

deaths of Xhemo's sons and about his second marriage, respectively.

Xhemo had two sons who were also musicians. One was called Maliq and was obviously his favourite since the song is named after him. Under the Austrian occupation during the first World War Gora suffered great deprivation and people starved. Xhemo decided to get food for his family and despite the fact that it was mid-winter he and his sons rode over Šar Planina to Tetovo, earned some money by playing, filled their sacks with grain and started on the homeward journey. As they came up into the mountains they were caught in a frightful snowstorm and both sons froze to death. Maliq died the day after his brother; his horse did not move from his side but held watch over his body for three days. Then Xhemo buried them both at Džindi Beg where their graves can still be seen. The parents mourned the loss of their sons deeply; their mother died of grief, but Xhemo composed a song which describes the whole tragic event and in particular the suffering and death of his favourite son Maliq. The song is without words but is performed entirely instrumentally, primarily in *nibet*, but also during the wedding processions.

Xhemo's song (gor. *Džemova pesma*) tells how Xhemo won a girl's love with his music. Sometime after the deaths of his sons he was again in the old Albania to play at a wedding and he played on that occasion the song about their unhappy fate. A young gypsy girl was passing by in the woods at that moment and heard the music. It made a deep impression on her, so deep that she fell in love with the master on the spot and decided to follow him. They were married soon after. A particular turn in the melody indicates the moment when Xhemo winks at the girl and the shawm player himself calls attention to it with a wink.

That Xhemo was also a musician of unusual strength and endurance is shown by the story of the wager. Xhemo once made a bet with a farmer in the village of Mamuša not far from Prizren. The farmer was about to thresh his wheat, in the old-fashioned way with horses, and Xhemo suggested that the farmer should carry out this operation while at the same time he, Xhemo, would play without stopping until all the grain had been brought into the barn. If Xhemo could hold out to the last, he should get all the grain, but if he was forced to give up he agreed to give the farmer his shawm and two gold coins. The contest began. First they sprayed the threshing area, then they arranged the sheaves and the horses were set to running around in the grain. After this the whole lot had to be dried in the wind and Xhemo continued to play while they did all this without ever taking the instrument from his mouth. He was still playing when they drove the threshed grain into the granary – what's more, he even managed to urinate without interrupting his performance. He played continuously for five hours and one of his eyes became blood-shot from the exertion but he did not stop before all the grain had been loaded into sacks and deposited in the granary. This is how Xhemo won the wager and the farmer gave him all the grain and had it sent to his home.

These stories about Xhemo have been told to me by several different people, usually in so fragmentary and incoherent a way that it has been difficult to find out what they really meant. The best version is the one I got from Kamber Manxhuki. What I have related above is a conflation of all these diverse accounts. However, I would like to include a word-for-word transcription of a conversation in order to show by means of a single example how an informant may formulate his thoughts.

*Conversation with Feriz Osmani about Xhemo*

- Bit<sup>27</sup>): What exactly was he called?  
 Feriz: Xhemo.  
 Bit: Where did he come from?  
 Feriz: He was from Globočica. He was the best master. He played all songs both old and new. He lived ninety years. He played all the time. In Turkey he was the best player.  
 Bit: Did he go to Turkey from here?  
 Feriz: Yes, he went to Turkey and played there.  
 Bit: And came back?  
 Feriz: Then he came back here again and played. He also played in the old Albania, and was the best. He had two sons and the two sons died of starvation under Austria, they had nothing to eat. He made up a song about his son. When he was young he could play for five hours without stopping.  
 Bit: *Nibet*?  
 Feriz: *Nibet*. No, not *nibet*! You know, when one threshes the grain with horses in the old-fashioned way. They did it all and he played without stopping for five hours. His eye became a little blood-shot from playing. He was the best master. He kept on playing until they were finished and were ready to put the grain into sacks.  
 Bit: And his sons?  
 Feriz: His sons played too, but they died young.  
 Bit: Was Xhemo also a drummer?  
 Feriz: Only a shawm player.  
 Bit: Were there other Gorans than he among the musicians?  
 Feriz: Now there is me, Feriz.  
 Bit: Are there others than you and Ramadan?  
 Feriz: There have been, but they are dead. When Xhemo died I took his place and I became Gora's master.  
 Bit: Have you played together with him?  
 Feriz: No, I was little, I was 12-13 years old. But I have seen him and I remember him. He played with my father.

- Bit: How long was he away in Turkey? Was it for a whole winter or did he just go and come right back?
- Feriz: He played there for a month or two and then came back. He went to weddings, annual markets, to everything.
- Bit: Did he buy his shawm in Turkey or in Macedonia?
- Feriz: He bought it in Turkey.
- Bit: Does it still exist?
- Feriz: I don't know, he didn't have children any more, maybe his family threw it away.
- Bit: Is there more to tell about him?
- Feriz: Well, I don't know. Yes, do you know what he was like? He was like this boxer, Muhammed Ali! That's what he was like.
- Bit: There was a woman who ran away with him. What was that story?
- Feriz: When he was young he went to the old Albania and there he made up a song. This woman came, heard the song and straight away fell in love with the master and he married her.
- Bit: Did he know this woman or girl?
- Feriz: He didn't know her, but when she heard how beautifully he played she followed him.
- Bit: Were the two who died in the mountains her sons then?
- Feriz: No, they were sons of the first wife. He had two wives.
- Bit: At the same time?
- Feriz: At the same time, two wives. The first was older and this one was young.
- Bit: And now this song is played . . . ?
- Feriz: It is played all over Gora, everyone like this song. They say: Play Xhemo's song. You have also recorded it on your tape-recorder.
- Bit: How did it happen that his son died?
- Feriz: His son died under Austria because they had no food. He went to Tetovo to fetch grain and then they came up into the mountains, Šar Planina. It snowed furiously and they froze to death. Afterwards he made up a song about the son, how he came there, how he suffered and was racked with pain.
- Bit: Do you mean that they did not get to Tetovo?
- Feriz: They got there and got the grain and were on the way home.
- Bit: Is this song only for shawm or is it also a song with words?
- Feriz: It is certainly a song for shawm, that's the way we heard it but it may be that there are some who sing it. It is played at *nibet* and as we go, both his son's song and Xhemo's song.
- Bit: What do you mean "as we go"?
- Feriz: I mean, when there is something beautiful, I mean – how can I say it – when people want to hear it.

Bit: At weddings, or . . . ?

Feriz: At weddings, mostly at weddings. — This is Gora's master, Feriz, speaking. After Xhemo that is me.

In Gora one cannot imagine a proper wedding without drums and shawms. The Gorans have taken this music to their hearts. During the festivities it lends lustre to the processions and the men's dance is unthinkable without it. Nevertheless it is my impression that only very few really understand the music and its background. Of course the people, both men and women, know the local melodies, but there is so much else in the music that is strange to them. Only a few of the old men can remember anything about the *nibet* songs and their stories. They can also tell about the old masters and their fabulous skill and about the young masters who can no longer play all the melodies that belong to the ceremonies. The musicians are in possession of a certain amount of knowledge but it takes time and patience to find it out. Many conversations with many musicians are required still before one can form a trustworthy and differentiated picture of this interesting people and its music.

Translated by John Bergsagel



1. A band of musicians (*tajfa*) playing at a wedding. Two drummers and two shawms are at work while a substitute holds himself in readiness. The boy on the left is the son of one of the musicians. Brod 1975.



2. Beqir Hoxhaj, an old master from Opojë. Vranište 1960.



3. Rafet Osmani takes a rest. Note the heavy leather belt (*silah*) and the necklace with ready-to-play mouthpieces *pištanika*. Rafet is the eldest son of the Goranish master Feriz Osmani. Brod 1975.



4. Feriz Osmani playing his oboe-shawm (*svirla*). Kukuljane 1976.



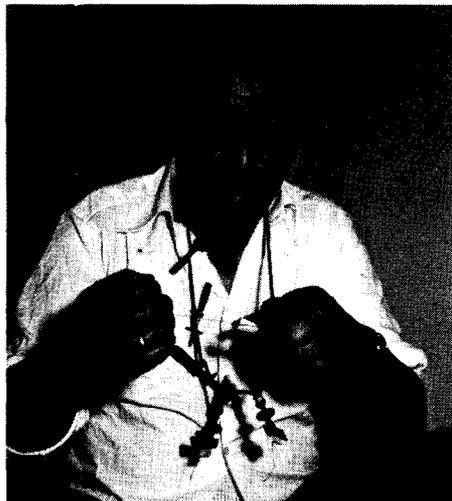
5. Drummers during the decent from the mountain Jelica to the village<sup>28</sup>). Brod 1976.



6. Rexhep Manxhuki in his home. He is a dervish, a member of an islamic mystical-religious brotherhood. Prizren 1975.



7. Young wives of musicians of Feriz Osmani's household in front of his house. Prizren 1975.



8. Feriz Osmani repairing the mouthpiece of his oboe-shawm. Prizren 1975.

## Notes

- 1) Hoerburger 1954.
- 2) Prizrenska Gora is a mountainous district on the north-west side of Šar Planina. The population is Mohammedan, the language is a Slavic dialect related to Serbian and Macedonian. See Lutovac 1955, Ristovski 1969 and Trærup 1975.
- 3) See Trærup 1963 and Hoerburger 1968.
- 4) Other designations in Serbian and Macedonian are *bubanj*, *goč*, *taĀan*.
- 5) The populations of these villages belong to the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia.
- 6) *lodër* or *lodrë*, definite form, *lodra*; in Kosovo also *daulle* from Turkish *davul*.
- 7) Other designations in Yugoslavia are *zurla*, *zurle*, *zurna*, *surla*, *surle*
- 8) Definite form *cula*, *curla*.
- 9) Also *nebet*, from Turkish *nöbet*, cf. Arabic *nuba*, a large cyclic form.
- 10) I have been very much in doubt as to how I should spell the names but have finally decided to use Albanian orthography since the musicians are Albanian-speaking and registered as Albanians, even the few that come from Gora. The musicians themselves have no particular opinion about how their names ought to be written. Place-names are written with Serbian and Albanian orthography respectively, and the same applies to foreign words. All this may seem confusing to the reader, but on the other hand it gives a vivid impression of the national and linguistic multiplicity in the area.
- 11) From Turkish *tayfa* – band, troop.
- 12) (Persian) from Turkish *usta* – master, artist.
- 13) (Persian) from Turkish *çırak* – apprentice.
- 14) The words are made up of the instrument's name + the Turkish suffix – *ci*. The Albanian word adds the syllable – *ja* in the definite form: *culexhija*, *lodraxhija*. Note that the Albanian *xh*, the Serbian /Goranish *dž* and the Turkish *c* are all pronounced like *j* in the English name John.
- 15) Both Brömse (p. 67) and Arbatsky (p. 10), however, write of systematic instruction so I will investigate this matter further on my next visit to Prizren. Arbatsky, incidentally, describes in a very lively manner his time as a pupil of the drummer Medmed from Špinadija near Prizren forty years ago.
- 16) A ca. 30 cm long end-blown flute with six holes on the top and one on the underside. The oriental technique of breathing used on the shawm is also used on the flutes *šupelĳka* and *kaval*.
- 17) (Arabian) from Turkish *sünnet* – circumcision. The Mohammedan boys are circumcised at the age of 5–8.
- 18) From Turkish *bayram*. Two feasts a year are held: *Ramazanski bajram*, which concludes the month of fasting, and *Kurban-bajram*. The feasts are ordered according to the Mohammedan calendar.
- 19) (Persian) from Turkish *bahşış* – gift, tip.
- 20) A Danish crown is worth ca. 3 dinars, a U.S. dollar ca. 17 dinars.
- 21) (Arabian) abbreviation of *bensilah*, from Turkish *belsilâhı* – a broad leather belt which has some pockets in front intended for papers, money, tobacco-pouch, knife, weapons, etc.
- 22) A necklace with mouthpieces, from Goranish *pištaniĳ* – mouthpiece.
- 23) (Persian) from Turkish *kılıf* – case.
- 24) *Tardžuk*, from Turkish *tagarcık*; *jandžik* from Turkish, *yancık*.
- 25) This is expressed in old dinars, which is still a custom among the people. The amount corresponds to half a million new dinars.
- 26) Goranish *Džemo*, abbreviated form of *Džemaludin*, *Džemal*, from Turkish *Cemâlüddin*.
- 27) Bit = Birthe Trærup.
- 28) Photograph No. 5 is taken by Jørgen Schou-Pedersen, the others by the author.

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## RESUMÉ

Musikken for store trommer og oboskalmejer har et vigtigt centrum i byen Prizren og dennes omegn, navnlig Prizrenska Gora har bud efter dens udøvere til de mange bryllupsfester sommeren igennem. Musikken er knyttet til bryllupsoptogene, til mændenes og kvindernes danse og til de traditionelle sportslege, desuden spiller de to skalmejer alene en sangrække *nibet* som underholdning for bryllupsgæsterne. Musikerne stammer fra landsbyer i de to muhammedanske naboområder *Gora* og *Opojë*, men er nu alle bosat i Prizren. De synes at være af sigøjneræt, men har assimileret sig med henholdsvis den slaviske og den albanske befolkning, især sidstnævnte. Musikerne organiserer sig i bander, en sådan kaldes *tajfa* og består normalt af seks medlemmer, som er henholdsvis mester og lærling alt efter deres ledende eller ledsagende funktion. Musikerhåndværket er helt og holdent præget af familietradition. Den mest almindelige sammensætning, som tjener til udførelse af processionsmusik og dansemusik, er to skalmejer og to trommer. De to andre musikere er afløsere. Almindeligvis begynder den vordende musiker med trommen for senere eventuelt at gå videre med skalmejen. Når han har været lærling i to-tre år, bliver han mester og kan danne sin egen *tajfa*. Lederen af en *tajfa* er altid skalmejebløser. Sommeren med dens mange bryllupper og omskærelsesfester er en krævende periode for musikerne, men resten af året er til gengæld mere rolig. De medvirker ved St. Georgsdagsfesten og 1. majfesten og ved de muhammedanske *bajram*-fester. Tidligere var mange musikere også smede, men nu lever de næsten alle udelukkende af musikken. Mange bliver ved som aktive musikere højt op i alderen, skønt skalmejespillet anses for at være meget skadeligt for helbredet. Instrumenterne købes hos instrumentmagere i Makedonien.