

ested in Mosely himself (a long bibliography of his work is included) but to students of Balkan societies, politics and history in general. In addition to historical and anthropological essays on the Zadruga, the inclusion of autobiographical articles by scholars, former members of Zadrugas, adds to the readability of the book. But some other more specialized essays will appeal only to specialists. Mosely's article on the Russian family, the impact of the October revolution on this institution and the policies of the Soviet government toward it, is a classic.

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*The Wedding of Smailagić Meho (Ženidba Smailagina Sina)* as told by Avdo Medjedović, in II vols. Introduction, notes and commentary by Albert B. Lord, translator; conversations with Avdo Medjedović translated by David E. Bynum (Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs III and IV). Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1974, Vol. III: xii, 326 including appendices and glossary; vol. IV: xxii, 408 including textual notes.

To do justice to a review of this two volume publication one must consider the song, the singer and the tradition. All are intimately linked, for the verbal artistry of Avdo Medjedović, an illiterate bard from near Bijelo Polje (Montenegro), represents more than an exposition of oral composition. The singer is part of the tradition and of the culture which perpetuates it. His song has been designated as Volume III (English translations) and Volume IV (Serbo-Croatian texts) in the series Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs, based on field collecting and research in areas of Yugoslavia by the American classicist Milman Parry in the mid-1930s, and as Numbers 1 and 2 in the newer Text and Translations Series of the Publications of the Milman Parry Collection, under the general editorship of Albert B. Lord, with David E. Bynum as managing editor.

First, the song: the theme is a common one in Balkan epic tradition, but the appearance of this publication of *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho* is of landmark significance to classicists, linguists, folklorists, social scientists and students of Balkan Studies. Under the careful guidance of Lord, who was originally Parry's assistant, the extraordinary narrative has been brought to light some four decades later in a meticulous preparation of the text as recited in epic decasyllable stichs in a dialect of Serbo-Croatian and in a companion prose version in English, faithful to the structure and *zvuk* (tone, ring) of the singer's composition.

Parry's endeavor had been a pioneering one. Influenced by the field work orientation of Renan and encouraged by Murko and others, he traveled to the source of South Slav epic tradition. By means of studying *in situ* a still viable oral tradition, his goal was to understand and explicate *process* in oral creativity and transmission. He sought to determine if a 'Homer', or series of Homers, could have composed orally the epic masterpieces *Odyssey* and *Iliad* (see *The Making of Homeric Verse. The Collected Writings of Milman Parry*, A. Parry, ed., 1971). *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho* now is available as proof by analogy: not only is it approximately the same length as the *Odyssey* (well over 12,000 lines), but the structural development of the narrative, the metaphoric and emotive speech, the social institutions and value systems and, importantly, the true epic 'pulse', are all reminiscent of Homer. An outstanding feature of Avdo's virtuosity in oral composition is his catalogues of the summonses and arrivals of the wedding guests. As Lord points out in a perceptive introductory commentary (III:13-34), this *tour de force* in verbal art is no mere padding or ornamentation. It is an

integral part of the narrative, and the long passages of variants on repetitious lines (set in smaller type but in no way condensed) permit the reader (ideally the hearer) to participate in the excitement of traditional ritual as the colorful and clanging spectacle unfolds, an elaborate panoply of noblemen, warriors, banners, steeds and armament. In addition to vivid imagery and skill with words, the singer carries a knowledge of the complex structure of a past society in his head. Part fantasy and part collective consciousness, it is this ability that makes it possible for him as an oral composer to develop his catalogues with order and logic. In many ways this skill parallels the genealogies which, even today, many Montenegrin elders are able to recollect orally through twelve or more descending generations in their respective patriline. In formal linguistic theory such internalized rules and orderings are termed competence, and the end realization, the utterance, is called performance (Chomsky 1957, 1965). Sociolinguistic approaches have adapted these terms by placing communicative competence and actual performance in socio-cultural context (e.g. Gumperz and Hymes 1972). These notions were barely evolving when Lord empirically understood them and incorporated them into his now classic *Singer of Tales* (1960). Avdo's recitation invites both linguistic analysis of its formal structure and language usage, and sociolinguistic treatment of the narrative as a culture-bearing datum. The song itself, with its wealth of verbal art and acoustical patterning, should be listened to, as Avdo's audiences did. Reading it reveals a thrilling story, told with skill. Hearing it is an aural delight.

What about Avdo the man? He was not an especially talented *guslar*. Of his musical ability he himself says, "I still don't know how to play the *gusle* as I should; my song gets ahead of the playing" (III:51). Here we have a glimpse of the singer's candor and humility, and of his fertile mind (his competence) processing creativity of lines of poetry under pressure of performance. Much more is revealed in Bynum's sensitive translations of conversations between the singer and a native interviewer (III:37-51; IV: 1-21). In view of the master theme of the particular epic under review, especially poignant are Avdo's comments about his own son (III: 39-40). These contrast with traditional ideals and values regarding respect patterns between older and younger men, woven so skillfully into Avdo's song. As Lord comments in his Introduction, "Avdo was singing of a past age, the ideals of which were his own, tried and not found wanting in the acid of his own experience" (III: 5).

Viewed as an ethnography of the life of Moslemized South Slav nobles at the height of Ottoman expansion in the Balkans, *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho* is the tale of a young man's initiation rite. The fledgling hero must prove himself in battle in order to become a man in the eyes of society (and in order to perpetuate the values which Avdo and his listeners, several hundred years after the temporal setting of the narrative, still cherish). Preserved through the singer's art is the institution of *bratstvo*, agnatically linked kinsmen, in the fine portraits of Meho's father and father's elder brother, who jointly look upon young Meho as sole son and heir to carry on their noble lineage. This social fact is the foundation upon which the narrative is based. Other explicit social relationships deal with order within the household and the larger community, with the duties and obligations of rank and with the role of women. The latter is elaborately defined in terms of the mother/son dyad as well as for societal norms of behavior for hostesses, daughters of hostesses, Meho's bride and his mother-in-law. Avdo sings of a romanticized life long since past and certainly never part of his own lineage's history, but he expresses the same values in a contemporary context when he explains to the interviewer that "A woman wants to honor a man" (III: 47).

Perhaps the most intriguing among the many personae elaborated by Avdo is Tale (from the Turkish *Taler*) of Orašac, on the surface a figure of ridicule and despair, but in fact a man whose bizarre appearance and behavior is socially sanctioned and serves to mask a special

wisdom crucial to the resolution of the narrative. (Analogies to the figure of the Trickster in North American Indian mythology are tempting here).

With this publication, then, we are presented with a superb epic, a living analog to Homer as the archetype of the 'Singer of Tales' and a social history of a given time and place. In addition to these invaluable contributions there are bonuses: one appendix gives variants of *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho* as rendered by other singers, providing an insightful contrast to the richness of Avdo's performance; another appendix provides a second variant by Avdo (III: 298-323), recorded in 1950 when the singer was about 80 years old, some fifteen years after the expansive performance that represents the body of the publication. The later version, running to some 8,500 lines, is itself a study in oral process and re-creation. Also provided is a glossary (III: 325-26). Finally, detailed textual notes are included (in IV), explaining some of the many problems encountered in dealing with language ambiguities, sub-dialects, Turkicisms and diachronic linguistics as well as everyday slips of the tongue. It is perhaps understandable, in an undertaking of this magnitude, that several typographical errors have occurred. The omission of an especially beautiful figurative passage in the Serbo-Croatian text (IV: lines 2101-2150) is unfortunate, as is a smaller omission of parallel texts in the conversations with the singer (III: 38; IV: 1). Hopefully a second edition will rectify these details, which do not detract from the beauty and power of the song, the presentation of the skill of the singer and the publication's outstanding contribution to diverse fields of scholarship.

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