

# EMBROIDERED WITH GOLD, STRUNG WITH PEARLS

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*The Traditional Ballads of Bosnian Women*

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THE MILMAN PARRY COLLECTION OF ORAL LITERATURE  
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3b. *Kana Tanović*

*Tekst 2224; bilježnica 5  
zapisao Hamdija Šaković*

Oglasi se na glasu devojka  
u našega Ahmetbega Zlata.  
Na devojku prosci navalili,  
prosci prose sa četiri strane,  
ona neće proscu ni jednoga,  
neg' junaka bega Omerbega.  
Tada dođe beže Omerbeže,  
on isprosi Ahmetbega Zlatu.

3b. *Kana Tanović*

*Text 2224; notebook 5  
written down by Hamdija Šaković*

*Word had spread about a maiden,  
about our Ahmetbeg's daughter Zlata.  
Suitors rushed to seek the maiden in marriage,  
suitors sought her from all four sides,  
5 the maiden did not want any of the suitors  
but the brave man Omerbeg.  
And then Omerbeg came,  
he won the hand of Ahmetbeg's Zlata.*

U koji je sahat isprosio,  
 u oni se sahat razbolio,  
 on bolova devet godin' dana.  
 Kad je Zlati korba dodijala,  
 mlađe joj se seke poudale,  
 a mlađi se bratac oženio  
 i u braće deca izrodila,  
 veli njojzi njena mila majka:  
 "Udaji se, ne udala mi se!  
 Koga čekaš, ne dočekala ga!"  
 Ona uze knjige napisate,  
 a uz papir crna murećefa,  
 pa je šalje begu Omerbegu:  
 "Evo ima devet godin' dana  
 kako si me isprosio mladu.  
 Već je meni korba dodijala,  
 mlađe mi se seke poudale,  
 a mlađa se braća oženila,  
 a u braće deca izrodila.  
 Ako vidiš da ćeš preboljeti,  
 [verse omitted]  
 ako nećeš mlađan preboljeti,  
 kaži meni za koga ću poći."  
 Ona zove slugu Huseina:  
 "Bogom brate, sluga Huseine!  
 Hoćeš 'i mi tvrdu vjeru dati  
 da ćeš meni knjigu odnijeti,  
 odnijeti begu Omerbegu?"  
 Poslušja je sluga Huseine,  
 nosi knjigu begu Omerbegu.  
 Beg Omerbeg sitnu knjigu primi,  
 knjigu čita, grozne suze lije.  
 Pitala ga ostarjela majka:  
 "Što je tebi, moj jedini sine?  
 Što proljevaš suze od očiju?  
 Koja ti je golema nevolja?"

*In the hour in which he won her hand,  
 in that very hour he fell ill,  
 he lay ill for nine years.  
 When Zlata got tired of being scolded,  
 when her younger sisters got married,  
 and her younger brother found a wife,  
 and her brother had a few children,  
 her dear mother said to her:  
 "Get married, may you never find a husband!  
 Whom are you waiting for, may you never see him!"  
 Then she took blank paper,  
 and with paper some black ink,  
 and she sent a letter to Omerbeg:  
 "It has been nine years  
 since you won my hand.  
 I am tired of being scolded;  
 my younger sisters got married,  
 my younger brothers<sup>18</sup> found wives,  
 and my brothers had a few children.  
 If you think you will recover,  
 [verse omitted]  
 if you think you will not recover,  
 tell me whom to marry."  
 She called to the servant Husein:  
 "Brother in God, servant Husein!  
 Will you swear by your faith  
 that you will take my letter,  
 take it to Omerbeg?"  
 Servant Husein obeyed her,  
 he took the letter to Omerbeg.  
 Omerbeg received the finely written letter,  
 read the letter, shed bitter tears.  
 His old mother asked him:  
 "What is the matter, my only son?  
 Why are you shedding tears from your eyes?  
 What great sorrow has befallen you?"*

18. In line 14 only one brother is mentioned, while here and in the next line a plural noun is used. There is a simple explanation for this: in the original the plural noun has an extra syllable which is needed in lines 26 and 27 to fit the meter.

## 32. EMINA ŠAKOVIĆ

*Tekst 2460; bilježnica 12  
zapisao Hamdija Šaković*

Vezak vezla u Mostaru Zlata  
na čardaku, na visokoj kuli,  
na čardaku, kraj džamli pendžera.  
Vezak vezla, pjesmu ispjevala  
gdje Alibeg vjernu ljubiu kara, 5  
on je kara što nema evlada.  
To je ljubi vrlo mučno bilo,  
pa izlazi uz bijelu kulu  
i eto je u gornje čardake.  
Ona roni suze od očiju 10  
i proklinje svoju milu majku:  
"Moja majko, dugo jadna bila!  
Što me dađe begu Alibegu  
da me kori i dnevi i noći  
što ja nemam od srca evlada." 15  
U riječi u kojoj bijaše  
odaji se otvoriše vrata,  
a uljeze zaovica mlada,  
pa govori svojoj nevjestici:  
"Snaho moja, biserli sevljio! 20  
Noćas sam ti čudan san usnila.  
Ti si, snaho, ilum naučila,  
ti ćeš meni sanak tumačiti,  
tumačiti, tabir učiniti."  
"Na hair<sup>75</sup> Bože, moja zaovice!" 25  
"Vako sam ti, snaho, snijevala:  
Na snu mi se nešto prikazalo  
i u snu mi 'vako besjedilo:  
'Oj Boga ti, lijepa djevojko!  
'Vako kaži svojoj nevjestici, 30  
nevjestici Alibegovici:  
Nek' zaprosi svile od vezilje,  
ibrišima konca od terzije;  
nek' naveze svilena kolana,  
nek' se paše po svilenu pasu, 35  
pa će imat' od srca evlada."

## 32. EMINA ŠAKOVIĆ

*Text 2460; notebook 12  
written down by Hamdija Šaković*

*Zlata sat embroidering in Mostar  
in the upper room, in the lofty tower,  
in the upper room, by the glass window.  
She sat embroidering and made a song  
about Alibeg scolding her, his faithful wife  
for she had no child of her own.  
This was very distressing for her,  
and she stepped upstairs in the white tower,  
and then she went to the upper rooms.  
She was shedding tears from her eyes  
and cursing her dear mother:  
"My mother, may misfortune befall you!  
Why did you give me to Alibeg  
to scold me every day and night  
because I have no child of my own."  
As she was saying these words,  
the door to the room opened,  
her sister-in-law entered  
and said to her:  
"My sister-in-law, my pearly cypress!  
I dreamt a strange dream last night.  
You, my sister-in-law, have the knowledge,  
you will explain my dream to me,  
explain it, give me its meaning."  
"With God's blessing, my sister-in-law!"  
"Thus I dreamt, my sister-in-law:  
Something appeared to me in my dream,  
and in my dream thus it spoke to me:  
'By God, lovely maiden!  
Say thus to your sister-in-law,  
your sister-in-law Alibegovica:  
She should ask some silk from the embroiderer,  
some silky thread from the tailor,  
she should embroid a silky sash  
and wrap it around her silky waist,  
and she will have a child of her own."*

75. "Na hair" is likely to have been pronounced  
"na-air," yielding a decasyllable by synizesis.

“O Boga ti, lijepa devojko!  
 Evo tebi hiljadu dukata  
 što sam tebi ničah učinio,  
 a poslušaj što ću govoriti. 95  
 Nemoj rano otvarati vrata  
 dok se svane i sunce ograne,  
 nek’ se moja naveseli majka,  
 mile seke pjesme napjevaju,  
 a jarani kola naigraju. 100  
 Selam ćeš mi mojoj miloj majci  
 nek’ pokupi hodže i hadžije,  
 nek’ me kuplju đulsijom vodicom,  
 s Čabe jagom nek’ namažu brke,  
 nek’ mi spuste tuze od perčina 105  
 niz nosila, žalosna mi majka,  
 što mi ga je odgojila Zlata;  
 tri je zlatna češlja salomila  
 dok je meni perčin odgojila.  
 Nek’ nanesu kraj Zlatina dvora, 110  
 nek’ me vidi materina Zlata.”  
 To izusti, a dušu ispusti.  
 A devojka mudra i pametna,  
 ona uze Kuran hamajliju,  
 pa je Muju Jasin izučila. 115  
 Ona svoje otvara sanduke,  
 pa izvadi od svile čašafe,  
 ona pokri materina Muja,  
 pokraj njega svu noć presidela,  
 a učila Kuran hamajliju. 120  
 Kad svanulo i sunce granulo,  
 uranila Mujagina majka,  
 ona kuca halkom na vratima,  
 halkom kuca, a pjesmu pjevaše:  
 “Otvor’ vrata, dvoje dece mlado! 125  
 Što je milo, more omrznuti,  
 što je mrsko, more omiljeti!

“By God, lovely maiden!  
 Here is a thousand ducats for you  
 because I married you,  
 and listen to what I will say.  
 Do not open the door early  
 until it dawns and the sun rises,  
 so that my mother rejoices to the full,  
 my dear sisters have enough of singing,  
 and my friends have their fill of kolo.  
 You will greet my mother and tell her  
 to gather priests and pilgrims,  
 to wash me in rose water,  
 to anoint my mustache with the oil from the Kaaba,  
 to let the plumes on my queue  
 hang down from the bier, woe to my mother,<sup>30</sup>  
 my queue which Zlata took care of,  
 she broke three golden combs  
 taking care of my queue.  
 They should take me by Zlata’s manor  
 so that mother’s Zlata can see me.”  
 He uttered this and parted with his soul.  
 And the maiden was wise and prudent,  
 she took the holy Koran  
 and she said a Jasin\* prayer for Mujo.  
 She opened her trunks  
 and took out silky covers,  
 she covered mother’s Mujo,  
 she sat by his side the whole night,  
 and read the holy Koran.  
 When it dawned and the sun rose,  
 Mujo’s mother rose early,  
 she struck the knocker upon the door,  
 struck the knocker and sang a song:  
 “Open the door, two young children!  
 What is dear may become hateful,  
 what is hateful may become dear!

30. Young Muslim men in Bosnia used to wear queues embellished with different kinds of plumes depending on their status. At funerals, the queue with its embellishments would hang from the bier to indicate that the person being carried was a young single man. For more information on this custom, see Hangi, *Život i običaji Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 235.