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Vanda Mari, Vanda terrae, aeri Vanda imperet : the Cracowian Tripartie Earth-Heaven-Sea Formula and Her Old-Icelandic, Old-Irish and Old-High-German Counterparts

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VANDA MARI, VANDA TERRAE, AERI VANDA IMPERET. THE CRACOWIAN TRIPARTIE EARTH-HEAVEN-SEA FORMULA AND HER OLD-ICELANDIC, OLD-IRISH AND OLD-HIGH-GERMAN COUNTERPARTS

In the Cracowian myth of origins recorded in Master Vincent's *Chronica Polonorum* (late 12th/early 13th century) appears Queen Vanda, King's Krak daughter (Słupecki, 1993, p. 15–17). The attempts to diminish her role to a literary character, transferred to Poland by Master Vincent (Kumaniecki, 1925/1926), have brought some important observations on how the myth was elaborated by medieval scholars, but are not convincing on the whole. One should admit that most probably Vanda indeed is a literary, artificial name. The attempts to deduce the etymology of her name from an Indo-European root meaning a water (*unda* in Latin, Danish *vand*, Lithuanian *wandu*) proposed by Römer (1872, p. 18) were rejected and scholars usually see in the name Vanda a name created like that of Vandals (Brückner, 1901, p. 225; Banaszkiewicz, 1979, p. 37–51), the name of a Germanic tribe from ancient times, which the medieval scholars liked to use from the end of 10th century to denominate Poles (Strzelczyk, 1992, p. 311–335).

Vanda, although dressed in foreign cloths, was nevertheless an authentic character from an old Cracowian myth. Whereas in the case of her father called Gracchus by Master Vincent it is easy to recognize the name Krak, the original name of Vanda was never recorded. H. Łowmiański (1963–1985, vol. 5, p. 322–324) supposed that she was called Wiślawa. Master Vincent (I, 7) asserted that from Vanda „one should derive the name of the river Wandal, because that

river was the center of her kingdom and because of that, everybody subjected to her rule, received the name Wandali". Łowmiański was of the opinion, that in this learned construction Vanda, the river Wandal and the Wandali reflected the orginal names Wisława, Wisła (Vistula) and Wiślanie (Vistulanias).

According to Master Vincent (I, 7) Vanda possessed magical powers. In that she resembled the daughters of the Czech hero Krok – the counterpart of Krak in Czech myths (Stupecki, 1993, p. 15). When Vanda succeeded her father after his death and the tragic end of the fight for power between her breathers, one German ruler (literally: *lemannorum tyrannus*) endeavored „to seize the throne as if vacant”. But his army was defeat by Vandas charm and refused to fight and the German ruler stabbed himself with own sword, saying a stanza, which has the character of an enchant:

*Vanda mari,
Vanda terrae,
aeri Vanda imperet!*

Followed with a text: *Diis immortalibus Vanda pro suis uictimet* (Master Vincent, I, 7).

It is not clear, if it was only a solemn acknowledgement of the power of Queen Vanda, who ruled over all the elements of the universe (sea, earth and air) and offerings the sacrifices for his own people (*pro suis uictimet*), or has another meaning.

Master Vincent's text is in this point not clear. After the enchant follows the words of the German ruler, who said, stabbing himself with his sword, that he is making an offering for his own army in order to this grow older under female rule. It is also a curse against the army which betrayed (Kumaniecki, 1925/1926, p. 49). Some scholars supposed that this offering should have an extact counterpart in Vandas offering, and tried to understand Master Vincent's words *Vanda pro suis uictimet* as a curse against Vanda and translated it as „should Vanda for owns offered oneself”. So does the translator of the new Polish edition of the Chronicle (Mistrz Wincenty, 1992, p. 18). If this interpretation is correct – which is doubtful – then in Master Vincent's version of the legend Vandas offering is composed only of the preserving of her virginity. Master Vincent's story is concluded with the words: because „she didn't want to marry anybo-

dy, and regarded maidenhood even higher than matrimony, she died without any successor" – as we can suppose – after a long, long reign.

But in the later versions of the legend (beginning from Kronika Wielkopolska, I, 1) this offering composed a suicidal death of the Queen in the Vistula, counterparts the death of her antagonist. In 15th century the German ruler received the name Rithogarus and the story – as J. Banaszkiewicz (1984) stress – assimilated some elements from the scheme of an expedition for a bride of the genre of german epic Brautwerbungssagen. But the motive of the wooing of a lady is alluded already by Master Vincent, who stated, that the German ruler exclaimed the course „affected by the pain of love or indignation, or by both".

Gerard Labuda (1988, p. 30–42) sees in description of the Vanda-episode in Master Vincent's Chronicle Scandinavian influences and stresses the archaic and pagan features; he refers to Scaldic poetry and Old-Icelandic sagas. Especially the formula of the charm according to Labuda is near to Scaldic verses, although he couldn't find any analogies.

Unfortunately no exact counterpart to Cracowian formula is known to me from Scaldic poetry. Labuda was however on the right path. The analogy exist in Old-Icelandic juridical texts (cf. Vogt, 1936, p. 325–327). According to Grágás a similar formula was spoken during grið amal, the ceremony of reconciliation between the sides in quarrel (Vogt, 1936a). Both sides (every one with twelve aldermen) should swear at first an griðr, literally: peace, this word means in that juridical text: agreement to renounce the attacks¹. Then Gargas refers the text which should speak the man who performed the agreement². But W.H. Vogt (1936, p. 326, 330) argue that an other text of grialamal, published in Diplomatarium Islandicum (in version from manuscript

1 Samkomulag um aþ gera ekki aras, Gragas 1992, p. 426, note 5.

2 Siðan skal sa maður er fylor griðum maelir nefna votta two eða fleiri „að því vaetti, að þessi grið er nu nefnd skulu vera full og fost allra manna a milli, þeirra er her koma i mannsofnu, þenna, og meðan menn eru her lengst a mannfundi þessum, og hver móður kemur heim til sins heima, og þott oftar varði i fundir lagðir til mala þeirra, þa skulu þó grið halda til þess er svo r malum þeirra lokið sem megú best lukast. Nu heldur jord griðum upp, en himinn varðar fyrir ofan en hafið rauða fyrir utan, er liggur um lond oll þau er ver hofum tioðindi af. En a milli þessa endimarka, er nu hefi eg talt fyrir monnum, þrifist sa maður hvergi er þessi grið ryfur er eg hefi her nefnd, og bindi hann ser svo hofga byrð að hann komist aldregi undan, en það er Guð drottins gremi og griðbits nafn. Grágás, Baugatal ch. 2: Grágás 1992, p. 456.

AM 350), recorded the older version of the formula as that from Grágás. In that version the formula have poetic form of a charm (galdr).

The most important parts of gríðamal composed a tripartite earth-heaven-sea formula and a curse. On concluding peace in version from Diplomatarium Islandicum a following text should be said:

„(...) Set ek frið eptir handlagi þeira ok skilordi:

Jorð raeðr gríðum fyr neðan
en upphiminn (fyrir ofan)
enn siðr fyrir utan,
sa er kringir um oll lond.

En sa er þessi gríð heldr eigi, þrifiz hvergi milli þessara
takmarka ok heiti gríðniðingr”.

(Diplomatarium Islandicum, II, Nr 10, XVI, p. 659, version
from AM 350; cf. Vogt, 1936, p. 326)

„I set up the peace after they join the hands with stipulation:

The earth rule the agreement from beneath,
And the high heaven from above,
And the see from all around,
Which surrounded (enclosed) all the land.

Let this who don't hold this agreement find anywhere the prosperity between this border and will be called truce-breaker”.

The formula definite the reach in whitch the agreement is valid and the earth, heaven and sea were used as an expression for the border of all the world (Vogt, 1936, p. 328). In similar way mare, terra and aer signifying the universe in Vanda-episode in Master Vincent's Chronicle.

As W.H. Vogt (1936, p. 331) stress the tripartite kind of formula is rare in Germanic sources where usually only the earth and heaven were mentioned. Lars Lönnroth (1981) collected the examples of that binary structure from Old-Norse *Vafþruþnismál* (str. 20), Old-German Andreas (vv. 79–799) and Heiland (vv. 2866–2887), from Old-English Psalms (101. 22) and find it even on Swedish runic inscription (Skarpaker stone). He is of the opinion that earth/heaven binary structure belongs to the myth of creation and as the alliterative iord/upphiminn formula appears in mythological descriptions of that

event. According to Lönnroth (1981, p. 325) this formula was also used for „magical” purposes, when „the speaker invoke the holy cosmic powers (...) to give him the strength necessary to perform an act of magic (...) thought (...) as an act of exorcism, whereby nature is cleansed from evil spirits and restored to health, fecundity and usefulness”. In poetic usage earth/heaven formula appears when „the text deal with the arrival of a great hero or god (...) in a world other than his own”. This „arrival should imply a threat to the natural order and ultimately the complete destruction of the world (Ragnarok, Judgment Day). The arrival implies that heaven and earth are roaring/trembling/cracking...” (Lönnroth 1981, p. 322).

But this binary earth/heaven structure is incomplete as compared to Cracovian earth/air/sea and Old-Icelandic earth/heaven/sea formula from *gríðamal*. „The sea (...) which surrounded all the land” is also an important cosmical element known very well in Norse mythology. Lars Lönnroth omitted the formula from *gríðamal*. But he quoted Wessobrunner Gebet (Lönnroth 1981, p. 313) and *Vafþruðnismál*. Lönnroth (1981) in his formulaic analysis didn’t notice that the tripartite structure appears even in his main example (not mentioned above), in third stanza from *Voluspá*.

This stanza is describing the chaos before the gods created the world:

Ar var alda,	þat er Ymir bygði
var sandr	ne saer ne svalar unnir;
iorð fannz aeva	ne uppiminn,
gap var ginnunga,	enn gras hvergi.

In olden days when Ymir lived there was no sand, na cool waves; earth did not exist, nor heaven above; there was a great emptiness but no grass.

Here the binary earth/heaven formula is preceded by the mention of the elements representing the world of the earth (the sand) and the world of the sea (cool waves); no example from heaven is quoted. But the sea is also referred by name, although outside the earth/heaven formula. It looks that in third stanza of *Voluspa* two structures, binary one (with standard *iorð / uppiminn* formula) and tripartite one were mixed³.

The earth/heaven structure is indeed more frequent in German texts, but also the tripartite one is reflected in some important sources. In German laws from high Middle-Ages the corpse of an outlaw was dedicated in damnation formula (maledictio) for „den thiern in den walden, den vogeln in den lufften und den fischen in dem wage...“⁴

In *Vafþru þnismal* was talk of the creation of the world from Ymir's corpse. After the Odins question about the origins of the world witch binary formula („Segðu... hvaðan iorð um kom eða upphimmin..., *Vafþru þnismal*, str. 20) follow *Vafþrudnis* answer:

ór Ymis holdi	var iorð um scopuð,
enn ór beinom biorg,	
himinn ór hausi	ins hrimkalda iotuns,
enn ór sveita siór.	

(*Vafþru þnismal*, str. 21)

From Ymir's flesh the earth was created, but the mountain from his bones, heaven from rime-cold giant's skull, and the sea from his blood.

I am also of the opinion that in Norse Mythology existed at least two cosmical structures, binary one (iorð/upphiminn) and tripartite one (iorð/upphiminn/soer), and two suitable formulas.

The tripartite structure defined very well the world, as described in Snorra Edda Sturlusonar. Which one is older is not important question for discussion in this paper.

The tripartite earth-heaven-sea formula is also known from Irish sources, where is present in *Tain Bo Cuailnge* epic (Vogt, 1936, p. 331–333). In the version from Book of Leinster the hero Cuchulainn, oppressed by enemies, is described as follows:

Cuchulainns father Sualdam heard in his house the noise of battle from long distance and asked: „Es ist aus der ferne, als ob dies ware – sagte Sualtam –

der Himmel, der belsted
oder das Meer, das ebbt,
oder die Erde, die sich spaltet,

⁴ Ordnung des Kampfrechtes am Landgericht zu Franken, 15th century; cf: H. Siuts, 1959, p. 127 (cf. there other german examples, all from 14th–16th century, Siuts 1959, p.127–129).

oder ist dies die Bedrangniss meines Sohnes in dem ungleichen Kampfe bei der Tain bó Cualgne?"⁵.

In that episode the tripartite structure is used to describe the fight of the hero against the enemies what could be count up in Lönnrots category „arrival of the hero in the other world than his own”. But this episode is contrasted in Tain Bo Cuailnge epic by following one, where the King Conchobar answered the admonition of Sualdam cut head and said in cold blood about the kidnaped cattle and peoples:

„Dieses Geschrei ist ein Wenig zu Gross, sagte Cochobar,
'denn [noch ist] der Himmel über uns,
und die Erde unter uns,
und das Meer rings um uns!

Aber wenn nicht das Firmament herabgefallen wird mit seinen Regen von Sternen auf das Burgerantlitz der Erde, oder wenn nicht die Erde sich splaten wird aus ihrem Erdbeben, oder wenn nich der Furchten ziehende randerblaue Ocean aus das Stiernhaar der Welt kommen wird, werde ich jede Kuh und jedes Weib von ihnen nach ihrem Stalle und nach ihrem Hofe, nach ihrer Behausung und nach ihrer eigenen Wohnstätte bringen, nach dem Siege der Schlacht und des Kampfes und des Streites"⁶.

The most interesting Irish Example of tripartite formula is included in the text of oath of King's Conchobar retinue. In the Yellow

5 Tain Bó Cualnge nach dem Buch von Leinster, XXIV, 1, v. 4685 sq, 1905, p. 666. Similar in older versions of the epic: cf. Rudolf Thurneysen 1921, p. 199). The tripartition is keeped in popular English translation: (...) From Raith Sualdaim, his house on Murtheimne plain, Sualdam heard how his son Cuchulainn was being harassed.

Are the heavens rent? – he said.

Is the sea bursting its bounds?

Is the end of the world upon us?

Or is that my son crying out as he fights againts great odds?" (The Tain, 1982, p. 218).

6 Die altirische Heldensage Tain Bó Cualnge nach dem Buch von Leinster, XXIV, 1, 1905, p. 676–677. English translation is a little different in that point. The King answerd here: „Why all this uproar? Conchobar said. Isn't the sea in front of them still? the sky overhead the earth under foot? I'll beat them in battle, and bring back every cow to its byre, and every woman and child back home again". The Tain, ch. XII, 1982, p. 219. W.H. Vogt (1936, s. 332) quoted a similar version and states that earth, heaven and sea appears there „als letzte Bedingungen der Existenz der fortgeföhrtten Frauen und Rindern”.

Book of Lecan appears only a binary earth/heaven structure. Hearing the noise of battle the King's peoples swore that they will keep the position until the earth behind and the heaven above collapse (Vogt 1936: 332). But in Book of Leinster (although that version of Tain Bó Cuailnge is the youngest) appears there the tripatite formula:

„Da sagte er [Conchobar] zu seinen eigenen Hausgenossen (...). 'Haltet dies ein Wenig ihr Manner, sagte er, 'nämlich die Stellung in der ich bin, damit ich gehe zu erfahren, vor wem die Schlacht dreimal gegen uns auf diese Weise nordwärts ausbricht'. Da sprachen seine Hausgenossen: 'Wir werden dies halten', sagten sie,

'denn der Himmel [ist] über uns,
und die Erde unter uns,
und das Meer um uns herum.'

Und wenn nicht das Firmament fallen wird mit seinen Schauern von Sternen auf das Menschenantlitz der Erde, oder wenn nicht das Fürchten ziehende randerblaue Meer auf das Stirnhaar der Welt kommen wird, oder [wenn nicht] die Erde sich aufthun wird, werden wir nicht die Breite eines Daumens von hier weg zurück thun bis zum Gericht und [ewigen Lebens], bis du wieder zurück zu uns kommen wirst⁷.

According to Labuda the supposed Scandinavian plot in the Cracowian legend reached Cracow through Germany. But it seems less probable that an Old-Icelandic juridical formula could came to Cracow in the way⁸. Although the structure in both cases is the same, appears also some differences: the three elements of the formulas are set in different order (in Cracow: the earth, the sea, the air; in

7 Die altirische Heldensage Tain Bó Cualnge nach dem Buch von Leinster, XXVI (Die Schlacht bei Garech und Ilgarech): 1905, p. 862–864. Compare here the oath of Conchobar that he bring back kidnapped cows and women (cf. above, note 6) and the prayer of Cuchulain in older version of epic, where he ask for help earth and heaven (in some version of the epic the water also) and the river Cronn, cf. Vogt 1936, p. 333; Thurneysen, 1921, p. 150.

8 Labuda remarks also, in connection with Vanda's name, that Freya is sometimes called in Scaldic poetry Vanadis, a dis from the kin of Vanir. Unfortunately I can't find any traces of that expression in Sveinbjörn Egilsson's Dictionary; that expressions is known to me from prose fragments in Edda Snorra Sturlusonar (Gylfaginning 22: 1931, p. 38) only. It is however worth noticing that A. Brückner (1901, p. 226) remarked that there are similarities between the account of Master Vincent and that of Saxo Grammaticus in the episode dealing with Kanute the Great (Master Vincent, I, 2).

griðamal: the earth, the heaven, the sea), the aer mentioned in Cracow is not literally the same like upphiminn in griðamal, ect.

The Old-High-German documented examples of the tripartite structure, although territorially and culturally nearest to Cracow, are unfortunately too late, and mentioned symbolically only the creatures from the zones of heaven, ear and sea, not the basic structure. It is then difficult to prove that the tripartite formula was borrowed in Cracow from Germany.

It seems to me more probable that in Cracowian and Old-Icelandic, Old-Irish and Old-High-German sources a traditional picture of the world was reflected, petrified in charms of the same structures and similar (but not exactly identical) formulas, used on similar semantic field in different way although in every case in magical contexts.

Because the tripartite formula is closely connected to myth of creations it seems that Queen Vanda could have in Cracowian myth a higher rank as an ordinary ruler or hero. The Cracowian formula clearly denominate the reach of Vandas power. In Irish Tain Bó Cuailnge epic the tripartite structure appears as an expression of the will that so long the world should exist, the retinue will keep true his position on the side of the king. The Irish formula, although similar to the Cracowian one, is set also in an absolutely divert context. However it is quite possible that there is any junction. Maybe because of Vanda's charm come in Cracow to the events which could loose even a true retinue (army) from the oath: the heaven tumble down, the earth collapse and the sea overflow. The content of the spell of the German ruler indicate that it was in Vanda's power to cause that⁹.

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9 But from the other hand the use of tripartite formula in charm spoken by German ruler could be interpreted – following Lönnroth – as an act of acquiring magical powers to perform a course against own army.

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