

# THE ETHICAL NORMS IN MACEDONIAN FOLK BALLADS ABOUT HAIDUKS

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**Abstract:** In this contribution we will take a close look at the ethical norms in the ballads of the haiduk cycle, still alive in the field.

We will examine the most popular ballads' motives, looking at them at the different levels: the enemy's respect of courage, the mother's behaviour in the different situations, the respect of his mother and respect of the milk that she breastfed him etc.

On the basis of the ballad motive of the sinful haiduk conscious sin and the moral codex oblige even the mother to put an especially hard curse, on her child, including the maledictas. The departure from the moral norms is so great that even her love could not find any excuse for the sinful haiduk ('aramija'), especially when the sin is incest. The next motive is the motive of treason and the moral norms.

**Keywords:** Haiduk/aiduks (rebels), Macedonian folklore, sinful haiduk, punishment, malediction

## 1.

As phenomenon the haiduk movement is a folk movement of the resistance that appeared and developed in all Balkan nations, almost immediately after their subjugation by the strong Ottoman Empire, as a reaction to the Turks' violence on a national-religious and economic-social basis. It is understandable why people started to magnify the militant life of the haiduks and their feats, primarily through traditions of their heroic folk songs, and then, in various stages of the slavery, they created songs with epic, epic-lyric and purely lyric motives. Haiduk songs played a very significant role not only for the importance and development of Macedonian militant folk poetry, and they were a big factor in preserving the national and religious feelings of our nation; convincing people that struggle is the only way to freedom.

Macedonian haiduk folk songs, as we mentioned, occupy a central place in the Macedonian militant poetry. They represent the continuation of the heroic folk epic. They are expressed in epic, epic-lyric and lyric esthetic types. The main fabula of a great number of haiduk songs is especially suitable for ballad constructions. So, we can find the esthetic type of ballads in haiduk songs, as well.

In this haiduk song, we can find information about the morals and ethical attitudes of the personages: the fighter, the company, the environment, the family, etc. Therefore, we will pay more attention to some of the main ballad motives, through which ethic norms in the haiduk ballad can be represented.

## 2.

Each society, environment, in different periods, establishes its moral code containing general and special rules, and these rules depend on the environment, period, situation and personal attitudes of the individuals in the collective. Ethical norms, no matter how much they cover the general moral code of Macedonian patriarchal society, which is a main characteristic for folk songs, according to the period of their appearance, differ even from genre to genre.

Haiduk songs with ballad motives are really a part of this, especially militant Macedonian folk poetry, that represent a wealth of specific moral norms, the moral code of one period of fighting for freedom that lasted for over a century. We can notice here, on one hand, the moral code of the society as a whole, of certain groups or other segments of the society, that at a given moment are connected with the same interest of an individual. The situation, sometimes, causes deviations in the behavior of individuals and some collectives and then some incompatibility with the general moral code appears.

## 3.

We do not have the space or time here to deal with the ethic norms in different relations, although there are plenty of them, therefore we will mention only some of them that are most striking:

## 1. ENEMY BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS A DEAD OPPONENT

This respect for the braveness of a killed opponent is not new in the moral code of Macedonian folk ballads. It is common and well known in many nations, and it can be found in the ancient world as well. A typical example of this respect can be found in the motive of the decapitated haiduk's head, with many variants:

The motive of the decapitated haiduk's head will not be considered only as one part of the forms of heroic death of the hero (aid), but also in some other reference: enemy behaviour towards braveness, mother's behaviour in this situation, etc.

Further, we mentioned that there is one established attitude of military enemy towards the braveness of the opponent. This is a respect towards the killed one, his mother and the milk that he was nursed with, as a reflection on the cult of the milk as a primary food of the infant, the main relation between the mother and the son, the food that is infused directly from the life fluid into life fluid (mother's milk – blood), extraordinary human qualities. Concerning the mother-son relation here, besides the feeling of pride, the feeling of a mother's deep sorrow dominates (she is not losing an aid, a robber, a hero, but a son).

In these ballads, the haiduk's head is always bought to his mother and they always speak about the braveness of her son:<sup>1</sup>

Сите стомина паднаа;  
Дури му руса глава зедевме,  
Сам буљук-баша погина.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. RESPECT FOR THE HEROISM OF OTHERS

This is well illustrated in the ballads about haiduks' death. Some Macedonian variants of ballads, connected with the symbol of haiduks' movement – Haiduk Velko, are especially characteristic and interesting. The common feature of all three ballads is the reaction of the haiduk to his imminent death: the haiduk (the hero), lying sick and dying, does not want to leave his weapon to a weaker hero than him.

In the first song, noted down by the Miladinov brothers (Zbornik, p. 217), Kara Mustafa, when dying, leaves his weapon and horse, the symbols of his heroism, to Aiduk Velko:

- Кој ќе ти носит, море д'лгата пушка,  
дегиди, болен Кара Мустафа?  
- Нека ја носит тој Ајдут Велко,  
зашто је боље јунак од мене.  
- Кој ќе ти носит, море, острата сабја,  
дегиди, болен Кара Мустафа?  
- Нека ја носит тој Ајдут Велко,  
зашто је боље јунак од мене.  
- Кој ќе ти јава та врана коња,  
дегиди, болен Кара Мустафа?  
- Нека ја јава, море, тој Ајдут Велко,  
зашто је боље јунак од мене.<sup>3</sup>

Nikola Kaufman, famous Bulgarian musicologist and folklorist, in 1967, in Pirin Macedonia, wrote down a variant<sup>4</sup> of the death of Macedonian duke Stojan, who leaves not only his weapon, but also his troops to be led by the "ideal of Haiduk Velko"<sup>5</sup>

- Кој ќе ти води верна дружина,  
Стојане, македонски војводо?  
- Нека ја води хајдут ми Велко,  
дружино, благоверна дружино.

<sup>1</sup> Кузман А. ШАПКАРЕВ, Избрани дела, приредил д-р Томе Саздов, "Мисла", Скопје, 1976: 355.

<sup>2</sup> All hundreds died; While we took his blond head. Bucuk pasa himself was killed.

<sup>3</sup> (Who will bring this long rifle, you sick Mustafa? / Let Haiduk Velko have that, because he is a greater hero than me. / Who will ride your horse, you sick Mustafa? / let Haiduk Velko ride it he is a greater hero than me).

<sup>4</sup> See: Вук НЕДЕЉКОВИЌ MF. IV, 7-8, Скопје, 1971: 94.

<sup>5</sup> Вук НЕДЕЉКОВИЌ *ibid.*

This attitude towards the heroic qualities of the other GREATER HERO is identical among the Macedonian Christian and Muslim Turkish or Albanian population.

### 3. WHEN REVIEWING THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEATH, SPECIAL ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE APPEARANCE OF SELF-SACRIFICE

Self-sacrifice is a new motive in haiduk folk poetry. When haiduks were really in a stalemate, in order to avoid fencing and cruel executions, they had recourse to self-sacrifice. As a short illustration of this, we will quote some lines about the death of the haiduk duke Gjorgija Lazot:<sup>6</sup>

Цевката в уста Ѓорѓи си ја тури,  
ајде што ми тргна, Ѓорѓи, пушка мартинка,  
Само се отепа, леле, не се предаде.<sup>7</sup>

It is obvious that “personal feeling of fate is a priority”.<sup>8</sup> It is clear, that this is a defeat, but it is not a recognition of final defeat. Choosing this kind of death, and not allowing oneself to be captured, points to the absolute rejection of slavery.

### 4. THE MOTIVE OF DEATH – DIFFERENT APPROACHES

In haiduk ballads with the motive of death of the haiduk, many different approaches may be useful for reviewing different attitudes towards certain family relations and compliance with a common moral code in the environment.

Death is considered as a normal consequence of their own choice – armed renegades fighting against the enslavers. In some cases, we can find matrimonial symbolism, when death is considered as marriage with the fatherland, and in others, where the companions bring the wounded soldier, and he, while dying, leaves messages.

First of all, we can see the behaviour towards the soldier. It is obvious that the moral code of collectivities that are connected by fighting together obliges them not to abandon the wounded soldier, even when his end is so close. Second, through his message we can see the attitude of the environment towards certain members of the family. The strongest attachment is shown towards the mother, then, towards the sister, and then towards the wife:

<sup>6</sup> М. ЦЕПЕНКОВ, I, п. 30

<sup>7</sup> Gjorgi put the gun in his mouth, he shot himself, but he did not surrender.

<sup>8</sup> See above.

Јунак плаче за дружина,  
Па си на коња говори:  
Тргни, коњу, откени се,

Сестра ќе те препродати  
За белило и црвило,  
Љубне ќе те препродати,  
Препродати за прикија. (мираз)

Ќе излезне стара маќа –  
Сложи глава до земјата;  
Она ќе те арно чува,  
Често за син ќе те пита.<sup>9</sup>

In this song, we can find the projection of all inter-relations among companions, family relations of haiduks, gradation of the force of love according to the common norms of the community, depending on the environment and the time period: the father, the sister, the wife, the mother.

##### 5. THE MOTIVE OF THE WIFE'S BETRAYAL

This motive can be found in these types of ballads, as well. However, in the epics, this motive is quite common. In haiduk songs, the wife usually betrays when finding herself in face of the difficult dilemma: to sacrifice the child or the husband. Usually, she chooses her son (often the only one). Mother's love is stronger than the love for the husband, than the awareness of his heroic role.

Concerning the torture and death of innocent victims, we give the example of the song *Nikola the duke, betrayed by his bride* (Mihajlov, 389). Nikola was hidden by his closest family "into dark colourful boxes". The pursuers cut his father's arms, put out his brother's eyes, and cut off his sister's head. But nobody revealed where Nikola was, only his wife, so that they would not cut off her hair. This motive, also, represents a continuation of haiduk folk songs.<sup>10</sup>

The motive of the wife's betrayal can be found in these types of ballads. However, in the epic this motive is quite common. Sometimes it is not explained why the wife, and not the sister, the brother, father or the mother, betrays the hidden haiduk. From the lines in such songs, it can be concluded that, simply, in respect to the established folk opinion, the wife's love cannot be compared with the love of the

<sup>9</sup> A hero is crying for his companions, and he speaks to his horse: Move, you horse, go away. The sister will sell you for a beautiful thing, the loving woman will sell you for an endowment. But, the old mother will come out – Put your head towards the ground, she will keep you, and she will ask you about her son.

<sup>10</sup> Радост Иванова, Още веднџ за невярната Груйовица ..., Български фолклор, кн. 3. София, 1989.

mother, sister and other close kin. In these songs, the wife usually betrays the husband when she confronts the difficult dilemma: to sacrifice the child or the husband. Usually, she is obliged for her son (often the only one). Mother's love is stronger than the love for the husband, than the awareness of his heroic role. If we look into the problem through the prism of ethics, the conclusion that sister love is generally stronger, more stable and more loyal than the wife's love, can be treated as an established rule of opinion. Finally, the motive of unfaithful wife who betrayed the husband has been transferred from the heroic epic. The variants where the wife is confronted with blackmail: the husband or the son, point to the justification of different reaction of wife and sister (and other blood family).

The haiduk song *Markovica and the robbers* can be added to this possible explanation of the wife's betrayal, and to clarify it somehow, at least in cases when the wife is confronted with the dilemma: the husband or joint continuation of their child. Markovica, on a holy day, at Easter, went to communion. The atmosphere of this greatest Christian holiday is supplemented with the description of her white dress, freshly washed hair, and her not overwhelming, but elegant jewelry – two wreaths of small pearls. She was waylaid by robbers in the forest and took her son, her sun from the head and her small stars that she had around the neck:

а сретие арамии.  
 Е зедоа јасно сд'нце,  
 јасно сд'нце од главата,  
 зедоа месечина,  
 месечина од грлото.  
 е зедоа дробни звезди,  
 дробни звезди од небеси  
 е зедоа мошко дете.<sup>11</sup>

When we are talking about the moral code by which family relations are established, especially the relation between sister and brother, an interesting haiduk ballad with a motive – becoming a robber – is the song “Stojan and his siester Proja”. It is a song about a sister who broke moral norms, and instead of being especially faithful, as strong as, possible, and giving stable support to her brother, she refuses to help him, in a situation where even persons not so close feel pity for him. The intolerable, difficult material condition of poor peasants in the period of collapse of the Ottoman Empire, where the haiduk movement was the strongest, is reflected in the poetry. So, in the song, Stojan is a typical representative of this poor class who cannot feed his nine children in this “expensive” period and time of “starvation”.

Стојан има девет деца,  
 девет деца сите м'шки.

<sup>11</sup> Живая старина, период. Издание. Отд. Этнография Императорского русскаго географ. Общества, вип. И., год. ИЦ, С. Петербург, 1899,198/11.

Пара немат половница,  
да си ранит девет деца,  
девет деца сите м'шки.<sup>12</sup>

He begs his sister to help him, and she sends him on the “road” to meet the caravan of about one hundred mules, to measure “white wheat”, and to give him the rest. He did that, but the sister, led by her changed psychology, refuses the help in a very perfid way:

– Ејди брате, бре Стојане!  
Не престана едно зрно!<sup>13</sup>

Confronted with the total impossibility of providing for his children survival, he decides on a desperate step – he gives a bag full of sand for them to eat, and they all die. After he buries all of them in one grave, there is no other way for him, except to “become a robber”.

## 6. CONFLICT SITUATIONS BETWEEN THE MOTHER AND THE HAIDUK SON

The best way to see the confrontations of the common moral code of the environment and examples of breaking this moral code is to show conflict situations.

We will start with the weakest conflict between the mother and the son: the attitude towards the haiduk movement. While the son is dreaming about robbery as an ideal (“A young robber to become”), the mother has a negative attitude towards his revolt. We can even find a curse in these songs.

In the ballad from the Collection of P. Mihajlov (s. No. 371)<sup>14</sup> we can see the mother's curse. The conflict is between mother and son, and it reaches such great proportions that it culminates with a curse. The mother curses her son because, despite her resistance, the son decides to become a robber.

“Сури ти орли сватове,  
црни гаврани попове,  
танка топола невеста,  
ж'та лисица кумица...”

A mother curse, according folks belief, is always fulfilled:

“Како го мајка проклела,  
така го клетва стигнала...”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Stojan has nine children, nine children, all of them are boys. He hasn't any money to feed nine children, nine children, all of them boys.

<sup>13</sup> So my brother Stojan, there is no corn left!

<sup>14</sup> B'lgarski narodni pesni otot' Makedonie, Sofii, 1924.

<sup>15</sup> As his mother curses him, so the curse reached him ...

The distinction action/reaction is the following: the action represents the solution of the son to become a robber (including his announcement of this solution to his mother and not stepping back from it), and the reaction is the mother's curse, that is usual, and more developed and more difficult in some other ballad motives that deserve special attention – the motive of the sinful haiduk.

This is most often found in so-called robber's songs, where the intensiveness of the haiduk's robber's steps can be seen as the strongest aspect, when the haiduk movement represents a severe kind of robbery. We can even find different kinds of cannibalism:

Татко му го натерав,  
сина на ражајн да пече.  
Мајка му ја натерав,  
печено месо да јаде.  
(п. 53)

На татко му дадов това десно раче,  
на мајка му дадов това клето срце, леле,  
това клето срце.<sup>16</sup>

This ballad motive that we want to examine is a motive of a sinful haiduk. On the basis of this ballad, the motive is a sin, but not only as a stand, an omission that a person is distracted from God, but as a sinful action. It is about a deliberate sin, that, as we know, according to the Old Testament differs from undeliberate sin, when the doer can only place himself at God's mercy. Usually, in these ballads we can see a dialogue between the mother and the haiduk son (rarely the daughter), in which usually a sick haiduk talks about his sins (setting fire to churches full of people, murders of girls, massacres, and especially, forcing people to commit cannibalism – baking and eating the flesh of their own child, rarely brother, etc.) As we said, this is about severe, deliberately committed sins when the moral code obliges the mother to curse her own child, because the violation of the moral code is so great that even a mother's love cannot find justification. As usual, we can again find here the number nine. The sick man lies down for nine years, and his mother curses him to lie down nine more years, to splint nine sheets and nine pillows:

Стојане, море Стојане!  
Девет години лежало,  
девет постели скинало  
и девет вруќи завивки  
и девет меки перници.

<sup>16</sup> I made the father roast his son on a spit. I made the mother baked meat to eat (s. 53) ... I gave the father the right shoulder, I gave the mother the cursed heart.



Мајка му вели говори:  
- Ако си, сину, лежало,  
Оште ми толку да лежеш!  
Стојане, море Стојане!

In our ballads of sinful haiduks we can find cannibals, as well as some examples of communion with blood and meet.

In the ballads where we find the sin the strongest impression is the confrontation of moral codes. The mother is linked to the moral code of the environment. Her ethical attitudes force her to curse: the robber created his own moral code in special conditions and in a special collective of like-minded men which causes an internal conflict in his last hour of life with the common moral code that was closest to him before he became a robber. Therefore, he may agree passively and calmly with any kind of punishment: sickness as a punishment for his sin, his mother's condemnation and curse.

Here, we can also mention incest, that is very often unintentional and depending on the closer relation. However, the common moral code in respect to incest, in the Macedonian nation, is very strict for blood relations, and as well as for non-blood relations, and violation of this code is a very grave sin.

In the Collection of Verkovic (s. no. 286)<sup>17</sup> we can find a developed form of a curse:<sup>18</sup>

- Да ти никне низ коските,  
да ти никне росна трава,  
низ уста ти изникната,  
изникнала танка ела...

Incest committed on a fresh grave is in itself a condemnation and curse, and in this example, although the incest has been discovered by the mother at the moment of performing it: the bride from the grave is his daughter-in-law, and the girl is his sister. In this example, while he is kissing the girl, three drops of blood fall from his mouth.

<sup>17</sup> Makedonski narodni pesni. Sobrani od Stefan I. Verković. Redakcija i predgovor Kiril Penušliki, Skopje, 1961 (Prvo izdanie: Narodne pesme makedonskih Bugara, U Beogradu, 1860).

<sup>18</sup> Фанија Попова, Македонската народна балада, Наша книга, Скопје, 1990, 111.

