

Macedonian Folk Poetry, Principally Lyric

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Macedonian folk literature, which has its beginnings in the distant past, developed over a long period of time. Information provided by the Byzantine chronicler Nicephorus (Nikephoros) Gregoras in 1326 is one of the most convincing testimonies to its antiquity. In his journey from Byzantium to Serbia, he visited the Macedonian town of Strumica and its surroundings. There he heard, to the accompaniment of the dance, many folk songs about heroes whose names were already familiar to him (Jagić 1876:111-12). The oldest examples of Macedonian folk song were recorded by the Austrian archpriest Sylvester in Kostur (Aegean Macedonia) in the sixteenth century. They were published only relatively recently by Ciro Giannelli and André Vaillant (1958).¹

The name of Vuk Karadžić is connected with the publication for the first time of a Macedonian folk song (1815)—“Don’t get up early in the morning to fetch water, *doz*, girl with the white face”—in his *Serbian Folk Song Book* (1965:201, No. 101). The first collection of Macedonian folk songs was made and published by the Bosnian Croat Stefan I. Verković under the title *Folk Songs of the Macedonian Bulgarians* (1860). It contains 335 Macedonian songs from Serrai (forty miles from Salonika) and its vicinity. From only one woman, named Dafina, whom he called the female Homer, he recorded 270 songs. Stanko Vraz, a famous Croatian poet of Slovene background, also published Macedonian folk songs. The Russian Slavist Viktor Ivanovič Grigorovič gave Vraz some recordings of western Macedonian folk songs, twenty-four of which the latter published in Zagreb in 1847 and the rest of which were published by Xaralampie Polenaković in Zagreb in 1951 and in Skopje in 1960 (Polenaković 1973a:71-77). Special mention should be made of the first Macedonian falsification, the *Veda of the Slavs*, published by Verković in two volumes (1874, 1881); the third volume was never published after the falsification was discovered. Later the number of Macedonians who collected their own folk literature increased, but a good number of foreigners were also engaged in such activity. Especially notable among these numerous

¹ For further information on early recordings of Macedonian folk song, see Polenaković 1973b.

collectors are Kuzman A. Šapkarev of Ohrid, whose eight volumes (1891-94) form one of the largest collections of Yugoslav folk literature (comparable to those of Vuk and of Franjo Kuhač) and Marko K. Cepenkov of Prilep, the most original and the most prolific collector of Macedonian folk literature, whose ten-volume collection (1972) was published some fifty years after his death.

The collection and publication of Macedonian folk literature played a significant part in the national revival. Verković provides convincing evidence of this in the introduction to his collection of folk songs (1860):

That this branch of the Slavic people has not disappeared by now nor been assimilated can be attributed only to the fact that... [a Macedonian] spends almost his whole life in his village, among his fellow countrymen, removed from foreign influence, in continual, diligent work in the fields, in sociable conversation, in relating and singing his numerous songs.

Generally speaking, the publication of folk literature played an important role in emphasizing and raising the cultural level of the people. Thus, in the introduction to the Miladinov collection of folk songs (1861:VII), the first real Macedonian poet, Konstantin Miladinov (1830-1862) says simply but beautifully:

Folk songs portray the intellectual development of a people and reflect its life. In songs a people shows its feelings, in them it immortalizes itself and its feats of old, in them it finds its spiritual food and sustenance; thus, in happiness and sadness, at weddings and dances, at harvest and grape gathering, at embroidering and spinning, in fields and forests, it pours forth songs as from a rich spring. Therefore we can say that a people is always a great poet.

Classification, Verse, and Poetics of Macedonian Folk Poetry

Macedonian folk literature comprises all known genres of folk literature. Thus, in poetry, lyric and epic songs are distinguished, and lyrical-epic songs are known as ballads and romances. In addition, Macedonian folk poetry is classified into groups and subgroups. Thus, lyric folk poetry is divided into the following main groups: ritual, mythological, work, love, family, children's, and humorous songs. Folk epic has the following divisions: non-historical, historical, heroic, haiduk, komita (revolutionary anti-Turkish), and partisan-revolutionary songs.

The mutual influence and assimilation of genres and types of folk literature, particularly of poetry, is an inevitable and natural process in its development. Ballads and romances are the most obvious examples of this interrelationship; therefore, they are not fixed as independent elements in the classification of Macedonian folk poetry.

The versification of Macedonian folk song is closely related to its accompanying melody, a linkage that is one of the factors responsible for the practically invariant number of syllables in each line of a folk song. Macedonian folk song is characterized as syllabic verse with a caesura. In addition, there is a definite rhythm, a fixed pattern of syllables, which in part may be determined by the melody. Therefore, quite rarely, there are cases also of syllabo-tonic verse. Such verse is an organic fusion of text and melody. Macedonian folk song is composed in a wide range of meters. There are lines of four to sixteen syllables, although the most common number is eight in lyric poetry and ten in epic. Quite rarely we encounter a line of just four syllables (usually only in children's songs). The hexasyllable is common enough in humorous songs and the heptasyllable is especially characteristic of Lazar Day songs (explained below). The octosyllable is the most common in Macedonian folk lyric. It also offers the widest range of possibilities, since it may have a caesura in any one of three positions—in the exact middle of the line (4 + 4):

<i>Ona strana, / ogan gorit, veter veit, / ne go silit, rosa rosi, / ne go gasit.</i>	Over yonder / a fire burns, the wind whistles, / does not fan it, and drops of dew / do not quench it.
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or after the fifth syllable (5 + 3):

<i>Da bi me tatko / žalilo, ne bi me mene / davallo.</i>	If my father would / pity me, why then he would not / give me in marriage.
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or after the third syllable (3 + 5):

<i>Na taa / slatka večera, na bela / meke postela.</i>	Come to that / supper, repast sweet, to that white / pallet, soft as fleece.
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The most common metrical feet in lyric folk song are the trochee and the dactyl, as illustrated in the following verses:

<i>Mlāda sākā, mlāda zēde, mlāda zēde, sprēma sēbe.</i>	The maid wants him, the maid takes him, The maid loves him, makes herself ready.
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and:

<i>Māruše, Māruše!</i>	Maruša, Maruša!
<i>Jāsna mesečino!</i>	Clear as the pale moonlight!

Kō̄njo za krādenje,
Mō̄me za grābenje.

Filly for stealing and
 Maiden for ravishing.

The verse form of Macedonian epic song reflects its narrative function. Despite some variation, this is usually the decasyllabic line. The dodecasyllable is used mostly in ballads as well as in dance songs. The other longer lines are used quite rarely.

Another characteristic of Macedonian folk song is the insertion, usually after a caesura, of certain expressions, most commonly a refrain. Like other similar elements (repetition in general and at the start of a line, asides to the audience, and so forth), the refrain exists primarily to strengthen the metrical pattern and to expand and embellish the line. It serves the purpose, in longer epic forms, of giving the performer a rest and may also be used to vary the metrical structure. There are also rare cases in which verses are grouped into stanzas, a tendency that is becoming more pronounced in contemporary folk song.

Macedonian folk song is highly picturesque and emotive, because of the composers' artistic use of traditional poetic devices. Over the centuries folk poetry built up a rich repertoire of techniques, which were employed within a clearly defined system, with great talent and true creative inspiration, to create superb folk songs. The artistic merit of some folk composers is so great that certain of their phrases have been carried over into daily speech.

The use of the epithet, the most common poetic device of Macedonian folk song, is largely responsible for the plasticity of folk verse. There is a large stock of such epithets, most often adjectives (*green* wreath, *level* courtyard, *swift* steed), although nouns (*sapling*-maiden, *marble*-stone), pronouns, adverbs, and even certain numerals may serve this purpose. The epithet may at times be used in apposition: *earth-little mother*. In epic as well as lyric, there are fixed epithets, phrases that have fused together into an inseparable compound, for example: *rolling* field, *green* forest, *blue* sky, *slender* waist, *dark* cloud, *sharp* saber, *heavy* cudgel, *honorable* table, *decked-out* wedding party. Frequent use is also made of double epithets, for example: *white, rosy* face; *white, black-eared* wheat; companions *faithful* and *true*.

Comparisons lend greater emotional force and vitality to lyric verse, and solemnity and appeal to epic. Particularly impressive are those that express the speaker's attitude toward a given character. The verse "The black plague appeared..." from the beautiful ballad for Goce Delčev shows dramatically the danger resulting from the appearance of the enemy, who is portrayed here as the black plague, elsewhere as a dark cloud, and so on. Macedonian folk song has many such comparisons, characterized by

descriptive simplicity and conciseness. Such metaphors as the following abound: the bride is a slender fir tree, a cool spring, a rose in a garden; the bridegroom is the bright sun, a golden cord; the couple is a pair of doves, a falcon and a partridge, two suns.

The following is an example of the use of symbol in Macedonian folk lyric, where it is especially common:

There bloomed a plant of many colors,
upon the young maid's windowsill.
By day the maid would water it,
by night the youth would steal it.

It was not a flower but love that flourished at the window and that was nurtured secretly at night, when the youth would steal it from the maiden. Pure youthful love was thus symbolized by the folk poet as a flower, the folk symbol of unconcealed beauty and tenderness.

Repetition is used widely in both lyric and epic songs in several forms. In the lyric, repetition of a word, phrase, and entire passage intensifies the emotional character and melodiousness of the verse, binding together the lines, adding harmony, and stressing certain concepts. One form of repetition is anaphora:

Your brothers saddle the horses,
your sisters-in-law pour out wine,
your sisters plait wreaths and garlands.

The final word or expression of one line is often repeated at the beginning of the following line in a figure of pleonasm or terracing:

His mother's *nine brothers*,
nine brothers, eight sisters-in-law....

Other well-known stylistic devices used by the folk poet to embellish his verse are contrast ("white paper written on in black ink"), allegory, personification, hyperbole, and the so-called Slavic antithesis.

Macedonian folk songs are typically dynamic and direct. This is accomplished in part by the use of numerous dialogues and monologues. The dialogue as a compositional scheme is found in both lyric and epic, whereas the monologue appears almost exclusively in lyric. Many Macedonian lyric songs are pure monologues, as, for example, the confession of a young girl or of a young man:

May you know, maiden, may you know,
may you know, may you never wed.
While I was living with mama,
while my dear mama combed my hair,

my blond hair thick and shining grew,
while my dear father nourished me,
my slender figure taller grew,
while my dear brother cared for me,
my fair face blossomed like a rose,
but since the time I was wed,
my fair face faded, lost its bloom,
my golden hair has fallen out,
my slender figure gone to ruin.

Macedonian folk song is characterized by a consummate union of composition, character, and language. The wealth of stylistic and expressive devices of the folk singer is sure evidence for the inborn poetic sense of the Macedonian people.

Folk Lyric Songs

Because of their exceedingly rich poetics, Macedonian lyric folk songs have more variants and genres than epic songs do, and surpass the latter in aesthetic quality. They therefore merit especially detailed discussion. Lyric folk poetry of the Macedonian people, like that of other peoples, is characterized by profound sincerity and a total unveiling of the life of the spirit. Revealing thoughts and feelings, such verse has existed since time immemorial as a normal part of life and work. Lyric songs carefully select those elements of daily life that are appropriate for poetic treatment, finding their subject matter at village gatherings, among harvesters and shepherds in the mountains, at weddings and dances, in the infant's cradle, and at the graveside. The world of lyric song has no boundaries, for it portrays every area of Macedonian life. Lyric folk songs are usually performed by women—"A maid outsang a nightingale," says one Macedonian folk song—for which reason Vuk in 1824 called them "women's songs," in contrast to epic, which he called "men's songs" (Karadžić 1964:87).

Ritual songs provide excellent evidence for the great significance accorded to the spoken word. In former times there was a strong belief in the magic power of speech, leading to the rise of the numerous rituals that filled daily life. This belief, reinforced by animistic concepts of the world, was especially evident in the celebration of the many festivals held throughout the year. Each festival listed in the folk calendar had its own specific rituals that were performed with a belief in the power of the word to influence the workings of nature and thus insure health and happiness within the family, a bountiful harvest for the farmer, and the fertility of livestock. The Macedonians, like other South Slavs, supported themselves primarily by farming and cattle breeding, two activities that are celebrated

in the folk calendar. Ritual songs, the regular accompaniment of family and calendrical festivals and customs, are also known as *calendar* (or *seasonal*), *festival*, and *ceremonial songs*.² They are inseparable from the life and work of the Macedonian peasant and are intimately bound up with his conception of magic, mythology, and religion. Ritual songs have an aesthetic function as well, serving to make ritual ceremonies more splendid, giving artistic value to an otherwise routine life and imparting an atmosphere of holiday cheer. Thus, Macedonian ritual songs can be divided into a number of distinct types.

New Year's songs are characterized by simple content and composition and most frequently are short verses dating from pagan times that express during the New Year season wishes for good health, happiness, wealth, success, and the like. New Year's songs are frequently sung in alternating recitative by a group of *koledari* (young men and boys). The thematic material of such songs is clearly influenced by religious and apocryphal legends, unconsciously modified by elements from daily life. Only quite rarely do they contain humor.

Lazar Day songs are performed by girls called *lazarki*, who are decorated with flowers and are dressed in white. The *lazarki* go from house to house singing songs to family members, for which they receive gifts. Like the New Year's songs, Lazar Day songs often address the person to whom the song is being sung and are punctuated by refrains and other characteristic compositional elements, usually blessings and requests for gifts. Love, family life, the idealization of village work, and luxuriant spring vegetation are the most common themes of these songs.

Easter songs are characterized by the presence of many elements from mythology. Mostly short, they are primarily dance songs and frequently contain dialogue.

In Macedonia, as elsewhere among the South Slavs, *George's Day* rituals preserve elements of an old pagan festival, inspired by the leafing out of spring vegetation, to insure fertility. They are, therefore, luxuriant in style.

Rain-making songs are usually sung by a group of girls during the dry summer months to bring rain. They are accompanied by rituals having marked magical elements. Supplication, of course, is dominant in them:

Give me, lord, a dark gray storm cloud,
that the fine rain may start raining,
that the black earth might be sprinkled,
that it might bear wheat and millet,
that the orphans might be nourished,
starving orphans, starving paupers.

² For detailed treatment of ritual songs in the context of Yugoslav folk lyric, see the article by Vladimir Bovan in the present collection.

Ritual songs also include *wedding songs* and *laments*. Wedding songs solemnize marriage, the central event in a person's life. From earliest times this ceremony was accompanied by appropriate rituals and songs, as is evident from the content of such songs, which arose before the development of a class-based society. We find references here to certain outmoded forms of marriage (e.g., purchase of brides, abduction), as well as elements of animism, magic, religious belief, and social and historical phenomena. These songs provide some idea of the world view of the patriarchal family. A clear illustration of social relations, these songs are the artistic embodiment of many elements of the wedding ritual, which was meant to insure a happy and harmonious life for the newlyweds as well as healthy offspring, the latter being the basic reason for marriage. Practically every moment of a peasant wedding is accompanied by a corresponding folk song, a fact that shows how strong belief in the fateful power of the word and of ritual was. Engagement of the bride, her leaving home with the uncertainty of a new life in an unfamiliar family, arrival of the wedding party to take her away, the celebration itself, the marriage ceremony, and other customs typical of a peasant wedding were preserved in songs of great artistic value. Particularly poetic are the songs sung on the occasion of the departure of the bride from her parents:

Give me your blessing, Oh darling father,
for I must leave you for a strange household,
for a strange household, and for strange people.
Though not my father, I'll call him father,
I'll call him father, he'll not say daughter.
Though not my mother, I'll call her mother,
I'll call her mother, she'll not say daughter.

Laments reveal the existence of early rituals connected with the occasion of death. These rituals, magical in character, were intended to gain the favor of the departed and to insure that they would pass on to a life after death. The songs that were sung during burial ceremonies are highly lyrical. Lacking fixed form and content, they depended on improvisation by the singer. Laments are characterized by their extreme emotional tension: grief is given full vent in the repetition of endless passages, which often lack stanzaic structure and almost never rhyme, and there is frequent use of exclamations and questions. An expression of important moments in a family's life, these songs show evidence of folk beliefs and sometimes social and historical reality.

Macedonians believed earlier that such creatures as dragons, fairies, and water nymphs were personifications of the forces of nature. Other mythological beings included the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the embodiments of human diseases such as plague, fever, and smallpox. Other beings existed who were capable of predicting individual fates. The

numerous *mythological songs*, evidence of primitive ideas and beliefs as well as of the artistic talents of the early Macedonians, were termed “fairy songs” by the Miladinov brothers (1861). Many of these songs dealt with love between a dragon and a maiden, or between a shepherd and a female dragon or a fairy, or with a duel between a village youth and a three-headed snake that had cut off the water supply, sought human sacrifice, and so on. Interactions between humans and mythological beings were described in great detail and in highly poetic language:

The young fairy was out dancing,
 was out dancing on the mountain.
 Her mother-in-law called to her:
 “Oh dear fairy, daughter-in-law,
 leave your dancing, come home quickly
 for your baby boy is crying.”
 “Mother-in-law, Oh dear mother!
 I will send a ewe for milking,
 to suckle my dear baby boy;
 I will send a gentle shower,
 to bathe my darling baby boy;
 I will send a gentle zephyr,
 to sing a lullaby to my baby boy.”

The fates, terrible diseases, and epidemics were often portrayed as ugly old hags. The fates appear in folk songs as three women at the cradle of a newborn child on the third day after birth and prophesy the baby’s future. The third fate’s prediction is the most decisive.

Closely related to the mythological songs are *religious-legendary songs* which deal with the lives of Christian deities and saints. The connection is clear in that characters of the latter type may often encounter those of the former category, as, for example, when St. George meets a dragon or the Virgin converses with fairies. There is, however, an essential difference between the two, clearly seen in the more realistic treatment of the subject matter of religious songs. Thus, for example, St. Nicholas, a favorite character also in Macedonian folk prose narrative, is portrayed as an old man engaged in normal activities.

The largest group of Macedonian folk songs are *work songs*, which are further subdivided into laborers’, harvest, shepherds’, migrant-workers’, craftsmen’s songs, and the like. Connected with the social and economic development of the Macedonian people, the first work songs reflected the basic activities of the Macedonians in the past: agriculture and cattle breeding. Later songs dealt with the more recent occupations of craftsmen and of migrant workers. Among the most popular work songs are harvest songs, which show great enthusiasm for gathering in the crops. Harvest is the peasant’s most important festival and the time of greatest exertion. From early morning until late at night the harvesters compete by

working quickly:

If I harvest more than you do,
I do not want your swift stallion,
it is you I want, brave young man,
brave young man, to be my husband.

Love between maiden and youth is a frequent theme of these work songs, with the victor in such competitions always being the beautiful, vigorous, and cheerful village girl. Social themes also appear in these songs. In character and content, laborers' songs are quite similar to harvest songs. Farm and field work on someone else's behalf, however, was more exhausting than harvesting. Shepherds' songs portray a relatively accurate picture of the Macedonian shepherd's life in the past: the shepherd worked for a crust of bread for wealthy farmers and peasants. These songs are especially rich in their stylistic expression. The craftsman was essential to Macedonian life since his wares were important to persons from all walks of life. The lovely maiden would wear "a fine chain around her fair neck," "about her slender waist a girdle," and so on. These songs portray the hard life of the artisan, his daily struggle to support himself, and his aspiration to earn enough to build his own house. They deal most often with the activities of goldsmiths, ironsmiths, tinsmiths, tailors, carpetmakers, bricklayers, and so on.

Among the most melancholy Macedonian folk songs are those of the migrant worker. Overflowing with nostalgia for his native land, they show the extreme social injustice that prevailed in Macedonia's past. They are an artistic portrayal of the mass exodus from the homeland in search of a more secure existence. Especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these workers traveled to neighboring Balkan and other European countries as well as to the Americas and Australia. The lot of the migrant worker and his family was especially sad, since the young husband in the prime of life was forced to set off alone for an unknown land for an indefinite period of time. Scenes of parting are extremely touching; for example:

The youth is starting out on his journey,
while his young bride stands near his horse, weeping,
bloody tears are falling as she entreats him:
"Do not go, darling, stay another year,
don't go, I beg you, to that far country!
Money, you know, darling, can always be earned,
But wasted youth cannot be regained!
A flower's fragrant while it is dewy,
A maid's for kissing while she is youthful!

A wasted youth, nostalgia for family, home, and country, and unfulfilled

desires and hopes are all present in almost every line of these songs.

It is no coincidence that *love songs* are the most numerous of all Macedonian folk songs since they are highly resistant to the “ravages of time” (Polenaković 1968:38). The basic motif is, of course, love between a young man and young woman. The songs depict yearning and passion and arousal and suffering, inspired by the mutual emotional involvement of the two lovers. Especially common is the motif of the plaintive lament for lost youth:

Foolish youth, youth is not for eternity,
youth flows onward, foolish youth, like a river.

One of the central themes of these songs is feminine beauty, which is almost always identified with health. A girl with a fair and rosy complexion should be healthy so that she can give life to equally healthy offspring, for marriage in folk song is a natural sequel to love. Physical beauty is generally equated with spiritual beauty and quite often idealized:

A young girl is like dew in the springtime:
the more dew there is, the more she'll flourish.

Macedonian love lyric avoids expressing the erotic directly since it is foreign to the patriarchal value system. Love lyric expresses some of the more important moral and ethical beliefs of early Macedonian society. For example, it is thought that first love will last until death and that the breaking of love's promises will bring unavoidable and well-deserved punishment. For that reason songs about one's “first love” are sung with great respect. The largest number of variants in this genre center on the inseparability of lovers, a theme dealt with dramatically, especially in ballads. Although the main characters and their relationships are poetically idealized, they live in a completely realistic setting. Social injustice and the uncertainty of life during the feudal period frequently were reasons for the forced parting of lovers:

Young bride so dark and beautiful,
why go so weary to the well?
Do your clay pitchers weigh you down,
or does your necklace weigh you down?
“My pitchers do not weigh me down,
nor does my necklace weigh me down,
rather my true love weighs me down.
My true love is in Bitola,
behind those accursed prison walls,
with heavy fetters on his feet,
with a fine chain, *lele*, round his hands!”

Subjective as it is, the love song gives a fairly accurate picture of folk life, for love is found everywhere, out on the burning-hot meadow and at the cool spring, in narrow alleys and on wide verandas, at the festive dance and at lively parties, beside the sparkling well and at the village fence, in the bustling market place and at the dark grave.

The natural successor to the love song is the *song about family life*. The marriage contract, which in folk song is the natural conclusion to true love, signals the start of family life, characterized by a number of complex relationships between spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, and so on. Almost all of these songs bear the stamp of the patriarchal family, whose greatest wealth is its children. Some of these songs clearly idealize family life. This is no coincidence, since in feudal Macedonia, where there was no independent sociopolitical life, the family unit, the only form of social autonomy, resisted the denationalizing efforts of the regime. Songs of family life centered on women in the roles of wife and mother or often daughter-in-law. Women held a fairly responsible position in the family circle and were often unhappy. The wife was expected to make possible the continuation of the family line into which she had married. More children were desired so that the family would have a better opportunity to maintain itself; consequently a childless wife was criticized by the folk poets:

“Brother-in-law, the youngest one,
 what fault, then, has he found in me,
 that he should wish to drive me out?”
 “Sister-in-law, young sister mine,
 this is the fault he’s found in you:
 nine years already are you wed,
 where is the cradle at your head,
 where’s the baby boy in your arms?”

A childless wife is despised even though she always behaves properly toward her husband, takes care of all his needs, keeps the house in the best of order, and is the main worker in the field. On the other hand, the mother’s most joyful and comforting moments, brightening her daily exhausting labor, are those spent with her children as she sings lullabies and feeds and educates them. The relationship between brother and sister is portrayed with particular warmth. The brother is his sister’s staunch defender, dearer to her than her beloved. Family songs often deal with the theme of the sister dying of grief for her brothers, forgetting her own children, or sacrificing herself for a brother. Maternal love is also one of the major themes of these songs; it is depicted as elevated and pure above all other forms of love, as is stated simply and credibly in the song “Sar Mountain Has Split”:

True lovers grieve, true lovers grieve for three long months,
and sisters grieve, and sisters grieve for three long years,
but mothers grieve, but mothers grieve right to the grave.

Humorous folk songs are also known as funny, joking, or satirical songs, depending on whether their humor is a means or an end. Humorous songs are directed without insult against human inadequacies and social injustice. Laziness or an unhealthy attitude toward work is frequently satirized in humorous songs. Other topics for sarcasm are common human shortcomings such as stupidity, timidity, miserliness, dishonesty, pride, and, above all, a tendency to drink to excess:

Tintana, maiden Tintana!
Are you done spinning all your wool?
“Yes, I have spun a spindleful,
carried it to the inn to sell,
bartered it there for cheap red wine,
sold it for worthless rakia.”

Also subject to ridicule are the desire of older people to appear young and the untidiness and gluttony of women. The folksinger also satirizes the upper classes, particularly the clergy.

Laments, mythological, and haiduk songs show a mixture of lyric and epic elements in Macedonian folk poetry. But folk ballads and romances display most clearly the artistic fusion of lyric and epic elements. In fact, in motif and expression folk ballads and romances are primarily lyric, while in structure they are predominantly epic. The basic epic plot of the folk ballad is interwoven with a lyric mood and intensive dramatics. Folk ballads most often deal with love, family life, battle, or mythological themes. They contain fantastic motifs and preternatural beings, and therefore are very close to mythological folk songs. Ballads are characterized by the subtlest contrasting mixture of centuries-old fantasy and everyday reality. Thus, we find therein traces of animistic elements: birds talk, people are transformed into plants and animals, and vice versa. There are mythological and religious beings, and revenants as well. Action in this unusual world very often leads to a tragic denouement.

Folk romances are closer than ballads to lyric songs. Their subject matter is cheerful and they never end tragically. They most often contain love motifs and dramatic passages, but the narrative pace is smooth. Sometimes their romantic content features lyrical repetitions, which prolong the action in order to intensify the emotive character of certain passages. There are melodies for many romances and ballads, which are performed vocally and to instrumental accompaniment.

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