

Interpretation of the Poem “The Sick Dojčin” Etymology of *Dojčin*

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Folklorists offer divergent hypotheses on the possible origin of the epic *Sick Dojčin*. Lambertz, for instance, claims that this type of poetry could have appeared in “the process of cultural symbiosis between Illyrians and Serbs and between Serbs and Albanians” (FOCHI 1965: 231). In 1968, Dagmar BURKHART (1968: 409–416) published her conclusions concerning Dojčin, having been inspired by Adrian Fochi.

However, some studies point to several other possible etymologies for the protagonist of this epic. According to Milica GRKOVIĆ (1986: 84), Dojčin’s name over a period of time acquired different forms, and even meanings, such as *Доинь* and *Дојко*. In her view, these names are primarily hypocoristic formations derived from Dobro (-slav, -mir, etc.). According to Tomo MARETIĆ (1966: 162), Dojcil or Dojčin in the epic poem were preserved in the existing local folk narration related to Thessaloniki. Therefore, in this view, the name was not associated with Dojčin Peter, the Varadin Duke, who is the same as the Hungarian Duke from the 15th century, Peter Doci, being later renamed by the folk narrator into the combined and single identity of Dojčin. This thesis encouraged Matičetov to come to his later own views which he published in 1987.

Another interesting observation which motivated this research is offered by TRUBAČEV (1978, 5: 55) under the entries **dojъcъ* ‘одојче’ and **dojъka*, according to which personal names are attached to the term, e.g., Serbian Dojčeta (Дојчета), Bulgarian Дојка. It develops into the expression *doec, sosok* (Gerov) slvc. *dojec doilec*, derived from the verb *dojiti* “to breastfeed”. This could also be related to the word *Dojče* “youth, a young one”, which according to Trubačev is associated with the name Dojče, Dojčeta (ibid.).

This term could even be related to the oldest etymological grounds for suggesting breastfeeding as a ritualistic relationship between man and religion, sin, punishment and the defense of honor. According to Penušliski, some name variants in Macedonian refer to the character Dojčin as Sick Dojče, others as Duke Dojče, or possibly Gero, with Dojče and Dojčo being diminutives of Dojčin (PENUŠLISKI 1988: 334).

According to Jordan ŽAIMOV (1994), the name Dojko appears in the 15th century, and the name Dojčin derives from Dojčo or Dojko, with the further derivatives Dojkin, Dojčina, Dojka (diminutive of Doja), Dojko, Dojkan. In addition, Doja derives from Dojo or Doiko (14th century).

In viewing Matičetov’s statement, the following proposals have merit: he offers a plausible etymology of the name – the character, the protagonist Dojčin, seems antithetical to Penušliski’s statement that suggests the Dojčin epic originated in Macedonia, but rather the action of the epic is located in Thessaloniki instead. According to Matičetov, it is not very plausible to assert a Macedonian-Slavic source in the same country (Greece) when the Greek population had no real knowledge of the Dojčin epic. Moreover, the range of the epic extends into many other regions (to the north),

as far as Moldova and Dobrudja (Dobruja) towards Albania, and almost to the entire northern Serbo-Croatian language region, all the way up to the Kvarnerski Zalijev, the Croatian coast, and Žumberk (MATIČETOV 1987: 336–337).

Matičetov establishes an opposing thesis: the journey of the hero Dojčin was from north to south, along the Morava and Vardar valleys, accompanied by Jank(ul)a, Sekula, and other "northern heroes" who were present in Macedonian narrative folklore (epics, ballads), with these other heroes becoming almost as well-known as Dojčin.

In the 15th century the leadership against the Turks was taken over by the *little Hungarians* such as J. Huniyadi and his son Mattia, as well as J. Szilagi, J. Szekeli and others. They were joined by some Serbian noblemen such as Despot Vuk, the Jakšić brothers, and others. All these historical actors have been honorably memorialized in the South Slavic epic poetry and preserved with their domesticated names (Duke Janko, Sibirjanin Janko, Sekula the kid, etc.).

Peter Doczy was also a well-known warrior against the Turks. In a Chronicle by P. Vitezović, from 1482, it states: *Pavel Kiniz, Vuk Despot and Peter Doczy, the Ban of Varadin, in the Becersko Pole, near Smederevo, killed 3000 Turks and wounded many others* (MATIČETOV 1987: 337). MARETIĆ (1966: 162–163) explains that the Croatian people changed the otherwise rather unusual Hungarian name Doczy into a more familiar Dojčin, without providing an explanation as to why the name Dojčin would have been more widely accepted. Thus, to the hero from the ballad Bolen Dojčin (KARADŽIĆ, II: 77) and to a hero of the humorous song Karadžić's I 633 (КУНАЧ IV 1472-4, ŠTREKELJ 1, 915-8), the Hungarian warrior Peter Doczy provided his surname as a literary name in the oral literature of the South Slavs. Arguably, this name, Doczy, underwent further transformations (Dojčin Petar, Dulci Peter, Doczy-Peter, Tuczypeter, Luczypeter, Ljuti Peter), appearing primarily in humorous songs. However, the following South Slavic and Romanian transformations and adjustments should be considered in comparative linguistics: Доичо, Дојчић, Дојчил, Дојчин, Дојчина, Дојчиница, Дојчиновић, Гојчић, Доцин, Doicil, Doicila, Doncila, Donciul, Donici, Ducin.

Matičetov suggests that the attribute *sick* in the South Slavic folklore comes from Albanian songs about *Bola* Hyusen-Aga. Regarding the first part of the name, he believes that a mechanical transmission of the cliché occurred in Serbo-Croatian (from the Albanian *bola* "snake, serpent") with the addition of the letter (n) – affixing it to the name of Dojčin. I disagree with this for the simple logical reason offered by Penušliski, and also given by Matičetov, namely, that the brother (Dojčin) was punished with a severe disease and became sick, *bolen*, as a consequence of his immoral actions.

Beyond the Sick Dojčin (Bolen Dojčin), a protagonist with a rare psychological trait (the immoral actions such as the sexual aberration of necrophilia as described in some variants of the epic), appears among only a small number of other peoples and nationalities. Andrejev points out three such foreign variants that reference great sinners: the Povolzhje in Russia; the Arabian from Palestine, and the Armenian from the lower Caucasus (MATIČETOV 1987: 339).

In Penušliski's view, the differences in song variants dedicated to the Sick Dojčin are rather apparent: there is a general, meaningful differentiation of content, accord-

ing to which two types of songs are distinguished: 1. One type of song, significantly less prevalent, is the one which extensively elaborates on the *cause* of Dojčin's disease. Some variants even expand on his predestined role to fight and defeat the Black Arab on the battlefield, thus redeeming the sins he has committed. 2. The second type of variant is one that does not reveal the cause of Dojčin's sickness (PENUŠLISKI 1988: 317–318). Penušliski calls the first type expanded, and the second (general) type abbreviated.

The description of Dojčin's sin in the variant collected by Valević, from the Zrze village, retains an unconventional feature. "Dojčin, the good hero," went hunting – "hunted for three days, but caught nothing"¹ so then he returned and discovered a beautiful monastery, but the monastery door was closed (VALEVIĆ 1936: 260–262). Then, by "making the sign of the cross" (a formula), first the door of the beautiful monastery opens, then there is the door of the church (made of silver and gold) which sits in the monastery courtyard and in the church three colorful coffins are found with three female saints in them (PENUŠLISKI 1988: 321), after which Dojčin sexually abuses the saints (a motif of necrophilia known, but not widely employed).

Regarding the taboo with reference to corpses (the Old Testament), two types of factors exist in the foundation of many taboos: the fear of some type of deception underlying what is actually a positive power possessed by the object, or the fear that the negative power of the object could drain the life-force from a man or could defile him (cf. taboo as related to corpses in the Old Testament). Following Fromm's psychological view that necrophilia actually occurs as a compensation, a substitute for the mother figure (searching for the mother), and using Freud's view that man invents gods in order to feel parental care and protection, we propose a further interpretation in light of this thesis. In this view, it is the relationship man-god (religion) which expresses the need for parental care and leads to the violation of religious principles. This is followed by God's punishment that characterizes this type of hero as an individual with immature, infantile behavior and requiring attention and care (as for a *toddler*), which connects quite well with the relationship of Dojčin and his sister Angelina. An excerpt supports this reasoning, when King Marko speaks to Dojčin:

Be aware, don't play with religion, don't play with God
Dojčin, however, decides to perform his act ...

Some profoundly original research presented by Marija Kukubajska should be mentioned here. She draws her logical conclusion based on endorphins (endogenous morphins). Discovered in the late 1970s as physical, material carriers of spiritual reactions and states activated by the power of the will, the endorphins are used in Kukubajska's hypothesis to explain her interpretation of the miraculous reactivation of Dojčin's vital strength (KUKUBAJSKA 1983: 76). She provides a logical explanation for the extreme mental states that Dojčin's body goes through as it is restored, resulting in the phenomenon of Dojčin as a heroic paradigm in Balkan folklore (ibid.: 75–85).

1 Such an introduction is met with in the Albanian variants of the sinful hero where Gergj Elez Aliya, after the unsuccessful hunt, as a sign of revenge, forces the parents to sacrifice their own child.

The endorphins found to be the power-restoration agents for Dojčin are actually interpreted as an original link that closes the gap, the *hiatus*, between Dojčin's psycho-physical nine-year long state of *sickness and pain*, and his newly gained supernatural strength that, in the crucial moment, enables his victory over the "Black Arab" (ibid.: 76, 77).

In addition, I would mention another relationship between the terms for *pain* and *punishment*, as analyzed by Kukubajska. The English term *pain* (which derives directly from the Latin word *poena*), meaning punishment, going back to the ancient belief that the gods, when enraged, punished man by inflicting pain and suffering upon him (KUKUBAJSKA 1983: 77). This is an exact equivalent to my diverse research focused on sacrifice, the wrath of the gods, violence, and sacredness (STOJANOVIĆ-LAFAZANOVSKA 1996).

This interdisciplinary approach between poetry and medicine conceptualized by Marija KUKUBAJSKA (1983: 175–185) could be viewed as a mind-over-matter effect, and be applied as a new possible explanation of Dojčin's case of sickness and temporary but enormous gain of strength explained through the bio-chemistry of the endorphins. However, besides being interpreted as an imminent power accessed from within a human being at exceptional moments of ultimate life-battles, Dojčin's supernatural victory over the enemy in the battlefield could also be interpreted as an allegory: an entire nation fighting and overcoming its *slave-condition* when faced with its basic survival. Therefore, the power of such supernatural resistance could be viewed as resulting from a nation's natural defense mechanism activated against critically dangerous oppressors such as the Ottoman Empire (a period during which the poem presumably appeared), or possibly as a reaction of the Balkan people to the waves of various invasions that intruded into their Slavic and non-Slavic cultures.

South-East European folklore contains variants (songs and legends) with similar content, which brings us to Loma's point of view regarding the reasons for the collapse of the Serbian Empire. There are legends about the defiant Serbs, acting so forcefully prior to the Kosovo battle, with their knights entering churches on horses and piercing the church bread with their spears, and these acts were the ones that provoked God's punishment (LOMA 2002: 146–147).

The interaction between sin, punishment, and repentance, or the *metanoia*, in typified songs about the *sinful haiduc* (outlaw) and the Sick Dojčin, may be defined as Medieval Christian morality texts. An interesting etymological solution² should be mentioned, namely, Dojčin and "breastfeeding, breast", as it takes us back to the origins of man-religion interaction. Two instances will be called upon to explore this further.

1. Man creates deities in order to fulfill his need to feel protection, as a child receiving parental protection from his/her parents (a well-known psychoanalytical theory).
2. Here I might refer to the area of *folk etymology*, defined as sound matching (in the shape of synonymia, allusion or homonymia) in various folkloric expressions, mostly short proverbs, sayings, and such (TOLSTAJA 2008: 228–240).

2. The Christianized ethics and the act of punishment towards the disobedient, and consequently, according to this theory, the disobedient is reprimanded for his/her irresponsible and childish behavior (showing a relationship between the degree of sin, the punishment, and the restoration of honor). As a response to his misbehavior (Dojčin jumping over the monastery in Gračanica and engaging in necrophilia), God's punishment follows: Dojčin is sentenced to his sickbed, while his sister plays the role of a nurse.

I would like to symbolically connect several themes inherent in this epic narration in their resemblance to Doyko and Dojčin. As a protagonist in the epic, Dojčin appears as a character in need of protection, safety, and moral correction, which he later receives from his sister. The breast (dojka) is a symbol of protection and of measure(ment) (CHEVALIER/GHEERBRANT 1996, see: breast). In the figure and the narrative of the Sick Dojčin epic, all the qualifiers of *interpretatio Christiana* can be identified.

Werner Wolf observes that, for the Children of Israel, the word *bath* means both "a girl" and "a liquid measure". The word *amah* meant "girl" and "a measurement of length". The breast is connected with the female principle, that is to say with the measure in its sense of restriction, since measurement is restricted to the object measured. This is in contradistinction to the male principle which is limitless and measureless. The male principle, manifested by Dojčin, is, in contrast, unlimited, measureless. The breast is primarily a symbol of motherhood, gentleness, security, and helpfulness. It conjoins fertility and milk – with this first food offering the images of closeness, devotion, unselfishness, and haven. The breast is the inverted cone (cupa) out of which life flows, as if coming from above. But above all, breasts are a symbol of motherhood, security, comfort, and plenty. They are connected with fertility. Returning to the bosoms of the earth, typified by death, it represents an initiation of rebirth (CHEVALIER/GHEERBRANT 1996: 118). Thus, the period of Dojčin's sickness may be interpreted as a military, male initiation, or a period of temporary death and preparation for the greatest battle – the battle against the Black Arab.

Now I would like to get back to the concepts of sin and repentance, and to the New Testament *metanoia*. Sin, according to TRUBAČEV (1980, 7: 114–115) represents a notion arising as the result of a deed, an action, without naming the feeling.

According to Judaic ethics, true repentance is proven by refusing to commit the same sin/crime when a similar opportunity presents itself. The New Testament describes it both as a personal responsibility and as God's gift of blessing.

All typified songs for sinners and heroes who, as a consequence of their grave sins, become bed-ridden for a prolonged period, (such as Dojčin, the sinful haiduc, etc.) including those who succeeded or failed to attain the Christian *metanoia* – the change of mind – display an extraordinary Christian moral message against acts of vandalism and violence. The spiritual change is accompanied by a heart-felt repentance where the repentant renounces his/her sins and turns to God, although in Dojčin's case it is displayed in Dojčin's defense of his sister's honor.

I agree with Cvetanovska's research which concludes that the notion of sin is nothing novel and it merely receives further emphasis with the adoption of Christianity. Sin was known in pagan times and then it denoted violation of the god's com-

mandments (CVETANOVSKA 2012: 35). Moreover, violations were sanctioned by being designated as sins, and therefore they required extraordinary purification rites. The roots of this viewpoint are found in the tendency of archaic thought to make judgments based on the sinful consequences, rather than on their motives (ibid.: 34). According to the folk worldview, sin extends to all activities harmful toward others, and such behavior, even if it is not intended to impose harm on others, breaches the moral norms of the community (ibid.: 35–36). What might be called a folk concept of sin is a rather complex interaction between various religious (Christian) thoughts, mythological (pagan) imagination, elements of oral and literary culture, precepts of popular common law, and traditional value systems (ibid.: 37).

Svetlana Tolstaja assumes that the pre-Christian worldview consisted in a particular relationship which evolved later into a Christian concept of sin. It might have been one of the primary and primal concepts of pre-Christian culture, which after adopting Christianity underwent fundamental transformation, while in the same process the Christian concept substantially changed under the influence of the folk culture.

It is well known that the rites of confession after moral failures had been practiced in Asia Minor since the 2nd millennium B.C., and probably earlier. Hittite texts confirm it, particularly in their prayers. The Hittite religion included rather developed concepts for a slow but steady divine retribution for offenses committed against either the gods or humans. This was intended to be against the re-occurring inheritance of sin, and was used as a chance for repenting the sin through sacrifice or prayers. After determining the sin – which meant the cause of the misfortunes and disease – sins and diseases were removed by means of sacrificial offerings through repentant people and cathartic rituals, as prescribed in ritual materials for the clergy (RITZL, p. 13, quoted according to CVETANOVSKA 2012: 43).

Dojčín will be examined through symbols and the etymology of the main concepts that define the key narrative: Dojko, Dojčín, girl, maiden, child, sin, etc.

In addition to previously examined, divergent research and hypotheses focused on Dojčín's character, VASMER (1950–58), TRUBAČEV (1959, 1978) and ŠIMUNDIĆ (1988) offer their distinctly different approaches. Trubačev claimed that the reference *dojъčę, Serbian дójче, дòјче and *dojъќа, *dojъќь include personal names – the Serbian Дòјчета and the Bulgarian Дóйка (1978, 5: 55). Also, under the reference *dojiti (se) (ibid.: 53–54), Trubačev lists the following relations: the verb ending in *-iti* (causative) of the non-preserved verb **dēti* (and in this regard the analogous term occurs **pojiti*, **pēti*, **piti*), which indicates an ancient condition developed from the verbal derivatives, **dēte*, **dēva*, and goes further to i.e. **dhē(i)-* (to suck, to breastfeed), compared to ancient Hindu *dhāyati*, to suck, the Ossetian *dæjūn*, the Greek *θησθαι* and other forms, as well as the Latin more remote derivatives *fēlāre* "to breastfeed", *fēmina* "wife", *filius* "son" ... (TRUBAČEV 1959: 114–118 and 1978, 5: 54).

Vasmer arrives at similar data. In his etymological dictionary of the Russian language, he does not list South Slavic personal names, but explores the verb *to breastfeed*. Under the reference дойтъ, дою, he gives the forms of Old Slavic *doiti*, Old Hindu, Ossetian, Gothic, Old High German (ahd) and other languages. Then he returns to the Old Hindu expression *dhénā*, *dhēnúṣ* "a milking cow", *avest*, meaning consequently *daēnu-* "femina", greek *θησατο*, Greek, Latin *fēmina* "woman" and

fēlāre “to breastfeed” (FASMER 1986: 522). Mate Šimundić should be mentioned here as well. Under the reference Dojčil / Dojčilo and Dojčín, in his Dictionary of Proper Names, he lists the following derivatives: Dojko, Doča, Dojče, Dojo, as he proposes to find their origin in the verb “to breastfeed”. Voice k > ch (ŠIMUNDIĆ 1988: 80).

In his book dedicated to the *Slavic terms for close relationship/kinship*, in a chapter devoted to maidens (maid, girl, девојка, девушка), Trubačev gives great importance to the connectedness between girl – breastfeeding, to feed, to give milk, etc. – доење, кормит, дава млеко, хрни. In this context he states the relationship: maiden – virgin (TRUBAČEV 1959: 114–118), which gives us the right to establish once again the relationship that does not accidentally appear in this song, the one between brother and sister. Two principles are also recognized at an etymological level: care – breastfeeding and the principle of honor. Possibly for such reasons, most frequent variants indicate that the role of Dojčín’s care-giver is given to his sister, and not to his wife.

In order to reach the level of heroism (half-deity), the brother, Dojčín, will be elevated from his sickbed and triumph over the Black Arab – which is traditionally considered as a heroic act of defending not only his own honor, his sister’s honor, but also the honor of his entire people as well.

I agree with the etymological references for *child*, and the psychoanalytical idea that man reaches for God’s parental care just as a child does. What follows is the analogy that Dojčín broke the Christian moral norms (through necrophilia, riding over the Gračanica monastery on his horse, etc.), and consequently, he displayed the behavior of an immature child. This can be shown through the epic variant in which King Marko tells Dojčín: *Don’t play games with religion; you are not a small child*.

At the very beginning of the blood kinship, Trubačev characterizes the term *child*, referring to its origins in the Indo-European **dbē(i)*- to breastfeed, to be fed by breasts, by sucking, which is additionally related to the son and his source of sustenance (the breast). According to TRUBAČEV (1959: 37), all the terms considered lead to breastfeeding.

This epic biography can be recognized as a portrayal of a sick brother defending the honor of his sister (Bolen Dojčín, or Gjergj Elez Ali among the Albanians). Two types of poems have been dedicated to Sick Dojčín: 1. A minor group/type of poems in which the reason for Dojčín’s sickness is extensively explained, with some variations in which Dojčín is predestined to defeat the Black Arab in a heroic duel, redeeming himself for his sins; 2. The second type of poem has the well-known storyline of defending the honor of his sister/wife. However, this type does not explain the reason for Dojčín’s sickness; it places the emphasis on the battle with the Black Arab.

In the two oldest Macedonian variants of the poem “Sick Dojčín” (MILADINOVIĆ 1983 [1861], no. 155, and VERKOVIĆ 1985 [1860], 3, no. 47), the role of Dojčín’s sister is replaced by Dojčín’s wife. In the other seven published versions, his wife appears alongside Dojčín’s sister, whereas in later variants there are no such appearances of the wife. Based on this, we conclude that folk singers preferred the role of the nurse to be played by Dojčín’s sister Angelina, rather than by the wife of the sick hero.

Great attention has been paid to Dojčín’s character by Balkan folklorists, but what we as colleagues also intend to explore further is the consistency of the aca-

demic and professional evaluation, and the alteration of Dojčin's character produced in certain literary transpositions. In his two plays, Georgi Stalev, in following the principles of the modernistic movement or simply by obeying the rules of art (Bourdieu), depicts Bolen Dojčin as not being the moral victor; and the duel with the Black Arab is condemned in particular because it comes only after his sister Angelina is concerned. The act itself is represented as moral egoism.

At the beginning of the poem, Dojcin makes some immoral sign: he jumps over the monastery (= sacred place) and engages in necrophilia. As a response to his misbehavior (in Christianized ethic), the God punished him to his sickbed during his lifetime. After a certain period of time, Black Arab kidnaps his sister Angelina. In this moment he instantly receives his moral and physical supernatural force in order to save the honor of his sister Angelina (which is also in a manner of deep and strong patriarchal Balkan christian norms). One of the greatest shame in the Balkans is the sister's dishonor. Therefore, I would like to point out that he is a moral egoist, because he wanted to keep the honor only of his sister Angelina. He doesn't act according to Christian moral rules, because he jumps over the monastery and engages in necrophilia. Because of this, I defined him as a moral egoist. According to many Balkan researchers he is a moral victor, just because of this act.

The relationship between shame and honor as two basic moral categories is completely altered or relativized in this modernist approach to ethics. Taking into account the historical distance, archaic honor is transformed into contemporary shame and vice versa. The reason for this is clear: archaic motifs are interpreted in a modern manner and, where cultural invariables are concerned (in the sense of their continuity and duration), the problem should be perceived as a need for invariability in the evaluation of inherited spiritual culture, or even further – a need to re-examine the reasons for such alterations.

'Societies of honor and shame' are by definition agonal societies. These social structures/constructs are characterized by bitter daily struggle for the reputation of one's person, family, and clan – and in extreme cases – for the reputation of the tribe. In our case, we have to consider Giordano's perception of honor as not being an egalitarian principle based on an equation of the 'status of the powerful' with the 'virtues of the weak' but as, above all, related to a certain social strata. Thus, three different notions of honor and their appropriate norms can be distinguished as conforming to some traditional class structures: plebeian, civic, and aristocratic honor (GIORDANO 2001: 105). In addition, I argue against the idea that honor belongs to pre-modern societies, while dignity belongs to modern societies. These two are equally characteristic of both types of societies (STOJANOVIĆ-LAFAZANOVSKA 2009: 195–213).

In this context, I would concentrate on BENVENIST's (2002: 431–432) discussion of religion. Nothing is as much debated as the origin of the Latin term *religio*. It can be shown here that for both semantic and etymological reasons *religio* is associated with the verb *relegare* "reunion, re-selection", returning to a former synthesis due to its re-composition. According to this, *religio*, "religious scruples", related to the origin, the personal mood, and the reflective effect, is tied to a kind of *permission* in a religious sense.

Historically inaccurate, the interpretation imposed by Christians regarding the association with the verb *religare* “connection, unity” becomes indicative of the revival of the term: *religio*, which refers to becoming an “obligation”, an objective relationship between the believer and his/her god, not a free choice of worship.

This meaning of the word *religio*, which may be found in numerous examples, was confirmed in its derivative *religiosus*, in the sense of “one who is careful with the things of a cult and tries to understand and execute the ritual.” Numerous Romans doing research provide information that the word *religiosus* can be used for the cult itself – “religious is the thing that regarding its dedication (*sanctitas*) is distant and separate from us”, “religious is what man is not allowed to do, so if he was to do it, it would seem that he opposes the will of the gods” (Fest, r. 278 Mull.).

This idea can be considered fundamental in interpreting the types of ballads about the sinful hero punished with severe illness due to his disobedience to the will of his Christian god (Sick Dojčin – for his necrophilia, and also the sinful haiduc – for his sparagmos and homophagy), acts contrary to the Christian moral norms that abolished human sacrifice (similar to Moloch and Tophet). Basically, *religio* represents a hesitance that withholds action, a reluctance that prevents an action, a shame, as opposed to a sensation that guides and encourages people to perform an action or cult. It seems to Benveniste that this sense, which quite clearly results from the old use of this word, imposes a unique interpretation: the one offered by Cicero who ties *religio* with *legere* (BENVENISTE 2002: 431–432).

Conclusion

Given the fact that in most variants Dojčin enters into a duel with the Black Arab, as well as the fact that remarkably numerous theoretical interpretations of Dojčin have emerged in folk literature so far, I would end this presentation with an expression by Loma: *interplanarity*. It refers to places in the epic song where two planes intersect.

If we intend to mark such capacity of certain places with a single word, to be seen as sections of existential planes, interplanarity would be the appropriate expression. We can freely use this term for this epic poem, and based on it differentiate it from the uniplanar poetic realizations, those which move through one plane only, and convey only human or only divine acts, as well as the multiplanar works, that, as comparisons or as excursions, move along various levels of existence (...).

The so called *male songs* (also referred to as “heroic songs”) move through the ‘interspace’ that binds the human with the higher plane, having the super-human as its foundation theme, the issue that helps the human exceed limited human nature.

The superhuman does not necessarily mean inhuman; in primitive societies (communities), *humanness* is layered into degrees, encompassing more degrees upon which it becomes acquired, confirmed and exceeded, in the process of growth and maturation. We tend to look upon it as a quantitative phenomenon, we experience it as cult sanction, or a whole range of qualitative passages (the well-known *rite de passage*); since one is not born as a fully formed man/woman, but becomes formed through the maturity test, including the military initiation designated for men.

From a sociological point of view, the epic can also be interpreted as an expression of military ideology. In the late stage of feudalism it used to be the Christianized ideology of knighthood; in the dark ages of the great migrations it used to be the

spiritual bond among military groups that ruined and created countries throughout Europe, and during the primeval tribal stages it used to be the oral code of the elders capable of carrying arms.

Throughout timelines, key topics of epic poetry remain the same: turning-points in military careers founded between human weakness and divine power. In its original source, the heroic song does not represent a rhymed chronicle only, but an artistic sublimation of crucial moments in the life of man – the warrior and the defender of his beloved ones (LOMA 2002: 13–14). The views presented in this analysis and interpretation of Dojčín allow for the recognition of the interplanar. It denotes creation placed on the borderline between the heroic song and the ballad, and it expresses military ideology. In later stages of feudalism, it was the Christianized ideology of knighthood, which is identified in both types of songs dedicated to Dojčín, as well as in the songs dedicated to heroes similar to him, where the adversary is formulated either through the Arab, the Turk, or other antagonists.

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