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**DIMITRIJE O. GOLEMOVIĆ, *PJEVANJE  
 UZ GUSLE [SINGING WITH GUSLE]***

**Belgrade, Srpski genealoški centar, 2008  
 (Belgrade, Čigoja štampa)**

**ISBN 978-86-83679-48-5, 206 pages**

Dimitrije Golemović is the author of many scientific books and papers. Last year he published this very interesting and valuable book, significant for the development and progress of Serbian ethnoorganology, especially now. Although it deals with various issues connected to singing with gusle, its general cultural framework is wider. Today when many values are neglected, 'naročito onih tradicionalnih, gusle još uvek žive, čini se još intenzivnije nego u prošlosti' ['especially the traditional ones, gusle are still alive, apparently even more intensely than in the past'], says Golemović. Studying singing with gusle and epic poetry in Dinaric areas in the Balkans, he did not miss a single source and/or eminent researcher from the 19<sup>th</sup> and the previous, 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, distinguished linguists, philologists, folklorists and ethnomusicologists who studied South Slavonic folk epic and its creators and recorders.<sup>2</sup> Dimitrije Golemović, the writer of our ethnomusicology, has been an enthusiastic travelling researcher ever since

he started studying at the Music Academy (now Faculty of Music), which is particular for ethnomusicologists and their Ahasuerian lives.

The book *Pjevanje uz gusle* contains many subtitles, but basically it consists of two parts (pages 5–136 and pages 137–206). Apart from the introduction and significant questions it raises, the first part contains several chapters, most notably *Publika [Audience]* and *Repertoar [Repertoire]*. 'Publika kao uslov za guslara je mnogo važnija nego za glumca ili skup za govornika.' ['The audience as a condition is much more important to a gusle player than to an actor, or an assembly to an orator.'] This has not changed even today, because contemporary audience still has a great impact on epic song, to its conveying and variability. Gusle players' competitions, called matches, started in 1925 in Belgrade. The second match, in Belgrade in 1927, was attended by many notables and guests. Besides government ministers and members of the Parliament, there were the ethnologist Tihomir Đorđević, the historian Vladimir Ćorović, the composers Miloje Milojević and Kosta Manojlović. Singing with gusle then emerges as a part of city culture. Just as today, when gusle players perform in concert halls, not only in Belgrade, but also in other Serbian and Montenegrin cities. The current audience is no longer city elite, because many local intellectuals express antagonism towards the gusle art. The attitude towards gusle is interesting when perceived in the light of political (ab)use. In the last few decades, the attitude towards the gusle art has been changing according to the political occurrences in the former Yugoslavia. That is especially seen in the contemporary negative attitude of gusle art audience towards singing with gusle and towards releasing new doubtful gusle songs on sound carriers (records or compact discs). The repertoire usually depends on the time, suitable place and the function of singing with gusle, as well as the audience, which a necessary companion of this musical practice. Traditional epic singing was written about by many local and foreign Slavists, especially philologists, who pointed

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Literatura [Literature], p. 187; it comprises over a hundred bibliographical titles; also p. 197; cf. predmetni indeks [index], over 700 notions and terms.

out decasyllabic verse and its structure of epic narration. Dimitrije Golemović singles out distinguished Vuk Karadžić's singers and the records of some of our well-known songs: *Boj na Mišaru* [Battle at Mišar] by Filip Višnjić and *Banović Strahinja* by Milija Kolašinac. Next are mentioned characteristic epic songs, *Lakrdije* [Burlasques]. Vuk said about them: 'Osobito parodistička nasljedovanja' ['Particularly parodist heritage'], and they were frequent in all areas where singing with gusle was nurtured. For example, here is the beginning of one such song:

*Lasno ti je p'janu zapjevati,  
a žalosnoj majci zakukati...  
[It is easy for a drunken man to sing,  
and for a grieving mother to wail...]*

Then the author mentions *pesme u kolu* [songs for a round dance] with particular octosyllabic verse, which makes them akin to *klanjalice* [songs with bowing down], sung by blind beggars. Certain contemporary gusle artists told to Golemović that '*kolske pjesme s novim epskim tekstovima tek od skora*' ['songs for a round dance with new epic lyrics are recent'], as well as that there is '*guslarsko muziciranje zabavnog karaktera*' ['making gusle music for entertainment purposes']. It is stated that '*savremeno guslarsko stvaralaštvo najčešće pokazuje osetno siromaštvo u odnosu na tradicionalne pesme*' ['contemporary gusle creativity most often shows appreciable destitution compared to traditional songs'] (e.g. First and Second World Wars and recent militant conflicts of adjacent Balkan nations). It is also new that '*tradicionalne lirske pesme, inače izvođene a cappella, dobijaju guslarsku pratnju*' ['traditional lyric songs, generally performed a cappella, receive gusle accompaniment'].

#### Melopoetic shaping of songs with gusle

The previous chapters, *Publika* and *Reper-toar*, are in the author's opinion 'svojevrsno informativno štivo... koje pruža opštu sliku o pevanju uz gusle' ['a kind of informative reading... which paints a general image of singing with gusle']. The third chapter, *Melo-*

*poetsko oblikovanje* [Melopoetic Shaping], is considered by the author 'najviše muzikološko' ['most ethnomusicological of all'], because *melopoetic analysis* is the way to get acquainted with the songs and the repertoire. Since the music is reduced to but a few tones, melodic element of songs with gusle is similar to that of general archaic singing of Dinaric people. This particularly conformed to the need of understanding the sung text. Sequence of melodic verses of very similar melodic type implies 'monothematic' principle.<sup>3</sup> 'U praksi se on odnosi na pojavu nekoliko istih melostihova i jednog finalnog melostiha, kojim se zaokružava epsko izlaganje pevača.' ['In practice, this refers to the appearance of several identical melodic verses and one final melodic verse, which rounds up the singer's epic presentation.'] In his analysis, Dimitrije Golemović relies on Béla Bartók and Milman Parry, and uses their notation for melodies and lyrics: capital letters ABCD for various melodic verses and capital F for conclusion of a singing section. On the subject of human experience, Golemović says: 'Kompoziciona shema epske stilizacije i melopoetskih oblika epskih pesama je direktna posledica određenih oblikotvornih principa, jer, kad god pevači izvode pesmu, tada je i stvaraju, dodajući ili skraćujući je ili nekad menjajući redosled stihova i nekih izraza u njima.' ['Compositional schematics of epic stylization and melopoetic forms of epic songs is the direct consequence of certain form-shaping principles, because whenever singers perform a song, they create it on the spot, by making it longer or shorter, or by changing the order of verses or some words in them.'] Therefore 'epic clichés and formulas' exist, which are used under the same metric conditions.<sup>4</sup> It should be empha-

<sup>3</sup> Sequence of melodic verses of the same musical content: A, A-1, A-2,... or A, A-v,... is undoubtedly the oldest procedure. The contrast is achieved by varying 'positioning of intonation'. Something similar happens also at the ends of melodic verses (cadence ending note as finalis on 'empty' gusle string, or confinalis).

<sup>4</sup> Milman Parry, *Studies in the Epic*, taken from

sized that a singer's talent and his poetic gift were considered important by Vuk. Singers' desirable characteristics were e.g.: falling into *trance*, particular *solemn 'emanation of tones'*, not too high a *voice register*, and specific *recitative* singing style and singing *a cappella*.

Finally, by realizing the idea to write this valuable book and excellent treatise, Golemović successfully finished his work at the origin of Serbian musicology: 'Odgovor na sva pitanja vezana za pevanje uz gusle moja knjiga nije dala' ['My book did not answer all the questions about singing with gusle'], concludes Dimitrije and adds: 'A, da li bi takva knjiga uopšte i mogla biti napisana?' ['But could such book be written at all?'] We will paraphrase the words of our distinguished Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić, who said: 'Rad i u nauci više nudi pitanja nego odgovora. Upravo to je ono po čemu posebno vredi!' ['Even in science, work offers more questions than answers. This is exactly what makes it particularly valuable!'] In everything he does, Dimitrije Golemović is an obsessive observer, which implicitly confirms the Russian proverb that 'no gift comes alone!' An array of Dimitrije Golemović's gifts is attested to by his diverse creativity, first and foremost by numerous ethnomusicological studies and books, then compositional opus, then personal libretto for his own opera and lyrics for songs. All that also relates to his life, public and private, as well as to Ahasuerian and nomadic trait in him. We have reason to believe that his great professional energy will bear us new fruits of his creativity in the future. And his book should be carefully read and studied.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

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Albert B. Lord, *Pevač priča* [*Singer of Tales*], trans. Slobodanka Glišić, IDEA, Belgrade, Biblioteka XX vek, 1990.

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**Ivana Perković Radak: *Od anđeoskog pojanja do horske umetnosti. Srpska horska crkvena muzika u periodu romantizma (do 1914. godine)*, Beograd, FMU, 2008.**

**[Ivana Perković Radak: *From Angelic Chant to Choral Art. Serbian Choral Church Music in the Romantic Period (until 1914)*, Belgrade, FMU, 2008]**

The treatise *Od anđeoskog pojanja do crkvene umetnosti. Srpska horska crkvena muzika u periodu romantizma (do 1914. godine)*, the second published book by Ivana Perković, a musicologist, is an edited and updated text of her doctoral thesis, defended at the Department of Musicology of Faculty of Music in Belgrade in 2006. The author's years-long researches, dealing primarily with monophonic chant in Serbian church, i.e. with the music of Serbian *Octoechos* in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, were logically followed by the interest in the complex and diverse problem area of Serbian polyphonic liturgical singing, resulting in this innovative and systematic musicological study conceived as a monograph, which examines an array of issues relevant not only to the history of Serbian music, but also to the history of Christian Orthodox music in broader geographical and socio-cultural coordinates.

In the book *Od anđeoskog pojanja do horske umetnosti* Ivana Perković deals with the subject which is very current today, and yet which has not been written about exhaustively. By the author's words, the existence of a limited number of potential paradigms, mostly in the

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