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# Grenzüberschreitungen

Traditionen und Identitäten in Südosteuropa

Festschrift für Gabriella Schubert

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tain its influence and diplomacy. It goes without saying that Christians they redeemed were all Catholics<sup>17</sup>.

The most famous of all clerical redemptionists were Trinitarians and Mercedarians. Contrary to the epic individual act of buying slaves out - after which liberated people were free to go wherever they pleased, official redemption (either by clergy or by administration) could mean a kind of prolonged servitude. VERLINDEN cites a case of 28 people (25 men and 3 women) redeemed by Mercedarians of Aragon, who were under obligation to follow the friars and take part in their tours of *propaganda fide*, for one whole year. While so doing, they were allowed only the slaves' robes (*almuxia*) without any weapons, they were forbidden to have their hair cut unless the friars said so, they did not have right to be anyone's guarantor, they were forbidden hazardous games etc. Anything they might be offered by others (money, food, material goods), they had to submit to friars immediately<sup>18</sup>. If they refused any of those, they might have been put to prison, in chains, or even to torture.

In folklore, a person forbidden to comb his/her hair and have it cut together with nails, forbidden to wash and change, to eat to his/her heart's desire, and to have any personal properties, can be only under a devil's spell or already (but temporarily) dead and in hell. In a way, it suits well one of many definitions of slavery as "social death"<sup>19</sup>. In epic poetry of South Slavs redemption of slaves, the moment of their liberation from dungeon, is usually depicted as restoring all those natural and civil rights lost to them by mere act of enslaving - to have their hair and nails cut, to wash and change, to get armed, and eat as they please:

(Christian epic)

He quickly got the barbers  
Three of them, not one less,  
One to wash his face,  
The other to shave him,  
Third to cut his nails.  
He was given good food and drinks,  
And knightly clothes and shiny armour  
What is good for knights.  
(VUK VI, 75: 221-227)<sup>20</sup>

(Muslim epic)

They brought two young barbers,  
Who cut the Lika-bey's hair,  
His long nails they cut too,  
Duchess made him a nice dress,  
Embroidered in silver and in pure gold,  
And she gave him a good horse,  
And three piles of gold with it.  
She added thirty knights  
To escort him to Turkish Frontier  
(KH I,21: 1604-1613).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup>DAVIS 2004: 12-13.

<sup>18</sup> "Toutes ces personnes se sont engagées à accompagner les frères pendant un an dans leurs tournées de propagande. Durant toute cette période, ils porteront des vêtements de captifs (*almuxia*), mais jamais d'armes. Ils ne pourront pas se faire couper les cheveux sans l'autorisation des frères. Ils s'engagent à ne pas jurer, à ne pas fréquenter les lupanars et à ne pas s'adonner aux jeux de hasard. Tout ce qui pourrait leur être donné, soit en argent, soit en effets de toute nature ou en victuailles, doit être remis par eux aux frères. ... Ceux qui désobéiraient pourront être mis en prison, aux fers ou même à la torture" (VERLINDEN 1955: 542-543).

<sup>19</sup>PATERSON 1982.

<sup>20</sup> Bego brzo dobavi berbere, / Tri berbera manje nijednoga, / Jedan mije, drugi bradu brije, / A treći mu nokte sariježe. / Najede ga piva i jestiva, / Pokloni mu junačko odelo, / I oružje što je za junaka.

The point, of course, is the ex-slaves' freedom to go home or wherever they choose. I will not make any comment on the Mercedarians' treatment of liberated slaves mentioned here. We can all only hope it was not customary.

This is, in short, only a sketch of larger and definitely more serious subject of slavery in the Balkans. If we could share the impression that oral epic tradition kept good pace with reality and for a very long time, that would mean I did a decent job. I do hope that it can also bring new perspectives to the study of folklore, reemploying its plausibility as a source for history and culture reconstruction. For if going from history to folklore did prove worth doing, maybe the other way round could work too, in case historical data are poor or completely absent.

Yet another detail worth mentioning here is considerable lack of these themes and motives in written literature within the same area. Except an early drama *The Slave-girl* by Croatian Renaissance author Hanibal Lucić<sup>22</sup> and romantic novels of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, like *Zulejka, the Bosnian Slave-girl* by a Serbian author Mihailo DINIĆ<sup>23</sup>, literature - especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century - knows not of slavery as its subject. The only exception is Ivo ANDRIĆ'S short story *The Slave girl*<sup>24</sup>, good, strong, heavily pointed little piece, but one and only. Even thus, because it was a Nobel Prize winner's little piece, it goes deep in psychology of despair and hopelessness of enslaved young woman, which is just what scholars of slavery long for and seek.

If I were to find an answer to this absence, I would probably go for its out-of-fashion disposition today, and shameful connotations in the period of Romanticism and 19<sup>th</sup> century in general. Slavery that comes to focus as an actual problem of today is usually a case either of sociopathology, or of human trafficking in service of greyish-black economy. It lost its epic dimensions, especially its *pathos* and romantic

<sup>21</sup> Dovedoše dva berbera mlada, / Ličkom begu kosu obrijaše, / I dugačke nokte odrezaše, / Banica mu sreza djeisiju / Svu od srme i od suha zlata, / Još mu dade pretila alata, / Konja dobra od Aršana bana, / I dade mu tri tovara blaga, / Tri tovara sve dukata žuta. / Još mu trides't dade pratioca.

<sup>22</sup> Hanibala Lucića vlastelina hvarškoga Robinja, *dramska pjesen iz XVI stoljeća*, Venezia 1556 (Zagreb 1942).

Mihailo DINIĆ: *Zulejka, robinja bosanska*, Leskovac 1889. All through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup>, the trivial literature on the same subject (always about slave girls as sex objects) has been in bloom, but this is not the theme of present article. However, they could and should be subject of separate study.

*Robinja*, u zbirci *Kuća na osami*, Sabrana dela Ive Andrića, Beograd 1997, 75-83 (*The Slave-girl*. In: *The Lonely House*, Collected works of Ivo Andrić, Belgrad 1997, 75-83). *The Slave Girl* is relatively late work of Ivo Andrić. As early as in 1926 he wrote a novelle "Mara milosnica" (The Pasha's Concubine), a pessimistic and very deep study about the fatality of woman's beauty. Mara in this story is, in today's idiom, a sex-slave to a pasha, that is to an infidel, and for that despised by her own people. After pasha's demise, she is rejected both by her church and her people. The point is that she was more respected and lived better while she was a Turkish slave than after she got her freedom. As a formally free person, she was molested, bullied, and harmed in so many ways, everybody felt she was really free only on the day she died. It was not my intention to elaborate this particular kind of slavery, so it is mentioned only here, in the footnote. Nevertheless, I strongly feel that this turn of oppositions (friendly-unfriendly, infidel-orthodox etc.) needs a deep and broad study.

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bravery, but none of its scary *appeal to conscious* complex. If it is to become a literary motive at all, the west Balkans audience will have to wait a bit to bear its witness.

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# Slavery in the West Balkans: history and oral tradition

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From time immemorial, there has been no human condition that could match slavery, either by its age, or by its universality. It is so ancient, it could easily be a pre-cultural phenomenon, yet - the world has never been without it, not for one single day. The secret of its longevity may well be the fact it is a lucrative and prosperous business, but it most certainly is not the only one. From the very beginning it had to satisfy two different but congenial human needs, like two peaks of the same desire: one for big profit from cheap labour, and the other for playmate in games for adults without safety limitations. Mutual to both, there lies the lust for power over a fellow human being and that is probably what makes slavery so ignominiously persistent.

Because it is so, I made the purpose of my contribution to introduce the image of Mediterranean slavery and slave trade as it can be found in the oral epic poetry of South Slavs. To my best knowledge, this issue has never been considered worth researching, although vernacular epic narratives represent very serious, high quality oral tradition. Slavery, on the contrary, was in focus from early days, especially because the very term (*sclavus*) is believed to be drawn from the word *Slav*<sup>1</sup>. Scholarship about the subject is huge, but folklore itself was never considered as an appropriate context for studies in social history. I do hope to prove the opposite - at least within this limited area.

By South Slavs I actually mean people occupying territory of today's four independent countries - Serbia, Monte Negro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not long ago, they were all within the borders of one and the same state (former Yugoslavia), but at the time epic songs were being collected, this territory was divided in two: Turkey and Austria with borders on the river Drina. In limiting territory this way, I obeyed strictly linguistic reasons: one and the same language, which automatically meant setting aside Macedonian and Bulgarian (there is no epic poetry in Slovenian).

My *corpus*, or the body of songs, consists of 1357 poems (of 8 major collections in 22 volumes)<sup>2</sup>, belonging to both Christian and Muslim epic tradition in Serbo-Croa-

<sup>1</sup> General opinion on etymology of the word slave is such (derived from

ethnic name of Slavic people because they were subject of enslaving in large numbers during the early Middle Ages). In English it is in use from 1290. The very name *Slav*, *Sloven* has no connection with this etymology, coming either from *slovo* (= word, logos) or *slava* (= glory, worship). Conf. LOZINSKI 1964; SKOK 1973, s.v. *Slaven*. Nevertheless, this occurrence imposes an inner division on enslaving and enslaved nations, which - from the present point of view - is not good for either of them. During the era of slavery as an economic system, this was as well the source of many ambiguities, but also of stereotypes and prejudices still in use in vernacular speech and folklore of both sides.

<sup>2</sup> 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, СXLVIII + 353; *Сабрана дела Вука Караџића, Српске народне пјесме II-IV*, издање о стогодишњици смрти Вука Стефановића Караџића

tian language<sup>3</sup>. The songs first came to the focus of academic world during Romanticism in 19<sup>th</sup> century (brothers GRIMM, J. W. GOETHE, TALVJ and others), and more recently in 1930es due to the works of Milman PARRY and Albert B. LORD on homerology.

South Slav epic tradition is both very old and very up to date. During many centuries, after the region lost its independence to Ottoman empire, it drifted away from its knightly origins and became the main - often the only - source of historical data and similar information for an illiterate society of layman. Due to its strong and significant ideology inherited from "golden age", oral epic poetry always did make a comment or offer an interpretation of important events in the region. From the distance of one or two centuries these interventions might look like literary motives, figures of style and speech, or some other appropriate poetic device. Compared to historical sources proper, they suddenly show some features of stark realism, especially in the matters important to community - like enslaving and being enslaved. I will try to confront historical and epic data on this particular subject, and see whereto it might lead.

Present day scholarship connects Europe with two major categories of slavery: antique or classical and modern (from early middle ages up to now). From the point of geography, modern slavery is further divided in Mediterranean and Atlantic with quite a lot of overlapping, especially along the North African coast, i.e. in the countries of Magreb in the idiom of the epoch. Opinions are pretty much unison about the main characteristics of modern Mediterranean slavery, especially compared to the Atlantic<sup>4</sup> slave trade which started later, but lasted longer. The very term *Mediterra-*

1864-1964 и двестогодишњици његова рођења 1787-1987, Београд [shortened in text as Вук II—IV]; *Српске народне пјесме* 1-9, скупиле их Вук Стеф. Караџић, државно издање, Београд 1899-1902; *Српске народне пјесме из необјављених рукописа Вука Стеф. Караџића II-IV*, Српска академија наука и уметности, Одељење језика и књижевности, Београд 1974; Сима Милутиновић Сарајлија: *Пјеванија црногорска и херцеговачка, сабрана Чубром Чојковићем Црногорцем*. Па њим издана истим, у Лајпцигу, 1837; *Hrvatske narodne pjesme I-IV, VIII, IX*, skupila i izdala Matica hrvatska, Zagreb 1890-1940 [shortened in text as MH I—IX]; *Narodne pjesme muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini /-//*, sabrao Kosta Hörmann 1888-1889, Sarajevo 1933 [shortened in text as KH I—III]; *Narodne pjesme muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Iz rukopisne ostavštine Koste Hörmanna, redakcija, uvod i komentari Đenana Buturović, Sarajevo 1966; Esad HADŽIOMERSPAHIĆ: *Muslimanske narodne junačke pjesme*, Banja Luka 1909.

<sup>3</sup>There is a political intention in each of the countries formed newly after disintegration of former Yugoslavia to proclaim local speech as a new and separate language. I will not pay attention to those incompetent attempts with no ground in language sciences. Anyway, at the time epic songs were sung and collected, the epic language was one and the same in the whole area, and foreigners (Italians, Germans, Austrians) called it *Illyric*, or *Slavonic*. I do not object to either, if Serbo-Croatian might be found offensive to anybody. Yet, I feel the need to stress that Milman PARRY and Albert B. LORD, scholars with the greatest authority in the matter, during their field trip to Bosnia in 1930ies and later, called the language of Bosnian Muslim epic songs Serbo-Croatian. Conf. LORD 1960, 1986.

<sup>4</sup>Although similar to each other, they are rather differently covered by scholarly research. Bibliography on Atlantic slavery is huge and many times larger than the other, with no plau-

*nean* - when connected with slavery - often includes Levant, and actually refers to three inner European seas: Mediterranean, Black, and Azovian. Slave trade on the coastal and continental regions of inner seas was "lucrative and prosperous business" enough, but - opposite to Atlantic/African trade - out of focus, a kind of specific, polycentric activity. This means that slaves acquired there were set to sale in many different slave markets, and then transported to their final owners in many different European towns. Between the time of captivity and date of entering a final owner's home, such a slave might have been transacted many times<sup>5</sup>. African slaves, on the contrary, were shipped overseas directly to their final destination, and between their own and their owner's home they usually had not seen anything but the inside of transporting ship.

Because it was so dispersive, Mediterranean type of slavery affected each particular region in its own way. The region of my interest is the west part of Balkan Peninsula - both the inland and Adriatic coast. The points of correspondence between epic and history that I find interesting for this occasion, are: 1) methods and criteria for enslaving; 2) ransoming; 3) treatment of slaves.

1) Mediterranean slave tradesmen were pretty indifferent to race and colour of their captives. Because the region was literally divided between Muslims (Saracens, Turks, Arabs) and Christians (Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox), religion and confession were the prevailing criteria for enslaving. It was quite normal to take prisoners among the infidels and make them slaves as often and as many as possible. One of the regular occasions to do so, was to go to war.

Countries involved in Mediterranean slave trade (referring to South and South-East Europe, Asia Minor, and North Africa) were constantly in war from early middle ages up to the World War One. Powers that be were leading states of the time or those with vital interest in the area. In South-Slav oral epic poetry they are known as "Seven kings": Austrian, Turkish, Russian, doge of Republic of Venice, French, English, and German (in epic songs often only Prussian). They were endlessly fighting each other, making alliances and breaking them down, taking sides - sometimes on religious, sometimes on economic basis, sometimes on both. In doing so, they always dramatically affected population of the Christian countries conquered by Turkey, especially in the Balkans, rekindling their hope for liberation, and then leaving them on mercy of their enemy. In the area covered by my research, it happened regularly on occasion of every single war between Austria and Turkey (because the borders between them varied from Dalmatian coast and Krajina in 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the river Drina at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century). The

sible explanation of the fact. Thus it is also stated by Robert C. DAVIS: "the story of European enslavement in the early modern Mediterranean world ... always rather neglected, even derided, form of slavery" (DAVIS 2004: XXIV). Conf. also BAEPLER 2003; ENGERMAN 2000; VINAVER 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Only the chattel slaves who were completely on disposition of their owners. This was not so in case of serfs, self traded persons (usually out of poverty), and other contract bound individuals, who were under obligation to serve for a certain period of time (usually from 2 to 20 years and more). Conf. ORIGO 1955.

same happened when the wars were more general - like 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 18<sup>th</sup> century etc. They were cruel and lasted long, and their regular spoil - among others - were thousands of slaves. It is very well confirmed both by contemporary sources and by present scholarship<sup>6</sup>.

Slaves were also captured in large numbers during the so called "small wars", which were in fact actions of plundering and robbing on the local level, often as an echo of bigger clashes or in context of an ongoing war on larger scale. Epic songs mainly refer to these, especially Muslim songs from Bosnia and Christian songs from Monte Negro, but none as much as songs from Bosnian Frontier or Krajina. Krajina was a tampon-zone formed along the borderline between Austria and Turkey (parts of present Bosnia and some parts of present Croatia). During four centuries (15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>) of Turkish domination over western Balkans, it was continually inhabited by a few hundred thousand people - both Christians and Muslims, and each on either side of the border - who lived there in permanent clashes, always heavily armed and ready to fight. The point of frequent expeditions deep into the enemy's territory was to rob goods, take slaves, and make as big a damage as possible. Besides all this, in time a new class of people emerged within the region, whose *metier* was hunting their compatriots for sale as slaves, either to tradesmen or on the slave markets. They were known as *ropci* (sing. *Robac*, from *Rob* - slave)<sup>7</sup>. Manhunt was their business, and they did not find it disturbing to make profit by trading their fellow Christians to Turks. In studies of history they are well documented<sup>8</sup>, but epic poems do not mention them, probably because it was too shameful for epic understanding of ethics. Sometimes, though, the manhunt, because of the aristocracy of the hunters, was not a business occupation - as with *ropci* - but rather a time killer, a sport, or a game. In epics, this has its own formula:

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Čuprilić vizier                    | Podiže se Čuprilić 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). |

Finally, sailing ships were also very good source of slaves due to the flourishing piracy both on seas and navigable rivers'. For a very long time water was the best

<sup>6</sup> DAVIS 2004, especially Bibliography there; Радонић 1950; Соловјев 1946, 139-164; Ф

1988.

Also *robiti*, -m, v. - to plunder, to enslave; *robље*, n. pl. tantum - slaves, family (children, women, elders); *zarobljenik*, m. sing. - captive; *suzanj*, m. sing. - enslaved prisoner.

<sup>8</sup> Спремић 2005.

<sup>9</sup> In the West Balkans navigable rivers were not all famous for piracy, but a few were. Neretva most of all (with the notorious slave market Gabela, also known as Narrenta citta), probably the Sava and the Danube too because of their international significance, and finally

possible way to travel, especially long distances like pilgrimage to the Holy Land and similar. Even there, pillage, robbery, and slave hunting were common both to Christians and Muslims, because the holy places for each religion lied in the same direction or very near one to another. So it happened that in 1644 galleys from Malta captured a Turkish ship full of pilgrims to Mecca, among whom there were a concubine of sultan IBRAHIM and one of his sons. This occasion is believed to be the direct cause of assault on Candia in 1645, when actually began the war that lasted 24 years.

Epic poems responded to this historical event as to a romantic story - the Christian placing the slaves in Malta, as it should be (VUK III, 16 „Sultanije robinje"/Sultan's wives enslaved), and Muslim in Candia (MH III, 2 „Sultanije u Kandiji"/Sultan's wives in Candia) - but both changing the identity of enslaved persons in two of many sultan's wives. Among the Balkan Turks, Malta was notorious for its military strength, long distance from their lands, and its busy slave market. In Muslim songs, Malta even has its own slave formula:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>He sent Meira overseas to ban,</b>   | <b>Mejru posla preko mora banu,</b>                    |
| <b>Overseas to plain land of Malta,</b> | <b>Preko mora u Maltiju ravnu,</b>                     |
| <b>Where from slaves never get out,</b> | <b>Oklen roblje nikad ne izlazi,</b>                   |
| <b>Where to Turks never get in</b>      | <b>Gdjeno Turčin nikad ne ulazi (KH II, 70: 7-10).</b> |

The atrocity of Malta as a final destination of Muslim slaves is revealed in statement that devils and dragons are hatched there (KH III, 4: 1790-1792), which - for an epic man - is as well as going to the other world or directly to hell. This fear had its very realistic ground in history, for Malta was never conquered by Muslim forces, although they tried hard in sixteenth century, and put it under a very long siege. Moreover, the very existence of hospitalist order of Maltese knights made it rather difficult for Muslims to maintain full control over the Mediterranean sea routes.

2) Because a great number of slaves were captured at sea by pirates and corsairs, which meant that they were people of some substance, ransom, barter and simple exchange were routine treatment of Mediterranean slaves. A person put to ransom usually was kept in dungeon, but - depending on nobility of the master - he/she could also be treated decently and live in relative comfort. One of the characteristic proceedings in that context was leaving someone (friend, relative, sibling) as security for a temporary freedom in purpose of collecting the ransom. The dead line for return with ransom could be prolonged if necessary, but it could also jeopardize the pawned person.

A case of this kind happened in 1654 to a certain Josif KOPEŠIĆ, left as guarantor for his elder brother Petar, who was captivated, during the War of Candia (1645—1669), by bey KOPČIĆ from Duvno (Bosnia). The ransom for Petar, a Venetian soldier from Šibenik (Dalmatian town, now in Croatia), was twenty gold sovereigns, but he was not able to collect it. So the Venetian administration gave him a Turkish captive

**the Morava and the Drina rivers - Drina because of its bordering, and Morava because of its central geographical position. Of sea-coastal centres the most important were Dubrovnik, Zadar, Perast, Herceg Novi, and Ulcinj. This, of course, does not mean that other places and towns were out of business.**

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for exchange, a *galeotto* from *Loredano* galley, whose condition was so bad, he died before the exchange could take place. As the dead line was long over, Kopčić bey decided to sell the younger brother if ransom could not be brought before next spring. In desperation, because with Kopčić bey he lived well and his new fate was utterly uncertain, Josif wrote to his elder brother a touching letter<sup>10</sup>, still preserved in the State archive in Zagreb (Croatia). Finally, after a whole year with the Kopčić family as domestic slave, Josif was set free after another Turkish slave was liberated in Venice and exchanged successfully.

Ransoming and exchanging slaves occur very often as a motive in South Slav epic poetry. It is usually an infidel warrior (from the standpoint of both religions) - Christian or a Turk", captured either while he was resting fast asleep by a water in the woods, or in an unfair battle where he was many times outnumbered. Such a knight is very rich by definition, so there is quite a sensible reason for putting him to ransom. Only if the captive were a notorious killer responsible for many deaths of his enemies, his captor might prefer to execute him publicly, as an example to his people.

There is a special term for such a captive - not *rob*, as usual, but *sužanj*. As in real life, he is also put to dungeon to wait until his future be decided upon. An epic ransom is always something special: right arm of captive's brother (usually better knight than the captive himself), his sister or wife, his personal weapon and horse (if they are famous and worthy), towns in his possession, salt factories, towers, castles and so on. From that point on, fables develop in two different plots: one about the theft of captor's children (usually performed by captive's elder brother and ending with exchange - younger brother for children and big pile of money), and the other almost identical to the case of Josif Kopešić.

The latter is very handsomely depicted in one particular song - "Od Horvata Mato" (Mathew of Croatia, VUK III, 48). The first half of the poem does not differ from the real thing: Mato is a Dalmatian (as Petar and Josif Kopešić were), he was caught not in battle but while he was resting and fell asleep, he was put to ransom and the items were fabulous - a ship made of wall-nut wood, with mast of tin and pure gold, and with the "masthead of precious stone / that shines so bright / one can travel by night / same as during the day"; then, of course, a special horse, a sabre ornate with silver, gold, and precious stones, a gold bowl worth three emperor's towns, with three candlesticks on it and a viper's head of precious stones "that shine

<sup>10</sup> "My brother, God be your judge, why did you do this to me, why have you forsaken me and left me in Turkish hands, and didn't want to buy me out. They kept me well up to now and I was well indeed, for their lordships thought you will do what is decent, and you did what is indecent, may God be your judge! Now they put me in chains, in heavy iron chains, which I cannot lift, and they want to sale me in Turkish lands, so I will never see you again ... send the ransom, and may God be your judge!" (Радоњић 1950, 200-201; translation mine).

Within the region as a whole, the common term for a Muslim was Turk, probably because there were no other Muslims in vicinity. To be precise, all *white* Muslims were considered Turks. *Black* or *olive* skin Muslims were all called Arabs, in accordance with a genuine Turkish habit.

so bright, / one could eat from it / by night same as by day"<sup>12</sup>. Turks believe that Mato cannot answer their demands, but in so thinking they are - of course - wrong. The plot further develops when Mato admits he does not have anybody who could collect ransom for him, so he has to go himself on this errand. As a foreigner in the country, he cannot leave anybody as security, and then a noble Turkish youngster, Hussein Lakić, comes out as a volunteer. The dead line is three days and three nights, after which Hussein Lakić will be executed. The outcome is inevitably epic: Turks do not wait till the end of the last night, they burn the unfortunate Hussein on the bonfire immediately after the third sunset. When Mato of Croatia comes with ransom at the last hour of his term and finds out what happened, he captures the Turks and punishes them in the same manner - by burning them on huge bonfire.

The elements of similarity between this plot and brothers Kopešić case are too obvious to be discussed further. The differences, though, would be much more interesting, and the greatest of them occur at the beginning and at the end of the poem. This was only to be expected, of course, for those are the strongest points of any work of literature. They are also distinctive borders, very sharp cuts that divide art from reality and keep the two worlds safely apart.

The poem begins with a formula of hunt without pray (including the aforementioned manhunt for Christians): a person goes to hunt, he hunts all day long but cannot catch anything; on the way home, he encounters someone on the road through the forest - a child or a knight. If it is a child, he brings it with him and later adopts it, and if it is a knight, he captures him and puts him to ransom. By the end of the poem, either of them - child or knight - brings a disaster to the hunter and/or his surroundings<sup>13</sup>. In older poems hunter was often someone of Serbian aristocracy (duke, king, emperor), and in more recent songs usually some of Turkish high ranking officers (topmost a vizier), but never sultan himself, probably because it was unimaginable for common people that he could leave Istanbul for any purpose. The fatality of such development is outlined by false freedom of choice: one can always leave the foundlings where they are and proceed without turning back, but this possibility is actually nonexistent. An event like this is always fatal manifestation of God's will on Earth, and it is not really difficult to recognize a demon or a god of destiny under the thin layer of Christianity over it. Enslaving and ransoming entered this *suĳet* relatively lately, but in doing so they preserved all their lively, mundane details - as the parallel between the real and the epic events shows.

3) Present scholarship on Mediterranean slavery generally supposes that knowledge about treatment of slaves - once they were sold to the final owner - is poor and undocumented. This is only partially true because slaves were neither a uniform popu-

<sup>12</sup>„Možeš dati orahovu lađu, / A na njojzi dumen od kalaja, / Od kalaja i suvoga zlata; / Navrh njega alem kamen dragi, / Sa kojim se vidi putovati / U ponoći kano usred podne? / Možeš dati iz potaje đoga, / Kog đogina u krajini nema, / U Turčina ni u kaurina; / O đoginu sablju okovanu / Sva u srebru i u suvu zlatu, / Na balčaku alem kamen dragi, / Prema koga konja kovat' mogu / U ponoći kano usred podne? / Možeš dati od zlata siniju / I na njojzi tri čiraka zlatna / I na njima tri kamena draga, / Da valjaju tri careva grada?» (60-77).

very detailed study of this motive in Детелић 1992.

lation, nor were they treated all equally. Normally, they were divided by gender in two categories: male slaves for hard work in mines, on galleys, or in building and maintenance enterprise, and female slaves and children mainly for domestic service. Europe was very well informed about life conditions of hard labouring slaves in North Africa and Turkey from books of slave narratives<sup>14</sup> printed in English, French, and Spanish from 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. The authors were mostly captured, enslaved, and finally liberated or redeemed soldiers, travellers or sailors who accurately and vividly described their life in imprisonment<sup>15</sup>. Domestic slaves, on the contrary, were hardly ever redeemed. Sometimes they succeeded to buy themselves out, or were liberated by the owner himself - usually as a part of death-bed legacies. As for the numbers, domestic slaves were always at least four to five times larger population than the others, probably because they were demanded more, and more easily supplied. The chances they had to let the world know of their hardships and sufferings were neglectable.

In the west Balkans these proportions were the same. Male slaves were captured either by chance, in manhunt, or in war, they were relatively scarce, and first to be redeemed or ransomed. Women and children were a regular spoil of war - big or small, same as material goods and other chattel. If they had any luck, men of their families and clans could get organized fast enough to liberate them before they reached slave markets. Once they left the territory of their settlement, they were lost to their previous way of life forever.

Because they sang about village people under warlike conditions, epic poems broadened the meaning of term slaves/roblje to the *members of family - women, children, and old men*, for they could not defend themselves in case village was attacked. Without weaponry or other form of defence (tower, castle, town/city), they were all as good as slaves - hence the expression. Redemption was so rare for this kind of slaves (maybe because they belonged to the poorest class of population), that once it happened, the person who did it was sung about as a new type of hero<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, for the Orthodox population of the west Balkans this individual engagement was the only hope of redemption, for there was not any kind of organized activities in that direction. On the contrary, Catholic church did have more than one organizations for search and redemption of Christian slaves, not only because it was not as seriously damaged by Turkish rule as the Orthodox was, but also because it succeeded to keep cities, both inland and on the seacoast, through which it could main-

<sup>14</sup>That was how the Europe got acquainted with Istanbul hammam institution (*bagno*). State slaves, whose labour was used for public enterprise, were stationed in some of Istanbul baths. The life conditions there were so poor, baths have taken more lives than hard work and piracy together (DAVIS 2004).

<sup>15</sup>See DAVIS 2004, 240-242; FISHER 1980; 1980a.

<sup>16</sup>"Knez Ivan Knežević" VUK IV, 29. Ivan (or Ivo) Knežević was the head (*knez* is an old Serbian title Turks did not change, but lessened its validity) of Semberia county on the border between Serbia and Herzegovina. This area especially was open to various slave hunters and was victimized by them for very long time. The redemption of slaves by Ivo of Semberia, the one this poem sings about (for there were more than one), was probably the last one because not long after it the first Serbian uprising happened in 1804. Knez Ivo took part in it as well.