

LIS 663: Metadata: Description and Access

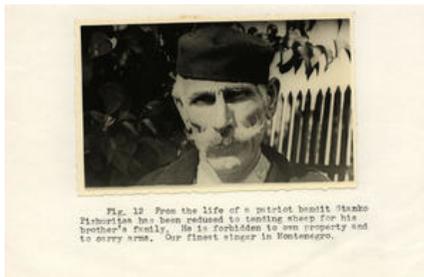
Rick Block

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Assignment 2: Dublin Core

student: Cedomir Kovacev

kovacev@earthlink.net



The caption reads: "From the life of a patriot bandit. Stanko Pitzuritsa has been reduced to tending sheep for his brother's family. He is forbidden to own property and to carry arms. Our finest singer in Montenegro." (Milman Parry Collection, Harvard University)

While browsing the Harvard University Digital Collections (<http://digitalcollections.harvard.edu/>) I ran into the link to the Milman Parry Collection (<http://chs119.harvard.edu/mpc/index.html>) that was accompanied by the photograph of a man who looked like my grandfather. I recognized typical features of a person from Montenegro, the area in former Yugoslavia where my mother comes from and where I was born.

The collection includes recordings as well as texts of heroic songs which have unique cultural importance for this region. Professor Milman Parry did an extraordinary job with collecting and preserving the tradition that is slowly dying out. I am not aware of existence of any such collection in former Yugoslavia. Curators also emphasize that collection features works that attest to vital cross-cultural currents in the region, the fact that is of particular relevance today.

<dc:title>Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature On-Line
</dc:title>

<dc:creator>Milman, Parry, 1902-1935</dc:creator>

<dc:creator>Lord, Albert B. (Albert Bates), 1912-1991
</dc:creator>

<dc:description.abstract>The Milman Parry Collection is the largest single repository of South Slavic heroic song in the world. It comprises the following separate collections. All of these are currently housed in Widener Library, Room C.

The texts and recordings of oral literature, including both epic and lyric songs, some stories, and conversations with singers and others, made by Professor Milman Parry of the Department of the Classics at Harvard University during the summer of 1933 and from June 1934 to September 1935, in Yugoslavia. Over 3,500 double-sided aluminum discs, with a playing time of ca. 4 min. each. Transcriptions of these songs are contained in ninety-five notebooks (14 cm. x 14 cm., 120 sides in each); dictated songs are contained in ca. 800 notebooks (14 cm. x 14 cm., 70 sides in each).

The Albanian Collection of some one hundred dictated epic texts was made by Lord in the north Albanian mountains in the Fall of 1937. These texts are contained in twelve notebooks (14 cm. x 14 cm., 200 sides in each.)

The Lord Collection consists of epic texts collected by him in Yugoslavia in the summers of 1950, 1951, and 1966. The last of these is little known, but contains Christian songs from the mountain ranges from Nis to Prijepolje. These songs are contained on thirty-five reel tapes (acetate).

The Lord and Bynum Collection consists of texts collected by Lord and Bynum in Yugoslavia in the summers of 1962-1965 and 1967.</dc:description.abstract>

<dc:publisher>Harvard University Library</dc:publisher>

<dc:contributor>Harvard University Library</dc:contributor>

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<dc:coverage.spatial scheme="TGN">Crna Gora</dc:coverage.spatial>

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<dc:rights.accessRights>Accessible freely</dc:rights.access-Rights>

One of the things I wrestled with was the Creator element. The collection is named after professor Milman Parry who initiated the project and did a lot of field work. But the significant portion of the collection includes works by Albert Lord who later completed Parry's plan. After some deliberation I decided to include Albert Lord as the Creator, as opposed to having him under Contributor element.

The description of the collection under the refined Description element was taken from “An Introduction to the Collection” (<http://chs119.harvard.edu/mpc/about/intro.html>). The description may be too long but I felt that it gives a fairly nice overview of the collection.

The Language and Coverage elements were, given the subject, somewhat difficult to define. The country professor Parry visited does not exist anymore. And, for example, ISO-639 standard does not provide for “Bosnian” language. Serbo-Croatian would be my choice but the standard does not provide for that option either. I decided to use the Language element four times for English, Serbian, Albanian and Slavic (the last one should cover dialects in Montenegro and Bosnia).

The Coverage elements list regions (and today countries) where recordings took place. “Bosna i Hercegovina” and “Crna Gora” are original names designated as preferred names by Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names.

I understand that some of the decisions inevitably have political overtones and those are simply impossible to avoid.