**Workshop 10**

*Adriatic Frontiers:*
*Communications Across Cultures, Space and Time*

# The Epic Image of Adriatic Towns as Slave Trade Centres

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Abstract: The research I am going to present here was based on the corpus of Christian and Muslim classical printed collections of epic songs, published in Serbo-Croatian language by the end of 19th and beginning of 20th century (during the last wave of romantic revival of interest for national oral tradition). The corpus consists of 1357 poems (of 8 major collections in 22 volumes),[1] sung and recorded on the territory of presently four independent countries: Serbia, Croatia, Bosna and Herzegovina, and Monte Negro. The songs themselves are composed in decasyllabic asymetric verse (4 + 6),  and are also known as the *heroic* or *chivalric* oral poetry. They are performed by singing with accompaniment of *gusle*, a primitive string instrument with poor musical possibilities, but of powerful impact. These songs are renowned for their historicity and formulative tendency which – together with their significant ideological element – make optimal context for studies in anthropology and folklore, especially of towns and cities. The object of this paper is to show biases of the epic attitude towards the Adriatic major towns as slave trade centres in the period from 12th to 19th century.

I

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The best way to put the Adriatic towns/cities into the picture of Medieval slavery is to look at them in a broader perspective, i.e. in perspective of the Mediterranean slave trade. Geographically, Adriatic coast could be divided in eastern (with towns like Rijeka, Split, Gabela, Trogir, Zadar, Šibenik, Dubrovnik, Kotor, Bar, Ulcinj, Drač)[2] and western with only one city – Venice - but strong and important enough to make a balance.[3] As an institution inherited from the Romans, medieval slavery was reestablished relatively early in the Adriatic region, responding to two general European trends: pressing need for the cheap labour and re-urbanization of Europe (Mosher Stuard 1995, 15). The hinterland to the eastern Adriatic coast has been populated by South Slavs ever since their arrival to the territory of the west Balkans in 6th and 7th century. By the end of 9th and the beginning of 10th century that hinterland became notorious as a vast source of human merchandise.[4]

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[1] Data about the collections and abbreviations for citation of songs can be found at the end of this paper.

[2] For alternative names of those cities (e.g. Fiume, Zara, Durres etc.) conf. Detelić 2007.

[3] There, of course, are others, like Ancona, Apulia etc. but none can match Venice in any way.

[4] The historical irony of the fact is that Slavs, on their arrival to the territory together with Avars (6th and 7th century), were notorious as enslavers: whenever a Roman town or city on the eastern Adriatic coast was put to

In spite of collision with the ethic and moral standards of the time, slavery was tolerated by both secular and canon law. For the secular needs, slavery was regulated in concordance with the Romano-Byzantine law which declared that the slave can be

- anyone whose mother was a slave
- anyone who has been captured in battle
- anyone who has sold himself /herself to pay a debt.

In time, the last item was broadened with self-selling out of poverty or famine (*tempore famis*)[5] in favour of children or other members of family, and vice versa. But the main difference between the classical and medieval times was in preferable gender of slaves. As the need for hard labour in agriculture gradually diminished and finally ceased to exist making place for the cheaper free workers, the need for reasonably qualified housework (needle work, looming, cooking) in big households began to rise. So, between 12th and 14th century the most wanted and the most expensive slaves were women (especially if they knew how to work) and children (because they could be taught). It goes without saying that willful selling was not the only (not even the usual) way women and children of the region became slaves. They were often caught in the raids or hunts organized by *ropci*,[6] people of special trade, who hunted down anyone they could find – free people, Christians, as well as others. In time, the very term *roblje* (slaves) in languages of the Balkan Slavs broadened its meaning to *women and children of one's family*, as in the phrase "*roblje mi je doma*" (I left my family/slaves at home). This, of course, referred only to the village and country population who did not have advantages of protective city walls, fortresses, and trenches and could not defend themselves in case of attack. Without weaponry or other form of defence, they were all as good as slaves – hence the expression (Detelić 2008).

The Canon law, briefly, tolerated enslaving of all schismatics (i.e. non-Catholics), heretics, and infidels (preferably pagans and Muslims). Very conveniently, it was the time when the Adriatic hinterland country Bosnia and some parts of Herzegovina offered refuge to the *bogomils* (patarens, cathars) who fled from Bulgaria and Serbia (Dragojlovic 2009). As heretics and pacifists, they were optimal solution in every sense, so it is a small wonder they

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fire and ruins by Slavs and Avars, its population was captured and sold in slavery somewhere in Panonia (Jireček 1962, 28, 31, 33-35, 39).

[5] The archives in both Dubrovnik (*Debita notariae, Diversa cancellariae, Praecepta rectoris*) and Kotor (*Monumenta Catarensia*) show that poverty was the prevailing reason for self-selling and long term contracting, at least during the 14th and the beginning of 15th century, i.e. before the Ottomans came to the Balkans.

[6] From *rob* (slave), *rob-ac*, sing. / *rop-ci*, pl. – he who enslaves. Conf. Tošić 2005.

made the majority of all Slavic slaves ever traded within the Mediterranean during the Middle ages (Solovjev 1946; Vinaver 1953; Dimić Knezević 1973, 13-17, 19).

In the Mediterranean region the trade in humans was at its peak between the 12th and 14th century, and so it was on both Adriatic coasts as well, having in mind that Venice was the biggest buyer of everyone who was on sale in the cities across the sea. During the 14th century the pressure to stop 'the infamous trade' in humans lead to the laws against it in most of Adriatic cities (Split 1373; Trogir, Korčula 1397; Dubrovnik 1416), Gabela and Narrona at Neretva estuary excluded because it was the domain of corsairs and no law of that kind had ever been declared there. The actual effect of these measures was only partial, in sense that slavery was tolerated as long as the slaves were kept for the personal needs of citizens and their households. Rigorous punishments (including the loss of trading license) were applied only for smuggling the slaves across the sea or trading them in the name of a third party. It might well have been the sincere effort towards the abolition, but its proclaimed earnestness was somewhat shaded as it coincided with the arrival of Ottomans to the Balkans. The effect of which  logically was the change of slave-trade routes, mostly in favour of Levant.

The Ottoman presence in the Balkans (15th to 19th century) made a big geo-political difference, most of all because of two frontiers that were formed almost instantly between the Islam and Christianity, i.e. between Turkey and Austria: one along the rivers Lika, Drava, and Sava (*Lička krajina*) between present Bosnia and present Croatia, and the other along the river Danube (*Negotinska krajina*) between present Serbia/Bulgaria and present Serbia/Hungary/Romania.[7] The renaissance of trade in humans (which came to pass in 16th century) was made possible by the very nature and style of life on the frontiers, no matter where across the Europe they might emerge – in Castile, in the Balkans, or in any other place under similar conditions (Mosher Stuard 1995, 15): in each case slave-traders worked on both sides, selling Christians to the Muslims and vice versa. The final destinations in this trade were two great cities – Venice and Istanbul/Constantinople – where the conditions of sale were regulated by state and laws, taxed, controlled (both quality and price of merchandise), and performed in properly kept places (Fisher 1978).[8]

In addition, there were also the permanent warlike circumstances in the region, and especially on the frontiers: local clashes or "small wars" and the big wars between Islam and

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[7] Actually, in those parts this was not the only frontier. Between present Serbian and Romanian parts of Banat, there was *Pomoriška krajina* (Frontier on the river Moris);  between Hungarian and Romanian parts of Erdely (present Transilvania) the frontier were Carpatian mountains dividing Hungary from Turkey etc.

[8] Fisher specifies that the autorities of Istanbul, during the reconstruction of the new slave-market, payed an extra attention to do it at exactly the same place where it once was in times of Byzantium (op. cit.).

Christianity that hardly ever came to full stop before the end of 19th century. They were many and cruel, and they lasted long.[9] One of their chief consequences was the shift of focus to the enslaved prisoners of war, so called *sužnji* (captives), who were usually put to ransom. While they waited for the outcome one way or the other, they were either kept in dungeons, put to work, or even temporarily released to collect the ransom money in person.[10] Needless to say, the real, domestic slaves (women and children) had never been put to ransom because even their own families could not think of reason why it should be done. If they were taken by force, against their own will, there was a chance to take them back either by force of arms or by the force of law, and that was the main reason selling the slaves across the sea was punishable by laws of the Christian cities on the Adriatic coast. Otherwise, it was the end of story.

Thus, roughly speaking, in both history and folklore tradition of South Slavs slavery could be divided in two large periods: before Ottomans (12th to 14th century) and during their rule (16th to 19th century). In both cases the slave trade was depending on 1) resource, 2) suppliers, and 3) final destination. Adriatic towns were the proxies in this trade, connection between the buyers and suppliers. The profit was very good indeed and, no matter what was being proclaimed in the time of its demise, the only reason the trade stopped was the shift of interest from Venice to Istanbul, i.e. from the Adriatic to the Levant.

II

EPIC PERSPECTIVE

During the Ottoman rule in the Balkans many of the formerly Christian population converted to Islam in search for better life or, more often than not, for mere survival, but they did not change their habits and customs unless connected with new religon and shariat law. Thus, in time, two kinds of epics were formed on the territory – Christian and Muslim – sharing all the poetic features (language, motifs, subjects, verse, gusle, style of performing) and most of ideological basics, but in everything else belonging to the opposing sides.

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[9] The war of Holy League (1522-1573), Long War (between Austria and Venice 1593-1606), War of Candia (1645-1669), Morean war (1684-1699), six Russo-Turkish wars in 18th century etc.
[10] In cases like this it was a custom to leave something or someone as a garantee (conf. Detelić 2008).

South Slav epic songs in Serbo-Croatian language came twice to focus of European interest: first during the 19th century, as a part of the work of Serbian filologist Vuk Karadzic, when they got undivided attention of Goethe, Herder, brothers Grimm, and other great names of the time, and again in 1930ies when the American scholars Milman Parry and Albert Bates Lord came to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to complete their research connected with the question of oral origin of homeric epics. The older songs (edited by Vuk Karadžić) were Christian by origin, by their favourite subjects, and area of their popularity, and the more recent ones (Parry-Lord collection) were Muslim in the same respect, but they are both undoubthedly the oral poetry of South Slavs.

Actually, their mutual and strong ideological foundation really is the main reason these poems are the only genre of folklore taken in consideration here. Any kind of cultural, historical, or anthropological study of cities and towns simply needs an ideological context as mandatory, and in folklore as such the epic genre is the only one that can provide it. Another reason is that the living epic poetry within the European borders can nowadays be found only in the Balkans, which is an asset worthy of being put in use.[11]

Finally, the third and the most prevailing reason is the epic historicity. By the time they were mostly recorded and published (the end of the 19th century), epic songs had been – for the vast period of time - the regular mnemotechnic and communicational facility for transmiting the ongoing historical events, such as the first and second Serbian uprising against Turks, as well as the bravery and heroic deeds of distinguished individuals in the same context. Knowing that, the same function of epics can also be projected backwards, into the past, which would qualify the epic songs as a kind of chronicals that regularly notified, depicted, and witnessed everything that was regarded as important on the national and social scale. It would not be too much to say that the epic tradition had the key role in construction of national and state imagery not only of South Slavs, but of all the Balkan peoples, including Albanians, Romanians, and Greeks as well.[12]

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[11] Having said that, the criteria in choosing samples for the corpus were both linguistic and territorial, which reduced the Balkan component to one language (Serbo/Croatian) and one territory (Adriatic coast), leaving the Albanians and Bulgarians out of focus, although their epic tradition is equally valuable and of the similar etiology. Nevertheless, the territorial argument needs a bit of clarifying. The Adriatic coast is not the territory from which the poems come, but rather the territory about which the poems sing. It is also defined in the title of this paper and, as the Adriatic towns are in the focus, the coastal towns of the other two inner seas (Black and Azovian) are out of interest. Albanian topics include Adriatic cities Valona and Scodra, but they are in Albanian language and specific Albanian epic verse (octosyllabic), which is also a declasifying moment.

[12] Each of them had their own tradition and verse (Greeks hexameter, Albanians octosyllabic verse, Bulgarians both octo- and decasyllabic verse, South Slavs decasyllabic and hexameter in older strata), but shared subjects, motifs, and historical data. It was not the case with other Slavic peoples. Although the so called long verse epics (ten and more syllables) is genuinely Slavic, East and West Slavs (Russians, Czechs, Poles, Slovaks) did not

Furthermore, from the point of historical geography, within the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan lands were a frontier to the Christianity, so they were treated accordingly. Slavs lived on the both sides of the frontiers: because they were used to fighting Turks, Austria invited Slavic Christian population to its territories, gave them lands and rights of settlement, in exchange for military service in the region. One of the most often motifs in the epics sung there was - naturally - taking, selling/buying, and retaking slaves.

During the Ottoman rule, especially between the 15th and 19th centuries, the basic three ways of falling into slavery did not change either in form or menaning, but the tradition labelled them differently: in all three pairs of relations, the stronger side (the one who takes slaves) was identified as *Turks*. Thus the relation Christians – heretics/schicmatics did not change into Muslims – Christians but in *Turks - Christians*, the relation enslaver – slave into *Turks – slaves*, and so on. It was in this form that it entered the epic poetry.

Whenever a motive, a subject, or a part of a plot becomes recurrent in the epic genre, it forms (or tends to form) a formula, which is a cliché or a pattern simple in structure, but of very intrinsic and important effect. All enslaving formulas that are successfully preserved in epic verses up to the present times display this general shift from the enslaver-in-general to the Turks, especially the formula of slave-hunt,[13] for example:

| | |
|---:|:---|
| Ćuprilić vizier | Podiže se Ćuprilijć vezire, |
| Went hunting in forest | On otide u lov u planinu, |
| With his officers and lords; | I sa šnjime lale i veziri; |
| They hunted the forest all over | Lov lovili po gori hodili, |
| All over the mountains too | Sve planine obredili redom, |
| But caught not a thing: | Ništa nije vezir ulovio: |
| *Neither stag nor a Christian,* | *Ni jelena niti kaurina,* |
| *Neither hind nor a Christian girl.* | *Ni košute niti kaurkinje* |
| | (Vuk III, 48:1-7). |

Epic formulas do not always have to be that long and developed. More often than not, they consist of only one or two words, as is the case with the *rob dragokup* (sweet-heart slave), a specific kind of self-selling *tempore famis*. Although the slave-trade reality tells us differently, the epic genre puts it in an interesting, rather romantic context: when the

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depend on it as much, and by the end of XV century finally lost any interest in it. The asymmetric decasyllabic verse itself, renowned as the Serbo-Croatian epic verse, is of very old, Indo-European origin. Its long life in the Balkans only might be the result of specific historical circumstances, but basically it has to be regarded as an idiosyncrasy of Balkan Slavs (conf. Jacobson 1933, Gasparov 1996).

[13] As it was said before, slave-hunt was not a figment, but a fact that got its literary finish once it entered the process of literary modeling. Depending on genre, differences could be expected in the narrative modes and other pattern forming procedures (conf. Boranić 1912 for legends etc.).

attrocious forest brigands (*hajduci*) find themselves without food, drink, and tobbacco, they sell the youngest and the prettiest of them to a young *bula udovica,* i.e. to a Turkish widow (Vuk III, 2). He then escapes, and the brigands share the price they got for him. Mutual to both formulas is the epic attitude towards the subject which is depicted as a kind of a chivalric episode rather than as a bleak reality, which it actually was.

Towns came into this picture relatively lately. They were in the haloo from the very beginning because the biggest (or, rather, the only) slave markets were there, but the Christian epic songs rarely mentioned towns by name in connection with slaves (and even then in specific context, as will be pointed later). What they did sing about, and often, were the city dungeons and prisons where captives waited to be either ransomed, redemptioned, or killed. These are always, again in the epic manner, fighters (soldiers or brigands) taken in battle or caught by treason, but never the so called domestic slaves, which means women, children, and other types of civilians. It had to be in Muslim epic poetry that the formula of domestic slaves and enslaving town be made, and – small wonder – it mostly was about notorious Christian marritime towns like Malta, Venice, Corfu:

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|---|---|
| He sent Meira over seas to ban, | Mejru posla preko mora banu, |
| Over seas to the land of Malta, | Preko mora u Maltiju ravnu, |
| *From where slaves never get out,* | *Oklen roblje nikad ne izlazi,* |
| *To where the Turks never get in* | *Gdjeno Turcin nikad ne ulazi.* |
| | (KH II, 70:7-10)[14] |

Because the Muslim epic songs have always been under the influence of the oriental baladry (even though indirectly), they were relatively easily composed as a mix of love story, family quest, and chivalric battle, and shaped to fit the epic poetics and versification frame.[15] They are, more or less, the longish wedding narratives depicting a hero going from town to town in search of a captive or a slave, wether a member of his family or a bride to be. The songs usually end in wedding with one or two girls. Compared to the older (Christian) songs about heroic weddings, these are really very much simplified, but from the point of geography and other types of realia, they are far more accurate. And yet, the only destination they actually fear of, are the long distances over seas, usually referring to the three inner European seas: Adriatic, Black, and Azovian.

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[14] The same with Corfu (MH III, 16, 25), but also with Zadar (KH II, 69, 70), and Venice (MH III, 19). These are all Muslim epic songs.

[15] That also is the main reason those songs are so long: there are actually at least two or three sung in one.

All the three are named simply as *sea*, but the Adriatic especially - as the homeland, domestic sea - is mostly called just *Primorje* (marritime hinterland), itself being often defined as town or a city: *U Primorju gradu bijelome* ('In Hinterland, the white town' EH 8, 10; KH II, 44, 51), *u Primorju gradu* ('in the town of Hinterland', with no additional attributes KH III, 2), or some other kind of settlement (*pitomo mjesto*/soft place Vuk VII, 48, 49; SANU IV, 22; *kameno mjesto*/stone place MH VIII, 15; *zemlja slovinska*/Slav country SM 38; *zemlja ćesarova*/Kaisar's country SANU IV, 39; *lacmanska krajina*/German frontier SM 142) etc. Even though this very fact witnesses the singers' poor knowledge of sea coast and the sea itself, the marritime towns were so long and so well known and notorious, that even a singer who had never seen a sea and had no concept of it, made no mistake in placing them rightly. This goes equally for Zadar („on the sea side" – KH III, 1, 19; „in the hinterland" – Vuk VI, 76; Vuk VII, 39), Dubrovnik, Kotor, Split („beautiful town at the sea coast" - ER 59), Senj („at the grey sea" – KH II, 54, 62), Venice („at the grey sea" – EH 2), Ulcinj, and – in a slightly different manner - Gabela in the Neretva estuary. They all of them were slave trade centres, especially Ulcinj and Gabela, where any law against trade in humans never existed. Yet, no epic song - Christian or Muslim – ever mentioned those two in that context. In fact, they appear scarcely and even then only as a *town* (Ulcinj, Vuk VII, 53) - *Turkish town* (Gabela, KH III, 9) or *white town* (Ulcinj, SM 136, 170), or simply as *white* or *plain* (Gabela, MH IX, 8; MH II, 4), with no relation to slavery whatsoever.

For the Christian epic songs especially, the marritime towns/cities were much more than just slave markets. They are pictured as beautiful and important, aristocratic settlements, well defended, rich, and opulent. Christian singers have a choice of attributes to glorify them, such as *lepi/p/ponositi/slavni* (beautiful/proud/glorious), *plemeniti* (noble), *ledeni/pleteni* (icy/woven, meaning white and ordained – probably because of the intrinsic decorative stonemasonry there) and so on. Especially for Venice, the oral tradition has a dictum: *Carigrad svijet, a Mleci cvijet* (to Istanbul the world, to Venice the beauty [belongs]), and the similar but in lesser degree goes for Dubrovnik (pretty, beautiful, most beautiful), Kotor (white, Latin, stony), and Zadar (wide, white, icy, of stone) as well.[16] For that reason maybe, and because the people of Adriatic cities spoke the same language and had the same religion, the Christian songs chose to neglect - but did never forget - the fact that slave markets traded whatever merchandise they got, Christians and Slavs included. They pointed out, rather vigorously, at the reverse end of the business – the highly estimated possibility to capture and

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[16] For cities, towns, and attributes to them and other kinds of human settlements in the epics conf. Detelić 2007.

sell a Turk, as in the song about Pasha Podgorica and his assault on a Christian newly wed bride:

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|---|---|
| When he spoted pasha Podgorica, | Kad on vide pasu Podgoricu, |
| He ripped off pasha's green coat, | Proreza mu zelenu dolamu, |
| And he mounted him as he were a horse, | Pa ga uzja, kako i paripa, |
| He then rode him [like a horse] to Dubrovnik city, | Odjaha ga gradu Dubrovniku, |
| *And he sold him to the Latin merchant,* | *Pa prodade njega u Latine,* |
| *To the Latin merchant, for the Latin ducats,* | *U Latine, za meke ruspije,* |
| *Let him pull the galleons on sea!* | *Neka vuce po moru galije!* |
| | (Vuk III, 17:160-166) |

Within the Christian epic tradition, the animosity of the Orthodox people towards the Roman Catholics is usually expressed as the lack of thrust. The Orthodox singers had no great respect for the population of Adriatic cities, whom they called Latins and treated them as old tricksters (*stare varalice*), because of their smooth manners and harsh deeds. Yet the cities themselves were something different, for the memory of them as precious posession of the ancient Serbian and Bosnian kings was still alive and cherished during the Turkish rule over the inner lands (Jireček 1962). They were also a token of possible freedom, for as long as they stayed free and prosperous, there was always some kind of hope for the mainland.

Contrary to this, Muslim epic songs did not have any reason to foster soft spots for the old Adriatic cities. The most important of them – Venice, Zadar, Split, Kotor – were the bitter enemies of the Ottomans, and others (like Dubrovnik) were just the vasals, a kind of paying lodgers on the conquered and therefore rightfully Ottoman land. All Muslim singers, without a single exception, were fully conscious of the importance and greatness of the Ottoman empire, and deeply proud to belong there. And although the Ottoman naval forces were very successful in taking and keeping Dalmatian coast (with exception of the biggest and the oldest marritime cities), epics always sang about one and the same spatial image of the world, where Zadar and Senj stood at the sea-coast, and Turkish hinterland towns lay all around them.

The crucial point here, mutual to both history and the epic tradition, is that the whole Mediterranean – inner seas included - was literally divided between Muslims (Saracens, Turks, Arabs) and Christians (Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox), so the religion and confession were the prevailing criteria for almost everything. The complete dynamics of a world thus conceited depends on the altercations between the people mostly of the same origin, but always of different religion. The wealth and the beauty of the marritime cities are important because there must be a goal for Turkish regular plundering campaigns, as well as the Turkish homes, castles, and towers have to offer the same as a juxtaposition for the

Christian side. Slaves are the regular booty of those raides, and if they stay in the region, all is well because they can be recaptured or ransomed. In general, recapturing was more chivalric than any other ending, but if the slaves went over any of the three seas, the chances for recapturing lessened and faded away.

In that context, an interesting epic formula was born. Because the point was on the impossibility to overcome the obstacles, it was the invincibility of a stronghold city, a fortress proven impenetrable, that equalled a big water and the long distance, which consequently made Zadar and Venice pose as the same kind of obstacles as Malta and Corfu:

<div align="center">

He sent her to Zadar, city of stone,  
Where Turks never come in,  
From where slaves never go out.  

Poslao je Zadru kamenome,  
Gdjeno nikad Turčin ne ulazi,  
Otklen nikad roblje ne izlazi.  
(KH II, 69:179-181)

To buy the slaves up and down Kotar,  
To take them to her city of Corfu,  
From where, my bey, they will never return.  

Da kupuje roblje po Kotaru,  
Da ga goni do Ćorfeza svoga,  
Oklen ga, beže, povratiti ne ćeš.  
(MH IV, 27:228-237)

We are going on ship to the sea,  
On the ship to the grey sea,  
We are going to the cursed Venice,  
From where the slaves never return,  
For Venice belongs to the king of Malta  

Mi odosmo moru na djemiju,  
Na djemiji a na sinje more,  
Mi odosmo u Mletke proklete,  
Oklen s' skoro sužnji ne vraćaju,  
Jer su Mleci Maltežlije kralja;  
(MH III, 19:482-486).

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Within the poetics of epic genre, the presence – and even the very making – of formulas are always an issue of utmost importance. If they are complete and developed (as those just cited are), it usually means that the object they refer to has to be either very old or very important, or – more often than not – both. In this brief outlook of epic image of three significant subjects: slavery, slave trade, and slave markets in Adriatic towns, we encountered two such formulas – of man-hunt and of overseas sale. In broader perspective, epic songs with slavery in it (either as a motive, subject, plot, or theme) are full of formulas like these, because there is not any doubt the very concept of slavery had a huge impact on the people themselves, on their culture, and their history. But putting the important issues into formulas

is not exclusively an artful, in this case epic, procedure with no contact with reality whatsoever. In both cases, as we had seen, epic formulas were grounded on very solid factography: the selling overseas - on the 15th century laws that particularly stressed it, and the man-hunt - on the practice of tradesmen who were so numerous and well established, that they even formed their own guild (Spremić 2005). Actually, it is hard to say, from the modern perspective, which was grounded on which.

Yet, both formulas strongly mark not these events, but the event that in epic mind was the most important of all that happened to the Balkan peoples after the fall of Constantinople: the arrival of Ottomans to their lands. Both institutions – man-hunt and trading slaves overseas – although old at the moment of the Ottoman arrival, were duly overwritten and re-encoded to fit the new situation and the conflict with the new masters. And while the formula of selling slaves overseas might be considered as an intirely Muslim device, the ancient formula of barren hunt (that in pre-Ottoman times was able to give a mythic pattern to the poem in full), ostensibly skipped *ropci* and fixed on religious chasm *Turci – kauri* (Turks – Christians):

The early formula

| | |
|---|---|
| They hunted for fifteen days, | Lov lovio za petnaest dana, |
| And his fortune was such, | Tako mu se sreća udesila, |
| That he caught not a thing: | Te od lova ništa ne ulovi: |
| *Neither stag or a wise hind,* | *Ni jelena ni košute mudre,* |
| *Nor any of the  small animals* | *Ni od kaka sitnoga zverinja;* |
| | (Vuk II, 30:7-11) |

The later formula

| | |
|---|---|
| They hunted the forest all over | Lov lovili po gori hodili, |
| All over the mountains too | Sve planine obredili redom, |
| But caught not a thing; | Ništa nije vezir ulovio: |
| *Neither stag nor a Christian,* | *Ni jelena niti kaurina,* |
| *Neither hind nor a Christian girl.* | *Ni košute niti kaurkinje* |
| | (Vuk III, 48:3-7). |

This change could not have happened before the end of 15th century, but the most probable time of its fixation should not be later than the end of 16th, as suggest the prose formulas discussed and published by Boranić (1912). Appearing in legends about wondrous liberation from the Turkish slavery by some saint's help, they undoubtedly mark the same issue, although in a different, vernacular speech: *'kat je on bil vlovljen i vu turske uze stavljen'…* (when he was hunted down and put into Turkish slavery). It means that – no matter how long in time the formulas were being processed before the Ottomans came – after their arrival it

took less than one hundred years to reverse them, and together with them the fundamental categories of traditional culture, such as space and time (Detelić 1992). That is how important the occasion was.

The self-censorship of the Orthodox epic singers in connection with slave-trade in the Christian Adriatic towns should be understood in the same context. The general attitude towards the cities in oral epic poetry is ambivalent: in the old, pre-Ottoman times, towns and cities were divided in 'theirs' (Latin, maritime, German, Hungarian) and 'ours' (everything else). In good epic tradition, and if nothing unpredicted happened, this difference would have been worked out to details and, finally, would result in a bunch of developed formulas. As the unpredicted eventually did happen, and Ottomans did come to stay, a new image of towns/cities was formed to fit the actual fact that all towns anyway were 'theirs' (which means Turkish), and 'ours' can be only what we succeed to liberate in battle. In the meantime, the nearest free Christian towns were those on the Adriatic coast, which made of them places of desire, but with no real substance. Even when the time came for both Serbian uprisals to happen and, later, for banishment of Turks once and for ever, Adriatic towns were not part of that reality either as a force (which in that moment they have not had for quite a long time), or as a goal. Not even for Muslims, whose presence was felt as substantial only in Ulcinj. But Ulcinj is quite another story.

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## ABREVIATIONS

ER = Герхард Геземан, *Ерлангенски рукопис старих српско-хрватских народних песама*, Зборник за историју, језик и књижевност српског народа, Прво одељење, књига XII, СКА, Сремски Карловци 1925, CXLVIII + 353.

Vuk II-IV = *Сабрана дела Вука Караџића*, *Српске народне пјесме II-IV*, издање о стогодишњици смрти Вука Стефановића Караџића 1864-1964 и двестогодишњици његова рођења 1787-1987, Просвета, Београд.

Vuk VI-IX = *Српске народне пјесме* 1 - 9, скупио их Вук Стеф. Караџић, државно издање, Београд 1899-1902.

SANU II-IV = *Српске народне пјесме из необјављених рукописа Вука Стеф. Караџића II-IV*, Српска академија наука и уметности, Одељење језика и књижевности, Београд 1974.

SM = Сима Милутиновић Сарајлија, *Пјеванија црногорска и херцеговачка, сабрана Чубром Чојковићем Црногорцем*. Па њим издана истим, у Лајпцигу, 1837.

MH I-IV, VIII, IX = *Hrvatske narodne pjesme I-IV, VIII, IX*, skupila i izdala Matica hrvatska, Zagreb 1890-1940.

KH I, II = *Narodne pjesme muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini I-II,* sabrao Kosta Hörmann 1888-1889, Sarajevo 1933.

KH III = *Narodne pjesme muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Iz rukopisne ostavštine Koste Hörmanna, redakcija, uvod i komentari Đenana Buturović, Sarajevo 1966.

EH = Esad Hadžiomerspahić, *Muslimanske narodne junačke pjesme*, Banja Luka 1909.