

Malki and Keema – A Panihari Song

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Abstract: Shri Komal Kothari drew our attention to a village folk song from Rajasthan, his home province. The song is about the meeting of a girl and a youth at the village well. It is a well-known theme in village life, since the Biblical times. For some time I looked for oral versions of the song, but found very few: three from contemporary India and four from Southern Slavs, from the eighteenth century. The literary-historical and literary-semiotic aspects of these seven songs are discussed in this article.

To the blessed memory of Shri Komal Kothari

The community of folklorists bewails the passing away of Shri Komal Kothari; his love for folk culture will keep inspiring us. This study is a modest offering to his memory.

In a paper published in *Indian Folklife*, Shri Komal narrated the summary of a Rajasthani folksong, a “panihari” song—the song of “the water-carrying girls”. The summary immediately reminded the author of songs with similar contents from southern Europe, a long way from India. So she went in search of more texts of this song:

A man riding a camel came to a water hole, *nadi* as we call it, where anyone could come and drink water. A girl is also drinking water there, and the camel rider asks her some questions and praises her beauty. The girl gets angry that a stranger should talk to her in this manner and goes home ruffled. The man follows her. Reaching home, she complains to her mother that the man has been harassing her. Her mother comes out, sees the man and finally says that this is the man to whom the girl has been betrothed. This is the story—no place is mentioned, no names of the persons (Shri Komal Kothari in *Indian Folklife*, July 2004, no. 16, p. 18).

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After some search, Prof. Harvinder S. Bhatti was so kind as to find two texts sung today by professional folk singers in Punjabi, for which the author is very grateful; the author found four more texts recorded during the mid-eighteenth century from Southern Slavs. Interestingly, further inquiries in folklore archives around the world have so far not brought more texts to light.¹ Thus, we have seven texts on which we can base our discussion. The discussion will start with a presentation of the corpus of Indian and South Slavic songs. The texts are presented under the following sections: a summary, followed by a short analysis of the spatial and temporal aspects, descriptions of the characters and finally the narration. A discussion on the contexts of the songs, their versions and ethnopoetic genre will conclude the enquiry.

Indian Texts

All the three Indian texts are contemporary. Regrettably, no real recording from oral folk tradition could be found, though the song seems to be popular. In Rajasthan, according to Shri Komal Kothari, "one of the most popular songs is the *panihari* ... (2004: 18)" (see below, Text no. 1). According to a communication by Prof. H.S. Bhatti with the author, the song is popular in Rajasthan and Haryana, but not in Punjab (letter dated Jan 8, 2007).² Professional folk singers perform it in Punjabi also (see below, Text nos. 2–3).

Text no. 1

The Rajasthani Text

P. Bh. Komal Kothari

"On Folk Narratives," *Indian Folklife*, no. 16 (2004), p. 18.

Summary:

- (1) Space connective: A man riding a camel came to a waterhole.
- (2) A maiden was drinking water there.
- (3) The camel rider asked her some questions and praised the maiden's beauty.
- (4) The maiden got angry that a stranger should approach her and talk to her in such a manner.
- (5a) Space connective: The maiden went home.
- (5b) Space connective: The man followed her.
- (6) The maiden complained to her mother that the man insulted (attacked) her.

- (7) The mother recognized the man as the one the maiden was betrothed to.

Analysis

Spatial Aspect

The location of the meeting of the couple is “nowhere” and “everywhere”. The name of the village is not specified; in every village there is a source of water, which can be a well, water hole, river, or water tank. The nature of the space is realistic, with no preternatural features intruding. Thanks to the social particulars mentioned we can at least conclude that the event takes place in “our country”: a maiden lives with her parents; maidens and young daughters-in-law are the ones who fetch water for the family, that is, they have to carry water from the spring; a stranger should not address a woman; a maiden is not supposed to know her betrothed; but her family knows him.

On this stage, the characters move: girl’s mother is static (she is at home, in the village); the girl moves in a loop: [home/village] – well – home; and the youth comes from an undefined “outside” to the well and then goes on to the village/home. The girl’s arrival at the well is not explicitly told; the narration starts with her being already at the well.

Temporal Aspect

The event in the song took place at an undefined period and point in time in the ethnopoetic-historical framework. This time is natural, with no preternatural features. The whole event takes a few minutes, in addition to the walking time from home to the well and back.

Acting Characters

Three characters play in the story: the girl (heroine), the foreign youth (antagonist) and the girl’s mother, who is the link supplying significant information. All three characters are natural, but not specific; they are “everybody”. As the girl still lives in her parent’s home, the couple are already betrothed but not yet married, and therefore the girl does not know what her future partner looks like.

Narration

The story is simple; it features a single complication: the youth insulted the girl (attack), followed immediately by a single solution: the girl was appeased when she was informed that the youth had the right to approach her. The conflict is a love-play.

Text no. 2
Malki and Keema

Summary:

- (1) Malki was at the well, drawing water.
- (2) Keema came [from outside] to the well and spoke to Malki.
- (3) Keema courted Malki teasingly: pretending to ask for a drink, he introduced himself as an eager lover and praised her beauty.
- (4) Malki dismissed his pretentions (you behave like Ranjha in search of Hir) and threatened to appeal (with the help of an uncle who is a police officer to King Akbar) against such a ruffian.
- (5) Keema went on teasing and praising her beauty.
- (6) Malki again dismissed his pretentions, scolded him and asked for his name.
- (7) Keema told her his name, family status (being Malki's betrothed) and the objective of his journey: to visit Rai Mubark (who is none other than Malki's father), a native of the village Garh Muglana; he asked for her name.
- (8) Malki blushed, moved away, thinking: I will not tell him who I am; instead, she advised him to ask information from his mother-in-law (Malki's mother).

Analysis

Spatial Aspect

In this text, the stage of the event is specified: at the well of a named village in "our country", possibly even in "our district": Garh Muglana, in which the girl's home is located. This space is completely natural. Malki is at the well and nothing is said about her going to the well from home. Keema is coming from "outside". After the dialogue, they are not shown to move to Malki's home. As the recognition happens at the well, there is no need to proceed home for the recognition.

Temporal Aspect

By mentioning the name of Mogul ruler of India Akbar (1542-1605), the event is set "as if" in medieval times but coupled with the contemporary "police officer" (see point 4 in the summary). Akbar, here, is the symbol of a just and good king as opposed to his corrupt bureaucracy. Thus, this setting is not really historical, but means "the period before modern times, when modern administration was not yet put up." The mention

about the famous lover couple Hir and Ranjha intensifies the medieval atmosphere (see above, point 4; for Hir and Ranjha see Temple 1881–1900, vol. II, no. 38, 507–580). Despite this lack of specification, the time in the work is completely natural.

Acting Characters

Of the three Indian versions, only this is supplied with names of the characters. Both members of the couple are named (Malki, Keema); the girl's father is also named (Rai Mubark), which enables recognition. The girl is still living at her parents' house and not with her in-laws; this indicates that she is only betrothed and the wedding has not yet taken place. Her parents do not act. There is no need for the mother to connect the couple by supplying information, because the youth did that (in contrast see below, Text no. 5, lines 19–27, where the girl supplies the information about her identity). No character has any preternatural traits.

Narration

The story consists of one conflict, which is a love-play, between the girl and the youth and one solution, namely the information about the youth's right to approach the maiden.

Text no. 3

The Soldier and his Wife

Summary:

[Soldier, coming from outside to the village well, approached a maiden who did not know him]

Conversation between maiden and stranger:

Strophe

- 1–2 Soldier drew the maiden's attention to the fact that a thorn has pricked her foot.
- 3 Maiden answered that it was none of his business.
- 4 Soldier requested a sip of water from the maiden.
- 5 Maiden refused.
- 6 Soldier threatened her (to break her pitcher and tear the rope of the water hole).
- 7 Maiden did not care.
[Space connective: Maiden returned home to the house of her in-laws.]

Conversation between the maiden and her mother-in-law:

8 Mother-in-law scolded the maiden for returning late with the water.

9 Maiden told her about the quarrel with the youth.

10 Mother-in-law explained that the youth is her son and the maiden's husband.

11 Mother-in-law sent maiden to appease her husband with a drink of milk.

[Space connective: Soldier-husband walks home]

Conversation between the maiden and her husband:

12 The husband refused to accept the milk.

13–14 Maiden apologized.

Analysis

Spatial Aspect

The spatial aspect is not explicitly mentioned in the text of the work. We understand that the conversation took place at the village well from the dialogue in which "a drink" (strophe 4), a pitcher and a rope are mentioned (strophe 6), and from the mother-in-law's scolding (strophe 8). All three items belong to the semantic field of the well. As understood from the dialogues, the location of the other events is the girl's home (her in-laws' house), where the mother-in-law receives her and to where the soldier comes, as this is his home too. The walking of the girl and the soldier from the well to the house is not explicitly mentioned. As the names of either the characters or the village are not mentioned, the locations are undefined. The social circumstances (girls drawing water, girl not knowing who her husband is and what he looks like, girl living in the household of mother-in-law, etc.) place the events into the realm of "our country"; no preternatural traits appear.

Temporal Aspect

The event could happen at "any time" and is completely natural. The meeting itself takes several minutes; the way from the well to the girl's home (the house of her in-laws) to which the girl and the youth walk, may take half-an-hour. No preternatural features appear.

Acting Characters

Three characters act in this text: the girl, the youth (unknown soldier) and his mother/the girl's mother-in-law, who forms the link between the two and supplies information. All the three are nameless, but have

no preternatural traits. The couple are already married, but the marriage is not yet consummated, that is, their status is of an in-between nature. They are neither fully in bachelor status nor in fully married status. Such a situation is common in Indian oral literature. Consider, for example, the epic traditions of Pabuji in Rajasthan. Pabuji leaves his bride in the middle of the marriage ceremony for a battle in which he is killed (Smith 1991: 400–424). Or, the Punjabi epic traditions of Raja Rasalu and Lady Kokilan (see e.g., Temple, vol. I, pp. 48–65, vol. III, 218–241). Rasalu brought up Kokilan since she was born in order to be his wife, but when she became nubile he did not consummate the marriage.

Narration

The story consists of two episodes. In the first episode, the conflict is the love-play: the girl feels attacked (strophes 1–10). The solution is the information that the attacking youth is the girl's husband. The conflict in the second episode is between the girl and her husband (strophes 1–7). The husband is angry and the girl has to appease him (strophes 10–14). The song tells about the girl apologizing, but does not tell whether and how the husband was appeased in the end. This song has affinities with the theme of the returning warrior. After many years, warrior returns home and tests the faithfulness of his wife: he is not recognized and as a test he tries to seduce her (Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType 13.1.0.2, paragraph L.2.2). In our text, the love-play could serve as such a test of the wife, but in the text there is no hint of this element.

South Slavic Texts

The four texts, analysed below, have been found in manuscripts from the eighteenth century in libraries in and around the town of Dubrovnik (the south of the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, now divided between the countries of Croatia and Montenegro). V. Bogisic published an anthology of these poems in 1878. They are written in the South Slavic language, it's Serbo-Croatian dialect of the region. Their poetic form is identical in all aspects with the form of works recorded since the eighteenth century from living oral tradition of the Croatian-Bosnian-Serbian area, and therefore they are considered as genuine recordings although the musical notation is missing (therefore we label them here as "poems" and not "songs," although they were sung). Part of the poems are in the older long-verse prosodic form (verse line of 12–16 syllables) and part of them in the newer 10-syllable verse line form (see Lord 1960 notes 3 and 4 to chapter 3 for discussion and bibliography of South Slavic oral epic verse). Our four texts have the long-verse form.

Inquiry with South Slavic colleagues showed that there are no younger versions on record, although intensive recording activity from

oral tradition went on during the whole nineteenth century and till the 1960–80s. This fact in itself is curious. Let us describe the four texts.

Text no. 4

Bogisic, no. 3. The text is fragmentary: between lines 28 and 29, an episode seems to be missing. The manuscript stops in the middle of line 40.

Summary:

lines 1–4: Warrior-champion, King's-Son Marko, put up his tent near the path, which girls use to fetch water from a well for their homes.

lines 5–12: Three girls wearing diadems passed by; the first two politely bowed to (greet) the stranger according to custom; the third (with a diadem of pure gold) refused to do so.

lines 13–18: The friends reproached the girl; she answered arrogantly that she would not bow even to the king, not to speak of such a boor.

lines 19–25: On hearing this, Marko cursed the maiden (the earth should enjoy the beauty which thou art proud of; others should wear-and-tear thy diadem which thou art proud of).

lines 26–28: Maiden arrogantly answered that the gallows for such a boor are already put up in Bosnia.

[Apparently, in response, Marko drags her into his tent]

lines 29–32: Marko led her out of his tent and swore that he did not violate the maiden.

lines 33–34: Space connective: The girls and Marko each went on their way, to their respective homes (the girls to Bosnia).

lines 35–38: Marko informed his mother about the adventure (no flashback narration) and requested her to go to the girl's country (Bosnia) and ask from the king (of Bosnia) (a) forgiveness, or (b) for the maiden's hand (unclear).

lines 39–40: Marko showed out his mother and looked ... (text ends in the middle of the verse line).

Analysis

Spatial Aspect

The location of the event is not specified, yet in line 30 it is positively described: the location is within earshot of the King of Budim. It is unclear

where “Budim” (Budapest) is located; from other songs it seems that it is considered to be in Bosnia, and Bosnia is the girls’ home (see Parry and Lord, 1953–54, vol. I, song no. 1, lines 1340–1351, 1438–1440: “Budim” is considered to be a Bosnian town). In lines 33–34, the location of the meeting is negatively described: it is neither Marko’s (Macedonia) nor the girls’ home (Bosnia). As the song is fragmentary, the spatial picture is not complete. In any case, the event is staged in “our country”, which is in “this world”, and is completely natural. The movements of the characters on the stage of the story lead from their home to the meeting point and back. Thus the meeting point is centre stage.

Temporal Aspect

The South Slavic traditional culture determines where on the ethnopoetic time scale the event happened. Here, it is the undefined period of the Turkish rule (fifteenth to nineteenth centuries). Historical Marko flourished at the end of the fourteenth to the beginning of fifteenth century, but such details are not known to the singing community (see a similar phenomenon for Israeli Arabs, Jason n.d.1, note 2). The story itself has nothing to do with history. The kind of time is human, with no preternatural traits.

The whole event (the meeting) lasts from a few minutes to half-an-hour. The span of time needed to arrive from home to the meeting place is undefined. Marko camped for one night (lines 3–5), and in the morning the girls came (lines 5–6). They presumably started out very early in the morning.

Acting Characters

Basically, one man and one woman play. Here, the woman is multiplied into three (“three” meaning “many”). Two of the girls serve as attributes of the main heroine and characterize her as being special, “marked”. They wear pearl diadems, whereas she wears a golden diadem. They are polite, behave according to custom (bow to the young nobleman); heroine arrogantly refuses. The lad and the girl are in a state of ignorance about each other’s identity; they are not yet betrothed. Although the text breaks off, from the remainder and the other texts it can be understood that Marko sends his mother to request the King of Budim for the girl’s hand in marriage. The king is the girl’s guardian (relative), who has to give her in marriage. He may be, for instance, her brother (see below Texts 5 and 7) or another relative (see below, Text 5). Or, the king may be understood as her master in some sense. Note that the girl, a king’s relative, is pictured as a peasant girl, whose duty is to go to the well and bring water for the household.

Narration

The narration contains one conflict. First comes girl's action, namely her arrogant behaviour which consists of two deeds: refusal to bow (conform to custom) and insult. The girl's actions are followed by the arrogant behaviour of the youth. His arrogance goes so far as to curse her to die (lines 10–18) and, apparently, to rape her or pretend to rape her (lines 29–32). Thus, his action also consists of two deeds. This is really a small love-play (lover's quarrel). After a suspense, comes the resolution which consists in the two becoming a couple (if our reconstruction is valid). The suspense is created by their ignorance of each other's identities. In the present text, the girl is clearly ignorant of the youth's identity. The youth seems to know where to woo the girl, that is, he knows, or guesses, her identity.

Text no. 5

Bogisic, no. 4 (reprinted in Broz et al., vol. II, no. 22).

Summary:

- lines 1–2: Warrior-champion, King's son Marko, put up his tent on a meadow beneath the town of Budim.
- lines 3–9: Young Budim maidens passed by on their way to the well; all of them greeted the stranger with a "good morning" [as custom demands] except for the last, who is the youngest and most beautiful; she looked shyly at the ground.
- lines 10–18: Marko asked the shy maiden who her family is and cursed her (thy ring, of which thou art proud, should delight other maidens; thy beauty, of which thou art proud, should the black earth love).
- lines 19–27: Girl called him "boor," enumerated her royal line, including Marko (whom she does not know) as her betrothed; then she threatened to grab his sword.
- lines 28–32: Marko dragged her into his tent and kissed her.
- lines 33–36: Maiden threatened to let him be hanged.
- lines 37–44: Marko ordered her to go home with a message to her family that "a young warrior has kissed me."
- line 45–66: Maiden complained to her brother (flashback) about the humiliation she has suffered and requested to hang the arrogant stranger in public.
- lines 67–69: Maiden's brother informed her that the stranger is her betrothed.

lines 70–73: The maiden bashfully bent her head and looked at the ground.

Analysis

Spatial Aspect

The location of the meeting is well defined: outskirts of the town (a walled city) which is home to the girl (on the geographic location of Budim see above, Analysis of Text no. 4). The youth comes from outside to the stage of events, apparently from afar as he carries a tent with him. This stage has four locations which are approached from outside toward the centre: (1) the well from which the girls want to draw water; this is not “seen” in the text (lines 4, 38, 46, 51); the meadow around the city (line 2a) on which Marko pitches (line 2b) his tent (this is the centre of the “out-of-city area”) (lines 1–2, 43, 49, 62, 68); (3) the city walls and its gate are on the other side of the meadow which lies between the well and the city (lines 36, 66); (4) the girl’s home (the king’s palace; in lines 45–73).

This stage is completely natural, although not exactly realistic, especially with regard to Budim’s location. On it the characters move: the youth moves from outside toward the centre (the city); the group of girls from the centre (the city) toward the outer circle; and the heroine performs a loop: city – meadow – city. The youth does not reach the centre stage in person; he is only talked about, yet he is the centre of attention among all other characters.

Temporal Aspect

The temporal aspect in this text is rather similar to the foregoing text.

Acting Characters

We have one youth and a group of maidens (no number quoted) and the heroine’s family: brother and nephew: the latter is the “King of Budim”; he is unnamed. The brother’s name, Pavle Banovic, is an “everyman’s” name. The group of maidens are polite and greet the unknown Knight; heroine bashfully looks down and is silent (lines 7–9). This behaviour is proper for a young bride, and marks her as such; thus she will react when told that the Knight is her betrothed (lines 70–73). Neither of the couple knows the other; yet the youth asks for her identity. From her answer, he recognizes her as his betrothed (lines 21–23); she, however, will get to know that only when back in the city (lines 68–69). See the identification by the groom in Text no. 2, above. The two texts are, in this point, inversions of each other in gender.

Narration

This text features basically the same conflict and resolution as the previous one. The difference lies in the information: it is supplied without problems

to both sides; to the youth during the conflict (lines 21–23), and to the girl as the solution of the conflict (line 69). The situation, enigmatic at the beginning, has now cleared. As befitting a love song, there is no need to say more. Oral folk literature assumes the listener to be quick-witted enough to understand how things will develop: here happy marriage will follow.

Text no. 6

Bogisic, no. 20. The song starts as a flashback in which the maiden tells her brother, the king, about her meeting with her future husband:

Summary:

lines 1–7: The maiden complained (flashback): On her way to the church she met three boors. The first stopped her; the second lifted the veil from her face; and the third kissed her.

lines 8–9: King asked her to describe the three men.

lines 10–19: Maiden described the warrior-outfit of the first two warriors (in two lines each); about the third the outfit and his face (“like the bright sun”) are described, also in two lines.

lines 20–28: King named the three knights (a youth, his uncle, and an additional knight), and informs her that the third warrior (the nephew who is the youngest) is coming to request her hand in marriage.

lines 29–33: King asked whether she agrees to marry him; the maiden was glad to consent as she has fallen in love with him at the first sight (l. 10–19 see; Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType 12.1.1.2, paragraph C.1).

lines 34–43: Betrothal followed.

line 34: Entrance.

lines 35–37: Greetings.

lines 38–39: Requesting of the maiden’s hand.

lines 40–43: King’s assent; betrothal.

line 44: Spatial connection: the three Knights left (lines 26–44: Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType 12.1.1.1, paragraph D.1). Continuation (epic work of the ECType 1.1.1.4 in Jason n.d., vol II).

lines 45–47: War broke out and the maiden’s bridegroom is called to battle (Epic Narrative Segments ENS [3.4], ENS 3.1(a) in Jason n.d., vol I). On getting the information, she lamented.

- lines 48– 50: Army was assembled (ENS 8).
- line 49: Army marched to field of battle (Field of Kosovo) (ENS 11).
- line 51: Army arrived (ENS 11(c)).
- lines 52–57: The bridegroom (warrior-champion) set himself the task of attacking the enemy king (ENS 4.0.3(a), ENS 4.1).
- lines 58–74: Warrior-champion failed to accomplish task (ENS 4 (c.2)).
- lines 75–80: Warrior-champion was mortally wounded; healing failed and he died (Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType 1.1.1.4, ENS 29.1, ENS 29.2–3).
- lines 81–82: Burial (ENS 33).
- lines 83–90: Uncle informed maiden of bridegroom’s death (a poetic image is used: he has married a maiden from the battlefield) (ENS 31(a.3)).
- lines 91–93: Maiden performed mourning customs (ENS 31(f.1.1)).
- lines 94–100: Maiden lamented (ENS 31(f.1.2)).

Analysis

Spatial Aspect

The whole action takes place in one location, namely the King’s palace, which is thus the spatial centre. To this centre, the girl and the youth (line 35) come from “outside” which we do not “see” and which plays no role. As the girl speaks about her going to church, her “outside” is outside the palace but still inside the city walls, whereas the youth comes from and leaves to an “outside” of the city altogether. The king is completely static. The location of Budim is not touched upon and supposedly known to the audience. The whole ambient is natural.

Temporal Aspect

There are two scenes (1: the king and the maiden; and 2: the king, the maiden and the knights), but there is no time-interval between them without narrated events: “While the young maiden with the noble king conversed”... (line 34) the three knights entered. The historical frame is set by the names of the three; their period is the fifteenth century (see below, paragraph “Acting characters”). They belong to the genre of epic (see below, paragraph “Narration”). No preternatural features are present.

Acting Characters

This text figures a single heroine, while the tale-role of the youth is filled by three personages. Two of them are patterned: the wooing youth and his maternal uncle. According to custom, this uncle is the elder who has to arrange a marriage alliance for the youth (whose father is non-existent in the tradition). The third character is silent and does not really act; his presence and acts serve to complete the formulaic number three and has no independent relevance (lines 6, 14, 24–25). All three are stock names in the South Slavic tradition and are, by the way, historic personages of the fifteenth century Hungarian nobility who fought on the Balkans against Ottoman's forces, together with Serbian knights. They figure in our love song because it became appended to a short epic song about the battle on the Field of Kosovo (lines 45–100).

Narration

In this version of the story, the girl does not challenge the youth. The whole share of arrogance is the men's. It amounts to an attack on the maiden, which forms the narrative conflict. The resolution consists not simply in the identification of the bride (lifting of her veil, (lines 6, 14) and the groom (brother informs the maiden of their identity (lines 22–27). Immediately the marriage proposal follows (lines 28–33, 38–43) which is the second part of the resolution: the knights were not just simply arrogant. Their arrogance is a lover's quarrel, just as in the other versions of the tale (in Text nos. 1–5, above) and precedes the betrothal which is the final resolution.

The epic continuation: the continuation is a short, but complete epic song about the battle on the Field of Kosovo (the central battles in the South Slavic tradition in which the Ottoman forces defeated the Serbian forces in 1389 and 1448; the folk tradition combined the two battles into a single event). The epic part starts already in the scene of lover's quarrel and the betrothal scene (lines 4–44), which can be analysed as Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType 12.1.1.2 (lines 4–28) and Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType 12.1.1.1 (lines 26–44), and thus belongs simultaneously to two genres: narrative love song and historical epic.

The epic song itself (lines 45–100) is a typical song about a battle of the Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType 1.1.1.4, "Defeat: 'Enemy' defeats 'us'" (see the ENS-units above, in the summary of the poem, "Continuation"). Form and content of the information to the family about the battle's outcome (lines 83–100) is one of the standard forms in this epic tradition.

Text no. 7

Bogisic, no. 32 (reprinted in Kekez, no. 22)

Summary:

lines 1–5: Beautiful princess went to church.

lines 6–11: Three young noblemen-knights met her: the first stopped her, the second lifted the veil from her face, the third kissed her.

lines 12–20: Maiden returned home and complained (narration in flashback) to her brother, the King, about the humiliation she has suffered from the three boors.

lines 21–23: King asked to her to describe the three boors.

lines 24–37: The maiden described their outfit (first: 2 lines long; second: 1 line long; third 8 lines long).

lines 38–49: King recognized and named the three noblemen.

lines 50–53: King informed her that the three are on their way to war and promised to give her in marriage to the third knight when they return from battle.

Epic continuation

lines 54–55: Maiden is happy (l. 6–55: Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType 12.1.1.2, paragraph C.1).

lines 56–58: Soon a black raven flew out of the church towards maiden (ENS 31(a.4)).

lines 59–64: Princess asked the raven for news from the battlefield (ENS 31(c.1)).

lines 65–71: Raven informed that all three knights were killed in battle (ENS 31(d)).

lines 72–77: Princess cursed the bird (ENS 31(g.2)).

lines 78–79: She engaged in mourning customs (ENS 31(f.1.1)).

Analysis

The text is a very close variant in all its aspects of the previous text (Text no. 6). The only difference is in the last scene of the epic continuation (lines 56–79), where another standard form of information is used. The speaking raven is the only preternatural trait in our small corpus. However, the bird is more of a symbol of death than a real bird.

Discussion

Socio-Cultural Context

The social context of our texts is a traditional peasant society with conspicuous patriarchal and patrilocal patterns.

Supplying of Water

In the absence of a mechanical water supply (by piping), the daughters and young daughters-in-law of the extended family household had to walk to the village spring or well to fetch water. The visit to the well was the opportunity for girls to meet and gossip, and for youths to see them; they could approach the girls with one request only, namely to ask for a drink of water. Only this request and conversation on this topic was appropriate.

Greetings

In Text nos. 4 – 5, the girls accompanying the heroine behave politely, that is, according to custom. Among South Slavs in villages and small towns which are more traditional, it is customary to greet anybody whom one meets; the greeting is a kind of blessing. The inferior should greet first and women are always juniors to men even if they are of the same age or older than the man. The bowing of the girls in Text no. 4 signifies in ritual form that they are in any case junior to the man. By flaunting the custom, the heroine marks herself as such on the level of literary patterns. On the other hand, the people who are strangers to each other and meet by chance en route are not supposed to exchange more words after the greeting-blessing. Thus, it is extremely rude and moreover demanding punishment when a youth addresses a girl, and even touches her (lifts her veil, kisses her, drags her to his tent), see Texts nos. 4–7, especially Text no. 5, lines 33–36 and 45–66.

Marriage Customs

The song makes sense in a culture in which marriages are customarily arranged by the parents of the young couple, who are not allowed to see each other before the actual marriage. In all the texts, it is clear that the bride/wife does not know what her betrothed/husband looks like; it is not clear whether the groom/husband also does not know what his bride looks like. Such conditions prevailed in many pre-modern societies, among others on the Balkans (especially among Muslims) and in India (both Hindu and Muslim).

Child Marriage

An additional context in Text no. 3 forms the custom of child marriages. In the case described, the marriage ceremony was performed while both

partners were children. The girl-wife moved as a child to her in-laws' home, while the boy-husband left his home and grew up abroad which explains the fact that the now grown-up girl-wife does not recognize him. The marriage has not yet been consummated; now the girl starts her role as wife (paragraphs 13–14). Compare this role-behaviour with the girl's behaviour in Text no. 5, line 9 and lines 70–73: the girl looks shyly at the ground as befits a young bride and daughter-in-law.

Literary-Historical Aspect

Monogenesis vs. polygenesis

The question of monogenesis vs. polygenesis is the continual question in folkloristics and ethnology: was a story, proverb, custom, social pattern, or belief invented once and diffused through history from the location of its invention to other places and culture-societies (Kroeber and Parsons 1958)? Or has it been invented many times in different places and culture-societies because of similar natural, social, psychological and cultural conditions? In the case of our story, attention should be paid to the fact that the two versions of the story (see below paragraph) are not characteristic of a single culture-society. While the Indian group of texts consists wholly of version A, the South Slavic group contains both versions of the story. Thus, regrettably, in our case, the question cannot be even tackled — too few texts and too large distances in space and time.

Literary-Semiotic Properties

Narrative Patterns

Our story can be analysed into a “move” consisting of three narrative actions: A: putting to test; B: passing or failing test; and C: rewarding or punishing, respectively. Two narrative roles perform the actions: a hero and a donor. Thus, three “motuses” (A, B and C) comprise a move:

A: Donor puts to test Hero

B: Hero passes/fails test of Donor

C: Donor rewards/punishes Hero

To the units of move, motus, narrative action, and role should be added “connectives” in space, time and information (for detailed exposition see Jason 1977).

Our story can be analysed thus:

- (1) Space connective: Girl and Youth walk towards a meeting point (the spring/well, or the path to it).

- A.1: Youth (donor) challenges (is rude to) Girl (hero)
 A.2: Girl (donor) challenges (is arrogant to) Youth (hero)
 B.1: Girl (hero) answers (is rude to) Youth (donor)
 B.2: Youth (hero) answers by challenging/(being rude to) Girl (donor)
- (1) Space connective: (a) Girl and Youth walk off each to her/his starting point;
 (b) both walk to Girl's starting point, each one separately.
- (1) Information connective: Girl is informed that Youth is her wooer/betrothed/husband
- C.1: Youth (donor) woos Girl (hero)
 C.2: Girl (donor) consents to pass into the status of wifehood (= to marry) — Youth (hero).

The Versions of the Story

The story is found in two versions. The first version is an independent work (in five Text nos. 1–5) and the second is an introduction to a short epic poem to which it is loosely attached (two Text nos. 6–7). The following actions and relations are distributed in various ways among our seven texts:

Table 1

Action, Role and Relation	First version					Second version	
	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Text 5	Text 6	Text 7
1 Moving toward meeting point (space connective) (1.1) moving toward (1.1.1) Youth (1.1.2) Girl	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2 The exchanged insults (Motuses A and B) (2.1.1) Youth starts Exchange (2.1.2) Girl answers	X	X	X			X	X

(2.2.1) Girl starts Exchange				X	X		
(2.2.2) Youth answers				X	X		
(2.2.3) Girls adds Insults							
3 Information Connective							
(3.1) Youth discloses his identity		+		—			
(3.2) Third person (parent) discloses Youth's identity	+		+			+	+
(3.3) Girl discloses her identity		—		—	+		
4 The couple reconciles (Motus C)							
(4.1) Girl finds her way to wifehood	X	X	X	?	X	X	
(4.2) Youth woos Girl	X	X	X	?	X	X	X
5 Marriage							
(5.1) Happy marriage	X	X	X	?	X		
Epic continuation							
(5.2) Marriage prevented (widowhood)						X	X
6 Roles and characters							
(6.1.1) Girl is single	X	X	X			X	X
(6.1.2) Girl is multiplied				X	X		
(6.2.1) Youth is single	X	X	X	X	X		
(6.2.2) Youth is multiplied						X	X
7 Relation between Girl and Youth							
(7.1) wooing				X		X	X
(7.2) betrothal	X	X			X		
(7.3) marriage			X				

Analysis showed a clear difference between the two versions. The exchange of insults is shortened in the second version, but is more intensive. The Girl does not start the exchange and only the Youth's insult is narrated

in both versions (Text nos.1–3 and 6–7). In the first version, the story ends in a happy marriage. In the second version, the exchange-of-insults story ends in a happy betrothal instead of a happy marriage. The epic continuation in the second version contains an inversion, a negation of the happy end: the marriage is stopped as the bridegroom is killed in battle.

The two versions differ in the way the roles are filled. Although in the first version the Youth is always single and the Girl can be single (in the Indian Text nos. 1–3) or can multiply (in the South Slavic versions Text nos. 4 –5), in both texts of the second version the Girl is single and the Youth is tripled. The actions of the three complement each other, which clearly show that they are one literary personage split into three.

The relationship between the Girl and the Youth: In the second version, they start out as bachelors and end as a betrothed couple. In the first version, in Text nos. 1–3 and no.5 they enter the stage as a couple, but unrecognized, which parallels the bachelor state in the second version; they end up as a recognized couple.

The epic continuation in the second version is a complete epic work. The work is analysed with the help of Epic Content Types (Jason n.d., vol. II, ECType) which were designed similar to A.Aarne's folktale types (Aarne 1910, 2nd reworking by S. Thompson, 1961). The ECTypes used here are ECType 1.1.1.4, Defeat: "Enemy" defeats "Us", ECType 12.1.1.1 "Wooper's Tasks" and ECType 12.1.1.2, "The Maiden's Choice." Specific actions of the narration "battle" are designed with Epic Narrative Segments (ENS): ENS 3, Challenge for Action; ENS 4, Accomplishment of Task; ENS 8, Summoning of Army; ENS 11, March to battlefield; ENS 29, Warrior after Combat; ENS 31, Notification of family; ENS 33, Burial of killed warrior (after Jason, n.d., vols I and II).

Ethnopoetic Genre of our Narrative

Every work of oral folk literature is "set" in a "mode". Mode is a very wide category that includes many ethnopoetic genres. There are three modes: mode of the Realistic, the Preternatural, and the Symbolic. Our narrative is set in the mode of the Realistic: it is wholly realistic, with no preternatural traits. The space is a "here", a world as the performer and his audience know from everyday experience (compared with the space of the fairy tale with its castles, palaces, silk meadows and glass mountains). Time is regular, human; no character stays young forever as the fairy tale princess does. Yet, space and time are undefined: it is not "in my grandfather's time" and in "the village, there, over the hill," like space and time in a legend. The stage of events is not in a never-never land, and no "flying carpet" has to be used to move around.

This set-up is typical for the genre of novella. Love stories are a subgenre of the novella. In a love story, the aim is to establish a family. This may not succeed, as in stories of the Romeo-and-Juliet type, yet it remains the goal of the characters. Our narrative tells about a quarrel between a girl and a youth, which serves to draw them to each other and make them a couple, that is, establish a family.

The work is clearly narrative (see above, the move/motus model), yet it is in verse, a short song (or a poem, as the musical side is missing in our records). Thus, we could label it: “narrative love poem/song.”

Abbreviations

ECType — ‘Epic Content Type’, see Jason, n.d., vol. II, Part F.

ENS — ‘Epic Narrative Segment’, see Jason, n.d., vol. I, Part C.

Notes

¹The two Biblical texts in which a wooer (or his representative) meets the girl at the well, could form a third version of our story. Yet, these texts do not come directly from oral tradition and their having once (in the 12th(?)–8th(?) century B.C.E.) been part of oral tradition is a matter of debate. Therefore, they are not included in our present discussion (see Genesis 24 and 29).

²For the songs in Texts 2–3 see website info-<http://desi.zdag.com/movieDisplay.jsp>: movie ID =6808; I thank for this reference Prof. H.S.Bhatti.

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