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When The Vilić Brothers Married Off Their Sister

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When the Vilić brothers married off their sister,
They sacrificed three hundred sheep,
Built three new mausoleums,
Circumcised three hundred young boys,
That their sister might cross the mountain
alive and well.
When their sister had crossed over the
mountain alive and well,
She crossed over the mountain, and went into
the field,
A freezing rain mixed with sleet struck her,
The whole wedding party fled back home,
The cherished one was left alone in the
middle of the field.
On the cherished one were nine brocade
coats embroidered with gold,
And the tenth garment was a silken shirt.
All nine coats over the shirt froze,
The thin shirt over her white body,
The yellow boots on her hennaed feet,
The rings on her white hands,
And the necklaces around her white throat,

The gold veil [1] covering her honey-sweet lips.
She walked to her intended's palace,
When she reached the white palace,
Out came her aged mother-in-law.
She didn't say to her: „Are you frozen from
the cold?"
Instead she said: „How beautiful you are!"

Out came her young sister-in-law. [2]
She didn't say to her: „Are you frozen from
the cold?"
But looked at the embroidery all down her
shirt,

Out came her young sister-in-law, [3]
She carried her young child, a babe in arms,
Then she said to her child:
„Darling, ask your aunt if she is frozen
from the cold?“
When the bride understood these words,
She stuck her hand in her pocket,
And pulled out a handkerchief embroidered
with silver,
In the handkerchief were a thousand
ducats:
„Take this for yourself, small, defenseless
child,
Tear this handkerchief, and remember
your aunt!“
She went to the upper balcony,
And fell onto the soft cushions.
They thought that she had fainted,
But the cherished one had parted with
her soul.

(Maglajlić, br. 46/1995: 255-256)

Maglajlić, Muijib. *Usmena balada Bošnjaka*. Sarajevo: Preporod, 1995.

Translated with notes by Masha Belyavski-Frank, DePauw University, Greencastle, IN

Notes

1. Peča is a small piece of cloth, which covers the lower part of the face, and was part of the larger covering for Moslem women worn outside the home. ↩
2. Zaovica is one’s husband’s sister. ↩
3. Jetrvica is the wife of one’s husband’s brother. ↩

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