

**BOOK REVIEW: *ENGENDERING SONG: SINGING & SUBJECTIVITY AT PRESIPA ALBANIAN WEDDINGS*. SUGARMAN, JANE C., 1997. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS. \$29.95. XIX+395 (+20) + COMPACT DISK.**

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At the beginning of her excellent book, JS asks what she refers to as "the most obvious questions" about Prespa Albanian weddings: "How is it that these families have developed such a strong sense of place? What is it about weddings that makes them so central to the life of the community? And why is it so important that everyone sing at such a celebration?" (7). Her answer is a sophisticated monograph that combines anthropological theory, thick ethnography, musicology, and ethnomusicology elaborately interwoven like the different melody and drone lines of a Prespa Albanian wedding song. Her rich material will be of interest not only to scholars in these fields but also to linguists, Balkanists, Albanologists, students of Macedonia, Albania, and former Yugoslavia, diaspora studies, folklore, and others. Moreover, the book is accompanied by a 70-minute CD with 24 tracks of the songs and music about which she is writing, most of them field or community recordings not otherwise available. The CD itself will be a valuable addition to the collection of anyone interested in Albanian or Balkan folk music. The result is a real tour de force. By situating her extensive data firmly in anthropological theory, JS shows how Prespa Albanian wedding songs -- "the principal means through which individuals participate in a wedding" (3) -- negotiate, inscribe, and reproduce social relations and identities in a complex society with a strong basis in tradition and patriarchy.

The book is divided into eight chapters (1-345) followed by a glossary of about 60 items (347-51), notes (353-72), a bibliography of about 250 items (373-86), a discography of 12 items (386), and an index (387-95). There are also two sections of high-quality photographs that are integral to illustrating the text and beautifully capture different points in the wedding rituals (ten each from Prespa [1980-95] and from North America [1985-94]), 23 musical examples (notations), six tables, and six figures.

The first chapter (1-39), entitled "Approaching Prespa Singing," provides the basic historical, ethnographic, and theoretical background. Her fieldwork concentrates on

families with connections to three villages in the former Ottoman *nahiye* of Lower Prespa, currently (and also before the administrative reforms of 1996) a part of the *Resen* administrative district in the southwestern part of the Republic of Macedonia, which is the area in this region where JS regards the type of polyphonic singing she is studying to be more firmly established. Although a large number of these families now live in North America and elsewhere, JS quite justifiably frames her work in terms of "the musical practices of families living in two distinct locales who nevertheless regard themselves as part of a single diasporic community" (16). Although never glossing over differences between the Prespa village and the North American city, it is not until the final chapter that she concentrates on changes wrought by the diasporic experience.

Each of the subsequent chapters begins with a description of a specific wedding event, including song texts accompanying it, followed by more general discussion and critical analysis, which also make use of illustrative song texts. Her work thus creates its own polyphony of ethnography and theory. In this manner, JS provides a complete description of the main part of a Prespa wedding celebration over the course of seven days and also elaborates a description of Prespa social life. The theoretical sections build on both foregoing and subsequent events, and therefore JS suggests that the reader reread the initial section of each chapter after finishing the entire book so that the analysis can have its full effect.

The remaining chapter titles and the events they are built around are the following:

2. Singing as a Social Activity (Singing at the Groom's) (40-78)
3. Singing as a Gendered Activity (Women's Singing at the Bride's) (79-119)
4. The "Order" of Weddings (The Bride Is Adorned) (120-54)
5. The Prespa System (Men's Singing at the Groom's) (155-204)

6. Singing and the Discourse of Honor (A Men's Konak at the Groom's) (205-26)

7. Singing as the Practice of Patriarchy (The Groom is Bathed and is Shaved) (227-85)

8. Emergent Subjectivities (The Bride is Taken) (286-345)

Chapters Two and Three discuss Prespa singing per se: The structures of the songs, specifics of vocal production, repertoire, and differences based on gender. Chapter Four describes and analyzes the structure of Prespa Albanian social occasions in general and weddings in particular. Chapter Five presents the Prespa "system", i.e. social order, notions of honor and morality, constitutions of personhood and identity. In Chapters Six and Seven JS moves from her interpretive focus on lived experience and the community's articulation of that experience to a critical analysis of how singing structures experience and engenders those who sing. Her final chapter, which is both the climax of the wedding celebration and the locus where the disjunction between Prespa and North America is fully articulated, investigates new forms of subjectivity emerging from Prespa Albanian experience in North America. Particularly striking is the tendency among the younger generation in the direction of greater similarity among men's and women's singing styles and topics and away from "constructing though their singing the image of two innately and profoundly different genders, inhabiting polarized domains of activity and concern" (339). Also noteworthy, although only mentioned in passing, is the emerging hegemony of Geg (North Albanian) songs as symbols of Albanian ethnicity among families from former Yugoslavia (345), including those from Prespa, despite the fact that the promotion of Tosk (South Albanian) songs in pre-1989 Albania gave Prespa Albanians the sense that their songs were especially "Albanian" (77).

From a linguistic point of view, JS has done an superior job of rendering the Prespa dialect of Albanian accurately and intelligibly. Her translations are sensitive to nuance -- out of literally thousands of lines of text, I found only one omitted word that I would have translated (*tëmjera* 'wretched, poor, unhappy' [9]) -- and one grammatical error ('girl' is the subject and *tambura* is the direct object [54]), and I found only two typographical errors (*Kanhov* 1990 should be 1900 [353], Montenegrin should be Montenegrin [365]).

There is one minor matter, however, that I would have preferred to see treated with greater consistency, namely that of etymologies, and, connected to that, the relationship of Prespa Albanian terminology and the usage to those of other ethnic groups in Macedonia. Although these concerns are entirely peripheral to JS's central theses and by no means detract from the tremendous significance of her accomplishment and the solidity of her arguments, analyses, and conclusions, -- she is, after all, concerned with Prespa Albanian wedding songs and their relation to gender and subjectivity -- nonetheless, the lack of consistency in etymologizing and comparison with other Balkan societies could give the impression of a purposeful distancing of Prespa Albanian culture from its surroundings and immediate contacts, although this is not the intent.

In general JS does a good job of addressing regional commonalities (e.g., an excellent and detailed summary of shared musical styles among groups of Albanians, Aromanians, Macedonians, and Greeks (356 n. 5), and she is sensitive to the delicacies of articulating issues of convergence without jumping to unsupported historical conclusions (71, 357 n. 10). Her comment on the role of historical (men's) songs in socializing the various modern Balkan peoples to their respective modern national loyalties in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is right on the mark (257). Often she gives Macedonian and other Balkan and Mediterranean (usually Arabic) terminological and/or conceptual equivalents (e.g., 363 nn. 16, 17). Nonetheless, the fact that JS has gone to the trouble of supplying the Arabic and Persian etyma of many of the Turkish words borrowed into Albanian -- in addition to the fact that these words are identified as Turkisms in the first place -- suggests that JS is attempting to place these aspects of Prespa Albanian culture (or at least their terminology) in a broader context. This is admirable but not consistently carried out. Thus, for example, *bakllava* (347), *bereqet* (247), and *Ramazan* (350) are etymologized directly from Arabic with no indication that they arrived via Turkish, while for the Arabo-Persian Turkisms *behar* (136), *daulle* (141, 348), *gurbet* (348), *lafë* (62), *lokum* (349), and *sünnet* (59) only the Turkish *etymon* is given. The term *sinitorë* (141, 351) is not etymologized, but it is based on Turkish *sini* 'tray', itself from Persian. The one word of Slavic origin in the glossary, *gosti* 'evening gathering to honor relative' is not identified as a loan (348). On the other hand,

*xhaxha* 'paternal uncle or male first cousin' is mistakenly identified as "probably from Slavic *djadja*." (174, 351). The Slavic from *djadja* is East Slavic and does not occur as such in the Balkans, and the source is most likely Turkish *amca* 'paternal uncle' (ultimately from Arabic '*amm* 'paternal uncle'; the appellative *xha* is probably original and not a shortening [180], and the etymological complications are probably due to a combination of expressive reduplication and taboo deformation that need not concern us here.)

On a few occasions, JS looks to Turkish or Arabic when there is a Macedonian or Turkish parallel right in the Prespa Albanians' own backyard, so to speak. For example, the use of *këndôj*, whose primary meaning is 'sing (both of humans and animals)' in extended meanings such as 'be happy' and 'read' has an exact parallel in Macedonian *pee* for both primary and secondary meanings (the fact that 'read' is now archaic is irrelevant to etymological considerations). Although Turkish *oku-* can also mean both 'sing' and 'read', its other main meaning is 'call out', it does not have the meaning of 'be happy', and it is not used for animals (*öt-* is used for that). The association between singing and reading is clearly connected with liturgy as the primary contact of peasants with literacy in earlier times, regardless of religion. Thus, the Prespa Albanian use of *këndoj* has an exact parallel in Macedonian, not in Turkish (cf. 68-70, 356 n. 7). The suggestion (183, 362 n. 11) that the Albanian use of *mënd* 'mind', to mean '[human] reason, intelligence', is a translation of Arabic '*aql* rather than Turkish *akıl* or a native or shared Balkan development, although not JS's, is nonetheless cited by her and is completely unjustified in view of the Turkish semantic complex and the fact that the Turks and Turkish were the vehicle for the importation of Arabo-Persian Muslim culture and lexicon into the Balkans.

On several occasions (4, 23, 135-37, 370 n. 29) JS comments on her "impressions from Macedonia of the marked differences between Albanians and the Slavic groups among whom they live." (23). Leaving to one side the thorny issue of ethnolinguistic terminology versus self ascription (JS refers to "Slavic-speaking Muslims" [11], although their language is the same Macedonian as their Christian neighbors, but "Albanian-speaking Roma" [9] although many such groups call themselves "Gjupci", [etymologically cognate with English 'Gypsies'], and consider themselves to be an ethnic group separate from the Roma; also [page 5] there are

some Orthodox Albanian-speakers in Macedonia), JS's observation about Turkish-speaking Muslim families from Prespa that "their system is virtually indistinguishable from that of *Presparë*" (371 n. 9), suggests that the issue may be a basic Muslim/Christian rather than Albanian/Macedonian cultural opposition.

Moreover, it is arguable that at least some of the differences are related to the fact that as the state-forming majority, even rural Macedonian Christians have been subjected to more "modernizing" pressures of urban origin since World War Two. In the early 1970's, I had occasion to observe that Macedonian Christians in plains villages were already considerably differentiated in their behavior from those in isolated mountain villages, and those from the mountain villages observed the type of gender/age based "system" described by JS (185). This is not to say that Prespa Albanian society is not unique in many respects. The deliberate exclusion of singing from work activities and restriction to socializing (58) is a case in point, but JS herself (194, 337) points out differences between Lower Prespa Albanians and those from Albanian-speaking villages in nearby Upper Prespa that suggest complex processes of contact and accommodation which, while justifiably beyond the scope of her study, suggest many rich avenues of further investigation.

None of these considerations detracts from the tremendous accomplishment represented by JS's work. Prespa Albanian society is unique, richly textured, and inaccessible to outsiders, and JS has made an immensely significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge in both her collection and analysis of a fantastically rich trove of data and insights. What emerges is a warm, sympathetic, and finely drawn presentation and analysis of a specific practice (wedding singing) that illuminates an entire society (Prespa Albanians) and more (the Balkan and Mediterranean regions). JS has demonstrated effectively that Prespa singing does not merely express, reflect or articulate but rather itself constructs, constitutes, maintains, and transforms gender in particular and social formation in general.