

## **Female Characters in Bosniak Oral Epic Poetry**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The main focus of this study is to emphasize the importance of raising awareness of Bosnian cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations. Additional reason for this study is neglected position of female characters in Bosniak epic poetry that should be further explored due to its significant role. The third reason for choosing this topic is the fact that profiles of female characters can help us understand general position of women in Islam and in the Ottoman period. Namely, this type of poetry allows us to see this position in rather different light, which is not the case with other types of literature.

Methods used in this study: descriptive method, content analysis, comparative method and method of ideal types.

The female characters in this study are: hero's mother, sweetheart, fairies or Christian blood sister, hero's sister and heroine. Each of these characters reflects typical and autonomous characteristics of women in the epic poem. The mother figure is the main female character in these songs. The sweetheart loves her hero and sacrifices herself for his love. The hero's sister, Bosniak girl, is very brave and loyal. The Christian girl is ready to betray her own brother for love of Bosniak hero. The fairies are mythological creatures playing important role in these songs and mirroring old Balkan tradition of Bosniaks. A separate chapter is focused on female beauty. This chapter is relevant for the study as untraditionally speaks about female beauty - the beauty is approached in an ancient way.

This study has proven that the roles of female characters are not marginal, but relevant when it comes to development of oral epic poetry. Women are active participants to the events, not only observers.