CHAPTER 2 – THE EPIC

Of all the epic traditions which we shall mention in this work, all, with one partial though important exception, were originally oral and traditional, though some may have later been given literary treatment. We refer to the Celtic – both Irish and Welsh-Breton – Byzantine, Gothic, the Viking Sagas, Slavic (including the epic tradition of Kievan Rus'), Iranian, Indo-Aryan, French, Provencal, and the Spanish or Castilian epic traditions. The Gothic epic tradition most certainly existed, though it has survived only in fragments. Also, certain Indo-European peoples, such as the Thracians, Illyrians, and Phyrigians, in all probability had their own epic traditions, though, so far as we are able to determine, nothing of them has survived. It may be taken for granted that the Gauls had an epic tradition, though nothing of it has survived, except perhaps for fragments in the French and Provencal epics. That the Spanish Celts had an epic tradition may be taken as certain, thanks to references in the Irish epic. It is also evident that the Welsh-Breton epic tradition contains elements from pre-Roman British epics, which is another proof that the Gauls had an epic tradition, as in pre-Roman times Celtic Britons and Gauls were virtually the same people. As we shall see the Welsh-Breton epic contains Iranian elements, some of which – such as those shared with the Irish epic – no doubt are examples of a common Celtic-

Iranian culture, while others are of Alanic origin; we shall deal with this in detail.

What is known as the Persian epic is, in fact, a compendium of the epic traditions of various Iranian peoples besides the Persians in the strict sense. It has been noted that modern literary Persian proceeds not from Fars – hence some Iranians object to calling this language "Farsi" – but rather from northeastern Iran, and in fact contains Sogdian elements. As we shall see, it has been noted that the Persian epic contains material from the Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans, and Sogdians, as well as the Parthians, and also no doubt from the Kurds.

Some have categorically denied that the Shah Namah of Firdausi contains material from traditional, oral sources, saying that the Shah Namah proceeds only and exclusively from written, literary works. Frankly, this appears to me to be the result of a preconceived theory or an *a priori* judgement rather than a conclusion reached as a result of an objective examination of the evidence. It seems quite obvious to me that, in the sense to which we are referring, the Shah Namah is a mixed bag, in part derived from written sources, in part from oral, traditional roots; see Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings by Olga M. Davidson.

Taking into account what we have said above, the words of Albert Bates Lord are, *grosso modo*, of great interest to us, though Mr. Lord deals fundamentally with the Serbo-Croatian oral epic tradition. We shall not speculate concerning Illyrian, Celtic and Iranian substrata in the Serbo-Croatian tradition, though, in

this regard, it is interesting to note that the Celtic and Iranian substrata are perfectly visible in the epic tradition of Kievan Rus'.

In the previous chapter we noted the special relationships which exist between the Iranians on the one hand and the Celts and Slavs on the other. We have noted in another place that the names *Serb* and *Croat* both have Iranian etymologies. Thus, the Serbo-Croatian epic tradition has form connections not only with the Persian epic: the names *Serb* and *Croat* both have Iranian etymologies; says Marija Gimbutas:

> "Ptolemy may have known another branch of the Slavs, whose names seems undoubtedly related to that of the present-day Serbs. Describing Sarmatia (Geography V, 8), Ptolemy enumerates thirteen tribes, among them the *Serbooi*, as follows: "...between the Keraunian mountains (identified with the north-eastern foothills of the Caucasus) and the river Ra (Volga), live Orineoi, Valoi, serboi ..." Moszynski sees the name derived from the Indo-European root **ser-*, **serv-*, 'guard, protect', making it cognate with the Latin *servus;* the "v" being interchangeable with "b" in pronunciation. The original meaning of *Serboi* was probably 'shepherds', guardians of animals'.
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> In their contact with the Slavic peoples the Sarmatians probably used a related name to refer to the Slavs. Iranian linguistic changes indicate that the Slavic **serv-* would become **xarv-* in Sarmatian. With the addition of the suffix *-at*, it appears to be very similar to *Hrvat*, the name of the present day Croatians. This name appears north-east of the Black Sea and the Lower Don basin and it is also cited as '*Xoroathos*' and '*Xorouathos*' in two Greek-alphabet inscriptions at Tanais from the second and third centuries AD. Theey were deciphered by Pogodin in 1901."(1)

Of course, the Serbo-Croatioan eoic is also closely kin to the epic tradition of Kievan Rus' (by way of Sarmatians, Alans,

and Goths), the Arthurian Cycle of the Celtic epic (by way of the Alans, as we shall see), to the largely lost Gothic epic, and therefore by way of the Goths and perhaps also with the Alans, with the Castilian or Spanish epic, (see: "*los cantares epicos yugoslavos y los occidentales. El* Mio Cid *y los refundidores primtivos*", Ramon Menendez Pidal "*Boletin de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, 31 (1965-1966), pp. 195-225. Most unfortunately, this essay is not accessible to me at the present time.) and even with the Viking Sagas (also by way of the Goths), though to a much lesser extent than those other traditions mentioned previously. All this in addition to the general Indo-European heritage, and also to the many special affinities that exist between Celts and Iranians, above and beyond the common Indo-European background, symbolized by the obvious Celtic as well as Iranian elements in the epic tradition of Kievan Rus' as well as the very close resemblance between the Parthian romance Vis and Ramin on the one hand and the romantic tragedy of Deirdre of the Sorrows of the Irish epic tradition. A bit of explanation here. The resemblance between the romance Tristan and Isolt of the Arthurian Cycle and the Parthian romance Vis and Ramin is also far too close to be a coincidence, but in this case the Alans may be considered to have been the connecting link. Of course, since the resemblance between Tristan and Isolt and Deirdre of the Sorrows is also far too close to be a coincidence, in this case a common Celtic heritage may be invoked; of course, these two theories are by no means mutually exclusive.

We now let Mr. Lord speak for himself:

"Were we to seek to understand why a literary poet wrote what he did in a particular poem in a particular manner and form, we should not focus our attention on the moment when he or someone else read or recited his poem to a particular audience or even on any moment when we ourselves read the poem in quiet solitude. We shoud instead attempt to reconstruct that moment in time when the poet wrote the lines. Obviously, the moment of composition is the important one for such study. For the oral poet this gap does not exist, because composition and performance are two aspects of the same moment. Hence, the question "when would such and such an oral poem be performed?" has no meaning; the question should be "when *was* the oral poem performed?" An oral poem is not composed *for* but *in* performance. The implications of this statement are both broad and deep. For that reason we must turn first in our analysis of oral epic to the performance.

We must grasp fully who, or more correctly what, our performer is. We must eliminate from the word "performer" any notion that he is one who merely reproduces what someone else or even he himself has composed. Our oral poet is composer. Our singer of tales is a composer of tales. Singer, performer, composer, and poet are one under different aspects *but at the same time*. Singing, performing, composing are facets of the same act.

It is sometimes difficult for us to realize that the man who is sitting before us singing an epic song is not a mere carrier of the tradition but a creative artist making the tradition. The reasons for this difficulty are various. They arise in part simply from the fact that we are not in the habit of thinking of a performer as a composer. Even in the realm of oral literature most of us in the West, at least, are more accustomed to the ballad than to the epic; and our experience has been formed in large part by "folk" ballad singers who are mere performers. The present vogue of revival of folk singing on the concert stage and elsewhere has distorted our concept of the essence of oral composition. The majority of such "folk" singers are not oral poets. The collector even in a country such as (the former) Yugoslavia, where published collections have been given much attention for over a century, some of which have become almost sacrosanct, must be wary; for he will find singers who have memorized songs from these collections. In spite of authentic manner of presentation, in spite of the

fact that the songs themselves are often oral poems, we

cannot consider such singers as oral poets. They are *mere* performers. Such experiences have deceived us and have robbed the real oral poet of credit as a creative composer; indeed to some extent they have taken from epic performance an element of vital interest. Our task in this chapter is to restore to performance and performer their true significance.

When we realize that the performance is a moment of creation for the singer, we cannot but be amazed at the circumstances under which he creates. Since these circumstances influence oral form we must consider them. Epic poetry in (the former) Yugoslavia is sung on a variety of occasions. It forms, at the present time, or until very recently, the chief entertainment of the adult male population in the villages and small towns. In the country villages, where the houses are often widely separated, a gathering may be held at one of the houses during a period of leisure from the work in the fields. Men from all the families assemble and one of their number may sing epic songs. Because of the distances between the houses some of the guests arrive earlier than others, and of course this means that some of the guests leave earlier. Some very likely spend the whole night, as we learn from a conversation with Alija Fjuljanin. The singer has to contend with an audience that is coming and going, greeting newcomers, saying farewells to early leavers; a newcomer with special news or gossip may interrupt the singing for some time, perhaps even stopping in entirely.

What is true of the home gathering in the country village holds as well for the more compact villages and for towns, where the men gather in the coffee house (*kafana*) or in the tavern rather than in a private home. The taverns are entirely male establishments, whether the district is predominantly Muslim or not. Neither Muslim nor Christian women are ever allowed in these places. This is a man's world. Here the men gather at the end of the day. The farmers of the nearby villages may drop in for a short while to sit and talk, sip coffee or *raki* (the Serbo-Croatian version of the Greek *ouzo*, the Spanish *anis*, the French *anisette*, or the Italian *sambuca;* frankly, I much prefer the Balkan Slav or South Slav *slivovitz*, i.e., plum brandy, of which I am very fond indeed), and listen to songs. They come and go. The townspeople join them. They are shopkeepers and caravan drivers who have come in with merchandise from other districts or are stopping on their way through. Frequently the tavern is also an inn, a "*han*", and here the drivers will spend the night. Many of these men are also singers and the

carriers of tradition from one district to another. They are a critical audience.

In market centers such as Bijelo Polje, Stolac, Novi Pazar, and Bihac, market day, the one day in the week when the town is crowded with people from the countryside who have come to buy and sell, will be the busiest day in the han or in the kafana. Some of the business is done there during the day, and some of the money which has changed hands will be spent in the kafana at night before the men return to their own villages. They may even stay the night there and return the next morning, if they feel so inclined, or if the day has been particularly profitable. This is a good opportunity for the singer because, although his audience may not be stable, it does have money and is willing to reward him for his pains. He is not really a professional, but his audience does buy him drinks, and if he is good they will give him a little money for the entertainment he has given them.

When the singing takes place, as it occasionally does, at a wedding festival, the amount of confusion is increased by the singing of lyric songs and dancing carried on by the young people. The evenings offer the best opportunity for the singer of the old songs, when the older men are not watching the games or gossiping with their neighbors and are content to relax and sit back and listen to the bard.

Among the Muslims in (the former) Yugoslavia there is a special festival which has contributed to the fostering of songs of some length. This is the festival of Ramazan, when for a month the men fast from sunrise to sunset and gather in coffee houses all night long to talk and listen to epic. Here is a perfect circumstance for the singing of one song during the entire night. Here also is an encouragement to the semiprofessional singer to attain a repertory of at least thirty songs. It was Parry's experience that such Muslim singers, when asked how many songs they knew, frequently replied that they knew thirty, one for every night of Ramazan. Most Muslim kafanas engage a singer several months in advance to entertain the guests, and if there is more than one such kafana in the town there may be rivalry in obtaining the services of a well-known and popular singer who is likely to bring considerable business to the establishment.

In Novi Pazar Demo Zogic kept a kafana, and Salih Ugljanin and Sulejman Makic had at one time or another been engaged in it as singers. Demo paid for the singer to leave with his family for food, because the singer stayed in town and ate at Demo's house. After te bard had sung a song in the kafana, Demo circulated among

the guests and took up a collections for him. According to Demo some gave one dinar and some five, but Sulejman told us that they usually gave two dinars and that he

made as much as sixty dinars a night. Murat Zunic was much sought after in the district of Cazin and Bihac in the north, both places competing for his talent. He had sung in Banja Luka for six years during Ramazan. Demo Zogic was himself a singer and would sometimes sing for his own company, but he told us he was generally so busy serving coffee and greeting guests and talking that he had to hire someone to do the singing. Once when the singer had been indisposed during his engagement, Demo had taken over, and the guests had given him great praise for his singing, so he tells us.

In an account of the occasions for singing and of the audience which fosters it, mention at least should be made of the courtly entertainment of the earlier days in (the former) Yugoslavia. What we have been describing up to this point was in existence in (the former) Yugoslavia in the 1930's and to an extent still continues. In medieval times, before the Turkish conquests, the Christian courts had undoubtedly fostered the minstrel's art as had the courts of other countries in Europe at that time. When these courts re-emerged, however, after the expulsion of the Turks, they were no longer interested in the bards but sought entertainment from abroad or from other sources. Hence in the Christian courts oral narrative poetry played no role for many generations. The local Muslim nobility on the other hand with its rich estates had fostered the art, and since this local nobility was still alive in some districts, such as Novi Pazar, Bijelo Polje, and Bihac in the 1930's, it was still possible to obtain firsthand information about the practice. It actually differed little from our account above except that everything was on a grander scale; the settings were more luxurious and the gifts to singers richer.

The records of the Parry Collection abound in stories, some fairly full, of how the Muslim bards used to sing at the "courts" of the Turkish nobility. Here the professional or semiprofessional singer was afforded the best opportunity for practicing his art. There seems to be little evidence, however, that the beys and aghas actually maintained a court minstrel. They not infrequently called in singers for special occasions when they entertained guests, but they did not keep a singer in their courts. In the old days the ruling class of Muslims celebrated the feast of Ramazan in its courts rather than in the kafana. When the Turkish rule was overthrown, the celebration took place more commonly in the kafana than in private Muslim

homes.

Whether the performance takes place at home, in the coffee house, in the courtyard, or in the halls of a noble, the essential element of the occasion of singing

that influences the form of the poetry is the variability and instability of the audience.

The instability of the audience requires a marked degree of concentration on the part of the singer in order that he may sing at all; it also tests to the utmost his dramatic ability and his narrative skill in keeping the audience as attentive as possible. But it is the length of a song which is most affected by the audience's restlessness. The singer begins to tell his tale. If he is fortunate, he may find it possible to sing until he is tired without interruption from the audience. After a rest he will continue, if his audience still wishes. This may last until he finishes the song, and if his listeners are propitious and his mood heightened by their interest, he may lengthen his tale, savoring each descriptive passage. It is more likely that, instead of having this ideal occasion the singer will realize shortly after beginning that his audience is not receptive, and hence he will shorten his song so that it may be finished within the limit of time for which he feels the audience may be counted on. Or, if he misjudges, he may simply never finish the song. Leaving out of consideration for the moment the question of the talent of the singer, one can say that the length of the song depends upon the audience. One of the reasons also why different singings of the same song by the same man vary most in their endings is that the end of a song is sung less often by the singer.

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If we are fully aware that the singer is composing as he sings, the most striking element in the performance itself is the speed with which he proceeds. It is not unusual for a Yugoslav (i.e., Serbo-Croatian) bard to sing at the rate of from ten to twenty ten-syllable lines a minute. Since, as we shall see, he has not memorized his song, we must conclude either that he is a phenomenal virtuoso or that he has a special technique of composition outside our own field of experience. We must rule out the first of these alternatives because there are too many singers; so many geniuses simply cannot appear in a single generation or continue to appear inexorably from one age to another. The answer of course lies in the second alternative, namely, a special technique of composition.

The major part of this book is concerned with the special technique of composition which makes rapid composing in performance possible. For an understanding of this technique it is necessary to introduce the Yugoslav (i.e., Serbo-Croatian) and to examine the way in which he learns his art of singing. Let the singers

speak for themselves from the phonograph records of the Parry collection.

"My name is Sulejman Fortic, and I am Salih agha Forta'a grandson. ... Today I am a waiter in the coffee house".

"My name is Demail Zogic. ... I am thirty-eight years old. ... I keep a coffee house."

"Nikola (the interrogator): What is your name? Sulejman (the singer): Sulejman Makic. ... N: How old are you? S: Fifty years old. ... N: What do you do at home? S: I plow and I reap. N: Do you have any sheep? S: I cut wood. No, by Allah, I have cattle." My name is Alija Fjuljanin. ... I am a farmer. ... I am twenty-nine years old. ... We occupy ourselves with stock and with the land".

"Nikola: What is your name, old man? Salih: Salih Ugljanin. N: How old are you? S: Eighty-five. ... N: Tell me what your life has been like, Salih. S: My life has been good. I lived like a bey. I had cattle, and I traded. ... I drove my cattle and sheep to Salonika, and up until the wars I had plenty. ... Afterwards I came to Novi Pazar. ... I kept a coffee house. ... N: But how do you live now? S: We live well enough, God sends me my daily bread. Someone asks for me to help him with something, and he gives me something. Another calls me, and I help him, and he gives me something. N: How can you help anyone at your age? S: I help him with my brains. ... I fix up a deal for someone, which is to his advantage, and he sees. I buy oxen or sheep for him, if they are worthwhile. If anyone breaks his leg, I set it so you cannot tell where it was broken. N: What, you are a doctor? S: Doctor, practitioner, whatever you like. ... N: When stopped trading, what did you do after that? S: For a while after that I worked the land, reaped and plowed, and worked as a farmer. ... I would sell the hay which I cut and take the money and buy cattle, and then buy grain, plow in a little, get some grain, feed my family, and all was well."

The example of Ahmet Musovic in Bijelo Polje shows that even well-to-do Turkish beys used to sing. In 1934 he was sixty-four years old and until 1912 he had his own land and tenant farmers and had been a merchant; he kept a store. He had two servants, one a Christian, the other a Muslim. Every Ramazan Ahmet and his family kept

singers at their house. In fact, even a Christian tenant farmer used to come during Ramazan and sing both Christian and Muslim songs. These singers were paid, but when Ahmet himself used to sing it was not for pay. Only after the wars in 1912 when he lost everything had he himself gone from town to town and sung for pay.

We can thus see that no particular occupation contributed more singers than any other, and

professionalism was limited to beggars. There was a kind of semi-professionalism among the Muslims during Ramazan, but only beggars lived completely by singing. In our field experience beggars, blind or otherwise, were not very good singers. In (the former) Yugoslavia in 1935-1935 blind singers were not important carriers of the tradition. Our experience would not tend to verify the romantic picture of the blind bard. Nikola Janjushevic in Gacko and Stjepan Majstorovic in Bihac were both blind, but although tghey were picturesque characters, they were not skilled singers, either in respect to the outward aspects of their performance or in the fullness of development of their texts.

Majstorovic's story is worth relating. He had been blind since he was a year and a half old (in 1935 he was fifty-five). He had to care for his father and mother since he was fourteen. When he was twenty he had learned to sing to the *gusle* (the one-stringed bowed instrument used to accompany the singing) which he kept always with him in a bag, to prevent pranksters from putting soap on the string and thus spoiling it so that he would have to get a new string for it. He lived as a beggar and had not done badly for a number of years. When hard times came with the wars (the two Balkan Awrs and World War I), the merchants in town had helped him and given him credit. In spite of his blindness he had married and had a married son. After the wars his situation improved, and up to around 1928 or so all had gone well again, but for six or seven years prior to 1935 his luck had changed for the worse. He admitted that he could no longer sing very well because he was getting old and was not strong. He therefore liked short songs, because they did not tax his energies and he could sing them all the way through. Now, however, nobody listened to him, and in only one village (Bosanka Krupa) was he able to pick up any money. He sang his songs according to the company he was in, since he had to please his audience or else expect no reward. Thus when he was with Turks he sang Muslim songs, or his own songs in such a way that the Muslims won the battles. When he was with Serbs, whose company was more congenial to him, he sang their songs. Although he had learned most of his songs from

listening to singers, he told us that he had also learned at least three or four songs from the songbooks, strangely enough. A neighbor, or whomever he could find with some schooling, had read them to him. Occasionally some kind soul would tell him that a particular song would be pleasing to his audience, and though they had not been able to sing it for him, they had related it to him, I do not know whether in verse of prose, but I suspect the latter. He knew of some singers who had made up new songs, and he himself sang a new one about King

Wilson, He told us that another singer had composed it, written it down, and had read it to him. When he was young, he had to hear a song only once in order to pick it up, but now he found it hard to learn new songs.

We do not mean to say, of course, that blind singers may not play an important role in the practice of teir art in other cultures, or that they may not have done so in the past even in this one, but, for what it si worth, our experience in those years seemed to indicate that blind singers were not usually good singers. Against the evidence, however, one should place the information which we heard indirectly concerning the blind singer. Chor Huso, whose name has become closely associated with the Parry Collection in this country. He was blind in one eye (though some say blind in both, in spite of the fact that the name Chor means blind in one eye), and was a really professional singer according to the accounts which the collection contains. Huso was from Kolashin in Montenegro, and he wandered from place to place singing to the gusle. His fame spread abroad, and some of our best singers had learned songs from him. According to Salih Ugljanin's story, Huso had even gone to the court of Franz Josef and had been richly rewarded by him. He seems to have been a good showman. His dress and the trappings of his horse were distinctive, and he cut a romantic figure. It is a great pity, of course, that someone did not collect songs from him a couple of generations ago, but he seems to have escaped the attention of collectors – just why is interesting to know. Hormann did not get so far west as Kolashin in gathering material for his most excellent volumes on the songs of the Muslims in Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Luka Marjanovic was working in the north for the Matica Hrvatska. From later accounts of singers who learned from him, we can get some picture, however inaccurate, of the songs which he sang and of the influence which he had on the tradition. His example demonstrates the role which the prestige of a singer plays in the life of a song or of a theme; for the singer of fame will make a deeper impression on the

tradition than will others of less repute.

What I believe is significant in this survey of the occupations which singers follow is that the singers do not seem to form a special class. They can belong to any group in society. The oral singer in (the former) Yugoslavia is not marked by a class distinction; he is not an oral poet because he is a farmer or a shopkeeper or a bey. He can belong to the "folk", the merchant class, or the aristocracy. His place in society tells us nothing about him as an oral poet. We must look elsewhere, then, for what distinguishes this man who sits before us and creates epic song from his fellow men

and from those who write epics.

There seem to be two things that all our singers have in common: illiteracy, and the desire to attain proficiency in singing epic poetry. If the second of these sets them apart from their fellows, it is the first, namely their illiteracy, which determines the particular form that their composition takes, and which thus distinguishes the particular form that their composition takes, and which thus distinguishes them from the literary poet. In societies where writing is unknown, or where it is limited to a professional scribe whose duty is that of writing letters and keeping accounts, or where it is the possession of a small minority, such as clerics or a wealthy ruling class (though often this latter group prefers to have its writing done by a servant), the art of narration flourishes, provided that the culture is in other respects of a sort to foster the singing of tales. If the way of life of a people furnishes subjects for story and affords occasion for the telling, this art will be fostered. On the other hand, when writing is introduced and begins to be used for the same purposes as the oral narrative song, when it is employed for telling stories and is widespread enough to find an audience capable of reading, this audience seeks its entertainment and instruction in books rather than in the living songs of men, and the older art gradually disappears. The songs have died out in the cities not because life in a large community is an unfitting environment for them but because schools were first founded there and writing has been firmly rooted in the way of life of the city dwellers.

In order best to appreciate and to understand the process of composition that we call oral, and thus to eliminate our prejudice against the "illiterate" singer, we must follow him during the years which he devotes to learning the art. If we take our future oral poet in his unlettered state at a tender age, let us

say fourteen or fifteen, or even younger (singers tell us that this was the age at which they learned, although they usually mean by it only "when I was just a young boy"), and watch him learning the art, we can understand what this process is.

We can trace three distinct stages in his progress. During the first period he sits aside while others sing. He has decided that he wants to sing himself, or he may still be unaware of this decision and simply be very eager to hear the stories of the elders. Before he actually begins to sing, he is, consciously or unconsciously, laying the foundation. He is learning the stories and becoming acquainted with the heroes and their names, the faraway places and the habits of long

ago. The themes of the poetry are becoming familiar to him, and his feeling for them is sharpened as he hears more and as he listens to the men discussing the songs among themselves. At the same time he is imbibing the rhythm of the singing and to an extent also the rhythm of the thoughts as they are expressed in song. Even at this early stage the oft-repeated phrases which we call formulas are being absorbed.

One of the best accounts of the learning process is to be found in Parry Text 12391 from Sheco Kolic. As a boy he used to tend sheep alone on the mountain. Here are his own words:

> "When I was a shepherd boy, they used to come for an evening to my house, or sometimes we would go to someone else's for the evening, somewhere in the village. Then a singer would pick up the gusle, and I would listen to the song. The next day when I was with the flock, I would put the song together, word for word, without the gusle, but I would sing it from memory, word for word, just as the singer had sung it. ... Then I learned gradually to finger the instrument, and to fit the fingering to the words, and my fingers obeyed better and better. ... I did not sing among the men until I had perfected the song, but only among the young fellows in my circle [*druzhina*] not in front of my elders and betters."

Sheco here roughly distinguishes all three stages of learning; first, the period of listening and absorbing; then, the period of application; and finally, that of singing before a critical audience.

The second stage begins when the singer opens his mouth to sing, either with or without instrumental accompaniment. It begins with establishing the primary element of the form – the rhythm and melody, both of the song and of the gusle or the *tambura* (a two-stringed plucked instrument). This is to be the framework for the expression of his ideas. From then on what he does must be within the limits of the rhythmic pattern. In the Yugoslav (i.e., Serbo-Croation) tradition, this rhythmic pattern in its simplest statement is a line of ten syllables with a break after the fourth. The line is repeated over and over again, with some melodic variation, and some variation in the spacing and timing of the ten syllables. Here is a rhythmic fixity which the singer cannot avoid, and which gives him the first real difficulty when he sings. His problem is now one of

fitting his thoughts and their expression into this fairly rigid form. The rigidity of form may vary from culture to culture, as we shall see later, but the problem remains essentially the same – that of fitting thought to rhythmic pattern.

It will be argued that this is what the literary poet does also. This may be true, but there are two factors in oral composition that are not present in a written tradition. We must remember that the oral poet has no idea of a fixed model text to serve as his guide. He has models enough, but they are not fixed and he has no idea of memorizing them in a fixed form. Every time he hears a song sung, it is different. Secondly, there is a factor of time. The literate poet has leisure to compose at any rate he pleases. The oral poet must keep singing. His composition, by its very nature, must be rapid. Individual singers may and do vary in their rate of composition, of course, but it has limits because there is an audience waiting to hear the story. Some singers, like Camil Kulenovic in Bihac, begin very slowly with fairly long pauses between lines, working up gradually to very rapid rhythmic composition. Others insert many musical interludes of brief duration while they think of what is coming next. Still others have a formulaic phrase of general character addressed to the audience which they use to mark time, like Suljo Fortic with his *Sad da vidish, moji sokolovi*, "Now you should have seen it, my falcons." But these devices have to be used sparingly, because the audience will not tolerate too many of them.

If the singer has no idea of the fixity of the form of a song, and yet has to pour his ideas into a more or less rigid rhythmic pattern in a rapid composition, what does he do? To phrase the question a

little differently, how does the oral poet meet the need of the requirements of rapid composition without the aid of writing and without memorizing a fixed form? His tradition comes to the rescue. Other singers have met the same need, and over many generations there have been developed many phrases which express in the several rhythmic patterns the ideas most common in the poetry. These are the formulae of which Parry wrote. In this second stage in his apprenticeship the young singer must learn enough of these formulae to sing a song. He learns them by repeated use of them in singing, by repeatedly facing the need to express the idea in song, and by repeatedly satisfying that need, until the resulting formula which he has heard from others becomes a part of his poetic thought. He must have enough of these formulae to facilitate composition. He is like a child learning words, or anyone learning a language without a school method; except that the language here being

learned is the special language of poetry. This is the period in which the teacher is most important.

In the first stage it generally happens that the neophyte has chosen one singer, perhaps his father, or a favorite uncle, or some well-known singer of his neighborhood, to listen to most closely, but he hears other singers, too. Sometimes, as we have seen in the case of Sheco Kolic, he has no single model, but picks up what he can from all whom he hears. Sulejman Makic, however, told us that he learned all his songs from a certain Arif Karaljeshak, who had stayed an entire year at Suljo's house when the boy was about fifteen years old. According to Suljo, he had brought this man to his house and kept him there to teach him to sing, but Arif also worked on the farm for them. Alija Fjuljanin said that his grandfather had given him a gusle when he was ten or twelve years old, and that he had learned most of his songs from three singers.

Sometimes there are published versions of songs in the background. Shaban Rahmanovic in Bihac told us that he did not learn to sing until he was about twenty-eight (he was forty-five in 1935), and that he had learned his songs from the song books, the Matica Hrvatska collection in particular. Although he could not read, someone had read them to him. But he had also heard the older singers in his district. The entrance of these song books into the tradition is a very interesting phenomenon, and one that is open to gross misinterpretation. Yet as long as the singer himself remains unlettered and does not attempt to reproduce the songs word for word, these books have no other effect on him than that of hearing the song. In the

case of Shaban it is very possible that he had heard many singers when he was young. He admits having heard his uncle sing, but says that he did not attempt to learn the art until later. Thus the first period in his learning was unusually long and casual, and the second period was taken up largely with having songs read to him from the song book.

More typical is the case of old Murat Zhunic from the same district, a district which has been strongly influenced by the song books. Murat had learned his songs from singers, not from the song books, knew the names of the singers who had contributed songs songs to be published in them, and was conscious that some of those from whom he had learned had picked up their songs from the books. He had heard songs from Hercegovina read from books and was very critical of the singers of that province. He said that they made mistakes in geography because they did not know where Kladusha, the home of the famous Hrnjichi, was. His own songs he had learned chiefly from two members of his family.

Franje Vukovic knew only that he had first learned to sing from a cousin, Ivo Mekic Jerkovic, but he could not remember from whom he had learned each song which he knew. Like Shaban Rahmanovic, he too had been a little late in learning. Until he was nineteen or twenty he had been too busy about the farm, but when he married, his wife took over the work, and he had leisure in which to listen to singers and to learn to sing himself. Strangely enough, Franje sang without any musical accompaniment. He told us that he had learned to sing to the gusle, but that when his house and mill had burned to the ground he had lost his gusle, and since that time he had sung without it.

Learning in this second stage is a process of imitation, both in regard to playing the instrument and to learning the formulae and themes of the tradition. It may truthfully be said that the singer imitates the techniques of composition of his master or masters rather than particular songs. For that reason the singer is not very clear about the details of how he learned his art, and his explanations are frequently in very general terms. He will say that he was interested in the old songs, had a passion (*merak*) for them, and then "work, work, work" (*goni, goni, goni*), aand little by little he learned to sing. He had no definite program of study, of course, no sense of learning this or that formula or set of formulae. It is a process of imitation and of assimilation through listening and much practice on one's own. Makic was a bit more explicit than some. He said that his teacher would sing

a song for him two or three times until he learned it. Fjuljanin said that he sometimes asked a singer to sing a song for him. Since the singer hears many songs, he uses the language and formulae that belong to them all; for the accomplished singer whom he has been imitating does not have one set of expressions for one song and another for another, except when there are themes in the one that are not in the other, and even in these cases the formulae and formulaic techniques are the same in all songs.

The second stage ends when the singer is competent to sing one song all the way through for a critical audience. There are probably other songs that he can sing partially, songs that are in process of being learned. He has arrived at a definite turning point when he can sit in front of an audience and finish a song to his own satisfaction and that of the audience. His job may or may not be a creditable one. He has very likely not learned much about "ornamenting" a song to make it full and broad in its narrative style. That will depend somewhat on his model. If the singer from whom he has learned is one who uses much "ornamentation", he has

probably picked up a certain amount of that ornamentation too. Whether his first song is fully developed or not, it is complete in its story from beginning to end and will tend to follow the story as he has heard it from his master. If, however, and this is important, he has not learned it from one singer in particular, and if the stories of that song differ in the various versions which he has heard, he may make a composite of them. He may, on the other hand, follow one of them for the most part, taking something from the others too. Either way is consistent with the traditional process. One can thus see that although this process should not be described as haphazard, which it is not, it does not fit our own conceptions of learning a fixed text of a fixed song. Already at this second stage, and to an extent also in the first, the singer has found, though the knowledge may not be conscious, that the tradition is fluid. His unlettered state saves him from becoming an automaton. Yet, in this period he is also closer to his originals in themes and possibly in language also than he will ever again be in his experience as a singer. Even the songs that he learns at this time will change as his repertory increases and his competence grows.

This increase in repertoire and growth in competence take place in the third and last stage of the learning process. We can easily define its beginning as the point at which he sings his first song completely through for a critical audience, but it is

much more difficult to set the other limit. That is a question of when a singer is an accomplished practitioner of the art, a matter to be considered shortly. Let us look more closely at what goes on in the third stage. First the singer learns to sing other songs all the way through. If he has already learned them in part, he finishes the process. But again this does not involve memorizing a text, but practicing until he can compose it, or recompose it, himself.

Our proper understanding of these procedures is hindered by our lack of a suitable vocabulary for defining the steps of the process. The singers themselves cannot help us in this regard because they do not think in terms of form as we think of it; their descriptions are too vague, at least for academic precision. Man without writing thinks in terms of sound groups and not in words, and the two do not necessarily coincide. When asked what a word is, he will reply that he does not know, or he will give a sound group which may vary in length from what we call a word to an entire line of poetry, or even an entire song. The word for “word” means an “utterance”. When the singer is pressed then to say what a line is, he, whose chief claim to

fame is that he traffics in lines of poetry, he will be entirely baffled by the question; or he will say that since he has been dictating and has seen his utterances being written down, he has discovered what a line is, although he did not know it as such before, because he had never gone to school.

While the singer is adding to his repertoire of songs, he is also improving the singing of the ones he already knows, since he is now capable of facing an audience that will listen to him, although possibly with a certain amount of patronizing because of his youth. Generally speaking, he is expanding his songs in the way I have indicated, that is, by ornamenting them. This process will be treated in a later chapter, but it will suffice her to say that this is the period in which he learns the rudiments of ornamentation and expansion. The art of expanding the old songs and of learning new ones is carried to the point at which he can entertain his audience for a full evening; that is one of his goals.

Here, then, for the first time the audience begins to play a role in the poet's art. Up to this point the form of his song has depended on his illiteracy and on the need to compose rapidly in the traditional rhythmic pattern. The singers he has heard have given him the necessary traditional material to make it possible for him to sing, but the length of his songs and the degree to which he will ornament and expand them will depend

on the demands of the audience. His audience is gradually changing from an attitude of condescension toward the youngster to one of accepting him as a singer.

It is into the world of kafana, informal gatherings, and festival that our young singer steps once he has mastered the singing of a song. Here he learns new songs. The form of his singing is being perfected, and its content is becoming richer and more varied. This audience and this social milieu have had an effect on the length of the songs of his predecessors, and they will have a similar effect on the length of his songs.

We might say that the final period of training comes to an end when the singer's repertoire is large enough to furnish entertainment for several nights. Yet it is better to define the end of the period by the freedom with which he moves in his tradition, because that is the mark of the finished poet. When he has a sufficient command of the formula technique to sing any song that he hears, and enough thematic material at hand to lengthen or shorten a song according to his own desires and to create a new song if he sees fit, then he is an accomplished singer and worthy of his art. There are, to be sure, some singers, not few in number, who

never go beyond the third stage in learning, who never reach the point of mastery of the tradition, and who are always struggling for competence. Their weakness is that they do not have enough proficiency in formula-making and thematic structure, nor enough talent, to put a song together artistically. Although such singers can show us much about the workings of the practice and of the tradition, it is the finest and longest songs and the most accomplished singers in whom we are interested for comparative purposes in the study of individual singers in whom we are interested for comparative purposes in the study of individual singers and individual songs.

The singer never stops in the process of accumulating, recombining, and remodeling formulae and themes, thus perfecting his singing and enriching his art. He proceeds in two directions: he moves toward refining what he already knows and toward learning new songs. The latter process has now become for him one of learning proper names and of knowing what themes make up the new song. The story is all that he needs; so on this stage he can hear a song once and repeat it immediately afterwards – not word for word, of course – but he can tell the same story again in his own words. Sometimes singers prefer to have a day or so to think the song over, to put it in order, and to practice it

to themselves. Such singers are either less confident of their ability, or they may be greater perfectionists.

Sulejman Makic, for example, liked to have time to put his song in order. In Parry Text 681, Records 1322-1323 (I, pp. 265-266) we can hear his own words: "Nikola: Could you still pick up a song today? Sulejman: I could. N: for example, if you heard me sing a song, let us say, could you pick it up right away? S: Yes, I could sing it for you right away the next day. N: If you were to hear it just once? S: Yes, by Allah, if I were to hear it only once to the gusle. N: Whay not until the next day? ... What do you think about in those two days? Is it not better to sing it right away than later, when you might forget it after so long a time? S: It has to come to one. One has to think ... how it goes, and then little by little it comes to him, so that he will not leave anything out. ... One could not sing it like that all the way through right away. N: Why could you not, when it is possible the second or third day afterwards? S: Anybody who cannot write cannot do it. N: All right, but when you have learned my song, would ... you sing it exactly as I do? S: I would. N: You would not add anything ... nor leave anything out? S: I would not ... by Allah I would sing it just as I heard it. ... It is not good to change or to add."

Demo Zogic also gave us information on this point (I, pp. 240-241). "N: We have heard – we have been in

those places in our country where people sing – and some singers have told us that as soon as they hear a song from another singer, they can sing it immediately, even if they have heard it only once, ... just as its was word for word. Is that possible, Demail? D: It is possible. ... I know from my own experience. When I was together with my brothers and had nothing to worry about, I would hear a singer sing a song to the gusle, and after an hour I would sing his whole song. I cannot write. I would give every word and not make a mistake on a single one. ...

"N: So then, last night you sang a song for us. How many times did you hear it before you were able to sing it all the way through exactly as you do now? D: Here is how many times I heard it. One Ramazan I engaged this Suljo Makic who sang for you here today those songs of the Border. I heard him one night in my coffee house. I was not busy. I had a waiter and he waited on the guests, and I sat down beside the singer and in one night I picked up that song. I went home, and the next night I sang it myself. ... That singer was sick, and I took the gusle and sang the whole song

myself, and all the people said: 'We would rather listen to you than to that singer whom you pay.' N: Was it the same song, word for word, line for line? D: The same song, word for word, and line for line. I did not add a single line, and I did not make a single mistake. ...

"N: Tell me this, if two good singers listen to a third singer who is even better, and they both boast that they can learn a song if they hear it only once, do you think that there would be any difference between the two versions? ... D: They add, or they make mistakes, and they forget. They do not sing every word, or they add other words. Two singers cannot recite a song which they heard from a third singer and have the two songs exactly the same as the third.

"N: Does a singer sing a song which he knows well (not with rhymes, but one of these old Border songs), will he sing it twice the same and sing every line? D: That is possible. If I were to live for twenty years, I would sing the song which I sang for you here today just the same twenty years from now, word for word."

In these two conversations we have accomplished singers discussing under guidance the transmission, not of the art of singing, but of songs from one well-trained singer to another. They are also telling us what they do when they sing a song. Here the creative performer speaks. In the case of Demo Zogic we can test his statements and thus we can learn how to interpret this information that singers can give us about their own art.

Note that both singers express some attitude toward

writing. Makic gives the opinion that only a person who can write can reproduce a song immediately; whereas Zogic's boast is that although he cannot write he can reproduce a song an hour after he has heard it. In other words, one says that the man with writing is superior; and the other, that he is as good as the man with writing. They reflect the unlettered man's admiration of the lettered, but their statements are inaccurate. Their admiration goes too far, for the man with writing cannot do what they believe he can and what they in actuality can do.

Both singers stress that they would sing the song exactly as they heard it, Zogic even boasting that he would sing the song in the same way twenty years later. Makic indicates that changing and adding are not good, implying that singers do change and add; and Zogic states plainly that two singers will not sing the same song alike. How do we disentangle these contradictions?

Zogic learned from Makic the song under discussion in his conversation, and both versions are published in

Volume I of the Parry Collection (Numbers 24-25 and 29). Zogic did not learn it word for word and line for line, and yet the two songs are recognizable versions of the samestory. They are not close enough, however, to be considered "exactly alike". Was Zogic lying to us? No, because he was singing the story as he conceived it as being "like" Makic's story, and to him "word for word and line for line" are simply an emphatic way of saying "like". As I have heard, singers do not know what words and lines are. What is of importance here is not the fact of exactness or lack of exactness, but the constant emphasis by the singer on his role in the tradition. It is not the creative role that we have stressed for the purpose of clarifying a misunderstanding about oral style, but the role of conserver of the tradition, the role of the defender of the historic truth of what is being sung; for if the singer changes what he has heard in its essence, he falsifies truth. It is not the artist but the historian who speaks at this moment, although the singer's concept of the historian is that of a guardian of legend.

Although Makic's and Zogic's versions of the same song differ considerably, Zogic's version itself changes little in the course of years. It was my good fortune to record this song from him seventeen years later, and it is remarkably close to the earlier version, though hardly word for word. It even still contains a glaring inconsistency in the story which was not in Makic's version.

But when Zogic is not defending himself as a preserver of the tradition, when he is thus freed to speak of the art of singing as such, in other words when

he can talk about someone else's practice, he can be more objective. Then he states that two singers will not sing the same song alike; then he can recognize changes, additions, and mistakes, and give us a clearer picture of what happens in transmission.

And the picture that emerges is not really one of conflict between preserver of tradition and creative artist; it is rather one of the preservation of tradition by the constant re-creation of it. The ideal is a true story well and truly retold."

Mr. Lord continues:

"There came a time in Homeric scholarship when it was not sufficient to speak of the "repetitions" in Homer, of the "stock epithets", of the "epic clichés" and "stereotyped phrases". Such terms were either too vagu or too restricted. Precision was

needed, and the work of Milman Parry was the culmination of that need. The result was a definition of the "formula" as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea." By this definition the ambiguity of "repetitions" was eliminated; we were henceforth to deal with repeated word groups, not with repeated scenes, although C.M. Bowra uses the term "formula" still to apply to both. At the same time, Parry's definition broadens "formula" to include within its scope more than the repeated epithets. Furthermore, the opprobrium attached to "clichés" and "stereotyped" has been removed.

Students of epic have now willingly applied themselves to the study of the repeated phrases and thus extracting the technique of composition by formula manipulation. Yet in following this method they tend to treat all texts alike, whether by the same singer of not, whether sung or dictated, whatever, indeed, the circumstances of their collection may have been. Much has been gained from this type of analysis, and from it surely much more remains to be learned concerning the details of the process in any given tradition. Yet it seems to me that in confining ourselves to this method we tend to obscure the dynamic life of the repeated phrases and to lose an awareness of how and why they came into being. Are we not conceiving of the formula as a tool rather than as a living phenomenon of metrical language? In this chapter we shall attempt to look at the formula not only from outside in terms of textual analysis, but also from within, that is, from the point of view of the singer of tales and of the tradition.

The stress in Parry's definition on the metrical conditions of the formula led to the realization that

the repeated phrases were useful not, as some have supposed, merely to the audience if at all, but also and even more to the singer in the rapid composition of his tale. And by this almost revolutionary idea the camera's eye was shifted to the singer as a composer and to his problems as such.

At all stages in our musings about oral epic we find it necessary to recreate in our imagination not a general but a specific moment of performance. The singing bard must be our guide; and the singing bard is never a type but an individual. Whenever we say "the singer does this or that", we must make it clear that our statement is based on experience with a specific singer, or on the combined experience of various singers. Our method will be to follow the developing career of the young singer, beginning even from the

time when he starts to absorb the tradition by much listening to the songs about him and continuing with each advance of his own flight of song.

It may seem strange that we have very few texts from singers in the earliest stage of apprenticeship, as it were, in their art. But collectors seek the best singers, and the best singers are usually the older men. Their reputation is great; they are brought forward by those whom the collector questions. On occasion a younger singer in his twenties or thirties may be suggested, often because he has a good voice or a fine manner of singing, that it has not occurred to anyone to make a special study of the youngest group. It is a commentary, indeed, on the force of the belief that the songs are set and that younger singers have not had time to memorize a song as well as an older man. Perhaps exposing this belief as false will encourage giving more attention to songs of the younger singers, imperfect though they may be.

Surely the formula has not the same value to the mature singer that it has to the young apprentice; it also has different values to the highly skilled and to the unskilled, less imaginative bard. We may otherwise think of the formula as being ever the same no matter from whose lips it proceeds. Such uniformity is scarcely true of any element of language; for language always bears the stamp of its speaker. The landscape of formula is not a level steppe with a horizon which equalizes all things in view, but rather a panorama of high mountains and deep valleys and of rolling foothills; and we must seek the essence of formula at all points in the landscape. Moreover, with the penetrating eye of the mind we must look for this essence backward through the centuries which formed the mountains and the valleys. For the singing we hear today, like the everyday speech around us, goes back in a direct and long series of

singings to a beginning which, no matter how difficult it may be to conceive, we must attempt to grasp, because otherwise we shall miss an integral part of the meaning of the traditional formula.

Or to use another figure, the formula is the offspring of the marriage of thought and sung verse. Whereas thought, in theory at least, may be free, sung verse imposes restrictions, varying in degree of rigidity from culture to culture, that shape the form of thought. Any study of formula must therefore properly begin with a consideration of metrics and music, particularly as confronted by the young singer first becoming aware of the demands of his art. Later we shall have to consider the question of why story

becomes wedded to song and verse, to ask ourselves what kind of tale finds its expression in these very special methods of presentation. These are not problems that the contemporary singer of tales faces; for he has inherited the answers. The fact of narrative song is around him from birth; the technique of it is the possession of his elders, and he falls heir to it. Yet in a real sense he does recapitulate the experiences of the generations before him stretching back to the distant past. From metre and music he absorbs in his earliest years the rhythms of epic, even as he absorbs the rhythms of speech itself and in a larger sense of the life about him. He learns empirically the length of phrase, the partial cadences, the full stops.

If the singer is in the Yugoslav tradition, he obtains a sense of ten syllables followed by a syntactic pause, although he never counts out ten syllables, and if asked, might not be able to tell how many syllables there are between pauses. In the same way he absorbs into his own experience a feeling for the tendency toward the distribution of accented and unaccented syllables and their very subtle variations caused by the play of tonic accent, vowel length, and melodic line. These “restrictive” elements he comes to know from much listening to the songs about him and from being engrossed in their imaginative world. He learns the metre ever in association with particular phrases, those expressing the most common and oft-repeated ideas of the traditional story. Even in pre-singing years rhythm and thought are one, and the singer’s concept of the formula is shaped though not explicit. He and the singer’s successive beats and varying lengths of repeated thoughts, and these might be said to be his formulas. Basic patterns of metre, word boundary, melody have become his possession, and in him the tradition begins to reproduce itself.

In the months and years of boyhood, not very long indeed after he has learned to speak his own language,

the future singer develops a realization that in sung stories the order of words is often not the same as in everyday speech. Verbs may be placed in unusual positions, auxiliaries may be omitted, cases may be used strangely. He is impressed by the special effect which results which results, and he associates these syntactic peculiarities with the singing of tales. Moreover, the linking of phrases by parallelism, balancing and opposition of word order become familiar to him; the verb, which occurs, for example,just before a syntactic pause, is repeated at the beginning of the next phrase or is balanced by a verb just before the following stop:

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De sedimo, da se veselimo, Where we sit, let us make merry,
E da be nas I Bog veseluio, And may God too make us merry,
Veselio, pa razgovorio! Make us merry and give us entertainment!

In these pre-singing years, together with a sense of new arrangements of ideas and the words which express them, the boy's ear records the repetitions of the sounds of the words. His instinctive grasp of alliteraions and assonances is sharpened. One word begins to suggest another by its very sound; one phrase suggests another not only by reason of idea or by a special ordering of ideas, but also by aciiustic value.

Thus even before the boy begins to sing, a number of basic patterns have been assimilated in his experience. Their form may not be precise – the precision will come later – but it can be truly said that in this youth the idea of the formula is in process of becoming. What we shall soon designate as melodic, metric, syntactic, and acioustic patterns are forming in his mind.

The chief reason, of course, that the formula does not take precise shape at this stage, is that only the necessity of singing can produce a full-fledged formula. The phenomenon of which it is a manifestation arises from the exigencies of performance. Only in performance can the formula exist and have clear definition. Besides, not all the singers whom the boy hears in his family or community have the same formulas for a given idea or the same manner of treatment of formulas. There si no rigidity in what he hears.

What has been described so far has been an unconscious process of assimilation. Consciously the boy has been thinking of the stories themselves which are related in this unusual way. But when he begins to sing, the manner of presentation comes for a long time to the fore. Then the formula is born for him and his formula habits are acquired.

One of the first problems for the young singer from the very beginning is to learn to play the instrument which accompanies the song. This is not a really difficult task, since most of the instruments which accompany chant are not intricate. In the Yugoslav case, the boy has to learn to bow a one-stringed instrument, the gusle, the range of which is open string plus four fingers, an ambitus of five notes. The rhythm is primary; the grace notes are ornamental. Some older singer may show him how to finger the instrument, or the boy may simply imitate

his elders by himself in private. He may make a small gusle for himself, because the grown-up size is too big for his hands, of his father or mentor may make one for him. He imitates the fingering, the melody, and the manner of his elder. Rade Danilovic in Kolashin has told us how his father, Mirko, used to put the boy's hand on his own as he fingered the string (Parry 6783).

Thus begins the stage in which the rhythmic impressions of the earlier period of listening are fitted to the restrictions of the instrument and of a traditional melodic line. Usually the rhythms and melodies that the youth learns at this period of initial specific application will stay with him the rest of his life. He may acquire others from singers of great reputation or striking manner of performance, but they will be in addition to the earlier ones or, at most, they will only modify, not replace them.

At the same time, the boy is trying to sing words. He remembers the phrases he has heard, sometimes whole lined, sometimes only parts of lines. From now on, for a considerable period of time, he will listen to his elders with more attention to the lines and phrases. He will pick them up from any singer whom he hears. As he practices singing by himself he realizes the need for them and he uses them, sometimes adjusting them more or less consciously to his own needs, sometimes unconsciously twisting them. They are not sacred, but they are useful. In this way he acquires the formulas of his elders and establishes his own formula habits. He is doing what all singers before him have done.

The most stable formulas will be those for the most common ideas of the poetry. They will express the names of the actors, the main actions, time, and place. Thus in the line, *Vino pije Kraljevichu Marko,* "Kraljevic Marko is drinking wine", *Kraljevichu Marko* presents the hero in a complete second-half-line formula, Kraljevic properly a title, "king's son", or "prince", is treated as a patronymic. In another line, *Sultan Selim rata otvorio*, "Sultan Selim declared war", the title "Sultan" makes it possible to name Selim in a four-syllable initial formula. The young singer learns that

patronymics, titles, and indications of city of origin, for example, *od Orashca Tale*, "tale of Orashac" are of great use in naming his heroes. Epithets are not so frequent in this tradition because the shortness of the line does not present a need for them that cannot be fulfilled by title or patronymic. They come into usage either when the singer wishes to express the actor in a whole line, frequently a vocative, as in *Sultan Selim, od svijeta sunce*, "O Sultan Selim, light [sun] of the world".

The most frequent actions in the story, the verbs, are often complete formulas in themselves, filling either the first or the second half of the line, as in *Govorio Kraljevichu Marko*, "Kraljevic Marko spoke". If the verb is a syllable short, a conjunction often completes the formula, as in *Pa Zasede svojega dorata*, "Then he mounted his brown horse". The length of the action formula is naturally in part determined by whether the subject is expressed in the same line and by the length of the subject. The singer finds that he can say, "Marko said", in the first half of the line with subject expressed, *Marko kazhe*, or in the second hald line , *govorio Marko*, or in the whole line, *govorio Kraljevichu Marko*. Obviously here the length of the whole line, *govorio Krljevichu Marko*. Obviously here the length of the subject is influenced by the length of the verb. If the subject is not expressed, if the singer wants to say merely, "he said", *govorio* does very well for the first half of the line; the addition of a conjunction and the personal pronoun come to his aid in the second half line, *pa on govorio*, "then he replied". But in order to accomplish this in a whole line, the singer must repeat the idea in the second half of the line: *Govorio, rijech besedashe*, "He spoke, he uttered a word". This example illustrates that the object of a verb forms an integral part of the verb formula, and shows as well how and why pleonasm is so common in oral style. Many of the formulas for the second half of the line are made up of verb and object: *rata otvorio,* "opened war"; *knjigu napisao*, "wrote a letter". By a change of tense this last formula is often expressed in the first half of the line as *knjigu pishe*, "writes a letter". In both cases the other half of the line is left for the subject.

A third common set of formulas indicates time when the action occurs. A typical example, with Homeric overtones, is: *Kad jw zora krila pomolila*, "When dawn put forth its wings", or *Kad je zora I bijela dana*, "When it was dawn and white day", or *Kad je sunce zemlju ogrijalo*, "When the sun had warmed the earth."

The singer must learn another category of common formulas indicating the place where an action occurs.

"In Prilip", for instance, can be expressed in the first half of the line *U Prilipu*, in the second half of the line bu *u Prilipu gradu*, and in the whole line by *U Prilipu gradu bijelome*, "In Prilip, that white city". Similarly, "in the tower" can be expressed in the first half of the line by *A na kuli*, with the conjunction *a* as a filler; in the second half line by *na bijeloj kuli*, "in the white tower", and in the whole line by *Na bijeloj od kamena kuli*, "In the white

tower of stone".

The formulas represented by the preceding examples are the foundation stone of the oral style. We have seen them from the point of view of the young singer with an essential idea to express under different metrical conditions. Their usefulness can be illustrated by indicating the many words that can be substituted for the key word in such formulas. For example, in the Prilip formulas above, any name of a city with a dative of three syllables can be used instead of Prilip: *u Stambolu, u Travniku, u Kladushi*. Instead of *a u kuli*, "in the tower", one can say *a u dvoru*, "in the castle", or *a u kuchi*, "in the house". These formulas can be grouped together in what Parry, when studying the traditional epithets in Homer, termed "systems". It is often helpful to write them down as follows:

au { *kuli*
     | *dvoru*
     | *kuchi*

Such a substitution system expresses graphically the usefulness and the relationship of a group of formulas.

A style thus systematized by scholars on the foundation of analysis of texts is bound to appear very mechanical. Again we may turn to language itself for a useful parallel. The classical grammar of a language, with its paradigms of tenses and declensions, might give us the idea that language is a mechanical process. The parallel, of course, goes even further. The method of language is like that of oral poetry, substitution in the framework of the grammar. Without the metrical restrictions of verse, language substitutes one subject for another in the nominative case, keeping the same verb; or keeping the same noun, it substitutes one verb for another. In studying the patterns and systems of oral narrative verse we are in reality observing the "grammar" of the poetry, a grammar superimposed, as it were, on the grammar of the language concerned. Or, to alter the image, we find a special grammar within the grammar of the language, necessitated by the versification. The formulas are the phrases and clauses and sentences of this specialized poetic grammar. The

speaker of this language, once he has mastered it, does not move any more mechanically within it than we do in ordinary speech.

When we speak a language, our native language, we do not repeat words and phrases that we have memorized consciously, but the words and sentences emerge from habitual usage. This is true of the singer of tales

working in his specialized grammar. He does not "memorize" formulas, any more than we as children "memorize" language. He learns them by hearing them in other singers' songs, and by habitual usage they become part of his singing as well. Memorization is a conscious act of making one's own, and repeating, something that one regards as fixed and not one's own. The learning of an oral poetic language follows the same principles as the learning of a language itself, not by conscious schematization of elementary grammars but by the natural oral method.

Any thorough grammar of a language notes exceptions to "rules", dialectal differences, "irregular" nouns and verbs, idioms – in fact those divergences from the systematized rules that arise in usage and in the normal organic change constantly in operation in a living spoken language. If we alanyze oral epic texts taken from dictation and normalized to some extent, we can observe the oral poetic language in its pure state, with its irregularities and abnormalities arising from usage. Then it is clear that the style is not really so mechanical as its systematization seems to imply.

The value to use of drawing up a number of substitution systems is that we immediately begin to see that the singer has not had to learn a large number of separate formulas. The commonest ones which he first uses set a basic pattern, and once he has the basic pattern firmly in his grasp, he needs only to substitute another word for the key one. The actual basic formulas which any given singer may learn first would be practically impossible to determine; it would vary from singer to singer. Probably if the first song learned by the singer concerned Marko Kraljevic, Marko's name and the varieties of it used in making lines would set the basic pattern for similar names, which would fall into four-syllable plus two-syllable pattern. The fundamental element in constructing lines is the basic formula pattern. There is some justification for saying indeed that the particular formula itself is important to the singer only up to the time when it has planted in his mind its basic mold. When this point is reached, the singer depends less and less on learning formulas and more and more on the process of substituting other words in the formula patterns.

Although it may seem that the more important part

of the singer's training is the learning of formulas from other singers, I believe that the really significant element in the process is rather the setting up of various patterns that make adjustments of

phrase and creation of phrases by analogy possible. This will be thw whole basis of his art. Wre he *merely* to learn the phrases and lines from his predecessors, acquiring thus a stock of them, which he would then shuffle about and mechanically put together in juxtaposition as inviolable, fixed units, he would, I am convinced, never become a singer. He must make his feeling for the patterning of lines, which he has absorbed earlier, specific with actual phrases and lines, and by the necessity of performance learn to adjust what he hears and what he wants to say to these patterns. If he does not learn to do this, no matter how many phrases he may know from his elders, he cannot sing. He does this in performance, not before an audience at first, of course, but by himself. This style has been created and shaped in performance; it has been so with all singers since time immemorial, and it is so with him. The habit of adjustment, the creation of lines in performance, this is acquired from the moment the boy begins to try to sing.

What is meant by "adjustment" can best be comprehended in terms of the establishment of various kinds of patterns and rhythms of expression. These the boy has picked up in his pre-singing years and now he finds his own means of forming them naturally and readily. We may begin again with the melodies of the singing itself. The boy learns that there is a special pattern for the opening of a song, with its own beginning and cadence. There is at least one oft-repeated melodic pattern for sustained narrative. Some times in the course of his life the singer acquires from one to three variations of this most important pattern. It is quite possible that he has discovered that by changing the melody he rests his voice. On occasion, but by no means regularly, the melodic pattern shifts for dramatic emphasis. There is a modified version of the singer's main pattern for stopping before a rest and another somewhat modified version for reprise after a pause. The song also has its concluding cadence. An example of these patterns can be seen in the appendix to Volume I of Serbocroatian Heroic Songs in the musical transcriptions of the "Captivity of Dulic Ibrahim", sung by Salih Ugljanin in Novi Pazar with music notations from the records of Bela Bartok.

From these musical examples one can see also the rhythmic patterns, generally trochaic. Here the play or "adjustment" between melody and metre can be observed in operation. We note the inadequacy of our texts without

music in presenting a picture of epic song. The line is syllabic, or better, syllabo-tonic, a trochaic

pentametre with an invariable break after the fourth syllable. It is simple, yet subtlety has entered from the interplay between melody and text. There is a tension between the normal accent and the metre. The accent of the metre does not always fall on the normal prose accent, nor are all five stresses of the same intensity. The ninth syllable is the most prominent, has the strongest beat, and is held longest; the seventh and eighth are the weakest. The tenth may be lost entirely, completely swallowed, or hopelessly deformed. It may be carried over to the beginning of the following line, or it may be an ordinary short beat. The first and the fifth syllables tend to be of the same intensity because they are the initial beat in the line and the first after the break; but when a proclitic stands in these positions, it is very common at the beginning of the line and not unusual in the fifth syllable, the first and third feet are sometimes iambs rather than trochees, and the melody follows this rhythm. Occasionally the first foot, sometimes even the second or third foot, is a dactyl in the regular practice of some singers; and they have sets of formulas adjusted to this rhythm. In these cases the extra syllable is often supplied by a word without meaning.

It is noteworthy also that Serbocroatian maintains a pitch accent, rising or falling, and pays much attention to long and short vowels. The subtlety of the rhythms is, of course, further complicated by these characteristics of the language. The metric differences here demonstrated required at an early stage an adjustment of formula by the singer, or perhaps were called into being because of an adjustment. Individual variations in melody and rhythms are greater than one might expect, and only when the actual melodies of recorded songs are published will this fact be properly realized. Some idea of the range of variation can be obtained from simple lines from three singers.

Under the pressure of rapid composition in performance, the singer of tales, it is to be expected, makes occasional error in the construction of his lines. His text line may be a syllable too long or a syllable too short. This does not trouble him in performance, and his audience scarcely notices these lines, since they have an understanding of the singer’s art and recognize these slight variations as perfectly normal aberrations. The singer himself adjusts his musical line to the text by making a dactyl out of a trochee or by holding one syllable for two rhythmical beats rather than for one.

An additional set of patterns, related to the

rhythmic patterns, which the singer must learn to control in these first years, is that of word boundaries, or more properly, length of accentual groups (that is, a word plus proclitics and enclitics). This need is especially important to the singer because the feeling for the mid-line break is very real. An accentual group cannot, and in practice only very rarely does, bridge the fourth and fifth syllables, although neither the melodic nor the rhythmic patterns show this. When listening to the song one hears no pause at the break. The end of the line is very clearly marked, and run-on lines are few. In the first half of the line the most common word-boundary patterns are 2-2, 1-3, and 4: *vino pije*, "he drinks wine; *pa govori*, "then he says"; *Kraljevichu*, or *a void ga*, "and he leads him" (where *a* is proclitic and *ga* is enclitic). In the second half of the line the most common patterns are 2-4, 4-2, and 3-3: *juris uchinio*, "he made an attack"; *zametnushe kavgu*, "they started strife"; and *besedi serdaru*, "he says to the sirdar". Most of the formulas that the singer hears are i9n these patterns, and he will make new ones on the basis of them.

Closely allied to the word-boundary patterns, to no small extent helping to form them, are the syntactic patterns of the formulas. The order in which the parts of speech appear, hence the relation of ideas, is involved. In a style in which actions or things are added one to another in series, the conjunction plays a large role, and the most common patterns for the beginning of the line naturally begin with a conjunction. In fact conjunction-verb in the first half line is very frequent. For example:

A chesar se na me naljutijo, And the emperor was angered at me,
Pa na mene naljetljemu dao, And he inflicted outlawry upon me,
Pa me danas surgun uchinijo, And today he has exiled me,
A prati me k tebe u Bagdatu, And sent me to you in Baghdad.

There are many initial formulas beginning with a conjunction, especially when an uncompounded form of the verb is used, for example, the narrative present, the imperfect, or the aorist. In the case of compound tenses, the auxiliary appears in the first half of the line and the participle or infinitive in the second. In the latter half of the line one finds most of the noun-epithet combinations: *knjigu sharovitu,* "well writ letter"; *visoku planinu,* "high mountain"; *gradu*

bijelome, "white city."

A tasevi od srme bijele, The cups were of white silver,
A sindiri od zhezhena zlata. And the chains were of 'fined gold.
Ej, Spanula bagdatska kraljica; Ej, Then appeared the Queen of Baghdad.

Such are the syntactic patterns which the boy now begins to store in his experience and to use as a basis for new phrases.

The second half of the line is dependent not only syntactically on the first, but is also to some extent suggested by the sound patterns with which the loine opens. There are a number of lines that have become set through the pattern of internal rhyme: *Kud god* ***skita****, za aliju* ***pita****,* "Wherever he wanders, he asks for Alija"*;* ***Zveknu*** *halka, a* ***jeknu*** *kapija*, "The knocker resounded, and the gate echoed." The importance of alliteration is apparent in such a line as *Kazashe ga u gradu Kajnidu*, "They pointed him out in the city of Kajnida", in which the k-g alliteration is arranged in chiastic or der, k-g-g-k. Nothing would seem to have hindered the singer from using *u Kajnidu gradu* in the second half of the line, but he appears to have preferred the chiastic order, in part also perhaps under the influence of the a-u-a-u assonance in the middle of the line. The singers have a sensitivity to proportion and completeness of form even within the limits of a single line. Whatever feeling for such sound patterns the boy has absorbed in his pre-singing days is crystallized when he begins to perform.

This period in his training is pre-eminently one of learning to produce lines. Part of the process is accomplished by remembering and using phrases heard from other singers. This constitutes one element in the continuity of oral epic style. The phrases help to establish in the singer's experience a series of patterns, and these patterns are also an element in the continuity of the style. At the same time, by necessity, because he does not remember all the phrases which he needs, he is forced at the moment of his private performances to form phrases on the basis of the patterns. Since they follow the traditional patterns, they are indistinguishable from the other phrases that he has remembered, and may unconsciously be actually identical with them. To him the first matter of importance is certainly not the source of the phrase but the phrase at the critical time. For anyone, however, who is trying to understand how a particular

style comes into being, it is necessary to note that

there are two ways by which a phrase is produced; one is by remembering it, the other is through creating it by analogy with other phrases; and it may well be impossible to differentiate between the two. While both remembering and creating (in the sense of making, not necessarily "originating") play important roles, the latter, creating, is especially significant. The singer cannot, and does not, remember enough to sing a song; he must, and does, learn to create phrases. Hence the most important elements in the style are the basic patterns which we have illustrated, and which are established at this period.

In the course of time and of much practice, the need for a particular phrase arises over and over again. Whether it is one remembered from other singers or one created anew (and perhaps re-created several times as the nedd recurs), a phrase becomes set in the poet's mind, and he uses it regularly. Then, and only then, is the formula really born. The remembered phrase may have been a formula in the other singer's songs, but is not a formula for our singer until its regular use in his songs is established. The remembered phrases from other singers are more numerous, of course, in the early years of training, and decrease gradually as the ability to make phrases is developed, although both processes continue during the singer's lifetime. The phrases for the ideas most commonly used become more securely fixed than those for less frequent ideas, with the result that a singer's formulas are not all of the same degree of fixity. Indeed, the creating of phrases continues always as well. I believe that we are justified in considering that the creating of phrases is the true art of the singer on the level of line formation, and it is this facility rather than his memory of relatively ffixed formulas that marks him as a skillful singer in performance.

The very fact that the practice of oral narrative song has endured so long is proof enough that it can absorb new ideas and construct new formulas. But the process of building formulas is so quiet and unspectacular and so slow that it is almost imperceptible. Since the patterns of thought and the rhythm of presentation remain unchanged, the new words in the formulas are not noticed except when the ideas behind them are in striking contrast to the surroundings in which they occur. Thus proper names, recent foreign or international words, and the inventions of a mechanized age, when they find their way into the songs, as they do and must, provide us with the means of studying new formulas. It would be

nonsense to suppose that the singer in whose songs these novelties are found is their originator. He may be, but

the chances are against it.

New formulas are made by putting new words into the old patterns. If they do not fit they cannot be used, but the patterns are many and their complexity is great, so that there are few new words that cannot be poured into them. Salih Ugljanin's song of the Greek War, a song which he claimed to have made up himself, contains some new ideas. He uses the word *Avropa* in the sense of "the rulers of Europe", *Avropa me odi zatvorila,* ""Europe imprisoned me here", and *Avropa me* is only a variation of *Ibrahim me* or *Mustafa me*. The Queen of England, although a newcomer, is perfectly at home in the line *Misir dale ingliskoj kraljica*, "They gave Egypt to the Queen of England"; we are familiar with both the *moskovska kraljica,* "the Queen of Moscow" and the *bagdatska kraljica,* "The Queen of Baghdad". When, however, we come upon *Ti nachini sitne teljigrafe,* "Prepare short telegrams", the newness strikes us in the face. Salih is singing of a new age and he has simply substituted the new means of communication for the old type of official document, the *bujruntija*. *Ti nachini sitne bujruntije* was his model. But when he tries to use the three-syllable nominative singular *teljigraf* he runs into difficulty. The nominative singular *bujruntije* has four syllables, and the other most common missives, *kniga* and *ferman*, have two. Formulas for communication have been built with either four- or two-syllable words in mind. He is thinking of *Od sultana brzhe kniga dode*, or *Od sultana brzhe ferman dode*, "A ferman came swiftly from the sultan", when he sings *Od sultana brzhe tekjigraf dode.* In the last appearance of the word in his song he has solved the problem and found the right pattern: *Pa kad takav teljigraf dolazi,* "When such a telegram arrived."

Even in a song of olden times new words have crept in. Avdo Mededovic uses terms that he must have picked up when he was in the army. In Parry Text 12389, the action of which, at least in Avdo's imagination, is placed in the days of Sulejman the Magnificent, we find *Moja bracho, moje dve* ***kolege***, "My brothers, my two colleagues" (line 415), *O* ***kolega***, *Fetibegovichu*, "O my colleague, Fetibegovic" (line 2376), *Jas am na to* ***riskirao*** *glavu,* "It is for that that I risked my life" (line 1570), *A na njima careva* ***niforma,*** "They were wearing imperial uniforms" (line 4085), and *sve* ***soldata,*** *sve pogranichara,* "All soldiers, all men of the border" (line 6794). One can thus observe that the Yugoslav tradition was still very much alive in 1935

and still receptive to new ideas and new formulas.

We have seen a bard's formulas coming into existence from the earliest period of his singing and we have noted the significant fact that they are not all

alike either in their genesis or in their intensity of "formulicity". We have also suggested that the formulas themselves are perhaps less important in understanding this oral technique that the various underlying patterns of formulas and the ability to make phrases according to those patterns.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, we must hasten to assert that in speaking of "creating" phrases in performance we do not intend to convey the idea that the singer *seeks originality* or fineness of expression. He seeks expression of the idea under stress of performance. Expression is his business, not originality, which, indeed, is a concept quite foreign to him and one that he would avoid, if he understood it. To say that the *opportunity* for originality and for finding the "poetically" fine phrase exists does *not* mean that the *desire* for originality also exists. There are periods and styles in which originality is *not* ata premium. If the singer knows a ready-made phrase and thinks of it, he uses it without hesitation, but he has, as we have seen, a method of making phrases when he either does not know one or cannot remember one. This is the situation more frequently than we tend to believe.

* * *

Thus far we have attempted to show the way in which the formulaic style enters into the consciousness of a young singer as he learns to use it for the telling of tales. Such a living art, so closely united to individual experience, cannot help but leave its peculiar stamp upon the songs and their texts. Because of this mark left upon them we can with a high degree of certainty determine whether any text that is before us was formed by a traditional bard in the crucible of oral composition.

Formula analysis, or even more generally textual analysis, must begin with a scrutiny of a sample passage in order to discover the phrases in it that are repeated elsewhere in as much of the work of an individual singer as there is available. In doing this we are following Parry's example. He took the first twenty-five lines of the Iliad and of the Odyssey and underlined these groups of words which he found repeated elsewhere in Homer. One needs only to glance at his charts to see how many formulas there are in

those samples. ...

From Volume II of the Parry Collection we have chosen a passage of fifteen lines from the Song of Baghdad, which was sung for phonograph recording by Salih Ugljanin in Novi Pazar in 1934. The singer was an old man at the time of recording and an accomplished

performer with a large repertoire, which he claimed included one hundred songs. His style, therefore, is not that of a beginner. The sample has been selected from the middle of the song rather than from the very beginning, because many of the Yugoslav songs open with an invocation which can be used for nay song. Most Yugoslav epics are shorter than the Homeric poems, and we have had to use several of salih's songs for corroborative purposes, rather than just two, in order to have sufficient material for analysis.

We have attempted, moreover, to choose a passage that did not contain one of the more frequently recurring themes such as those of letter-writing or of the arrival of an army on the field of assembly. In other words, the sample has been selected with an eye to making the experiment as valid as possible and to anticipating any objection which might be brought that the passage is of a sort that would be more formulaic by the very nature of its position or of its contents. For a similar reason, we have not admitted as supporting evidence for establishing a formula any repetition which occurs in the same passage in two other versions of the same song by the same singer which are included in the material analyzed. …

…One should not conclude, of course, that these singers learned these formulas from Salih or he from them. Salih learned them bit by bit from the singers whom he heard, and they from all whom they heard, and so forth back for generations. It would be impossible to determine who originated any of them. All that can be said is that they are common to the tradition; they belong to the "common stock" of formulas.

Although the formulas which any singer has in his repertoire could be found in the repertoires of other singers, it would be a mistake to conclude that all the formulas in the tradition are known to all the singers. There is no "check-list" or "handbook" of formulas that all singers follow. Formulas are, after all, the means of expressing the themes of the poetry, and, therefore, a singer's stock of formulas will be directly proportionate to the number of different themes which he knows. Obviously singers vary in the size of their repertoires of thematic material; the younger singer knows fewer themes than the older; the less experienced and less skilled singer knows fewer

than the more expert. Even if, individually, every formula that a singer uses can be found elsewhere in the tradition, no two singers would at any time have the same formulas in their repertoires. In fact, any given singer's stock of formulas will not remain constant but will fluctuate with his repertoire of thematic material. Were it possible to obtain at some moment of time a

complete repertoire of two singers, no matter how close their relationship, and from that repertoire to make a list of the formulas which they know at that moment of time, there would not be complete identity in the two lists.

What is true for individuals is true also for districts. Differences of dialect and vocabulary, of linguistic, social, and political history will be reflected in thematic material and in formulas. The songs of Christian groups will have themes and formulas distinctive from those of Muslim groups, and *vice versa*. The formulas stock of the Serbocroatian speaking district as a whole will be the sum total of the formulas known to its singers, but not all the singers will know all the formulas. One is ever being forced to return to the individual singer, to his repertoire of formulas and themes, to the quality of his practice of the traditional art. One must always begin with the individual and work outwards from him to the group to which he belongs, namely to singers who have influenced him, and then to the district, and in ever enlarging circles until the whole language area is included.

There would, however, be a large group of formulas known to all singers, just as in any speech community there are words and phrases in the language known to and used by all the speakers in that community, so too the stock of formulas known to all practitioners of the art of traditional narrative poetry represent the most common snd most useful ideas in the poetry. Again they can be correlated with the thematic material. This common stock of formulas gives the traditional songs a homogeneity which strikes the listener or reader as soon as he has heard or read more than one song and creates the impression that all singers know all the same formulas.

The question whether any formula belongs to the common stock of formulas cannot be decided merely on the basis of its relative frequency in the songs of any given singer. In order to find the answer we must know its distribution among the singers of the tradition. For work of this sort a formula index is necessary, but this is a labor of many hands over many years. Only by compiling such an index could we determine with any degree of accuracy the frequency and distribution of

formulas and the number of different formulas within a tradition. It would readily show us what formulas comprise the common stock of two or more individual singers, of a given district, or of a group of districts, and of the language tradition as a whole. This would do for formula study what the great motif indexes have done for thematic study.

Once a singer has solved a particular problem in

verse-making, does he attempt to find any other solution for it? In other words, does he have twi formulas, metrically equivalent, which express the same essential idea? Parry has shown how ”thrifty”Homer was in this respect. Bowra has indicated that this thrift is not found in other oral poetry. …

… Our brief excursion into the principle of thrift in actual oral composition among Yugoslav singers has served to emphasize the context of the moment when a given line is made. In order to understand why one phrase was used and not another, we have had to note not only its meaning, length, and rhythmic content, but also its sounds, and the sound patterns formed by what precedes and follows it. We have had to examine also the habits of the singer in other lines, so that we may enter into his mind at the critical creative moment. We have found him doing more than merely juggling set phrases. Indeed, it is easy to see that he employs a set phrase because it is useful and answers his need, but it is not sacrosanct. What stability it has comes from its utility, not from a feeling on the part of the singer that it cannot or must not be changed. It, too, is capable of adjustment. In making his lines the singer is not bound by the formula. The formulaic technique was developed to serve him as a craftsman, not to enslave him.

In the foregoing, for the sake of clarity, we have spoken only of single lines and their parts. In actuality, lines cannot be isolated from what precedes them. The singer’s problem is to construct one line after another very rapidly. The need for the “next” line is upon him even before he utters the final syllable of a line. There is urgency. To meet it the singer builds patterns of sequences of lines, which we know of as the “parallelisms” of oral style. As we have said, some sense of these is gained in the pre-singing period, but when the singer begins to practice and to train himself the patterns here too must become specific. Moving from one line to another is not merely, perhaps not even correctly, the adding of one ready-made phrase, or group of ready-made phrases, to another. Oddly enough, because of the variety of patterns for sequences of lines there is greater

flexibility possible and greater skill is needed than in pure juxtaposition of formulas. The complexity and artistry of the result are often surprising to anyone who feels that illiterate singers can produce only simple structures. The passages below, chosen almost at random, will serve to illustrate the potentialities of the style.

In South Slavic song, the end of a line is marked by a pause for breath, by a distortion of the final

syllable or syllables, frequently by an ornamental turn in the musical accompaniment. Since it is the close of a unit of composition, it is clearly emphasized. Very rarely indeed does a thought hang in the air incomplete at the end of the line; usually we could place a period after each verse. Of 2400 lines of Yugoslav epic analyzed, 44.5 per cent showed no enjambement, 40.6 percent showed unperiodic enjambment (that is, the sense was complete at the end of the line, but the sentence continued) and only 14.9 per cent involved necessary enjambement. The greatest number of exceptions in Yugoslav epic involve a preceding subordinate clause, or a line consisting of a noun in the vocative case plus modifiers, and even in these cases a thought, even is it is not the main thought of the sentence, has been presented whole by the end of the line. The absence of necessary enjambement is a characteristic of oral composition and is one of the easiest touchstones to apply in testing the orality of a poem. Millman Parry has called it an “adding style”; the term is apt. ...

* * *

…The poetic grammar of oral epic is and must be based on the formula. It is a grammar of parataxis and of frequently used and useful phrases. Usefulness in composition carries no implication of opprobrium. Quite the contrary. Without this usefulness the style, and, more important, the whole practice would collapse or would never have been born. The singer’s mode of composition is dictated by the demands of performance at high speed, and he depends upon inculcated habit and association of sounds, words, phrases, and lines. He does not shrink from the habitual; nor does he either require the fixed for memorization or seek the unusual for its own sake. His oft-used phrases and ines lose something in sharpness, yet many of them must resound with overtones from the dim past whence they came. Were we to train our ears to catch these echoes, we might cease to apply the clichés of another criticism to oral poetry, and thereby become aware of its own riches.

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For while I have stressed usefulness and necessity in composition as essential considerations in studying formulas and the whole formulaic style, it may well be that these characteristics belong to the preservation and development of that style and of the formula rather than to their origins. It is certainly possible that a formula entered the poetry because its acoustic patterns emphasized by repetition a potent word or idea was kept after the peculiar potencywhich it symbolized and which might say it even was intended to make effective was lost – kept because the fragrance of its past importance

still clung vaguely to it and kept also because it was now useful in composition. It is *then* that the repeated phrases, hitherto a driving force in the direction of accomplishment of those blessings to be conferred by the story in song, began to lose their precision through frequent use. Meaning in them became vestigial, connotative rather than denotative. From the point of view of usefulness in composition, the formula means its essential idea; that is to say, a noun-epithet formula has the essential idea of its noun. The "drunken tavern" means "tavern". But this is only from the point of view of the singer composing, of the craftsman in lines.

And I am sure that the essential idea of the formula is what is in the mind of the singer, almost as a reflex action in rapid composition, as he makes his song. Hence it could, I believe, be truly stated that the formula not only is stripped to its essential idea in the mind of the composing singer, but also is denied some of the possibilities of aesthetic reference in context. I am thinking especially of what might be called the artistically weighted epithet: what later literary critics find "ironic" or "pathetic". Indeed one might even term this kind of criticism "the pathetic fallacy" in that it attributes to an innocent epithet a pathos felt only by the critic, but not acknowledged or perhaps even dreamed of by either the poet of his audience. Being part of the tradition, they understand its characteristics and necessities. Nevertheless, the tradition, what we might term the inherited stories from the past – the tradition cannot be said to ignore the epithet, to consider it as mere decoration or even to consider it as mere metrical convenience. The tradition feels a sense of meaning in the epithet, and thus a special meaning is imparted to the noun and to the formula. Of course every adjective and epithet can be said to do this, but I am not thinking in this case about the surface denotative meaning of the adjective, but rather of the traditional meaning. For it is certain that the singer means on the

surface "drunken tavern" to mean a tavern in which men drink and become drunk, but it could well be be argued that the epithet is preserved in the tradition because it was used in stories where the tavern was the symbol for an entrance into the other world and the drinking involved is the drinking of the cup of forgetfulness, of the waters of Lethe, and that the drunkenness involved is not that of the ordinary carousel, but is itself a symbol for consciousness in another world, perhaps even death. This meaning comes to it from comes to it from the special, peculiar purpose of oral epic song at its origin, which was magical and ritual before it became heroic.

The sense of "drunken" becomes clear when one follows the various stories of marko Kraljevic and his brother Andrija, for example, in which Andrija is lured by a tavern maid into her tavern, where he is made drunk by a band of Turks and then killed. Some of the variants have him asking for water rather than wine because he has been contending with his brother to determine which could stand thirst the longer; and Andrija breaks a taboo imposed by his brother in that he dismounts from his horse although instructed not to do so, and enters the tavern. Other variants have Marko reporting his brother's death to their mother according to the elaborate instructions given by a dying Andrija, and saying that Andrija has fallen in love with a girl in a far-off country who has given him of the waters of forgetfulness so that he will not return. This last is from our earliest version in the sixteenth century; other examples can be found in the songs of Volume I of the Parry Collection.

Webster may well be correct in regard to his tracing of the meaning of formulas, such as "ox-eyed Hera" and "bright-eyed Athene" to cult songs, although it is not entirely clear what he means by them. These epithets do seem to refer to the epiphanies of the goddesses and thus to strengthen the power of the invocation of the goddess by the repetition of the goddess in several different ways, that is to say, not only by invoking her by her name but also by her epiphany. I think we are safe in assuming that the repetition was there in two forms originally, not for the sake of metre, nor for the sake of convenience in building a line, but rather for the sake of redoubled prayer in its hope of surer fulfillment. The metrical convenience, or even better, the metrical necessity, is probably a late phenomenon, indispensable for the growth of epic from what must have been comparatively simple narrative incantations to more complex tales intended more and more for entertainment. This was a

change concomitant with the gradual shift toward the heroic and eventually the historic. It is quite likely that the later stages could not have developed until the formula became a compositional device; yet because of its past it never could become merely a compositional device. Its symbols, its sounds, its patterns were born for magic productivity, not for aesthetic satisfaction. If later they provided such satisfaction, it was only to generations which had forgotten their real meaning. The poet was sorcerer and seer before he became "artist". His structures were not abstract art, or art for its own sake. The roots of oral traditional narrative are not artistic but religious in the broadest sense."(2)

At the beginning of my course in comparative religion at the University of Miami of Ohio, the professor, Stanley Lusby, gave a number of definitions of religion by various authors. A few were simply absurd, others were not, but it was obvious that none were satisfactory. The reason was that said definitions, while not necessarily absurd nor completely false, were incomplete, inadequate. When one recalls the limitations of human language, it becomes obvious that a complete, comprehensive definition of religion is practically impossible; I have no doubt that Mr. Lord would be in agreement with this. Therefore, while one may have problems with Mr. Lord's definition of religion as implied in the above, no doubt he would agree that said implied definition is neither complete nor definitive nor comprehensive.

Below is a study of a Montenegrin *guslar* or traditional epic singer by Albert Bates Lord:

Avdo Mededovic, *Guslar*

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> Demodocus, I praise you beyond all mortal men, whether your teacher was the muse, the child of Zeus, or was Apollo.
>
> -Homer, *Odyssey* 8.487-488
>
> Avdo Mededovic of the village of Obrov, a half-hour's walk from Bijelo Olje in eastern Montenegro, died sometime during 1955 at the approximate age of eighty-five. It may well be that he was the last of the truly great *guslari* of the Balkan Slavic tradition of oral narrative song. The texts of some of his songs that were recorded for the enlightenment of the scholarly world have been published, but his real fame is still athing of the future. Yet his passing must not go unmarked by the scholars who have benefitted much already by his

remarkable talents.

Avdo was Muslim, as is clear from his given name, Abdullah; but by blood he was Slavic. In centuries past his family had ben Serbian Orthodox and had come from central Montenegro; they were related to the Rovchani and came from Nikshich. Avdo knew neither when nor why they had embraced Islam.

During the first half of his life Avdo was a Turkish subject; for up to the First World War Bijelo Polje belonged to the Sandzhak of Novi Pazar in the (Ottoman) Turkish Empire. Here he was born and here he lived and died. His father and grandfather were butchers in the town, and in his mid-teens Avdo began to learn their trade. After some two years of apprenticeship he went into the army as "a still beardless youth", and when he returned seven years later his father did not recognize him.

In the army he spent three years in Kriva Palanka on the Bulgarian border. For another year he fought with Shemsi Pasha in Albania, and then after six months at Kumanovo near Skopje in Macedonia he was sent to a school for noncommissioned officers in Salonika, where, according to his own account, he "rotted for a year and emerged a sergeant". He then passed another year in Kriva Palanka drilling others in the tactics he had learned under "*Alamani*" (German) officers in Salonika, after which he was on guard duty for six months at a post on the Bulgarian frontier "under the skies, high in the mountains". When he returned to headquarters his discharge came.

It is characteristic of Avdo that the only time that he was disciplined in the army was after he struck an "Anatolian" with the butt of his rifle for cursing the faith (*din*). Ordinarily a peaceful man, he was stirred deeply by the religious laxity of the Anatolian

Turks, whom he called "unbelievers". He was himself devout and conservative, a person of lofty principles, yet unostentatious. All this is reflected in his poems.

Although Avdo learned to speak and understand Turkish in the army, he was never able to read or write any language. In those days there were only Turkish language schools, and his father had never sent him to them. During his lifetime he saw the growth of literacy in younger generations and shared both the feeling of inferiority and the pride of accomplishment of those illiterates who had led successful lives. It was "stupid" he thought, in retrospect, that he had never learned to read and write; and yet, in spite of that, he had been a good tradesman because he was honest. He had the respect and confidence of his fellow merchants. One of the greatest shocks of his life had come when the son to whom he had given over his business and all his

capital, so that Avdo himself might retire peacefully to the farm, had squandered everything in riotous living. There was bitter disillusionment in his voice as he told of it. He had been brought up to honor and obey his father and to believe that "as a man sows, so shall he reap". Having been a good son, he felt that he deserved to have a good son.

In Avdo's song, "The Wedding of Meho, Son of Smail", there is a deep personal ring in the words of young Mehmed when asked whether the old man are better that the young. "Opinions are divided", he said, "but mine shall ever be that the old men are better than the young." His questioner replied: "Bravo, my dear son! If God grants, you will be an honor to us." 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.

After serving in the army, Avdo returned to his trade with his father, but later he was called up again as a border guard, this time on the Montenegrin frontier, where he stayed for ayear and a half. He was wounded in the Balkan wars; his right arm was broken by a bullet. With some epic exaggeration he told of how the doctor in Bijelo Polje cound not stop the blood for four days and finally had to put him on a horse and send him with two soldiers to Senica. Here the doctor did not dare even to inspect his wound but sent him on to Novi Pazar. Four doctors looked him over, saw the danger, and sent him to Mitrovica, where twelve doctors consulted together about his case and then sent him post haste by train to Salonika. There he lay in the hospital forty-five days. One bullet was extracted, but another remained in his arm for the rest of his life.

Two years after returning from the army he was

married, when, according to his reckoning, he was twenty-nine years old. It was at this time that he acquired the little farm in Obrov. His friends had praised a girl in the village to him, and he married her, as the custom was, without ever setting eyes on her or she on him. He lived through the terror of the First World War and somehow managed to keep hi butcher shop. His descriptions of the lot of the Muslims in Bijelo Polje during the few months immediately following the downfall of Turkey are graphic. Until the new law and government were set up, for a period of abouth three months, the Muslims were plundered and killed by their former Christian subjects, the *raja*. Avdo was among those who survived; his family had never been rich, they had never been "*aghas*".

He watched the world around him torn to shreds once more by the Second World War. During these later years of his life he had the satisfaction that as father and

patriarch he felt was his right. One son had disappointed him, but two other sons stayed by him and cared for him. He had daughters-in-law to help his wife and a grandson to dandle on his knee. He was a quiet family man in a disturbed and brutal world. The high moral tone of his songs is genuine. His pride in tales of the glories of the (Ottoman) Turkish Empire in the days of Suljman, when it was at ist height and when "Bosnia was its lock and its golden key", was poignantly sincere without ever being militant or chauvinistic. That empire was dead, and Avdo knew it, because he had been there to hear its death rattle. But it had once been great in spite of the corruption of the imperial nobility surrounding the sultan. To Avdo its greatness was in the moral fibre and loyal dedication of the Bosnain heroes of the past even more than in the strength of their arms. These characteristics of Avdo's poems, as well as a truly amazing sensitivity for the feelings of other human beings, spring from within the singer himself. Avdo believed with conviction in the tradition that he exemplified.

Milman Parry of Harvard University's Department of Classics collected epic songs from Avdo during the months of July and August 1935. Avdo had a repertoire of fifty-eight epics; Parry recorded nine of these on phonograph discs and Nikola Vujnovic, Parry's assistant, wrote down four other from Avdo's dictation. ...

...The mere bulk of these spic songs is astonishing: 637 record sides, or 319 twelve-inch phonograph discs recorded on both sides; 44,902 lines sung on discs, and 33,653 lines written from dictation.

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His longest song on record contains 13,331 lines and fills 199 record sides, or 100 twelve-inch discs recorded on both sides. If one reckons five minutes of singing on one side of a record, then this song represents more than sixteen hours of singing time. The total singing time for all the recorded material listed here is approximately fifty-three hours.

To these songs must be added the conversations with Avdo that were recorded on discs. These conversations cover 180 twelve-inch records recorded on both sides. These conversations cover 180 twelve-inch records recorded on both sides. In other words, the total recorded songs and conversations from this single singer fill 499 discs on both sides, or nearly one-seventh of the 3,584 twelve-inch records in the entire Parry Collection from the 1930s. The conversations contain the story of his life, a lengthy discussion of the singers from whom he learned his songs, and a running commentary from questions prepared beforehand by Parry to two of his texts, "The Arrival of the Vizier in Travnik" and "The Wedding of Meho, Son of Smail".

It was my privilege to return to Bijelo Polje in 1950 and 1951, where I had been with Parry as a student in 1935, and to find Avdo still ready, in spite of poor health, to sing and recite epic songs. At that time I recorded on wire the following texts, partly sung, partly recited ...

...These additional 18, 168 lines bring the total lines of epic from Avdo Mededovic to 96,723.

The statistics alone are an indication of the value that Milman Parry placed on Avdo as a singer and tell at a glance one of the reasons for this high regard. Avdo could sing songs of about the length of Homer's Odyssey. An illiterate butcher in a small town of the central Balkans was equaling Homer's feat, at least in regard to length of song. Parry had actually seen and heard two long epics produced in a tradition of oral epic.

In the case of two of Avdo's songs, "The Wedding of Meho, Son of Smail" and "Bechiragic Meho", we had the exact original from which Avdo had learned them and we knew the circumstances under which he acquired them. A friend of his had read "The Wedding of Meho" to him five or six times from a published version. It had been written down in 1885 by F.S. Krauss from an eighty-five-year old singer named Ahmed Isakov. Shemic in Rotimlje, Hercegovina, and had been published in Dubrovnik in 1886. It was later reprinted, with minor changes in dialect, in cheap paper editions in Sarajevo, without notes and introduction. In this form

it was read to Avdo. Krauss' text has 2,160 lines; Avdo's in 1935 had 12,123 lines and in 1950, 8,488 lines.

Avdo's singing of this or any other song was always longer than anyone else's performance, because he belonged in a tradition of singers who habitually "ornamented" their songs by richness of description, and because he had himself always had a fondness for this "ornamentation". His technique, and that of his fellows, was expansion from within by the addition of detail and by fullness of narrative. Catalogues are extended and also amplified by description of men and horses; journeys are described in detail; assemblies abound in speeches.

Avdo called his "ornaments", as he himself called them, from all the singers whom he heard. But he did not stop there. He admitted that he thought up some of them himself; and this is true. He told me once that he "saw in his mind every piece of trapping that he put on a horse." He visualized the scene or the action, and from that mental image formed a verbal reflection in his song. Avdo's songs are living proof that the best of oral epic singers are original poets working within the tradition in the traditional manner. These texts provide

priceless evidence for the theorists in comparative epic studies.

It is impossible here to do more than hint at illustrating this singer's technique of amplification. The opening scene of "The Wedding of Meho, Son of Smail" is an assembly of the lords of the Turkish Border in the city of Kanidzha. In Krauss' published version this assembly occupies 141 lines; Avdo's text has 1,053 lines. The essence of the assembly is that all the lords are merry except young Meho. The head of the assembly asks him why he is sad, and he replies that he alone of all of them has nothing of which to boast. He has been pampered by his father and uncle and not allowed to engage in raids across the border. He will desert to the enemy, he declares. The lords then decide that they will send him to Budapest, there to be invested by the vizier with the position of authority which his uncle has held up to this moment. The uncle is old and agrees that the time has come to give over his authority to his nephew. The lords prepare a petition to the vizier, deliver it to Meho, and the assembly is dissolved. All this is in the songbook version published by Krauss.

Avdo gaisn length by adding musch description such as the following:

> As you cast your eyes about the gathering to
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> see which hero is the best, one stands out above them all, even Mehmed, the young son of Smailaga. What a countenance has this falcon! He is a youth of not yet twenty years, and one would say and swear by Allah and the Rosary (*Tasbih*?) that the radiance from his two cheeks is like sunshine and that from his brow like unto the light of the moon. The balck 1yeue that covered his white neck was like a raven that had perched there. He was the only child his mother had borne; she cared lovingly for his queue and bound his locks over his forehead, and her son's thick dark locks curled around his fez. His mother had strung them with pearls, which completely covered the strands. His eyes were black as afalcon's, his teeth as fine as a demon's. His forehead was like a good-luck charm, his eyebrows thick as leeches. His eyelashes were so long that they covered his two cheeks even as a swallow's wings. Beard had he none, nor yet moustache. One would say that he was a fair mountain spirit. The boy's raiment was of Venetian stuff, his blouse of choice silk embroidered with gold. There was, indeed, more gold than silken fabric. His doublet was

> neither woven nor forged, but was hand embroidered with pure gold. The seams of his cloak were covered with richly embroidered gold, and golden branches were twined around his right sleeve. The young man’s arm was as thick as any other fine hero’s slender waist. The youth’s breeches were of white Venetian velvet, embroidered with pure gold, with braided snakes on the thighs. The whole glistened like the moon. He wore two Tripolitan sashes about his waist and over them the belt of arms of Venetian gold. In the belt were two small Venetian pistols which fire without flint, all plated with gold. Their sights were of precious stones, and the handles were inlaid with pearl. His Persian sword with hilt of yellow ducats was at his left side in its scabbard inlaid with pearls. Its blade was deadly steel. As the sword lay thrown across the youth’s thighs one would say a serpent was sleeping there. A golden breastplate embraced the young hero, two-pieced, reaching to his white neck. Each half of the breastplate contained an even half pound of gold, and on them both was the
>
> (376)
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> same inscription. That breastplate had been sent by the sultan to the alajbey, Smail the Pilgrim, and to his true son; for that house had held the alajbeyship for full forty-seven years by charter of Sulejman the Magnificent, by his imperial charter and appointment.

Avdo also adds new action to the assembly, action that indicates that not only is the singer’s eye observing the scene but that his mind and sensitivity to heroic feelings penetrate within the hearts of the men depicted on this animated tapestry. For example, the head of the assembly, Hasan pasha Tiro, notices that the young man is sad, and the pasha is disturbed.

> He could not bear to see the young man’s sadness, nor could he ask the lad before all the beys to speak out the cause of his sorrow. So Hasan pasha leaped to his feet and called Cifric Hasanaga: “Come here with me a moment, Hasanaga, that I may have a word with you!” Hasanaga went to Hasan pasha and sat beside him. Then Hasan pasha whispered to Hasanaga: “Hastanaga, golden plume, my heart breaks within my breast to see your brother’s

son, Mehmedaga, son of Smail the Pilgrim. All the rest are merry. He alone is sad. You go and sit beside him. Do not question him immediately, lest he notice that I called you to me for that purpose and be angry at me."

Then Hasanaga obeyed the pasha and took his seat beside Meho, the son of Smail the Pilgrim. The cursed cups flew around, and the aghas drank; for they had no cares, and no one noticed that the hero was unhappy. Since he has all he wants, why should the young man be sad? A half hour passed. Then Cifric Hasanaga leaped to his feet. "O pasha, and all you beys, have patience s moment!" They all stopped and looked at the agha. Cifric Hasanaga knelt and then asked his brother's son Mehmed: "My Mehmed, honor of our house! Why do you sit there so sad in the company of the imperial Hasan pasha Tiro and the fifty warriors of the sultan?"

This little play between the pasha and Meho's uncle is original with Avdo; I have found it nowhere

else. And it is a stroke of real genius. Only a poet who lived what he was telling would have thought of it. Avdo was the kind of person who would have done just what the pasha did. Such additions do much more, of course, than add length to the song; they make the characters in the story, in this case a usually stiff and stereotyped chief of the assembly, feeling, breathing human beings. Such touches are Homeric.

Another technique that Avdo uses very effectively in gaining length, breadth, and depth of song is the time-honored "flashback". We have seen something of it in the comment on the breastplate of Meho that had been sent by the sultan to Smail and to his son. Avdo develops this theme later in the long speech of Meho's uncle to the youth after the boy has said that he will run away to the enemy.

When you were born, your head rested on a pillowed couch, your brow fell upon gold, and your locks were strewn with pearls. My dear son, when you were born from the pearly lap of your mother, in every city up and down the Border, in Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Hungary, cannon roared and beys and aghas held festive gatherings in honor of your father Smail and me, your uncle. ... They sent word to the sultanm and the sultan sent a firman to your

father and to me, your uncle: “I congratulate you both on the birth of your son! May his life be long and honorable, and may the alajbeyship fall to him as it did to his father and to his uncle Hasan!” Nor, my son, did we pick a name for you at random, but we gave you the name of imperial Mehdija, Mehdija, the imperial pontiff. That you might live longer, we brought in three women besides your mother mother to nurse you, in order that you might receive more nourishment, grow more in a short time and attain greater strength. We could scarcely waith for you to grow up, so fur nurses gave you suck, first your mother and then the other three.

Day followed day, and after four years had passed, my son, you had grown well, in God’s faith, and were as large as any lad of eight years. Then we began your schooling and brought the imam to yur feet. We could not bear to send you away from home to school, and the imam taught you at our own house. You

studied until you were eight years old, my son, and if you had studied yet another year, you would have been a Hafiz. Then we took you from school.

When you were twelve, another firman came from Stambol asking me and your father, Smailaga, “Smailaga, how is the boy? Will he be like his father and his uncle Hasan?” And we boasted about you to the sultan: “O sovereign, most humble greetings! It is likely that the boy will be good, he will not fall much short of us.”

When your thirteenth year dawned, my son, the imperial chamberlain came from the halls of Sultan Sulejman, bringing an Egyptian chestnut horse for youm one that had been brought from the Shah of Egypt. Golden-winged, its mane reached to its hoofs. Then a two-year-old, it was like a horse of seven. The trappings were fashioned in Afghanistan especially for the chestnut steeed when it grew up. The saddle was decorated with coral, the upper portion was woven of pure gold.

It is now nineteen years, my dear son, since that day when you were born, and this is the ninth years since the chestnut steed with its trappings came to you as a gift. ... We hid the horse from you and made a special stall for him in the side of the stable.

There is no other horse with him. Two servants are in the stable and four torches burn the whole night long beside your horse. They exercise him within the stable. They groom him four times every twenty-four hours; not as any other horse is groomed, but with a scarf of silk. You should see how well-nourished the horse is, even though he has seen neither sun nor moon, my dear son, for nine years. ...

Among the clothes which have come for you is a breastplate covered with pearls; its silk is from Damascus. ... And a Persian sword was sent, which had been forged especially for you, my son, of fiery Persian steel tempered in angry poison, which cuts fierce armor. Its scabbard is decorated with pearls and its hilt with diamonds. When it was finished, they sent the sword to Mecca by an Arab messenger, who delivered it to the sheikh of the Kaaba. The sheikh inscribed it with a passage from the Sacred Book and then

blessed it. No ill can befall him who wields it. The common ranks will flee in terror before him. In Mecca, with the imperial blessing, they named the sword “The Persian Pilgrim”, because it was made for you in Persia and taken on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Woe to him who stands in its way! On its hilt are three imperial seals and two seals of the sheikh of Mecca, my son.

Upon the fur cap which was sent to you, my son, there are twelve plumes. Neither your father nor I has such a cap; how then would any other, except you to whom the sultan presented it!

Were you to gather all these treasures together, they would be worth a good Bosnian city!

I have quoted at some length not only to illustrate Avdo’s use of a Homeric type of flashback, but also to emphasize the various attributes which he has given his hero, young Mehmed. They are nor bestowed upon him in any other version of the song that I have found; they seem tome to be Avdo’s gift to Meho. Not, of course, that Avdo invented the precocious childhood, the magic horse, the wonder-working sword, and the protective breastplate and cap. These are perhaps in their essences inheritances from Slavic tradition, later reinforced by Byzantine and Ottoman influences. The glitter and

elegance remind one of Byzantium and the Sublime Porte. They can be found in the songs of other poets, although Avdo, it must be admitted, describes them more fully than I have seen elsewhere.

The wonder of this passage, however, does not rest merely in its ornamentation. It rests also in the fact that Avdo has thought fit to add these particular attributes to Mehmed. For these are the qualities and possessions of the magic hero who slays dragons and saves maidens, who rights wrongs and destroys evil. Mehmed is, indeed, that kind of hero. He kills the treacherous vizier and the vizier's henchmen; he saves a maiden; he restores law and order in Budapest, and brings exiles back from Persia. Avdo unwittingly, or by a sure instinct for the richness of the tradition in which he was steeped, has chosen the proper attributes for the proper hero. He has reliated Meho to Diogenes Akritas and to the basic epic theme of the divinem or divinely inspired, hero who is a savior of mankind. Somehow or other, Avdo Mededovic, the butcher from Bijelo Polje, had acquired a deep and unerring sense of

the well-springs of epic.

Avdo belonged to a tradition that had been in the hands of ine singers for many generations. Without such a tradition behind and around him he could not have had the materials of song. He learned his art from skilled men; first and of most lasting importance from his father. Avdo's father had been deeply influenced by a singer of his generation whose reputation seems to have been prodigious, Chor Huso Husein of Kolashin. We know something fo this singer not only from Avdo, who heard about him from his father, but also from other singers in Bijelo Polje and Novi Pazar who learned songs from Chor Huso. From the material in the Parry Collection we shall someday be able to reconstruct part of his repertoire, at least; and probably also his handling of specific hemes. His most distinctive characteristic as a singer was his ability to "ornament" a song. Of this we are told by all who knew him. Avdo was a worthy student of the school of Chor Huso.

With Avdo the song, the story itself and the telling of it, was paramount. He had exceptional powers of endurance, but his voice was not especially good. He was hoarse, and the goiter on the left side of his neck could not have helped. Nor was his playing of the *gusle* in any way of virtuoso quality. He told Parry that he learned the songs first and then the musical accompaniment. His singing ran ahead of his fingers on the instrument; thoughts and words rushed to his mind for expression, and there were times when he simply ran the bow slowly back and forth over the strings while he poured forth the tale in whet seemed to be prose of

lightning-like rapidity but was actually verse. He was not a musician, but a poet and singer of tales.

Parry in 1935 made trial of Avdo's ability to learn a song that he had never heard before. Among the singers from whom Parry collected while Avdo was dictating or resting was Mumin Vlahovljak of Plevlje. Parry arranged that Avdo was present and listening while Mumin sang "Bechiragic Meho", a song that Parry had adroitly determined was unknown to Avdo. Mumin was a good singer and his song was a fine one, running to 2,294 lines. When it was over, Parry turned to Avdo and asked him if he could now sing the same song, perhaps even sing it better than Mumin, who accepted the contest good-naturedly and sat by in his turn to listen. Avdo, indeed, addressed himself in his song to his "colleague" (*kolega*) Muminaga. And the pupil's version of the tale reached to 6,313 lines, nearly three times the length of his "original", on the first hearing!

Avdo used the same technique of expansion from

within in ornamenting "Bechragic Meho" and that which begins "Bechiragic Meho". This song also opens with an assembly of the lords of the Border. Bechiragic Meho leaves the assembly at line 1,320 in Mumin's version, at line 3,977 in Avdo's. There are similarities between the gathering T THE BGINNING OF "SMAILAGIC Meho" and that which begins "Bechiragic Meho". In the midst of the lords in both instances is a young man who is unhappy. But the head of the assembly in "Bechiragic Meho", Mustajbey of the Lika, unlike Hasan pasha Tiro, is a proud and overbearing man; and Bechiragic Meho himself is at the foot of the assembly, poor, despised. As we should expect, Avdo's telling is distinguished by richness of description and by such similes as, referring to the unhappy Meho, "His heart was wilted like a rose in the hands of a rude bachelor". But when a messenger arrives with a letter for Meho and Meho has to announce his own presence, because Mustajbey is ashamed to acknowledge him, Meho lashes out at the head of the assembly in moral indignation; and Avdo "ornaments" the theme of Meho's reproache far beyond Mumin's telling of it. Avdo has Meho remind Mustajbey that he has riches and power now, but everything comes in time; time builds towers and time destroys them. Meho said that he, too, had once been of a well-to-do family, but time and destiny had deprived him of all. Avdo's earnestness, his philosophizing and moralizing, have a personal note. As we said earlier, Avdo had seen the (Ottoman) Turkish Empire fall; and just before our arrival in Bijelo Polje, his own house had been burned to the ground. His ornamentation is not mere prettiness, nor trite sayings, but words of wisdom from personal experience.

Avdo has made two minor changes in the action of

the song up to this point that are worth noting as characteristic of his artistry. His sense of the dramatic has caused him to withhold Bechiragic Meho's identity – even though, of course, the audience is perfectly aware from the start who the unidentified young man is – until Meho himself rises to reproach Mustajbey. Even more interesting, however, is the way in which Avdo has prepared us for Nustajbey's attitude. In Mumin's version the messenger arrives, inquires if he is in Udbina, asks to have Mustajbey pointed out to him, does obeisance to the bey and then spaks. Avdo's handling of the arrival of the messenger is somewhat different. The messenger is seen from afar; Mustajbey sends his standard-bearers to meet him; they bring him before the aghas and beys and he asks if he is in Kanidzha (Avdo has changed the place). Mustajbey, rather than Halil in Mumin's version, answers, and the

messenger, noting that Mustajbey is the most honored man in the assembly, asks his name and rank. Mustajbey replies with his name and a list of all the places over which he rules. The messenger then does obeisance and speaks, beginning with flattery of Mustajbey, praising his fame. This is typical ornamentation on Avdo's part, and yet it emphasizes Mustajbey's vainglory.

These are but samples of Avdo's methods in changing and expanding the songs that he has heard. He does not, one should stress, gain length by adding one song to another. His long songs provide no solace to the theorists who have held that long epics are made of shorter ballads (*cantilenas*) strung together. Avdo's technique is similar to Homer's. It is true that some singers, when pressed to sing along song, add one song to another and mix and combine songs in various ways. This is, however, a process that good singers look down upon and do not practice.

Avdo in 1935, when he was already sixty years of age, maintained that he had been at the height of his powers when he was in his forties. We have seen a glimpse of the quality of this talented singer in his sixties and can only guess at his excellence twenty years earlier. We should do well not to minimize the extraordinary feat that he performed when he was in his eighties. For at least ten years he ahd sung very little. He was weak and ill in 1950 and 1951, and, alas, the circumstances of collecting were far from ideal. I had very little time, and working with a singer like Avdo requires leisure. Yet, even under adverse conditions, he sang and recited two long songs totaling more than 14,000 lines in about a week's time! When he finished the song of "Osmanbey Delibegovic and Pavichevic Luka", he apologized that it was shorter; he had cut down some of his descriptions of the army. He

was indeed unwell, and we took him to the doctor, who was very kind. Six thousand lines is still a sizable song. And the 8,000 and more lines of his "Smailagic Meho" in 1950 was a prodigious undertaking which few, if any, younger men could have accomplished.

His description of young Meho was shorter than that quoted earlier, but the flashback to the birth of Meho, his precocious childhood, and the gifts of the sultan, the horse, helmet, breastplate, and pilgrim sword were not forgotten. They were not in the same place in the song, however. Avdo now put them into the mouth of Meho's father after the boy had returned with his uncle to their home to inform Smail of what had happened. As Smail is about to send Meho to his mother to prepare for the journey to Budapest, Smail tells him about the horse and weapons and clothes which have been

kept for him. It is a fitting place for the theme.

Perhaps the most astonishing of Avdo's accomplishments was the reciting of the song of "Bechiragic Meho" (not to be confused with Smailagic Meho) in 1951. I have already described the circumstance under which he learned and firs sang this song in 1935. He assured me that he had not sung it since that time, nor had he heard it in the intervening years. Sixteen years and five days exactly had passed. There is some confusion toward the beginning of the 1951 text; one can feel Avdo probing his memory. He was straining to prove himself; but most of all, I believe, he sang it for Milman Parry and Nikola Vujnovic, in memory of a peaceful, sunny day so many years before. Before reciting the tale he recalled how Parry had asked him to sing the song; how he had asked to be excused, because he did not wish to take honor away from Mumin. Avdo knew that his song would be longer and more ornate. "The professor said, 'whatever is not a sin is not shameful.' So I found Mumin, and embraced him and took his hand 'You will not be hurt, because my song will be much, much longer?' "No, Avdo, I beg you as my son – he was older than I – I will not be hurt.' And the professor listened, like this professor, and Mumin sat there, and I sang." Then Avdo remembered and added "Muminaga and the professor told me that he had learned that song from Chor Husein [Chor Huso]; and Chor Husein was an excellent singer in these parts."

From the past the song was unwound and the tale emerged. Its essence, however, was from a time long before Avdo and Mumin and Chor Huso; for more than half of the song takes place in the assembly with which it opens, as Bechiragic Meho tells of his wanderings and adventures, his trials and sufferings which have brought him to his present sorry state. To those who have ears to hear, Homer is singing of Odysseus in the court of

Alcinous, recounting his wanderings and the misfortunes which had brought him to the shores of Phaeacia.

On May 21, 1939, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Nikola Vujnovic completed his review of his transcription from the records of the words of Avdo's song "Sultan Selim Captures Kandija". He wrote this note at the bottom of the page: "*Onda kad ne bude Avda medu zhivima, niche se nachi niko ko bi bio ovakav za pjevanje";* "When Avdo is no longer among the living, there will be no one like him in singing". He has left behind him, however, songs that will be remembered in days to come."(3)

We now give a more general view of epic song by Albert Bates

Lord.

Words Heard and Words Seen

"It seems superfluous to remark that in the history of mankind words were heard before they were seen. For the majority of people, as a matter of fact, words still are heard rather than seen, and even those who have learned to visualize words as containing particular letters in a particular sequence continue to operate much of the time with the heard, and hence the spoken, word. In our individual experience we share in varying degrees in both worlds. We have gone in our individual development from orally conceived words, without visible representation, existing within boundaries defined by utterance rather than spelling, to a sense of words with rigid, visual characteristics; cultures, like individuals, moved from one world to another through a series of gradual ada[potations. Although the two worlds, the oral and the written, of thought and its expression, exhibit some striking and important differences, they are not really separate worlds.

As my title indicates, I intend to discuss words rather than orality, words in their oral form, as it were, and words in their written form. I want particularly to treat the artistic use of words in what we rightly call literature, the oldest literature in the human world, and its significance for "written literature".

We use the word "literature" in at least two senses. When the automobile salesman tells us that he will give us the "literature" about a given model of car, he is not using the word in the same sense as the Department of English `1Literature at a university. When scholars say that they have read all the "literature" on Beowulf they are not speaking of belles-lettres. The saleman's "literature" means "something in writing", and

the scholars' "literature" indicates "what has been written" on the Old English epic. In this case. Scholars and salesmen are using the word with the same meaning. The English department, on the other hand, has made a qualitative judgement on part of the vast amount of written documents. Some people, stressing the etymology of the word "literature", make a distinction between the written and the nonwritten, thus viewing all literature as written, by definition, as the origin of the word implies. At the same time, the same people might hesitate to subscribe to the idea that everything that is written is literature, although that is the

automobile salesman's attitude. They would insist that literature means belles-lettres. This is a well-attested use of the word. Surely you have heard someone say that a given piece of writing is not "literature". Sometimes writings that contain many obscenities are condemned because they are *not* literature. Whichever side may be in the right, they are both speaking about the quality of what is written, not whether it is written or not. In that use of the word "literature", therefore, we make a distinction of quality among various expressions in words. It is to that meaning of literature that I turn, for under it we can speak of both an oral and a written literature, products of verbal expression of high artistic quality. In sum, words heard, when set in the forms of art, are oral literature; words seen, when set in the forms of art, are written literature.

These considerations lead us to the question of what the role of writing is in literature. Written literature is dependent on writing. That sounds axiomatic, but the type of literature that I think of as "written literature" *par excellence*, historically, was created in writing and was impossible without writing. Let me illustrate by way of explanation. Can you imagine James Joyce's Ulysses being created without writing? Or a poem of e.e. cummings, whose very name must be seen to be recognized? Or a short, graphic example from Ezra Pound's Canto LXXVI:

> Nothing matters but the quality
> Of the affection –
> In the end – that has carved the trace in the mind
> *Dove sta memoria*.

This is visual poetry; its very placement on the written or printed page indicates a phrasing and emphasis in meaning; and its lack of punctuation is a purposeful element put there by the author to convey a message. You must see it to understand it fully. The Italian quotation was taken from Guido Cavalcanti's *Donna mi prega*. This is real borrowing from a thirteenth-century

poet, impossible without a written text. This kind of poetry requires writing. These words have to be seen.

Even such lines as the following from Yeats' the Wanderings of Oisin, which exhibit some of the characteristics of oral literature, are inconceivable without writing:

> Like sooty fingers, many a tree
> Rose ever out of the warm sea;
> (386)

> And they were trembling ceaselessly,
> As though they all were beating time,
> Upon the centre of the sun,
> To that low laughing woodland rhyme.
> And, now our wandering hours were done,
> We cantered to the shore, and knew
> The reason of the trembling trees;
> Round every branch the song-birds flew,
> Or clung thereon like swarming bees;
> While round the shore a million stood
> Like drops of frozen rainbow light,
> And pondered in a soft vain mood
> Upon their shadows in the tide,
> And told the purple deep their pride,
> And murmured snatches of delight;
> And on the shores were many boats
> With bending sterns and bending bows,
> And carven figures on their prows
> Of bitterns and fish-eating stoats,
> And swans with their exultant throats.

In spite of the adding style of this lovely passage – balanced as it is, nevertheless, with necessary enjambements – this poetry must be seen as well as heard, so that one may go over it again and again to appreciate its subtleties. If Yeats' lines were *really* oral-traditional lines, and if you were in the traditional audience or its equivalent, you would not need to go back over them to savor them. The traditional diction would be familiar, known, understood, and appreciated on first hearing, because words and word-clusters or configurations like them had been heard before. They were "just right". On the other hand, the phrase "sooty fingers" has no traditional resonances, and the same can be said for the sentence "many a tree rose out of the warm sea". This is neither traditional diction nor traditional imagery. It is individualistic in an individualist's milieu. Its particular style, its striking choice of words and ideas and poetic combinations are purely Yeats. Song-birds cling to every branch "like swarming bees", which just might be traditional, but a million of them stand on the shore "like drops of frozen rainbow light", which I wager was

not. These delights are in a tradition of *written* poetry, but are not in an oral *traditional* Hiberno-English poetry. The technique here, indeed, is to seek a striking nontraditional image.

Few cultures with which I am acquainted have developed writing from within their own society. For many of them writing was brought to them from outside,

from a "more advanced" culture, or at least from a culture with writing. But writing does not always imply written literature. The ancient Greeks first presumably devised a script called Linear B, probably adapted from one called Linear A, in the second millennium BC; and in the eighth century BC they borrowed and modified the Phoenician alphabet for writing the Greek language. One of the noteworthy facts about Linear B is that it seems not to have been used for writing down Mycenean oral-traditional literature or even for creating a written Mycenean literature. Mycenean literacy served the interests of trade or religion. In Mycenean times, to be literate had practical mercantile or cult implications but none concerning the culture of literature.

The Greeks themselves then developed a literary culture from within their own ranks. There may have beeb outside models from ancient Near Eastern cultures with writing *and* with a literature in writing, be it written down or primary, which influenced the Greeks in that development. I have often wondered whence the idea came to someone in the eighth century BC to write down the Homeric poems, since whatever had been written up to that point had been aimed to further commerce or administration. There is the possibility that the writing of the earliest Hebrew scriptures, or the terracotta tablets of other Near and Middle Eastern peoples, may have become known to the Greeks from their contacts with the Near East and that they may have given the Greeks the idea of writing down their own myths.

Greek literature was already formed when it was first written down. The earliest written texts, such as the Homeric poems, could not be transitional, because oral literature was highly developed and so far as we know, written literature, as *written* literature, was nonexistent when they were recorded. It might be said that on the basis of the oral-traditional Homeric poems and other archaic Greek poetry ancient Greek written literature was created. The oral period must have lasted for a long time and true written literature must have been worked out very gradually; oral literature satisfied all the requirements.

Writing did however, provide an opportunity for Homer to dictate – or write, if you wish, although I find the idea incongruous – a song, or songs, longer than a normal performance. It took away one set of time

limits, that of performance before an audience, the circumstances under which the traditional epic was usually sung. It imposed another set of time limits, more flexible, but artificial and probably difficult

for the poet/singer without the accustomed type of audience. Yet the flexible time limits held great potential for more prolonged composing than occasion usually afforded, a different kind of performance, as it were. At this stage, that potential was for greater *length*, for more of the same, nothing else.

The case of the Germanic peoples is in part much the same as that of the Greeks. They had a runic alphabet with a restricted and nonliterary use. Like the Mycenaeans, they did not have a literature written in that, their own, alphabet. Like the Mycenaeans, too, they had an oral-traditional literature. That it was highly developed we know, because when it eventually came to be written down, it was revealed to be of a complexity in its structure that argued a formative period of generations before writing recorded it. Words heard were sufficient for literature, for ritual utterances, for the recounting of myths, and for the telling and singing of tales, just as words heard were sufficient for everyday communication. Literary language, oral or written, after all, differs from everyday language in its function, particularly in its association with the sacred world. It was characterized by repetitions of sounds, and by parallelisms of structure, for example, which had the function of rendering magic utterances more powerful and hence more surely effective. Writing was not needed for those devices. In fact, when you come to think of it, the written word becomes operable as sound only when spoken aloud! Many basic rhetorical devices of written literature do not depend on words being seen, but come to life only when they are words heard.

In the case of the Germanic tribes in continental Germany, Scandinavia, Iceland, and England, writing was not used to record and eventually really to write literature, until the peoples were converted to Christianity (as we shall see, this was true of the Goths, though they almost certainly invented runes, hence Jordanes' saying: "the Goths have always known the use of letters", there is no evidence that they had a written literature before their conversion to Arianism by Ulfilas [or *Wulflein*], who made an alphabet for the Gothic language, using mainly Latin letters with a few runes for sounds unknown in Latin. Runes were apparently used only for cultic and decorative purposes; in fact, today there exists a certain fashion for the use of runes for ornamental purposes due to their exotic and decorative appearance. As we shall see, there obviously

existed an oral, traditional literature among the Goths long before the time of Ulfilas). The Church, moreover, brought these tribes

not only an alphabet, but a developed literature in a hieratical language. The al0phabet that came with Latin was used to write down some of the oral literature. Since that literature was pagan – i.e., non-Christian – in its sacred ambience, however, the Christian Latin texts were translated or paraphrased in the vulgar tongue so that the teachings could be understood by those who did not know Latin. And the pagan oral-traditional literature of the peoples was sometimes adapted, when possible, to Christian ideology. And thus gradually a new phase began in those literatures and a real written literature in those languages began to appear. It was an amalgam of two cultures, the vernacular with its own developed oral-traditional literary style and the new Christian Latin culture. The first effect of the latter was on ideas, on content, rather than on style, because, especially in poetry, Latin written style was not easy to reproduce in the metrical and alliterative schemes of Germanic verse. The oral-traditional vernacular style continued for some time to be the backbone of the new vernacular written literatures. Only then among the Teutonic peoples did words heard become literally words seen. Yet, except for a certain small and limited group of people, the literate – not only those who could read and write, but, more specifically, those who actually *read* literature – the vision of the world of orality changed not one iota.

Latin brought with it not only religious writings and the works of the Church Fathers such as St. Augustine, but it also made available the great writers of ancient Rome, such as Virgil and Ovid, and the new non-religious Latin literature. All these writings eventually played a decisive role in the development of the new literature in the vernacular. And a new secular Latin literature appeared, which for a while dominated the learned world as well as producing a Medieval Latin literature of great distinction.

Oral literature did not need writing to become literature, and it continued long after writing was invented. Walter J. Ong has given us a useful term, “oral residue”, referring to the characteristics of orality which remain in the world of literacy after the introduction of writing. The term applies very well to literature. But his “characteristics of orality”, given in his book Orality and Literacy, were really intended to cover may other areas than literature. Accordingly, they apply more widely than “words heard and words seen”, to encompass a psychology of the “oral mind” and many facets of the world of the unlettered, including

their literature and its

interaction with the written word.

At this point it would be helpful to distinguish oral iterature from oral history and also to place oral literature in respect to that vague but useful term "oral tradition". Sometimes that term is synonymous with oral literature; it may be another way of saying "oral-traditional literature. For example, one may hear, or read, that a particular story is found in "oral tradition". More often, the term is used to designate oral report, which shades into oral history. Oral tradition in that case covers what one hears of what has happened in the past, distant or recent. Although it can exist in a casual form, when it takes on a formal aspect it is oral history. Literacy has little or no effect on oral history, except that eventually, when literacy becomes widespread and begins to be used for recording, and finally for writing, literature, the *writing* of history is an important part of that larger development.

Oral literature is varied. It includes a number of genres, and each has its own role. In it, stories are told, songs are sung, riddles are posed, proverbs are wisely expounded, and in Africa praises are "performed". Stories and songs entertain and instruct, as do also the more humble, shorter forms of proverbs and riddles. Each has its time and place. Certain genres of wisdom literature – proverbs and riddles – sometimes, in fact quite frequently, are contained within stories and songs. Genres are not watertight compartments.

Among the shorter forms of song is a group that includes ritual songs of several kinds, such as lullabies, wedding songs, laments, and keenings at funerals. Here, too, belong the praise poems for which Africa is justly famous. Laments and praises tend to be pure improvisations. Literacy has little effect on the shorter forms of oral literature. Except for an occasional collector, no one would think it useful to write down proverbs, riddles, or sayings, and, by definition, improvisations do not require writing.

Prose stories in oral-traditional literature, that is, anecdotes or more complex folktales, do not have set texts, except that there are "more or less stable" introductory formulas, such as "once upon a time", and concluding words, as well as some short set "runs", for frequently recurring passages.

Excellent examples of such runs can be found in Irish storytelling. In his relating of the long hero story Eochair Mac Ri in Eirinn, Eamon Bourke used the following run whenever the hero came to a giant's castle and "struck the challenge pole".

> And when he came to the giant's house, he struck the challenge pole. He did not leave foal in mare, lamb in sheep, child in women, a kid in goat that he did not turn nine times in its mother's belly and from there back again; he did not leave the old castle unbroken, the new castle unbent; the old tree unbroken and the new tree unbent; and it said upon his sword that there was not a fighting man under the ground or over the ground fit to beat him. The herald came out and asked what he wanted.

Another run in the same story – there are many of them – is a description of the beheading of a giant:

> And he came to him and struck him, and took the head off him on the eighth day. When he did the head was whistling as it went up and humming as it went down in hope of coming upon the same body again. But Mac Ri in Eirinn made no mistake: he struck it a blow of his right top-boot, he sent the head a ridge and seven acres from him.
>
> "Well for you!" says the head, says he. "If I came on the same body again, half the Fianna would not take me down!"
>
> "Well, assuredkly, says Mac Ri in Eirinn, "weakling, it was not to let your head up that I took it down, but to keep it here below!"

Here is another example of the same run from Myles Dillon's translation of a text of "The Giant of the Mighty Blows" that he recorded by dictograph from Joe Flaherty in County Galway in 1932.

> And he struck him where his head joined his neck, and sent his head into the air. The head was singing as it came down, but he gave it a kick and a shove that sent it over seven ridges and seven rows out onto the green lea.
>
> "You did well!" said the giant. "If I had got back onto my body, half the Fenians would not have cut me off again."
>
> "Oh", said the King of Ireland's Son, "you may tell that to someone else."

These last two quotations illustrate individual variants of the same common "theme". The storyteller may vary the run a little or not, or he or she may omit

it, but in individual practice it is comparatively

stable, although not actually memorized as fixed. When writing comes, these set passages tend to disappear, because in written literary style variety, rather than repetition, is sought after. Yet the stories, as narratives, remain the same, though the written style of them changes.

The storytellers continue to tell their stories as before. Even when they become literate, this is true. It is what the literate person *other than* the storyteller – usually a collector from either within or outside of the traditional community – does with the tale, that brings about a real change. Through such persons a written literary folktale genre is created. The tales in it are often compilations of elements belonging to several traditional tales, told in written literary style. The literacy in the community and the presence of an already developed literature create a new genre, which lives its life in literary circles, parallel to the continuing oral-traditional stories in their usual setting, as long as that setting itself remains unchanged.

The case of oral-traditional poetry, specifically epic song, is somewhat different, because with it we are dealing with stories in long poems in verse, or rhythmic periods of some sort. The question then arises: what is the impact on the individual singer of the introduction of writing into the oral poet's community? If the singer did not personally learn to read or write, it had no direct effect at all, of course. There might, however, be indirect effects. Someone miht read a song to the singer from a printed or written source. Other than possibly bringing him an epic tale which he might otherwise not have known, this reading would not trouble the waters of his oral-traditional literary world.

As printed material increases in the community and more and more people learn to read and write, and to read literature, prestige may become attached to the literate, and literary members of the society, and consequently the unlettered may lose prestige. As a result, their cultural activities, such as singing traditional songs and telling traditional stories, may also lose prestige and eventually be lost. There would be pressures, of course, for the unlettered traditional singer to join the prestigious group of the literate. This would not necessarily mean at first that he would immediately become a person knowledgeable at written literature. If he succumbs to the pressure, nothing may happen to him or to the songs or stories, provided the society continues to foster the traditional culture as

well as the newer written culture, to listen to and to sing and tell traditional tales and songs.

If the traditional singer/poet is composing in that special oral formulaic style which came into being to

make rapid composition in performance possible, and which he has learned from previous generations of singer/poets, he does not need writing to compose lines and tell stories. But in a literate, more particularly a literary, society, a singer might get the idea of writing down an epic song from his repertoire in the words and manner in which he usually sang it. This would be the same as if someone else wrote it down from his dictation. If, however, a singer made changes in the way in which he wrote from the way in which he sang, then his knowledge of writing would have played a role in the composing of his text. If, for example, he uses some new, non-traditional phrases or constructions, nevertheless still keeping mostly to the traditional diction, he would not be moving in the direction of written literature. It could be argued that he is already a practitioner of written literature or that he is writing in a transitional style. Such a singer's text, therefore, could be considered legitimately as either a written literary text or a transitional one. One must, however, be cautious. Not every "new" word used necessarily constitutes a breaking of the traditional formulaic style, for some new words quite normally find their place in the traditional formulaic systems. The singer without the pen, including the beginner at one end of the scale, the highly gifted singer at the other end, and the unskilled singer in between, breaks the system from time to time, making unmetrical or inept lines, or even lapsing into prose. These are the aberrations of performance, be it before a live audience or in dictating to a scribe. The breaking of the new structure of the *formulaic systems* themselves is moe important than are new words. Donald Fry was right in stressing the system in his definition of the formula in Old English. As long as the systems continue, it does not matter whether the singer composes with or without writing. In fact, the "oral residue" expressed in the systems, themselves formed in orality, would persist in the world of literacy, in the usage of the literate traditional singer until such time as the nontraditional-minded writer with a pen in his hand should arrange the words and traditional patterns in the basic systems. Thus would a written literature be born from an oral literature.

How can one distinguish an oral-traditional text from one of written literature? It must be said at the

beginning that one must know something – the more the better – about the tradition in question to which a singer belongs as well as his own habits of composition in order to make the judgement. By that I mean that one must know what the specific characteristics of a given tradition are in order to tell whether they are present

or not in the text under consideration. One needs, also, as many texts of a singer or storyteller as possible.

Milman Parry distinguished three stylistic characteristics of oral style: 1.) the presence of a large number of formulas; 2.) the presence of "themes", and 3.) the presence of many cases of unperiodic enjambement. During his lifetime he wrote much about formulas, something about enjambement, and very little about "themes". Enjambement is useful as a rule-of-thumb measurement if other characteristics are also present, but is not in itself decisive as a criterion of orality. It is a manifestation of the adding style. That style is a sign of oral-traditional composition, but it is easily imitated.

Formula density, the presence of a substantial number of true formulas in a text, is still a reliable criterion for oral composition under certain circumstances which need further review. Formula density should, however, be tempered by an additional investigation of the specific formulas used in a given work vis-à-vis the traditional formulas as they are known.

Let me give two examples that may help in determining whether a given poem is an oral composition, or, more specifically, was composed in the oral-traditional style. The first is the poetry of Peter II, Petrovic Njegosh, Prince-Bishop of Montenegro in the first half of the nineteenth century. He was brought up as an (oral) traditional singer of epic, but after his education he became a well-known written literary poet. One can trace in his early *written* poems his gradual departure from the style in which he was brought up. One can note phrases and patterns that were not "traditional", and thus one can document in his case the moving away from tradition, even while keeping the traditional metre. The formula count, in such a case, would in the course of time naturally reflect the emerging written literary style of the author. In addition, an analysis of specific phrases and structures would show marked differences from his known tradition.

The other case is of an author, a poet, brought up in an educated milieu as a Franciscan monk in the eighteenth century, Andrija Kachich-Mioshich became so

immersed in the traditional style that he could write poems which were, to the uninitiated, indistinguishable from the real thing. In other words, he used well-known traditional formulas. He sought no new stylistic effects. Occasionally, as in expressing a date, he broke the tradition, not only with new words but with new structures. Thus his style betrayed the writer. But he could also write, still in the traditional *metre*, poems, which by content and even genre (e.g., an epistolary

genre from the written literary tradition in which he was brought up) were clearly not oral-traditional compositions. If one were to analyze all his work together, the formula density would be fairly high. It is necessary, however, to analyze each song separately, or to segregate those which are clearly written literature from those "in the style of" oral-traditional poetry. His chief and most influenctial work was a history in prose and "popular" verse of the South Slavs, written in a manner which they could readily understand. He could *write* in both oral and written styles.

The "theme" in oral-traditional epic, a repeated *passage*, is as characteristic of oral-traditional composition as is the formula and for the same reaons, its usefulness in composition. There are several important things to note about the "theme". First, it is not *simply* a repeated subject, such as a council, a feast, a battle, or a description of horse, hero, or heroine. It is that, but it is more than that. All those subjects occur repeatedly in written literature as well. The "theme" in oral literature is distinctive because its content is expressed in more or less the same words every time the singer or storyteller uses it. It is a repeated *passage* rather than a repeated subject.

Second, the degree of variation of text and of detailed content among occurrences of a "theme" in the usage of a single singer or storyteller differs considerably from individual to individual and from "theme" to "theme". In general it is clear that a "theme" which he or she uses frequently tends to be more stable in its text, as well as in its content than one used infrequently. It is also true that a short "theme" is more stable than a long one. One singer I have known had the opening scene of his favorite song down pretty much word for word – not quite, but the text for ten or fifteen lines was fairly stable. This comparative fixity of text in a "theme" is not a mark of a written text. The singer involved, Djemail Zogic of Novi Pazar, was illiterate; he had not consciously memorized those lines. He simply remembered them. Here

are the pertinent lines from his dictated version of July 1934 (on the left) and his sung version of November 1934 (on the right). The lines common to both versions are printed in the center column.

NO. 25		No. 25
Jedno jutro tek je osamnulo,		Jedno jutro kad je zora bila,
Studena je rosa osammula,		Studena je rosa udarila,
	Zelena je bashcha beherala	
	Leskovina mlada prelistala,	

A svakoja pilad zapevala,
Sve pevahu, a jedna kukashe.

To ne beshe tica lastavica
No to beshe sinja kukavica
Kukavica Alibegovica.

Kroz kukanje Bosnu proklinjashe:
"Ravna Bosna kugom pomorena!

One morning had just dawned,
The cold dew (dawned),
The green garden blossomed,
The young hazelwood sent forth leaves,
And every bird began to sing,
All were singing, but one lamented.

That was not a swallow,
But it was a cuckoo-bird,
A cuckoo-bird, the wife of Alibeg.

In her lamenting she cursed Bosnia:
"May level Bosnia be struck by the plague!

He svakoja pilad prepevala,
Sve pevahu, jedan zakakashe.

Kroz kukanju vako govorashe
- Hala njojzi do Bora Jednoga.
Bez nikoga desna ni s' lijeva.
Kukajuchi dvanajes godina! -
Sve proklinje Bosnu cip cijelu:
"Hala Bosno, kugon Pomorena!
A po Bosni lajale lisice,
E sve zhene ostale udovice,
Shto nemade Bosna kahrimana,
Da zakahri nasheg dushmanina!"

One morning when it was Dawn,
the cold dew settled,
And every bird started to Sing,
All were singing, one Lamented.

In her singing she spoke thus:

Her lot was hard, by God!
With no one at her right or left,
Lamenting for twelve years!

Ever did she curse all Bosnia:
"By God, Bosnia, may you be Struck by the plague!
May the foxes bark in Bosnia,
And all the women remain widows,
Since Bosnia has no champion,

To challenge my enemy!” To challenge our enemy!”

Osammula in the second line, wrongly repeating the verb of the preceding line, is a slip of the tongue (or of the recording pen) for *udarila*. In the fifth line the only difference is in the prefix of the verb, namely *zapevala* and *prepevala*. In the last line, in addition to the difference in prefixes in *okahri* and *zakahri*, there is the difference between *moga* (mine and *nasheg* (our). The main differences between the two versions are the expansions in the singing of the second version.

As further evidence that the lines were not memorized, I present the pertinent lines from Zogic’s version sung for the tape-recorder in the summer of 1962, nearly ternty-eight years later.

Jedno jutro je zora bila.	One morning when it was dawn,
A ne beshe sinja kukavica.	It was not a cuckoo-bird,
No to beshe Alibegovica	But it was the wife of Alibeg.
Od udbine, od turske Krajine.	Of Udbinam of the Turkish border,
A kukashe na dimir kapiju,	She was lamenting at the iron gate,
A preklinje Bosnu cip cijelu,	And she cursed all Bosnia:
“Ravna Bosno, kogom pomorena!	“Level Bosnia, may you be struck by the plague!
I po Bosni lajale lisice,	May the foxes bark in Bosnia,
A sve zhene ‘tale udovice! ...”	And all the women widows! ...”

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There is a popular misconception that oral literature is crude, formless, unstructured, and that without writing one cannot create intricate structures of verbal expression. A corollary to this belief is the idea that any work of literature with a complex structure must be a product of the written word, the word seen, rather than the word heard. Those intimately acquainted with a oral-traditional literature, however, are cognizant of the fact that this is a false impression, arising from a lack of experience with that type of literature.

Cope and Opland have demonstrated the stylistic and artistic excellence of Zulu praise poems and folktales and of Xhosa praise poetry, respectively. Douglas Mzolo has done the same for Zulu clan praises, and Daniel Kunene has been especially painstaking in analysis and

eloquent in describing the heroic poetry of the Basotho.

For an ulustration of larger orchestration in a long epic song by a talented South Slavic singer I offer here a brief sketch of ring-composition at the beginning of Vdo Mededovic's 12,311-line song, The Wedding of Smailagic Meho, collected by <ilman Parry in 1935 and written down by Nikola Vujnovic from Avdo's dictation.

The song opens with an assembly of the nobles with Hasan pasha Tiro at tjheir head. He notices that young Meho, son of Smailaga, is unhappy, and he sends Meho's uncle, Cifric Hasanaga, to inquire the reason for his sadness. Meho responds that he is sad because his elders will not allow him to engage in warfare. He plans to rebel and go over to the enemy. His uncle tells him that he has been the darling of all, that they have been waiting for him to grow up so that he may assume his father's and uncle's position as leader of the Border warriors. The pasha agrees to send Meho to Buda to receive his credentials from the vizier there. The nobles sign the petition and say farewell to Meho.

This opening council scene – a typical "theme", by the way – is a good example of ring-composition. Here is the scheme:

1.)Description and listing of *nobles* with Hasan pasha Tiro at their head.
2.)The intervention of *Hasan pasha Tiro*.
3.) *Cifric Hasanaga*'s speech to Meho.
4.)*Meho*'s response.
3.)*Cifric Hasanaga*'s response to Meho.
2.)*Hasan pasha Tiro* has the petition prepared and gives his blessings.

1.)Listing of *nobles* as they sign the petition and say farewell to Meho. 1.) Nobles; 2.) Pasha; 3.) Uncle; 4.) meho; 3.) Uncle; 2.) pasha; 1.) Nobles.

This is a perfectly acceptable ring. Its pattern is inherent in the narrative itself, and its focus, the speech of Meho to the assembly, is significant in the story; for in it is contained the background for the whole plot. The dramatic confrontation between uncle and nephew with its centerpiece of the nephew's angry speech, which is to provide motivation for the entire poem, is framed in a setting of hierarchical social organization and a atatement of heroic values.

After a brief linking theme which tales Meho and his uncle back to Smailaga's house to report what has happened in the assembly, of which the father had as yet no knowledge, the scene for the next ring begins. It extends from the report of Meho's uncle to his brother Smail to the completion of preparations for the departure of Meho and his companion Osman for Buda. The

first ring is the conversation between mother and son. This is a scene of elaborate ritual adornment of Meho prior to his appearance before his father. The centre of the ring is that appearance. Moving outward in the circle we find a ceremonial preparation of the hero's companion, Osman. This balances the ceremonial preparation of Meho himself. The outermost circle reveals Meho, Osman, and their alter egos, their horses, also ceremonially prepared. Schematized, the ring looks like this:

1.) Meho with father and uncle.
2.) Meho with mother – ritual preparation of Meho.
3.) Meho appears before father and receives his approval.
2.) Meho with father and Osman – ritual preparation of Osman.
1.) Meho with Osman and horses – ritual preparation of horses.
(Meho has passed from father and uncle to Osman and the horses.)

There is not space to follow the intricate structure of rings for the whole poem. Suffice it to say at the moment that each scene can be analyzed in this way, as well as the whole narrative, in terms of rings or chiastic constructions, resembling Cedric Whitman's analysis of Homer's Iliad. Some would doubt that oral-traditional poets would have the ability to construct their scenes, and perhaps even an entire poem of some length, in this manner. Here is proof that they

not only *can* do but actually *do* just that.

There is a tendency for us in the European tradition to forget how extensive and how basic our literary heritage from the world of orality has been, and there is a corresponding tendency to believe that the world of literacy invented some of the characteristics of literature, which in reality originated in oral literature. Among them is a sense of form and structure, as I have just illustrated, and many devices, later termed "rhetorical" and attributed to the schools, actually were created in the crucible of the oral world. The worl of orality gave us *anaphora*, the use of the same word at the beginning of each series of lines, *epiphora*, the use of the same word at the end of each series of lines, alliteration, assonance, rhyme, both internal, medial, and final **[**see Chapter 3**]**, and the sense of balanced structure as typified by parallelisms in sentneces and other forms of *parataxis*. In short, our poetics is derived from the world of orality, with some later additions and modifications introduced by the world of literacy **[**once again, see

Chapter 3**]**.

Consider as an example of anaphora, alliteration, and parataxis the following passage from one of the South Slavic epics from the Milman Parry Collection collected in 1935. The setting is an assembly of leaders of the Border. All are boasting except one who keeps his head down (my translation reflects the structure of the original).

Pocheshe se falit' krajeshnici,	The Borderers began to boast,
Shta je koji bolje uchinijo,	What each had done better,
Ko je vishe dobijo mejdana,	Who had won more duels,
Kol l' njemachkog roba porobijo,	Who had taken a German captive,
Ko l' je carski hudut rashirijo;	Who had broadened the imperial Border;
Ko l' je boljeg konja podhranijo,	Who had reared the better horse,
Ko l' je boljeg sina podnivijo,	Who had nurtured the better son,
Ko l' je bolju cherku podgojijo.	Who had raised the better daughter.
Eglenishe shta ko begenishe.	Each said what he wished to.
Neko sebe, neko konja fali,	One praised himelf, another his horse,
Neko sina, a neko sinovca.	One his son, and

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another his nephew.	
Neko fali svoju milu shchrku,	One praises his dear daughter.
Neko shcherku, neko milu seku.	One his daughter, another his dear sister.
Neko fali od brata devojku,	One praises his brother's girl.
E, sve age fale na izredu.	E, All the nobles boast in turn.

Note that after two lines of introduction, there are six lines beginning with *ko* (who), followed by a summary line. The six lines are *paratactic*, in addition to their alliteration and anaphora. Moreover, the next five lines, this time beginning with *neko* (someone), are in parataxis with the preceding group of five lines, and they too end in a *coda*. They repeat in substance the previous group, but with a slightly different construction, both grammatically and alliteratively, the "neko" appearing not only at the beginning of the line, but also, in three lines, after the caesura.

The paly of "ko" and "neko", which is joined by the

neuter *neshto* (something, or somewhat) continues in the scene in the negative. The text goes on then with a rhyming couplet:

Svak se shenli des'jo I vesejo. Each was joyous and happy.
Jedan im je junak nevesijo, One hero was unhappy,
Pa nit' vina pije ni rakije, He drinks neither wine nor brandy,
Ni duhanske tegli tumbchije, Nor does he draw on his pipe,
No mu mrke objesijo brke, But he let droop his dusky moustaches,
A ponisko podpushchijo glavu. And hung his head low.

Note the internal rhyme *pije/rakije*, *mrke/brke*, and the alliterations *tegli tumbechije*, aand *ponisko podpushchijo*.

The next couplet ends the first part of the scene and at the same time introduces the second:

Bozhe mili, ko je junak bijo? Dear God, who was that hero?
To je Hrnja sa Kladushe Mujo. It was Mujo Hrnjica of Kladusha.

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In the next two couplets we return to the negatives:

Pa serdara niko ne pitashe But bobody asked the sirdar
Shto je neshto Mujo nevesijo. Why Mujo was not happy.
Neko niche, neko ne vidashe, One would not, another did not see,
A neko ga pitat' ne smijashe. And some dared not ask him.

And the passage continues to weave its way binding couplets together into quatrains and other configurations with sound and syntax. This is oral-traditional poetic composition at its most typical.

As many have remarks, the Finnish *Kalevala* makes abundant use of parallelism and repetition, and in his translation of it Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr. has preserved those elements of the style, For example, here is a passage near the beginning of Poem 33:

> He uttered a word as he went along
> Kept saying while walking:
> "Woe is me, poor lad,

Woe the unfortunate lad.
Now I have got into something,
Got into the futile occupation
Of being the herdsman of a steer's tail,
a tender of calves ..."

Another compositional device in the *Kalevala* is the repetition of the end of one line at the beginning of the next, as in the following:

"With what shall I now pay back the woman's mockery,
the woman's mockery, the girl's derision?"

Note that the second half of the second line is parpllel to the first half. In the next example the fourth line is also parallel to the second:

In this way Kullervo, son of Kalervo,
Took vengeance on the girl's ridicule,
On the girl's ridicule, the woman's derision,
Paid the bad wife her wages.

Such repetitions are common in Slavic oral-traditional epic as well [note that the Finnish language is not only not Slavic, it is not even Indo-European, but rather it is Ural-Altaic]. In commenting on similar

devices in Irish [Gaelic] traditional poetry Daniel Melia remarked that they are not primarily Mnemonic, but compositional and structural. They are basic to oral-traditional style and characteristic of it.

One is inclined to ask whether written literature would tolerate the kind of poetics that makes frequent use of these and other similar devices. It is well known that most oral-traditional texts are heavily "edited" before they are published. This was especialy true in the nineteenth century but such practices still exist today. The Grimm brother are classic examples for the European folktale, but their case is by no means isolated. What would a well-intentioned editor with a literary bent try to do with passages such as those just quoted to make them accord more with his own feeling for style? He would do what even the most careful translator of Homer does. Where Homer uses the same epithet for a god or hero many times, the translator varies the eputhets, because English style (or written literary style in general) avoids repetitions as much as possible. In the editing practice of the person who prepared for publication the songs collected by one of the best of the nineteenth-century Croatian scholars, Luka Marjanovic, of the Matica Hrvatska in Zagreb, when the end of a line is repeated at the beginning of the

next, the repetition is frequently – though not always – omitted and the lines are refprmed. In short, the published texts do not reproduce what the singer said, but what the editor thought that the singer should have said, or intended to say. It is for this reason that Milman Parry made his own collection of field recordings of epic so that he could have reliable material for meaningful research; and it is with this in mind that the texts in his collection are published exactly as the singer sang or dictated them.

In addition to balanced structures and poetic devices, we have also inherited from the oral period the great myths from the past of most cultures of the human race, myths telling of the formation of the universe, of the beginning of all things. They were both believed and believed in, and tjhey have had very profound influence on the history of mankind. Yet they, too, belonged originally in the world of orality, until they were written down. Here are to be found the accounts of the lives of gods, or heroes, saints, or legendary rulers. In them the birth of a god or a hero was important, because it explained his special powers and characteristics. Narratives of his childhood deeds gave early evidence of his extraordinary personality and strength, proving his divine, or at least

“different” origin. And the story in many cultures of a hero’s acquisition of a horse and special weapons provided him with the means of accomplishing his mission in the world. One of his earliest deeds, after initiation and often associated with it, is his acquiring of a bride, in order to assure the continuity of quality in future generations.

In some cultures in many parts of the world the biographical scheme in oral-traditional literature plays a very large role, second only to their creation myths and sometimes intertwined with them. The miraculously born and magically equipped god or hero creates order from chaos, thus establishing the cosmos, and he also overcomes monsters that would destroy the universe and return humanity to chaos and death.

This is the mythic side of oral literature, its basic and oldest message evolved through the ages in the minds of the people who created it, perfected its forms, and continued it over time. The battles of gods and demigods, and those of heroes, provided the patterns, the fundamental vocabulary of words and themes, heard, not seen, so that in the course of time, when myth was secularized, or, whichever the case may be, when secular narratives arose side by side with myth, they found ready-made patterns in the forms of literature recounting history. History has played a significant role in African praise poetry, as well as in African

oral literature in general. Both tribal and personal history have contributed to the praises of chiefs. Topical compositions, too, like the odes of Pindar, may on occasion make reference to past events as well as to the present subject. A people's history and the fundamental values of its legal and social structures are expressed in its traditional literature.

In some societies oral literature, as such, has given way to a large extent to written literature. But the form and the content of mush of our written literature were created before writing was invented. The fact of the matter remains that, without overtly realizing it, when we read the Homeric poems, the Gilgamesh epic, most of the *chansons de geste* **[**Spanish: *cantares de gesta***]**, and many other "literary" works, we are reading in essence the masterpieces of oral literature, which evolved in the oral period, but became set in that of literacy. Like most oral literatures of Africa, of the Balkans, of Central Asia, of all those regions of the world where oral-traditional literature has been recorded, they too were once written down. They are older than writing.

From an intimate acquaintance with the oral background of its past one gains a perspective on one's

own culture, a knowledge of its age and depth, of what it held dear in the generations long gone, as well as some insight into why one still holds it dear in the present."(4)

We continue with the same general topic:

THE IINFLUECE OF A FIXED TEXT

"In The Singer of Tales I attempted primarily to describe the workings of a *pure* oral tradition of narrative song, one in which written texts had no influence, or were nonexistent. A knowledge of the processes of oral composition and transmission in teir pure form was necessary for an understanding of such texts as those of the Homeric poems, which we may safely assume were written down before other texts were recorded, in a precollecting era.

Once texts have been written down and are available to those who sing or tell stories, they can in fixed form have an influence on the tradition. While the Homeric rhapsodies we are studying a somewhat different phenomenon from Homer himself, from the *aoidos* (epic singer, bard). A realization of this difference is especially significant for the medieval period in Europe, where we are surely dealing, to a large extent, perhaps, with texts thus influenced by a preexistent fixed text. The question, therefore, arises: In exactly

what ways do the written texts affect the oral tradition? I should like in this paper to address myself briefly to that question and to examine some of the evidence that is furnished by the material in the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literaure. I shall limit myself here almost entirely to textual or verbal influence.

Among the best songs in the older repertoire collected by Vuk Karadzhic of Gacko, Hercegovina, are outstanding. In the second volume of Karadzhic's collection, the volume that contains the heroic songs of the older period, there are thirteen songs from Podrugovic. For all but one of these there is at least one corresponding text in the Parry Collection. I have examined them all and compared each of them with the corresponding Karadzhic text to determine what influence, if any, the printed text had on the songs collected approximately one hundred years later.

In this respect, the Parry texts may be divided into three unequal ctaegories. There are some texts (category A) that seem to be independent of the Karadzhic tradition. Category A, provided that we could show that the songs in it are not influenced by other

printed collections, could be assumed to be "pure" in their traditional orality. Into Category B, a much larger one than A, we have placed those texts that show a clearly discernible influence of the Karadzhic printed text. Category C contains texts that are clearly cases of direct copying or of word-for-word memorization from the songbook. I wish to examine at least one text in each category to see exactly what the differences are between the later and earlier texts, and for this purpose I shall begin with Category C, and with a text from Parry's early days of collecting.

Adam Parry published some of the notes that his father dictated in Dubrovnik as commentary to the first six songs that he collected in 1933. In those notes he included the digressions on various subjects that were in his mind as he worked in the field and gained experience in understanding the songs and the processes of traditional composition and transmission. In a portion of "*Chor Huso* (the name that he gave to these writings) that Adam Parry published, Milman Parry, wrote (December 3, 1934) some observations on the subject of the influence of a fixed text. Among the comments that still remain unpublished he made the following remarks about the singer Milovan Vojichic of Nevesinje, Hercegovina: "Milovan from his school days, he told me, had read every word of all the *pjesmarice* [song books] on which he could lay his hands. At one time, he said, he had a very large collection of his own which later on in days of poverty he sold for ten dinars a kilo. His repertoire of the classical Serbian songs, as far as I

could judge by his questioning, was very large, and the *Zhenidba Kralja Vukashima* [The Wedding of King Vukashin] (autograph text 29) which I picked at random and asked him to write out for me shows that he had learned those texts with an exactness that varies from the original only in the omission or rearrangement of a few lines and in the reordering or changing of words in the phrase." What follows illustrates in detail the kinds of differences that exist in another experiment with a song sent by Milovan Vojichic to Parry at Kirkland House, Harvard University.

During the winter of 1933-34, Milovan wrote out himself a version of *Nahod Simeun* and mailed it from Nevesinje on February 19, 1934, to Milman Parry at Kirkland House, Harvard University. The Karadzhic text, from Podrugovic. Has 197 lines; Vojichic's is 1998 lines in length. The added line is the last, *Simeun se mladan posvetijo*, "The young Simeun became a saint." Of the remaining 197 lines, 116 are identical with Podrugovic's text, 79 of them are very close, 2

correspond in meaning but have different wording. No lines from Karadzhic are omitted in sense.

In the category of lines that are very close to those of the Karadzhic text some reflect only slight differences of pronunciation: for example, *uranijo* for *uranio*, *namastir* instead of *manastir*, *jevandelje* for *evandelje, zavati* for *zafati, dvanajes* for *dvanaest*, and so on.

Milovan preferred the normal forms *tebi* and *meni* for the dative of the pronouns *ti* (you, singular) and *ja* (I) to the dialect forms *tebe* and *mene*, and he used the form *dogin* rather than *dogat*, meaning "white horse".

In several lines one preposition is udsed instead of another: for example, *na obalu*, "on the shore", rather than Karadzhic's *pod obalu*; and *niz bijelo lice*, "from his white face".

Other cases of change of a single word are (1) change of verbal aspect, as *posjede dogina* for *usjede dogata*, "mounted his white horse" (line 131); (2) avoidance of an obsolete form, as *misli* for *mlidijashe*, "thought" (line 8), and *chita* for *chati*, "reads" (lines 48 and 141); (3) one epithet for another, as *divno odijelo*, "wondrous clothes", for Podrugovic's *svetlo odijelo*, "bright clothes" (line 69), and *na noge junachke*, "to his heroic feet", instead of *na nogue lagane*, "to his light feet" (line 126); (4) in one instance Vojichic has been influenced in his change by the rhetoric of the line, preferring *namjera je starca nanijela*, "intention came over the old man". In this latter case, he seems to have liked the combination of cognate verb with cognate noun subject.

Of the changes that effect more than one word the

following are typical: (1) in line 53 *shta ti fali*, "what is lacking to you" takes the place of *shta je malo*, "what is little"; (2) in line 107 Vojichic prefers *zdravlje prifatila*, "she accepted his greeting" to *bozhju pomoc prima*, "she received his 'God's help!'" In both cases the alternatives are natural replecements.

The most concentrated degree of change (underlined in Vojichic's version in the Parry Collection) is found in lines 23-27:

Karadzhic	Parry
Kad je bilo od tri godinic,	Kad mu bilo *tri godine dana,*
Kolik' drugo od sedam godina!	*Kolik drugo od sedam godina!*
A kad bilo od sedam godina,	
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Kad mu bilo sedam godinice,	
Kolik' drugo od dvanaest ljeta,	*Kao drugo od dvanes' godina!*
Kad je bilo od dvanaest ljeta,	*A kad bilo dvanajes' godina!*
Kilik' drugo od dvadest godina!	*Kolik' drugo od dvades' godina!*

When he was three years old,
He was like another of seven!
When he was seven years old,
He was like another of twelve,
When he was twelve years old,
He was like another of twenty!

It is useful to see exactly in what way Vojichic's texts varies from that in Karadzhic, but, in spite of a few details like those just cited, *the differences are minimal*, and Vojichic's text is very close to that of Podrugovic. There are only two lines in the Vojichic text that seem to correspond un general sense with the Karadzhic text but to differ from it almost completely in wording. These are kines 37 and 163.

Karadzhic	Parry
Preskache im Nahod Simeune,	Preskache im Nahod Simeune,
Preskache im, kamenon odmeche,	I pretura kamena s ramena

In these pairs of lines, Podrugovic has repeated the sense of line 36 in the first half of line 17, and in that same line (37) he has also added a new thought.

Thus, "Nahod simeun jumped farther than the rest/He jumped farther, and hurled the stone." Vojichic has used an equally typical, but not the same, construction. He has made the second idea, that of hurling stones, equal in length to the first idea. "Nahod Simeun jumped farther than the rest/And he hurled stones from the shoulder, farther than the rest." TUhe difference is one of line economy rather than of sense. In line 163 Podrugovic says "*Simeun spade od dogata"*, "Simeun dismounted from the white horse"; Vojichic has it "*Skochi Simo sa konja dogina"*, "Simo jumped from the white horse". They both mean that Simeon dismounted from his white horse. The line construction is different, but the meaning is the same.

In whatever changes there are between these two

texts no change in sense takes place, but the copier on occasion exhibits a preference of his own for one phrase or formula rather than another. When we know that he is a singer in his own right, we can see that his slight changes are in the natural direction of the words and phrases that he usually employs in his own singing.

As an example of Category B I have chosen a somewhat unusual case, a song that was recorded from singing on August 23, 1934. The singer was Ilja Mandaric of Vrebac. His version of the well-known song "Marko Kraljevic and Musa Kesedzhija" is 312 lines in length, compared to Karadzhic's 281 lines. In the first hundred lines, which are typical of the whole song, approximately 50 percent are identical or very close to the lines in Karadzhic. This figure should be compared with the nearly 99 percent identical in Category C. There are 12 lines of Karadzhic missing in the Parry text, and 23 lines of the Parry text that are not to be found in Karadzhic. There are 25 lines identical save for orthographic varaiations in both texts. We can follow the difference (underlined in the Parry text) in detail in the first 50 lines.

Karadzhic	Parry
	Oj! Mili Bozhe, na svem' rebi fala!
Vino pije Musa Arbanasa	Vino pije Musa Keserdzhija
U Stambolu, a kremi bijeloj;	U Stanbolu, a kremi bijeloj;
Kad se Musa nakitio vina,	Kad se Musa napojijo, vina,
Onda poche pijan besjediti:	Onda poche pijan govoriti
"Evo ima devet godinica	"Mili Bozhe, na svem' tebi fala!

Kako dvorim cara u Stambolu:
devet godin' dana

cara u Stambolu;
Ni izdvorih konja ne oruzhja,
pare ne dinara
Ni dolame nove ni polovne:
nove ni polovne.
Al' tako mi moje vjere tvrde,
vjera tvrda,

rodila majka,

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neka bedevija,
Odvrc chu se u ravno primorje,
u primorje ravno,
Zatvorichu skele oko mora
skele oko mora
I drumove okolo primorja,
primorja

carevina blago,

Trista tovara.

sebi prigrabiti,
Nachinichu kulu u primorju,
kuchu nachiniti,
Oko kule gvozdene chengele -
gvozdene chengele.
Vjeshachu mu hodzhe I hadzhije!"
'odzhe I 'adzhije."
Shto god Ture pjano govorilo,
pjano govorilo,
To trijezmo bjeshe uchinilo:
bjeshe uchinijo.
Odvrzhe se u primorje ravno,
primorje ravno.
Pozatvara skele oko mora,
oko mora,
I drumove okolo primorja,
primoja,
Kud prolazi carevina blago,
carevina blago,
Na godinu po Trista tovara:
Trista tovara

He revolted to the coastland level,
the coastland level,
He closed the seaports

Ev' imade

Kako dvorim

Ne izdvori'

Nit' aljine

A tako mi moja

I tako me ne

Vec kobila

Oj! Odvrchu se

Zarvorichu

I drumove okolo

Tud prolazi

Na godinu po

Sve chu blago

U orimorju

Oko kuche

Vjeshachu mu

Shto je Ture

To trijezno

Pozadvrzhe se u

Pozatvara skele

I drumove okolo

E prolazi

Na godini po

He rebelled to

He closed the

seaports
And the roads on the coast, And the roads on the coast,
Where the imperial monies pass, Well, the imperial monies pass,
In a year three hundred pack loads: In a year three hundred pack loads;
All Musa held for himself; He seized all the money for himself.
In the coastland he built a tower, In the coastland he built a house,
Around the tower iron hooks, Around the

tower iron hooks;
He hanged the sultan's priests and He hanged the sultan's priests and
pilgrims. pilgrims.
When the complaints disturbed the But the complaints disturbed the
sultan, sultan,
Complaining
about the cursed Musa.

He sent Cuprilic-vezir against him,
And with him three thousand soldiers.
The sultan began
to seek champions,
But whoever went
out there
Never saw
Stambol again.
Musa destroyed
them all on the coastland.
Against him he
sent Chuprilic vezir
And with him
twelve thousand soldiers.
When they came to the level When they came to the coastland level,
coastland

Musa destroyed them all on the Musa destroyed them all on the coastland,
Coastland
And captured Cuprilic-vezir, And captured Chuprilic vezir,
Tied his hands behind him, Then tied his hands behind him,
And tied his legs under his horse,
Then sent him to the sultan in Stambol. Sent him bound to Stambol.
The sultan began to seek champions, Oj! The sultan began to seek champions,

He promised countless monies
For whoever would kill Musa the Highwayman;
Whenever anyone went out there,
He did not come back to Stambol.
That worried the sultan sorely.

But then you see Chuprilic vezir
But Hodzha Chuprilic said to him:

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said to the sultan:
"Master, sultan of Stambol,
Were Kraljevic Marko here now,
He would kill Musa the Highwayman."
And then wept tears from his eyes:

And the sultan, master, said:

"Do not speak idly, Chuprilic vezir!
Why do you mention Kraljevic Marko?
Even his bones have rotted;

He promises countless monies.
This is what he said to the sultan:
"Listen to me, sultan, master!
Were Kraljevic Marko here now,
He would kill Musa the Highwayman."
"Do not speak idly, Chuprilic vezir!
Marko's bones have rotted.

This sample shows us patterns similar to those we have seen in Category C, namely, identical lines (though not so numerous) and very close lines. The novelty here is the number of lines in the Parry text that are not in Karadzhic and vice versa. One should notice, however, thet the new lines in the Parry text consist of: !.) the exclamatory line *Mili Bozhe na svem tebi fala*," "Dear God, thanks be to Thee for all things!" (twice); 2.) a common traditional couplet that is an elaboration of the oath of Musa *I tako me ne rodial majka, Vech kobila neka bedevija*!", "And may a mother not have borne me, but some Bedouin mare!"; 3.) three lines concerning the stealing of imperial treasure, lines that have no counterpart in the Karadzhic text at that particular place, *but* are actually found later in Podrugovic's text (i.e., Parry's lines 17-19 correspond to Karadzhic lines 21-23); and 4.) Parry lines which concern the fate of those who went out against Musa, namely, thet they never returned to Stambol, but do not have a counterpart in the same place in the Karadzhic text, although once again they are in part to be found later in Podrugovic's text (i.e., Parry line 36 equals Karadzhic line 36, Parry lines 37-38 equal Karadzhic lines 39-40). One should also direct attention to the metathesis of lines 49-50 of Karadzhic and Parry lined 56-57. In short, in

our sample fifty lines there are no significant additions to the song. What slight novelties there are are exclamatory or elaborative. Elements are found in one place in one text and in a different place in the other. Although the singer is clearly aware of the fixed text and has presumably partly memorized, it is not inviolable and can be departed from.

The remainder of the poem follows in the same

pattern of identical, close, and corresponding lines; of omissions and additions; of differences in order. Mandaric changes nothing of significance in the story. He does omit the *vila*'s scolding of Marko for fighting on Sunday (a *vila* is a winged female mountain spirit), but both the voice of the *vila* and the hidden knife are there, as well as the heart with three serpents. Mandaric closes his song proper with the comment of the serpent that Marko would have had much more trouble had he, a serpent, been awake. Thus he omits Podrugovic's ending in which Marko brings Musa's head to the sultan, who is terrified by it. Instead Mandaric finishes with an address to his audience:

Eto tako, moja draga!	There you are, my dear brothers!
Eto vami pjesma na poshtenje!	There is a song in your honor!
Bilo name od Boga proshtenje!	May God forgive us!
Nije vishe, nit' se ...	There is no more, nor ...
Ko me chuo, Bog mu adravlje dao!	God grant health to him who has heard me!
Ko ne chuje, I on zdravo bijo!	May he also have health who has not heard me!
Nije vishe, nit' se perom pishe,	There is no more, nor is it written by pen,
Jer pisara zaboljela galva,	For the writer has a headache,
A nestalo tinte I papira.	And there is no more ink or paper.

The dependence of the literate Ilja Mandaric on the Karadzhic text is clear, yet his song shows a tendency toward expressing the song in the singer's own words and formulas, a tendency more marked than in Category C, but still strong enough to free the song from the fixed published text. Category B contains many gradations in relationship to the version of Karadzhic. From the example just given, one can range to texts in which there are comparatively few identical lines, less than 10 percent, for instance, and where there is a greater number of corresponding lines with quite different wording, and not only more frequent transference of

lines, but the addition of genuinely new material. In other words, Category B is a large and much varied group, covering a full spectrum of variation, leading at last to the independent texts in Category A.

Both the previous singers were literate. The singer of our third example, from Category A, Stanko

Pizhurica of Rovce in Montenegro, was illiterate. Although he had little voice and even less sense of musical pitch, and although he was awkward with the gusle, he was a fine poet in words, a good storyteller. He sang a version of *Nahod Simeun*, the same story we used for Category C. Pizhurica's song is, I believe, independent of the Karadzhic text. If it has a printed, fixed, songbook version somewhere in its background, that text is not from Podrugovic. The first indication of this comes from the fact that Pizhurica's song has 305 lines, as against the 197 lines of Podrugovic's text.

There are no lines completely identical with the version of Karadzhic. It is true that in one passage they are somewhat similar. This is the naming scene and the account of the precocious childhood of the hero (variations are underlined in the Parry text).

Karadzhic	Parry
Iz sanduka izvadio	
	Pa mosijo
chedo u dvorove,	
Pokrsti ga u svom namastiru,	
	Povijo ga
u bijelu svilu,	
	U bijelu
crvenu svilu.	
	Stavishe
ga u beshiku zlatnu,	
	Zalozhishe
medom I shecherom,	
Dobavavishe kuma igumena	
	Pokrstishe
mushko chedo ludo,	
Hjepo mu ime nadenuo,	E car mu
je ime izdenuo,	
Nadenuo Nahod Simeune,	Aj, divno
ime, Nahod Simeune.	
	U odaju na
dvorove bjele,	
Ne shche davat' chedo na dojilj,	
Vech ga 'rani u svom namastiru,	
'Rani njega medom I shecherom.	Sve ga

medom I shecherom hrane,

ga zadojashe chesto.

napredak poshao.

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Kad je bilo chedu godnice!
bile shes' godina dana,
Kolik' drugo od dva ljeta!
od dvanaes' ljeta.
Kad je bilo od dvanaest ljeta!
dvanaes' godina
Kolik drugo od dvadest godina!
od dvadeset ljeta,

ljeta I chetiri.
Chudno Simo knjigu izuchio
Nahoda nauchi,

ga mnoge nauchijo.

He took the child from the chest,

carried the child to the house

in white
In white and red silk.

in a goldeb cradle,

honey and sugar,

godfather and iguman
Christened him in his monastery
little male child,
Gave him a fine name
him a name,
Named him Simeon the Foundling.
name, Simeon the Foundling.
He did not want to give the child
To be nursed,
But fed him in his monastery,
of the white house,
Fed him on honey and sugar.
on honey and sugar,

him milk.

progressed.
When the child was a year old,
year of days,
He was like another of three!

Mlijekom

Nahoda je

Kad mu

Kano drugo

Kad mu bilo

Kano drugo

Od dvadeset

Eto care

Na shkole

Then he

Wrapped him
silk,

He placed him

Fed him on

brought a

Christened the

The tsar gave

Aj, a fine

In the chamber

Ever he fed him

Frequently gave

The Foundling

When he was a

As another of

three.
When he was three When he was three years of days,
He was like another of seven! As another of six full years,
And when he was seven, When he was six years of days,
He was like another of twelve! As another of twelve years,
When he was twelve, When he was twelve years,
He was like another of twenty! As another of twenty years
Of twenty years and four.
Simeon learned to read wonderfully Lo the tsar taught the Foundling,
Well.
Taught him at many schools.

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This passage is the closest in {izhurica's text to that in Karadzhic, as we saw to be true earlier in Vojichich's text of the same song. Yet Pizhurica's text is not nearly so close to Karadzhic's as was Vojichic's; there are ten lines without equivalents in the Karadzhic text, and two of that text's lines are unmatched in the Parry text. Where there are parallels, the wording is quite divergent for the most part, as can be seen from the underlining. The core of this passage, telling of the phenomenal growth of the foundling is a commonplace theme, a well-known run. In fact the correspondences in the entire section quoted do not necessarily indicate a direct relationship between the Karadzhic and Parry texts. They simply point to a set of variants of a common theme.

The poem itself, although dealing with "Nahod Simeun", tells an entirely different, though related story. The Karadzhic text, Podrugovic's song, concerns a child found in a chest on the shore of the Danube by a monk who brings him up in his monastery. There is nothing remarkable about the child. *Pizhurica*'s song concerns a child found in a vineyard by the Serbian emperor Shchepan and his vizier, Todor. In his version the child, when foundm has certain marks that set him apart, a star on his forehead, wolf's hair on his shoulder, a sword depicted on his thigh, fire from his teeth. When Shchepan sees these markings, he decides to keep the child, since he has only a daughter, the beautiful Cvijeta.

In *both songs* the hero has a precocious childhood as evidenced in the passages quoted. In the Karadzhic

story other children taunt the foundling for his ignorance of his parenthood, after he has bested them in various sports. As a result Simeon asks permission

to set out to find his parents. He wanders in vain for nine years, and on the way back is seen by the Queen of Budim. She summons him to her castle and, when he is drunk, sleeps with him. When Simeon leaves next morning he forgets his Gospel book and returns to the castle for it. There he finds the queen reading the book and weeping. She realizes that she is Simeon's mother. Simeon goes back to the monastery and confesses his sin to the iguman (abbot), who throws him into prison and hurls the key into the Danube. After nine years the iguman remembers Simeon the Foundling. Fishermen catch a fish that contains the key, and when the prison is opened, the sun is hining in it and Simeon is sitting at a golden table with the Gospel book in his hands.

Pizhurica's tale has some points of resemblance to Podrugovic's. The place of the taunting friends is taken by Todor the vizier and the twelve dukes. They are jealous of the favors shown Simeon by Emperor Shchepan and plot his downfall. Simeon's wine is drugged and, when he is unconscious, the dukes put him in bed with the emperor's daughter, Cvijeta. Note the basic similarity of the drink and the bed. In one case, however, the pair are guilty of mother-son incest.

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The emperor condemns Simeon and Cvijeta to be hanged on a leafless orange tree in the garden. The following morning the tree has blossomed, under is is a church, and in the church are the two young people with crosses in their hands. This is a multiform, of course, of the ending of the Karadzhic text. In Pizhurica the story continues with the execution of Todor and the twelve dukes. On the day following their execution the orange tree is again withered and beneath it is a lake of blood in which are the rwelve dukes and Todor as well as the cup from which Simeon had been drugged.

In view of the considerable divergence in the stories of the two texts and of the common traditional character of their resemblances it si clear that Pizhurica's song has not been influenced directly by the Karadzhic text in question.

Pizhurica's song, however, has elements from other

stories that were current in the tradition and combinations and recombinations of them account for
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Pizhurica's song. It was not the influence of any single text that I have found but rather of the normal workings of an oral-traditional literature.

When an oral narrative song has been written down and in one way or another a fixed text of it is made available to traditional singers, it may affect literate bards directly, and others indirectly. Yet even when a singer who can write copies, he makes changes, tending to express some lines in the formulas to which he is most accustomed in his own singing. Even as copyist he remains to some extent a traditional singer. When a singer attempts to memorize the published text, his basic training shines through and enables him to reconstruct lines according to his own creative habits, to rearrange them in the manner he had learned when he was yung.

There are many degrees of relationship to the fixed text. At one end of the scale, at its highest point, comes the song that is independent of the published text. At its best this song represents a pure oral tradition. Its value is great and is becoming ever greater because it is rare. At the other end are the songs memorized from the published final text. We have observed a few of the degrees in between these two extremes. The memorized texts cannot tell us much more about the pure tradition than the published text of which it is a "copy". From the singers and songs that have been influenced by the printed texts, although not to the point of memorizing them, the scholar can learn much about the life of a tradition as it is affected by cultural changes in the traditional society.

We have been investigating what happens in the last degenerative stages of a tradition, when texts have been fixed by being written down, and when those written texts have been disseminated in a literate, or partially literate, community. I have demonstrated the results of true memorization; they are contrasted with the songs that are "composed in performance" in a living and thriving tradition. The evidence I have presented points up the more remarkable aspects of the tradition in its truly creative period."(5)

Very relevant for our purposes is the Bulgarian epic tradition. Says Albert Bates Lord:

"NARRATIVE THEMES IN BULGARIAN ORAL-TRADITIONAL EPCI AND THEIR MEDIEVAL ROOTS"

"The core of this paper consists of the
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examination of several narrative themes in Bulgarian oral-traditional epic, particularly in the songs about the hero Krali Marko, with the hope of discovering possible medieval roots for them. It is necessary to stress at the beginning that the medieval roots I am seeking are not to be found only, or even mainly, in literary documents, but also in oral-traditional literature.

While the monks and scribes were busy translating, copying, and writing laying the foundations for Bulgarian written literature, what kind of oral-traditional literature were the Bulgarian people in the Middle Ages creating and listening to outside the monasteries? What stories were they telling and singing during those centuries when their written literature was beginning to develop? Was there any connection between the two kinds of literary activity?

One theme, or a detail in it, has directed me to the Armenian Paulicians and Bulgarian Bogomils **[**both Manichaeans**]** and to larger patterns of traditional narrative. Another has led into newer areas, to which considerable attention is now being given in scholarship dealing with oral-traditional literature, namely shamanism.

A people's past can be read in its songs and stories that have been bequeathed to each generation from its elders since the time when the community first came together to share common concerns. History of a particular sort, not political or military or diplomatic history, but what might be termed "spiritual", or even intellectual history, can still be heard on the lips and in the voices of the truly traditional singers in any country. Bulgaria's past has been blessed with an abundance of that kind of history which is embodied in its literature both oral and written. Since oral-traditional literature is older than written literature, its themes may go back to the oldest times. Much of common Slavic provenience was in the tradition when the Slavic peoples came into the Balkans; and much also was taken from the Greeks at various times. The Slavs brought the living forms of the tradition, the language and the metrical patterns in whch we still listen to and read the record; perhaps the earliest Indo-European elements in Bulgarian oral-traditional literature came from them, sometimes reinforced and increased by other Indo-European theme when they met with the Greek population of the Balkans. The evidence is in details, but they are suggestive of larger landscapes.

It is always difficult to talk with any degree of precision about the roots of any single oral-
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traditional narrative song. The streams of narrative in Bulgaria in the Middle Ages sprang from wells of stories told and sung rather than written and read. And it is important that some at least – probably more than is usually thought to be the case – of the written stories that were brought to Bulgaria in Greek from Byzantium and translated into Bulgarian, had themselves come eventually from oral-traditional sources. It is a moot point, therefore, whether some of the narrative songs collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries stem from medieval documents or from continuous oral tradition. If they stem from the written narratives from medieval times that we p[ossess, it is not easy to determine exactly what the process was by which they came into oral tradition. If they were read aloud from the manuscript to "people", or if the stories were read or recounted by the monks or priests in sermons, then the effect on oral tradition would most likely have been much the same (but not quite) as if someone had told the story in the tradition itself. The book transmitted it from one culture or from one region to another in the manner in which a traveler or traveling storyteller might have transmitted it. The story, not the text, is passed on. I shall, therefore, speak more about stories than about manuscripts, although they too have a place.

One of the narrative themes that seems to have appealed to people on various levels was the creation of the world and its organization. Joan the Exarch's Shestodnev, the"six Days of Creation", a translation of Basil the Great's
Hexameron, with many additions of the Exarch's own, including a famous description of Simeon the Great and his palace, represents Orthodoxy. Joan was reputed to be one of the learned men of his time in Bulgaria.

On the level of dualistic **[**i.e., *Bogomil* or Manichaean**]** heresy, or of the "unofficialdom" represented bu apochryphal works, originally in Greek, some of which have survived to us only in Slavic translation, steeming even from the early period of Church Slavonic and Bulgarian letters, the creation of the world was also a recurring theme.

The apochryphal and similar works that were apocalyptic or visionary in nature, or that dealt with the creation of the world and with the role of Satan as well as of God in a dualistic **[**once again, Bogomil or Manichaean**]** universe, were, understandably enough, popular with the Bogomils, even though it may be an exaggeration to say that these works were "their" books, The Tajna Kniga, the "secret Book", contained a dialogue between the apostle (St.) John and Jesus

(Christ). In answer to (St.) John's questions Jesus

recounted how the primeval world was dofferent from the present one, and how Satan had created this our earth and men and women on it. He told also what His mission was to this sinful world and how in the end, at the second coming of Jesus, the world would perish. This in brief was its content. Cosmology and the creation of mankind were some of the subjects that were most significant for the Bogomils and the highly important Tajna Kniga fitted so well that it is not surprising that it was even thought to be one of tjheir own works.

But the Tajna Kniga was not the only work concerned with Creation. The Sea of Tiberias falls into the same category. It contains a dualistic myth of the creation of the universe. In it God sees a duck, which is Satan, swimming on the sea and orders it to dive and bring up a rock, which God then breaks into two pieces, one of which He gives to Satan and from the other He strikes sparks, which become the archangels, Michael and Gabriel, and all the other angels. The Bulgarian text is hort; it is worth quoting in its entirety.

The Creation of the World

> The Lord of Sabaoth lived in three layers of the sky before Earth existed. And the Lord of Sabaoth, the eternal Father, thought and brought forth from his heart and gave birth to his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and from his mouth came out the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. And the Lord said, "Let the crystal heaven be on iron columns resting on seventy myriads, and let there be lakes, clouds, stars, light and wind." And after he blew in his bosom, he planted paradise in the east. The frost is of the Lord's face; the thunder is the Lord's voice, hardened on an iron chariot; lightning is the Lord's word, which comes out of the Lord's mouth; the sun is from the inside of the Lord's garment, and the moon from the Lord's face, because the Lord wiped his face. And the Lord said, "Let there be a Sea of Galilee on the earth, salty water; let there be myriads of columns in the air." And the Lord descended through the air to the Sea of Galilee and saw a grebe swimming on it. Standing above it, he said, "Grebe, who are you?" The answer came "I am Satan." And the Lord said to Satan, "Dive into the sea and bring out some soil and a stone!"
>
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>
> And the Lord, after breaking up the stone into two halves, gave with his left

> hand one half of the stone to Satan, and struck the other half with his scepter. Out of the fiery sparks from the stone God created the acrhangels Michael and Gabriel, and the angels flew out. Satan made from the stone myriads of satanic powers for the gods. And the Lord said, "Let there be thirty-three whales in the Sea of Galilee and let earth stand upon these whales."

This reads like oral-traditional literature, and the concept of the "earth diver" is a very widespread motif in the lore of many parts of the world.

On both the official Orthodox level of Joan the Exarch and on the heretical and apochryphal level the story of Creation was important. It can still be found in oral-traditional literature.

There have been collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries tales of the Creation that seem to derive to some degree from these medieval stories, which must have entered into the repertoire of the people and to have survive among them. These are not oral-traditional epic songs, but they belong among the prose narratives with medieval roots. They may have been known to the singers of oral-traditional epos, but we do not have any epic texts of them. Here is a small part of such a tale, published in 1914, refelecting the incident of the "earth diver" to which I just referred in The Sea of Tiberias.

> In the beginning there was no earth nor people. There was water everywhere. There were pnly the Lord and the Devil who were living together at that time.
>
> Once the Lord said to the Devil, "Let us make earth and people." "Let's", answered the Devil, "but where will we get some dirt?" "There is earth under the water," said the Lord to the Devil. "Say 'With the power of God and mine," then you will reach the bottom and find dirt."
>
> The Devil set out, but he did not say first "With the power of God and mine," but "With my power and that of God." That is why he did not reach the bottom. He did it again a second time, and again he did not reach the bottom. But the third time he said, "With the ppower of God and mine." And then he reached the bottom and with his nails picked up a

> little dirt.
>
> The Lord cast this dirt into the water and there came into being a little earth.

Thus, in the case of Christian stories, we seem to have an amazing continuity of popularity from written to oral literature.

Some themes are prominrnt in the written literature and that oen might expect to find in Bulgarian oral epic tradition, however, are not well represented there. One of these is the taking of cities, the subject of the Trojan Cycle in ancient Greek epic. As far as I can see, the medieval Slavic translations or adaptations of the Trojan story, stemming from Dares and Dictys and very widespread in medieval European literature, including Bulgarian, had no influence on Bulgarian oral-traditional epic.

The theme of the return of the hero after a long absence to find his wife about to maryy again, the Odyssey theme, is also rare in Bulgarian oral tradition, although it can be found. In the Slavic world outside the Balkans it is exemplified best, of course, by the Russian *bylina* of Dobrynja and Alyosha and its many variants.

On the other hand, songs about the dragon-slayers are numerous in the Bulgarian repertoire. In addition to real dragons, there are dragon substitutes such as Musa the Highwayman and the three-headed Arab. Since Musa has three snakes in his heart and the Arab has three heads, there is no difficulty in classifying them as unusual and dragon- or monster-related.

Such themes certainly go back to the Middle Ages, to the time when the present repertoire of themes was being formed, and they belong in the cultural continuum of East and West. In fact the basic story patterns of epic dragon-slaying, in which the hero fights the dragon who blocks the roads or guards treasures (as distinguished from the dragon-slayer type in the folktale, in which the hero saves a maiden about to be sacrificed to a monster) are very ancient shared cultural characteristics, for they represent the constant renewing of the primeval establishment of order in the universe. Dragons should be taken seriously. Strangely enough, most dragon stories in oral-traditional epic narrative do not seem to have any relationship to the dragon stories in the medieval Slavic documents. I am thinking in particular of the Life of St. George as told in the medieval Slavic texts, which is the usual tale found also in the Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine. No epic hero defeats a dragon by praying, thus making the beast submissive

enough to be led by a halter by the freed maiden to the city, there to be killed by St. George. This is a distortion of the folktale type of dragon-slayer rather than of the epic one. These stories keep the outward

form of hagiography, but are really traditional tales in saints' clothing. A new and highly original example of this phenomenon is found in the medieval Bulgarian text of *Mihail Voin*, Michael the Warrior.

Its mauscripts are of the fourteenth century, but it belongs to a somewhat earlier date, by at least one century, coming perhaps at the very beginning of the Second B ulgarian Empire. This apocryphal life of St. Michae of Potuk, who lived in the time of **[**Tsar**]** Boris, is built around the well-known type of tale of the slaying of a dragon, an almost ageless story with myriad ramifications. St. Michae of Potuk's encounter with a three-headed *lamja* varies from many other such encounters, however, because St. Michae dies from a blow of the dragon's tail after he cut off its three heads in fair fight. The tail syruck him on the right cheek and the left arm and wounded him. Michael, nevertheless, rose to his feet again immediately. His servant ran to the city to tell what had happened, and the citizens went out to meet Michael with candles and blessings. He gave the girl whom he had saved back to her parents, went home, and a few days later died. His relics performed amny miracles and gave healing to all who came to them with faith.

The life depicts the saint as being born to a good family; he was a saintly youth who fought against the Ethiopians and heathen at Carigrad. When all the Romei were fleeing in defeat, Michael prayed, rallied and encouraged the troops,a dn they were victorious. It is on thee return from this war that the saint stops to rest by a large lake. His servant learns about the dragon (*lamja*) and Michael undertakes its annihilation.

Michael is a fine and tragic hero, yet I know of no oral-traditional epic in Bulgaria in which the hero is killed by the dragon, or of any other saint – though I have not searched for one – who was thus martyred. I must confess that I am also fond of this story – attractive enough in its own right – because it reminds me, as I am sure that it has reminded many, of the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf. I do not suspect any connection. ...

[Note that Kai Khusrau of the Shah Namah, King Arthur of the Arthurian Cycle, and El Cid of the Spanish or Castilian epic tradition all bear dragons on their shields as their heraldic

symbol. One suspects a common Saka or Alanic origin for all of the above, though by way of the Goths in the case of El Cid and the

Spanish or Castilian epic tradition.**]**

...The treatment among the Balkan Slavs of such ancient and well-known themes as that of the Oedipus myth is noteworthy. The medieval South Slavic texts (both Serbian and Bulgarian) of the life of St. Paul of Caesarea emphasize the prophecy of incest and its fulfillment. It is found in a document that, according to Jordan Ivanov, is preserved in Middle Bulgarian copies of the sixteenth century and in modern Bulgarian *damaskini* of the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries, but all these are presumed to go back to a Byzantine Greek original now lost.

The essential story begins with the marriage of a brother and sister for the purpose of eventually keeping whole the kingdom of their father, a half of which was to be inherited by each child. When they had a son, he was put in a chest and set in the sea with a note that he was of incestuous birth. The brother died and the sister became queen of the whole kingdom.

The boy Pavel – the name is given to him later – was found by a monk, who hid the letter and brought him up, and Pavel became emperor of *irodskata zemja*, i.e., "heathen country". The Empress Egazia (his mother) heard of him and said she wanted to marry him. He would thus become emperor of all Caesarea. The monk told Pavel that he was not worthy of even living, to say nothing of becoming emperor, and he gave Pavel the latter that he had found with the child. But Pavel gave it to a servant and forgot about it. Thus he married his mother.

But – to shorten the story – he finds the letter again, forsakes his wife's bed, she finds the letter (through the servant), and the truth comes out.

The incest theme is avoided or at least not found in my experience in the Bulgarian oral-traditional versions of the Oedipus story. On the other hand, the prophecy of patricide and its fulfillment are interestingly worked out in the Bulgarian traditional songs, which seem to have no connection with Pavel or Paul of Caesarea. Why this is so is not entirely clear, but it is to be noted that the Bulgarian songs of patricide are attached mainly to Krali Marko, whose relations with his mother were impeccable while those of his father were far from amicable. It should also be noted that in the Bulgarian songs Marko does not actually kill his father. He simply beats him, or as

one song says, "he crushes his father's bones." They are indeed in the tradition of the Oedipus theme because of the connection with fulfillment of a prophecy, and because in the battle between father and son the contestants do not know each other's identity. **[**The parallel with the tale of Sohrab and Rustam in the Shah

Namah is obvious, though in this case it is the son who is killed, and, of course, no incest is involved.] The exception to these songs of Krali Marko in the patricide tradition in one about Porche of Avale, in which the father is actually killed.

In this extraordinary song Porche of Avale tells his wife that he will send her home because she has borne him no children, although they have been married nine years. She tells him he should take three loads of money and go to Venice to buy swaddling clothes since she is pregnant with a boy child. In joy Porche does as she bids and when he is on his way back, at a place two hours away from home, he hears a child crying, and its voice reaches to heaven. Porche realizes that this child is his and it will become a great hero who will kill him. So Porche returns to Venice and buys a gypsy child. When he arrives home he finds his wife nursing their son. He steals the baby boy, putting the gypsy child in its place, wraps his son in a sheaf of rye (?) and casts him into the Danube. An old woman hears the child crying when she goes to draw water from the river and she keeps him until he is a handsome hero os twenty.

At that time the king of Buda gathers an army and takes a hero from each house. The young man hears the old woman cursing the Austrian Empire as she sweeps the house, and tells her that he will join the army. He prders her to bring him the hidden arms and prepare his horse. The young man then goes to Buda, where he comes upon a turbulent river that is impassable. On the other side is a mighty Turkish army (which the poem describes very vividly). The youth is afraid, but his horse advises him to tie his shirt over his eyes so that they will not get wet when he leaps over the river. The horse comes down in the midst of the river and then leaps up again onto dry land. The hero, again at his horse's advice, unbinds his eyes, draws his sword, and attacks the Turks.

The young hero is about to return from the battle when he sees seventy kings sitting under an olive tree drinking raki. He greets them and Porche (evidently in the company of the kings) declares that the great hero is his son. He repeats the story told previously about his trip to Venice. The young man is so angry at his father for what he has done that he draws his sword and

cuts off his father's head. He says farewell to the kings and takes his mother to live with him and the old woman who had brought him up. This last may be a vestige of mother-son incest.

This brings me to a consideration in greater depth of another song, more typical than Porche of Avale, in which the theme of patricide occurs. The song tells, among other things, of the childhood deeds of Krali

Marko. In it the foundling Marko is brought up by a shepherd, and when he is old enough he is given the task of pasturing the village calves. He pastured them three days and three nights and on the fourth he beat them to death and went home. His foster father sent him away to live by the River Vardar where he had found him. The story continues, and is the same as that in which Marko "crushes his father's bones."

The pattern of miraculous birth, absenting, and precocious childhood has a long and impressive history. The element of beating the calves fits into this pattern of precocious and unusual childhood, and is a recognizable and characteristic trait in the sequence of story elements. Irrational, frenzied behavior seems in these cases to be a mark of special powers, of an otherworldliness.

Whence comes the incident of the beating of the calves? Two parallels come to mind. One is found in the Kullervo songs in the Finnish Kalevala, the other in the childhood deeds of the Armenian heroes David of Sassoun. Both parallels point to the East. An Armenian connection is not beyond the realm of possibility. In the Middle Ages on at least two occasions large groups of Armenian Paulicians [Manichaeans; here is almost certainly the origin of Bogomilism in Bulgaria and, indirectly, of Albigensianism or Catharism in Languedoc in what is today southern France.] were resettled from eastern Anatolia to Bulgarian Thrace. I cannot prove that these people knew the Armenian epic songs, but it is thoroughly possible, and even likely. Although te first Armenian epics were written down in 1873, at least one Armenian scholar (Shalian) states that the songs must have been formulated not later than the tenth century; there is no doubt that the songs were much older than that. According to Obolensky, Constantine V transferred Armenians to Thrace as early as AD 757. During the crucial period when Bulgars and Slavs [and also Thracians, the bedrock of the Bulgarian people] were gradually being assimilated, one can assume that traditional songs and stories were being formed and reformed. It must have been a creative period for epic. It is thoroughly possible that the episode of Marko's childhood – without Marko, of course

– came into the Balkans at that time. His name would have been associated with it later.

But that is only one of the possibilities. The incident is also reminiscent of apocryphal stories of Jesus. These are found in the Gospel of Thomas, with two Greek forms and one Latin, and the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior. The Gospel of Thomas was translated into Slavic. All of these contain narratives of the strange childhood deeds of Jesus.

It is true that none of the incidents in either the apocryphal texts or the Armenian epic corresponds exactly to the incident in the Bulgarian oral-traditional song of Krali Marko. In the case of the former, the apocryphal texts, it si clar that the documents themselves that were involved had no direct influence on the tradition. Put simply, I do not believe that any "carrier of the tradition" read or had read to him or her any apocryphal Gospel. But it does seem that Krali Marko took unto himself, or his name was attached to, stories typical of the lives of a special type of hero. It is also to be noted, although here one must be cautious, that such apocryphal texts, or the stories in them, were possibly known to the Armenian *Paulicians*, or at least to the *Bogomils*, **[**both Paulicians and Bogomils were Manichaean sects**]** and thus our two threads may be tied together. The incidents in the Armenian epic of David may also have been influenced directly by apocryphal Gospels like those cited.

This final section concerns the way or ways in which Krali Marko of the Bulgarian oral-traditional epic gained his unusual qualities, his strength, his horse, his relationship with the "other world" of the supernatural.

A traditional song will serve as a transition. It begins with the prophecy that Marko will be a hero and that he will crush his father's bones. His father, V'lkashin, puts the baby into a basket and casts him into the Vardar river. Marko is found and brought up by a shepherd, and when he is old enough he pastures the village calves. The song begins, therefore, like the one already cited.

No more is heard of this theme in the song in question, however, but a second subject is taken up. In the mountains Marko finds a cradle with two children whom he shades from the sun. Their mother is a *vila* (a winged female mountain spirit) **[**Lithuanian: *veles;* this topic is of great importance to our theme, see below**]** and in gratitude for his kindness to her children she gives him suck and from her milk he receives his strength. In a third section of the song the *vila* tells

him how to capture a wondrous horse, which he mounts from ambush. The horse had many wounds and came to a tree, in which Marko was hiddn, to scratch his wounds. After Marko was on his back, the horse flew off as fast as he could, but Marko was not afraid and hung on until the horse spoke and admitted tha Marko was more of a hero than he and so would be his master. Marko asked him then why he had been afraid and had fled, adding: "I will be your master and you will be my faithful servant. Let us go and fight the Turks and guard the highways from evil!"

Leaving aside Marko's final speech, let me begin to analyze the background and meaning of the second and third parts. Are they simply fantastic tales of the supernatural, or is there more to them? Can we tell from whence they may come and possibly speculate as to when?

The first step in our archaeology of a song is to ask what its meaning is and why it would ever have come into being. Some songs cry out for an explanation. For example, there is a short song in which Krali Marko saves the young of a falcon and later when he lies wounded and dying the falcon brings him water in its beak and saves his life. Usually such songs are ignored by critics, or it is implied that they are intended to show how the great hero was kind to animals. The folk have composed, as it were, a character study for their beloved hero. Or one could say simply that it is a nice little folksong. I do not find these answers satisfactory and, as I have said earlier, I have a conviction that most oral-traditional songs have a long history and deeply embedded meanings.

This song is widely known in both Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian and has many variants. The bird can be a falcon, a raven, or an eagle. In the Bulgarian versions it is usually an eagle. It is an easy jump from the song about the eagle to the one in which young Marko the calf-beater shaded the children of a *vila* (or *samodiva* in Bulgarian lore), who then suckled him and gave him strength and showed him how to gain his wondrous horse.

These stories explain how Marko obtained an animal helper in the form of a bird, how he is transformed in strength by the milk of a supernatural substitute mother, and how he obtains another animal helper and alter ego. Both animal helpers, as well as the supernatural female, are a means of conveyance in either air or on the ground, although Marko's horse is also aerial, as we see in other songs. These characteristics, animal counterpart spirits and means of air travel, suggest a shamanistic background as the

proper sphere in which these elements will be found to be at home. Are there, in short, parallels in shamanic epics among peoples of a culture that had connection at some time with the Balkans? There are some central Asian narratives similar to what the proto-Bulgars might very well have known, and they provide us with evidence that points to more important meanings for these tales than a trite "character study" of Marko!

There is an incident in the Turkish Kirghiz epic of Er Toshtuk, a part of the Manas cycly collected by Radloff and others later, and noted by Hatto in his translation of The Memorial Feast of Kokotoy Khan, parts of which are strikingly like the elements in our Marko songs. The hero Er Toshtuk encounters in the Underworld,

where he has gone on a quest, a giant balck eagle, which carries off in its talons the just-born foal of the spotted mare. The hero pursues the eagle to the base of the giant World Tree in the crown of which are the eaglets of the giant balck eagle. They are threatened by the serpent at the foot of the tree. Er Toshtuk cuts this dragon in two and then into six pieces, which he ties to himself and climbs the tree to feed the eaglets. The head of the dragon is left for the mother eagle. The eaglets tell the hero that it had been foretold they would be saved by Er Toshtuk. "Are you he?" "I am." They tell him that they will save him whenever he wants to escape from this world; they say that whenever he has difficulties they will appear at his side. For forty years the dragon has killed the eagle's young and she has vowed this year to leave the world if it happens again. She returns amid great winds and cosmic disturbances and is surprised and rejoices to find her eaglets alive and happy. The mother eagle gulps down the dragon's head and the eaglets explain what happened, uncovering Er Toshtuk fromunder their wings. Mother eagle immediately swallows him, too. The eaglets attack their mother, but she explains, "My intention in swallowing Toshtuk is to rearrange his bones and to forge them anew, making them as solid as steel; he will no longer drown if he is trown into the water, a sword will no longer be able to pierce him if he is struck." The mother eagle ends with, "So, here is your Toshtuk!"

The mother eagle gives Er Toshtuk a feather from her wing, if he is in danger he has only to burn the feather and she will appear before him. Later when he is in trouble she appears and carries him on her wings out of the Underworld, tus restoring him to the land of the living. One may recognize a not uncommon folktale element in this last flight.

The striking shamanistic elements in this tale are

significant. The first overall motif is that of the quest of the hero to the Underworld, and the second is his acquiring of an animal or bird sponsor in that world, who gives him a talisman or support as a spirit counterpart to ave his life and restore him with new powers to the world of living human beings. Very shamanistic indeed is the swallowing of the hero by the giant black eagle and the regurgitation. Her intention, she said, was to rearrange his bones and to forge them anew that he may be strong as steel and invulnerable! Anyone who has read (Mircea) Eliade's book on shamanism will recognize in this story the initiatory experience of a shaman. In our South Slavic songs Marko has been transformed and has acquired vestiges of the age-old shamanistic concepts of being born again with new and otherworldly powers.

The elements are especially clear in the following strange and wonderful Bulgarian songs. One of them is not about Krali Marko but concerns Ilija the Hunter, who had gone hunting without success with his uncles and had become separated from them. Soon he came upon a three-headed serpent which had swallowed a stag up to its antlers. The stag asked Ilija to cut the serpent in two, promising him three loads of gold. The serpent asked him tocut off the stag's antlers so that the serpent might swallow him. But when Ilija discovers that the serpent's sisters are fierce snakes (what had he expected?) he cuts the serpent in two and releases the stag, which takes him to his house. After three days and three nights they are met by the stag's grooms (*konjari*) who tell the hunter Ilija to draw his sword and "break" the green mountain wood (*da polomish gora, bre, zelena*) so that it will be impossible to return afterwards (*oti ne mozh posle da se varmesh*). "Two days later they arrive where the stags are, where they stay for three days and three nights. The grooms advise Ilija to ask for the six-month-old foalm which he can take home with him, as a reward. The stag offers instead three loads of gold, but Ilija does not want anything but the six-month-old foal, because the foal is winged and can carry him home. The stag curses the grooms who taught Ilija the method of taking away his black winged horse.

This is an astonishing and extraordinary song, but some of its mystery, if not all, can be dispelled by reference to narratives like that I adduced from er Toshtuk. For example, the death and rebirth elements seen in the swallowing of the stag by the serpent and his eventual release are apparent. They are mingled with the straightforward element of slaying the dragon, like Er Toshtuk's killing of the serpent at the foot of

the World Tree. The hunter seems by chance to have penetrated to another world, as shown by his being lost. The boiundaries of the other world are indicated 1.) by the deserted galde (sunny place) where Ilija finds the serpent; 2.) by the enigmatic statement of the grooms that he break the mountain woods because he will nkt return; and 3.) by Ilija's flying off on his winged horse. These elements, including the helper role of the grooms, have shamanic overtones. The hero acquires his otherworldly horse, one of several boons such heroes receive in addition to supernatural strength or invulnerability.

Another swallowing song tells how Marko has hunted a stag for three days and three nights, but all in vain. He cannot catch it. When he arrives at the Danube he finds women bleaching cloth and with their help he captures the stag which he presents to the sultan and is richly rewarded. On his return he shares the reward with

the women who helped him and when he discovers that they are the captives of Filip the Hungarian, he frees them.

After three days and three nights in captivity the stag escapes by leaping over the high fence and seeks clover. When he has cropped his fill, he approaches a lake and after drinking his fill of the cold water, he falls sound asleep. A serpent comes and swallows him as far as his antlers, but cannot swallow any further. Ilija the hunter passes by and the serpent asks him to cut off the stag's antlers so that he may swallow the rest of him. (It is not clear how he can talk with his mouth full.) The stag tells Ilija that bis he cuts off the antlers he hand will wither, and then the serpent will swallow the stag, and then Ilija, and then whomever else he finds; "Rather, cut open the serpent and pull me out of him." This Ilija did.

A strange song, but actually somewhat simpler than the first. At least two provocative questions arise: What does it mean? Where does it come from? And one might add, when?

The notes to the 1971 text suggest that the stag represents all that is good and the serpent all that is evil. They tell us that Ilija is unknown as a hero of epic, and say that the song is a contamination of two songs into which the motis of Filip Madzharin has been injected from still a thirst for us the second part of the song is especially interesting. One might suggest that the capture of the stag and its escape is a multiform of the swallowing of the stag and its rescue by Ilija; the tradition has thus put together two multiforms of the same basic idea. On the surface the first part is a simple vignette of a stag hunt for

which Marko is rewarded by the Sultan. One might be puzzled by the role of the women in the stag's capture and by the fact that it is aptured alive and not killed, and one suspects that it is not really a simple tale at all. Of course, if it were that kind of hunt, the second part of the song would not have been joined to the first.

The essence of the second part is the attempted swallowing of the stag by the serpent. This act links this song also with the episodes in Turkic epic in which the hero is swallowed by a monstruous creature and then regurgitated. The Bulgarian song in question, no. 162, is only a dim reflection.

The shamanic keys to tnhis narrative and other like it might have come into Bulgaria and thence to other parts of the Balkans with the Osmanli Turks or simply – if any such avenues are straight and simple – through travel of Bulgarian merchants or soldiers to and from the Near East. My belief is, however, that if that were so, the "Turkish", as against Turkic, elements would be

> closer to the surface. There would be less of the enigmatic, and so a naïve or tendentious reinterpretation would be unnecessary. For these reasons I believe that there is a distinct possibility that the elements in these songs came with some earlier Turkic people, perhaps even the proto-Bulgars. The Middle Ages gradually transformed these narrative elements from old beliefs, codified them in Slavic oral-traditional lore, and bequeathed them to us in many changing forms as jewels of many colors and facets across centuries, marked by the movements of armies, the rise and fall of dynasties, the investing and divesting of religions and heresies.
>
> Let me end with Krali Marko, however, who has played a crucial role in the last stages of the process. It is not surprising, although somewhat paradoxical, that Krali Marko, pictured in the poetry later as the fighter against the Turks, and eventually defier of their overlordship, liberator of captives and slaves, should be the inheritor of one of the oldest layers of Bulgarian tradition. In them the mystery of the origin of his supernatural strength is plumbed, giving him the qualities and attributes that make it possible for him to fight with monsters and disturbers of order in society and the world, to free the stag from the serpent, and his people from tyranny."(6)

I am very fond of the Viennese operetta. My favorite operettas are *Due Lustige* Witwe, i.e., "The Merry Widow" and *Der*

Zarewitsch, "The Tsarevich" or "The Son of the Rsar", both by Franz Lehar. I am particularly fond of the aria *Vilja-Lied* "The Song of the Vilya""from "The Merry Widow" and the aria *Wolgalied*, "The Song of the Volga" from "The Son of the Tsar".

Die Lustige Witwe or "The Merry Widow" concerns a fictitious kingdom in the Balkans known in the operetta as "Pontevedro". It is generally assumed that "Pontevedro" is based on Montenegro, which was indeed a small, independent kingdom in the Balkans in the time of Franz Lehar ("The Merry Widow" was first performed in 1905). However, if one looks more closely, it is evident that, in reality, "Pontevedro" is Bosnia. At the time of Franz Lehar,

Bosnia belonged to the Habsburg or Austro-Hungarian Empire. In fact, the *Bosniaks* or Bosnian Muslims (Catholic Bosnains were considered to be Croats, Eastern Orthodox Bosnians to be Serbs) were among the most loyal subjects and the finest soldiers of the Habsburg Emperor; we shall deal with this in more detail later. So, Lehar was far more familiar with Bosnia than with Montenegro. The name "Montenegro" is, of course, the Italian translation of the Slavic *Tsernagora*, which means "Black Mountain". On the other hand, "Pontevedro" means "The Old Bridge", which has nothing to do with the name "Montenegro", but rather reminds one of Bosnia's most famious landmarks, *id est*, the "bridge over the Drina" at Mostar. The folk dance known as the *Kolo* which plays such a role in "The Merry Widow", is definitely Bosnian.

The *Vilja* of the aria "*Vilja-Lied*" is what is called the

vila, mentioned above. *Vilja*, pronounced "Vilya" in English, may be a local Bosnian pronunciation, or at least Lehar heard it as such, or it may be that he, not being a Slavic-speaker, conflated the singular (*vila*) and the plural (*vily*). Lehar claimed that the music to the *Vilja-Lied* was based on "an old Pontevedroan melody"; since there is no such place as "Pontevedro" (though there is a city in northwestern Spain called "Pontevedra", birthplace of *La Belle Otero*, a famous beauty of *La Belle Epoque*), there can be no such thing as "an old Pontevedroan melody". In reality, the hauntingly beautiful tune of the "*Vilja-Lied*" is an old Bosnian melody. In any case, said melody is indeed of an almost celestial beauty.

As Lehar said in the "*Vilja-Lied*" of *Die Lustige Witwe*:

Vilja, O Vilja! Du Waldmagdelein,
Fass' mich und lass' mich
Dein Trautliebster sein

Vilya, O Vilya, you forest maiden,
Take me and let me
Be your own truest love.

In the English version of "The Merry Widow", the above is paraphrased thusly:

Vilya, O Vilya, witch of the wood
I would die for you,
Dear, if I could.

Fortunately, in the English version the almost acheingly beautiful melody is

preserved.

Notes Dmitri Obolensky:

"Unfortunately, however, it is not possible to obtain a clear picture of the pre-Christian cult in

Bulgaria, as the relevant sources are scanty and vague and illustrate no more than the general character of southern Slavic demonology and ritual.

The earliest and fundamental account is that of Procopius, who describes the religion of those Slavs who invaded the Balkans in the sixth century: they worshipped one supreme God, creator of lightning and Lord of all things, and also honored the spirits of rivers and woods, to whom they offered sacrifices in exchange for oracles. Procopius, De Bello Gothico, Volume III, p. 14; Volume II (Teubner, Leipzig), pp. 357-358:

'They recognize that there is one God, the maker of lightning and sole Lord of all things, and they sacrifice to him cattle and all other victims. They do not know destiny, nor do they admit in any way thet it has any power oven men. But whenever death stands before them, when they are stricken with sickness or preparing for war, they make a promise that, if hey escape, they will straight away make a sacrifice to the God in return for their life; and if they escape, they sacrifice what they had promised, and consider that their safety has been bought with this same sacrifice. They venerate, however, rivers, **nymphs** (*nymphai*) and some other spirits

(*daemonia*); they offer sacrifices to all these also, and in sacrificing expect oracles.' This passage has served as a basis for all researches into the pagan religion of the Slavs.

The evidence of Procopius is particularly important, as it clearly shows that the belief of the early Balkan Slavs was monotheistic. The **nymphs** (*nymphai*) mentioned by him are in all probability the Slavic *vily*, the belief in whom is an essential characteristic of the pagan tradition of the southern Slavs, and particularly of the Bulgarians."(7)

Says The Greenwood Encyclopedia of World Folklore and Folklife:

"When Vuk Stefanovich Karadzhic organized his vast collection of Serbian folklore and poems in the early nineteenth century, he presented "Women's Songs" first, suggesting that these lyrics, short tales, and beliefs constituted the earliest Serbian folk poetry. He devoted a section to lyrical songs and fragments that alluded to mythological beliefs and ideas. The pre-Christian religious beliefs that permeated the lives of the South slavs, including the Serbs, featured aspects of nature worship znd the veneration of

ancestors. A natural phenomenon was often anthropomorphisized; that is, the forest, fields, and animals had spirits that protected them, and these spirits were not always benigh. One such spirit, the *vila* – sometimes described as a fairy or wood nymph, at other times as a creature to be feared – was variously depicted as swift as the wind, with long hair and silky veils waving in the wind as she flew the skies, as beautiful and eternally young, robed in white gauze, and with shimmering golden hair. The *vila* had the sweetest imaginable voice, but at the same time she was armed with bow and arrows. These creatures were believed to live by lakes or in meadows hidden deep in forests or on high mountain peaks beyond the clouds. They liked to dance and possessed supernatural powers.

Perhaps the most famous *vila* plays an Athena-lie role in the Prince Marko heroic ballads. She is his *posestrima* (bold sister), granting him protection and aid when he needs it most. She binds his wounds and repeatedly heals his pierced heart. This *vila* named Ravioyla, could foretell the future, control storms, and change herself into a snake or a swan. Another famous *vila* figures prominently in an old legend about the building of a fortress town (Skadar). In this poem she demands a human sacrifice before she will allow the walls of the fortress to be built. Her demands, however,

occur only after she is ignored and deceived."(8)

Says Marija Gimbutas of the *vila* among the Balts:

"The Baltic *veles* – etherealizations of the deceased – go to live their family and community lives, to 'a sandy hill, a hill of *veles*, where they have their houses or chambers, tables and walls, and where they are covered with linen cloths. The 'hill of *veles*' has gates through which the *veles* enter, and benches on which they sit, and these features recur in descriptions of the after-life in Latvian and Lithuanian folk poetry. The verses would seem to have preserved the image of the ancient burial mounds, the wooden chanmbers or stone cists. Many passages of Latvian folk songs speak of a cemetery on a small sandy himm, often so full of graves that there is no more room for new arrivals. They may reflect the communal Bronze Age barrows with hundreds of graves, or the Iron Age barrows with a number of graves of one family.

If the realm of the *veles* on 'a high sandy hill' in the neighborhood of the village reflects the more realistic side of this people's beliefs about life after death, there also exists an imaginary hill, or a

steep stone hill, which the dead have to climb, and therefore they need to have good fingernails or the aid of animal claws. On this steep hill *Dievas* (God) resides and summons the *veles*. Here we begin to see the connection between the god's (Lituanian *Dievas*, Latvian *Dievs*) abode and that of the dead. Further, we learn from the mythological songs that the goal is not the hill, which is the image of the sky, but is the place beyond the hill.

The way to this is long. The *veles* may ride on horses through the sky, they may rise with the smoke of the fire, ot fly like birds through the Milky Way, which in Lithuanian means 'the Birds' Way'; they may also go by boat as does the Sun at night through the waters – the sea, the Daugava or Nemunas rivers – to the west. There the Sun sleeps, there she washes her horses and there appear other gods, *Dievas*, the Thunder god, the Moon, and the deity of the Sea. And somewhere in this remote place are the grey stone and the sun-tree, or the iron post, and at the post two horses. These represent the cosmic tree of the Balts, the axis of the sky, having close analogies in Hindu, Roman, Slavic and Germanic mythologies. In folklore it is usually the oak tree (as among the Celts) or birch tree with silver leaves, copper branches and iron roots; sometimes it is an enormous linden or an apple tree. It stands on the stone, at the end of 'the way of the Sun'. The Sun hangs her belt on the branches, sleeps in the crown of this

tree and, when she rises in the morning, the tree becomes red.

'Beyond the hill is my mother, there where the sun is', runs the Latvian song. The dead travel to the realm of the gods, to the realm of light, to the end of the visible world. It is still said: "He is in the realm of *dausos*." The lituanian word *dausos* preserves the meaning of a mysterious realm and cannot be translated either into 'paradise' or into 'heaven'.(9)

As we indicated above, the *vila* or *veles* is known among the Slavs as well as the Balts. Says Ms. Gimbutas in this connection:

"The northwest Salvic *Zuarasic* – Latin transliterations of Slavic at the time being quite haphazard – may have been identical with *Svarozhich* (Svarog's son), the early Russians' personification of the solar fire. Svarog's name is probably related to the Indic (Vedic Sanskrit) *svargas*, 'radiant sky', and *svarati*, "gleams, shines'. The suffix *–og* shows his name to be of Scythian, i.e., Iranian origin. He survives in the Romanian adjective *sfarog*, 'torrid,

sunburnt', and in names of hills and towns along the Slavic-German borderline in Poland.

As generator of the sun, *Svarog* rates comparison with the Vedic *Indra* and the Iranian *Vrtragna*. Indra's great feat is the slaying of the *vritra*, 'obstruction', and evil serpent who has imprisoned the waters behind the 'mountain' (i.e., the sky). The Iranian warrior-god *Vrtragna*, as his name shows, also overcomes obstructions, though there is no record of him as a dragon fighter. He is also a smith, associated with fire and with generative power, particularly of a sexual nature. A master craftsman, he can change his own form into that of the wind, the gold-horned aurochs, the boar, the horse, or the falcon *Varagna*, the alst-named being his main incarnation. This suggests the Russian *bylina* of the *botatyr' Volkh (volkhv*, 'priest', sorcerer') who could turn himself into a grey wolf, a white bull with golden horns, or a bright falcon. It also suggests the creature in folklore, a supernatural falcon or hawk or a fiery dwarf who turns into a whirlwind, called *rarog* in Polish, *jarog* or *rarich* in Ukrainian, *rarach* in Czech. The whole character of Svarog is probably complicated by borrowings from the tradition of *Vrtragna*.

From Lusatia to the Urals it was customary to toss a knife or other sharp instrument into the whirlwind for protection. Only a few decades ago in Pomerania, the West Beskids, and Bulgaria, people would cast themselves face down before a whirlwind, to ward off the misfortune

and illness which it brought. Russians, while doing so, would cry, 'A belt around your neck!", so that the whirlwind should be strangled. A whirlwind was feared because it contained demon, who was often called *rarog*. It appears likely that Svarog once was the shining hero who stirred up a whirlwind by fighting the evil serpent. St. George, who was primarily a dragon killer in Christian mythology, became a popular Slavic folklore figure, perhaps by identification with some dragon killing Slavic god; if such a god did exist, it was surely *Svarog*. This St. George was also thought to be the ruler of the wolves. There is a very ancient Slavic belief that the white wolf is a divine being; in Belarusia he is called the king of all animals. So possibly St. George has a wolf incarnation like the *bogatyr' Volkh*, which would certainly reflect his connection with *Svarog*.

Associated with Svarog's functions are maidens called *vila*, known among the Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, and Bulgarians, who laid offerings for them under the trees, at springs, caves, and stones, as attested in records since the thirteenth century. They take the

form of beautiful, very strong, naked girls equipped with arrow heads, but can also appear as swans or snakes, as well as falcons, horses, wolves, and whirlwinds. In these last four incarnations they parallel the incarnations of *Svarog*. They are battle maidens like the Germanic *Valkyries* **[**as well as the Iranian *Fravashis***]**, and friends of heroes. When they are dancing on mountain tops or meadows they shoot at anyone who approaches, or blind him or pull him into the ring and dance him to death.

Simargl, mentioned as a separate god in Vladimir's pantheon **[**see Chapter 8**]**, is best explained, as Roman Jakobson has suggested, as *Simurg*, a winged griffin, a divine bird of the Persians. The Slavs probably borrowed him in the last centuries BC from their Sarmatian overlords, whose name for him was *Simarg*. He may enev have been connected with the warrior god's functions, and perhaps merged in Slavic folklore with the eagle. In Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia, and Serbia, the eagle was believed to rule over hailstorms, and to cause fire, illness, or other misfortune if harmed. *Khors* is an obvious borrowing of the Iranian name for the personified sun – *Khurshid. Dazhbog* means in Slavic 'the Giver (< *dati* – 'to give') of Wealth' (*bogu* – 'wealth'; also 'god', i.e., the source of wealth). One of the clues to *Stribog* is that in the Song of Prince Igor it is stated that the winds are his grandchildren; his name is probably connected with the Slavic root **srei* – 'to flow', or to the Iranian *srira* – 'beautiful', a common epithet for the wind, which also suggests the sublimity

of the sun. Another possibility is that *Stribog* is the relic of an old Father God: **patribhagos*.

There is no doubt that the Slavs were sun worshippers, as indeed the tenth century Arab traveler al-Masudi reported them to be. According to him, they even had a temple with an opening in the dome and special architectural arrangements for observing the sunrise. The dead were buried with their heads to the east or with their eyes or face oriented eastward. Custom prescribed sleeping with one's head turned toward the east. Greetings and prayers to the rising sun are recorded from southern Poland, Belarussia, and Ukraine. The personified sun fused with the Christain God, as among the Lusatian Slavs of eastern Germany, where it is the custom, upon entering a church, to turn around and greet the rising sun. ...

...*Volos*, god or horned animals, mentioned with Perun in the treaties of 945 and 971, and his alternate name *Veles* known from fifteenth and sixteenth century Czech demonology and preserved in toponymy (Veles,

southeast of Skopje in Macedonia) has recently been proven through an ingenious linguistic study by Roman Jakobson to be an old Slavic god derived from the common Indo-European pantheon. Close parallels exist in Baltic and Old Irish **[**Gaelic**]**. In Lithuanian, *velinas* now means 'devil' and *vele* 'shade of the deceased'. Latvians in their mythlogical songs have preserved *vels*, god of the underworld and guardian of cattle. Tacitus mentions the Celtic *Veleda*, 'prophetess', while Old Irish **[**Gaelic**]** *felmac* (from the record of 880) is a musician and a poet, 'a son of musico-poetical power'. In the Russian epic *Slovo o polku Igoreve* (The Song of Igor's Campaign), Boian, a **[**Bulgarian**]** musician and poet, **[**see Chapter 8**]** is called 'grandchild of Veles'.

The above etymologies lead to a parallelism of Slavic *Veles* with the Vedic thousand-eyes magician-god *Varuna*, who upholds the cosmic order and binds his adversaries by spells. In the Rig Veda he has a double name: *Varuna-Asura*. The Slavic Veles is a compound name: *Vel-es*. The second part relates to *Asura* as well as to the Old celtic god *Esus*, portrayed with a bull's head, and to the Old Norse *asir*. The cult of Volos was strong around Novgorod and Rostov, and his name became a common one for churches and monasteries. In Christian times *Volos/Veles* was replaced by the Byzantine St. Blasius (*Vlas* or *Vlah* in Slavic), who continued to be the guardian of cattle until the present time.

The last figure in Vladimir's pantheon is the goddess *Mokosh*. Sixteenth century church chronicles contain the question, addressed to women, 'Did you not go to Mokosh?' Peasant women believed that if Mokosh was pleased with their offerings she would help them with

> their laundry. The Czechs prayed to *Mokosh* in time of drought. In northern Russia she survived as a female house spirit called *Mokusha* or *Mokysha*. In the Novgorod area she is identifiable by her large head and long arms, and she sins flax at night. In the Olonets area she spins wool or walks abroad at night, and is the sheep lose hair, the proverb says '*Mokosh* has sheared the sheep.' Place names of the fifteenth century include *Makushi, Makushina, Makusovo*, etc., from Pskov, Novgorod, Kostroma and Chernigov areas.
>
> In Iranian mythology *Ardvi Sura Anahita*, literally the 'wet, strong, spotless one', is the source of the celestial waters, goddess of prosperity and fertility. *Mokosh*, whose name brings to mind the Slavic *mokru* – 'wet', might be an analogous figure. Unquestionably ancient is the worship of 'female' stones – the *kamannye baby*. Some of them had female breasts. Paralytics, the deaf and the blind came from great distances to offer grain, flax, wool, pigs, calves,
>
> (442)
>
> sheep, and money to such stones. When in the nineteenth century archaeologists in Ukraine removed stones from the Scythian barrow where they stood, the people blamed this action for the start of a drought."(10)

When we get to the Celtic field, we will note many mythological creatures who forcibly remind us of the Slavic *vila* and the Baltic *veles*, including even Morgana la Fae, the half-sister of King Arthur. Also, in in other parts of the present work, we will deal with the Persian *pari* or *feri*, as well as the Persian *Fravashi*, which recall the Celtic *fairy*, the Slavic *vila* and the Baltic *veles*. Marija Gimbutas noted the parallel between the Slavic *vila* and the Viking *Valkyries*; as we shall note below at some length, it is generally believed that the Viking *Valkyries* are derived from the Iranian *Fravashies*, no doubt by way of the Goths. So, one is inclined to see in the Slavic *vila*, the Baltic *veles*, the Celtic *fairy*, and the Persian *pari* or *pari*, the Persian *Fravashi*, and, by derivation, the Viking *Valkyrie* an Indo-European

phenomenon; of course, the words *peri* or *pari* and *fairy* all derive from a common Indo-European root.

We now deal with the above in the Shah Namah of Firdausi:

> "Firdausi claims as his source not only a single Book of Kings (by Daqiqi), but also the multiple oral reports of learned men called *mobads* and *dehqans*, whom he conventionally describes as masters of traditions that are specifically poetic in nature. What Firdausi is claiming, as we shall see, is that he is creating his Persian Book of Kings from a Pahlavi Book of Kings *and* from the Persian oral poetic tradition. Moreover, there is nothing in the poet's testimony that would suggest a clear delineation between the stories of kings as drawn from a book and the stories of heroes as drawn from the oral tradition. It is as if both kinds

> of stories came from both kinds of sources.
>
> Thus my work takes issue with the prevailing idea of Noldeke and other experts in Iranistic studies that the Rustam tradition is extrinsic or intrusive to the Book of Kings tradition. If there had been any intrusion at all, I argue, it would have happened at least as early as the era of the Parthian dynasty of the Arsacids. Whereas Firdausi implicitly presents his poem as if it were the very first to combine a book of kings and oral poetic traditons as sources, the findings of Mary Boyce suggest that, even in Sassanian times, the subject matter found in books of kings was just as much an aspect of oral poetry as that in epics of heroes. As the discussion proceeds, we shall have reason to posit the existence of separate narrative traditions about kings and heroes, but I shall also be arguing that stories of kings were potentially just as much an inherited ppoetic form as the stories of heroes, and that the two kinds of story could exist as one: an epic about kings *and* heroes.
>
> Still, it is problematical to assume that the traditions about kings should have had a predominantly historical basis, while the traditions about heroes were grounded in myth. In this boo, I propose that the poetic combination of themes concerning the hero Rustam and tjhemes concerning the national kings is a tradition that goes back not only to Parthian Arsacid times. Rather, they can be traced all the way back to the remotest Indo-Iranian and even Indo-European layers of the classical Persian language. My proposition is supported by the work of Georges Dumezil, who argues that the narrative traditions about the Iranian dynasty of the Keyanids, as transmitted by Firdausi's Shah Namah, represent an authentic continuaton of traditions

that have a common Indo-Iranian and even Indo-European heritage.

In particular, Dumezil shows that the traditions about the Indic hero Kavya Ushanas and those about the Iranian *shsh* Kai Kaus are cognate, both centering on the water of life and its magical powers in bringing the dead back to life. My own results supplement those of Dumezil about the Keyanids: I find that the relationship between the Keyanid kings and the Sistanian heroes, namely Rustam and his family, is in its own right an equally old mythical theme of Indo-European provenience, cognate with such themes as the relationship of Agamemnon and Achilles in the Greek epic tradition of the Iliad.

To argue, as Dumezil has done by way of the comparative method, that some of the main story patterns concerning the Keyanids have a mythical

heritage, is a matter of controversy for experts in Iranistic studies: such arguments contravene one of the most influential pieces of scholarship on Iranian subjects, Arthur Christensen's masterly book on the Keyanids, which had consistently defended the historicity of this dynasty. In general, historicist assumptions have impeded the acceptance by Iranists of Dumezil's findings. My work will have to confront the same sort of historicist viewpoint.

I shall argue, however, that we need not deny the existence of an element of historicity in epic. We need only affirm a discovery by such experts in oral poetry as Albert Lord, who notes that mythical patterns regularly absorb and them reshape historical patterns in the context of oral poetry. In other words, the Iranian "book of kings" tradition can theoretically stem from a combination of history and myth. But if it is oral poetry, it must be a combination where the patterns of history are subordinated to the controlling patterns of myth.

Because we do have evidence, thanks to Mary Boyce's survey of the Arsacid (Parthian) period and beyond, for thinking that the "book of kings" tradition was indeed a matter of oral poetry, we have a sound theoretical basis for positing the continuity of Indo-European traditions up to Firdausi. But the impact of Boyce's work is blunted precisely at the point where the application of her findings would be most striking. Although she corroborates the flourishing of oral poetry from Arsacid times all the way to the era of Firdausi, we encounter a major obstacle in Firdausi. The consensus among Iranists is that, on the basis of internal and external evidence, the Shah Namah of Firdausi draws its treasury of lore about kings from a prose Persian translation of a Pahlavi Book of Kings, not from a continuum of Persian

oral poetic traditions about kings. Boyce's work, however, suggests that even the Pahlavi Book of Kings is a repository of oral traditions. I in turn shall argue that the multiformity of the Arabic translations provides supporting evidence. Thus my findings about Rustam, added to Dumezil's findings about the Indo-European heritage of the Iranian heroic narrative, would still hold, even if it were true that the Shah Namah of Firdausi is based on a prose Persian translation of a Pahlavi Book of Kings. Only we would then have to say that the Rustam narrative is an *indirect* continuation of Indo-European poetic traditions.

In this book, however, I propose that the Rustam narrative of Firdausi's Shah Namah is in fact a direct continuation of Indo-European poetic tradition. There

are two main lines of argumentation. First, I examine extensively what the Shah Namah itself says about its own mode of composition, comparing this stylized testimony with the available external evidence about Middle and New Persian poetry, with the purpose of trying to isolate traits that are characteristic of the workings of oral poetry. In considering such characteristics, I rely on the definitions of oral poetry as developed by Milman Parry and Albert Lord in the course of their fieldwork – and as reformulated in more recent theoretical work.

I should note in advance that no single aspect of the evidence that I have assembled can prove, of and by itself, that the composition of Firdausi's Shah Namah followed the principles of oral poetry. But this book does, I hope, present a persuasive constellation of evidence. My minimal position is that the Rustam narrative is a matter of oral tradition in Middle Persian poetry and that at least the themes of this narrative were accurately revived by Firdausi. My maximal position is that this narrative is not just oral tradition but also an oral poetic tradition, inherited directly in New Persian poetry and recorded permantly in the Shah Namah of Firdausi."(11)

Olga M. Davidson continues:

"I suggest that there is another and equally strong reason for Firdausi's appropriation of Daqiqi: he is seeking to make Daqiqi the representative of the preexisting poetic traditions, a single foil for and rival of his own version. In fact, we know tghat Daqiqi's Zoroastrian themes share the heritage of a Middle Persian epic tradition: there is a Pahlavi narrative poem, *Ayadgar-i-Zareran*, i.e., "The Memorial of Zarer", the themes of which converge with those in the verses of Daqiqi as incorporated in the Shah Namah.

In this connection, it seems to be no accident that Daqiqi supposedly just happens to have composed only those thousand-odd lines incorporated in the Shah Namah, and that these lines, in turn, just happen to coincide with the narrative framework of the *Memorial of Zarer*.

Daqiqi himself pays homage to a Zoroastrian past:

> *Daqiqi has chosen four qualities*
> *In the world from all that is beautiful and all that is ugly –*
>
> *Ruby-colored lips, the plaint of the harp,*
> *Wine as limpid as moonlight, and the religion of*
> (446)
>
> *Zoroaster.*

In this light, it may have been more prudent for Firdausi to present the orthodox Zoroastrian doctrine from the mouth of Daqiqi. By supposedly quoting Daqiqi on the overall narrative of the coming of Zoroaster, Firdausi achieves a critical distance, being thus one step removed from his own Muslim context and thereby not personally responsible for anything that might be offensive to Muslim sensibilities. But he also achieves something that is even more important: with his gesture of quoting Daqiqi in the Shah Namah, Firdausi appropriates, in one stroke, the cumulative poetic traditions of his Zoroastrian predecessors.

Such popetic traditions, I argue, are *oral* poetic traditions. I use the term "oral" in line with the investigations of living oral traditions by Parry and A. Parry and A.B. Lord. As we know from evidence independent of Firdausi's Shah Namah, a lengthy history of Iranian oral poetic traditions stretches back many centuries. The most striking testimony, collected by Mary Boyce, centers on the New Persian and Middle Persian contexts of the Parthian word *gosan*, roughly translated as 'minstrel'. Boyce sums up the essence of this testimony:

> *The **gosan** played a considerable part in the life of the Parthians and their neighbors, down to late in the Sassanian epoch: entertainer of king and commoner, privileged at court and popular with the people; present at the graveside and at the feast; eulogist, satirist, storyteller, musician; recorder of past achievements, and commentators of his own times. He is sometimes an object of emulation, sometimes a despised frequenter of taverns and bawdy houses; sometimes a solitary singer and musician, and sometimes one of a group, singing or performing on a variety of instruments. The explanation of such diversity is presumably*

that for the Parthians music and poetry were so closely entertwined, that a man could not be a professional poet without being also a musician, skilled in instrumental as well as vocal music ... As poet-musicians, in Parthian society as in any other, the ***gossans*** *presumably enjoyed reputation and esteem in proportion to their individual talents.*

There is comparable evidence about singer-poets in the earlier Iranian traditions of the Medes (Athenaeus 633d-e), Achaemenids (Xenophon Cyropaedia 1.2.1), and

Sassanians (Letter of Tansar, Minovi, 1932.12).

The medium of the singer-poet was competitive. Particularly striking anecdotes concern competitions between Barbad (Pahlavi: *Pahlapat*), traditionally the greatest Sassanian minstrel, and various rivals (cf. Tha'alibi, Zotenberg 1900.704). These traditions of poetic competition are prominently featured in the Shah Namah of Firdausi (for example, IX 226-228.3601-3677). And these traditions help explain the tenor of Firdausi's competitiveness with Daqiqi.

In this connection, it is important again to draw attention to the way in which Firdausi presents Daqiqi as the sum total of previous traditions. Oral poets in most cultures appropriate all previous traditions of composition to themselves in the context of each poet's own performance/composition. So too Firdausi claims thathe is definitive by virtue of being the ultimate transmitter of the stories he tells. The poet figuratively owns the whole poem in the context of composition, which is presented as a stylized performance:

These stories, grown old,
Will be renewed by me in all assemblies.

In performance, the oral poet appropriates the song to himself at the expense of other oral poets (see A.B. Lord, The Singer of Tales, op. cit., p. 102: "A song has no 'author' but a multiplicity of authors, each singing being a creation, each singing having its own single author."). A cross-cultural survey reveals that such a claim on the part of the performer/composer is typical of oral poetics. In the Shah Namah, Firdausi appropriates the poetry of his predecessors, as represented by Daqiqi, because they are long dead and removed from the realm of performance:

Now I will tell what he [Daqiqi] has told,
For I am alive and he has become joined with the dust.

Alternatively, Firdausi can present his predecessors as having lost control over the transmission of their poetry.

In transmitting, his words became weak.
Ancient times were not renewed by him.

Firdausi presents his composition as his "performance", *his own song.*

Some may think that the testimony of Firdausi about Daqiqi should be taken more literally, to the

extent that Firdausi may be citing Daqiqi because the latter is truly his only significant predecessor in his use of poetic form. In this line of thinking, some might argue that, even if there were oral poetry in the time of Firdausi, this poetry would still be very different from that of Daqiqi and Firdausi. For example, if we take the obvious aspect of the formal features shared by Daqiqi and Firdausi, namely the *mutaqarib* metre, some would be inclined to think that the poetry of these two poets, as well as all New Persian poetry, results from the artificial literary adoption of Arabic poetic forms. Why not, then, consider Daqiqi and Firdausi to be forerunners of a new literary form? After all, this *mutaqarib* form, with its strict rules in quantitative metre, would seem to be in sharp contrast with what Iranists have considered to be the form of native Persian oral poetry. Judging from the evidence of attested Avestan and Middle Persian poetry, Emile Benveniste in 1930 proposed that the basic native Persian metrical principle is a system of lines with equal syllable count, while scholars like W.B. Henning posited a system of equal stress counts.

But these evaluations of native Persian poetic forms have now been seriously challenged by L.P. Elwell-Sutton, who makes a strong case for quantitative metre as the basic principle of Middle Persian poetry, thereby directly linking it with the quantitative metre of New Persian poetry, like the *mutaqarib* lines of Firdausi's Shah Namah. Moreover, Elwell-Sutton argues convincingly that Firdausi's *mutaqarib* metre, as well as other metres related to it, is not derived from the corresponding Arabic metre, one that is unattested in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, extremely rare in the Umayyad period (661-750 AD) and relatively frequent only in 'Abbasid times (750-1258 AD); rather it is the Arabic *mutaqarib* that seems to be modeled on the Persian. In fact, the New Persian *mutaqarib* seems to be derived from Middle Persian forms. The thrust, then, of Elwell-Sutton's findings is that the attested fragments of New Persian poetry before Daqiqi and Firdausi consistently reveal the formal characteristics of Middle Persian poetry. I

cite Elwell-Sutton's illuminating survey of these New Persian poetic fragments, such as the three surviving lines attributed to the Sassanian minstrel Barbad; part of a hymn recited by the Zoroastrian priests at the fire-temple (*atashgade*) of Karkoy; and a two-line lament for the ruin of Samarqand.

Accordingly, I maintain that Firdausi's description of Daqiqi as his *only* predecessor cannot be taken literally. By appropriating his rival Daqiqi as

the representative of Zoroastrian traditions, Firdausi implicitly declares himself heir to the Middle Persian epic traditions, and he does so with a gesture typical of oral poetics."(12)

Evidence shows that Firdausi's epic poetry cannot have been the first of its kind. The question remains, however, why was his claim to be the first poet of national epic implicitly accepted by later egnerations of poets? It will not suffice to assume that Firdausi's poetry came to be considered the first of its kind simply because it was the best. Firdausi's primacy is not just a matter of artistic superiority. As the poet himself affirms, it is also a matter of authenticity and authority. And authority is a matter of control over tradition. For Firdausi, moreover, such control is specified as control over both oral and written traditions. The oral traditions, as we shall see, are represented as stylized performances by figures called *mobads* and *dehqans,* while the written traditions take the form of an archetypal book, the Pahlavi Book of Kings.

Firdausi's claimed control over both oral and written traditions, I argue, is an expression of authority that is derived primarily from oral, not written, poetic traditions. Firdausi's poetic tradition was an oral tradition in its own right, and his Shah Namah had survived as a living oral tradition in the period following its composition. Firdausi's poetry was an accretive medium that kept adapting itself to the society for which it was composed and recomposed.

As I proposed in the preceding chapter, Firdausi not only inherited the Middle Persian oral poetic traditions; he also re-created the New Persian oral traditions, composing a version of national epic meant to be both more comprehensive and better than any that preceded him. His version became canonical. And yet, ironically, this very fact of canonicity became a guarantee that the national epic tradition would not come to and end with Firdausi. Rather, the Shah Namah of Firdausi went on regenerating itself all over the land. The key to this process was the oral poetic tradition that Firdausi had inherited and appropriated from his

predecessors. In his extensive study of medieval Western European literary traditions, Paul Zumthor describes as *mouvance* the phenomenon in which the act of composition is regenerated with each act of copying a manuscript; we may expect such a process to be ongoing in any tradition where the act of composition is still part of a living process of composition-in-performance. With the passage of time,

as we shall see, the national epic of Firdausi even became a focus for the accretion of extraneous oral poetic traditions.

It is not necessary to apply our own modern poetic criteria in order to determine whether or not the poet Firdausi was indeed superior to all other poets of national epic. A clear sign of Firdausi's poetic superiority from his own society's point of view can be found in the very fact that it was Firdausi's Shah Namah, not some other poet's Book of Kings, that survived, and that its survival precluded any subsequent treatment of the narratives that the Shah Namah as treated. This is a matter of authority as well as artistry, and that authority, I propose, is conferred by the contimuum of oral poetic traditions. With its authority, Firdausi's Shah Namah became perceived as the only Shah Namah. It survived Firdausi's formative social context, as defined by the patronage of the Sunni sultanate of Mahmud of Ghazna (998-1030 AD), founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty, and it continued through the centuries, prevailing as the national epic of Shi'ite Iran. Firdausi's Shah Namah has carried such weight and prestige that, even down to the present century, the recitation of oral prosaic traditions of the Book of Kings is conventionally attributed by the reciters to Firdausi.

The survival of the Shah Namah from Sunni to Shi'ite contexts raises the possibility that there were shifts in the actual orientation of the poem as it kept on being reshaped in performance over the course of time. Such shifts seem to be reflected in the "Life of Firdausi" tradition, both what is built into the Shah Namah and what is extraneously supplied from the prefaces and other sources. Here I interpret the "Life of Firdausi" lore not simply as raw data about the real life and times of the poet but as a traditional discourse that merges factual details with an ongoing mythical reinterpretation of the poem's role in society. A salient example is the tradition that tells of Firdausi's supposedly having composed a poem of blame, that is, a satire or invective, against the Sunni sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. The essential themes of this poem of blame attributed to Firdausi are accretively built into the Shah Namah proper. The purpose of such accretions in

the Shah Namah may well have been to acclimatize the poetry of Firdausi to a Shi'ite audience at large. In terms of my interpretation of the "Life of Firdausi" tradition, instances of praise for Sultan Mahmud reflect those of Shi'ites. Thus there is no need to reject the authenticity of the blame passages, as a strictly

biographical reading requires on the grounds that the blame itself seems to undermine any impression of sincerity that we may read into Firdausi's words of praise elsewhere. Since the praising of Mahmud is centrally and pervasively reflected by the Shah Namah itself, while the blaming of this sultan is represented more marginally and sporadically, it seems reasonable to infer that the Sunni orientation of the poet's patronage was dominant in the most formative phases of the poem, while the Shi'ite orientation may have developed only over time, accretively. In any case, it seems to me fruitless to discount the patronage of Mahmud's Ghaznavid dynasty in considering the historical formation of the text that we know as Firdausi's Shah Namah. There is also a related problem concerning the historical attribution to Firdausi of a work known as Yusuf and Zuleikha.

Firdausi's appropriation of all previous poetic traditions in his Shah Namah goes beyond the formal gesture of incorporating the poetry of his main rival Daqiqi. On another level, the poet is making a colossal effort to establish his poetry as the text of a definitive book, and in fact the entire Shah Namah is pervaded by references to this effort. On the surface, such references to the Shah Namah as a book seem to contradict the argument that Firdausi's poetry is the product of an oral tradition. As weshall see, however, the idea of a book, in Firdausi's medieval Persian context, is not at odds with the dynamics of the oral poetic traditions that he inherited.

A basic question arises: should we assume that oral poetry is basically incompatible with literacy? The cross-cultural evidence of social anthropology suggests that no universalized formulation can be made about the phenomenon of literacy: in some societies, literacy erodes the traditions of oral poetry, whereas in others, these traditions may remain unaffected. There is no justification in assuming *a priori* that the poetry of Firdausi is not oral poetry, or that it is some kind of "semi-oral" poetry, solely on the grounds that the Shah Namah refers to itself as a book in the making. Moreover, the act of writing, of creating a book, can be assumed to be a factor merely in the recording, not necessarily in the composing, of Firdausi's poetry. In other words, whatever we may ultimately conclude about the question of deriving the Shah Namah from oral

traditions, it cannot simply be taken for granted that the ctual composition of the Shah Namah depended on writing. We can be certain abut the factor of literacy only to the extent that writing had played a part in the recording of the poem, and

that the factor of literacy is a prerequisite for the reading of any recording in the form of a book. It does not necessarily follow that literacy was a prerquisite for the composition that resulted in such a book. Moreover, according to the account of Nizami 'Arudi Samarqandi in his *Chahar Maqala* (Four Discourses), the Shah Namah was dictated by Firdausi to one 'Ali Daylam and performed on behalf of Firdausi on specific occaisions by one Abu Dulaf, described as a *rawi*, i.e., 'repeater'.

In the first chapter, we saw that the medium of Firdausi's Shah Namah talks about its sources in the same way: it refers to them in terms that suit either stylized performances or a stylized book.

Let us examine, then, the claim made by the Shah Namah to two basic sources. The first is a Pahlavi Book of Kings that Firdausi says he acquired through "a friend":

> *In my city I had a congenial friend [**mehrban**].*
> *You might say that he and I were in one skin.*
>
> *He said to me: "This idea of yours is good.*
> *Your steps indeed tend to goodness.*
>
> *This book [**nama**] written down in Pahlavi,*
> *I will present to you so that you may not slumber!*
>
> *You have lucid language and youth.*
> *You have the words for heroic composition.*
>
> *Go, render anew this book [**nama**] of kings!*
> *With it seek honor among the great!"*
>
> *When he brought this book [**nama**] to me,*
> *It inflamed my dark soul.*

In previous scholarship, this passage has been interpreted literally as a piece of historical information, and some have gone so far as to claim, on the basis of external lore about the life of Firdausi, that the man here described as a *mehrban* i.e., 'congenial' friend of the poet can be identified as one Mohammad Lashkari.

I suggest, however, that it is more productive to exhaust first the internal evidence of the Shah Namah itself. Specifically, this passage should be compared

with the passage that leads into the story of Bizhan and Manizhah, Shah Namah V 6-9, 1-37, a description of a mystical nighttime encounter between Firdausi and an unnamed figure who is, again, described as a *mehrban*

'congenial one'. Some commentators infer that the 'congenial one' is in this case meant to be understood as a concubine. This *mehrban* proceeds to recite from a *nama* 'book', said to be written in Pahlavi, the love story of Bizhan and Manizhah, which Firdausi is then to put into verse.

It seems that both passages, Shah Namah I 23.156-161 and V 6-9.1-37.e variants of an integral type-scene where a "dear one" gives Firdausi a prose rendition of part of the Shah Namah, supposedly taken from a book written in Pahlavi, and where it is Firdausi's task to convert the given rendition from prose to verse. In the second passage, we are told explicitly that Firdausi has difficulty falling asleep, whereupon the *mehrban* consoles him by reading out loud from this Pahlavi book the story of Bizhan and Manizhah. We can compare this theme of a sleepless night in the second passage with the *mehrban*'s words in the first passage, where he is pictured as exhorting Firdausi not to sleep.

I draw attention to a detail from another passage, where yet another *mehrban* is pictured as setting for Firdausi a spread-out feast [*khwan*]; in the mode of a *dehqan*, this *mehrban* sets the spread in order to tell a story (Shah Namah V 167.25). In this image, we see a stylized reference to performance in oral poetic traditions – a reference that is fused in the same context with a reference to the alleged acquisition of a Pahlavi book from this *mehrban*.

Use of the word *dehqan* in this passage brings us to the important subject of the second of the two primary sources adduced by the Shah Namah. As the inspiration for the Shah Namah, the poet not only receives a Pahlavi book from the mysterious *mehrban*: he also actually "hears" the poetic traditions spoken by what are called *mobads* and *dehqans*, and references to their spoken words pervade the whole Shah Namah. The first term, *mobad*, means 'priest' or 'wise man', and the second, *dehqan*, means 'landowner'. The latter meaning, however, masks the actual function of the *dehqan*: as a schief owner of property in a particular locale, he is the "authority" not only in the narrow sense that he has administrative powers but also in the broader sense that he actually validates the traditions of that given locale. In other words, the *mobads* and *dheqans* are performers of the oral tradition. In fact, Nizami 'Arudi Samarqandi in his *Chahar Maqala* reports that Firdausi himself was a *dehqan*.

In the poetic diction of the Shah Namah, as the

following passages show, the words *mobad* and *dehqan* are in fact the functional equivalents of each other, inasmuch as they both designate performers of the oral

tradition, validators of tradition itself. In example 1, the words are even synonymous. In example 3, the *dehqan* is the son of a *mobad*, while in example 4, the *mobad* is a descendant of a *dehqan*. Moreover, the *mobads* and *dehqans* are characterized as validators of a specifically *poetic* oral tradition. In fact, the word *sarayanda*, i.e., 'reciter' is synonumous with both *mobad* and *dehqan* in example 1.

*Now turn back to the words of the **dehqan**.*
*Consider what the reciter [**sarayanda**] says.*

*This **mobad** said, that, one day Tus*
At the time when the cock crowed ...

2.)
Perhaps you do not agree with this account
*That the **dehqan** often recites about ancient times.*

A wise man hears this story
Chooses knowledge and does not accept it.

But when you remind hi, of the meaning
He complies and cuts short his quarrel.

*Listen to the words of the old **dehqan**,*
If now the words are agreeable.

*The worthy speaker, the **dehqan**, thus recalled*
That one day, at daybreak, Kai Khusrau ...

3.)
*A reciter [**sarayanda**], a **dehqan** of **mobad** descent,*
Thus taught me this story.

4.)
*From the **mobad**, in this manner we remember*
*Also from the speech of that old amn of **dehqan** descent.*

5.)
*Now listen to this story from the **dehqan+**,*
Who recites it from ancient discourse.

6.)
*Now turn back to the words of the **dehqan**.*
Consider what the experienced man says.

7.)
*Now turn back to the words of the **dehqan**.*

*Consider what the reciter [**sarayanda**] says.*

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8.)
*What did that reciter [**sarayanda**] say, that old **dehqan**,*
About Goshtasp and famous Ardashir?

9.)
*What did the teacher, the world-searching **dehqan**,*
Say about the passage of time?

10.)
*Who did that fine speaker [**sokhan guy**], the **dehqan**, say*
Was the first to seek great fame in the world?

11.)
…while you are in accord with the story
*That the **dehqan** keeps on reciting about ancient times.*

12.)
*Now listen to the old **dehqan***
And learn all his stories, one by one.

13.)
*Did you not hear the story from the **dehqan***
Who calls to mind the ancient times?

14.)
*That provider of choice words, the **dehqan**, when he spread out the feast,*
Recited a story from the Haft Khwan.

Thus the *mobads* and *dehqans* represent for Firdausi the equivalent of oral poetry, and it is their traditions that he appropriates in the manner of an oral poet:

15.)
*From the spoken words of the **dehqan**recall now*
The stories and recite to the righteous.

These stories, having become old,
Will on account of me be renewed before the seembly.

16.)
*When I put into verse the spoken words of the **dehqan***
I wanted some sign of my own self in it.

There is even an instance where two variants of one distich explicitly refer to the aspect of oral poetry on one hand and to the aspect of Firdausi's appropriating this oral poetry on the other:

17.)
Now turn back to the spoken words of the ***dehqan.***
Consider what the singer says.

From the spoken words of the ***dehqan,***
I will join together a story from what was said in ancient times.

Such testimony about the authenticity of the poetry as both written and oral tradition, offered by the poetry itself, is essentially accepted as valid by Jules Mohl, one of the first editors and translators of the Shah Namah. He accepts the acquisition of a Pahlavi Book of Kings as the written aspect of Firdausi's sources and the hearing of the stories from *mobads* and *dehqans* as the "oral" aspect.

Since the work of Mohl, however, there has been a decided movement away from his interpretation, under the aegis of Noldeke, who has been followed by succeeding generations of European, American, and native Iranian scholars. Although Noldeke was an admirer of both the literary and the editorial judgment of Mohl, and in fact concedes that he became increasingly so with each consultation, he stresses his disagreement with his predecessor in this particular case. I agree with Noldeke by treating the reference to *mobads* and *dehqans* not literally but as narrative gestures; still, I disagree with him by treating the references to writing likewise as narrative gestures.

Noldeke was an exponent of what he called the "scientific method", grounded in the European heritage of textual criticism and *Quellenforschung*. Oriented toward finding the textual sources of the Shah Namah, Noldeke rejected Mohl's idea that Firdausi's sources included "oral" traditions. In Noldeke's time, the empirical study of living oral traditions, later perfected by A. Parry and A.B. Lord had not yet taken shape, so that the very term "oral" did not as yet have "scientific" status. As we shall see, there are indeed empirical techniques available in applying our knowledge of living oral traditions to poetic evidence that happens to be preserved only in "dead" textual traditions. For now, however, let us pursue Noldeke's line of thinking, based purely on textual evidence.

Firdausi's ubiquitous conceit of hearing the stories from a *mobad* or a *dehqan* was discounted by Noldeke as a stylized way of expressing the consultation of texts:

> 'It is a delucsion when he [Firdausi] speaks in such a way as if relating from an oral narrative of some

> *dehqan* or the like. When he says … that he brings into verse "what had been related of the antiquity" it only means the same thing that is meant by "the book of old times". In the nexte verse he addresses the reader as a listener: "O son, lend me thy ear!"… which is a similar case."

Noldeke's reasoning was obviously based on the assumption that the Shah Namah is a text that is meant to be read. For him, Firdausi's frequent exhortations that the audience listen are simply a matter of stylization.

The major impetus for Noldeke's con fidence, and that of his followers, in the notion of a purely textual basis for the composition of he Shah Namah had been the cumulative evidence of narratives in Persian and Arabic, which gradually became better known and edited in the nineteenth century and later. These books, or extensive passages in them, retell much of the matter of the Book of Kings and comment upon it. They include:

1.) Abul'l-Qasim 'Ubayd-Allah b. 'Abd-Allah b. Khurdabeh, *Al-Masalik wa'l-mamalik* (ninth century, Arabic).
2.) Ahmad b. Abi Ya'qub Ya'qubi, *Ta'rikh* and *Al-Budan* (ninth century, Arabic).
3.) Abu Hanifa Ahmad b Dawud Dinawari, *Al-Akhbar* (ninth century, Arabic).
4.) Abu 'Abd-Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *Al-Ma'arif* (ninth century, Arabic).
5.) Muhammad b. Jarir Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l-Muluk* (early tenth century, Arabic); and its freely adapted and considerably altered Persian version, Abu 'Ali Muhammad Bal'ami, *Tar'ikh-I Bal'ami* (late tenth century).
6.) Abu'l Hasan 'Ali b. Husayn Mas'udi, *Muruj ad-dahab* and *Al-Tanbih wa'l-Ishraf* (both Arabic, tenth century).
7.) Mutahhar b. Tahir Maqdisi, *Al-Badi wa'l-Ta'rikh* (tenth century, Arabic).
8.) Abu'lHasan Hamza Isfahani, *Ta'rikh sSini Muluk al-Arz wa'l-Anbiya* (tenth century, Arabic).
9.) Abu Sa'id 'abd al-Hayy b. az-Zahhak Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akhbar* (eleventh century, Persian).
10.) Abu Mansur 'Abd al-Malik Tha'alibi, *Ghurar Akhbar Muluk al-Furs* (eleventh century, Arabic).
11.) Abu Rayhan Biruni, *Al-Athar al-Baqiya 'an al-Qurun al-Khaliya* (eleventh century, Arabic.

Also, from the twelfth century onwards, there are extant works that contain mane episodes or details not found in the above earlier sources, at time providing radically different narratives of the same episodes based on local oral traditions. These include, for example, *Mujmal at-Tawarikh wa'l-Qisas* (twelfth century, Persian) by an anonymous author; Shahmardan b. Abi'l Khair's *Nozhat-Nama-ye 'Ala'I* (twelfth century, Persian); Ibn al-Balkhi's *Fars Nama* (twelfth century), and a much later but interesting account written in the style of popular professional *naqqals* by a prince from Seistan in the early seventeenth century, Malek Shah Hosayn Sistani's *Ihya' al-Muluk*.

It has been suggested that these Arabic and Persian texts are based ultimately on sources written in Pahlavi, the official language of the Sassanian dynasty. There is thought to be one such source in particular, the Pahlavi *Khwatay-Namak*, the equivalent of the Persian *Khoday Nama* 'Book of Lords', originally commissioned by King Yazdgerd (632-651 AD) and compiled by his vizier, a *dehqan* called Daneshvar, covering a period that extends from Keyumarth to Khusrau Parviz. In this line of reasoning, then, Firdausi's immediate textual source would have been a Persian translation of the Pahlavi *Khoday Nama*.

In what is known as the "older preface" to Firdausi's *Shah Namah*, there are reports of a translation of the *Khoday Nama* into Persian prose. This prose text was commissioned by a figure with strong Zoroastrian connections, the "Lord of Tus" Abu Mansur-e 'Abd al-Razzaw, and compiled by his secretary, Abu Mansur Ma'mari; the project was reportedly completed in April, 957 AD. **[**The information concerning this prose *Shah Namah* is provided in the "older preface" of the *Shah Namah*. The text of the "older preface" is publaihed bu Qazvini in 1944 and translated by Monorsky 1964. 263-273. On the confirmation provided by the "most reliable" Biruni, see Noldeke 1930.27. For instances of translations from Pahlavi into Persian prose, see Lazard 1971.387, n19; cf. also Lazard 1975.625. On the Zoroastrian (and possibly Shi'iye) connections of Abu Mansur-e 'Abd al-Razzaq, see Shahbazi 1991.31-32(especially n54)**]** By "preface", what is meant are the varied prose accounts that precede the actual text of Firdausi's *Shah Namah* in the surviving manuscripts. These accounts can be grouped into different families on the basis of differing contents. An edition of these varied accounts is now available. One such account is the "older preface, reconstructed from a family of manuscripts which has drawn particular attention since the days of Mohl. In

this "older preface" we find the report about a

commissioning of a prose *Shah Namah* written in Persian and translated from the Pahlavi Book of Kings, preumed to be the one mentioned in Firdausi's account. This Persian prose text, no longer extant, extended the Book of Kings all the way down to the reign of Yazdgerd, a terminus that in fact coincides with that of Firdausi's *Shah Namah*. Some go so far as to argue that the "older preface" had originally served to introduce this prose *Shah Namah*, now lost, rather than Firdausi's poetic *Shah Namah*.

It is commonly inferred by modern commentators that Abu Mansur's prose *Shah Namah* is the "source" for Firdausi's poetic *Shah Namah*. There are, however, serious problems with such an inference. To begin with, we have already seen that the "ancient book" given by an unnamed *mehrban* 'congenial one' to Firdausi in the *Shah Namah* is stylized to such an extent that it seems more generic than specific. The book is described not as Persian but more vaguely as Pahlavi:

> *This Pahlavi book [**nama**], written down,*
> *I bring before you so that you may not slumber.*

There is a striking parallel in the narrative dealing with the early life of Zoroaster and the beginning of his prophethood. In the proem of his composition, the poet speaks of his source in the following words:

> *I saw a notebook [**daftar**] from the time of the empire*
> *In a script which is called Pahlavi.*

Later on a *mobad* urges the poet to translate the book into Persian verse:

> *You see these ancient stories*
> *Of which no one recalls the origins, foundation, and root.*
>
> *No one understands this script*
> *I fear that it will disappear altogether.*
>
> *It is better that you put it in verse,*
> *In beautiful language and in **dari** [= Persian] script.*

I conclude that it is unjustified to posit a specifically Persian prose archetype for Firdausi's poetry merely on the basis of his references to an authoritative book of prose as his source.

A similar argument can be made concerning a

Pahlavi version, produced in the reign of Khusrau I Anushirvan (531-579 AD), of the Indic corpus of fables

known as the *Panchatantra*; the Arabic version of Ibn al-Muqaffa', apparently based on the Pahlavi version, is known by the title Kalila and Dimna (names of two jackals who are characters in one of the stories). There was a version of Kalila and Dimna in Persian, composed in verse by the poet Rudaki and commissioned by Abu'l-Fazl Bal'ami, vizier to the Samanid king Nzar II Ibn Ahmad; this poem is not extant, except for some fragments. Firdausi himself draws a parallel between his own *Shah Namah* and Rudaki's Kalila and Dimna, stressing that the uniqueness of both compositions depends on what is described as the turning of prose into poetry (*Shah Namah* VIII 655.3460-3464). Here again it is unjustified to posit a Persian prose archetype for the Persian poetry of the Kalila and Dimna merely on the basis of references to an authoritative book of prose as a source. The implicit equation of "prose" with Pahlavi documents conveys an authority that is comparable to thr medium of Firdausi's poetry. In this medium, as we have seen, both the Pahlavi book and oral poetic traditions are visualized as the basis for a poem's authority.

Moreover, it is impossible to establish with certainty that the Pahlavi *Khaoday Nama*, as commissioned by Yazdgerd, was even the ultimate source of Firdausi's *Shah Namah*. We come back to the parallel retellings of the Book of Kings in Arabic and Persian prose, cited by Noldeke as proof of the existence of a Pahlavi archetype, the *Khoday Nama*. These retellings are so often at variance with Firdausi's *Shah Namah* and with each other, that a stemma leading back to a single archetype *Khoday Nama* simply cannot be reconstructed. It is pertinent here to cite the anecdote, recorded in Hamza 24, that one Mobad Bahram had to use twenty "copies" to establish the "correct" chronology of the *Khoday Nama*.

Yet Noldeke, who wants to believe that there is an archetypal version of the *Shah Namah*, is in fact the first to despair of establishing by way of Arabic and Persian prose sources, a textual stemma for Firdausi's *Shah Namah*. Even the *Ghurar* of Tha'alibi, a contemporary of Firdausi, is disappointing in this regard. Although Noldeke believes that the *Ghurar*, unlike the other Araic sources, was based directly on the Persian prose *Shah Namah*, commissioned by Abu Mansur, he is forced to posit, on the basis of the textual divergences, that Tha'alibi and Firdausi must have used different copies of this Persian prose *Shah Namah*, copies that varied considerably one from the

other:

> The text used by Tha'alibi was, however, not exactly the same as used by our poet. We have

> here to do with two somewhat different copies of the Book of Kings. … The Persian copyists have, and always have had, the tendency of "correcting" at least in minor details quite arbitrarily or guided by their supposed discernment the originals on hand, and the number of such disfigurements made on purpose is further increased by mistakes made out of sheer carelessness. In that way there appear also in those portions which take their originin a common source and cannot be traced to any of the other Arab authors certain divergences between the *Ghurar* and our Epic.

Noldeke rationalizes even further the divergences between Tha'alibi and Firdausi. Since Firdausi is after all a poet, so Noldeke reasons, he may allow his imagination to elaborate and make more beautiful those things that the "elegant rhetoric" of the scholar Tha'alibi would have left alone. The same sort of reasoning emerges in a monograph by Kurt Heinrich Hansen that systematically compares the parallel narratives of Tha'alibi and Firdausi. Whenever Hansen deems something gratuitously present in Firdausi's *Shah Namah* while it is absent in Tha'alibi's *Ghurar*, he infers that Firdausi has filled the gap in the traditional narrative by unleashing his poetic "Phantasie". But Hansen's reasoning can be replaced by a more satisfactory explanatory model. For example, in Firdausi's *Shah Namah*, when the hero Sam, Rustam's grandfather, goes to war against Mazandaran and the Gorgsars, there is an elaborate description of his handing over the crown and kingdom to his son Zal, who is destined to be Rustam's father. Later, however, after Zal marries Rudaba, Rustam's mother-to-be, Sam again goes to war against the Gorgsars – and again there is an elaborate description of his handing over the crown and kingdom to Zal. By contrast, the corresponding narrative of Tha'alibi has Sam hand over his kingdom to Zal as his representative the first time and then as his successor the second time. Hansen thinks that the version of Firdausi is by contrast a misunderstanding of the same hypothetical original: not understanding the difference between representative and successor, the poet supposedly executes an awkward duplication of scenes and then fills in the gaps with his imagination.

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Such a doublet in Firdausi's narrative, deemed gratuitous by Hansen, can be explained as a typical feature of "oral" traditional narrative patterns as described by Albert Lord in The Singer of Tales: a traditional scene A can be doubled in the pattern A1 BA2 by way of an interposed scene B. For example, a South

Slavic "oral" traditional singer, Avdo Mededovic, at one point of a performance seems to contradict himself when narrating the sequence of events concerning the receiving of a letter delivered, the recipient open it and readit, and the head of the assembly ask about the letter (pattern A.1). Only after he has shifted to the next stage of his narrative (pattern B) does Avdo realize that he has not mentioned the rewarding of the messenger, a theme that proves to be important for a later part of the song. So Avdo repeats the theme of reading the letter, this time mentioning the reward (A2), thereby leaving a minor violation in the sequence. It can be argued, then, that Firdausi's *Shah Namah* here reveals a feature typical of "oral" poetry, and that it is Tha'alibi's account that may reflect innovation here, namely, the undoing of a doublet by way of making two variants complementary rather than redundant.

The factor of oral poetry, especially as it was investigated by Parry and Lord well after the time of Mohl's writing, can help account for this and for many other aspects of Firdausi's *Shah Namah*. Thus we will be moving back toward the position represented by Mohl, who – as has been previously noted – believed that the *Shah Namah* of Firdausi was built on "oral" as well as written sources. For the moment, however, we shall not insist, as Mohl did, that references to *mobads* and *dehqans* are to be taken literally to mean that Firdausi heard oral poetry from them. By the same token, however, we also cannot say for ssure, as Noldeke did, that Firdausi literally acquired an ancient book from a friend. In both cases, I suggest, we are dealing with poetic conventions that are expressing the authority and authenticity of the traditions that are being told. Thus we come back to our point of departure: not only does the *Shah Namah* present itself as both a stylized performance and a stylized book, but it also presents its sources in the same way.

The fusion of themes is so complete that performance and book can be interchangeable concepts. Thus, as we have seen, the book of Firdausi is presented as preempting the book of Daqiqi, just as an oral poet's performance might preempt the performance of another oral poet. And yet, we know that we are dealing with rival fixations of the text. The

preemption is presented as it might happen in oral poetry, but the poetry of Daqiqi is not presented as merely a performance or oral poem, but also as a book like that of Firdausi.

So the poetry of Daqiqi is seen as more than oral poetry, just like the poetry of Firdausi. As for the oral poet, he is stylized in a different way, as a *mobad* or *dehqan* from whom Firdausi hears tradition. It would

be tempting for some to assume that the poetry of the *mobads* and *dehqans*, if it is poetry, would be different from that of Daqiqi. But we have already seen that the atguments assembled by Elwell-Sutton, concerning the native Persian heritage of Daqiqi's amd Firdausi's *mutaqarib* poetics, suggest otherwise. The major difference established by the *Shah Namah* between the likes of Daqiqi and the *mobads/dehqans* is that his poetry has become a fixed text, though the mode of rivalry and th mode of appropriating is that of oral poetry.

That the *mobads* and *dehqans* do represent oral poetic traditions, not just any kind of oral traditions, becomes clear from Firdausi's own description of the genesis of the Pahlavi Book of Kings that he claims it as his source. In this description, we have what amounts to a myth-made stylization of oral poetry. A noble and wise *pahlavan*, born of the *dehqans*, assembles *mobads* from all over Iran, each possessing a "fragment" of a preexisting ancient book. Each *mobad* recites his portion and, in this way, this ancient but once "fragmented" book is wondrously reassembled:

*There was a book [**nama**] from ancient times*
In which there was an abundance of stories.

*It was dispersed into the hands of every **mobad.***
*Every wise one [of the **mobads**] possessed a portion of it.*

*There was a **pahlavan**, born of the **dehqans**,*
Brave, powerful, wise and noble,

One wo inquired into the earliest days.
He sought to retrieve all the past stories.

*From every region an aged **mobad***
*\Be brought, who would remember this book [**nama**].*

He asked them about kings of the world
And about the famed and glorious heroes,

When and how they held the world in the beginning

That they should have passed it down to us in such a wretched state,

How, with a lucky star,
Every day completed a heroic exploit for them.

The great ones, one by one, recited before him
*The stories [**sokhanha**] about kings and the turnings of the world.*

When the lord heard their words from them
*He set the foundations for a renowned book [**nama**].*

Thus it became his memorial in the world.
The small and the great praise him.

It is implicit in this passage that the authority of the unified empire and the unified Book of Kings is one. The key to this essentially Zoroastrian concept of the empire is to be found in the traditional role of the *mobad*. In a Zoroastrian document known as the Selections of Zatspram, the idealized Iranian Empire of the Supreme god Hormazd **[**Avestan: *Ahura Mazda***]** is visualized as one in which every village has a true-speaking witness, every district has a judge who knows the law, and every province has a *mogbad* 'high priest' [Pahlavi for *mobad*] who is the guarantor of truth. It appears that the "truth" of the *mobad* is a foundation for the structure of the empire just as it is a foundation for the structure of the poetry that glorifies the empire.

With regard to this passage in the *Shah Namah* about the *mobads* and their "book". Mohl comments in passing that such a story parallels the myths of other societies abouot their respective national poetic traditions. But he does not go further in thinking of Firdausi's source "book" as anything other than a "book". In this case, then, Mohl makes no inferences about possible stylized reference to performance of oral traditions, as he has done with other passages involving *mobads* and *dehqans*.

One may be tempted to reject the idea of a reference here to oral traqditions on the groundsthat, according to the "older preface" to the Shah Namah, the story of what happened to the Pahlavi Book of Kings can theoretically be followed all the way down to the time of Firdausi himself, with the commissioning of a Persian prose Shah Namah translated from the Pahlavi book. The identity of the man who commissioned this prose Shah Namah, Abu Mansur, has already been considered. This person not only had a Zoroastrian

background but also claimed to trace his genealogy all the way back to Godarz, a hero of the Kaianid court. The details of this prominent nobleman's distinguished vareer have been carefully reconstructed, and I limit the discussion here to part of the narrative that describes the constitution of the Book of Kings. The passage from the "older preface" must be quoted in its entirety.

'Therefore he [Abu Mansur-e 'Abd al-Razzaq] commanded his minister [*dastur*] Abu Mansur Ma'mari to gather owners of book from among

> the noblemen [*dehqan*], sages, and men of experience from various towns, and by his orders his servant (the said) Abu Mansur Ma'mari compiled the book: he sent a person to various towns of Khorasan and brought wise men there from [variant: and from elsewhere], such as Makh, son of Khorasan, from Herat; Yazdandad, son of Shapur, from Sistan; Mahoy Khorshed, son of Bahram, from Bishapur; Shadan, son of Borzin, from Tus. He brought all the four and set them down to produce those books of the kings, with their actions, their life-stories, the epochs of justice or injustice, troubles, wars, and (the royal) institutions, beginning with the first king [*kai*] who was he who established the practices of civilization in the world and brought men out of (the condition of) beasts – down to Yazgerd Shahriyar, who was the last of the Iranian kings.'

This passage has led to the assumption that the book in question must have been Firdausi's own source. Moreover, such convergences as the fact the Abu Mansur is "Lord of Tus" while Firdausi himself is a native of Tus prompts the inference that "Firdausi, in his early years, did certainly know the Lord of Tus and could have met him." And yet, the description of the "older preface" is strikingly parallel to Firdausi's narrative, which we have just considered, concerning the genesis of the Book of Kings. It is also parallel to a story that tells how King Khusrau Anushirvan (531-579 AD) commissioned a collection, from all the provinces in his empire, of popular stories concerning ancient kings (*haka it muluk*), a collection which he then deposited in his library **[**This information comes from a preface to the Shah Namah in the manuscripts. This version is different from the one in the "older preface", where the acquisition made by Khusrau

Anushirvan is not a primordial Book of Kings, but rather the story of Kalila and Dimna**]** Finally, it is parallel to a story of the commissioning by Yazdgerd the last Sassanian king, of the *dehqan* Daneshvar to reassemble the Book of Kings.

In view of all these parallelisms that exist between the story of the prose Shah Namah and the stories of earlier forms of the Book of Kings, it becomes clear that the version of the "older preface", even if it has a historical basis, conforms nevertheless to a mythmaking pattern that keeps revalidating the Book of Kings by way of explaining its "origins". **[**In terms of the "older preface" as we have it, it cannot even be

assumed that the primary authority belongs to the earlier prose Shahnama instead of the later poetic Shah Namah of Firdausi. Shahbazi draws attention to the sequence of narration in the "older preface" as edited by Qazvini: "Before we proceed to describe the words of the kings and their history, we mention the descent of Abu Mansur-e 'Abd al-Razzaq, who ordered this chronicle to be collected in prose writing"; at this point, we find this additional remark in the preface: "And after it had been made into a prose work, Sultan Mahmud-e Sebug-Tegin ordered Firdausi to reduce it into the Dari language in the form of poetry." I question whether it is justifiable to assume, in Shahbazi's formulation, that this remark was added by "a later copyist using the older preface as the introduction to the Shah Namah of Firdausi". Given Firdausi's own conventional claims concerning the superiority of Persian poetry over Persian prose,, I find it questionable to assume that the author of the "older preface" would have considered the prose Shahnama superior in prestige to the poetic Shah Namah of Firdausi.**]** The greater density of historical information in the "older preface" version does not take it out of consideration as a variant **[**Of the four wise men credited in the "older preface" with producing the Persian prose Shahnama, some are mentioned as independent authroities by the poetic Shah Namah of Firdausi himself. It is interesting that such mentions take place with reference to specific narrative traditions; the clearest cases are the poet's reference to Makh of Herat, in the story of Hormazd (Avestan: *Ahura Mazda*), and to Shadan of Tus, in the story of Kalila and Dimna**.]**. Cross-cultural studies of interaction between myths and historical events that are independently known to have taken place show that myths tend to appropriate and then reorganize historical information. As for Firdausi's own version of the story, it is more

versatile because it is more stylized and therefore generic. Firdausi's version of how the Book of Kings came about can usurp more specific versions because it is so generic. His version acknowledges the variation of these stories by not identifying the persons, places, or time involved in the genesis of his own source "book" for the Shah Namah. And by acknowledging this multiformity, Firdausi is in effect transcending it **[**In this connection, I stress that the *mehrban* or "congenial one" who recited Firdausi from the ancient *nama* 'book' written in Pahlavi is left unnamed. In this way, the poetry makes it even possible to picture the *nama* as the original *nama* of the *dehqan* Daneshvar, so that the poet's ultimate *mehrban* may be viewed as a phantom of Daneshvar himself. In an earlier work I suggested that

the poetic imagination in this passage conjures up an archetypical Daneshvar as a "mysterious nocturnal reciter".] His Shah Namah does not depend on any one version for the establishment of a text. The myth gives validity to the text by making the assembly of wise and pious men in the community the collective source of the text.

In this sense, of the three multiform stories concerning the constitution or reconstitution of the Book of Kings, the one in the "older preface" is the least essential for the purposes of understanding the composition of Firdausi's Shah Namah. To motivate the constitution of a prose *Shahnama* is to motivate something less prestigious and from hindsight, less enduring. In the end this version can after all survive only as an intrusion in the text of the poetic Shah Namah. Firdausi's Shah Namah needs no prose introduction, because it introduces itself poetically, By contrast, the prosaic *Shahnama* requires and equally prosaic introduction. It seems to me ironic that this unattested prosaic *Shahnama*, of which we know only by way of its reconstructed prosaic preface, should be treated in current scholarship as the source of Firdausi's poetry.

I conclude, then, that the tradition of oral poetics, as reflected in the references to performances by *mobads* and *dehqans*, accounts ultimately for the authoritativeness of Firdausi's Shah Namah. Firdausi's claim, that he received an old Pahlavi Book of Kings, written in prose, and that he turned it into poetry – the first, the best, and therefore the only Shah Namah – could not have been made without the authority of the oral poetic traditions that he had mastered. The idea of the book contains, like a time-capsule, not only an idealized composition-in-performance but also, cumulatively, an idealized sum total of all oral poetic

traditions as they were performed before Firdausi and as they continue to be performed after Firdausi. As such, the book is both a concrete object and a symbol, expressing the authority and authenticity of the oral poetic traditions that are being performed."(13)

The composite picture of an assembly of *mobads*, whose coming together literally constitutes Firdausi's "sourcebook" by way of their collective recitation, can be supplemented by individual pictures, recurring throughout the Shah Namah, of individual recitation. Here too, as in the composite picture, the idea of an archetypal book can be combined with the idea of performance, wherever Firdausi claims that he heard a given story from a reciter, who in turn got it from an

"ancient book:

Now, O aged singer,
Return to the time of the Ashkanian (Parthian).

What did the book of the truthful say
That the reciter recollected from ancient times? (VII 115.46-47)

In another case, the reciter is described as having special affinities not only with the archetypal book but also with the family of the main hero of the Shah Namah, Rustam. The her Sam, Rustam's grandfather, is described as an ancestor of the family of the reciter himself, so that the source of the oral tradition, the performer, is directly linked to the subject of that same tradition, the hero:

There was an old man whose name was Azad-sarv,
Who was in Merv with Ahmad son of Sahl.

His heart was full of wisdom, his head full of worthy discourse,
And his speech full of ancient traditions.

Who had the Book of Kings,
Who still had the bearing and the build of a ***Pahlavan.***

He traced his ancestry back to Sam, son of Nariman
And knew much about the battles of Rustam.

I will now say what I found out from him;
I will weave the words together, one to another.

If I remain in this fleeting world,
And if my soul and intellect guide me,

I will finish this ancient book
And leave to this world a story.

With reference to the second of these two examples, it has been argued on chronological grounds that Firdausi could not actually have heard Azad-sarv perform epic. We have already seen, however, that the medium of performance, as an authority, is just as stylized in the Shah Namah as is the medium of the book. What is essential, therefore, in the reference to Azad-marv is that his authority is envisaged as a performance that was heard, just as any living oral performance can be heard. Such a stylized reference to authority, then, affirms that the medium of performance is intrinsic to

Firdausi's own poetry, which presents itself as part of a continuum in oral tradition **[**I therefore disagree with Shahbazi's inference, on the basis of such examples as the anachronism just mentioned, that Firdausi was literally copying from earlier sources in earlier books whenever he introduces a narrative with such phrases as "So I have heard from the aged *dehqan*." Such an inference simply displaces to a previous poet what Firdausi is is doing in the present, *id est*, claiming a previous performance as the authority for what is "now" written in his book. Even in terms of the inference, the hypothetical previous poet would still be doing exactly the same thing. I maintain that, even if Firdausi follows the tradition of earlier books when he bases the authority of his written word on the authority of a continuum of performances that precede him, we have no reason to doubt that he could have direct access to that same contimuum – and in fact that he could be part of it."**]**.

The point remains that the Book of Kings, where it is described as the possession of a performer heard by Firdausi, is a visible sign of the performer's authority, parallel with other visible signs such as an ancestry actually shared with the lineage of a principal hero. The final authority is not in the book itself but in the actual *performance* of the poem. Even if the preface of the prose *Shahnama* acknowledges the autuhoritativeness of performance, which is then immediately tied in with the concept of "book". Says Minorsky:

> Whatever we discuss of this book must be told from statements of the *dehqans*, for this kingdom was in their hands and they know the
>
>
>
> affairs and proceedings, whether good or bad, and whether more or less. Therefore we must go by what they say. Consequently, whatever we learn concerning them has been collected from their books.

Till recent times, in fact, the Shah Namah has continued to be transmitted by way of performance in oral tradition – albeit indirectly, since it has assumed the format of prose. Mary Ellen Page has made a study of the professional sorty telling, *naqqali*, of the Shah Namah as it is performed in the Iran of recent times. The word for professional storyteller is *naqqal*, meaning literally 'transmitter'. Granted, the format of this transmission of the Shah Namah is prose, but the ubiquitous conceit of the *naqqal* is that he is indeed performing Firdausi's Shah Namah.

The traditional social context for such

performances was a setting of coffee – and tea – houses. Adam Olearius describes such a coffee-house (*qahve khane*) in his account, dated 1631-1632 AD, of the main square in Isfahan.

> The *kahweh* khane, 'coffee-house', is an inn in which smokers of tobacco and drinkers of coffee-water are found. In such inns are also found poets and historians whom I have seen sitting inside on high stools and have heard telling all manner of legends, fables, poeticized things. While narrating they conjure up images by gestures with a little wand, much as magicians play tricks.

A typical performance by a *naqqal* lasts for about ninety minutes. He uses a *tumar* 'prompt-book' which contains highly compressed thematic summaries of his own repertoire. A study of such a *tumar* shows that it is not a text to be adhered to but rather a skeletal outline of a story – a story that the *naqqal* may expand or compress, even shift around with variations of theme; the decision is up to the performer, whose primary need is to keep his hold over the audience. The *tumars* of different *naqqals* covering a parallel stretch of narrative vary in much the same way. The *naqqal* can of course diverge from his *tumar* as he or his audience wishes.

There are of course profound variations between Firdausi's verse Shah Namah and the prose retellings of the Shah Namah tradition. For example, whereas the reign of Bahram is covered in about two hundred distichs in Firdausi's Shah Namah, it takes up forty-

eight pages in one *naqqal*'s *tumar* and roughly a month's length of actual retelling in successive daily performances. Yet the conceit of the *naqqal*, as we have noted, is that he is indeed performing the Shah Namah of Firdausi.

There is a comparable conceit among the South Slavic poets, the *guslars* studies by Parry and Lord. The *guslar* will say that he performs the song that he has learned exactly as it has always been performed. For example, Lord quotes from an interview with the *guslar* Suleyman Makic:

> *Interviewer:*
> "Could you still pick up a song today?"
>
> *Suleyman:*
> "I could"
>
> I:

"For example, if you heard me sing a song, let us say, could you pick it up right away?"

S:
"Yes, I could sing it for you right away the next day."

I:
"If you were to hear it just once?"

S:
"Yes, by Allah, if I were to hear it once to the *gusle*."

I:
"Why not until the next day? … What do you think about in those two days? Is it not better to sing it right away than later, when you might forget it after so long a time?"

S:
"It has to come to one. One has to think … how it goes, and then little by little it comes to him, so that he will not leave anything out. … One could not sing it like that all the way rightaway."

I:
Why could you not, when it is possible the second or third day afterwards?"

S:
"Anyone who cannot write cannot do it."

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I:
"All right, but when you have learned my somg would ...you sing it exactly as I do?"

S:
"I would."

I:
"You would not add anything … nor leave anything out?"

S:
"I would not ... by Allah I would sing it just as I heard it … it is not good to change or add." (Lord, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

This conceit notwithstanding, the fieldwork of Parry and Lord has established that no two performances even of the "same" song by the same *guslar*, are ever identical.

In the case of Persian poetic traditions, it is important to note that the narratives of Firdausi and of

any given *naqqal* can converge potint-for-point – as well as diverge. And such thematic convergences between Firdausi and a *naqqal* are in effect no different from the convergences between any two different *naqqals*. It is as if Firdausi too were a *naqqal* – the definitive *naqqal* – of the Shah Namah tradition. Occaisionally a *naqqal* will recite some of Firdausi's actual verses. Again this may be a matter of convergence, not derivation. After all, there can be found, in a given *naqqal's tumar*, verses in *mutaqarib* metre that are not even attested in the canonical version of Firdausi's Shah Namah. In fact, when the *naqqal* introduces his story, he can use rhymed prose or a combination of poetry and rhymed prose, and sometimes there is even a melody. Thus the traditional format of a *naqqal*'s introduction may reveal vestigial aspects of an earlier stage in the art-form of the *naqqal* when his medium was indeed all poetry.

But the crucial indication of the *naqqal*'s independence from Firdausi's Shah Namah lies in the fact that there is much narrative material attested in the *naqqal*'s oral traditions that is not attested in any of the literary epics so far known. Many of the themes found in later literary epics such as the *Garshaspnama* appear as an integral part of the *naqqal*'s narrative repertoire. For example, the Garshasp stories will be included in the *naqqal*'s story-line where it would have been chronologically appropriate for the Shah Namah to include it. Noldeke condemns these later

epics as not folklore but invention: "It is a common opinion that a great deal of popular epic has been preserved in those poems. It might sound a little bold if I flatly deny that and declare the contents of these narratives to be essentially a free fancy of the repective authors." Similarly Mohl claims that the epics after Firdausi's Shah Namah are not only artless but also simply a matter of filling in *lacunae* left by Firdausi, with no pride of authorship. There can only be a limited number of ultimate poets, however, and what is worthy of special note is the sheer mass of poetic compositions that deal with material beyond Firdausi and which usually take a verse from Firdausi as a point of departure.

These considerations bring us to one of the major problems confronting the "scientific method" of editing Firdausi's Shah Namah. The manuscripts seem to be full of "interpolations", sometimes massive ones, from other literary epics; at other times it is impossible to establish the provenience of the "interpolation". But it can now be seen, from the perspective of studies centering on the *naqqal* traditions of the Shah Namah, that such interpolations may correspond to actual

conventions of *performance*. In other words, the divergences of manuscripts in this regard may be parallel to divergences in performance, since the *tumar* allows the *naqqal* to expand or compress during any performance in patterns of thematic variations that are clearly parrllel to those of the manuscripts. And, as noted, the *naqqal* can diverge from his *tumar*.

Thus the Shah Namah tradition has continued till recent times, albeit indirectly, as a medium still dynamic, still alive. It could theoretically generate an infinite number of performances – provided that the *naqqal* is still there to perform and the audience is there to listen. In this light, we may call into doubt the theory that there were gaps in the story-line of the book of Kings – gaps that had to be filled with Firdausi's "*Phantasie*". From what we can see even from the *naqqal* traditions, standing ready to be filled at any point in the retelling of the book of Kings. And just as the *naqqal* testifies that he is indeed performing Firdausi's Shah Namah, so also Firdausi himself testifies that he is "translating" the Pahlavi Book of Kings.

After comparing what the poem says about itself with the external evidence about Middle and New Persian poetry, we may now isolate characteristics of oral poetry as formulated in current scholarship. The fieldwork on oral poetics by Parry and Lord

corroborated Parry's earlier work on the crystallized traditions of ancient Greek epic as they survived in the Homeric Iliad and Odyssey. For our present purposes, the most important aspect of the findings of Parry and Lord is their observation that the formal building blocks of oral poetry consist of what they call *formulas*.

Parry's working definition of the formula is as follows: "A group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea." This definition, devised by Parry on the basis of his work on Homeric poetry, before he even started work on the living poetry of the South Slavic tradition, has proven to be enduring despite the need for one small adjustment. Ironically, this adjustment has been prompted at least partly by the ev idence of Homeric poetry itself: it has recently been shown that the metrical conditions of the formula can vary, although this variation itself is systematic. Thus it may be useful to revise the phrase "under the same metrical conditions" to read instead "under fixed metrical conditions". The phrase "to express a given essential idea is crucial, since this aspect of Parry's definition has often been undervalued or even missed altogether. It is important to stress that, for Parry, the formula is not simply a phrase that is repeated for

its metrical utility. Rather, the formula is the expression of a traditional *theme*. To quote Parry, "The formulas in any poetry are due, so far as their ideas go, to the theme, their rhythm is fixed by the verse-form, but their art is that the poets who made them and of the poets who kept them." The word "theme", according to Lord's working definition, is "a subject unit, a group of ideas, regularly employed by the singer, not merely in any given poem, but in the poetry as a whole." In other words, the Parry-Lord definition of oral poetry is founded on the proposition that the traditional formula is a direct expression of the traditional theme; in oral poetry, there is a formulaic *system* that corresponds to a thematic *system*.

In a 1977 book by Ruth Finnegan, however, which purports to present the overall subject of oral poetry to the general reader, this basic aspect of the Parry-Lord definition of the formula goes unmentioned. She consistently treats formula as if it were merely a repeated phrase, repeated simply for its metrical utility. In discussing Homeric epithets, for example, she writes that they "are often combined with other formulaic phrases – repeated word-groups – which have the right metrical qualities to fit the [given] part of the line." In the same context, she quotes Parry for

support:
"In composing [the poet] will do no more than put together for his needs phrases which he has often heard or used himself, and which, grouping themselves i*n accordance with a fixed pattern of thought* [emphasis mine], come naturally to make the sentence and the verse." We see here that Parry is saying much more than Finnegan, however; the formula is not just a phrase that the poet is free to choose according to his metrical needs, since the formulas are regulated by the traditional themes of the poet's composition. By contrast, Finnegan seems to assume that *formulas* and *themes* are separate ingredients in the poet's repertoire: "As well as formulaic phrases and sequences [emphasis mine], the bard has in his repertoire a number of set themes which he can draw on to form the structure of his poem." Working on the assumption that formulas are simply stock phrases repeated to fill metrical needs, Finnegan offers the following criticism of the Parry-Lord theory of oral poetry: "Does it really add to our understanding of the style or process of composition in a given piece to name certain repeated patterns of words, sounds ormeanings as "*formulae*"? Or to suggest that the characteristic of oral style is that such *formulae* are 'all-pervasive' (as in Lord, op. cit., p. 47)?" In light of what I have adduced from the writings of Parry and Lord, I find this criticism unfounded; if

the formula is the building-block of a system of traditional oral poetic expression, then I cannot find fault with Lord's observation that the formulas are "all-pervasive" in oral poetry.

Another important point of disagreement between Finnegan and Lord is her insistence that, on the basis of what we know of oral poetry in such cultures as that of the Bantu of South Africa (both Zulu and !Xhosa), the oral poet can both compose poetry and *write it down*. It is tempting, of course, to extend such findings to medieval European (epic) poetry (such as the *Cantar de Mio Cid*, and the other works of the Castilian epic tradition, the lost epic tradition of the Goths, the Arthurian Cycle, including Tristan and Isolt, the various cycles [Ulster, Leinster and Mythological] of the Irish Gaelic epic tradition, the Viking *Sagas,* the Song of Igor's Campaign, which is all that survives, except perhaps for a few fragments, of the epic tradition of Kievan Rus' and the *Chanson de Roland*), where the fundamentals of what is freely acknowledged as oral poetry are preserved and transmitted by literati in the context of a vigorous scribal tradition, Finnegan's point of contention with

Lord provides ammunition for medievalists who have argued that an Old English poem like Beowulf cannot be considered oral poetry on the basis of the formulas that we find as its building blocks, simply because we can find comparable levels of formulaic behavior in other Old English poems which were clearly written compositions and some of which were even translations from Latin originals. As one expert concludes, "To prove that an Old English poem is formulaic is only to prove that it is an Old English poem, and to show that such work has high or low percentage of formulas reveals nothing about whether or not it is literate composition, though it may tell us something about the skill with which a particular poet uses tradition."

An important challenge to such a position has been proposed by Michael Zwettler: applying the work of the medievalist H.J. Chaytor, Zwettler suggests that, even when an Old English poem is written down, it is not meant to be read by an individual but performed before an audience. In other words, as Zwettler points out, there is no such thing as an "audience of readers" in medieval European poetry. To quote Chaytor: "The whole technique … presupposed … a hearing, not reading public." The rules of this poetry, written or not, are those of oral poetry. Zwettler extends this principle to pre-Islamic Arabic ppoetry, and I for my part hope to extend it here to the New Persian poetry of Firdausi. So long as I can argue that the building blocks of his Shah Namah are functional formulas, I can also argue that his

poetry is based on the rules of oral poetry.

In the appendix to this book, using as a test-case a randomly selected passage, I show that every word in this given passage can be generated on the basis of parallel phraseology expressing parallel themes. The degree of regularity and economy in the arrangement of phraseology is clearly suggestive of formulaic language. Moreover, the regularity extends to the actual variation of phraseology. This factor may well be an important additional clue to the formulaic nature of Firdausi's Shah Namah. As Parry and Lord had noticed in their South Slavic field work *each new performance/recomposition of a song involved variation in the deployment of formulas*. This principle has been applied successfully by Zwettler in his study of classical Arabic poetry. He extends the observations of the Romance philologist Ramon Mendendez Pidal, who has drawn attention to the fact that three of the earliest manuscript versions of the *Chanson de Roland* do not share a single identical verse with each other. He had inferred this and other such facts that this kind of

poetry, which Zwettler rightly equates with oral poetry, is "a poetry that lives through variants". "How ironic," Zwettler writes, "that scholars of Arabic poetry have so often cast doubt upon the 'authenticity' or 'genuineness' of this or that verse, poem, or body of poems, or, sometimes, of pre-Islamic poetry in general, because they have found it impossible to establish an 'original version'. The same irony, as we shall see, applies to scholars of Persian poetry. Zwettler goes on to say:

> The multiplicity of variants and attributions and of formulaic phrases and elements attested for the great majority of classical Arabic poems may undermine our confidence in ever establishing an "author's original version" – as indeed it should! But they ought to convince us that we do have voluminous record of a genuine and on-going oral poetic tradition (even if in its latest stages), such as no other nation can match in breadth of content and scrupulosity of collection and documentation.

The conscientiousness of those who preserved all these variants in their editions is a reflection of an attitude that we also witness in the context of Islamic oral transmission, or *hadith*, and Zwettler insists that the editors' quest for authenticity by way of examining and collecting all variants was due not so much to any need of determining the author but to the desire of

recovering the authentic poetic traditions of Bedouin poetry.

An analogous principle of variation, I propose, can also be applied to the text tradition of the Shah Namah. A systematic and exhaustive application, of course, is at this point impossible, since there is no available centralized collection of all the variants as could be collected from the entire textual tradition. Such a collection would be a monumental task indeed. Still, the limited experiment of formulaic analysis that I present in the appendix illustrates the principle of compositional variation as reflected by textual variation. The examples could be multiplied by the hundreds, even thousands, and by then we would start to see clearly that there are legitimate variants attested for vast portions of the Shah Namah. We may postpone for later any questions about how these considerations may affect our evaluation of the standard Moscow edition. What is important is that even a preliminary test reveals such patterns of variation

in the text of the Shah Namah – the surest available sign that we are dealing with the heritage of oral poetry.

We must note, however, an essential difference between the patterns of variation in the textual tradition of the Shah Namah, as revealed by its textual transmission, and in the Arabic poetry studied by Zwettler. In the case of the Arabic evidence, the variants seem to have been collected *while* the given poem was evolving into a fixed text in the process of continual performance/recomposition. In the case of the Shah Namah, on the other hand, the variants seem to have gone on accumulating even *after* the composition had become a fixed text by way of writing. This fact alone suggests that, side by side with the written transmission of the text, the oral transmission of poetry continued as well. Each new performance must have entailed recomposition, and the oral poetry must have continually influenced the text, while in the process of textual transmission and copying, the creative urges of the copyists themselves cannot be overlooked.

This means that we cannot reconstruct with any absolute certainty the original composition of Firdausi, because of its susceptibility to recomposition with each new performance in a living oral tradition. All we can say about the original is that, if it is capable of being recomposed, it too must be a product of oral composition. And the continual recomposition on the level of form was matched by recomposition on the level of content, leading to new accretions that are anachronistic to the patterns of earlier layers. We may even compare the accretion of Muslim elements in the

Arab pre-Islamic poetic traditions studied by Zwettler:

> "We must consider the alleged "inconsistencies", "anachronisms" and "Islamic emendations" that do crop up in our received texts and have so frequently been adduced as proof of the "corruption" of the tradition. Such phenomena as the introduction of post-Islamic expressions or neologisms into archaic poems, elimination of pagan theomorphic names or substitution of the name *Allah*, allusions to Qur'anic passages or Islamic concepts or rituals, and so on, can all legitimately be seen as a natural result of the circumstance that versions of those poems were derived from oral renditions performed by Muslim renderants conditioned
>
> (479)
>
> now to the sensibilities of Muslim audiences."

Similarly, we find the accretion and eventual dominance of Shi'ite elements in the poetry of Firdausi, which seems to show traces of earlier Sunni patronage. But even if we cannot reconstruct the original composition, its authority or authenticity as tradition could survive the countless accretions and reshapings of each recomposition in performance. That is the true nature of oral poetry.

Let us imagine going back in time to a point where the oral tradition of the Shah Namah was still in *mutaqarib* verse. At such a point, the formal and thematic variations of performance/composition in the oral poetry would surely have affected the manuscript tradition of Firdausi's Shah Namah. Even as late as the era of Baysonghor Mirza (died 1433 AD), it seems that no definitive edition was possible, because the extant manuscripts were clearly no better than *tumars* would be in recent times for the purpose of deciding what is definitive and what is not. The song must have existed in performance. Even though Noldeke yearns for the attestation of the original "critically revised" copy of the Shah Namah commissioned by Baysonghor in 1425 AD, he realizes that he would be disappointed if it suddenly came to light: "How", he asks, "could in those times the Persian bel-esprits – only such can be thought of, if it were not simply copyists – have managed to accomplish a great and purely philological work somewhat critically?" The point is, if no copy could be definitive and preemptive even as late as 1425, it may be that each copy was, at least in part, a reflection of traditions in *performance*.

Noldeke says that redactors in the era of

Baysonghor could not be "scientific" about consulting other manuscripts, for they had no Aristophanes, no Zenodotus, no Aristarchus in the Timurid court. The princely libraries were full of manuscripts of the Shah Namah such as the one described as "a fine looking, beautifully written, and very defective copy" (to quote from a contemporary evaluation). How, we may ask, were such copies of the Shah Namah "defective"? Is there a trace here of a contemptuous attitude on the part of those better versed than others in the performance of poetry? In Noldeke's own words, there exists no "final touch" for Firdausi's Shah Namah.

As if to console himself, Noldeke adds: "We are not really worse off than with the text of Homer." But the Homeric analogy in fact leads back to the factor of performance in the constitution of the text of any

poetry that is built on an oral tradition. Since Noldeke's days, new discoveries have emerged about the factor of performance as it affects the canonical text of Homer. It now appears that even the Homeric text is replete with variants that are to be attributed not to textual inconsistencies but rather to actual formulaic alternatives. So also with the textual tradition of Firdausi's Shah Namah in its present form: as even Noldeke concedes, it is replete with "various genuine versions" of given passages. In other words, a given passage may have two or more textual variants that are not a matter of one genuine reading and one or more corrupt or interpolated readings, but rather of two or more traditional alternatives, either or any of which would be acceptable to the discerning audience of Firdausi's Shah Namah.

It is now possible to imagine how Firdausi's Shah Namah could survive and prevail, albeit with accretions and modifications, if we allow that everything in it is traditional. In his own lifetime, Mohl had an ever-growing intuition that Firdausi invented nothing, and he says so most forcefully: "The more one studies the work of Firdausi, the more one is convinced, I believe, that he invented nothing and that he was content to restore in brilliant hues the traditions that formed the popular stories of Persia."

For Firdausi, the writing down of his composition would make permanent his appropriation of living poetic traditions. For a typical oral poet, by contrats, appropriation could ordinarily be achieved only in the context of performance. But even if Firdausi's book, his Book of Kings, constitutes a more lasting way of establishing appropriation of his composition, it is nevertheless not a frozen text, like some Pahlavi book. To put it schematically, we could say that the survival of Firdausi's Shah Namah depends not so much on the

writing down of the composition as on the Persian nation's general approval of the writing down of the performance of the composition. And the approval of Persian audiences through the ages could happen only if the Shah Namah were traditional, that is, if it conformed to the rules of composition-in-performance. It could even be claimed that the survival of the Shah Namah, in the context of countless performances for countless audiences steeped in oral poetry, is the best argument for its own essence as oral poetry. It is also, of course, the best argument against the notion that the poetic form and overall content of the Shah Namah were in any sense an invention of Firdausi.

If, however, we accept the idea that the medium of the Shah Namah is that of traditional oral poetry, we

should expect that it will be subject to accretions and mosifications in the context of each new performance. Thus the recording of an original composition by Firdausi, in the process of its textual transmission, would be continually subject to interference from the concurrent process of oral transmission in performance, since each performance in oral poetry entails recomposition. Thus the Shah Namah really could not ever become a completely fixed text until the oral tradition died altogether. The manuscripts of the Shah Namah seem to reflect a period when oral poetry had not yet died, so that editors are left to struggle with the textual variants that are not just a matter of textual transmission. As we have seen, it seems that some variants are also a matter of oral transmission.

The archetypal fixed text of Firdausi's Shah Namah can never be recreated, since it would be impossible to decide in any given instance which of, say, two "genuine" variants was actually composed by Firdausi. To understand the full creative range of the Shah Namah tradition, it would be more important to have an edition that lists all variants, since many of these will be a matter of *composition/performance*, not text.

If indeed textual variants arise from the perpetuation of the Shah Namah in performance, we need just the opposite of the so-called critical Moscow edition (1960-1971) of Y.E. Bertels and his colleagues. This edition strips Firdausi's Shah Namah to ist bare bones (50,000-odd distichs), selecting variants essentially on textual grounds by comparing "superior" and "inferior" manuscripts. It is based essentially on five manuscripts:

1.)

L. = ms.Add.Or. 21103 of the British Library, London, dated 1276 AD, the oldest extant ms. At the time when the work on the Moscow edition was proceeding:

contains the preface of Abu Mansur.

2.)
I = ms. 329 of the National Public Library of St. Petersburg, dated 1333 AD and the second oldest ms. After L.

3.)
IV = ms. S.1654 of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, dated 1445 AD. Contains the preface of Abu Mansur.

4.)
VI = ms. S.822 of the Oriental Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, dated 1450 AD.
5.)
K = ms. S.40 of the Dar al-Kutub of al-Misriya, Cairo, dated 1394 AD, utilized only for volumes IV-IX of the Moscow edition; contains the preface of Abu Mansur.

In view of the fact that there are around 500 extant manuscripts of Firdausi's Shah Namah, and especially in view of all the variations in manuscript readings, the restriction of the editorial field of vision to five manuscripts is a bold move indeed. The Moscoe editors' confidence in this particular one percent of manuscript evidence was based primarily on two facts: that this particular manuscript family was singularly old and that this family inherits the "older preface", that is, the preface of Abu Mansur.

But we have already seen that the "older" preface of Abu Mansur, no matter how valuable it is for understanding the history of ealy Persian prose, cannot be directly linked to the composition of Firdausi's Shah Namah. Even on textual grounds, there is a contextual gap between the poetry of Firdausi and this particular preface, in marked contrast with the preface of the recension of Baysonghor.

The latter recension of Baysonghor, transmitted in a vast family of manuscripts, represents our "vulgate": the Calcutta edition (Macan 1829) follows it closely, and tis edition, collated with the eclectic Paris edition of Mohl (1838-1878), is the basis for the incomplete Leiden edition of Vullers (1877-1884) and the completed Tehran edition of Nafisi-Vullers (1934-1936). But the recension of Baysonghor is late: the preface is dated 1425 AD, in marked contrast to the preface of Abu Mansur, dated 957 AD. In view of this contrast, the Moscow editors of the Shah Namah considered the Baysonghor recension inferior, as opposed to the

recension represented by the family of mansucripts V, I, IV, VI, and K, a recension that seems to have had affinities to the preface of Abu Mansur. Guided by the reasoning that a more recent recension must be inferior to the older recension, the Moscow editors as a matter of policy rejected variant readings stemming from the Baysonghor recension. They also eliminated readings that could not be verified from the collective testimony of the old family of manuscripts that they had isolated, thereby reducing the corpus of the Shah Namah to 48,617 distichs, to which are added in the appendix another 1,486 distichs, deemed probably

spurious. We may appreciate the extent of this textual reduction by comparing the number of distichs in the Calcutta edition, 55, 204.

But the basic principle of the Moscow edition, that the older group of manuscripts is by necessity closer to the "original", is open to question. If, as I claim, the many variations in the textual transmission of the Shah Namah are due at least in part to the rich repertoire of concurrent oral poetic traditions, then each attested variation must be judged on its own merits, regardless of its textual provenience.

Moreover, the Moscow edition's dependence on the manuscriptfamily L, I, IV, VI, and K, to the exclusion of others, must now be brought in line with the discovery of yet another incomplete manuscript of the Shah Namah:

> F = ms. CI.III.24 (G.F.3) of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, dated 1217 AD.

Here, then, is a document considerably older than L, which in turn is dated 1276 AD and which had been for the Moscow editors the oldest extant manuscript of the Shah Namah. As Angelo Michele Piemontese, the discoverer of F, has demonstrated, this manuscript, two centuries away from the traditional date of the completion of Firdausi's Shah Namah, is replete with valuable new readings that are not to be found in the manuscript family of L, there are also about two hundre "new" distichs attested – distichs that have not been known to exist before. This is not to say that F is closer to the "original" than L simply by virtue of being older than L. Moreover, this is not to discredit L and its family, as opposed to F. Rather, the point is simply that the editorial field of vision cannot be restricted to the family of L.

In fact, the preface of F is clearly in the same tradition that we find attested in the much later preface of the Baysonghor recension. Even more important, the actual variants that we find in F

correspond far more closely to those of the Baysonghor recension than those of L and its family. Thus, ironically, the Calcutta edition and its offshoots, most notably the Paris edition of Mohl and the Tehran edition of Nafisi-Vullers, contain "genuine" aspects of the Shah Namah tradition that have been neglected by the "critical" Moscow edition. What we ultimately need is an edition of the Shah Namah that accounts for all the variants, each of which may be a reflex of variation in the oral tradition. In addition, we need a

concordance that would include all variants that are demonstrably not just a matter of textual corruption or editorial tampering. With the aid of such an ideal edition and ideal concordance, we could demonstrate more rigorously both the power and the flexibility of the oral tradition as it was kept alive in Firdausi's Shah Namah.

Even without such ideal aids, however, we can already begin to appreciate the qualities of oral tradition in the poetry of the Shah Namah. As I hope I have demonstrated, there is enough evidence, both in the Shah Namah and in the history of Persian poetry before and after this monumental composition, to show that the creative power of a rich oral tradition produced and then maintained the authority of the national poem of the Persians."(14)

At the beginning of the preceding chapter, we saw an example where a performer of the Book of Kings tradition, ostensibly heard by Firdausi, is described as having an ancestral claim not only on the archetypal book but also on the family of the main hero of the Shah Namah, Rustam. On the authority of such an ancestral claim, the source of the oral tradition, the performer, is being directly linked to the subject of that same tradition, the hero. It is clear that the Book of Kings, described as the ancestral possession of the performer heard by Firdausi, is a visible sign of that performer's authority; so also is the ancestry actually shared with the lineage of the hero Rustam of Sistan, arguably the most prominent character in all the Shah Namah.

I propose that these two kinds of authority, one based on the Book of Kings and the other based on the essence of heroes like Rustam, represent a dichotomy between what may be called a "bbok of kings" and an "epic of heroes" tradition. This is not to say that we are dealing with two separate kinds of narrative tradition. I contend rather that such a dichotomy between "book of kings" and "epic of heroes" can exist within a single kind of narrative tradition, which actually combines lore about kings and heroes. If I succeed in making this case, then the Shah Namah can be seen not as an innovative conflation of a "book of

kings" and an "epic of heroes" but rather as a traditional combination of these distinct and sometimes conflicting elements. The central figure in the argumentation is the hero Rustam of Sistan.

This hero Rustam has been perceived as an "outsider" to the Shah Namah. Such a perception, as we shall see, is in part inspired by the poem itself. For scholars like Noldeke, who take as a given the

historicity of the Kayanids, the dynasty with which Rustam and his father, Zal, coincide in the Shah Namah, the qualities and actions that characterize Zal and Rustam are evidence enough that they must be considered essentially unlike their royal contemporaries. The story of Zal's being born with white hair and raised by a giant bird called the Simurgh, and also the many stories of Rustam's extraordinary feats, led Noldeke to the conclusion that these heroes, unlike the kings they served, were mythical rather than historical. Thus, the aargument goes, of the Keyanids are historical, then surely Zal and Rustam are intrusive.

Then there is the matter of chronology, which again suggests at first glance that Zal and Rustam are exceptional in the Book of Kings. Between the two of them, Zal and Rustam live over a millennium, covering the reigns of kings extending from Manuchehr all the way to Gushtasp. That stretch of narrative takes up the first six volumes of the nine-volume Moscow edition of the Shah Namah. No king that they served rivals the span of roughly five hundred years allotted to Zal and Rustam each: the closest is the *shah* Kai Khusrau, whose won span is 150 years. As Georges Dumezil has observed, the parallel narratives of the kings on the one side and of these heroes on the other reveal distinctly different "rhythms".

It even seems as if the Shah Namah itself were emphasizing the anomaly of Rustam and his ancestors. He is, after all, descended on his mother's side from the archdemon or *div* Zahhak, the monstrously cruel tyrant with snakes growing from his shoulders, and, as such, Rustam qualifies as part *div* 'demon' himself. In reference to Rustam's maternal grandfather Mehrab, the *mobads*, who have been consulted by Shah Manuchehr, have this to say:

It is well known that his [Mehrab's] roots are from the dragon [Zahhak],
Although he has been the ruler over the Arabs for some years.

Sam, Rustam's paternal grandfather, questions the feasibility of the marriage of Rustam's parents to be, Zal and Rudaba,

From this bird-nursling and that *div*-born one
What say you, what kind of child will come?

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Shah Manuchehr also has doubts, saying,

Thus spoke the monarch to the wise men,
Saying: "Evil times will fall upon us from this.

When, from the claws of lions and leopards,
I have rescued Iran by wisdom and combat,

Faridun delivered the world from Zahhak,
But I fear what will grow from that seed.

It must not be that by nehligence concerning Zal's love,
The shamed one became an equal,

When from the daughter of Mehrab and the son of Sam
A sharp sword is drawn from the scabbard.

If he inclines toward his mother
His head will become confused from discourse.

He will fill the country of Iran with terror and pain
If by chance crown and throne come back to him.

Marcia Maguire suggests that this genetic heritage of Rustam does not affect the hero's character and his actions. Still, she and others are ready to build from such details the inference that Rustam belongs to a "pre- or extra-Zoroastrian climate."

Thus, when Rustam confronts the Zoroastrian prince and hero Isfandiyar, whose character and actions are in certain episodes strikingly parallel to those of Rustam, Maguire is led to interpret the confrontation of the two heroes a conscious juxtaposition of differing poetic traditions – a fading pre-Zoroastrian poetic mode on one side and the prevalent Zoroastrian mode on the other. I shall argue, however, that (1.) the figures of Rustam and his ancestors cannot be separated from the Zoroastrian traditions, and (2.) the homeland of Rustam can in some traditions be identified with the "sacred space" of Zoroastrianism.

The anomalous nature of Rustam and his ancestors in the Shah Namah has led scholars to focus their attention on Sistan, the hero's homeland. The consensus, as

reflected in Maguire's dissertation on Rustam, is to attribute the hero's anomaly in the Book of Kings to the native traditions of Sistan. The reasoningis that these native traditions would naturally be at variance with the national traditions

of the Book of Kings, especially if Sistan were a remote outpost of the empire – an impression fostered by the Shah Namah itself. According to this theory, a remote Sistan would surely reflect an outlook that is different conceptually – and maybe even politically – from that of the central power of the empire under the rule of *Shahanshah* 'King of Kings'.

A notable example of such reasoning is the position taken by Noldeke on the war of Rustam against the Turanians after the murder of Siyavush, son of Kai Kaus, who unjustly driven out of Iran by his father, takes refuge with Afrasiyab and marries his daughter, and then is treacherously murdered by Afrasiyab himself. Once he had defeated the Turanians, Rustam rules over them for seven years before leaving their country. Yet, as Noldeke points out, there is no apparent trace trace of Rustam's undisputed reign over the Turanians after he withdraws. The ensuing narrative seems to take it for granted that the archenemy Afrasiyab, king of the Turanians, is still in power; moreover; "the Iranian prince Khusrau, the son of Siyavush, was quietly growing up in Turan under the reign of Afrasiyab, exactly at the same time that the country was supposed to be in hands of Rustam." Noldeke goes on to conclude that there must have been two versions in conflict here, a local and a national one. In the hypothetical local Sistanian version, it was Rustam who was presented as primary avenger of Siyavush and conqueror of Afrasiyab, whereas in the national version the credit for the final defeat and killing of Afrasiyab was reserved for the Shah Kai Khusrau, the son of Siyavush who had grown up in obscurity in Turan under his archenemy's reign. It is the latter version that of course takes precedence in Firdausi's Shah Namah, but the hypothetical local Sistanian version has left its trace in the detail about Rustam's seven-year reign over the Turanians.

For Noldeke and Christensen and others who believe that Firdausi's Shah Namah is based on the text of an earlier Pahlavi Book of Kings or Khoday Namah, it follows that the traditions about Rustam and his family, which seem so distinct from the Book of Kings, should in turn be based on a separate text, of Sistanian provenience. Indeed, Christensen can point to the report of Mas'udi (Muruj II, p. 118) about a book called 'Isakiysaran, concerning such events as the combat of Rustam and Isfandiyar and the death of Rustam at the hands of Bahman, the son of Isfandiyar. Christensen

interprets the reported book title ‘Isakiysaran as Pahlavi Sagesaran, which would mean “The Chiefs of the Sakas”, that is, “The Chiefs of

Sagastan [=Sistan].” This book, which was reportedly translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa’, could then have supplements the nation Khoday Namah, also translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa’, to constitute the general history of the Keyanid period as we find it represented by writers like Tabari.

The problem is that there is no indication, in Mas’udi’s description of the contents of the Book of Sistan, that its narratives actually veered from the traditions glorifying the national *shah*, glorifying instead the heroes of Sistan at the expense of the s*hah*. Such references as there are, indeed, reflect a variant that seems perfectly appropriate to a national tradition that primarily glorifies the *shahs* of Iran: the national king Bahman is shown killing Rustam, thus taking vengeance against the local hero fo Sistan. In this case it is the Shah Namah of Firdausi that veers in the direction of what seems to be a local variant, in which Rustam is slain not by King Bahman but rather by his own treacherous half-brother, Shaghad. The poet introduces the variant with these words:

> There was an old man whose name was Azad-sarv,
> Who was in Marv with Ahmad son of Sahl.
>
> His heart was full of wisdom, his head full of worthy discourse,
> And his speech full of ancient traditions.
>
> Who had the Book of Kings,
> Who still had the bearing and build of a *pahlavan*.
>
> He traced his ancestry back to Sam, son of Nariman
> And knew much about the battles of Rustam.
>
> I will now say what I found out from him;
> I will weave the words together, one to another.
>
> If I remain in this fleeting world,
> And if my soul and intellect guide me,
>
> I will finish this ancient book
> And leave to this world a story.

I see no justification for ppositing a local Sistanian textual tradition as the primary source for the Rustam stories in the Shah Namah. No doubt there were Sistanian traditions about Rustam that differed from the national tradition, and no doubt there were

written versions of these. But the authority of these traditions rests ultimately upon the spoken word, as

the Shah Namah makes clear. From all of Firdausi's references to the testimony of *mobads* and *dehqans* about the stories of Rustam, it seems clear that the poet was free to choose versions that would or would not be at variance with the stories of kings. Thus the local Sistanian traditions about Rustam need not necessarily impose anomalies upon the traditions of kings.

We may conclude, then, that the anomalies in the Rustam stories of the Shah Namah cannot be explained away simply by attributing them to the provincial lore of Sistan. The time has come to propose another, more comprehensive, explanation: the Rustam stories may be anomalous in the Shah Namah simply because the "pic of heroes" and the "book of kings" represent two distinct aspects of poetic tradition. Instead of stressing, along with Noldeke and others, a dichotomy along the lines of two different levels of narrative, one concerning heroes and the other, kings.

The problem with Noldeke's approach is that he takes literally the testimony of the Shah Namah, which presents itself as a direct descendant of a Pahlavi Book of Kings. The temptation, in light of this testimony, is not to treat the stories of kings as a poetic tradition in its own right. My working hypothesis, by contrast, is that both the "book of kings" and the "epic of heroes components of the Shah Namah are a matter of poetic tradition. The parallel but consecutive actions of Rustam and Kai Khusrau against the Turanian Afrasiyab represent a juxtaposition of parallel themes in two different poetic forms.

Noldeke's sense of verisimilitude is violated by the tactical pointlessness of Rustam's conquering and ruling Turan – only to withdraw from it. Rustam's actions may be tactically pointless in military strategy – but not in poetic strategy. Rustam's conquest, followed by his withdrawal, sets the stage for glorifying the subsequent conquest by Kai Khusrau – an act that seems to receive priority over the "epic of heroes" in the overall plan of Firdausi's Shah Namah. So it is not a matter of Firdausi's inserting a contradictory local Sistanian version about Rustam's defeat of Afrasiyab and then having to distort it in order to make room for a rival national version about Kai Khusrau's defeat of Afrasiyab. In stead, the roles of Rustam and Kai Khusrau in the defeat of Afrasiyab may be complementary – a traditional function of their roles as hero and king.

Even if the anomalous nature of the Rustam tradition in the Shah Namah is due to its heritage as epic poetry and not to its provenience from Sistan, an

explanation must still be found for why it is specifically Rustam of Sistan who became a focal point of the heroic level of the Shah Namah. One possible solution is available from the researches of Mary Boyce on the Parthian oral poetic traditions. In a well-known article, Boyce makes it clear that the Pahlavi documents of the Sassanian dynasty draw on the heritage of a vigorous oral poetic tradition that flourished under the earlier Parthian dynasty. In another article, Boyce also shows that the Parthians, who are North Iranians, were in close political and cultural contact with Northeast Iranians, such as the Sakas. Thus the Parthians hypothetically absorbed the epic traditions of Rustam that were native to the Sakas, and these epic traditions as appropriated by the Parthian oral poets were then "nationalized", spreading throughout the Empire in the era of the succeeding dynasty, the Sassanians. In this way, the hero of Sistan, "the land of the Sakas", became part of a national epic tradition, alongside the royal line of Keyanids. Supposedly, then, both the story of Rustam and the history of the Keyanids were transmitted by way of Parthian poetry.

Moreover, the Rustam tradition has now been discovered in yet another branch of the Northeast Iranian family. Fragments of a text composed in Sogdian, a language closely related to that of the Sakas, tell of the adventures of *rwstmy* 'Rustam' and his wondrous horse *rkhshy* 'Rakhsh' as they confront murderous demons or *dywt* 'divs'. These narratives correspond to those found in the Shah Namah about the war of Rustam against the *divs* 'demons' of Mazandaran, but the Sogdian version is clearly independent of the Persian. For example, the demons fought off by Rustam are described in the Sogdian version as riding on otherworldly animals. Though such details in this particular Sogdian episode have no direct parallel in the Shah Namah of Firdausi, the themes of the episode are nevertheless typical of the general characterization of Rustam in the Shah Namah, where he is conventionally portrayed as singlehandedly fighting off any attack on Iran with only the help of Rakhsh, his horse.

The same Sogdian episode describes Rustam's removing his saddle from his horse, cooking himself a repast, and then falling asleep. If we compare this narrative type-scene with parallel type-scenes found in the Shah Namah of Firdausi, we have grounds for understanding the Sogdian Rustam fragment to be part of larger Iranian Shah Namah tradition, composed in a poetic tradition that is cognate with the one inherited

by Firdausi. In other words, the very manner in which

Rustam goes about preparing his solitary feast in the Sogdian version is built on a traditional sequence of activities that closely matches the sequence of activities in corresponding scenes to be found in Firdausi's Shah Namah. If the built-in rules of sequence can be shown to be as traditional as the narrative themes that enter into the sequence, the case for a common Iranian poetic heritage would be considerably strengthened. Let us briefly examine, then, not only the themes but also the actual organization of these themes in the Sogdian Rustam fragment, with special attention to the question of how they relate to similar themes that are found in the Shah Namah of Firdausi.

The Sogdian Rustam fragment begins with the description of the hero's routing of the horde of *divs*, forcing them to retreat back into their city. Following that, starting with line 5 of the fragment, Rustam's actions are described as follows:

5.)
rwstmy zywr't prw RBkw shyrn'm shw'kw shyr'kh
Rustam turned back in great glory, went to a good

6.)
wyshywrt mnch'y p'yrdn sykhw'y 'spw prw wysh w'ch
Meadow, stopped, unsaddled his horse, then sent it out to graze.

7.)
khwty mnshp khwrt gwrt sh'twkhw wB' 'nsp'kh
He himself rested, ate food, was satisfied spread out a rug,

8.)
pr'nshtr nypd "y"z'wBt ...
Lay down, and began to sleep.

This visualization of Rustam "at ease", so to speak, is a very familiar one to the Shah Namah of Firdausi. We see here the conventional theme of Rustam's being "off his guard": he lets Rakhsh roam free without a saddle or bridle, eats a substantial meal, and then falls asleep, oblivious to danger that awaits him. Four scenes from the Shah Namah each contain elements directly comparable to the Sogdian Tale of Rustam. We join the action as Rustam sets out to rescue Kai Kaus

from the White Div of Mazandaran. Before his exploit, we find the hero engaged in a series of activities closely parallel to those in the Sogdian

Rustam fragment.

He ate and threw the bones away.
It was both a stew and a platter.

He slipped off the bridle from Rakhsh's head,
Saw some pasture, and sent [him] out into the meadow.

By a reed-bed he made a bed for sleep.
He considered the gates of fear a safe place.

The second example is taken from the episode known as the third of Rustam's Haft Khwan. Before his exploit, the killing of a dragon that attacks him while he sleeps, we see Rustam acting in a comparable manner:

When his recitation of praise was finished
He took the saddle off from good-gaited Rakhsh.

He also washed his [Rakhsh's] body with clean water,
And he became respelendent as the sun.

When he had quenched his thirst, he prepared for the hunt;
He fastened his belt and filled his quiver with arrows.

He struck down an onager that was as fierce as an elephant
And removed its hide, hooves, and entrails.

He lit up a fire, blazing like the sun,
Brought it [the onager] from the water and roasted it in the fire.

This done, he took it from the fire to eat,
And entrusted the bones to the earth.

He went to a shining source of water.
When he quenched his thirst, he prepared for sleep.

The third example is from the beginning of the celebrated story of the fight between Rustam

and Sohrab. The narrative begins with a scene describing Rustam hunting. He stops for a rest, and, once again, lets Rakhsh loose, eats a large dinner, and falls asleep, oblivious to any anger:

He impaled a male onager upon the tree –
It weighed in his hand like a bird-feather.

When it was roasted, he tore it apart
And drew forth the marrow of the bones.

He slept and rested for a while
And Rakhsh pranced and grazed in the meadow.

The last example is from another well-known story, about Rustam's fight with Isfandiyar. We see Bahman, Isfandiyar's brother, watching Rustam as the hero takes some time out while hunting, again eating a substantial meal, while Rakhsh roams free:

He impaled an onager on a tree.
An iron mace and harness lay beside him.

He had a cup full of wine in his other hand;
His serving boy was standing before him.

Rakhsh wandered in the meadow
Where there were trees, brush, and streams.

Clearly, all four of these examples from the Shah Namah of Firdausi are parallel on the level of theme to lines 6-8 of the Sogdian Rustam fragment. In each instance, including the Sogdian version, we see Rustam letting Rakhsh roam free to graze, unharnessed. In other words, Rakhsh is in a state of unreadiness for his master to leap on his back and charge into combat. As for Rustam, he enjoys such a substantial feast that it causes him to fall asleep, a state of uneadiness for combat. Note, however, the exception of the last example, where something happens before Rustam can fall asleep; the logic of this exception will be taken up presently. Needless to say, Rustam and Rakhsh in all these instances become the perfect targets for ambush, and this is exactly what happens each time, though the circumstances may vary.

Let us return to the Sogdian fragment. While Rustam sleeps, the *divs*, furious that they have been routed by him singlehandedly, plan to attack him in full force. They leave their city, riding

on their otherworldly mounts in search of Rustam. In lines 24-28 of the Rustam fragment there follows this description of the hero's reaction:

24.)
wytr'nt y'khy rwstmy prwkhd'k rtyms 'ys 'khw

They went to searche for brave Rustam. And also then came

25.)
khd'Br'nh rkhshy ZKw rwstmy wykhr'ys mnshpt 'khw
Perceptive Rakhsh (and) he woke up Rustam, Rustam

26.)
rwstmy MN khwBn' zkh'rt ptymynch ZKw pwrdnkh
Tore himself from sleep, quickly put on again his leopard

27.)
chrm nkhwdnh drwnshth nyB'ynt B'zgd prw rkhshw
Skin garment, attached his quiver, mounted Rakhsh,

28.)
p'dB'r kw dywt
And dashed toward the *divs*.

Rustam is so off guard that he needs his horse, Rakhsh, to wake him uo. He then needs to rearm himself quickly before he charges off to fight his attackers. Let us now look at how the events in this hain reaction compare to the already-selected four passages from Firdausi's Shah Namah. In our first passage, when a lion comes to attack the sleeping Rustam, his horse Rakhsh rushes out to fight and kill the lion himself while Rustam remains asleep. Rustam then wakes up on account of the noise and rebukes Rakhsh for doing something that he himself should have done. In the second passage, Rakhsh tries three times to wake the sleeping and ill-tempered Rustam as the dragon attacks. Rustam, not seeing the impending danger on account of the darkness, becomes irritated with his horse, who keeps trying to awaken him. When Rakhsh tries to wake him the fourth time, Rustam finally sees the dragon in the darkness, jumps up, and proceeds to fight it to the death. In the third passage, Rakhsh does not

wake up Rustam but is himself stolen by some enemy Turanians while Rustam sleeps. Rustam finally gets Rakhsh back from the Turanians after he impregnates a princess, Tahmina, with Sohrab, his future son. Finally, in the fourth passage, as Rustam roasts his onager and Rakhsh roams free, Bahman hurls down a huge boulder; Rustam manages to kick the boulder

far away, all along continuing to roast his onager.

The first two passages seem particularly close to the Sogdian Rustam fragment. As in the Sogdian version, Rakhsh wakes the sleeping Rustam in order to protect him from harm, causing Rustam to get up quickly and take action. In the third passage, Rustam is pushed into action on account of the disappearance of Rakhsh, stolen while the hero slept. Even here the horse reacts to being stolen in a manner that resembles what he does in the first two passages, where he is waking up Rustam at the prospect of danger: he tries to fight off, however unsuccessfully, the Turanians as they steal him, and the commotion awakens Rustam, forcing him into action. Finally, in the fourth passage, Rustam has not quite yet fallen asleep, though it takes the shouting of Zawara, his brother, to warn him of the impending disaster.

To sum up: in the Sogdian and Persian examples of a type-scene we may call "Rustm-at-ease", the hero goes off into the wilderness, entering a life-threatening situation, all alone, only to make himself totally vulnerable to mortal danger by unsaddling his war-horse and then gorging himself with a hearty meal that sends him into the deepest slumber. We see that the Sogdian example operates along lines of narrative technique that are clearly paralleled by the Persian examples, even in details of description and sequencing of events. These parallelisms appear to be the result of cognate patterns in a common Iranian heritage of storytelling, which culminated in Firdausi's reworking of the Shah Namah tradition.

The evidence of this Sogdian version of the Rustam tradition can be used to support Boyce's claim that Rustam "was trult a Saka hero, and not a hero of the indigenous pre-Saka population [of Sistan]." The Sakas, it seems, invaded Sakastan = Segistan = Sistan, the country that was to be named after them, toward the end of the second century BC. If, then, the opinion advanced by

Boyce is correct, it must be assumed that the Rustam stories of the Sakas from that point on developed into a national Iranian epic tradition, through Parthian intermediacy. By the beginning of the seventh century AD, it is clear that this national tradition was already in effect: in Mecca itself, according to a report by Ibn Hisham (F. Wustenfeld, Gottingen, 1858. Pp. 191, 235), the citizens of that city were entertained with the stories about Rustam and Isfandiyar as narrated by one Nadr ibn al-Harith, who learned them in the

course of commercial travels along the Euphrates.

Boyce leaves us with the impression that the aspect of the Shah Namah that I have called "epic of heroes" was originally a provincial Northeast Iranian tradition that eventually evolved into a national Iranian tradition through Parthian intermediacy. Once this tradition became widespread among the peoples of the Iranian Empire, it could be grafted on to a pre-existing national tradition as reflected by the aspect of the Shah Namah that I have called the "book of kings".

A major problem arises in Boyce's historical scheme, however. She presupposes that the coexistence of Rustam and his father Zal with the dynasty of the Keyanids results simply from an artificial merger of an "epic of heroes" tradition with a "book of kings" tradition. Such a merger is then supposed to account for the disparities in chronology: as already mentioned, the thousand year life-span of the two Sistanians, Zal and Rustam, exceeds the combined life-span of the entire Keyanid dynasty. These disparities suit the views of Christensen, who believes that the Keyanid kings are a matter of history while conceding that the Siatanian heroes are a matter of myth.

Christensen's theory of a historical Keyanid dynasty, however, should be modified on the strength of a single fact: the life of Afrasiyab is long enough to span a succession of kings ranging from the generations that followed the primordial King Faridun himself, before the dynasty of the Keyanids, all the way to the reign of Kai Khusrau. Throughout the Shah Namah, Afrasiyab is primarily the enmy of the Keyanid kings, only secondarily an enemy of the Sistanian heroes. Afrasiyab is clearly a mythical figure, corresponding to the Frasiyap of the earlier Pahlavi texts and the demonic Frangrasiian of the

even earlier Avesta. There is no way that even Christansen could consider Afrasiyab to be historical, yet his enmity with the traditional kings of Iran is a unifying theme in the "Book of Kings" traditions about the Keyanids, from Kai Qobad to Kai Apiva to Kai Kaus to Siyavush to Kai Khusrau. It stands to reason, then, that the Keyanids, like their enemy Afrasiyab and their paramount hero, Rustam, are compatible with traditional figures in Iranian myth.

In fact, Dumezil's comparative studies establish in detail that the story patterns concerning the Keyanids are a heritage of Indo-Iranian and even Indo-European mythmaking

traditions. The titlar *Kai* of the Keyanid dynasty (Kai Qobad, Kai Apiva, Kai Kaus, Kai Khusrau), attested in the earlier Avestan tradition as *kauui*, is cognate with the Indic word *kavi-*, which in the diction of the Vedas designates a priestly or at least hieratic figure endowed with special supernatural knowledge bordering on the magical. The ultimate *kavi-* in the Vedas is one Kavya (derivative of *kavi-*) Ushanas, smith of Indra's thunderbolt (with which the god kills the demonic Vritra/Ahi); this theme is comparable with that of the Iranian Kava, the smith who helped Faridun smite the dragonlike usurper Zahhak in the aetiological story about the banner of the Keyanid dyasnty (Shah Namah). The narratives about one of the Keyanids in particular, Kai Kaus, are closely parallel to those about the Indic Kavya Ushanas: both build a magnificent fortress on a high mountain, both have affinities with demons, and both possess a magical elixir that can bring the dead back to life. Such parallelisms bear out the argument that the Iranian and Indic traditions are cognate. Moreover, the stories about Kai Kaus and Kavya Ushanas in the Indo-Iranian traditions are cognate with those found in the Old Irish tale known as the Second Battle of Moytura. In this Celtic narrative, a wondrous smith called Goibniu has at his disposal the waters of life, over which the gods (Tuatha De Danann) and the demons (Fomoire) contend. The figure of Goibniu is parallel to the Iranian Kava, ancestor of the Keyanids, who is likewise a smith, and also to the Indic sorcerer Kavya Ushanas, who stands between the gods and demons contending over the waters of life, which he controls.

It is beyond the scope of this book to exhaust all the details of the relevant

comparisons that can be found in the work of Dumezil and his predecessors, notably Stig Wikander, Hermann Lommel, and Friedrich von Spiegel. It suffices to say that, on the basis of these comparisons, the traditions about the Keyanids that can be ascribed to the narrative patterns of Indo-European myth, which could have reshaped the narrative patterns of history.

In proposing that the Keyanids are reshaped by myth, my aim is not to discredit Boyce's argument that the Rustam stories were transmitted ino Sassanina times by way of a Parthian oral poetic tradition – or evn that these stories were ultimately the heritage of Northeast Iranains. Rather, the point is simply that the "epic of

heroes" tradition about Rustam is organically linked to the "book of kings" tradition about the Keyanids, and that the interrelationship between these two traditions did not result fom an arbitrary historical merger. Again, what I call the "book of kings" tradition about the Keyanids is ultimately a poetic tradition, through Parthian intermediacy. Like the stories of Rustam, the "histories" about the Keyanids are fundamentally a matter of poetry. In fact it is possible to go even further than Boyce, who posits that the provenience of this poetry is specifically Parthian: as Wikander's studies have shown, the stories about the Keyanids themselves are a product of early Parthian and Northeast Iranian mythmaking traditions, which are in many ways alien to the Zoroastrian orthodoxies prevalent in the Gathas of the Avesta. Thus the poetry about the Keyanids and the poetry about Rustam may actually share a common Parthian and Northeast Iranian heritage.

In the Pahlavi documents that preserve fragments of the Iranian poetic traditions in Sassanian times, we can actually witness convergences between the poetry about Rustam and the poetry about the Keyanids. In the Draxt Asurik, for example, a text that has been shown to be composed in a Parthian dialect of Northwest Iran *and in verse*, there is a passing reference to the saddles upon which *Rotastaxm* 'Rustam' and *Spendadat* 'Isfandiyar' had been seated. In the case of the battle between Rustam and Isfandiyar, which we have already noted is attested as the topic of an entertaining narrative performance in seventh-century Mecca and is one of the most impoprtant episodes of Firdausi's Shah Namah, the

Zoroastrian prince Isfandiyar, a prime character of the Keyanid tradition, is consciously juxtaposed with Rustam, a prime character of the "Sistanian" or herois tradition. Already in Sassanian times, these characters were counterposed as parallel poetic figures, much as the Shah Namah parallels the seven deeds of Isfandiyar with the seven deeds of Rustam.

There has been over the years much debate over which of the seven deeds served as a model for the other – those of Isfandiyar or those of Rustam. As we shall see, that debate is pointless if indeed we are dealing here with two multiforms of an oral poetic tradition. In any case the poetic device of fully treating both sets of seven deeds in the Shah Namah establishes *ipso facto* a large-scale opposition of the two heroes involved, and the seed

for this poetic device is already evident in the small-scale juxtaposition of the two heroes in the Draxt Asurik.

In this sense, of course, the actual combat between Rustam and Isfandiyar – or more preciselym the poetic rendition of this combat – serves as the ultimate juxtaposition. In the course of this combat, Isfandiyar at one point compliments Rustam by comparing him to Zarer:

...saying: "Thanks be to God, O world champion,
For I see you, contented and enlightened.

It is just to praise you
[and for] the heroes of the world to be dust before you.

Happy is he who has a descendany like yours,
For he has protection from bad times.

Happy is Zal, who, when his time passes,
Will leave you in the world as a memorial.

When I see you I am reminded of Zarer,
The horse-overturner and lion-like leader.

Zarer, a Keyanid prince and Isfandiyar's uncle, is attested already in the Avesta (Zairiwairi in *Yast* 5.112 and *Yast* 13.101). He is celebrated as a heroic paragon of the Zoroastrian way: in an attested Pahlavi poem known as the *Ayadgar I Zareran* "Memorial of Zarer", he is presented as a pious warrior who was instrumental

in a key victory of the Iranians over King Arjasp and his Turanians, and who los his own life in that battle. The Pahlavi poem is strikingly parallel in both form and content to the later narrative about the death of Zarer in the part of the Shah Namah that is attributed to that allegedly self-confessed Zoroastrian himself, Daqiqi. It si worth pointing out that, in this story of Zarer, the victory of the Iranians over the Turanians is described as worthy of Rustam:

They slept not for the whole night on account of joy,
For a "Rustamian" victory was theirs.

In other words, the Keyanid tradition is comparing itself here to the Rustam tradition within the poetry, whereas earlier we have seen the Rustam

tradition comparing itself to the keyanid tradition by way of Isfandiyar's compliment.

To conclude, I have argued against the commonly held notion that the Rustam of Firdausi's Shah Namah is historically an extrinsic and intrusive figure. The notion rests on five overlapping components:

1.)
The qualities and actions of Rustam seem characteristic of what we find in myth, whereas the qualities and actions of the national (Keyanid) kings he serves should be situated in the context of history.

2.)
The chronology of Rustam and his father Zal is out of synchronization with that of the Keyanid kings.

3.)
The genealogy of Rustam suggests that he is at least in part alien to the national traditions of Iran.

4.)
The ideas that lie behind the Rustam figure seem non-Zoroastrian in nature, and as such they too would be alien to the national traditions of Iran.

5.)
Finally, Rustam's provenience from the remote

region of Sistan establishes him as a figure who is likewise remote from the national kings of Iran. This factor accounts for the other four factors already listed, in that Rustam could be considered an outsider to the national traditions of the Shah Namah on the grounds that he was originally a regional, not a national, hero.

In regard to this last point, I propose an alternative explanation for the anomalous nature of Rustam in the Shah Namah. On the basis of what survives from the regional traditions of Sistan about Rustam, we have found no radical differences between Rustam as a regional hero and Rustam as a national hero of the Shah Namah. I therefore suggest that Rustam's Sistanian heritage is catually part of the national traditions about this hero, and that these national traditions combine narratives about heroes with narratives about

> kings. In other words, the Iranian concept of a "book of kings" is not incompatible with an "epic of heroes".(15)

Since childhood I have always loved what the supremely great poet Dante Alighieri called "the beautiful stories of King Arthur", though, of course, he only knew them in French and Provencal recensions, no doubt being only dimly aware that they were originally sung and written in Welsh and Breton. Beautiful indeed are the "stories of King Arthur". As we shall see, in reality the Arthurian Cycle, though indubitably Celtic at base, in fact contains so many Iranian – both Persian and Sarmatian or Alanic – elements that it is impossible to determine where the Celtic ends and the Iranian begins. This is especially true, since we have noted, that the Celts and Iranians have a great many affinities. It is perhaps this combination of Celtic and Iranian elements that gives the Arthurian Cycle its unique beauty and fascination.

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It has at times been noted the similarity between Kai Khusrau and his knights on the one hand and King Arthur and his knights on the other. However, in the Arthurian Cycle there is no figure comparable to Rustam. In the Arthurian Cycle, no one knight is clearly predominant; Lancelot, Galahad, Tristan, Parsifal, Gawaine, Bedwyr, etcetera all have their moments in which it is one of them who becomes the protagonist, King Arthur temporarily becoming a background figure. However, when all is said and done, the parallel between Kai Khusrau and King Arthur is indeed rather close, as we shall see.

Note that Kai Khusrau, King Arthur and Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, "El Cid", principal protagonist of the Spanish or Castilian epic, each bears a dragon on his shield as his heraldic device. There does exist a link between the Persian epic, the Arthurian Cycle and the Spanish or Castilian epic. As we shall see, the *Sakas* or Iranian nomad peoples of the Eurasian steppe played a key role in the formation of the Persian epic. "Sistan" or "Seistan", homeland of Rustam, means "Land of the Sakas". The Alans, one of the Saka peoples, unquestionably played a role in the formation of the Arthurian Cycle, as we shall see. The Spanish or Castilian epic also largely or principaaly derives from the Sakas, i.e., the Sarmatians and Alans, in this case by way of the Goths. To summarize, the Sakas or Iranian nomad peoples of the Eurasian steppe played a key role in the formation of the Persian epic, the Arthurian Cycle and the Spanish or Castilian epic tradition: here is the link between the three. It should be noted

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that in both the Shah Namah and the Arthurian Cycle, bearing a dragon on one's shield as heraldic device is the prerogative of the king, while Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, "El Cid" is not a king nor is he of royal blood. Perhaps the key to this anomaly is this: the kings who appear in the Cantar de Mio Cid are all, for one reason or another, unworthy. More than once in the Cantar de Mio Cid, someone says: "What a good vassal (El Cid), if only he had a good liegelord." Thus, it is El Cid who bears the dragon on his shield, because the singer of the *Cantar* considers him more worthy than the king.

As we shall also note, the Sarmatians and Alans, once again by way of the Goths, even influenced the Viking Sagas, though to a much lesser extent than is true of the Persian epic, the Arthurian Cycle, and the Spanish or Castilian epic tradition. The dragon was, of course, known to the Vikings, their famous "dragon ships" so called for the image of the dragon used as a figurehead. However, I know of no case in the Viking Sagas of any Viking king or hero who bears the dragon as the heraldic device on his shield.

As we shall see in a later chapter, the epic tradition of Kievan Rus' unquestionably contains a great many Celtic as well as Iranian elements. The Iranian elements are, of course, very easily explained due to the presence of Scythians, Sarmatians and Alans in the Russian and Ukrainian steppes. Concerning the Celtic elements there are three possible theories to explain them:

1.)
There is considerable evidence of a very ancient Celtic presence in the Russian and Ukrainian steppes, of which we shall speak later.

2.)
The Goths, in their long migration from southern Sweden to the shores of the Black Sea, were at one stage under intense Celtic cultural influence. &

3.)
That, in fact, we are to some extent dealing with an Indo-European question, relating to a very ancient relationship between Slavs, Celts and Iranians; see Chapter 1.

Of course the above theories preclude nor contradict one another in any way; there may be, and very likely is, some truth to all three of the above theories.

We now go to medieval Spain. In the field of lyric verse, Hispano-Arabic literature offers some interesting topics. Possibly the most interesting is the *zejel* or *muwashshaha*. Said versification form does not resemble Classical Arabic verse at all, nor does it resemble Classical Latin poetry. The language of the *zejel* in Andalusian Vulgar Arabic, the metre is syllabic-accentual, the structure stanzaic or strophic, consisting of stanzas the length of which varies from poem to poem, each of which ends with **a** refrain and/or line or lines of return to the original rhyme**(16). (**See Chapter **3)** The *muwashshaha* differs from the *zejel* in that uses the Classical Arabic quantitative metres and is written in Classic Arabic. The strophic structure is the same as that of the *zejel*. The *muwashshaha* is very often "capped" by **a** two-to-four line verse in Romance, called **a** *harcha* or *harja*. By "Romance" **I** of course mean the Romance language spoken in

Andalusia before the Arab conquest and which survived for **a very** long time among Muslims as well as Christians and Jews. Our knowledge of this language is fragmentary, but it seems to resemble Gallego, Catalan and even Provencal more than it does Castilian, this last being the language usually called "Spanish". The Arabs called this language *Lisan al-Ajjam*, "the non-Arabic language". Since *Lisan al-Ajjam* **can** also refer to the Persian language, this causes some confusion. Andalusian Vulgar Arabic contained **a** great many Romance words. Here are the last three stanzas of **a** *muwashshaha* by Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Isa **(**11th-12th centuries**).** Note the *harja* in Romance at the end of the third

stanza:

al-maliku l-mamunu du l-makramat
al-wahidu l-fardu l-jazilu s-sifat
Kam madahin ahyu wa hammin amat
Tunilu yumna-hu alai-na nudhar
     Tumna l-yasar

Fi smi-hi li-n-nasri wa-li-l-fathi fal
Qad amma ahla l-ardhi turran nawal
Asbaha fi l-judi bi qairi mital
Anjada dhikra-hu l-karimu wa-gar
     kulla l-amsar
Hatta hada fi-hi hudatu l-qitar

Wa-gadatin tashku ifada l-halil
Guduwwa-ha tabki fi yaumi r-rahil
Bi-dhiffati l-bahri wa zallat taqil
Ya qorazoni ke keres bon amar
     a liyorar
Laita-mi obiese weliyos de mar(17)

Here are the last three stanzas of a *zejel* by ibn Quzman, No. 82 in the edition of Emilio Garcia Gomez. Note that the first line of the last stanza is in Romance:

Halli dha saqa Alladhi tadrih
Ana nahtar bi-aini w-anta bi-llah tazan fih
Ish alaik min muwabbal sahaqa man taftahir bih?
Bin-n-Nabi bi-llah ajjil la tasir aini ashtar

Wa ana dhaba nauzar fi ma la budda minnu
Min habal besh yuallaq wa-sukaian nasuana
Wa-bsar az-zulla hadhir la gona liya annu
Wa-muwaiya ma nashrab wa-rubaiya ma nashtar

(El) alba, (el) alba es dholje en una dia
Wa-kadhak yadhdha gudwa wa-kadak min ashiyya
W-arra yaddak naqabbal wa-hudh etl fi-ha miya
Shakar Allah man aufa wa-amal bi-l-mukarrar (18)

That this verse form is the same as that called *musammat* or *tarj-i-band* in Persian literature is obvious. Nevertheless it is clear that the tarj-i-band does not proceed from the Andalusian zejel or muwashshaha. In the first place there are chronological

difficulties. Manuchihri, the great master though not the inventor of the tarj-i-band, lived in the 10th-11th centuries. The first mentions of the diffusion of the Andalusian *zejel* or muwashshaha in the Eastern Arab lands occur in the middle of the 11th century(19). Also, there are onomastic difficulties. If the Persian musammat or tarj-i-band proceeds from the Andalusian zejel or muwashshaha, why was it called *musammat* or *tarj-i-band* in Persian? Though the word tarj-i-band is of purely Persian origin, the word musammat is Arabic, as the prefix "mu" indicates. This fact simply makes no sense if the Persian musammat or tarj-i-band proceeds from the Andalusian zejel or muwashshaha. I personally believe that the tarj-i-band is of pre-Islamic Persian or Pahlavi origin.

Use of refrain and/or "lines of return" occurs frequently in

the Avesta. Except for the first, all 35 *kardes* (cantos of the Avestan Hymn to Mithra end with the words *yanghamcha tascha tascha yazamaide*, and in karde No. 9, stanzas 5, 6 & 7, the words, or rather the line *Mitro vo vouro gaoyaoitic* is repeated every seven lines. Here one also finds the "line of return", since in every case the line which precedes the refrain ends with the syllable *iti.*(20). Therefore, all the elements of the zejel or tarj-i-band are found in the ancient poetry of the Iranians.

Is it possible, then, that the Andalusian zejel is of Persian origin? To anyone who knows of the Persian influences which entered al-Andalus beginning with the reign of Abd ar-Rahman II (822-852), this might at first appear plausible. Yet, there

are grave difficulties here. In the first place there are the same onomastic difficulties as before. Tarj-i-band is indeed a strange and nearly unpronounceable word to an Arabic-speaking person, but the word musammat is Arabic. If the Andalusian zejel or muwashshaha is of Persian origin, why was it not called musammat?

There is an even graver difficulty. To all appearances the zejel or muwashshaha sprang from the lower orders of society in Muslim Spain, and was for some time despised by the more cultured members of the community. Muqaddam of Cabra, the supposed inventor of this form, was a blind bilingual (Romance-Arabic) bard, not a cultures or formal poet. Says ibn Bassam of Santarem (12th Century) concerning Muqaddam of Cabra:

> "He composed them (the zejels and/or muwashshahas) using short verses, but the major part of these copmpositions he made using careless metrical forms, without artistic scruples and using the manner of speech of the ignorant plebians and the Romance language. These vulgar (Arabic) and Romance phrases were called *markaz* (refrain."(21)

As I said before, the zejel is written in Andalusain Vulgar Arabic (the zejels of ibn Quzman contain a great many Romance words) while the muwashshaha very often contains a harja in Romance. Although our sources say very little about this, it is virtually certain that in Muslim Spain a certain number of highly cultured people had some knowledge of the Persian language. However, it is even more certain that amonmg the lower orders of Hispano-Muslim society knowledge of Persian was nil. Where, then, do we go from here.

Fundamentally, Celtic and Iranian verse use the same versification techniques, i.e., internal and end rhyme, alliteration, stanzas as is also true of the zejels of ibn Quzman(22). There is every reason to believe that the zejelesque or tarjiband form is very ancient in Celtic verse. Since this is a popular or folkloric rather than a bardic form in Celtic verse, I at present have no example in the original language, but there is a translation by Sir Walter Scott of a poem written in Scots-Gaelic. The rhyme scheme and strophic structure have been retained.

Awake in thy chamber, thou sweet southland gale
Like the sighs of his people, breathe soft on his sail
Be prolonged as regret, that his vassals must know
Be fair as their faith and sincere as their woe
Be so soft, and so fair, and so faithful, sweet gale
Wafting onward MacKenzie, High Chief of Kintail

So sang the old bard, in the grief of his heart
When he saw his loved lord from his people depart
Now mute on thy mountains, o Albyn are heard
Nor the voice of a song nor the harp of the bard
Or its strings are but waked by the stern winter gale
As they mourn for MacKenzie, High Chief of Kintail

In vain the bright course of thy talents to wrong
Fate deadened thine ear and imprisoned thy tongue
For brighter o'er all her obstruction arose
The glow of the genius they could not oppose
And who in the land of the Saxons or Gael
Might match with MacKenzie, High Chief of Kintail!(23)

In all the cases in which this form is used - Vulgar Arabic, Classic Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Provencal, Gallego-Portuguese, Catalan, Castilian, Gaelic or Welsh - the length of the stanzas

varies from poem to poem, and there may be a single line of return, two or more rhyming lines of return, a refrain or a line of return and a refrain.

Before we leave the zejel and muwashshaha, here is an excellent example of said form, the 14th Century Spanish song Three Morisca Maids of Jaen:

Tres morillas me enamoran
en Jaen
Aixa, Fatima y Marien

Tres morillas tan garridas
Iban a coger olivas
Y hallaban las cogidas
en Jaen
Aixa, Fatima y Marien

Y hallaban las cogidas
Y tornaban desmaidas
Y las colores perdidas
en Jaen
Aixa, Fatima y Marien

Tres morillas tan lozanas
Iban a coger manzanas
Y hallabanlas cogidas
en Jaen
Aixa, Fatima y Marien

Hallabanlas cogidas
Y volvieron desmaidas
Sus colores perdidas
en Jaen
Aixa, Fatima y Marien

Señoritas, quienes sois
Que mi vida destrozais?
Cristianas que eramos moras
en Jaen
Aixa, Fatima y Marien

I love three Morisca girls
in Jaen

Aisha, Fatima and Marien

Three Morisca girls so lovely
Went to gather olives
And found them already gathered
     in Jaen
Aisha, Fatima and Marien

And found them already gathered
And became dismayed
And pale of face
     in Jaen
Aisha, Fatima and Marien

Three Morisca girls so lissome
Went to gather apples
And found them already gathered
     in Jaen
Aisha, Fatima and Marien

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Found them already gathered
And became sad
And and the color drained from their faces
     in Jaen
Aisha, Fatima and Marien

Young ladies, who are you
Who are destroying my life?
We are Christian girls who once were Muslims
     in Jaen
Aisha, Fatima and Marien

Of course, the above song has a special meaning for me. I do not believe that anywhere in the world there is so small a city with so many beautiful girls as Jaen. During my student days in Granada, three "maids of Jaen" broke my heart.

At times the parallels between Celtic and Iranian verse are truly startling. Here are a few Welsh quatrains or *ruba'i* of the 12th and 13th centuries. The pronunciation is similar to English, except that the vowels are as in Italian, the "c" always has the

sound of "k", the "f" has the sound of "v" and the "dd" is similar to the "th" in "that".