

The Sister–Brother Recognition Motif in the Albanian Folk Ballad: Meaning and Contexts within the National Culture

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ABSTRACT. The motif of sibling relationships has been part of folklore since ancient times. In ancient civilizations, a marriage between brother and sister was considered the perfect pairing, as represented by the union of the moon and the sun, with its creative power on life on earth. According to written sources, Paganism supported this belief until the advent of Christianity, which sacrificed the sibling couple on the altar of monotheism, while it is also proven that the prohibition of incest originates from where nature transcends itself, where the social defeats the natural. This paper looks at this phenomenon among Albanians, and examines how it is treated in tradition, by analyzing the cultural background of the motif in folk ballads and in current artistic variations. How does the sister–brother relationship manifest in Albanian folk ballads? What is its origin? What do folk ballads say about the complexity of this relationship through time? I will draw on examples from Albanian folk ballads alongside anthropological theories built on family relationships, kinship, and cultural influences from a comparative perspective.

KEYWORDS: Albanian folk ballad, sibling relations, family, incest.

VARIANTS OF ALBANIAN FOLK BALLADS WITH THE MOTIF OF SISTER–BROTHER RECOGNITION

The constant element that characterizes traditional Albanian ballads, and others (Delić 2000: 21–42), is the family institution, or, more precisely, family relationships. In Albanian folklore, the motif-based typology of ballads is built on the family relations represented in the ballad: *ballads of the husband and wife reunion*; *the ballads of the sibling (or sister–brother) recognition* (Haxhihasani 1973: 125–145); *ballads with the motif of wife’s betrayal* (Çetta 1974: 9–38); *ballads with the motif of fratricide*; etc. (ibid.: 9–38). In this article, I will focus on ballads with the theme of sister–brother recognition, which, as recognized by anthropologists, is an inherent variety in sibling relationships that proves to be a productive entry

point for revisiting old questions regarding the relationship between friendship and kinship, intimacies conceptualized as incest, and forms of support across social classes, generation and geographic distance (Alber [et al.] 2013: 1–25).

The ballad with the theme of sibling, or sister–brother recognition, is found in many variants in Albanian-speaking areas of the Balkan region. The first variants have been recorded among Arbëreshs (the Albanian community living in Italy since the 16th century) and is known as *Gjon Pretika* (Palaj, Kurti 2007: 257–258), and also among Albanians living in Montenegro (Çetta 1974: 134). It has also been collected in the Southern part of Albania, where it is known as *Gjino Vaku* (Haxhihasani 1973: 129), while variants recorded in Northern Albania and Kosovo are known as *Lute Fukaraja* (Çetta 1974: 139–160), or *Ali Borxhalija* (Palaj, Kurti 2007: 259–264).

The *Gjon Pretika* variant portrays a rural idyll in which a shepherdess, who is singing while guarding her flock, meets a Janissary soldier. He tries to kidnap her, but she tells him that she is not unprotected because her brother is a soldier, though she has not seen him since childhood. The soldier asks her if the brother had any marks by which she could identify him. She replies that her brother had six toes on each of his feet and six fingers on each of his hands. So does the soldier. She thus recognizes her brother, before having any physical relationship. Both the sister and the brother die crying from grief; in some variants they metamorphose into fruit trees, a pomegranate and a quince. The variant known as *Gjino Vaku* from Southern Albania is similar, except that the brother is not a soldier, but a thief who kidnaps the bride, who later turns out to be his sister, at her wedding. Here, as well, any physical contact is avoided because they recognize each other as siblings.

The Northern version of *Lute Fukaraja*, or *Ali Borxhalija*, speaks of the misfortune of a man who had fallen into debt and is unable to repay. Finding no solution, he decides to put his beautiful wife on the market. A rich man buys her and takes her home, but the moment he joins her in bed, natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and bloody rain occur. In some variants, the birds sing that “a brother and a sister are getting together in bed”. Then the rich man asks the woman to tell him more about her life. She says that her parents have died but that there must somewhere be a brother from whom she has been separated since they were little. She tells him that her brother has a scar on his arm (in some versions his forehead) where he had been shot as a child. The man then shows her the childhood mark and, happy that he found his sister, he returns her to her husband and does not ask for the money back.

None of these three variants can be claimed as the original, and it would be impossible to identify one in the broader Balkan region. Very similar ballads have been found in Greek, Romanian, Bosnian, and Slavic folklore (Brewster 1972; Haxhihasani 1973), although in the Albanian ballads, we find Albanian cultural

features related to local family structure, social organization, national history, geographical position and influences from neighbours, as well as religious cultural layers reflected in belief and prayer systems. It should be noted that, in Albanian folklore, this ballad was always recognized and named after the *motif of sister-brother recognition*, and never by other means.

THE THEME OF INCEST IN FOLK BALLADS: COMPARISON AND ORIGIN

The motif of sibling recognition implies a potential incestuous relationship between a sister and a brother, uniting the aforementioned ballads thematically, despite them being found in different contexts and settings. As we will see below, its occurrence or avoidance is the key criterion that connects this motif across different cultures.

Being part of the Balkan ballad area, the Albanian folk ballad shares many themes, motifs, and also events, which are sung about in the songs of other Balkan peoples in diverse languages. Paul G. Brewster, author of an early study on the topic of incest in folk songs, says that the Balkan region seems to be particularly rich with folksongs which focus on the incest theme (Brewster 1972: 25). Although his research did not include the Albanian ballads, he analysed Serbian, Bulgarian, and also Turkish, Greek, as well as Czech, Scandinavian, Baltic, and Scottish ballads, finding the theme present in many songs. He found not only the sibling pairing, but also the pairing of a mother with a son, or that of a father and daughter, though the latter to a much lesser extent than the sibling pairing. What we come to realize from Brewster's study is that the crime is in most cases avoided, or, in the rare cases it happens, the ballad ends up with the death of the protagonists. Avoidance is usually achieved because of warnings from the forces, or signs, of nature. In all cases, the protagonists fall in love with each other out of ignorance, often due to the childhood separation of the family because of kidnapping or recruitment for war with the Turks, the Tatars, etc. Brother-sister incest committed unknowingly, writes Brewster, appears in the Anglo-Scottish ballads, but also in Polish, Bulgarian, Finnish, Russian, Danish, Swedish, Yugoslav and Hungarian folksongs (ibid.: 16). He also brings up an example from Lithuanian folklore, "The Slave Woman", which he found in *Lithuanian Narrative Songs* of Jonas Balys, and he writes:

It would seem that the Lithuanian song "The Slave Woman" is related to the Bulgarian and Hungarian version, but the resemblance is slight. A woman is brought to the home of son and daughter as a war captive. She must perform three tasks at the same time: embroider a kerchief with her hands, rock the cradle with her feet, and tend the oxen with her eyes. The lady of the house eventually recognizes her as her mother (ibid.: 22).

But what of the Albanian ballad? Albanian folklorist from Tirana, Qemal Haxhihasani, writes that more than a hundred versions of the Albanian ballad of a sister-brother reunion have been collected over a period of nearly two centuries. Haxhihasani has identified three types: 1) the girl is at risk of being kidnapped by a Janissary soldier; 2) the girl is kidnapped by a thief; 3) the bride is sold by her husband to honour a debt (Haxhihasani 1973: 126). In Albanian folklore, in all versions, the incest is prevented, and they can thus be categorized as ballads of crime avoided (Delić 2000: 23). The crime of brother-sister union is avoided thanks to warning signs which thwart the action. In one version, the union is figuratively hampered by natural disaster and the fall of bloody rain, which can also be understood as a metaphor for the blood that is at risk of mixing through the possible sexual relationship. Sometimes, the warning comes from talking birds, or from distinctive marks on one of the character's bodies. The moment the brother discovers that his partner is in fact his sister is, for both, a moment of joy, because the siblings separated in childhood are happy to find each other, reunite, and henceforth live as siblings. This happens in the Northern variant, while in the Arbëresh and Southern variants, they die and get metamorphosed into fruit trees.

But what is the origin of the motif? Why has incest become a leitmotif of the Albanian folk ballad and why is it consistently prevented from happening? Was the motif of avoidance prevalent from the beginning or has it been added in the later versions of this ballad? If it occurred later, what has brought about this motif of prevention?

According to Elizabeth Archibald, the motif of incest has been widespread in folk ballads and narratives since ancient times and is mainly characterized by prophetic dreams, incest, exposure, salvation, discovery of origin, suicide, scenes of renunciation, features which are not observed in oral and literary creations of the Middle Ages (Archibald 2001: 218). She further notes that, in the Balkans, incest-themed ballads recount long separations of the sibling couple and the fact that the incestuous relationship is mostly avoided, unlike in the English and Scottish ballads where the incest occurs due to ignorance of the couple's true relationship (*ibid.*: 193).

In Egyptian mythology, Isis and Osiris, also known as the sibling couple, had their son Horus as a result of their union (Doniger 2006a: 153). In Greek mythology, Zeus and Hera were both brother and sister and husband and wife, as well as the parents of many ancient Greek gods (Doniger 2006b: 392). Couples' intra-family reunions, in particular incestuous ones, are found in many cultures in antiquity, and also reflected in their respective folklore. Sexual intercourse with family members stems from endogamous, conservative marriages within the same kin, based on which many primitive or even traditional societies were built, including

royal families. But societies in general have condemned sex between persons of the same blood, terming it a “perversion”, one from which unhealthy children are born (Archibald 2001: 9). Consequently, the transition from endogamous to exogamous marriages must have created, or perhaps derived from, an incest taboo, when marriage, that is sex within the family, came to be viewed as a sin and was punished. With the move from endogamous to exogamous marriages, which caused major changes to the organization of the family and the tribe, the sister-brother relationship appears to have become sacred (Gencăraŭ 2008: 64). According to Claude Levi-Strauss this prohibition points to the formation of a new and complex structure superimposed on the simplest animal life structures. The very coming of this prohibition points to the establishment of a new social order. The prohibition of incest is where nature transcends itself (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 26).

Given that folk creations bear the mark of the era that produced them, Romanian author Virgil Onutiu maintains that the essence of the ballad emerged in times when “people have tried to explain the causes of all phenomena through creatures that were similar with them, but possessing supernatural powers” (Gencăraŭ 2008: 6). For example, the Romanian ballad “The Sun and the Moon”, describing the genesis of the world, shows that the marriage of the Sun and the Moon (known as the sibling couple) led to the birth of other creatures (ibid.: 62–70). Even in Albanian folklore, folktales about the “Bija e Diellit dhe e Hanës” (‘Daughter of the Sun and the Moon’) (Çetta 1979: 17–20) confirm belief in such mating. It is thought that the victory of Christianity over Paganism, when the new religion replaced the old, changed many elements in oral tradition related to beliefs. The sanctification of the sibling couple, who represent prohibition in the ballad, must have its source in this time, in the first centuries of the new era (Gencăraŭ 2008).

Was the motif of incest in the Albanian folk ballad avoided from the start, or was it banned later? The cultural and especially literary evidence that comes from other traditions testifies to the presence of incest in life and art, so why do Albanians not have a ballad portraying a consummated act of incest? The fact that the act itself is missing in Albanian ballads suggests that the versions with the sister-brother recognition motif are new variants, but, on the other hand, other circumstantial elements present testify to the existence of polytheistic beliefs and speak of ancient origins. In these variants, we find elements that testify to a pantheism, i.e. the belief that god was everywhere, which was much older than monotheism. Such evidence includes talking birds and bloody rain, signs of gods everywhere, with messages manifested through signs in nature (Reese 2006: 839). These remnants of polytheistic variants, which must have existed in Albanian culture before monotheism, testify to the ancient history of this ballad among Albanians.

Even in Albanian folklore, there must have been versions of the motif of sister-brother recognition in which the crime of incest happened. The question is, then, when did Albanian society first punish and codify this crime, and when did ballads with this feature disappear? We have two possible answers: either researchers have refused to record the “dirty” versions with the goal of purifying Albanian cultural heritage, or the process of recording ballads came too late and such versions were so old that they had already disappeared from circulation. Haxhihasani points to the most likely answer, stating that, “[t]he tragic consequences of incest have led to the demise of all versions of this subtype (*Gjon Pretika*) with the death and metamorphosis of heroes” (Haxhihasani 1973: 128), implying that there must *have been* versions in which incest occurred, but the tragic consequences of sibling mating has removed them from circulation. This sin is also condemned through the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini¹, which in the Middle Ages had clearly codified the “oak of blood” and the “oak of milk” (meaning the lineage of father, the blood line, and the lineage of mother, the milk line), as well as the generations that come from these lines. These, especially the blood line, are closely connected to the tribal organization of Albanian society in the past. The tribe consisted of the offspring descending from a common male ancestor, whose descendants were “brothers” and “sisters” meaning that they could not marry each other. Sexual relationships between these lines were not allowed even if the family was divided into four hundred settlements, according to the code of the Kanun (Gjeçovi 1985: 115). Strict Kanun codes with harsh forms of punishment may have eradicated the motif of incest from Albanian folklore.

It appears that the incest taboo existed among Albanians much earlier, well before the monotheistic religions, and as such had no religious basis. The tribal organization of Albanian society also had its own codes of honour and hierarchical respect, and prohibited marriage within the tribe and province; in some areas, marriage was taboo even in the extended family of the godfather. Marriage was also forbidden for the families baptized in the same water (for the families who practiced Christian religion) (Lajçi 2014: 263). Even in the Albanian epic song, “The Marriage of Halil”, when Muji asks Halil to find a bride in Jutbina, that is, inside the province, he contradicts him by saying “all Jutbina’s girls are sisters to me!” (Palaj, Kurti 2007: 27).

This evidence leads us to other assumptions about when Albanians’ attitude towards the phenomenon of incest began to break down. According to ethnologist

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 1 In the Middle Ages, Albanian areas in the Balkans were regulated by tribal organization and operated under their own laws. The Canon of Lekë Dukagjini was the most prominent of these. It represents a set of customary codes which were unified under a system of norms and regulated the lives of the inhabitants of Northern Albania.

Bashkim Lajçi, the restrictions of sexual relations within kin among the Albanian population, regardless of where they live, have a taboo character. Albanians continue to recognize the concept of tribes and inherit the limitations of blood ties. Tribal organization existed well before Christianity and it codified the norms for allowing marriages between members of the same tribe. Memory of this tribal organization still exists, and in almost every marriage, the young couple is required to know which tribe the partner belongs to, although marriages today are arranged neither by the priest nor by the imam, the monotheistic guardians of incest avoidance. Tribal organizations and provincial divisions belong to the past, and the canons that organized Albanian life before and during the Middle Ages are no longer functional in terms of recognizing their legality, but incest taboos remain unbroken (Lajçi 2014: 257–265). Robert Elsie describes the tribes in *Albanian Tribes: History, Society and Culture*:

In the tribe all male members considered themselves of common descent. In many cases until recently, members of such tribes could find traces of their origins in one of the ancestors of previous centuries. Thus, believing that they were closely related to each other, they were exogamous and did not marry within the tribe. Usually, they married women from tribes with whom they had no close relationship. Thus, the tribe had the meaning of the group who had the close blood ties and did not imply a common geographical territory (Elsie 2017: 27).

POETIC ELEMENTS OF SISTER-BROTHER RECOGNITION IN THE ALBANIAN FOLK BALLAD

In his detailed study on the *Poetics of the Albanian Ballad*, folklorist Sadri Fetiù categorizes all versions of the ballad with the motif of sister-brother recognition, sung in Albanian, as the lyric-epic type, which implies that the whole storytelling structure of the ballad is dominated by lyrical feelings despite the epic character of dramatic situations, such as the sensation caused by the tensions in the moment of reunion. In circumstances where a woman feels in danger, suddenly recognizing her long-lost brother is a shocking moment. Presented in the ballad text in a very few words, this moment leaves many things unsaid and has a great emotional effect on the reader or listener (Fetiù 1987: 144–149).

Fetiù identifies several layers in Albanian ballads that shape meanings afterwards – the mythological, the religious and the historical layer – which contribute to many discoveries about Albanian national identity and history. In the ballad, the mythological layer is identified through mythical elements, such as the bloody rain or talking birds mentioned earlier. Here I present two versions of

a ballad, along with my translation into English which renders the meaning, if not the poetic aspects of rhyme, or artistic form:

<i>Kúr vjen koha për me fjet,</i>	When it comes the time to sleep,
<i>I pllumb prej qielle u bje ndër-mjet.</i>	A pigeon from the sky falls between them.
<i>Zot ki pllumb çkaf po thotë?</i>	Lord, what is the pigeon saying?
<i>Shi e gjak po bjen për tokë!</i>	Rain and blood are falling to the ground!
<i>Pllumbi i bardhë, Zot, çkaf po flet?</i>	Lord, what is the white pigeon saying?
<i>“S’ka faj Zoti qi s’u vret,</i>	“It is not God’s fault to kill you,
<i>Se i vllaj t’ motrën s’e përket!”</i>	Because a brother cannot possess his sister!”
(Çetta 1974: 141)	

The mythical layer is also present in the symbols of human metamorphosis into plants, which is very powerful in the Arbëresh version of this ballad. The *Gjon Pretika* ballad version ends up being tragic:

<i>Edhe u kapën gryka-m-grykë,</i>	They even embraced each other,
<i>Porsi motra me vëlla’ n;</i>	Like brother and sister;
<i>Të dy plasën tue kja.</i>	Both died while crying.
<i>Ku ra Gjoni, bini floni;</i>	Where Gjon fell, a quince sprang up;
<i>Aty çili lule floni.</i>	There a quince blossomed.
<i>Ku ra Blega, bini shega;</i>	Where Blega fell, a pomegranate sprang up;
<i>Aty çili lule shega.</i>	There a pomegranate blossomed.
(Ibid.: 134)	

The religious layer corresponds both to the regions where the ballad was recorded and to their religious belonging, as well as to the characters’ names and linguistic terms. For example, in Southern Albania, Montenegro and among the Arbëresh, where Christianity dominates, the names of the characters are Gjon (John) and Lena, and the brother has six fingerprints on each of his hands and feet. Meanwhile, in Northern Albania and in Kosovo, which are predominantly Muslim, the characters are named Ali, Lute (diminutive of Lutfi), Hysen, Fatima, and the ballad sings of the post-Eid festivities, as the husband sends his wife to be sold on the market on this occasion, an element that does not appear in the Southern Christian variants. In the older Arbëresh version, the Janissary soldier who seeks to kidnap the girl is named *Turku*, the young *Turk*. In the variants found in Northern and North-Western Albania, all the names and characters are Muslim which implies that they are later versions of the ballad, dating to the Ottoman period in the Balkans (Haxhihasani 1973: 131). Fetiu notes that while the religious layer has not substantially influenced either the basic ideas or the main motifs of the ballads, it had a superficial impact on

the process of ballad evolution, when we look at its social function in people's lives, for example, changing the way of interpreting it (Fetiu 1987: 179).

The historical layer attributed to this ballad pertains to the last centuries of the second millennium. The separation of the brother from the sister (in some versions) by the soldiers of Filipe Maxharri (Çetta 1974: 149–153), or the kidnapping of the brother as a child to be sent to the Sultan's army, are historical facts of the period of the conquests in the Balkans. The practice of abducting Christian male children for them to serve in the Sultan's military formations was known to many peoples in the Balkans and as such has created a break of relationship with their family of origin. This separation, and the lack of contact between siblings, creates the circumstances for an encounter many years later, which turns out to be a meeting of a brother and his sister.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE BALLAD MOTIF THROUGH OTHER ARTISTIC WORKS

Another aspect of this ballad that I want to address here is the survival of the motif in other arts such as literature and cinema. The well-known Albanian writer, Ismail Kadare, acclaimed for his retelling of folklore motifs in his novels, published the *Kush e solli Doruntinën?* ('Who brought the Doruntina?') based on the motif of the dead brother found in the folk ballad (Dushi 2004: 19–43). This ballad depicts the sibling relationship once again, but here the brother rises from the grave to keep the oath that he made to his sister to bring her home from the house of her husband whenever she wanted to visit her family of origin. In the novel many situations develop over suspicions about the journey of a dead brother with his alive sister on the same horse. The writer, through the character of the investigator in the novel, creates different situations based on his sister's imagination, up to a possible incest. But the existence of such love remains untrue according to the writer's novelistic techniques, while the reason for the brother's rise from the grave, as in the ballad world, is explained by the power of the given word, the oath. To Albanians, this oath, known as *besa*, has the power of an unchangeable code, a code expressed in the formula: *Po s'e mbajte besën as dheu nuk të tretë!* ('If you don't keep the oath, even the earth won't decompose your body!').

The theme of this ballad is also found in cinema. The twentieth century is characterized by the development and growth of the Albanian diaspora in Europe and America. Albanian communities abroad are very much rooted in the respect for traditions and maintain close ties with their family of origin. In addition to providing material goods through remittances that they mainly send to their families, they much prefer to keep their second and third generation connected to Kosovo,

often bringing them to their hometowns, and returning to choose a partner from their country of origin. Utilizing this motif, the Kosovo director Ekrem Kryeziu made *Dashuria e Bjeshkëve të Nemuna* ('Love in the Accursed Mountains') (1997). The film is named after the massive mountains at the Western border of Kosovo. A man, who has returned from America to his native village in Kosovo, with his beautiful young daughter, is unaware that he had a son from an early relationship with a woman from the village. His son and his daughter from an American wife fall in love and promise to each other that nothing in the world will separate them. The father, whom his ex-girlfriend had informed that he had a son, does everything to interrupt this union. The film ends with the boy accidentally slipping and falling off a cliff. The incest is avoided, just like in the ballad of the brother and sister's recognition, from which the film derived its theme.

The presence of the theme of sibling recognition, which continues into current Albanian artistic creations in the Balkans beyond the old ballad, points to the sacralization of the sibling couple, which among Albanians is raised to the level of cult. The sincere and very protective love of this couple, strong even to the point of sacrifice in order to maintain the purity of this love on both sides, can probably be explained by the domination of a patriarchal society, which suggests that woman is a fragile creature. Being vulnerable, she always needs to be protected, first by her brother, the person closest to her parents, and then by the spouse with whom she continues her life after marriage. In his essay, *Europe's Oldest Society*, incorporated in his book about Scanderbeg, Harry Hodgkinson writes:

Biologically the woman in an inelegant phrase used in the mountains, was a 'sack for putting things'; her body was needed (housework apart) only to transmit children who owed nothing to her genetically. If a husband died, the widow naturally returned to her father's family, with whom her emotional links had probably never been weakened (Hodgkinson 1999: 13).

The sister's love for her brother to the point of self-sacrifice, having denied both the husband and the children to protect the brother's life, is present in many other Albanian folk ballads and songs. Woman has also become the subject of research and study by non-Albanian authors who have dealt with this theme, thus explaining other archaic phenomena of Albanian society such as vendetta or blood feud (Durham 1991: 492–477), sworn Virgins (Young 2000: 55–69), hospitality and many more.

The sibling relationships stratified in Albanian folklore and heritage bear evidence that helps us understand many Albanian social, political, and legal relationships today. Socially, the respect owed to the sister as a sacred person

provides her with power and authority in all relationships with other persons later in life. This also helps us to understand some situations from real life, such as when she gives her inherited property to her brother for free. Four types of state policies affect sibling relationships, claim the authors of *The Anthropology of Sibling Relations*: education systems; state laws on family planning; the law of inheritance; and, finally, nation building based on the ideologies of these relationships, which in addition affect migration laws (Alber [et al.] 2013: 17).

CONCLUSIONS

The motif of sister-brother recognition is an ancient one found in many folk ballads across Europe and the Balkans. These folk ballads belong to the cycle on family relations and have a significant status in Albanian folklore, too. The folk ballads of sister-brother recognition are found in almost all Albanian settlement zones in the Balkans and are identified in three main variants. Those mainly differ based on historical, social and religious circumstances which reflect the characteristics of the geographic zones where they were recorded: Northern and Southern variants as well as those recorded among Arbëreshs in Italy. These features have subsequently influenced the identification of cultural layers and temporal dimensions which helped us to analyse this type of ballad.

This type is known among the European cultures, and in the Balkans, as an incest ballad due to the existence of variants in which the physical union occurs, but in Albania, there is no such variant and this ballad is not identified on the basis of this phenomenon. The reason for this, among others identified in this paper, must have been the early tribal organization of society and the prohibition of sexual relationships between the members of the same tribe, which has encouraged the strict practice of exogamy, a principle that Albanian society has codified since the very early stages of its existence.

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Sesers ir brolio atpažinimo motyvas albanų liaudies baladėje: reikšmė ir kontekstas nacionalinėje kultūroje

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S a n t r a u k a

Raktažodžiai: albanų liaudies baladė, brolio ir sesers santykiai, šeima, kraujomaiša.

Sesers ir brolio tarpusavio atpažinimo motyvas, kai dėl ankstesnio nepažinėjimo kyla kraujomaišos pavojus, yra labai senas ir pasitaikantis daugelyje liaudies baladžių, paplitusių Balkanuose ir visoje Europoje. Šios baladės priklauso šeimos baladžių ciklui ir albanų folklore taip pat užima reikšmingą vietą: jos žinomos kone visose albanų gyvenamose Albanų srityse. Nustatyti trys pagrindiniai variantai, kurie iš esmės skiriasi pagal istorines, socialines ir religines aplinkybes, atspindinčias geografinių sričių, kuriose šios baladės buvo užrašytos, ypatumus. Tai šiaurės ir pietų variantai, taip pat variantai, užrašyti iš Italijoje gyvenančių

arberešų. Skirtingi šių kūrinų bruožai atitinka savitus kultūrinius klodus ir laikotarpius, o tai gelbsti nagrinėjant šio tipo balades.

Kitų Europos tautų, taip pat ir Balkanų, kultūrose šis tipas žinomas kaip baladė apie kraujomaišą, nes esama variantų, kur vaizduojamas fizinis brolio ir sesers suartėjimas. Albanų folklore tokių variantų nėra, tad ši baladė identifikuojama ne pagal tai. Šio reiškinio pagrindas, kaip pabrėžiama ir straipsnyje, veikiausiai buvo gentinė visuomenės sandara ir lytinių santykių tarp tos pačios genties narių uždraudimas, nulėmęs ir griežtą egzogamijos taikymą – šiuos principus albanų visuomenė privalomai įteisino labai ankstyvame savo raidos tarpsnyje. Tai turėjo sakralizuoti brolio ir sesers santykius, įskaitant jų vieno kitam aukojimąsi; pasirodo, albanų visuomenėje šis reiškinys yra išlikęs iki pat šių dienų. Baladžių tyrimas atsižvelgiant į nacionalinės kultūros kontekstą leidžia geriau suvokti jų prasmę.

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