oral-compositional theme was also applied to the infant Temujin, the future Chinggis Qahan, in *The Secret History of the Mongols*.¹⁷⁵ The prodigious growth and ability of the child-hero is a round-the-world epic theme, but the details that link Sohrāb and Pokr Mher suggest direct borrowing.

At age ten, Sohrāb demanded to know the secret of his paternity from Tahmineh. She told him about Rostam, showed him some tokens of his (including the patrimonial armband), and cautioned him to keep his paternity secret, fearing that the Turanian king, Afrāsyāb, would send for him if he knew that he was Rostam's son. Instead, Sohrāb vowed to drive Afrāsyāb and Kay Kāvus from their thrones and install Rostam as king of both Turan and Iran.¹⁷⁶ At age seven, Pokr Mher demanded to know about his paternity from Khandout. She told him about David's mission in Gurjistan and gave him the armband. Pokr Mher set out in search of his father, and met him on the road to Gurjistan, sooner than expected. David was on his way home, accompanied by an Azeri maiden whom he brought with him to be Khandout's handmaiden. Not recognizing his father, Pokr Mher taunted David for his old age, demanded possession

¹⁷¹Anderson 2007: 137-44.

¹⁷²Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, in Davis 2006: 189.

¹⁷³Ibid., Davis 2006: 190.

¹⁷⁴*Sasunc'i Davit'* 3.7.2; Shalian 1964: 329; Feydit 1964: 358.

¹⁷⁵*Sasunc'i Davit'* 3.7.2; Shalian 1964: 328; Feydit 1964: 358. For Rostam: Safā [1948] 1973: 554. For Temujin: *Secret History of the Mongols* 59 and 78, in Cleaves 1982: 14 and 23; for discussion, Anderson 2006: 92-93.

¹⁷⁶Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, in Davis 2006: 190.

of the Azeri maiden, blocked his path in the road, and engaged him in combat. From her home in Sassoun, Khandout saw the dust rising from their combat, and recognized David's handkerchief when it was blown to her door by the breeze created by their swinging maces. She rushed to the scene of battle and called for David to stop fighting their son, and for Mher to stop fighting his father, but both combatants ignored her. At Khandout's intercession, God sent the angel Gabriel to stop the fight.¹⁷⁷

Rostam's encounter with Sohrāb took place on the battlefield rather than on the road. The direct influence of the Rostam-cycle wanes at this point, although there are some detailed similarities. During combat, Sohrāb wore his patrimonial armband, but it was under his armor. Pokr Mher wore his armband in the open, but David did not notice it until after the angel had stopped the fight. Sohrāb and Pokr Mher both taunted their fathers on account of their age. Both combats are described hyperbolically, like mountains clashing or breaking apart.

As obvious differences, Rostam was not accompanied by a maiden, and his combat ended with Sohrāb's death, for no mother or angel appeared to stop the fight. David's and Pokr's quarrel over a maiden is unique in extant father-son combats, although disputes of that sort are common in Arabic and in Byzantine Greek oral narratives. Angelic intervention, like material intervention, must have been a migratory theme in Armenian, Persian, and Urdu oral tradition, for in *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* an angel ended Hamza's fight with his son Alam Shah Roomi.¹⁷⁸ The Rostam-Sohrāb and David-Mher episodes differ in their tragic denouement, as well. Rostam wounded Sohrāb mortally, and only then learned that his opponent was his son. When David found out that his opponent was Pokr Mher, he laid a curse on him, such that he would be "heirless and deathless." This curse was fulfilled at the end of cycle IV, when Pokr Mher was confined, heirless and deathless, in Akravou Kar ("Raven's Rock," the Rock of Van). From the perspective of oral-compositional analysis, the most important feature of the denouement is that mutual recognition occurred twice, first when Khandout intervened, and second after the angel Gabriel's intervention, when David recognized Pokr Mher by

¹⁷⁷ *Sasunc'i Davit'* 3.7.1-2; Shalian 1964: 326-32; Feydit 1964: 356-62.

¹⁷⁸ Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007: 789-91.

his golden armband. Three oral-compositional themes coalesce in this story: recognition after seeing a patrimonial armband, recognition due to the mother's intervention, and recognition due to angelic intervention.

Surmelian provides a different account of events running up to the father-son combat and David's curse of Pokr Mher: David and Khandout were married and living in Blue Rock when Pokr Mher was born. As a newborn, Pokr Mher was a weakling. David was alarmed by this, but after forty days, Pokr Mher grew giantlike as Sassoun heroes were supposed to do. When Pap of Franks and his allies invaded Armenia, penetrating as far as Moush, David responded to a summons from Kerry Toros and began his homeward journey to Sassoun. On the way, David was ambushed in a narrow valley by troops of the Emir of Tabriz, his father-in-law. The emir had planned to kill David, adopt Pokr Mher, and bring him up janissary-like (as a Moslem). But Khandout, an amazon-warrior, was suspicious of her father's intentions. She armed herself and followed David at a distance. When the emir's soldiers attacked David, she attacked them, slew 5,000 of them, and saved David's life. So David and Khandout continued their journey to Sassoun, together, leaving Pokr Mher at home in Tabriz. On the road at Khlata, they were confronted by Ch'm'shkik Sultana, a former lover, who challenged David to single combat. He swore to return in seven days for combat, but forgot his oath. It was then, while Pokr Mher was still living in Tabriz, that David decided to travel to Gurjistan to find wives for his forty rival suitors. Khandout returned to Tabriz, but later, Kerry Toros went to Blue Rock and brought mother and son back to Sassoun, where Pokr Mher was an *enfant terrible*. At age seven, Pokr Mher required his mother to tell him about his paternity, and set out toward Gurjistan to find him. Unbeknownst to each other, they met on the road and engaged in combat over possession of the Azeri maiden. As happened often in Arabic folk-epics, father and son recognized each other, were reconciled, and returned to Sassoun to make merry at a feast.

Meanwhile, the Emir of Tabriz sent his five sons to Sassoun to visit their sister Khandout. They took Pokr Mher out hunting for several days, and each day returned with wild sheep—except for Pokr Mher, who came back empty-handed. David admonished his son for his poor hunting. So challenged, Pokr Mher went hunting by himself, and started home with the carcasses of wild sheep and boars. His five uncles confronted

him, and tried to take his game away, but Pokr Mher resisted, and slew them one by one by throwing them “into the ground up to their waists.” When Pokr Mher returned to Sassoun alone, David inquired about his uncles. “I left them standing in the road, grinning,” Pokr Mher replied. David set out to find them, discovered their bodies, and returned home. Khandout was shocked, but Pokr Mher was unrepentant, so father and son fought a second time. Khandout prayed to God to break up their fight, and God sent an angel to separate them. Alarmed by Pokr Mher’s strength, which endangered the cosmos, David pronounced a curse that Pokr Mher should be “heirless and deathless.”¹⁷⁹

Surmelian’s presentation, with its two combats between David and Pokr Mher, has a remote analogue in the Russian bylina of Ilyá Múromets and Sokol’nichij, whose first fight ended in mutual reconciliation, only to be revoked by Sokol’nichij when he returned to his father’s tent in a stealthy nocturnal attack. Double-combat reappears in a variant form of this bylina, in which the antagonist is Ilyá’s amazon-daughter. She appeared near Prince Vladimir’s frontier outpost, prepared to attack Kiev. Vladimir sent two warriors in succession to fight her, but they retreated in fear. Ilyá was her third challenger. During their combat, Ilyá questioned her, and from her answers, recognized her as his daughter. They reconciled, but later that night the amazon-daughter attempted to slay him. Ilyá slew her, chopped her body into pieces, and sowed them in the plain.¹⁸⁰ Another double-combat appears in the story Rizq and Baraka in *Sīrat Banī Hilāl al-Kubrā*, discussed above.

Quite apart from double-combat and stealth, another interesting theme in the bylina of Ilyá Múromets and his daughter is the sequence of two unsuccessful warrior-challengers, followed by Ilyá, the third challenger, who proves his worthiness as a champion. The same sequence is found in *Aided Óenfir Aife*, where King Conchobar first sent Condere, then Conall the Victorious, to confront Connla as he approached their coastguard outpost. Cú Chulainn confronted Connla as his third challenger.¹⁸¹ This triple-sequence is one of the oldest typescenes to have a continuous history in oral-compositional tradition. It is found in the Akkadian *Anzu* epic:

¹⁷⁹Surmelian 1964: 239-50.

¹⁸⁰Arant 1970: 85-86.

¹⁸¹Cross and Slover 1969: 173-74.

after the Anzu-bird stole the Tablet of Destiny from Ellil, King Anu and the gods in assembly appealed to two warrior-gods in succession, Gerra and Shara, to hunt down Anzu. The assembled gods elected Ninurta as their champion, but only after Gerra and Shara declined to undertake the mission.¹⁸² Again in the great assembly of Anunnaki in the Babylonian *Epic of Creation*, King Anshar first sent Anu, then Nudimmud, to fight the cosmic dragon Tiamat and her army of monsters. They failed. Only then did the gods in assembly elect Marduk as their champion and as the new king of heaven.¹⁸³

Double-combat appears in *Sirat 'Antar*, too, where the hero fights his son Ghassūb twice. Even so, when an episode is partially duplicated in a narrative, often the repetition is due to a bard's or editor's effort to reconcile two or more divergent versions of an episode. A biblical example is the story of David in 1 Samuel 16-17, which provides two conflicting accounts about how he was introduced into King Saul's court, first as a court musician and armor-bearer, and second as the unlikely champion who slew the giant Goliath. The David-Mher combat, both in *Sasunc'i Davit'* and in variant episodes, provides multiple examples of this process, some attributable to bards, others to editors.

Most likely the David-Mher combat, originally composed by the Rostam-Bard, ended with their mutual recognition when David saw Mher's patrimonial armband. Later in the process of oral-compositional diffusion, other bards contributed alternative endings: maternal intervention, angelic intervention, or mutual recognition followed by a celebratory feast. These alternatives circulated as migratory themes in Middle Eastern oral tradition, as is evident from the Indo-European and Arabic sources discussed in this essay. As a third step in the compositional prehistory of *Sasna Crer*, bards who were familiar with two or more endings started to combine them, thereby introducing inconsistencies into the narrative, as *Sasunc'i Davit'* illustrates. As for the variant episode of Pokr Mher's slaughter of five uncles during a hunting-quarrel, originally this may have been one of several anecdotes about Mher's childhood as an *enfant terrible*, at some point during oral transmission, this anecdote was transferred from the *enfant terrible* section to the father-son combat section of the cycle, and

¹⁸² *Anzu*, tablet I, in Dalley 1989: 201-21, at pp. 208-11.

¹⁸³ *Epic of Creation*, tablet III, in Dalley 1989: 228-77, at pp. 246-49.

served as the rationale for David's combat with his son. If a bard or editor wanted to include this story without excluding their quarrel over an Azeri maiden, the only way to do so would be to invent a second combat scene, such as we find in Surmelian's translation of the epic.

Conclusion

The "father-son combat" typescene is represented by twenty-five episodes from a variety of sources in twelve Indo-European languages, representing seven sub-groups. Beside these, we have cited fourteen episodes from eight Arabic folk-epics. The themes are similar because the Arabic and Indo-European narratives belong to the same oral-compositional *Kulturbund*. The Persian-Arabic link is obvious in the case of *Sīrat Hamza*, whose episodes, while derived from the Persian Hamza-cycle, are similar to father-son combats in other Arabic folk-epics. Analysis of "father-son combat" episodes must include both "Indo-European" and Arabic examples. Our inventory is as follows:

Hittite: Illuyanka myth II—Zaskhapuna vs. son
Indo-European *satem* languages

Iranian

Persian: Firdausi's *Shāhnāma*—Rostam vs. Sohrāb

Persian: *Qessa-e Hamza* (11th-12th cent.)—Hamza vs. 'Omar ibn Hamza

Persian: Safavid *Romuz-e Hamza*—Hamza vs. 'Omar ibn Hamza

Hamza vs. Rustem

Hamza vs. Badi'ul Zamān

Ossetic: Amiran-cycle—Daredzanty Rostom vs. Sohrāb

Kurdish: Rostam-cycle—R'oostam vs. Zuhraavee (2 versions)

Indic:

Sanskrit: *Mahabharata*—Arjuna vs. Babhruvāhana

Urdu: *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*—Hamza vs. Amar bin Hamza

Hamza vs. Alam Shah Roomi (Rustem)

Hamza vs. Badiuz Zamān

Armenian: Sassoun-cycle, *Sasunc'i Davit'*—David vs. Pokr Mher

“ variant episode “ “

Slavic—Russian: Bylina of Ilyá Múromets vs. Sokol'nichij I

“ “ “ II

“ “ vs. daughter

Bylina of Saul Levanidovich vs. Constantin

Indo-European *centum* languages

Germanic

German OHG *Hildebrandslied*—Hildebrand vs. Hadubrand

MHG *Die jüngere Hildebrandslied*—Hiltebrant vs. Alebrant

Old Norse *Thidrekssaga*—Hildibrand vs. Alibrand

Ásmundarsaga kappabana—Hildibrand vs. son

Landnámabók—Ælfar Ketilsson vs. Vefrud

Middle English *Sir Degaré*—Rapist-Knight vs. Degaré

Celtic: Old Irish *Aided Óenfir Aífe*—Cú Chulainn vs. Connla

Greek: Parthenius, *Erotika Pathemata* 3—Odysseus vs. Euryalus

Byzantine ballad of Andronikos vs. Konstantin

Byzantine ballad of Tsamathòs vs. “Widow's” Son

Arabic folk-epics*Sīrat 'Antar*—al-Sayyid vs. Nazīh

“ Damhār vs. Ghassūb

“ 'Antar vs. Masaira

“ 'Antar vs. Ghassūb

“ 'Antar vs. Ghadbān

Sīrat Hamza—Hamza vs. Amar bin Hamza

“ Hamza vs. Rustam bin Hamza

“ Hamza vs. Budī bin Hamza

Sīrat al-ʿAlmīra Dhāt al-Himma—'Abd al-Wahhāb vs. Sayf al-Nasrānīya*Sīrat Baibars*—Ma'ruf vs. 'Arnus*Sīrat ʿAlī al-Zaibaq*—Zaibaq vs. Asad*Sīrat Saif al-Tijān*—Saif vs. Mulhib*Sīrat Banī Hilāl al-Kubrā*—Rizq vs. Baraka*Sayf bin Dhī Yazan*—Sayf vs. Damar

No doubt future scholars will discover other episodes that represent this typescene. Systematic analysis of the Hamza-cycle alone, if this ever becomes possible, most likely will disclose a dozen variant episodes or more. Even so, we hope to have assembled enough data to create a profile of “father-son combat” as an oral-compositional typescene in the Indo-European and Middle Eastern *Kulturbund*. The typescene consists of a “core” scenario that is notably lacking in details: a heroic father begets a son on an exogamous mother, is separated from him during his early childhood, but meets him as a youth and fights him unawares. In the early Indo-European versions of this story, the identity of the son was not disclosed until after the father had dealt him a mortal blow, but in later Indo-European versions, and in all Arabic versions, the father-son combat ended in mutual recognition and reconciliation.

This scenario is sketchy, even skeletal, but in the process of oral composition, a host of other migratory themes and typescenes could be used to “flesh out” the skeleton, to create a vibrant, dramatic story. Some of these, such as the father’s role as an exile, hostage, or questing hero, the mother’s role as an amazon-warrior, her intervention to stop the fight, the patrimonial armband or ring as a recognition-token, are recurring themes that appear in many narrative contexts besides father-son combats. Oral-compositional themes and typescenes are always interchangeable parts in a traditional

narrative.

The father in this typescene is a famous hero, whose combat with his son is only one of his many adventures, and not his most important one. This is true in both Indo-European and Arabic sources. In the Hittite source, the hero is a storm-god. Storm-god vestiges cling to Rostam and Ilyá Múromets. In the stories of Zaskhapuna and Ilyá Múromets, the mother's symbolic association with a mountain encourages the view that the PIE prototype was a myth of the storm-god.

Usually the father is separated from his son due to the exigencies of his career as a warrior, although sometimes it is because of his defeat in battle (Andronikos), exile (Hildebrand), captivity (Saul Levanidovich), or quest (David of Sassoun). Sometimes it was the child who was an exile (Saif al-Nasrāniya), a captive (Nazih), or fostered in a distant land (Pokr Mher in a variant version). Although the separation of father from son is a constant theme, the reasons for that separation vary from one narrative to another, but in each case the reason is itself conventional.

The mother is "exogamous" in virtually all Indo-European and Arabic sources. Exogamy was emphasized by Potter (1899) and again by Miller (1996), but is the norm in epic marriages and liaisons. Still, the hero's exogamous marriage or liaison contributes to the estrangement of father and son. The mother is an amazon-warrior in Irish, Russian, and Armenian sources, but this character type is conventional in Indo-European and Arabic epics.¹⁸⁴ Surprisingly, the mother was not an amazon-warrior in any of our Arabic sources, even though an Arab hero often must defeat an amazon-warrior in combat before he can win her as his bride. The hero's combat with an amazon-warrior is an independent typescene, although it converges with father-son combat episodes in the cases of Cú Chulainn, Ilyá Múromets, and David of Sassoun. Ilyá Múromets's slaying of his amazon-daughter is a variant version of this typescene, as is Gordāfarid's victory by deception over Sohrāb, just prior to the Rostam-Sohrāb episode in *Shāhnāma*.¹⁸⁵

The son often grew prodigiously, and sometimes was an *enfant terrible*, who left home at a tender age to seek his father, only to engage him in combat unawares. The son's prodigious growth sometimes is expressed in age-graded terms: Sohrāb

¹⁸⁴On this widespread theme see Žirmunskij 1975.

¹⁸⁵Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Davis 2006: 191-94.

“looked a year old in a month;”¹⁸⁶ in a day, Pokr Mher “grew as much as other children grew in a year.”¹⁸⁷ In a variant version of *Sasna Crer*, Pokr Mher “grew by the day, by the hour, not like other children by the year, or by the month”; just so, Sokol’nichij “didn’t grow by the year but by the hour.”¹⁸⁸ This theme applied to Connla and to Andronikos’s son, too. Pokr Mher, Constantin, and Baraka were *enfants terribles*, another common theme, especially in Middle Eastern epics. The son’s young age is emphasized in many of the Indo-European sources and in some of the Arabic ones: Sokol’nichij was twelve, Badiuz was eleven, Sohrāb was ten, Pokr Mher and Connla were seven, Andronikos’s son not much older than three. In most sources the son set out in search of his father, but often this motive was mixed with heroic ambition. Sohrāb planned to slay Afrāsīyāb and Kay Kāvus and install Rostam as king of both Turān and Iran. Sokol’nichij planned to conquer Kiev when he encountered Ilyá Múromets at a military outpost. At the time of his death, Connla said that had he lived, he would have conquered the world and given the Ulstermen the kingship of Rome.¹⁸⁹ Often the son’s motivation is to test his strength against a proven champion.

Confrontation between father and son. In the Hittite and Sanskrit sources, which represent stage I of the typescene, mutual recognition is not an issue, but in most other sources, father and son are unaware of their kinship when they first meet. There are other exceptions, such as the Hamza-Amar fight when the father disciplined his son, and the Hamza-Badiuz fight when the son desired to prove his strength against his father, who was unaware of their kinship, although Arab and Persian spectators suspected it. In most cases father and son fought unbeknownst to each other, notwithstanding signs of their kinship, such as a recognition-token, advance warning by a mother or companion, or demands for a name-exchange at the start of a joust or combat. Often the son taunted the father on account of his old age. Sometimes the father responded to these taunts with a dismissive remark that his opponent was just a stripling. Even when the conflict ended in reconciliation, the father sometimes rebuked the son for

¹⁸⁶ Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, trans. Warner 1909-25, 2: 126; trans. Davis 2006: 190.

¹⁸⁷ *Sasunc’i Davit’* 3.7.2; Shalian 1964: 329; Feydit 1964: 358.

¹⁸⁸ Surmelian 1964: 240; Bailey and Ivanova 1998: 40.

¹⁸⁹ Cross and Slover 1969: 174-75.

fighting him or challenging him in public.

The setting for father-son combat usually is a battlefield, a frontier outpost, or “on the road” to a destination-city or country. Other settings are possible, such as a hunting-ground (in a variant version of David and Pokr Mher), a tournament arena (Hamza-Amar), or a village festival (Tsamathòs and the “Widow’s” son). In certain other commonplace settings, father-son combats do *not* occur: a court scene, a banquet, a stable, an orchard or garden, a bedchamber or harem.

Denouement. In the “primary” Indo-European sources, the father slays his son, but in most secondary sources, and all Arabic sources, the conflict ends in mutual recognition and reconciliation, often celebrated in a feast. Double-conflicts appear in the byliny of Ilyá Múromets and a variant version of David and Pokr Mher, in which the first fight ends in reconciliation, while the second ends tragically. When the denouement is tragic, the text explores cultural themes of loyalty and honor. Zaskhapuna’s son, for example, found himself torn between kinship-obligations to his father and oath-keeping obligations to his father-in-law Illuyanka, and Connla found himself constricted by the geasa that Cú Chulainn had imposed upon him prior to his birth.

In sources where the combat ended in mutual recognition and reconciliation, sometimes the father recognized his son from a patrimonial armband or ring. Just as often, the combatants paused from their fighting, exchanged information about themselves, and recognized their kinship by that means. Sometimes, especially in Arabic sources, a mother or sister intervened and stopped the fight. In the David-Pokr Mher and Hamza-Alam combats, an angel intervened and stopped the fight; no doubt a (lost) Persian model stands behind these Armenian and Urdu episodes. These variant endings are oral-compositional conventions, like virtually all other variant details in father-son combat stories.

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