

The Orgiastic Elements in the Rituals Connected With the Cult of the Moon Among the Balkan Slavs

Ljupčo S. Risteski

The author analyzes extensiveness and diversity of the Balkan-Slavic ritual of stealing milk in rites with a pronounced erotical component.

At the beginning of my exposition, I feel obliged to explain the term used in the title, to redefine it and to determine its essence.

Namely, in my work I am discussing a traditional magic ritual performed by women during the vegetation cycle of nature, closely connected with the influences of the moon, which is used with a unique aim i.e., to stimulate the fertility, but what is more important is the taking of its power by others and using it for personal aims. I am discussing the Balkan magic rituals for fertility, connected with the cult of the Moon.

The term orgy (Gr. τὰ οργία, lat. Bacchanalia), in the cultures of the old Hellenes and Romans denoted religious rituals accompanied with music and dancing, eating of raw meat from bull and calf, sacrificed in honor of the Great Mother (Cibela, Demetra) and Dionysus (bacchanalia).¹

In “Rječnik simbola”² (Dictionary of symbols), the term orgy is explained as: “orgiastic activities, bacchanalia or even simpler forms of vulgar orgies, regressive development and returning to the chaos of drinking, singing, lechery extreme behavior, masking (dressing of men in women’s clothes and vice versa) or losing of reasonable control; on the other hand they are a kind of returning to the sources, discovering the elementary forces of life, after the daily spending and boredom, the elegance and the education. It is often mentioned that the orgies preceded the festivals dedicated to the sowing, harvesting...”

The term orgiastic is usually used in its basic, semantic meaning, connected to the ancient rituals, cults and the pantheon, denoting in that way the sacrifice to the Gods, secret ceremony in the honor of the Gods. Some authors, ethnologists and others, used this and described the numerous ritual activities of the peoples who express the free behavior, the naughtiness and the games with erotic content.

The psychoanalyst Vojin Matič, defines the orgy as: “a typical cultural phenomenon in which predominate the pre-genetic orientations, with attempts for the same to be activated again or to renew their mystical activities, because some communities have already put aside some of their asocial tendencies and prevented them from finding

¹ Mala enciklopedija: Prosveta. Opšta enciklopedija K-Pn, book 2, Prosveta, Belgrade 1968, s.v. orgije p. 888.

² J. Chevalier, A. Gheerbrand, Rječnik simbola, Mitovi, sni, obichaji, geste, oblici, likovi, boje, brojevi, Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb 1983, s.v. orgije p. 463.

their personality. Most typical in that way are the orgiastic mysteries... The periodical disorganization of the structure of the personality, in a kind of orgiastic attack, is conditioned from facing the reality, i.e. the frustrations, which are stimulated by the reality on a certain level of the development of the person. The orgy appears in many kinds, at different levels of the development and the social relations conditioned by the psychological organization and in the same time its characteristics.”

In those orgiastic episodes what becomes evident are the killing and masochistic tendencies, as well as a whole range of abnormal sexual intentions which are usually suppressed, and are a reaction of the infantile sexual hypothesis of the connection with the gods in the ritual of fertility. In that way we can make a distinction between the shamanic, mystical, black magical, carnival and pathological orgies.³

Anyway, it must be admitted that the term orgies has different meanings, and it is almost always used with a negative connotation.

I have done a lot of thinking about its use and meaning in this work. Despite all this I decided to use it, since there is neither a more appropriate nor a more terminological concept for the contextual depth of the rituals that I am researching and their true significance.

In short, under the term “orgy” or orgiastic elements in the rituals I understand the intensive magic influence of women on certain occasions with special accent on the nakedness, the sexuality, the kind of ritual dancing and accent on the sexual organs, mimics of sexual pleasure (orgasm), with an unique aim – to inspire nature to similar activity but for their personal use. Namely, what the people of a community will get, they adapt for themselves with help of the magic.

It is possible that the ritual I am analyzing has more orgiastic elements related to the ancient meaning of the term. These elements are of mysticism and secrecy during the performance. The lack of data for mystic rituals of the ancient times is the result of the hiding of the rituals, because this was considered as the only condition for successful finishing of the same.

The same thing happens to this ritual. Its keeping in secrecy, the mysticism of the ritual or at least in its most important parts (the ritual dancing with intense sexuality and the magic of the word) are conditions for its fulfillment.

The negative connotation is mostly noticeable at the ethno-explicit level, as an ethical approach in terms of disturbing the relations in the community.

In this work I shall use ethnographic materials of the Balkan Slavs because they are more familiar and more accessible to me.

What actually is this work about? I intend to analyze and research the rich and multivariable ritual complex of taking over, stealing or cheating of the milk, where we have examples of the ritual actions of the women with an erotic accent, ritual orgiastic behavior always in the context of communication with the Moon.

³ Vojin Matič, Psihoanaliza mitske prošlosti, Prosveta, Beograd 1976, p. 195-197.

1. Ethnographic materials

a) Macedonians

K. Šapkarev wrote quite briefly that the day before Đurđovden (6. 05, the day of St. George, the Victorious Great Martyr) the cows are kept “nekoj da ne bi so magii da im go zeme mlekoto” (so that no one will take away the milk from them) and to “navrati” (to take it, to direct it) from a cow that gives a lot of milk to another woman who has a little or no milk while breast feeding.⁴

In the “Zbornikot za narodni umotvrenija”⁵ (Collection of Folklore works), there are registered beliefs and rituals for the taking over “mamenjeto” (the cheating) of the milk from cattle. The women that performed the ritual were called “mamjački” or “mašesnici” (witches). We can find similar data for the villages in the area of Lerin in the Aegean part of Macedonia.⁶

In his study of the area near the city of Gevgelija, Stevan Tanovič, writes about the belief of the people that on the day before St. George the milk can be taken over from the cattle, only by “prejasana” woman (woman who does not intend to have any more children), on midnight, naked, riding a weaving “peam” (part of the loom) in the middle of the village. She rotated three times around the village fountain, without wetting her legs, directing herself toward the yard or the stables in order to take the “maksulot” (blessing) of the cattle. Before she enters the stables she also rotates around it three times, spreading out ashes that she has with her. Then she enters the stables, milks a little milk of each of the cows or sheep, and at the entrance of the stables she “ispoganuvala” (excrement), utters nasty words:

“Na mene mlekoto i maslo, na tebe gomna”

(I will have the milk and honey, you will have the excreta)

She returned silently home, by the same way she came. As a condition for the successful work of the witch was the “svaljuvanje na mesečinata” (taking off the moon). Behind the house she would turn round three times with her head on the ground, holding herself with her hands, and then she would excrete. She would ride the peam, rotating around the excrement, looking at the moon saying “Jas sum tele ti si krava” (I am a calf, you are a cow) and she would rotate around the excrement again. As a result of this the Moon would descend, large as a threshing-floor, in the form of a cow, roaring. When the witch would touch the Moon, she would become invisible. She would repeat the rotation around the excrement, eating from it, and addressing the Moon “Jas sum žena ti si mesečina; jas sum dole ti si gore” (I am a woman, you are a Moon; I am down, you are up). Once the woman had said this magic formula three times, the Moon would start lifting up, roaring like a cow in pain, and the woman with the peam and the pot with ashes continued her magic work.⁷ It is also noted that certain women took the Moon down and breast-fed her.⁸

⁴ K. Šapkarev, Izbrani dela. Običai, obredi i nosii, volume IV, Mislja, Skopje, p. 121.

⁵ Sbornik za narodni umotvorenija (further SbNU), book XII, Sofija, 1985, data for the villages of Kovačevica-Nevrokopsko and Kostursko in the Aegean part of Macedonia.

⁶ Olga Bečarova, Đurđovdenskite običai vo rekanskite sela (Lerinsko), Makedonski Folklor (further MF) year VI, No. 12, Skopje 1973, p. 239.

⁷ St. Tanovič, Srpski narodni običai u Đevdeliskoj kazi, SEZb: Život i običaji narodni, SKA, book 40, book 16, Beograd 1972, p. 64-65.

⁸ Konstantinov I., Narodni poverija ot Makedonija, - Carigradski vestnik VIII, No 329.

M.S.Filipović, J.Hadzi Vasilević and A.Petrović in the villages of the Skopje's Monte Negro noticed magic rituals of women (sommambulist), who could take down the moon and draw the milk from the cattle. It was believed that the old women could milk the Moon as a cow and take her up to the sky, again (she will put a lot of effort into doing it)⁹. Similar examples can be found in the works that deal with the rituals in spring, taken as a complex process or individual parts.¹⁰

In the Archive of the Institute of Folklore "Marko Cepenkov" – Skopje, I found an article from the region of Veles in which it is stated how:

"I vatile dve ženi, sproti Đurđovden, ugol - goli slečeni. Majka i ćerka bile i vatile okolu trlo kaj šo vrtele, vikale i se udirale gas so gas, se čuknuvale napred i vikale:

*"Ja i Đurđa gas i gas
matkata kitanova v gas"*

Tova trebalo da se reče tri pati. Tri pati zavrtuvala okolu nivnoto trlo, na brata e, da mu go zemat mlekoto.

Na sekoe zavrtuvanje okolu trloto trebalo da se čuknat so gazovite i da rečat taka. Zatoa ovčarite okolu Đurđovden držele straži po trlata."¹¹

(Two women, mother and daughter, the night before Đurđovden, naked ran around the stables, screamed, touched their sexual organs and said magic words. They were supposed to do this three times. Because of fears of these spells the Shepherd kept guard around the stables during the night)

During the field researches of the Institute of the Old Slavic culture from Prilep¹², in the year of 1994, the following materials, unpublished till now, were recorded:

"Na Đurđen vo s. Kadino Selo starite kažuva izleguvala (ženi) so krosna, šetale, velele nešto i taka mlekoto ke mu go soberele. Ko dete ko bev, edni veleja bila magesnica, stara zena. Komu mlekoto ke mu go zemela i mesečinata duri ja smetnuela. Ama zato 4 godini ne možeš da umri. Kako kučka vijaše. Veleja, magesnicata grevojte gi otpeva od narodot."¹³

(Before the holiday, women went out from the houses and claimed that they could take the milk. It was believed that the witches could not easily die and suffered a lot before the death – in this way they paid for the sins)

"Na Đurđen, utre ako e Đurđen, večerta tije šo znaat, goli slečeni i krosna zele pa se čukale po gas i velele: "Gas i gas kaca mas". Se tie znaat da prezimaat, i jagnjina i mleko i deca duri.

⁹ Milenko Filipović, Običai i verovanja u Skopskoj kotlini, SEZb SKA, book LIV; Život i običaji narodni, book 24, volume 1, p.248.

¹⁰ Vesna Petreska, Proletni običaji kod Mijaka (master work), University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade 1994, p. 130 (handwriting); Z. Delinikolova, Običai svrznani so poedini praznici i nedelni dni vo Radoviš, Glasnik na Etnološkiot muzej, Skopje 1960, book 1, p.165; Aneta Svetieva, Đurđovdenskite obredni lebovi vo Makedonija i nivnata funkcija vo običaite i veruvanjata, Makedonski Folklor, year XXIII, No. 46, p. 13, 21.

¹¹ Archive of Institute of Folklore "Marko Cepenkov", recorded tape ML1700/IV, tape XXIX, channel 1, p.2. Materials from the village of Papradišta, Veleško, noted from Anđa Ilioska, born 1908 in the village of Oreše, illiterate. Noted by Angel Čulavkovski, 1970

¹² Field researches of the Institute for old Slavic Culture Prilep1994; Scientific-research project "Makedonska narodna mitologija" Researchers T. Vražinovski, V. Karadžoski, Lj. S Risteski i L. Simoska (further ISK-Prilep).

¹³ Informant : D. Kebakoska, born 1934 in the village of Krivogaštani, living in the village of Kadino Selo-Prilepsko. K-1/1994 side.A'

To greovno bilo. Edna mađesnica, stara, ko umiraše, se naprajala kako izbudalena. Se faćala kaj gazo i lapala v usta, velejki: "Ne se jada jagninjava od ovie luđe" ili "ne se jada decava od ovije luđe", i taka so maki umrela. Ako ne možela kaj nea da go odnesi nekade na dab će go odnesi i od dabo ke tećit mleko."¹⁴

(Again we have record of the troubles that the witches had before dying; the pains because of the evil deeds they did; it is also stated that besides the taking of the milk they could also take over children from certain families)

In the western parts of Macedonia we have recorded the following data:

"Tije ženi magesnici i vikale. Tie duri od lajnoto ne si kasnele, magesnici ne bidu-vale. Samo taka možela mlekoto da go prezemat. Mlekoto go zemale na Đurđovden. Vrtele okolo trlata so motoilo-krosno. Majka i ćerka od magesnici rodene. Se soglasu-vale da go soberat mlekoto, ama trebalo mesećinata da ja smetnat Vetuvaat da ja smet-nat. Ja smetnuvale, ja smetnuvale, do kaj šo ja smetnale, ama ne možele sega da ja kaćat. Došol nekoj ušte po magesničar, i mu rekol oti taka ne možat da ja kaćat, tuku go zele krosnoto, zele vino, turaj na krosnoto od vinoto i prskaj uгоре. Na vrvor na krosnoto vrzale krpće za da prskaat vinoto, mesećinata da se kaći pogore. Ko ja smetnuvale, kl-avale pirustija, kacija, so krst i motale so brdata. Obavezno bile slećeni goli. Na gumno do stožero...Na stožero kaj što vršat, go ružaat (kitat) so cvekinja, snop, rž ke nakitat i samo togaš možele da rabotat. Starive kažuaja, da mi prostite ženive se ćukale po gradi, od napred od nazad, mlekovo da mu go zemele.

Nie kako mladi, 17-18 godini, organiziravme straži. Ni rekoja vilan žena, utre na Đurđovden će se sogoli. Baš vo dvanajse saato, to go raboteše noće, se sogole ugol gola, a motoiloto - brdoto go vrti i vika nešto, da mu go soberi mlekoto, na vilan ćovek. I nije ja vativme ugol gola.

Nekoja, pak, druga magesnica od Ohrid, bila prva magesnica vo okolinata, ja vatila ja smetnala mesećinata. Ama sega ne mojt da ja kaćit. Samo polojna se kaćila. Ama od magijata se odštrbnala mesećinata, i vistina i denes je odštrbnata mesećinata."¹⁵

(Those women were called witches. They could not become witches until they had eaten from their excrement. They took the milk over on the holiday of St. George. They were usually mother and daughter with magical abilities. They would rotate around the stables, but they were also supposed to take down the moon. They managed to do this but now they could not return it where it belonged - in the sky. They took a peam and wine, wetted the peam with wine and sprinkled it around. On the top of the peam they bound a piece of cloth in order to sparkle the wine, and to return the moon to its place. When they were taking the Moon down they would put metal objects on the threshing-floor. It was necessary for them to be naked. The ritual was performed in the middle of the threshing-floor, near the hinge. They decorated the hinge with flowers. According to the stories of the old people the women were touching themselves around their intimate parts.

Young people, aged 17 - 18, guarded the threshing-floors on the nights before St. George. They were told that a naked woman was going to come to take over the milk and they were supposed to catch her.

¹⁴ Informant: S. Cvetkoska born in the village of Rilevo, living in Ropotovo, Tape K-6/1994.

¹⁵ Informant: Milan Kostadinovski, born 1912 in the village of Virovo, living in the village Kadino Selo - Pri-lepsko, Tape K-1/1994, side B, Tape K-5/1994, side A.

In the area of the town of Ohrid lived a witch, who managed to take down the Moon, but she could return her only the half way up. During the process of the ritual the Moon lost a part from it, and remained like that until today.)

In the region of Mariovo the magic ritual of taking the milk over was also present - "prezimanje":

"Edna teta imaše, na tatko mi sestra, taja ako vide negde ogan da svete, ako je bačilo će mu ja prezeme blagotata i doma ke si dojde kaj nea. Ako je žetva, vo nejna niva ke pojde semeto, rodot. Ako mate nekoj, ona ke prezima i ke se napne ečmeno vo mlekoto.

Tie ženi si znajat, bajat. Na mojata majka, taja zolva bila, i imalo edna niva, namu Vrteška se vikalo mestoto. Storila šes nedeli ič ne se promenila, edno aličce od grbot ne go slekla. Na šes nedeli ja viknale numkata da ja raspromene vo nivata nevestata. Da bidela darlija nevestata. Taja ke se slečela posle, noće, vo dvorot, ke ja zatvorela portata i ke vikala: "Dojdi vamu kaj nas, dojdi vamu kaj nas" i blagosta ke dojdela kaj nim."¹⁶

(I had an aunt, a sister of my father, who performed magic rituals. Wherever she saw a fire, she went there. If there were stables she would take the blessings from them and bring them into her house. She also took the crops from the fields and the milk from the animals.

Those women can perform magic rituals. In order to take the blessings a women would go to sleep in the field for six weeks, wearing the same clothes. Then after six weeks another woman would take her clothes off and the women was considered to have magic power. During the night she was able to collect the blessings.)

"Na Đurđovden, spored Đurđovden, odile tie šo prezimaat (mleko, žito), ama eden se zatckril i i videl Bešiškite ženi kako došle, dve ženi, da prezimaat. Se slekle goli, i tri pati se zavrtile okolo pato (raskrsnicata) ednata odavde; drugata odande, grb so grb, pa posle mej so mej se stavale do tri pati. Ama dedot Kole mu i zel košulite. Odile tie nešto si baile. Tri pati se vrtele i velele:

*"Gas i gas se kaj nas,
pič i pič na oračot/ovčarot ič"*

Tie a siminjale mesečinata, ama toa bilo mnogu grešno. Koa a siminjale taja ko krava mukala duri da se kačela. So basni ja smetnuvale. Mesečinata na zemi rikala kako krava od maka. Posle pak so basni a kačuvale. Mnogu grevno bilo toa."¹⁷

(On the day of St. George the women who were able to take over milk or crops performed their magic rituals. While doing this they were seen by an older man who stole their shirts and saw and heard what they were saying. They were naked and stood on the opposite sides of the crossroad touching at first their asses and then their bellies. They rotated around the crossroad three times and said the magic words. They took down the Moon but it was very sad because it roared like a cow in pain. They took the Moon down with fairytales and then again with fairytales returned her.)

"Ženi znaele i na seidbata da "prezivaat'. Okolu Đurđoen ke vrti okolu nivata i daro ke i go zeme. Taa znae da bae. Če vrte okolu nivata, ke vrte i nivata ke padne seta, ke ostanat tri klasje. Taja odma trčaj da gi skine trite klasje, da ako i zavtasa da i skine, ako ne pak ke se vrte okolu nivata. Noćno vreme na polnok. Če i skine i ke si i nosila na nejnata sedba. Gola soblečena. Tamu ke se sleči."¹⁸

¹⁶ Informant: Anđa Makrevska, born 1932 in the village of Vitolište - Mariovo, Tape K-2/1994, side A.

¹⁷ Informant: Jovčeva, born 1926 in Polčišta - Mariovo, Tape K-4/1994, side A.

¹⁸ Informant: Neda Gađova, born 1919 in Bešišta, Tape K-4/1994, side A.

(The woman also knew how to take over the crops. On the day of St. George she would go near the field in order to take the crops. She knew magic spells. She would rotate around the field and all the crops would fall down, only three would remain. She would pick them up and carry them to her field. This was performed at midnight and the woman was naked.)

“ Imalo edna baba vo komšiite ovde, na Đurđovden, ja videle zad crkvata, tamu beše seto poseano, gola- prao gola, šetala po nivjeto, prezemala žito.

Ima i dve ženi da igraat na gumno, da prezimaat žito, igraat, peat, si velat nekoj nivni pesni, ama ne možat da se čuat. Zad crkvata pred sonce na sam den Đurđoen, togaj fačalo naj mnogu. Imaše pak edna baba Cveta od Veprčani, taja a smetnuvala mesečinata, i togaj kako govedo revela, znaci mesečinata.”¹⁹

(There was a woman, who on the day of St. George would go behind the church, in the crops, and naked would take over the crops.

Two other women danced on the threshing-floor, at the same time singing, but could not listen to each other. These spells had most of their effect before the sunrise on the day of St. George. An old lady was able to take down the Moon, which roared like a cow.)

In the area of Demir Hisar the ritual of taking over the milk and the crops was performed by women who used a reaping-hook and magic words:

“ Noće ke mu go vidat imanjeto i ke mu go zemat. Goli. Na mestoto ke pojdat i ke vrtat, ke go soberat mlekoto. ..Tri ili dve zeni. Kotle nosele so trici, so nego maftale i vrtele okolu kuća. Ja smetnuvale togaj i mesečinata i taja rikala kako krava.”²⁰

(These women performed the ritual during the night. They were naked. There were usually two or three women. They carried a pot with flour and rotated around the house. They were also able to take down the Moon, which roared like a cow.)

“Imalo babi šo znaele, baele vo mesečinata i ka će ja smetnele mesečinata go ba-bele mlekoto. Goli treba da bidat, a mesečinata da grei. Polna mesečina.”²¹

(Some old ladies were able to take down the Moon, during which performances they were naked, and it was necessary for it to be full Moon.)

b) Serbs

The ethnographic materials show the existence of different variants of this ritual complex on the territory of Serbia as well. From the numerous published ethnographic materials from the ethnographic areas of the Serbs, we will take only a few, because they are numerous and already published. The aim of this is to show the existence of the same ritual in the areas with a Serb population.

The taking over of the milk²² in those areas is also performed by women called “magesnici, magionice, činilice, ciljarice” - witches. At midnight, naked, riding a peam they made magic circles around the stable:

¹⁹ Informant: Jordan Atanasoski, born in Dunje 1934, Tape K-4/1994, side B; Kata Mitreska, born 1929 Dunje, Tape K-4/1994, side B.

²⁰ Informant: Marija Pejkoska, born 1945 in the village of Edinakovci, married in the village of Zvan Demirhisar, Tape K-5/1995 side A.

²¹ Informant: Cveta Endekoska, born 1919 in the village of Žvan, Demirhisar, Tape K-5/1994, side B.

²² Savo Orlović, Đurđevdanski običaji, Rad IX. Kongresa Saveza Folklorista Jugoslavije u Mostaru i Trebinju 1962, Sarajevo 1963, p. 371.

“ U noć uoči Đurđevdana, one raspletu kosu i nage, ko od majke rođene, pođu po selu jašući na vratilo. Kada dođu do tora sopstvenika od čije stoke hoće da oduzmu mleko, one tri puta obiđu oko tora, uđu i baje oko stoke. Poskakujući oko vratilu izgovaraju: hop, hop, hop Stameni (the name of the host) trop, a meni mleko i mast”²³

(During the night before St. George the women with disentangled hair enter the stables and tell magic charms. They rotate three times around the stables and with the help of the words and their magical power they take over the milk.)

In the area of the river Morava, near the city of Leskovac there are evidences of taking over the crops from the fields:

“ U oči Đurđevdana, žene koje znaju da magicaju, svuku se gole pa uzjašu vratila i “ povratiljke” (parts of the loom), i idu po tuđim njivama... Priča se da su to radile i neke žene u arary grada Leskovca. Njih je bilo tri, sve gole. Napred su išle njih dve, a ona je treća išla za njim jašući na vratilu. One ce dve s vremena na vreme da je pitaju: “Što rabotiš toj?” Ona im odgovora: “Obiram beriket u ovu njivu pa prenosim u našu”²⁴

(The night before St. George, women who know how to perform magic rituals undress and naked, riding on the peam, enter other peoples fields. The stories tell that there were three women. This even happened in the area of the city of Leskovac. All of them were naked. Two of them were going first and the third followed riding on the peam. She was the one telling the magic spells in order to take over the crops from the field and to take them into their field.)

In the rituals of the taking over of the milk, in Serbia, there are elements of the cult of the Moon.²⁵

In the village of Žepce, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the “Voice of the National Museum” from 1911 there are also beliefs for taking over the milk:

“U Stocu.. Zatekli su jednu ženu sasvim голу, gde mete mlijeko u štapu i govori: “Gola ja, golo mu bilo i maslo (i.e. may she have more)”²⁶

(In the village of Stocu there was a women who naked performed the ritual in order to get more milk from her cattle.)

In Vlasenica, at dawn on the day of St. Elijah, a Turkish woman performed a similar ritual:

“Sa rukatom u ruci tora svog komšije, skinula jednu nogavicu sa gaća sa noge onda uzjahala na vratnice od tora, kao na konja, bacila nogavicu na glavu, te kroza nju gledala na mal i govorila: “ Od Riste Vukovića nekoliko, a od Petre Stojšića svekoliko...”

(She would tear apart the pants and with one part of them she would ride the peam. She would put part of the pants on her head and look through the hole so that the blessings of her neighbors would come to her)

After that she dug a hole putting sour milk in it saying something, and then she would go on the fountain of that house and bathe herself naked.

²³ Sr. Knezević, M. Jovanović, Jarmenovi, SEZb SKA, book LXXIII, Odeljenje društvenih nauka, Rasprave i građa, book 4, Beograd 1958, p. 113.

²⁴ Dr. M. Gjorgjević, Život i običaji narodni u Leskovačkoj Moravi, SEZb SKA book LXX, Odeljenje društvenih nauka. Život i običaji narodni, book 31, Beograd 1958, p. 382; M. Đorđević, Uloga žene u nekim prolećnim običajima u Leskovačkoj Moravi, Rad IX Kongresa SFRJ u Mostaru i Trebinju 1962, Sarajevo 1963, p. 295.

²⁵ P. Tomić, D. Maslovarić, Đ. Tešić, Narodni običaji u vezi sa privredom. Jadar - Vukov zavičaj, GEM No. 27, Beograd 1964, p. 168.

²⁶ Tomo Dragičević, Narodne praznovjerice o malu (Žepče), GZM, BiH, XXIII, book 3, Sarajevo 1911, p. 389.

Very often on the holidays of St. Barnaba, St. George, St. Luke and St. Isidore women riding on peams would enter the fields saying:” You will have less and I will have more”

In Kraina during the night before St. George, the witches rotate naked around the wells, saying:

“Kako u ovom bunaru bilo vode, onako u moje krave mrkulje mlijeka, kako ovo vrelo nikad ne presušilo, onako i moja mrkulja mlijekom nikad ne presušila..”

(As there is always water in this well, may my cow have always milk. As the water will never run dry, may my cow have always milk.)

In the areas near the river Drina, in the dawn before St. George,

“pred zoru dvije stare žene došle na Drinu, tu se svukle, uhvatile poruke i igrale. Onda uze svaka po kravljaču, koji su sobom donjele zagaze u vodu, zgrabe malo u kravljaču , i stanu po vodi pljuskati i nešto govoriti. Čuo je kako samo jedna reče;” Ov-liko je onaj... Ljetos mlijeka imao”, a zagrabil punu kravljaču:” Ovliko meni i mojoj kući ljetos svaki dan. Zatim se obadvije okupaše, obukoše i odoše kući.”²⁷

(Before dawn two women go to the riverbank, get undressed; join hands and dance. They take the pots they brought with them and put a little water in them saying words that the neighbors may have a little, and fill the pot with water so that they will have a lot.)

Similar data for the ritual of taking over the milk were also noticed in the travelogue of Alberto Fortis²⁸ , the study of R. Filipović-Fabijanić “Folk medicine and folk beliefs”, called “sihrobasice”²⁹ and also in R. Kajmaković for the inhabitants of Derventa (Serbian, Croatian and Muslim Groups).³⁰

In the area of Janj (Serbian population): “viještice se mažu nekom tečnošću koju obično čuvaju ispod ognjišta. Noću uzjašu na vratilo, metlu, mašu ili neki drugi predmet u kući i jašući na tim predmetima mogu brzo stići gde su naumile.”³¹

(The witches use an ointment on their bodies, which is kept near the fireplace. During the night, they ride on the peam, the broom or on an other object from the house and riding on those objects they can reach the wanted destination.)

For the analyzed ritual there are also some sayings which have been changed.³²

c) Croatians

In the ethnic area of Croatia, the women who perform the magic ritual of taking over the milk, mostly from the cattle were called “nastornica, činilica, ćornica, stanarica ćornica” - witches.³³

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 388, 389.

²⁸ Špiro Kulišić, Iz putopisa Alberta Fortisa, GZM u Sarajevu, Etnologija, N.S. Sv XIII, Sarajevo 1958, p. 83.

²⁹ Radmila Filipović-Fabijanić, Narodna medicina i narodna verovanja, GZM u Sarajevu, Etnologija, NS., Sv XIX, Sarajevo 1964, p.232-233.

³⁰ R. Kajmaković, Narodni običaji stanovništva Dervente, GZM BiH u Sarajevu, Etnologija, N.S. XXX-XXXI 1975/76, Sarajevo 1978, p 73-78.

³¹ Rade Rakita, Narodna verovanja u predelu Janj, GZM u Sarajevu, Etnologija, N.S., XXVI, Sarajevo 1971, p. 80-81.

³² Vlajko Palavestra, Narodne pripovetke i predanja iz Dreznice, GZM BiH, Sarajevo, N.S.Sv.37, Sarajevo 1982, p.184.

³³ M. Stojković, Slike iz života Hrvatskog naroda po Slavoniji i Sremu, Zagreb 1881, p.83; Ivan Filakovac, Godišni običaji (Retkovci u Slavoniji), ZbNZOJS, Zagreb 1929 book XIX, p.170.

“Tako isto na Đurđevo već pre sunca rano ide gazdarica svetom di svetinom vodom. Ako izvraća to ona Đurđevo do zore, raspletene kike i rasperasana ko noćna vještica, udeba se u komšisku štalu ili ti okol, di u stručak svezatim travama sicka svaku komšisku kravu - dojaću, a povrativ se doma isto tako sicka i njene krave, pa maže i im vime mladim maslima, koje je tu noch izbila, da njenim kravama sise ne pucaje i da dadu mleka...”³⁴

(Early before the sunrise on St. George's day the hostess goes and sprinkles around with water. If she manages, at dawn she enters the stables of the neighbors, with disentangled hair and with grass touches the cows of the neighbor. After that she returns to her house doing the same with her cows putting on them fresh ointment so that they will give more milk.)

d) Bulgarians

The taking over of the milk as a ritual is spread all over Bulgaria. The ritual there is also performed by women who in the north-east, the centre and the north of Bulgaria are called: džadia, magesnica, izmamnica; in the south-east and the south part of Bulgaria: mamnica, mainica, vešterica, primamnica; and in the south - west, west and north-west Bulgaria: mamjačka, vražalica, znaiorica, vračka, bajarija- names for witches.³⁵

I will quote the whole exposition of taking over the milk and taking down the Moon that D. Marinov used in his huge work “Folk religion and religious folk customs”, previously published in SBNY, so that one can compare the structure and the form of the same in Bulgaria:

Magii za obirane na žito mljako i med. Tova sa magii da obirat žitoto od nivite, mljakoto ot stadata i meda ot košarite.

Sas sila na magiite edna magosnica može da obere hlebodoridieto ot edna niva i da go prenese v druga... Tova stava prez nošta sreštu Enovdnen i tija magosnici se naričat brodnici ili mamnici.

Brodnicata se popr'si s omagošena voda, otiva v nivite u potaina doba, sableče se gola, vasjeva na krosno, kato si zabode lažica v zadnika i narami na garba si brdo. Taka vasednala obikalja nivite. Vsičkite klasove i se klanjat, samo carja ne se poklanja. Tja gi vižda i otiva, ta gi iskubva, omagasva gi i otinisa ili v kašti ili na drugo mjasto...

S magii obirat mljakoto ot stadoto ili ot kravite i go prenasjat v drugo stado ili v druga krava, ili na druga zena...

Magiite sas silata na koito magosnicite svaljat meseca ot nebeto, sa nai-težkite. Tui svaljane stava na toja nachin:

Magasnicata se sabliča gola-golenička, kato ja maika i rodila, bez riza i vasednala na krosno. Magašnicite trjabva da bidat dve, i to maika i dašterja, no i dvete da sa doiki, da imaat deca na sisa.

V bjat kotel sa magosničeskite bilki, a do kotela imi i sito. Kato bajat v kotela i okolo sitoto, i kato prasje s taja voda okolo sebesi - mesecot e omagosan i počne da se gubi na nebeto, a da sveti v kaštata, dato se pravjat magiite.. Toi se priblizava do magos-

³⁴ Same p. 171.

³⁵ Tatjana A. Koleva, Geragovden u južnite slavjani, izd, BAN, Etnografičeskii institut s muzei, Sofija 1981, p.62-6.

nicite v obraza na krava, kojato te izmalzavat. S mljakoto koeto ima goljama magičeska sila, te pravat naisilni magii. Samo palen mesec moze da se malze, zatova i samo palna svešt svaljat. Kato go izmalzjat, puštat go toi pak leka poleka se izkačva na nebeto, no samo če sega e mnogo bleden i svetlinata mu e slaba.”³⁶

(These are magic spells for taking over the milk, the crops and the honey. With the power of the magic a witch can take the blessings from one field and take it into another. This happens on the night of St. George. The witch takes water and in the night goes to the field, gets undressed, sits on the peam so as to put the spoon in her bottom. She goes around the field. All the corns cobs fall and she picks them up in order to carry them to another field or to her house.

The women also with spells can take over the milk from the cows and transfer it to other cows or to a woman. Most difficult is the magic that takes down the moon from the sky. In order to do this the witch must be naked and sit on the peam. The witches have to be mother and daughter, both of them breast-feeding small children.

They use a kettle filled with plants and a bolter. As they say the spells they pour from the water around them and the bolter, the light of the Moon in the sky becomes weaker and stronger in the house. The Moon approaches in the form of a cow, and they milk it. With the milk that has strong magical power they make the strongest magic. This can be done only when the Moon is full. When they finish their job they let the Moon to go back to the sky. Its light is weaker and the Moon looks very pale.)

The most detailed and rich study of the rituals performed during St. George is the one provided by T. Koleva “St. George among the South Slavs”, which refers to the spring rituals of the South Slavs. In this study there are materials that show new ethnographic data for the ritual of the taking over of the blessings, in which there is a special accent on the part connected with the taking down of the Moon and its relation with the taking over of the milk.³⁷

Disregarding the numerous variations of the ritual, in Bulgaria³⁸ it is mostly performed by women, with disentangled hair, always naked. It is often mentioned that the witch has a chicken under her arm in order to perform the ritual.³⁹ In many of the variants the participants in the ritual are mother and daughter who are still breast feeding. An important condition for the taking over is the taking down of the Moon, and during the ritual they always ride on peam or spoke.⁴⁰

³⁶ Dimitar Marinov, *Narodna vjara i religiozni narodni običaji*, BAN, Sofija 1994, p.269-270.

³⁷ Tatjana A. Koleva, *Geragovden u južnite slavjani*, izd, BAN, Etnografičeskii institut s muzei, Sofija, p. 63-64.

³⁸ M. Arnaudov, *Studii varhu balgarskite obredi i legendi*, 1, Sofija 1971, p.282.

³⁹ Račko Popov, *Kam karakteristikata na balgarskite narodni vjarvanii, svarzani s periodite na prehod kam zimata i proletta*, Etnografičeski problemi na narodnata duhovna kultura, BAN, Etnografičeskii institut s muzei v Sofija 1989, p.64; Marija Nikolčovska, *Prinos k izučavane na obštobalgarskata tradicionna geragovdenska obrednost*, *Balgarska etnografija*, god. XIV, KN.2, Sofija 1989, p. 51-52; Raina Draževa, *Geragovden v balgarskata etnografija*, BAN, Etnografičeski institut s muzei, God 1, kn.2, Sofija 1990, p.3; Vladlena Nestorova, *Vazraždenski periodičen pečat kato izvor i faktor za procesa na promjanata na tradicionnija svetogled*, *Balgarska etnografija*, BAN, Etnografičeskii institut s muzei, God. III, kn.1, Sofija 1992, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Plovdivski kraj; *Etnografičeski i ezikovi proučvanija*; Margarita Vasileva, *Kalendarski praznici i običaji*, BAN, Etnografičeski institut s muzei, Sofija 1993, p. 256.

Analysis

I. Basic elements of the ritual

From the rich fact-sheet material and the numerous variants, we could idealistically formulate the ritual complex of taking over the milk and taking down the Moon as the magical activity of women, mother and daughter, always naked in active sexual and birth-giving power, who are still breast-feeding (this is considered as the oldest form of the ritual), who at the threshing floor, near the hinge perform a ritual dance where they will put the accent on their sexual power, potency, which with the ritual dancing will be brought to the phase of culmination, during which ritual the Moon attracted by the act of going on down to Earth, comes down to share the pleasures, and at the same time the women will get additional power from the Moon in order for this to be of use for their personal needs. Riding on the peams, naked they have power to take over the blessings and the milk from others.

From this extreme sexual explication of this very complex magic ritual, we can summarize its basic elements, which will be of great help in the further analysis of the structural elements.

Because of the theme given in the title, and the spatial limits, for the time being we will avoid the genesis of the ritual, although there already are certain tendencies for establishing the layers, the roots and the directions of the development of this ritual complex.

From the numerous descriptions, we can already conclude that certain participants perform ritual activities during: exact time and spatial limits, with typical tools, placing special accent on the ritual behavior, on the full activity of the organisms, on the orgiastic elements which the actors use to inspire nature to similar activity.

1. Time of organizing the ritual:
 - St. George
 - night, midnight
 - at full Moon
2. Space of acting/performing:
 - on threshing floor, near the hinge;
 - in the stables, around them, in fields
3. Participants:
 - women, mother and daughter, breast-feeding;
 - one woman (in fewer cases);
 - a woman and a man (only few cases)
4. Ritual tools:
 - Weaving peam - spoke;
 - pot with ashes/ointment;
 - excrement;
5. Magic action:
Magic transmission of the ritual
 - orgiastic behavior of the participants;
 - ritual nakedness;
 - riding of the peam;
 - ritual dancing of naked woman, orgiastic elementsTaking over the milk/corn

II. Semiology of the ritual

1. Time and space of the ritual

In order for the ritual to be successfully performed, i.e. its intentions, it is very important for the action to happen at the right time and place.

Because this is a case of ritual in which the dominant tendency is to place the accent on fertility, in accordance with the mythological roots of the ritual, the unique time for it to take place is during the night. This is because the most important condition for taking over the milk is the influence of the Moon. The communication with the Moon is possible only during the night. It is the only witness of the events:

*“Mesečko, jasen mesečko,
ti greeš dene i noše,
vide li stado golemo.”⁴¹*

(O you moon that shine night and day have you seen a great flock)

Only the Moon is active during the day and the night. What is important is that the Moon only during the night can give power to someone, to put accent on his/her sexuality, to make him/her fertile.

In accordance with the mythological concepts of the people, the Moon's character, in the sense of gender is ambivalent. The Moon is male-female. The Moon is female (full Moon), but the young Moon is male (it is also in accordance with the Macedonian grammar). Its mythological characteristics in the area of the Balkans do not remain only in the chthonic cults, for the Moon is the symbol of the fertility, of richness in harvest, or at least it is considered as the renewer of the Nature.

The problem lies in the question - how to communicate with the Moon? By whom, when and where can this be performed. The answer to these questions lies in the ritual itself. The ritual -taking down of the Moon.

In order for the contact to be successful, the witches chose the appropriate place - the threshing-floor, hinge, field, stable. A space, which is not only symbolical, but is also connected with fertility, with the generosity of nature.

2. Participants

All the above mentioned is not enough, because the power and the ability to make contact with the Moon is wanted by everyone, but not possessed by everyone. They can be attributed in a specifically traditional way - the person must be ritually prepared to fulfill certain conditions. The fertility will be extremely active and powerful if the participants, mother and daughter are breast-feeding at the same time. They are fertile, breast-feeders, proven in their abilities. They have the dignity to communicate with the Moon. The actors of the ritual are attributed special ritual conditions.⁴²

3. Ritual tools

One can notice from the description that different tools are used in the ritual, some of which have great significance during the performance of the ritual, while others are inserted in the ritual itself.

⁴¹ T. Koleva, Geragovden u južnite slavjani..., p.66.

⁴² M. Mos - Sociologija i antropologija, I, Prosveta, Beograd 1982, p. 85, 86.

The most used tool in the ritual (noticeable from its constant mentioning in the descriptions) is the peam. It is part of the weaving loom, attributed with great magical power in the traditional/folk culture.⁴³ Its real function and power can be discovered while analyzing the ritual. The women considered as witches ride on it. On it they bind magic items. The form of the peam and its ritual use indicate that it is actually a substitute for the phallus, the male principal. Symbolizing the phallus, the only place where its function can be fulfilled is between the legs of the woman. The ritual spinning, binding of the peam participates in the collecting, attacking crops, milk, and people, symbolizing at the same time the fructified power of nature.⁴⁴

The ritual activity of women with the spake is connected with the use of wine. Its symbolism of life, living power and fertility is used very appropriately. In some variants of the ritual there is the use of the reaping-hook in order to take down the Moon or take over the milk. The use of the reaping-hook indicates connection with the cult of the Moon, and its form indicates the relation with the Moon and the gaining of fertility. It is used to reap the corn, it makes the corn fall down, and it symbolizes blessings. It is close to the lunar symbolism, and is often a sign of the female principle.⁴⁵

4. Magic action

Magical transmission in the ritual

One of the most important characteristics of magic is its transmission-ability to take the power to someone or something else. In the theory of magic it is already established that the transmission is simple and mythical.⁴⁶ It is especially important that these two characteristics of the magic usually go together, helping each other in the ritual. One of them is more connected with analogy, and the other with transformation of the information at the level of symbols.

“ The magical mimesis as the first form of the human understanding of nature and the influence on it, is in the root of the ritual.”⁴⁷ The magical activity shows man's active reaction to the objective reality. The model of successful magic implies established rules connected with appropriate performance of certain steps and accurate pronunciation of the magic formulas.

The motives of the people to perform magic are their wishes. It is important to understand that man has remarkable trust in the power of his/her wishes. Basically what man does with the help of magic is what he/she wants to do. Yet the wishes are complemented by one more segment of the human existence -the will, which should show satisfaction by physical hallucination.⁴⁸

⁴³ Dimitar Marinov, *Narodna vjara i religiozni...* p. 212.

⁴⁴ Anna Ilieva, Iskra Račeva, *Za njakoi tancovi arhietipi v mominskata proletna obrednost, Balgarskijat folklor v slavjanskata i balgarskata kulturna tradicija, Problemi na Balgarskija folklor, volume 8, BAN, Sofija 1991, p.38.*

⁴⁵ J. Chevalier, A. Gheerbrand, *Riječnik simbola, mitovi, sni, običaji, geste, oblici, likovi, boje, Nakladni Zavod Maticе Hrvatske, Zagreb 1983 s.v. srp, p. 626, 627.*

⁴⁶ D. Antonijević, *Obredi i običaji balkanskih stočara, SANU, Balkanološki institut, Posebna izdanja, book 16, Beograd 1982, p. 96, 97.*

⁴⁷ B. Jovanović, *Magijsko i teatarsko, SANU, Balkanološki institut, posebna izdanja, book 16, Beograd 1982, p.96, 97.*

⁴⁸ S. Frojd, *O seksualnoj teoriji. Totem i tabu, Odbrana dela, book IV, Matica Srpska, Novi Sad 1981, p.206.*

According to the principles of the magic actions, the participants should influence the Moon and the fertility.⁴⁹ In context the most important things are: the orgiastic activity, the female principle and the fertility.

Ritual nakedness

The feminine way of cultural action is connected with the ability to make communication and understand nature, through getting into the intimate structure of the objects and leading in the wanted direction.⁵⁰

The woman is always in an intimate contact with nature, and yet she is able to rule with it.

During the contacts between the woman and nature there is a throwing-away of every obstacle that come in the way of realization of the intimate contact. This is why the women during the ritual have to be naked, because the clothes (as a cultural value) create a distance between them.

woman = nature	vs.	culture
naked		woman dressed

According to the norms of the traditional culture, nakedness is forbidden in the profane world. On the other hand the magic rituals realized in specific time, unconditioned by human-nights, the deaf hour, require that the participants be naked, because the nakedness makes the connection with the other, "the sacred world". This means that the performers of the ritual have to be naked in order to reach the other, the received power, in order to fulfill the wanted communication.⁵¹

Night > sacred world > magical power to fulfill intentions

From this, we can conclude that the power, organized and performed by women on St. George, has one aim – the transmission of the power of the Moon in order to take the blessings of the other people in a strictly given ritual structure, order and intensive magic.

During this ritual, they energetically modulate their bodies, extremities, with ritual orgiastic accenting of two, sexually active women, who through erotic games, touching their sexual organs, want in an ambivalent way to take down the Moon. In its base this modulated game symbolizes life, activity and at the same time stimulates life. "Life is born through game", especially if this is done with intense sexual power and wish, in the moment of ambivalence, during "sexual intercourse". The moment of the ritual dancing of women, the hitting with the peam, the spoiling of the wine with a towel bound on the top of the peam, is an imitation of sexual intercourse, of orgasm, i. e. fertilizing the female principle generally in nature.

⁴⁹ B. A. Rybakov, *Jazyčestvo drevnei Rusi*, Nauka, Moskva 1987, p.544, 554, 675.

⁵⁰ N. Čausidis, *Mitskite slike na Južnite Sloveni*, Mislja, Skopje 1994, p.153.

⁵¹ Iva Stanoeva, *Tjaloto - golo i oblečeno*, Balgarski folklor, Antropologija na folkloru, BAN Institut za folklor, book 2, Sofija 1994, p. 74.

Orgiastični elementi v rutualih povezanih s kultom lune pri balkanskih Slovanih

Ljupčo S. Risteski

Avtor v članku analizira in raziskuje bogat in raznovrsten balkansko-slovanski ritualni kompleks prevzemanja oz. kraje mleka v obredjih, kjer je pri tem postopku poudarjen erotični moment. Avtor ugotavlja, da je tovrstno ritualno orgiastično ravnanje vedno povezano s kultom lune. Bogato etnografsko gradivo tako iz Makedonije kot iz Srbije, Hrvaške in Bolgarije ga je pripeljalo do sklepa, da tovrstni rituali predstavljajo magično delovanje žensk, da bi vplivale na luno, s tem pa na rodovitnost in življenje. S tovrstnim obredjem na magičen način "snemajo luno" in "prevzemajo mleko". Magični ritual je ambivalenten, kar se kaže v poskusu združiti se z naravo in hkrati prevzeti nadzor nad njo.