

Albanian and South Slavic
Oral Epic Poetry

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princes to come with their armies. The wife of Miloš has no advice to give her husband:

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| <p>4. King Lazar calls Miloš and the other princes, among them the Duke of Dukadjin, to come with their armies to Kruševac. The princes arrive and Miloš tells Vuk Branković, whom he calls "disloyal," that he will kill the Sultan in the tent. (93-170)</p> | <p>4. Miloš goes to the <i>Kralj</i>, who was in Peć, and tells him that the Sultan has come to Prishtina (Kosovo). He then asks the King what is to be done, receiving from him the answer that they had better surrender. Miloš makes known to the <i>Kralj</i> that he will not surrender but intends to kill the Sultan. (286-298)</p> |
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The Duke of *Dukadjin* (Serbian spelling) in Parry's version is an Albanian. Apparently the singer had knowledge that Albanians had taken part in the battle of Kosovo. It is not known, however, whether one of the *Dukagjinis* (Albanian spelling) was present in that battle. The singer has used the name of this Albanian family because it was old and famous. "The family of the Dukagjinis has been one of the most powerful in Albania. Its origin, according to a document published by Makušev, goes back to a very old period."¹ It is interesting to note that the Duke in the song comes from *ravna Dukadjina* (the plain of Dukagjin). This corresponds exactly to *rrafshat e nalta te Dukagjinit* (the high plains of Dukagjin), the name by which the Albanians of Metohija call their own region, which they consider as a continuation of the Albanian province of Dukagjin.² In fact, for the Albanians the division into Metohija and Kosovo is alien; they consider both provinces as one and call them by the name Kosovo. In Parry's variant we also remark that Miloš Obilić is given Prizren (Metohija) as his city. He is called, as in Vuk, *veran i neveran* (faithful and unfaithful), which is another indication of the influence of the Christian tradition.

¹ A. Gegaj, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Gegaj writes further on this page that, according to the same source (published by Makušev), in the seventh century already the Dukagjini ("Dukagjini d'Albania") had fomented a revolt in Bosnia, particularly in Dubrovnik, but they had to retreat after a defeat, inflicted by the Bosnian lords. Indeed, it is in 1281 that Gin Tanusio (*ducem Ginium Tanuschum*) carries this title for the first time.

² Before the nineteenth century the Sandžak of Peć was called in the Ottoman administration the Sandžak of Dukagjin. See Th. Ippen, "Beiträge zur inneren Geschichte Albaniens im XIX. Jahrhundert," *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen*, I, München und Leipzig, 1916, pp. 343-344.

In the Serbian Moslem song Vuk Branković proposes to send three hundred beautiful girls to the camp of the Turks who will later report about the forces of the Sultan. In Elezović's song the *Kralj* (Lazar) makes the same proposition for thirty girls:

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| <p>5. The girls led by Milan Toplijeva, disguised as a maiden, arrive at the camp of the Turks. They carry things for sale. They are well received, well fed, and are allowed by the Sultan to sell their objects. No one buys. The Sultan invites them to his tent and gives one hundred ducats to Milan and thirty to each of the girls. The mission leaves. (171-334)</p> | <p>5. The girls go to the camp of the Turks with large trays full of money. The soldiers do not look at them, no one touches them, no one offers them food, and no one is tempted by their money. When the Sultan hears about the Serbian girls, he orders his men to give them food. The company leaves. (300-331)</p> |
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In both versions the Sultan is kind. In Parry's he is even called *Dedo*, meaning "father," and he sends his regards to King Lazar, telling Milan: "Such is the Sultan's custom: to give gifts to his guests." (337-338) This reminds one of the behavior of Ali Pasha of Gusinje¹ in the Bosnian song "Das Lied von Gusinje." He sends back with a present of forty ducats the messenger of his enemy, the Prince of Montenegro.² On the other hand, the sending of the girls to the camp of the Turks brings to one's mind the Mujo-Halil cycle of the Bosnians, where women play such an important role. The stratagem is in keeping with the mentality of the harems.

Miloš goes to meet the girls. In the Serbian Moslem poem he speaks with Milan; in the Albanian, with the girls. When he hears about the strength of the Turkish army, he warns the mission not to tell the truth to the King:

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| <p>6. The Turkish army does not number more than thirty thousand and all of the soldiers are either very young or very old. (409-420)</p> | <p>6. The soldiers are sound asleep because they are completely exhausted. (346-348)</p> |
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¹ The Albanian town of Gusinje, near the Montenegrin frontier, was ceded to Montenegro by the Congress of Berlin (1878). The Albanians refused to surrender it and went to war against Montenegro. Ali Pasha, an Albanian, was the governor of Gusinje at that time.

² J. von Asbóth, "Das Lied von Gusinje," *Ethnographische Mitteilungen aus Ungarn*, I (1887-1888), p. 149.

verted to Mohammedanism) in Montenegro, during the time of the ruler Danilo (1702)).

The Mohammedan was now eternally abhorred:

during the eighteenth century a Turk who approached the boundaries of Montenegro was fired on as a matter of course without being challenged. The Albanians, who had often been friendly with the Montenegrins, became their most resolute foes, and the enmity has existed until the present day...¹

Indeed, one of the first songs which deals with the eighteenth-century fight of the Albanians against the Montenegrins is "Kânga e Kara Mahmud Pashës Kundra Malazezve" (The Song of Kara Mahmud Pasha against the Montenegrins), (Taipi, p. 22). The Pasha ruled over Shkodra and a great part of northern Albania:

Mahmut vezir vijeć učinio (1)

U bijelu Skadru na Bojanu, (2)

Vuk, IV, No. 10.

(Transl.: The Vezir Mahmud gathered the council in white Shkodra, on the Bojana River.) He was a member of the famous Albanian family of the Bushatis who were vassals of the Sultan. He fought three times against Montenegro, taking part in person:

Sad da silnu vojsku podignemo, (8)

Da mi goru Crnu osvojimo

Goru Crnu i primorje ravno

Kojeno smo odavna žudjeli (11)

Vuk, IV, No. 10.

(Transl.: Let us now muster a mighty army in order to conquer Montenegro, Montenegro and the flat sea coast, which we have long coveted.) In the third war against Montenegro Mahmud Pasha was killed by the Palabardhi fighters in 1796.² Breathing his last, in an Albanian song, he regretted that he left no son to avenge him:

How miserable I am that I left no son

To make war against the Palabardhë.

Taipi, p. 45.

The *Palabardhë* are a tribe in Montenegro, near the Albanian frontier, called in the song "Boj Crnogoraca s Mahmud-Paşom" (War of the Montenegrins against Mahmud Pasha), (Vuk, IV, No. 10), as *Bjelopavlići*. Another heroic poem which sings the wars of Mahmud

¹ H. W. V. Temperley, *History of Serbia*, London, 1917, p. 149.

² *Mitko Collection* (edit. Pekmezi), p. 208; Cf. K. Jireček, "Albanien in der Vergangenheit," *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen*, I, München und Leipzig, 1916, p. 90.

Pasha in Serbian is "Opet Crnogorci i Mahmut Paša" (Again the Montenegrins and Mahmud Pasha), (Vuk, IV, No. 11). It is the opinion of Karadžić that these last two songs were composed by Vladika Petar I (1782–1830), and that they later became popular.¹

As the frontier wars against Montenegro were not waged by Moslem Albanians alone, but also by Albanians of the Roman Catholic faith, the struggle was transposed on an ethnic level: Albanians against the Slavs. No doubt the opposition of Albanian Roman Catholicism to Montenegrin Christian Orthodoxy intensified its ethnic nature. As early as 1685 Pjeter Bogdani, an Albanian author, wrote: "The Slavs. . . call the Catholic faith *Arbanaška vera* (Albanian religion)."²

The wars between the Albanians and the Montenegrins continued after the death of Mahmud Pasha. They were principally fought by the Shkodrans and *Malcija* (the mountaineers of the north). They both pledged their faith to fight the Montenegrin encroachments on their soil. When Turkey ceded Tuzi to Montenegro, they took arms and defeated the Montenegrins: "Lufta e Miletit" (The Battle of the Nation), (*Vis. e Komb.*, I, 1, No. 38a and 38b), in which the hero Ded Gjo Luli distinguished himself. The battles followed one after the other, when at the Congress of Berlin Turkey ceded to Montenegro the towns Ulqin (Dulcigno), Plava and Gusinje. They have given rise to some of the most beautiful Albanian songs.

In "Ali Pash' Gusinja" (Ali Pasha of Gusinje), (*Hylli i Dritës*, XIV (1938), 304–312), the Albanian Pasha summoned the heads of the country who vowed that they would not cede Plava and Gusinje to Montenegro but that they would "die for the land of their fathers."³ It was the Albanian reaction to a letter sent by Prince Nicholas of Montenegro. In the Bosnian song "The Song from Gusinje" the "thirty captains" urge the Prince:

Pa opravi knjigu do Gusinja,
Al se voli s nama udarati
Al ée nama teslim učiniti!⁴

(Transl.: And sent the letter to Gusinje, if he (Ali Pasha) wants to fight against us or surrender to us.) Prince Nicholas of Montenegro

¹ Vuk, IV, p. 68 (footnote).

² M. Sirdani, *Skanderbegu mbas gojdhánash* (Scanderbeg According to Tradition), Shkodër, 1926, p. 131.

³ See for the battle of Gusinje, Theodor Ippen, "Beiträge zur inneren Geschichte Albanien im XIX. Jahrhundert," *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen*, I, pp. 372–373.

⁴ J. von Asbóth, "Das Lied von Gusinje," as reproduced in *Ethnologische Mitteilungen aus Ungarn*, I (1887–1888), p. 324.

then sends a large army, under the command of Mark Milan, against the Albanians. In the battle that ensued the Albanians were victorious: they beat "the vile *Shkja*" (Slav), (227).

We must stop for a moment at the term *shkja* — plural *shkje* — as it is often used in the oral epic poetry of northern Albania. The Albanians call *shkje* the neighboring Slavs. But how did this come about? G. Meyer gives the etymology of *Shkja* from the Latin word *Sclavus*, meaning Slav.¹ Could this form, as well as the term *Sclavonia*, have been familiar to the Albanians in ancient times?

It is known that a great geographical zone, which in the seventh to the tenth centuries comprised all the lands between Zara, Salonica and the Rhodope mountains, was called in Greek *Sklavinikai* and in Latin *Sclavinica*. In a trade agreement between Dubrovnik and Ancona (1292), under the name Sclavonia was understood the region between the rivers Narenta (in Dalmatia-Bosnia) and Drin-Bojana (in Albania). In the fourteenth century, the statutes of the city of Kotor make an exact distinction between the northern Croats and the Sclavi, who were mixed with the Rumanians (Vlachs) and Albanians.²

From the above historic facts it becomes obvious that the words *Sclavi* and *Sclavonia*, the latter for the land of the Slavs near Albania, must have been familiar to the Albanians in the Middle Ages. But how can the change from Latin *Sclavus* to the Albanian *shkja* be explained? Latin *s* before *k* has become in Albanian *sh*, as for instance, Latin *scala* has become Albanian *shkalla*, Latin *episcopus* has become Albanian *peshkop*. Thus Latin *Sclavus* became first Albanian *shklavus*. For one reason or another, the sounds of the syllable *-vus* disappeared and *shklavus* became *shkla*. As *kl* in Albanian of Albania proper has given *kj*, which became *k'* (q) — *klani* (you weep) became first *kjani* and ultimately *qani* — in the same way we have *shkla* first becoming *shkja* and then *shqa*. These last two forms are encountered in the heroic songs of northern Albania.

To my knowledge, the date of the form *shkja* is not known. A certain relative chronology, however, can be established. We are aware that *kl* has been preserved among the Albanians of Italy. As their migrations took place at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century, *kl* was in use until then. Furthermore, *kl* is preserved in the writings of an ancient Albanian writer of the north, Buzuku (1555). In a Latin-Albanian dictionary of 1635 the

¹ G. Meyer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der albanischen Sprache*, Straßburg, 1891, p. 410.

² For this historico-linguistic treatment about *Sclavi* and *Sclavonia*, see: M. Šufflay, *Srbi i Arbanasi* (Serbs and Albanians), Beograd, 1925, p. 109.

noun *Sclavonia* (Slavonia) has been translated as *schienia* (*shkienia*)¹, a form which exists in the Albanian of today. This is a proof that by that time *kl* had become *kj*. We can then say that the form *shkja* dates from some year between 1555 and 1635. It is used only in northern Albania.

Against the *shkje* there is another beautiful song, "Të ramt e Plavës e të Gucis" (The Fall of Plava and Gucinje), (*Vis. e Komb.*, I, 1, No. 37). In it Prince Nicholas of Montenegro goes to Istanbul to ask of the Sultan the cession of the two Albanian towns. The conversation with him is informal, and such is the discussion of the Sultan with his Council, who for the mountaineers are merely *zabita* (officers). A new element enters the picture: the Princess of Montenegro urges her husband to occupy the Albanian territories and become as powerful as the Sultan. On his return from Istanbul, Prince Nicholas tries to carry out the promise of the Sultan, which is that he occupy the Albanian towns, but the Albanian mountaineers reply:

We will not leave them without honor, (55)

He can take them only by arms. (56)

And a fierce battle began to rage at Brezović.

There are no descriptions of great battles in the oral epic songs. Only episodes in them are described. The ordinary popular singer is not able to give a description of a whole combat in which a number of battalions have taken part. Murko maintains that this is "the reason one does not find, in the South Slavic epic poetry, any description of great battles, but only episodes and events related to the battle, and rarely [the description] of such an event as the siege of a city."²

The Albanian songs of the wars against Montenegro reveal in general a hatred of the Slavs, who want to encroach upon Albanian soil. In "Kânga e Mehmet Shpendit Dukagjinit" (The Song of Mehmed Shpendi Dukagjini), the Albanian hero, dying on the battlefield, is sorry, like Mahmud Pasha, that he does not leave a son:

To oppose Montenegro (48)

To fight and to massacre

The *Shkje* of Montenegro,

To fight and to die

Until the blood runs like a stream. (52)

Vis. e Komb., IV, 1, No. 20.

¹ Cf. R. D. Franciscum Blanchum, *Dictionarium Latino-Epiroticum* (edited by Mario Roques under the title *Le dictionnaire albanais de 1635*), Paris, 1932, p. 144.

² M. Murko, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

cycle. It is also an historical fact that Udbina and Kladuša, the two localities most often mentioned in the Albanian songs, were situated in Lika of Croatia, in the region which was called Krajina. The inhabitant of Krajina, who at the same time was a warrior, was called *Krajišnik* or *Krajšnik* — plural, *Krajišnici* or *Krajšnici*. In one of the Bosnian songs, Mujo, arriving at Kotar, addresses his companions:

Čujete l' me braćo Krajišnici, (561)

Hörmann, II, No. LV.

(Transl.: Listen to me, brothers *Krajišnici*.) In another, Babić Husejn calls Mujo:

O Hrnjica, od Krajine glavo! (10)

Mat. Hrv., IV, No. 38.

(Transl.: O Hrnjica, the head of Krajina.) And Smiljanić Ilija says to his sister Jela, who wants to marry Halil:

Zar ti j'turska vjera omilila (126)

Što će tebi Turci Krajišnici

Što će tebi Hrnjica Halilu? (128)

Mat. Hrv., IV, No. 40.

(Transl.: Do you like the Turkish religion? Why do you need the Turks of Krajina, why do you need Hrnjica Halil?). While in an Albanian song of the Mujo-Halil cycle we see *kreshnik* connected with Udbina:

Sot na ka msye një Kreshnik Jutbine (64)

Vis. e Komb., IV, 2, No. 5.

(Transl.: Today a *Kreshnik* from Jutbina has attacked us.) And elsewhere:

Fill n' Jutbinë Muji ka shkue,

N'treg t'Jutbinës kur ka rà, (248)

Ja ka dhâne zânin Krahinës. (249)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 1.

(Transl.: Mujo went directly to Jutbina, when he arrived at the market-place of Jutbina, he called (the inhabitants) of Krajina.)

There is no doubt that the Albanian *kreshnik* stems from the Serbocroatian *krajišnik*. Šmaus tells us that the Albanians of old Serbia call the songs of the Moslem heroes of Krajina, as well as other heroic songs, *kraina* or *kraina me laut* (*kraina* with *lahuta*).¹ In

¹ A. Šmaus, "Nekoliko podataka o epskom pevanju i pesmama kod Arbanasa (Arnauta) u Staroj Srbiji" (Some Information about Epic Singing and Epic Songs among the Albanians of Old Serbia), *Prilozi prouč. nar. poez.*, I (1934), 109. See also T. Vukanović, "O pevačima narodnih pesama u Drenici" (About the Singers of Folk Songs in Drenica), *Prilozi . . .*, I (1934), 256-257.

this instance, a geographic area with its battles has been associated with the heroes and their songs, and later with heroic songs in general. On the other hand, Salja Ugljanin, the famous Albanian singer of Novi Pazar, called *krejšnic* the heroic songs of the Bosnian Moslems warring against their Christian opponents, those songs which in Serbocroatian are called *krajišnice*.¹ The derivation of *Kreshnik* is evident: Serbocroatian *krajišnik* becomes the Albanian *krejšnik*, and this in turn, becomes *kreshnik*, the intermediary form offered by Novi Pazar. If in the Albanian of the north the word *kreshnik* has the meaning of both a hero and a nobleman (or heroic and noble), it can be explained by the fact that in the *krajišnice* the heroes are generally warriors and noblemen, Moslem "begs" and "agas."

In both the Albanian and Bosnian cycles the main subjects are the wars between the "agas" of Udbina, led by Mujo, against the Christian Slavs beyond the border, who in the Albanian songs are often called *Shkije*. The causes of the wars are mostly the rape of women or the plundering of castles and towns. In the Bosnian songs the opponents of Mujo and his followers are the *uskoci*, those who have fled the Turkish occupied territory, or the *hajduci*, who in turn raid the Moslem lands. Disputes and imprisonments are not rare in either the Albanian or Bosnian cycles, but the duels are more frequent. In all the wars and duels, Mujo is the victor, either by his own ability or with the help of the *vilas*, in the Bosnian songs, or of the *zâna-s* and *orë-s* (Albanian mountain fairies) in the Albanian songs. Jutbina, where the fortress of Mujo is situated, is never conquered by fighting; only from time to time the Slavs beyond the frontier penetrate into the town by treasonous means and set fire to Mujo's castle.

However, general subjects alone are not a good criterion for showing influences in cycles. There should also be identities or similarities in details within the cycles. If we can show that in the Mujo-Halil cycle there are characters (although their names may be Albanianized), separate motifs, themes and plots, as well as localities, which are found at the same time in the Bosnian Mujo-Alil songs, the influences of the latter on the former cycle will be clear. We shall now proceed to deal with these details, beginning with the characters.

According to a story told by Bosnians, Mujo was born in Udbina, in the district of Lika. His father came from Asia Minor, together with Fazil Pasha, who at that time was the governor of Knin (in Bosnia), and married the sister of Kozlić Hurem. When Mujo's father died, the uncle took care of the three orphans — Mujo, Halil, and Omer. Later the sons and the mother were constrained to move to Velika (Big)

¹ A. Šmaus, "Beleške iz Sandžaka, I" (Notes from the Sandžak, I), *Prilozi prouč. nar. poez.*, V (1938), 276.

three companions to take Halil in his stead. Dizdar is not satisfied because he does not consider Halil an exceptional hero. He also makes a deal with Pavle, the doctor of leeches to poison Mujo. This latter motif is lacking in the Albanian song.

Some of the motifs in Parry's "The Wounded Mujo" which are missing in "Halil Avenges Mujo" are to be found in "Muji, Halili and Desdar Osman Aga" (*Vis. e Komb.*, I, 2, No. 7). In this song the horse brings Halil to the castle of Kresht Kapidani, as in Parry's Serbian song to that of Captain Djeloš. He puts the daughter of the Captain on his horse and rides away. In a battle that ensues he kills Kresht Kapidani.

Halil liberates the agas, in the Serbian rhapsody (The Wounded Mujo), from the prison of the Captain and ties up Dizdar who had offended him. When the plot with the doctor of leeches is discovered, Mujo beheads Dizdar. This motif, absent from the two previous Albanian songs, is met in "Muji i varruem" (The Wounded Mujo), (*Vis. e Komb.*, II, No. 32). Mujo decapitates Osman Arnauti because, when he was wounded, not only did he not come to his assistance, but he also insulted him.

We can draw certain conclusions from the above comparisons of Albanian and Bosnian songs of the Mujo-Halil cycles. There are songs on the same subject which have such a different treatment that the only things remaining in common are the titles. On the other hand, Albanian and Serbian rhapsodies which do not deal with the same topic contain similar or identical motifs and themes. There are also songs, which in spite of totally different titles, have in common a majority of motifs and the whole development of the plot.

"Halil Avenges Mujo" (*Vis. e Komb.*, II, No. 23) and "The Wounded Mujo" (Parry, I, No. 656) belong to the last category. The resemblance in contents is so striking that one may call the Albanian song a variant of the Serbian. Salja Ugljanin said to Parry that he had learned the Serbian song from an inhabitant of Plava, an Albanian town on Montenegrin soil near the frontiers of Albania and the Sandžak. The localization of the song is important. It explains the great similarity between the two songs. Whether Parry's "The Wounded Mujo" originated in Plava in a symbiosis of Christian Serbs and Moslem Albanians — in Montenegro the songs of Mujo are extensively sung — or in the Sandžak, where there is a symbiosis of Moslem Albanians and Moslem Slavs, is a secondary matter. The thing of consequence is that this particular song, "Mujo ranjen," is sung in Plava, near the present Albanian boundary.

It is not only striking that names and roles of heroes are the same in the Mujo-Halil cycles and many motifs and themes in them are

this should not bewilder us. It is in keeping with popular epic poetry. In it names by themselves are not important. They are often substituted for others, depending on the singer and the place the songs emerge from. Sometimes the singer has a store of names of minor heroes whom he uses indiscriminately. At other times he desires to glorify his patron and introduces him in a song in the place of another hero. In the case of the Mujo-Halil cycle, the Albanian singer may enjoy greater liberty in the use of the names of heroes, for they do not mean as much to him as to his Bosnian colleague. The same can be said about motifs. One variant may have motifs which are missing in another and may have come from an altogether different song. Bards sometimes merge events and episodes which have taken place in different periods and places. Such a mixture is more natural in instances of loans, as in the Albanian Mujo-Halil cycle. Contaminations and anachronisms are therefore unavoidable. Localities, too, are subject to change. They are at times completely transformed, when passing to songs in another language.

The Serbian influence on the Albanian Mujo-Halil cycle has not been exercised directly, but by means of variants risen in places where both Albanian and Serbian speaking elements lived together, as for instance in the Sandžak and Metohija. On the other hand, the disposition of the motifs, the Albanianized forms of names, as well as the introduction of other motifs, prove that the Albanian songs of the Mujo-Halil cycle are elaborations of Bosnian rhapsodies with a strong Albanian imprint, often so powerful that they become totally new songs.

CHAPTER VIII

CULTURAL PATTERNS IN THE MUJO-HALIL CYCLE

The conquest of Bosnia by the Ottomans brought about a great change in the life of the Bosnian aristocracy. Bosnia became "Turkish" in religion, in the regulations of society and the conception of the state. In the ethnic-national sense, however, the Bosnians remained South Slavs. Some Anatolian blood was infused only in the Bosnian *krajina* by the Turkish garrisons sent there.¹ Nor did the Bosnians change their customs. They merely adjusted them to the new faith. Few were the Turkish customs they introduced. Nor did they give up their mother tongue; their language remained always Serbocroatian.² It is no wonder then that they should have cultivated a traditional poetry of the same type as the Christian South Slavs, but strongly influenced by Islam.

In the heroic songs which emerged in this Moslem environment we see the reflection of the life of the Serbian feudal lords of the Middle Ages, which the begs of Bosnia and Hercegovina preserved until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when their power was broken (1850-1851) by the Sultan's commander, Omer Pasha, of Serbian origin.³ Till then these lords carried on wars among themselves and kept in their troops singers who celebrated their glories and entertained and inflamed in battle their soldiers. They also fought against the enemies of Turkey on their boundaries, as well as in the interior of the country in the Ottoman Empire. Their epic songs describe faithfully this kind of life.

As the *uskoci*, the Moslems of Bosnia and Hercegovina cared little about the official peace. A good number of their songs tell of guerrilla wars in Hungary and particularly in the district of Lika and Krbava, in Croatia. Lika and Krbava had once been fertile lands, where Croatian feudal lords had their fortresses. When occupied by the Turks (1528), they were transformed into a military zone, the

¹ Cf. G. Gosemann and others, *Das Königreich Südslawien*, Leipzig, 1935, p. 47.

² Hörmann, I, p. 5.

³ M. Murko, *La poésie populaire épique en Yougoslavie au début du XXe siècle*, Paris, 1929, p. 29.

Tvoja s braća da ožene ne će (23)

Priko tebe, brata *starijega* (24)

Mat. Hrv., IV, No. 38.

(Transl.: Your brother will not marry before you, the "older" brother.)

The Bosnian songs and those of Mujo and Halili in Albanian show the importance of nobility. Birth is a part of feudal society, as we saw in the oral epic poem of King Lazar and the Jugovići. But noble birth is also valued in a tribal society, where there is a certain hereditary hierarchy, as among the chieftains. The fact also that there are several tribes and clans, among which a certain gradation by comparison would be imposed, would lead to the importance of descent. Mujo says to his wife-to-be:

If you are a "noble" woman, (153)¹

Will you listen to a word from me? (154)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 1.

Mother advises Ali Bajraktari:

Either you stay, son, a bachelor for life (3)

Or you marry one from a "noble" family! (4)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 14.

In "Ženidba Kumalijića Mujaga" (Marriage of Kumalijić Mujaga) seven "begs" had asked for the hand of a young lady and the eighth was Mujaga. Although the mother likes Mujo because he is a true "hero in the duel," she adds to her daughter:

Već on što je *soja fukarskoga*, (34)

A tebe je *gospoja* rodila

I *gospodskim* mlikom nahranila. (36)

Mat. Hrv., III, No. 22.

(Transl.: But he is of "low lineage," while a "lady" gave birth to you, with "lordly" milk nourished you.)

It is interesting to note that when this last song was sung by the famous bard Meho and at a certain place he referred to the begs as *nejunaci* (coward), one of those present in the group got up and said to him: "Stani, pivaču, ne valja ti pisma. To je pisma za govedare, a mi govedari nismo, već stari begovi. Kako možeš begovsku divojku udavati za govedara, za fukaru?"² (Transl.: Stop, singer, your song is worthless. This is a song for cowherds, and we are not cowherds but

¹ The Albanian words are *grue fisit* — lit. woman of *gens* (in Latin). The Roman *gens* is nearer to the Albanian *fis*, which for convenience we translate as tribe.

² *Matica Hrvatska*, III, p. XV.

old begs. How can you give the girl of a beg to a cowherd, to a low-class?)

The frequency of duels is another common feature of the Albanian and the Bosnian songs of the Mujo-Halil cycle. The duels, called in Serbian and in Albanian *mejdan*-s (from Turk. [Pers.] *mejdān* — open space, arena), were survivals of the customary law, namely, "God's judgment." This method of solving disputes was preserved in the epic poetry, where the contentions between heroes ended in a duel. The epic songs of the Yugoslavs are filled with examples of duels, particularly the old historic songs. Although "God's judgment" was prohibited even by Dushan's *Zakonik*, it continued to live in the warrior's code.¹ In the Albanian heroic songs we have several examples of duels. The difference is that in them the heroes do not fight on horseback, as is the case in the Serbian songs. This fact speaks also for the relatively recent origin of the heroic songs of Albania proper. Only in the Mujo-Halil cycle and in "Gjergj Elez Alija," if we exclude the traditional songs of the Italo-Albanians, *mejdan*-s take place on horseback. This kind of combat is a manifestation of a feudal society, of a fighting aristocracy: the knights.

The individuals take part in the duels rather as representatives of their religions or of their bands. Sometimes they participate in order to show who is the greater hero, as in the case of Janko from Kotar who asked Mujin Alil for a duel (Vuk, III, No. 20); at other times in order to defend their honor or that of their family. Gjergj Elez Alija fought a duel against the "black pirate" in order to defend the honor of his sister (*Vis. e Komb.*, I, 2, No. 1). It seems strange to an Albanian, however, to let an old man fight a duel against a "pirate," when the former asks the agas to replace him, as in "Omeri the Young" (*Vis. e Komb.*, II, No. 10) of the Mujo-Halil cycle. It is significant that in the duels on horseback the weapons often used are mediaeval, like *topuz* (club) and *mazdrake* (spear). In the genuine Albanian songs the weapons used are pistols or rifles, which may be a sign that they are more recent in origin. A beautiful description in such a song is the duel between Prêle Memë Ujka, an Albanian, and Vuksan Leka, a *Shkja* (Prennushi, No. 56).

From the songs of the Bosnians and the Albanians, we know that the agas of Jutbina made raids in enemy lands and pillaged what they could. It was their habit to live by their arms. When they remained peaceful for a long time, they were not satisfied. They made raids. In an Albanian song, Tali was asked by Mujo to gather the agas of Jutbina:

¹ Cf. N. Kravtsov, *Serbski epos* (Serbian Epos), Moscow-Leningrad, 1933, p. 29.

Even the last line is completely Albanian. We have not come across such an expression in Serbian epic poetry. It also shows a democratic conception: all of us are sharing the benefit of light, and perhaps equally. But Mujo continues, for he is a mountaineer and is interested in the honor of the whole tribe:

And if he intends to dishonor our tribe, (72)
Hit him, cloud, immediately with a thunderbolt! (73)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 4.

The reply of Mujo has a deeper meaning. It reveals the blend of religious conceptions among the Albanian mountaineers. Line 71 represents monotheism (Christian or Moslem), while line 73 is pagan — the element of nature as a free agent.

It is altogether in keeping with the spirit of the Albanian mountaineers of the north to see that even the enemy, the *Shkja*, is protected, when he comes as a guest. In one of the songs of the Mujo-Halil cycle, Ali Bajraktari says to the leader of Jutbina:

How do you want to kill the *Shkja*, (37)
When he happens to be my guest? (38)

Vis. e Komb., IV, No. 10.

The *Kanun* states: "If the guest enters your house, even if you are on vendetta terms with him, you will say to him: 'Welcome!'" (*Kanuni*, No. 620, p. 67). The right of the guest is so deeply felt that, when Arnaut Osmani's wife is reluctant to give water to Huso in order to quench his thirst, the women of Jutbina remind her that Huso is a stranger and:

If we don't give water to this young man, (93)
We shall dishonor the whole of Jutbina. (94)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 12.

The foundations of *fis* (tribe) are blood relationship. Consequently, the ties among members of the family are strong. It is Albanian to see Alija ask Krajl Kapedan, who had invited Zuko to a duel, to be the substitute for his brother. It was also his right to ask the messenger that the letter addressed to Zuko be handed to him:

You should give me the letter (41)
Because I am the brother of Zuk Bajraktar (42)

Vis. e Komb., IV, No. 10.

The feeling of identity with one's brother is also revealed in another song of the Mujo-Halil cycle. When a letter was brought for Halil from the daughter of the *krajl* of Taliri, Mujo says to the Tartar:

I am the brother of Sokol Halil, (42)
 Whatever you have for him,
 You will speak it here with me. (44)

Vis. e Komb., IV, No. 11.

Totally Albanian is the test which the mother proposes to her son in order to understand the Young Omer, his fiancée disguised as a boy:

Give him your *lahuta* to his hand (107)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 10.

In Yugoslavia women play the *gusle*, and there are even professional *gusle*-players who are women. In the mountains of Albania no woman is allowed to play the *lahuta*. In order to eliminate any suspicion, the Young Omer plays the *lahuta* as a man and

Better still: he accompanies it with a song (118)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 10.

Nor is it possible to find in the Albanian Mujo-Halil cycle coffee served with *šerbet medovinu* (honey sauce). This must have been a Bosnian custom. In the Albanian songs only "coffee" or "coffee with sugar" are served, the latter found in the Bosnian songs as "sugary coffee". Women also do not serve them, as in epic songs of Bosnia, where we read:

Tada *cure* kahvu doniješe (126)

I uz kahvu šerbet medovinu; (127)

Hörmann, I, No. XI.

(Transl.: Then the "girl" brings coffee and with it honey sauce).

Another Albanian trait to be found in the poems of the Mujo-Halil cycle is *besa*. As we have previously explained, this is a custom which prevails among the mountaineers of northern Albania. It has the meaning of "word of faith," "word of honor" or of a "truce." It is sacrosanct and cannot be trampled. Ali Bajraktari had given it to the *krajl*. He had promised to return to the prison within six days:

I must go back to the *krajli* (the country of
 the *krajl*), (311)

Because I have given the *krajl* the *besa* of God
 To be there six days from today. (313)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 13.

In the meaning of truce, given to enemies on certain occasions, as for instance when the mountaineers need to till the ground or fight against a common adversary, we meet *besa* in the following lines of Halil:

And I myself have seen *Tanusha* (83)
 When we have had *besa* with the *krajli*. (84)
Vis. e Komb., No. 4.

So Albanian is the *besa* that the Bosnians themselves consider it as a particular word of honor. In "Das Lied von Gusinje" we read in the reply of Ali Pasha to the Prince of Montenegro:

Pošalji mi do dva Kapetana
 Na božiju vjeru arnaucku,
 Ništa njima učiniti ne ću.¹

(Transl.: Send me two captains, "on God's Albanian faith," I will not harm them at all.) And a little further Ali Pasha asks his thirty *bajraktars*:

Je li u vas ona *besa* prva
 da svog lica zaklonit ne ćete²

(Transl.: Have you that *besa* of old that you would not care about danger?)

It sounds very Albanian to hear Mujo tell his wife, who was complaining that seven of her sons died in the mountains:

Don't weep for the sons who have died in war, (15)
 Don't weep for the men who want to fight in the Alps,
 For there is no sweeter death than to fall on
 the battlefield. (17)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 29.

The hero is admired by the Albanians. He is also admired in the Bosnian songs, only there, when fighting against the Christians, he is permitted to use shrewdness and slyness: "Devet hila deseto junastvo" (Nine tricks, the tenth should be heroism; Hörmann, p. 6). In the Albanian songs no such distinction is made. Heroism transcends religion and nationality. The Albanian hero is ready to recognize it in his enemy. Huso speaks of the valor of his opponent:

That the *Shkja* is brave and faithful (205)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 12.

And Mujo after the hard battle he had with Zadrani of Tetovo, whom he finally killed, exclaimed:

Had I known that you were such a brave man, (113)
 I would have sacrificed Halil to you.
 We would have ruled over Turk and Christian. (115)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 31.

¹ J. von Asbóth, "Das Lied von Gusinje," as reproduced in *Ethnologische Mitteilungen aus Ungarn*, I (1887-1888), p. 324. ² *Ibid.*, p. 325.

The last line is characteristically Albanian. It shows how much importance he gave to domination and how little to the Turkish-Christian opposition.

But of all the songs of the Mujo-Halil cycle the one which seems most full of the genuine spirit of the Albanian mountaineers in the north is "Martesa e Halilit" (The Marriage of Halil; *Vis. e Komb.*, II, No. 4). It is also written in pure Albanian, with the least use of Turkish and Slavic words, with simple and strong expressions, a product of the physical and social environment in which the song was composed.

It is not the custom among the northern mountaineers of Albania to marry within the clan or tribe. Halil swears that he is not going to marry any girl from his *bajrak*¹ (banner, clan), that is any one of the girls from Jutbina, because he considers them as sisters. We read in the *Kanun*: "The Albanian, even separated four hundred fires (generations), does not take or give, i.e. he does not intermarry" (*Kanuni*, No. 697, p. 71).

Halil's speech, when captive in the hands of the *Krajl*, before the latter ordered his execution, reveals the spirit of the *Kanun*:

- The youth began to speak like a man: (584)
 — Listen, you captain — *krajl*!
 — One is not in straits but on the day of death.
 — Death comes when your guest has been offended,
 — Death comes when *besa* has been broken
 — Or when you lack a slice of bread for your
 guest. (589)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 4.

The above lines reveal that death is not dreadful for a people who value honor more than life.

The spirit of the mountains of the north reemerges, when Halil replies to the *krajl*, who asks him to express his last wish:

- Our ancestors have left us no other good: (597)
 — The death of none of us should be on the blanket,
 — But with swords to die singing. (599)

Vis. e Komb., II, No. 4.

These three verses show the respect for tradition and a truly heroic conception of life.

¹ The *bajrak* seems to have been introduced in the highlands of Albania during the Turkish occupation; it increased in value apparently during the rule of Kara Mahmud Pasha of Scutari, who needed the highlanders for his wars against Montenegro and wanted them more efficiently organized. Cf. F. Cordignano, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

sang Bosnian songs, accompanying them with a *lahuta* (the Albanian *gusle*).¹ Salja Ugljanin had learned how to sing Albanian songs when he was young, having heard them from Albanian shepherds who had come with their flocks to Hercegovina. He himself had been quite a few times in Shkodra on business — to buy cattle and sell them in Salonica. It is important to note that in Ugao, Salja and other inhabitants sang in Albanian songs about Mujo and Halil. Did he not say that when they returned from Bosnia they translated the songs “from Bosnian into Albanian?”² When he was met by Professor Parry and Šmaus, Salja Ugljanin was in the Sandžak and was singing there both in Serbian and in Albanian.

But the contact of the Albanians was not restricted to the three Yugoslav provinces mentioned above. During the Ottoman Empire, the regions along the Montenegrin frontiers, from Shkodra to the Sandžak, were inhabited by Albanians. The greater part of this population was Moslem Albanian and the rest were Roman Catholic. Their contacts were with the Christian Montenegrins and were not at all friendly. The Albanians of this frontier were in a state of permanent war against the Montenegrins. Herein lies the attraction that the *Krajišnice* had for the Albanian mountaineers.

From the whole situation described above, it is apparent that the Albanians came under the influence of the Bosnian songs of the Mujo-Halil cycle — and partly that of Serbian Christian epic tradition in general — in three ways. First, through their contacts as soldiers, traders, and craftsmen in Bosnia. “The *bosanski put* (Bosnian road) joins the basin of Kosovo and Metohija to Sarajevo and during the Ottoman regime was a first rate road. Its importance was increased by roads departing from the Adriatic.”³ Secondly, as shepherds in periods of changing land, when they went to Bosnia or sat together with Albanians of the Sandžak. These shepherds were also the best agents for the diffusion of the songs, for their living space is large. They travel in the summer from meadow regions to mountains, and in the winter from mountains to meadow regions in river valleys and coastal plains. Even today the oral epic poems are sung by shepherds and mountaineers.⁴ Thirdly, through the symbiosis in the Sandžak with the non-Albanian Moslem element and in Metohija and Kosovo through the influence of the Christian Serbian epic tradition. The

¹ Cf. A. Šmaus, “Beleške iz Sandžaka, I” (Notes from the Sandžak, I), *Prilozi* . . . , V (1938), 276.

² *Ibid.*, 277.

³ J. Cvijić, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴ W. Wunsch, “Die Kunst — und Volksmusik der Slawen am Balkan,” *Leipziger Vierteljahrsschrift für Südosteuropa*, III (1939), 57.

road of the Serbian (Bosnian) influences can then be easily traced: Bosnia – Hercegovina – Sandžak – Metohija and Kosovo – northern Albania.

A question which arises, as a consequence of the Serbian influence on Albanian heroic songs, is whether Albanian influence can be found in turn in the Bosnian epic songs. The difficulty here is that few studies have been made — and those fragmentary — which can throw any light on this problem. These do not show more than traces of Albanian influence. The community of shepherds of the *Burmazi* (from Albanian *burr'* [*i*] *madh* — big man) is of Albanian origin and has been in Hercegovina since the beginning of the fourteenth century. The vocabulary of the cattle-breeders reveals even today an Albanian influence: *balja* — white sheep with a black spot on the head or with black coat and white spots; *éno* — young dog; *keć*, *keća*, *kić*, *kića* are calls which the Hercegovinians use when they drive the goats. Also in toponymy and in family names Albanian influences are recognized, as for example in *Arnautović* (*Arnaut* is the Turkish name for Albanian) or *Dukandžić* (*Dukagjin* being a famous Albanian family of the northern mountains).¹ But as for the influence of Albanian oral epic poetry, we are still in darkness. J. Asbóth heard in Bosnia, in the house of a *beg*, an heroic song about Gusinje.² When this town was ceded, together with Plava, to Montenegro by the Congress of Berlin (1878), the Albanians refused to deliver it and put up a strong resistance. There is no doubt that “Das Lied von Gusinje” is a reflection of that fight.³

The relations of Gusinje and Bosnia had been quite close. Until not long ago, writes Čorović, the Albanians from the surroundings of Gusinje and Plava went to Bosnia to spend the winter with their herds.⁴ However, the contacts between the Bosnians and the Albanians did not only result in the song about the battle of Gusinje. The Albanians have many songs about fights against Montenegro which must have interested the Mohammedans of Bosnia-Hercegovina who, also, sang songs of their clashes with the Montenegrins.⁵ Indeed, from

¹ See for the Albanian traces, M. Šufflay, “Biologie des albanischen Volkstammes,” *Ungarische Rundschau*, V (1916), 12; V. Čorović, “Napomene o albanskim tragovina u Hercegovini,” *Arhiv* . . . , I (1923), 202–203.

² Cf. J. von Asbóth, “Das Lied von Gusinje,” *Ethnologische Mitteilungen aus Ungarn*, I (1887–1888), p. 149. See also by the same author, *An Official Tour Through Bosnia and Hercegovina*, London, 1890, pp. 211–218.

³ The song in Serbian is in *Ethnologische Mitteilungen aus Ungarn*, I (1887–1888), pp. 323–326.

⁴ Cf. V. Čorović, *op. cit.*, 203.

⁵ Cf. M. Murko, “Nekoliko zadaća u proučavanju narodne epike” (Some Problems in the Study of Popular Epic Poetry), *Prilozi* . . . , I (1934), 2.

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