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Saint Sisinnius in the Twilight Zone of Oral Literature

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This paper deals with a translation model of a saint motif from hagiological context to folklore. This is exemplified by St. Sisinnius' legend and apocryphal prayer for children and parents health, especially against fever. The analysis is done from the poetological point of view, focusing on mutual genre influences along the passage from the prayer to a fairy-tale.

The history of apocryphal prayers of St. Sisinnius - for children and parents' protection - is very long, just as their area is very wide, including not only the Balkan Peninsula, but also the territory of the former Byzantine Empire. It is generally assumed that all the hitherto recorded editions of this apocrypha (Greek, Armenian, Arabian, Abyssinian, Romanian, Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Croatian) had in fact the same, Aramaic original¹ connected with the hagiography of Saint Sisinnius - a soldier born in Armenia during the reign of emperor Licinius (320 A.D.). His day is March 10th.²

It is possible to recognize two basic types among many versions of sujet connected with the image of St. Sisinnius. The first, and probably the older one, comes from the tradition of a special kind of Christian holy men, so called stylita or "stolpnik", the most famous of whom was St. Simeon.³ There, St. Sisinnius is shown as ever standing on a marble column in the sea or near it at the sea-side, watching for 7, 12, or 77 fevers to come out of the water, spread the sickness over the world and strike people, especially children.⁴ St. Sisinnius catches them all and forces them to disclose their true and secret names to him. Thus he gains power over them and sends them back to sea, their mischievous work prevented. This sujet-type corresponds especially with charms and other similar, magic texts mainly used as exorcisms.⁵ The second one, also a very ancient sujet-type, represents

¹ Pantelić 1973; opposed by Veselovsky who pleads for a Greek origin.

² There are 8 more saints with this name (conf. Mansvetov 1881, Sokolov 1888, Hasdeu 1984).

³ As a stylita who lives on the stone column. St. Sisinnius appears also in Bogomil's prototype. There is a possibility that he was overlapped with St. Simeon, maybe because the latter was born in a place called Sisan (conf. Hasdeu, pp. 210-212).

⁴ In the church tradition about St. Sisinnius his ability to exorcise sickness is not even mentioned. Popular tradition, though, connects his name with fever healing. It is generally assumed that St. Sisinnius in charms was contaminated by Sisinnius from Laodicaia (beginning of IV century - the time of Diocletian) and Sisinnius from Kizik. Conf. Byzantine legend about Gilo the child-killer, defeated by brothers Sisinnius and Sisinodor (Mansvetov 1881, Sokolov 1888). "False prayers" against fever, where St. Sisinnius is mentioned, appear on the old lists of prohibited books (Ädin 1997, pp. 110).

⁵ A. V. Ädin 1997, pp. 110. There are also versions with witch (instead of fever), where the witch is asked her true and secret names. Further procedure is identical (conf. Pantelić 1973).

St. Sisinnius as an "authorized" warrior against the witch/devil who kidnaps the newborn.⁶ Iconically, in these texts the saint is represented as a holy horseman, by many details similar to St. George, St. Demetrius, or Archangel Michael. Texts of this kind came to us in the form of apocryphal prayers which were in circulation long enough so as to merge with the oral narrative tradition. They will be the subject of this paper.

There is no doubt that the process of rearranging a sacral (even if apocryphal) sujet into a secular text was long and gradual. It is also easy to believe that this process could be satisfactorily reconstructed by a scrupulous analysis of its different editions, and from different points of view (e.g. textology, philology in the strict sense, narratology and so on) - as well as from the standpoint of genre theory, which will be the angle of our approach. Nevertheless, oral literature - as a part or a subsystem of traditional culture - is hard to submit to genre classifications, and so much so that the very idea of division according to genres is, in fact, strange to it. Therefore, it is not an overreaction to say that the discussion on genres in this field could be performed "by the book" only if some basic poetological presumptions were formulated in advance. In the analysis we are going to present here, such a presumption is the concept of "inter-genre transferability" which, strategically speaking, belongs to that relatively narrow, border zone where even the little changes could be of prevailing influence on deciding about the genre label of a text. This "twilight zone" is not a *sine qua non* of oral literary theory, but it is by all means a very good way for loosely defined or unqualified texts to acquire a position of minimal orderliness when it comes to oral poetics and terminology.

Among all approachable prayers of St. Sisinnius, for this occasion the XVII century Bulgarian apocrypha was chosen as the basic sacral text, although in its close vicinity there exist even its older versions (Serbian and Romanian, both from the XVI century). This choice was motivated by characteristics of the oral narratives (texts 2 and 3) which manifest more points of similarity with the Bulgarian version than with the other editions of the basic paleoslavonic manuscript - including the Serbian. Text no. 4, a relatively new, late XIX century printed version of the apocrypha, is taken here as a sort of control or check point for evaluation of the reversible influence which the process of desacralization, initialized by traditional culture, had on the text itself.

For the purpose of the analysis, as well as for a more comfortable review of its subject (i.e. sujet-structure), all 4 texts are schematically presented as a narrative model with 15 (I-XV) constructively important points. Some of them are invariants and keepers of "relational" information about characteristics of pertaining structure, and others - more or less variable - relate the information about genre interventions on sujet. The presented texts are rendered as follows: *The Prayer of St. Sisinnius, Isidor, Simeon and Theodore* (Molitva na sveti Sisin, Isidor, Simeon i Teodor, Apokrifi, pp. 313-314) - apocryph, text no. 1; *Saint Sisulj* (Sveti Sisulj, ZNŽOJS, 1905, X, 1, pp. 137-138) - folktale, text no. 2; *Saint Paraskeva and the Devil* (Sveta Petka i davo, Čajkanović, no. 167) - folktale, text no. 3; *The Miracles of Saint Sisoe* (Minunile sfintului Sisoe, Hasdeu, pp. 217-222) - apocryph, text no. 4.⁷ If attached to text no. 1 the item "variants" occurs, which means that information is

⁶ Originally, the enemy of the saint was a witch, i.e. female demon whose function was to steal and kill the newborn (conf. Pantelić 1973).

⁷ This recent Romanian edition from XIX century (1860-1870) was first printed in Jashi, and after 1870 many times reprinted in Bucharest. Here the Bucharest edition from 1888. is cited. The author is truly grateful to Dr Biljana Sikimic for her friendly help on Romanian translations.

given about differences between Bulgarian and other versions of apocrypha⁸ with the same sujet (i.e. where the enemy is the devil instead of a witch etc.).

I. hero

- text 1: St. Sisin (variants: together with brothers)
- text 2: St. Sisulj
- text 3: Krstivoje
- text 4: St. Sisoe

II. hero's place before the action starts

- text 1: Arabian country (variants: Mt. Sion, Sion Mountain, Mt. Sinai, Tavor Mountain)
- text 2: he dwells in a desert mountain and is continually riding on horseback
- text 3: none
- text 4: none

III. additional protagonists

- text 1: hero's sister Melentija and her children (5 sons + 1 child) /in original Aramaic text: Melitena/
- text 2: hero's sister Mileva (two children+one)
- text 3: hero's sister Krstina (three sons)
- text 4: hero's sister Meletia (five children + one)

IV. action initialized (the way hero gets informed that his sister needs him)

- text 1: Sisin is hunting in the woods and there comes an angel who informs him that his sister's last child is in danger
- text 2: an angel presents himself to St. Sisin in the woods
- text 3: the sister "prati aber" (sends the message)
- text 4: no specific information: Sisoe is in the big woods, hunting with the emperor; a storm occurs, the company splits apart, and Sisoe - with God's help - comes to his sister's "kelia" by the sea-side

V. place from which the action begins (his sister's home)

- text 1: the stone tower reinforced with iron, strengthened with lead and bronze; in it the 6-years-lasting food is piled up and there are two girl-servants
- text 2: Mileva lives in Mount Salimaska; she has arranged everything to last her for one year and closed herself in
- text 3: no description
- text 4: Meletia's "kelia" on the sea-side; Meletia lives there alone, without any help ("with one arm she cooks, and in the other she holds the child")

VI. obstacles in space (at the entrance of the sister's home)

- text 1: a strong and cold wind suddenly occurs; the sister dares not let the hero in until she recognizes his voice and finds out he is a devil hunter

⁸ Editions printed in: Dujčev, *Apokrypha Byzantino-slavica*, Zbornik Filološkog fakulteta, IX, 1, Beograd, 1967, pp. 247-250 and Pantelić 1973, pp. 161-205.

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- text 2: the sister dares not let the hero in until she recognizes his voice
text 3: the sister dares not let the hero in until she recognizes his voice
text 4: sudden tempest; the sister dares not let the hero in until he informs her that God has made him a devil hunter

VII. hero's adversary

- text 1: devil (kidnaps the last child)
text 2: enemy⁹ (kidnaps the last child)
text 3: devil (kidnaps the last child)
text 4: devil (kidnaps the last child)

VIII. the adversary transforms the obstacles in space (in front of the sister's home)

- text 1: turns into a grain of barley and sticks to a horse hoof (variant: becomes a fly)
text 2: no description, only statement: "uvuče se neprijatelj" (the enemy sneaked in)
text 3: no description
text 4: turns into a grain of barley and sticks to a horse hoof

IX. hero's task

- text 1: to bring the children back home
text 2: to bring the children back home
text 3: to bring the children back home
text 4: to bring the children back home

X. journey assistants (informants)

- text 1: willow (cursed), blackberry (cursed), maple (blessed), olive (blessed) (variants: cypress and fir tree)
text 2: shepherds, willow (cursed) and olive (blessed)
text 3: willow (cursed) and olive (blessed)
text 4: willow (cursed), blackberry (cursed), maple (blessed) and olive (blessed)

XI. place the adversary dwells in

- text 1: in the sea, with the sea-fish
text 2: "u pučinu morsku i u dubljinu", "u morskije dubljina" (in high seas and sea depths, in the sea deep)
text 3: "na obalu na brodu ge izlazi galia" (at the sea-shore where galleons go off)
text 4: "he dipped in the Sea, he is playing with sea-fish and with the child"

XII. the adversary is bitten

- text 1: a hook is thrown into the sea and he bites it (variants: 7 hooks; 77 hooks)
text 2: "nalazi ga u morskije dubljina te ga sindžirima tvrdo veže a klještima ga za nos vata pa ga iz mora izvukao na jednu ledinu, i poče ga biti gvozdenom šibicom" (he finds him in the sea depths and by chains he ties him up tight, and with pliers he pulls him by the nose to a lawn, and he starts beating him with an iron stick)

⁹ The "enemy" is the usual folklore hypocoristic for devil, the same as: *nekrštenik, naletnik, nečastivi, kusi, reponja, rogonja, matori, prokletnik* etc.

- text 3: Krstivoje "nade mrtvo dete, pa ga naniže na udicu, pa ga baci pod galiu. Đavo ga progune, i udicu i njega. Krstivoje vuče te izvuče đavola iz vode" (Krstivoje finds a dead child, he puts him on the hook and throws it into sea, under a galleon. Krstivoje starts pulling and pulls the devil out of the water)
- text 4: "Then St. Sisoe dismounted at the Sea-shore and he fell on his knees and prayed to God to put the devil in his hand. And the saint, praying in fiery tears to God, threw the hook into the Sea, and he caught the devil instantly, and pulling him by the neck, he got him out of the Sea, and he started beating him by strokes that burn and with a burning stick along the spine"

XIII. hero passes a hard exam

- text 1: to throw up his mother's milk
- text 2: to throw up his mother's milk
- text 3: to throw up his mother's milk
- text 4: to spit out his mother's milk

XIV. magic assistant

- text 1: prayer to Jesus Christ (variants: assistant does not appear at all)
- text 2: the holy Mother of God: "Sv. Sisulj nade se na mucu te kleknu na gola koljena i zamoli majku Božiju, da mu dade da izbljuje svoje matere mlijeko, što ga poso. Učini to majka Božija" (St. Sisulj, being in trouble, fell to his bare knees and prayed to the holy Mother of God to let him spit out his mother's milk that he had sucked. The holy Mother of God did so)
- text 3: St. Paraskeva: Krstivoj "pođe uz obalu pa plače. Sretne ga sveta Petka" (Krstivoj went along the shore crying, St. Paraskeva meets him there)
- text 4: prayer to God: "So the saint prayed in tears to God and instantly threw up the milk he had sucked from his mother"

XV. final outcome and destiny of children

- text 1: "Ashamed, the devil doubled his strength and threw up Melentija's six sons"; nothing more is said about the children
- text 2: "Onda isprebijat neprijatelj izbljuva dvoje djece. Opet ga bije sv. Sisulj, da mu i treće izbljuvava. Već ne more dalje neprijatelj, neg izbljuva i treće. U ta doba dopade majka Božija pa ij okupa i opru i zamota u svoje aljine te ij odnese u nebesa, a sv. Sisulj uzimlje neprijatelja te ga presiječe na četiri poše pa ga baci u more, da više ne nosi naroda. Sv. Sisulj onda uzja na konja pa odja sestri kaz'ti, da ne žali djece svoje, da ij je majka Božija odnijela u svoje krilo." (Then the beaten up enemy threw up the two children. St. Sisulj beats him again to have him throw up the third child too. The enemy cannot endure, so he throws up the third. By then the holy Mother of God appears, seizes the children, washes them and wraps them in her own gowns, and takes them to heaven, and St. Sisulj takes the enemy, cuts him in four slices and throws him into the sea, so as to prevent him from abducting people any more. St. Sisulj then mounts his horse and rides to his sister to tell her not to weep after her children, for the holy Mother of God took them in her lap)

- text 3: "Kad se vide đavo u nevolji, riknu triput pa izbljuva oba deteta, te ji Krstivoj uze, te odnese svoje sestre, a đavola puštio ge je i bio. A đavo se zareče da ga više dirat neće." (The Devil, seeing himself in trouble, cried three times and threw up both children, so Krstivoj took them and brought them to his sister, and he let the devil be. And devil took an oath never to bother him any more)
- text 4: "And then the saint beat him even more and put him to pains and threw him around, put him on the hook by the neck and took him by the hair with his hand, and he struck him and beat him saying: 'Submit to everlasting pains and go to the desert where you belong'; and he cut his head off, he ripped his chest from waist to throat. And then he threw him in the Sea and placed a curse on him so that he should never come back again. Then St. Sisoe took his sister's children all and everyone and brought them to the cell /kelia/ where Meletia was. And so said the saint: 'Take, my sister Meletia, the children the devil stole from you'; and she took them with great love and joy and she praised God for it."

What strikes the eye in this review of the texts is the small – or, better, insufficient – number of mutual, invariant points (marked with a raster): only three (VII, IX and XIII). They cover for dramatic turns needed to start the action and significant for telling a story about it: the hero's main task (to bring the children back), the enemy who took the children, and the final test the hero has to pass so as to accomplish his goal. Thanks to the last one, they are all easily, almost automatically connected with the fairy-tale, although they are present in any genre with dramatic plot – either rudimentary or advanced: in charm, epic poem, some rite texts and many narrative genres such as novellas, comic stories and so on. The nature of information thus transferred is relational (information that the text structure relates about itself) but incomplete, for it lacks two frame notions: on the main protagonist – i.e. hero (point I), and – complementary to it – on the hero's return to the spot from which the action has begun (point XV). Without that frame, and that means without both the beginning and the end, the structure remains unfinished. But here neither the beginning nor the end are marked with the raster, and so they figure as main differences between the texts. That means they are excluded from the basic structure, for the information they relate is not only relational but also of genre – i.e. literary – importance. Within the boundary of oral literature, this case is completely atypical.

Generally, if the line of research is connected with the sujet, the hero and his adversary form a pair element of basic structure which is in no way influenced by nomination (to start with point I). For example: in the epical sujet "wedding with obstacles" nothing is changed if Grbljic Zane (a Montenegrin knight) takes the place of "srpski car Stjepan" (Serbian emperor Stefan), and if in the role of adversary "gospoda kotorska" (gentlemen from city of Kotor) replace the "gospoda ledjanska" (gentlemen from the city of Ledjan). The difference between these two poems lies in the presence/absence of a mediator in the form of the groom's nephew, which is a distinctive element of sujet that can *by no means* be found as early as in its basic structure. In a different, narrative genre – e.g. in the novella, the sujet becomes even less formal about nomination: whether the hero would be king Solomon or an emperor's brother, and whether his adversary becomes the hero's mother or the emperor himself – does not affect the sujet in any way. Here, too, the distinctive element of sujet is the presence/absence of an assistant in performing a task and, again, this element can *by no means* be found within its basic

structure because this structure - as was said before - offers only relational information about its own self. How eagerly the narration tries to keep its nucleus intact, becomes obvious with the first glance at a fairy-tale where an indifferent and even hostile attitude towards the protagonist's nomination figures as one of its few distinctive genre characteristics. The protagonists of the fairy-tale are either nameless (third/the youngest/the only son, prince, step-daughter, brother and sister...) or nick-named (John the apple seed, Cinderella ...), or their names are fully folklorized (Hansel and Gretel, Ivanushka, Snow-white and so on).

On the other hand, whatever comes from the broadest area of hagiography (lives of saints, prayers, legends), apocryphal or not, shows a completely opposite reaction to the protagonist's nomination. Those *sujets*, although typical in great measure, have as their main purpose to protect and keep the memory of saints and holy martyrs, and of their deeds above all (*acta martyrum/sanctorum*). Therefore this opposite attitude towards nomination is not only understandable but also inescapable. Differently from the majority of oral texts pertaining to the same genre (where the main thing is to protect the *sujet* as far as possible), legends are meant to protect the protagonist and his name because, as sacral texts, they plead for a special kind of plausibility (witness *ad visum*). Even if they merge in oral tradition, these texts keep their basic structure unchanged. There, the position of the hero is not empty but, on the contrary, it is always known in advance to which nomination it is consecrated: that means that interchangeability is strictly limited and motivated by non-textual reasons. In the case of our St. Sisinnius, for example, only one alternation is possible (Archangel Michael) and not one more. The reason, probably, is the written origin of the matrix and, of course, the underlined Christian surroundings at the moment of its transfer to the new (oral) environment. There where christianization went on differently and was less controlled, the interchangeability of hagionyms was of bigger size but showed no principal differences of any kind. In this context, our problem clearly presents itself as a special case of intersection between two literary genres with opposite attitudes towards the protagonist's nomination, but with the mutual *sujet*.

Nevertheless, the folktales do not react identically to the contact with texts of different genres. Text no. 2 ("St. Sisulj") keeps both the hagionym and the iconic image of the holy horseman in the desert mountain which, necessarily, prevents it from using an initial formula as it should be in oral narrative genres, and urges the text to make a beginning most close to the origin.¹⁰ By contrast, text no. 3 ("St. Paraskeva and the devil") replaces hagionyms with folklorized names Krstivoj and Krstina,¹¹ respects the initial formula ("Imala Krstina tri sina...") and introduces the hero only after it. The first example is characteristic of legend, the second one of fairy-tale.

If the same attitude of narrative texts towards the original could prevail through the remaining 14 points, it would be easy to put a genre-label on them and they themselves would not formally belong to the twilight zone of oral literature. But the things are not that

¹⁰ In this context, it is possible to suppose that the source was one of the manuscript's variants where the "Cion mountain" is determined as St. Sisinnius' dwelling place. (Sreckovic's collection of the priest Dragolj - the beginning of XIV century), "Cion mountain" (Romanian prayer to St. Sisoe - XVI century), or "Sinai mountain" (priest Jeremiah variant, Bogomil original). In Russian incantations "Tavor mountain", also appears. For all these variants see: Sokolov 1888 and Hasdeu 1984.

¹¹ In this sense, the story could begin with: "The woman had three sons...", and nothing fundamentally would be changed.

simple: inter-genre transferability is huge and mutual influences, although tiny, are nevertheless more in number than could be expected. How and where they are inactivated will be shown through an analysis of the represented scheme.

Besides the aforementioned nomination of the hero (point I), the full chain of points witnesses the difference in acceptance and interpretation of the basic text's details. For example, points III, X and XI mark the places of difference both between folktales themselves, and between folktales and apocrypha. In case of additional protagonists (point III), the folktales show a smaller number of children (three) than do the apocrypha (four and six). This number is not only smaller, but in both cases it is also caused by the fairy-tale poetics: besides three, the children might also be seven in number (6+1) or ninety-nine (100-1), but never six (5+1) because such an element is not known to the fairy-tale's numerical code. The same goes for the journey assistants (point X) – of whom in the apocrypha there are four and in the folktales two or three – where the "St. Sisulj" text submits to larger interventions than the "St. Paraskeva and the devil" text does: number 3 in the folktale represents the right numerical encoding, and for that reason added to two plants (blessed and cursed) are the shepherds-informants. If their purpose were something else, the role given to them would have been defined better, and the answer to the hero would have not gone without any comment. (In "St. Paraskeva and the devil" the lack of such an intervention, although it does not ruin its structure, lessens its literary value from the standpoint of genre, and remains one of the less important reasons for it belonging to the twilight zone.)

Finally, as for the place in which the hero's adversary dwells (point XI), the difference between the folktales and the apocrypha is small but significant. In "St. Sisulj" the enemy goes down to the sea depths but he *does not* dwell there "with fish"; this nuance makes a big difference between the devil's dwelling place (apocrypha) and the hiding place of its escape (Sisulj). Text no. 3 (St. Paraskeva), probably because the narrator himself does not have a clear concept of the sea, which he might have never seen, stresses the border line between the water and the land: "na obalu *na brodu* ge izlazi galia" (to the coast and to *shallow water* where the galleon goes off), where "shallow water" as a liminal locus gains strong magic connotations. As a consequence, at point XII (the adversary is bitten), folktales show more similarity to the apocrypha than to each other.

All this shows that text no. 2 (St. Sisulj) is not simply and carelessly transferred (as a legend) from one tradition to the other and that, leaving the written and entering the oral idiom, it had to make many small but multilevel adaptations. Strong reaction to the numerical narrative code (three children, three informants), along with the hero's return to the place the action started from (point XV), are only the most outstanding phases of this process. Along with them, less obvious, there are also recognizing the hero by his voice (point III) and negative reaction to the offered motive of devil's transformation (point VIII), mutual to both folktales. In this last – VIII – point, deviation from the apocrypha is at its greatest, and it fully shows the real meaning of inter-genre transferability and the way it operates.

It is well known that the narrative matrix of oral story-telling is rejective to unofficial solutions. Seeing that the subjects are typical, it is also very well known which one of them could deal with the transformation motive (not only of the devil, but also of the hero, his assistant or his adversary in general) and in what length (starting from the folktale in extenso – e.g. "Devil's apprentice", to the isolated sequences of dragon fighting, of extra

corporal strength, of the grateful dead and so on). If the sujet is not of proper type, the narrative matrix does not recognize such a motive as a logical one and rejects it.¹² Both our folktales react accordingly, although the devil's metamorphosis motive exists *in every single* edition of the original manuscript. The prayer, though, as a sacral text of written origin, is not bound to pay attention to the same things, because its matrix is differently structured and so it cannot be ruined by the borrowings from the oral narrative model. The points of its vulnerability are differently arranged, as we have seen before (discussion on the hero's nomination - point I), and there where its function is not at stake, borrowing from another genre - even from another type of literature - is almost free. This theoretical notion is general and applicable to both our cases (apocrypha/legend and oral folktale/fairy-tale), and therefore the reactions it causes are contradictory.

Then, again, the points where flexibility did not take place, although very scarce, are strong enough as to definitely exclude "St. Sisulj" from the twilight zone of fairy-tale and transfer it to the genre of legendary folktales. On the contrary, by an opposite reaction to exactly the same challenge, the folktale of St. Paraskeva and the devil moves toward fairy-tale and definitely stays out of legend.

Besides the hero's nomination, the first important difference between our folktales appears at point IV, i.e. in the way the hero gets informed that his action is needed: in "St. Sisulj" - as well as in the Bulgarian apocryph - an angel is the one who approaches the saint, and in "St. Paraskeva..." - seeing the text is free from any hagiography burden - the sister simply "sends a message". The same connection with elements of hagiography urges St. Sisulj in point V (the sister's dwelling) to - more or less genuinely - relate the apocryphal data, while in the other case (St. Paraskeva) the absence of such a bond enables it to simply skip point V.

The final discrepancy between "St. Sisulj" and "St. Paraskeva..." begins at the point where - in terms of fairy-tale - there emerges the need for a magic assistant (point XIV). In this sequence, text no. 3 stands for the best genre tradition: "Krstivoj /.../ went by the sea-side shedding tears. St. Paraskeva meets him: 'what's the matter with you, Krstivoje, why are you crying?' 'The devil took my sister's children and won't turn them back'..."¹³ and even more so, seeing that the nomination of St. Paraskeva in this context is equal to nomination of the hero and his sister at the beginning of the folktale.¹⁴ St. Sisulj, then, does quite the opposite: he falls to his bare knees and he prays to the holy Mother of God for help, which duly happens. Because she comes unrecognized and uncalled for, but expected

¹² Fairy-tales usually do not explain the way the demon enters the man's space for committing the evil that initiates the story: "Once upon a time there was a king who had three sons, and in front of the court a golden apple that in one night flourishes, grows ripe and somebody strips it, but there was no way to understand who" ("The golden apple and nine pea-hens", Karadžić, p. 59). The absence of a rational explanation until the story activates is one of the fairy-tale's genre constants.

¹³ The formula with the crying hero who on the road meets the assigned helper is older than genre division. This formula is equally frequent in incantations, about which we have written in the paper "Saint Petka in the twilight zone of oral literature", *Kult svetih na Balkanu*, Liceum, 2001 (in print).

¹⁴ What the hero sees during this meeting for him is not the saint (because he does not call her and he can not know who is the woman he met) but the helper, and this is different. Such as anthropomorphic helper is frequent in fairy-tales ("thankful corps", fairy girl, old woman, old man with the white beard, etc.). In the other text of the same narrator, Saint Paraskeva is found at the same function under the same circumstances, but with elements of her description: "He set off on the road and cried. Saint Petka met him, *she was spinning the golden hemp*: 'What's the matter, king, she says, why are you crying...' etc. (Čajkanović, No. 79). In this case, also, the hero does not know that he is talking with Saint Petka.

from the genre point of view, St. Paraskeva really is a magic assistant despite her hagionym; the holy Mother of God is not.

The difference in the way the helpers appear (called and uncalled for) has a far-reaching effect. Because he neither rationally participates in his "good fortune" nor consciously counts on it,¹⁵ - and this is nothing less than showing respect for the genre constant - Krstivoj becomes a real fairy-tale hero. His actions are consistently motivated and realized in the horizontal plane of his world (steps "up" or "down" are motivated by an alien initiative), and because of this such a hero is free to make his own choices and is independent in making decisions which initiate and direct the plot. The choices are scarce and illusory and the decisions predictable, but they have no effects on the narration. On the contrary, St. Sisulj - whose insight covers both for what is above and what is below his world - acts as an agent of powers stronger than he could ever be and so he is deprived of any choice: he is told where to go and what to do (angel), and - when in trouble - he knows exactly to whom to appeal. The helper thus called for (the holy Mother of God) assists, in fact, not the hero but "the rightful Christian cause" and, by so doing, expropriates the hero and makes him unnecessary for further narration. So it happens that he, unlike Krstivoje, is not able to fulfill his main task and bring the children back. Krstivoje, the true fairy-tale hero, is able to do both, remaining in congruence with the original even more than St. Sisulj: Krstivoje does not kill the devil (although in fairy-tale it would be more likely, and is what St. Sisulj in fact does), but makes a deal with him (conf. the end of the Bulgarian apocryph).

Repeating, then, what is for an apocryphal saint of the greatest importance (nomination, prayer, killing the devil, loss of children), "St. Sisulj" - in spite of the multiform and significant influence of the fairy-tale narrative model - in terms of genre is most adequately defined as an oral legend or a folktale with religious plot. Giving negative response to the solutions offered (folklorized name, initial formula, magic assistant, return of children), the folktale "St. Paraskeva and the devil" withdraws equally from both the original and "St. Sisulj", which might logically qualify it as a fairy-tale. In that case, its genre imperfections could be explained by the incompetence of the narrator as well as by the influence of the original, which is still very strong.

The point at which that influence diminishes completely and gives its important place to the oral narrative matrix is, in fact, the missing - fifth (V) - point of the aforementioned basic structure, i.e. fulfillment of task and return to the place the action started from. Independently from the original manuscript, this point is restored by both folktales and, still more important, by the recent (Romanian) edition of the apocrypha which was naturally exposed to the reversible influence of traditional, oral story-telling. Keeping in view whatever might be important for a sacral text, even overdoing the saint's icon up to flamboyancy (fiery tears, fiery stick, burning wounds on devil), the Romanian apocrypha coincides with an oral understanding of genre in two points: it sends the hero into action without invitation (angel left out) and brings him back to the sister's "kelia" together with the saved children. It is by no means a frivolous and hazardous coincidence that those compromises are offered both at the beginning and at the end of text, i.e. at his

¹⁵ Special attention was not paid to that fact (cf. the motif of noble step-daughter and evil daughter, or the motif of noble attitude toward the animal in trouble). In the story "Saint Petka and the devil" this story segment (gaining help episode) is completely lacking; this is one of the important reasons why its position must be in the "twilight zone".

borders. Especially there, at the strong points where one open colloquial succession is put into a clearly defined frame and thus appropriated as text, the iron logic of oral narrative demands the full correspondence and, if given a chance, attains its purpose.

TEXTS

Tekst 1: *Molitva svetog Sisina, Isidora, Simeona i Teodora* (Bugarski Apokrifi, str. 313-314)

U ime Oca i Svetoga Duha. Bili jednom vojnici kao sveti Sisin i Simeon i Isidor, koji su svakoga pobeđivali, prvo Asirce, a posle Ismaelićane. Za vreme njihovog dvadesetog / podviga/ u arapskoj zemlji, Sisin pođe u lov. Tada se svecu javi anđeo Gospodnji i reče mu: "Idi svojoj sestri Melentiji, koja je rodila 5 sinova, a davo ih uze. Danas joj se zateklo novo-rođeno dete, davo i njega hoće da uzme; da ga osujetiš, poteraj ga i zajedno s njim /izgnaj/ sve đavole." Tada se sveti Sisin uputi ka svojoj sestri Melentiji. Ona je napravila mramornu kulu i dobro je okovala klicima, i ojačala livenim olovom i bakrenim okovima. Nakupila je hranu za šest godina i dovela dve devojčice da je služe.

Kada se sveti Sisin približio kuli, iznenada se podiže veliki vetar i nastade zima. Sveti Sisin reče: "Sestro moja, Melentijo, otvori mi da uđem, jer mi golemi vetar dosadi." Melentija reče: "Ne smem da ti otvorim, brate moj, jer imam dojenče i strah me od đavola." Sveti Sisin reče: "Ne boj se, ja sam lovac na đavole i njihov progonitelj." Melentija, kad mu je čula glas, otvori kulu. Tada se davo pretvori u zrno prosa, prilepi se konju pod kopito i uđe u kulu. Kad bi pola noći, Melentija pipnu svoje dete i reče: "O, brate, mrtvo je" - i povika jakim glasom: "Brate moj, Sisine, kako sam ti rekla, tako je i bilo!"

Tada sveti Sisin usede na svoga konja, kome je iz usta bio plamen, i dok je gonio đavola, sretne vrbu Božju i reče: "Vide li vruga kako beži i nosi dete?" Ova je videla, a reče: "Ne videh." Tada je Sisin prokle: "Cvet da imaš, a plod da nemaš!" Posle toga naiđe na kupinu i reče: "Vide li vruga da beži i da nosi dete?" Ova je videla, no reče: "Ne videh!" Tada je sveti Sisin prokle: "Kupino, da budeš čoveku prepreka, a za sebe da si prokleta! Gde ti je koren, tamo da ti je i vrh!" Posle stiže do javora, drveta Božijeg, i reče: "Javore, vide li vruga da beži i dete da nosi?" Ovaj je video i reče: "Videh." I reče sveti Sisin: "Da si blagosloven, javore, da si u crkvi klepalo i da zoveš pravednike na spasenije, a grešnike na pokajanije." I kad dođe do masline, drveta Božijeg, reče: "Maslino, ne vide li vruga da beži i dete da nosi?" Ona je videla i kaza: "Videh, gnjurnu se u more s ribama morskim." Sveti Sisin reče: "Maslino, da si blagoslovena u crkvi i da budeš lek šudima!"

Tada se sveti Sisin pomoli Bogu i baci udicu u more. Izvuče đavola na suvo i započe da ga bije i muči, vičući: "Daj mi decu moje sestre Melentije, koju si uzeo!" I još reče Sisin: "Živ je Gospod Bog moj na nebu i na zemlji, ne puštam te, đavole, nećeš mi se izmaći iz ruku, dok mi ne daš Melentijinu decu." Davo reče: "Pojeo sam ih. Izbljuj mi majčino mleko, koje si sisao kao mali, a ja ću ti ispljunuti decu" - bio je uporan davo. Tada se sveti Sisin pomoli Bogu rečima: "Gospode Isuse Hriste, čuj raba svojega, danas ću te proslaviti ja, tvoj rob, a đavola ću posramiti." I bljunu materino mleko. Davo se posrami, udvoji sile svoje i povrati šestoricu sinova Melentijinih. Sveti Sisin reče: "Živ je Gospod Bog moj na nebu i na zemlji, neću te pustiti đavole, nećeš mi izmaći iz ruku ako se ne zakuneš: "Tamo, gde se čita moja molitva i gde se spominje moje ime, tamo da ne može doći ni mora, ni veštica, ni davo." Tada se davo zakle: "U ime svevišnjeg i nebesnih sila, i 40 popova, koji neprekidno

poju na nebu. Tamo, gde se spominje moje ime i gde se čita moja molitva, u domu raba Božijeg (ime), tamo da ne pristupa ni mora, ni veštica, ni zao duh vo vjeki. Amin.

Tekst 2: *Sv. Sisulj* (ZNŽOJS 1905, X, 1, str. 137-138)

Sv. Sisulj bio u gori pustinji i ja' na konju vavijek i imao jedinu sestru Milevu, udatu u Salimsku goru. Ona je imala sa svojim drugom dvoje djece; došao neprijatelj i odnio oba dvoje. Kad je bilo treće na rođenju dijete, onda otiša anđel Boži sv. Sisulju u gori kazati: "O sv. Sisulju, eno ti se porada sestra Mileva, ajde joj budi na pomoći, obrani je od neprijatelja, jer joj je odnio prvu djecu, pa će i ovo sad što ima roditi." Mileva je bila pripravila sve za godinu dana za svoj rodaj i zatvorila se, da nema njoj niko dolaziti, jerse bojala jako neprijatelja. Kad se bila porodila danom u podne, a sv. Sisulj k njoj dođe pred počivanje u zavojke sunca, kad ona sve oko sebe zatvorila, da ne bi neprijatelj uša. Tada rupi njezin brat sv. Sisulj i zove: "Otvori vrata, sestro Mileva!" Ona njemu kaže: "Ja sam se zatekla, da nikom vrata otvoriti ne smijem." Govori on: "Ja sam ti brat sv. Sisulj, otvori mi!" Otvori ona vrata pa mu se poče tužiti, kako joj je neprijatelj djecu odnio, pa čuva, da ne bi i ovo sade, i da joj on nije brat, da mu ne bi nikako otvorila. Čim sv. Sisulj uđe u avliju, odma tvrdo zatvoriše vrata sa sviju strana pa stadoše čuvati dijete. Prevari nji san te zaspashe oboje. Uvuče se neprijatelj pa im ukrade iz kolijevke dijete. Kad se prene sestra Mileva, onda stade je plač i cika; prenu se i sv. Sisulj pa govori: "Što ti je, sestro Mileva?" Ona njemu kaže, da je doša neprijatelj i da je ukra dijete; on nju tješi: "Muči, sestro Mileva, ja idem potražiti neprijatelja." Sv. Sisulj uzjaiva na konja i uzimlje zgrade, kako će ga uvatiti: sindžire i kliješta, i uzimlje gvozdenu šibicu, s kojom će ga biti. Tako je otiša dvije tri milje puta i tuka dvoje troje čobančadi. Pita nji, da nijesu u zoru trevili neprijatelja, da nosi dijete moje sestre Mileve? Njemu oni kažu: "E sv. Sisulju, da smoga videli oli trevili, mi bi ti kazali." Ide dalje sv. Sisulj od nji i tuka kraj puta vrbu pa joj reče: "Dobro jutro, vrbo!" Reče ona: "Bog da dobro!" - "A da ti nijesi vidla ovda, da je u zoru neprijatelj pronio dijete moje sestre Mileve?" Ona njemu veli, da nije vidla ništa. Ode on dalje od nje i prokle je, da od nje ne bilo nigda roda ni sjemena. Tako je iša dalje i tuka je maslinu te joj reče: "Dobro jutro, maslino moja!" - "Bog da dobro, sv. Sisulju!" - "A jesi li ti vidla ovda u zoru, da je neprijatelj pronio dijete moje sestre Mileve?" Maslina njemu kaže, da jest prošla u zoru i da je pronio nekakvo dijete. Pita je sv. Sisulj, što bi on od njega sad uradio i de bi se on sakrio? Maslina mu kaže: "O sv. Sisulju, on je otiša u pučinu morskou i sakrio se od tebe u dubljinu." Sv. Sisulj pozdravlja maslinu: "O moja maslino sveta, od tebe bolja mast bila nego od ikakve stoke i blagoslovljena bila!" Pa ode u pučine morske tražiti neprijatelja i nalazi ga u morskije dubljina te ga sindžirima tvrdo veže a kliještima ga za nos vata pa ga iz mora izvukao na jednu ledinu, i poče ga biti gvozdenom šibicom. Pita njega neprijatelj: "Zašto me biješ?" Reče sv. Sisulj: "Za djecu moje sestre Mileve, i odma mi ij vraćaj!" On mu govori: "Kako ću ti ij vratiti, kad sam ij poždro." Bije njega sv. Sisulj opet što ikad more gvozdenom šibicom, da mu vraća djecu, ali mu reče neprijatelj: "Ajde ti povrati svoje matere mlijeko, što si posao, ja ću tebi djecu." Sv. Sisulj nađe se na mucu te kleknu na gola koljena i zamoli majku Božiju, da mu dade da izbljuje svoje matere mlijeko, što ga poso. Učini to majka Božija, te bljunu sv. Sisulj mlijekom svoje matere pa onda bolje kliještima vata neprijatelja za nos i bije gvozdenom šipkom pa mu govori: "Evo ja sam izbljuva materino mlijeko, ala ti meni bljuj djecu moje sestre Mileve!" Onda isprebijat neprijatelj izbljuva dvoje djece. Opet ga bije sv. Sisulj, da mu i treće izbljuvava. Već ne more dalje neprijatelj, neg izbljuva i treće. U ta doba dopade majka Božija pa ij okupa i opr

i zamota u svoje aljine te ij odnese u nebesa, a sv. Sisulj uzimlje neprijatelja te ga presiječe na četiri pole pa ga baci u more, da više ne nosi naroda. Sv. Sisulj onda uzja na konja pa odja sestri kaz'ti, da ne žali djece svoje, da ij je majka Božija odnijela u svoje krilo.
(Đevrske u Dalmaciji)

Tekst 3: *Sveta Petka i davo* (Čajkanović, br. 167)

Imala Krstana tri sina. Došo đavo te ju izeo jedno dete, jednu noć odno. Došao drugu noć te odno drugo dete. Prati ona aber za brata Krstivoja: "friško neka mi dođe brat, odnese mi davo decu!" Dođe brat Krstivoje na vrata, sestra ne sme da mu otvori vrata, misli da je došo đavo da ju uzne i treće dete. Pa ga pozna po glasu da ju je brat rodeni. Kad videla da ju je brat rodeni ona pisnula pa brata zagrlila. Brat je upitao: "Šta ti je sestro, te pištiš?" "Dode davo, odnese mi, brale, decu, samo mi jedno ostalo; pa sad me stra oće mi uzne i njega jedno". "Ne boj se, sestro, prostri da spavamo." Prostre mu sestra da spavau. "Turi dete ovdi među nas dvoicu, ništa ne može davo da čini." Kad se trgla sestra u polak noć, ona pisnula, a dete nema. "Dig se, brate Krstivoje, dete mi nema!" On skoči i usede konja svoga, pa poče dole pokraj mora pa dođe do vrbe. "Vrbo, jesi videla da pronese davo dete u zubima?" Vrba kaže: "nisam videla." Sakrila đavola, nije tela da kaže. Onda je Krstivoj proklo: "ploda da imaš a roda da nemaš!" Pa udari niz more na drvo maslenku: "drvo maslenko, vide li davola da odnese dete u zubima?" "Vido, kaže; otide i drža dete u zubima." "Da Bog da da roda rodiš i da bes tvoga roda niko ne može živeti! A šta reče, kaže, kod tebe kad prođe ge boraviš?" "Ja ga upita ge češ; kaže, oću da ga nosim, ja imam više decu kod moe kuće. A ge boraviš? Na obalu na brodu ge izlazi galia." Krstivoje otidne na obalu ge izlazi galia, pa nađe mrtvo dete, pa ga naniže na udicu, pa ga baci pod galii. Đavo ga progune, i udicu i njega. Krstivoje vuče te izvuče đavola iz vode, pa g uvati štrangom za jezik. Đavo progovori: "Nemo, Krstivoje, da me tako grdno mučiš!" "Da daš moe sestre decu pa da te puštim!" "Kad izbljuješ materino mleko na dlan, onda ću ti dam decu." Krstivoj ga veže za koc, pa poče uz obalu pa plače. Sretne ga sveta Petka: "šta ti je, Krstivoje pa plačeš?" "Uzo mi davo sestrinu decu pa ne da, pa mi traži da izbljuem materino mleko, pa da mi da decu." Ona izvadila desnu sisu: "Trgni, kaže, Krstivoje triput is te sise mleko, pa idi te izbljuj na dlan kod njega nek ti da decu." On trže tripu iz njojzine sise mleko pa otide kod đavola: "daj mi, kaže, sestrinu decu!" "Kad izbljuješ materino mleko, kaže, onda ću ti dat decu." On roknu dvaput pa izbljuva mleko na dlanu. Kad se vide davo u nevolji, riknu triput pa izbljuva oba deteta, te ji Krstivoj uze, te odnese svoe sestre, a davola puštio ge je i bio. A davo se zareče da ga više dirat neće.

(Resava, selo Strmosten)

Tekst 4: *Čuda svetog Sisoja* (Hasdeu, str. 217-222) *The Miracles of St. Sisoë*¹⁶ (*Minunile Sfantului Sisoë*)

Onda, u vreme sv. Sisoja, krenuo je sa jednim carem u lov, i zajedno sa mnogom braćom, a kada je bio u velikoj šumi, uz volju božju, zadesi se veliko nevreme i svi se raspršiše po zemlji, niko ne znajući kuda je krenuo. A sveti Sisoje, uz božju volju, naiđe upravo na keliju svoje sestre Meletije na obali Mora i, stojeći pred vratima, vikao je jakim glasom da mu otvori vrata. A Meletija ga upita: "Ko si ti, kad te ja ne znam?" A on opet reče: "Otvori mi vrata, sestro moja Meletija, nemam gde da pobegnem od nevremena Mora; a njegova sestra Meletija odgovori mu govoreći: "Neću ti otvoriti vrata jer se bojim da mi davo ne uzme i ovo dete jer još nije navršilo 40 dana". A svetac joj reče: "Otvori vrata jer je mene Bog postavio za lovca na đavole." Čuvši to, njegova sestra odmah mu otvori vrata, a svetac, ušavši na konju u kuću, a davo se pretvori u zrnice prosa i zalepi se ispod kopita konja i ude i on sa svecem u kuću. A Meletija, njegova sestra, pošto je bila sama bez pomoći, jednom rukom je kuvala, a u drugoj ruci je držala dete; a zatim su večerali i legli u postelju; a kad je bila ponoć, ustao je davo i ukrao dete iz kolenke i pobegao sa njim. A pošto je dete jako vriskalo, Meletija ga je čula kroz san i probudila se i stavila ruku u kolenku i našla praznu kolenku i počela glasno da plače i, uz mnogo žalosti, da viče: "Ustani, brate moj Sisoje, jer mi je i ovo dete ukrao davo!" A svetac se probudio i rekao: "Šta je to?" A sestra mu je rekla razlog. Onda je on odmah ustao i uzjahao konja i uzeo paloš u ruku i krenuo za đavolom da ga nađe. Išavši putem, našao je na obali Mora vrbu, stao, sjahao s konja, pomolio se Bogu sa suzama da mu progovori vrba i počeo da je pita: "Sveta vrbo Božija, da nisi videla đavola kako beži sa detetom u rukama?" A vrba je videla i rekla mu je da nije videla; onda svetac, znajući njenu pokvarenost, reče joj: "Budi prokleta od Boga, cvetaćeš a da ne radaš" i tako bi. A svetac je i dalje jurio za đavolom i, videvši na putu kupinu, reče joj: "Kupino Božija, da nisi videla đavola kako beži sa detetom u rukama?" A kupina je videla i reče da nije videla; a onda i nju, kao i vrbu, prokune govoreći: "Gde ti je koren, da ti bude i vrh i budi prepreka ljudima"; i tako bi. A svetac je i dalje jurio za đavolom i vide na obali Mora javor i reče: "Sveti javore Božiji, da nisi video đavola kako beži sa detetom na rukama?" I on reče pravo, da ga je video, i da je čak čuo dete kako vrišti putem; a svetac mu reče: "Budi blagosloven od Boga i stoj ispred crkava pokajnicima na pokajanje, a pravednima na spasenje", i tako bi. A svetac je i dalje jurio za đavolom i vide na obali Mora maslinu i reče: "Sveta maslino Božija, da nisi videla đavola kako beži sa detetom na rukama?" a maslina mu reče pravo: "Videla sam ga, zagnjurio se u More, igra se sa morskim ribama i detetom zajedno"; a svetac reče: "Budi blagoslovena od Boga, od tebe neka bude miro i bez tebe da se ne krštava čovek" i tako bi. Onda sveti Sisoje sjaha s konja na obali Mora i kleknu licem na zemlju i pomoli se Bogu da mu da đavola u ruku. I svetac, moleći se sa plamenim suzama Bogu, zabaci udicu u More, i odmah uhvati đavola i, vukući ga za vrat, izvadi ga iz Mora, i poče da ga udara udarcima koji peku i plamenim palošem duž tela. I progovori davo svecu: "Šta imaš sa mnom, sveti Sisoje, pa me tučeš?" A svetac mu reče: "Daj, đavole, decu sestre

¹⁶ In the text commentary, Hasdeu states that Sisoë is a substitute for the original Sisinnius, and adds: "The Christian calendar knows two Sisoë, born as Egyptians, both celebrated in the month of July. About the one celebrated on 6 July, called Sisoë the Big, it is said that 'his prayer was strong in exorcizing devils'. This, together with the similarity of names and the association of ideas, was the reason why Saint Sisoë 'devil exorciser' in the new redaction easily replaced Saint Sisinnius, the devil exorciser in the older redaction. In both redactions there are other, secondary differences: 'disappearance' of the marble post, maple-tree in addition to willow, blackberry and olive" (pp. 210-212, articles 8 and 9).

moje Meletije koju si uzeo"; a on reče: "Nemam odakle da ti ih dam kad sam ih progutao"; a svetac reče: "Ako si ih progutao, ispljuj ih"; a đavo reče svecu: "Ispljuj ti mleko koje si sisao od svoje majke". A svetac se pomoli Bogu sa suzama i odmah povрати mleko koje je sisao od svoje majke. Onda se đavo veoma uplaši, i od straha i on ispljuva sve šestoro dece njegove setre, netaknute. A tada đavo zamoli svetog Sisoja da ga pusti, a svetac mu reče: "Đavole, dok se ti ne zakuneš da nećeš više imati moći nad hrišćanima da im činiš ikakvo zlo". A onda đavo, ne mogavši da pobegne iz svečevih ruku, dade mu zapis u ruku da gde god se nađu ti listovi ili u kojoj kući bilo kog čoveka ili na bilo kom mestu, da se đavo ne približava na 7 milja. A onda ga je svetac još udarao i mučio i bacao, zakačio ga je udicom za vrat i držao rukom za kosu, udarao ga je i tukao i govorio je svetac: "Idi na večne muke i u pustinju gde ti je dato"; i isekao mu je glavu, i rasporio mu je grudi od grla do stomaka. I onda ga je bacio u More i prokleo da odande više ne izlazi. Onda je sveti Sisoje uzeo decu svoje sestre svih šestoro i odveo ih do čelije gde je sedela Meletija. I reče svetac: "Uzmi, sestro moja Meletijo, decu koju ti je đavo ukrao"; a ona ih je sa velikom radošću i velikom ljubavlju primila i Boga hvalila.

Gde god se nađe ova knjiga, braćo, neka đavo nema moći i dušmani nikakvu snagu na ove hrišćane; kod kojih se nađe ova knjiga, da ne pride niti da se približi toj kući, niti ženi tog čoveka, niti njegovoj deci, neka se uopšte ne približava tim hrišćanima; i neka milost Božija bude sa vama za vek i vjekova, amin.

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