

Margaret Masson Hardie Hasluck (1885-1948)

By Sharon R. Stocker

Classicist, folklorist, geographer, linguist, epigrapher, and archaeologist was born June 18, 1885 in Aberdeenshire, Scotland and died October 18, 1948 in Dublin, Ireland.

Margaret Masson Hardie began her primary education at Elgin Academy in Morayshire and then attended Aberdeen University where she received a first-class in Classical Honors (M.A. 1907). After passing entrance exams, Hardie was accepted into Newnham College, Cambridge, in 1907. In addition to entering Cambridge with a Fullerton scholarship, she was College Scholar in 1907 and Arthur Hugh Clough Scholar in 1910. Eleanor Sidgwick, one of the founders of Newnham College in 1871, was principal during Hardie's tenure. Fellow students included M. E. Holland, Ka Cox, D. Lamb, Nora Kershaw and Hope Merrlees. The economic historian Eileen Power, of Girton College, tutored Newnham students during Hardie's residence at Cambridge. Also present at Newnham were the Cornfords, Frances and Francis, who were married in 1909 at the beginning of her third year of studies.

Hardie lived in Clough Hall, at that time under the supervision of Jane Ellen Harrison, who had returned to Cambridge in 1898 when she received the First Research Fellowship from Newnham College. Hardie was taught by Harrison, who was resident lecturer in the primitive origins of Greek Religion and also the director of archaeological studies in Part II of the Classical Tripos. Harrison devoted a great deal of energy to the training of her students and apparently formed close working relationships with many of them. It is not obvious that there were close bonds between Harrison and Hardie as there certainly were between Harrison, Jesse Stewart, and Hope Merrlees, but in a letter dated October 30, 1912, Harrison did ask Gilbert Murray to advise her how to deal with Hardie's difficulties at the British School at Athens: Hardie's request to participate in an excavation had been sidetracked because she was not officially a Cambridge graduate. In general it is also clear that Harrison exerted considerable influence on the intellectual development of her students: for the Tripos she recommended they familiarize themselves with Robertson Smith's Religion of the Semites, Maine's Ancient Law, and Oldenberg's Kultus and Mythos. The influence of the Cambridge "Ritualist School," which combined archaeology, anthropology, and ethnology, and in which Jane Ellen Harrison was a major player, can be seen in Hardie's later work on contemporary Albanian folklore, ritual and myth.

Hardie finished her formal education at Cambridge University in 1911 with first class honors in both parts of the Classical Tripos. She did not take a degree from Cambridge as women were not eligible to receive them until 1948. Because of this, she also was not recognized as a member of the university, a fact which later caused problems for her at the British School at Athens by the vice-chancellor of Cambridge University. With the aid of a Wilson Travelling Fellowship, she proceeded to Athens and there attended the British School in 1911-12 as School Student of the year, the first woman to receive this honor. Fellow students at the school in 1911 included the eminent

student of British literature. M. W. W. Tillyard. historian A. J. Toynbee, and archaeologists M. S. Thompson and A. J. B. Wace.

In the summer of 1911 it was Hardie's intention to participate in excavations sponsored by the British School, at ancient Akanthos (modern Turkish Datcha) near Knidos, but there were immediate objections in the Managing Committee of the British School that the participation of women in excavations within the Ottoman Empire was inappropriate. In the event, however, although a permit was received, the outbreak of war prevented excavation, and Hardie instead accompanied Sir William Ramsey to his excavations at Pisidian Antioch. Soon after, under his supervision, she drafted a report on the shrine of Mên Askaēnos, then recently discovered by Ramsey, which was published in the following year as "The Shrine of Mên Askaēnos at Pisidian Antioch," in the Journal of Hellenic Studies 32, 1912, 111-150. Also in 1911, Hardie made a special study of the topography and inscriptions of Izmir, intending subsequently to examine relevant testimonia firsthand, a goal never realized because of the outbreak of Greek revolts in Turkish islands of the Aegean. Her investigations did, however, lead to the publication of an article, "Dionysus at Smyrna," in the Annual of the British School at Athens 19, 1912-13, 89-94.

The following year Hardie married Frederick William Hasluck, Assistant Director (1911-15) and Librarian (1906-15) of the British School and a fellow Cambridge student. As a wedding present, Hardie chose a visit to Konya (ancient Iconium) from the options offered her by her husband, and the couple spent the spring of 1913 there together. (As a result of this visit, Frederick became interested in the interplay of Christianity and Islam within the Turkish Empire, a subject which occupied him for the rest of his life and later had a great influence on the direction of Margaret's research.) The Haslucks were based in Athens and, over the next four years, had the opportunity to travel widely together in the southwest Balkans: it was these travels that first sparked Hardie's passionate interest in and love of the Balkans.

Hasluck resigned his post at the British School in 1915, but the couple remained in Athens. After the outbreak of World War I they worked together at the British Legation and assisted British wartime intelligence operations. But in 1916 life took a tragic turn and Frederick became seriously ill. Margaret accompanied her husband to Switzerland where he entered a tuberculosis sanatorium, only to die four years later on February 22, 1920.

After Frederick's death Hasluck-Hardie moved to England and began the difficult and painstaking task of editing his three uncompleted books: Athos and Its Monasteries, 1924; Letters on Religion and Folklore, 1926; a compilation of correspondence with R. M. Dawkins; and Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans, 1929. In England she became a member of the Geographical Society in 1924, and later wrote articles for its journal, assuming her husband's surname and subsequently publishing as Margaret Hasluck. The two volumes of Christianity and Islam, born of their honeymoon journey to Konya, took four years to complete and brought about a redirection of her scholarly interests. Hasluck also traveled widely during this time (in the 20s) and embarked on new projects of her

own in western Macedonia, as a Wilson Travelling Fellow of Aberdeen University (1921-23; 1926-28), and in Albania as a Leverhulme Research Fellow (1935-37). She became a friend and correspondent of Edith Durham.

In the process of editing her husband's work Hasluck acquired a wealth of information about contemporary Balkan folklore and religious practices. This legacy is evident in her future ethnographical research on topics as varied as tribal laws, gypsy society, and Albanian vendettas and magic. In the next two decades of her life, she developed as a folklorist, linguist and ethnographer, reveling particularly in the study of contemporary Albanian peasant life.

Hasluck first crossed the border into Albania in 1919 while doing anthropological research in Macedonia (J. Amery, Sons of the Eagle: A Study in Guerilla War, 1948, 27). Later, after extensive traveling in the southern Balkans, she decided to set up a permanent base in Albania and built a substantial house in the picturesque town of Elbasan, where she lived for 13 years. Elbasan, medieval in atmosphere and oriental in character, with its narrow cobbled streets and tall cypress trees, was Hasluck's home until 1939, when, because of her intelligence work during World War I, she was forced by the Italian invasion and the flight of King Zog to depart from Albania for good.

Margaret's years in Elbasan were pleasant and fruitful. A constant stream of visitors, both foreign and Albanian, appear to have made their way to Margaret's house. Travelers, like Bernard Newman (Albanian Back-Door, 1936, 209), who passed through Albania often commented on the "English-speaking person in Elbasan whose fame has penetrated far beyond her retreat." Newman noted that Margaret was a legend throughout Albania in addition to being the world's foremost authority on Albanian folk-lore and the Albanian language; she was also a "definite personality" of great culture who wielded "a great influence in Elbasan." The Albanian government was insistent that Hasluck should have a soldier as a personal bodyguard; although she repeatedly argued to the contrary and tried to refuse their offer, she finally accepted the guard but used him as a butler: her "bodyguard," when Newman was present, "handled round cherry wine with the dignity of a Jeeves," (p. 210). It is clear from his and others' accounts that Hasluck genuinely cared about the well-being of all classes of Albanians and women in particular as well as the welfare of the country as a whole.

Several notable scholars who encountered Mrs. Hasluck commented on their experiences with her. Patrick Lee Fermour remembers her as a stately woman of immense energy, kindness and good humor who was wont to dress in long Victorian style skirts (personal communication). He also noted her "reckless courage" and fierce determination that was manifested in her living alone as a single woman in an extremely foreign, masculine culture. N. G. L. Hammond describes her as: "a very warm-hearted, compassionate person who helped many peasant families and retained their affections." He encountered her in a monastery in Elbasan, where she invited him to spend the night and listen with her to a troubadour she was expecting to arrive ("Travels in Epirus and South Albania Before World War II," Ancient World 8, 1983, 26-27). R. M. Dawkins notes her "unbounded energy" and her "sound and solid manner of work" ("Obituary," in

Folk-Lore 60, 1949, 291-292). Hasluck is also fondly recalled in memoirs of SOE British soldiers sent into Albania during World War II. One of them, D. Smiley, remembers her as “an elderly lady, the widow of a famous archaeologist, with greying hair swept back into a bun and a pink complexion with bright blue eyes....Full of energy and enthusiasm, she was totally dedicated to her beloved Albania” (Albanian Assignment 1984, 8).

The years in Albania were academically fruitful and the research Margaret conducted ultimately appeared in scores of professional publications. The targets of her investigations were admirably diverse, including the evil eye; the basilopita (New Year’s Cake); witchcraft; the Albanian vendetta; Christian influence on the religion of Moslems resident in Greece; the practice of Islamic religion in Albania; gypsies, Vlachs, and dervish sects in Macedonia, Albanian and Serbia; ancient Greek survivals in Contemporary Albanian society (e.g., the bride price and the Oedipus myth); and the body of Albanian tribal law known as the Canon of Lek Dukagjin. Amidst such a flurry of productivity she managed to collect several hundred folk-tales “from school-children in various parts of Albania” (S. E. Mann, 1950, 80), and so authored the first English-Albanian grammar and reader (Kendine Anglisht-Shqip, 1932) which included 16 Albanian folk-stories presented in both English and Albanian and two grammars with vocabularies. She was assisted in this last endeavor by the distinguished Albanian scholar and patriot Lef Nosi, who also resided in Elbasan. Nosi “had taken a prominent part in the creation of an independent Albania after the First World War” (D. Smiley, Albanian Assignment, 1984, 9)” and during her time in Albania, Hasluck developed a particularly close friendship with him.

In addition to articles published in scholarly journals, Hasluck also wrote pieces for the general public that were published in popular periodicals such as British Weekly, Discovery, Nature, and Everywoman. A multitude of newspaper articles she authored appeared in The Times, Illustrated London News, and the Manchester Guardian. She served from 1932-36 as the Albanian correspondent for the periodical Great Britain and the East. During her residency in Albania, Hasluck also wrote numerous book reviews for a variety of publications that dealt with the southern Balkans.

After her husband’s death and her departure from the British School, little of Hasluck’s research was directly concerned with archaeology. Important exceptions are three articles published in The Geographical Journal, 87, 1936, 338-347; “A Historical Sketch of the Fluctuations of Lake Ostrovo in West Macedonia,” and “Causes of the Fluctuation in the Level of Lake Ostrovo, West Macedonia,” 88, 1937, 446-457. What is extraordinary about these studies of the modern Lake Vegoriti is the confidence she displays in weaving together into a convincing study of landscape evolution diverse strands of evidence drawn from archaeological field survey and excavation, from the accounts of earlier travelers and ancient sources, and from on-the-spot observations of topography.

World War II brought a sudden interruption to Hasluck’s studies. She left Albania in the spring of 1939 when Mussolini annexed the country. She served first in the British Embassy in Athens (1939-41) where she established, and was then advisor for, the British

Section D operatives who comprised the “Albanian office.” Her job was to make contact with Albanians who would assist the British in resisting an Axis takeover in the Balkans. In particular, she was charged with opening up communication with the Tosks in southern Albania. She was well qualified for work in the “Albanian office” since few “foreigners can ever have known Albania and the Albanians as thoroughly as she did” (R. M. Dawkins, 1949, 292). In spite of her efforts, however, much of the British organization promoting revolt in Albania collapsed after the Germans overwhelmed the Yugoslav army in the spring of 1941.

In the summer of 1941, after conditions became unsafe in Athens, Hasluck replaced Colonel Frank Stirling in Constantinople. For almost two years “the responsibilities of observing the Albanian situation, keeping touch with the exiles and seeking to re-establish communications with Albania devolved upon her alone” (J. Amery, Sons of the Eagle: A Study in Guerilla War, 1948, 48). Among the British, she alone remained convinced that a revolt against the Axis invaders was being planned, and virtually single-handedly she kept interest in the country alive by dispatching to British HQ in Cairo a continuous series of telegrams, memoranda, and reports on activities and conditions in Albania. Hasluck then was transferred to Cairo where she served as Special Operations Executive expert on Albania (1942-45). Among other duties, when it finally became clear towards the end of 1942 that guerilla bands had formed in the mountains, she assisted British Military Intelligence by briefing British liaison officers dispatched to Albania to direct this resistance against the Germans.

Hasluck was in charge of the production of propaganda leaflets dropped into Albania. In addition, she gave British infiltrators an intensive course in Albanian folklore, customs, and psychology (*ibid.*, p. 50). She was fondly referred to as “Fanny” by the British members of Section D, later Force 133, and the men she trained; D. Smiley affectionately named his Albanian mule “Fanny” after her (Albanian Assignment, 1984, 8). She also wrote personal notes of introduction in both Albanian and English for soldiers sent to Albania. One such example reads as follows:

Friends of mine in Albania Lt. Hibbert who brings you this letter is an Englishman and my friend. As you received me well when I asked you for a pretty folk-story or questioned you about the Bektashis or the Kanun of Lek the Great, please receive this Englishman also, like the hospitable people you are. Friends that I never forget, I send you my best wishes (R. Hibbert, Albania’s National Liberation Struggle, 1991, 88).

Hasluck remained behind in Cairo when Force 133 moved to Bari in April of 1944, but kept close touch with the Albanian section throughout the remainder of the war. Diagnosed with leukemia in 1945, she left Cairo for Cyprus hoping that her health would improve in the more favorable climate. It was here that she learned of the death of her close friend, Lef Nosi, who, for his participation in the Regency Council during the German occupation, was one of the first to be executed by the new communist government of Enver Hoxha in February of 1945.¹ In Smiley’s opinion, Hasluck never recovered from her great shock and disappointment in this loss. When it became clear in

1947 that her health would not improve in Cyprus and that she would shortly die, she returned to Dublin where, with immense courage and persistence, she endeavored to complete her own book, intended to be the first history of Albania in the English language. When, however, she finally succumbed to leukemia on October 18, 1948, Margaret had completed four out of twenty-five chapters and managed to draw up a detailed outline of the whole book as she envisioned it. This work was published posthumously in 1954 as The Unwritten Law in Albania.

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ⁱ "In one of her intelligence reviews, dated 15 December 1943, Margaret Hasluck in Cairo wrote an eloquent apologia for the Regency government. She wrote:

The lines of the government's policy would meet with our warm approval if we were not at war with the country whose armed forces now occupy Albania... They have further appealed to the youthful to avoid civil war and to preserve intact the Albania with which they, the elderly men in the government have done but which they, the young, are to inherit tomorrow. Indeed, these elderly men must be greatly pained as they watch the chaos into which the guerilla movement has plunged the country. They were born to the oppressions of decadent Turkish rule. They grew up to struggle for independence, many like the Butka brothers and the late Idhomen Kosturi by guerilla warfare, a few like Lef Nosi and the late Prenk Pasha of Mirditë by years of imprisonment, internment and exile. Independence achieved, they set their faces, Moslems as much as Christians, toward the west and they won for themselves and helped the younger generation to win a certain degree of western civilisation. They rejoiced to see their successive governments deprive the population of the weapons that only served to preserve their medieval barbarity. Now they see the clock put back to 1920

or earlier, arms again in every man's land, human life counted as naught, and anarchy rampant.

They would be less than human if they did not ask if the benefit to the Allied war effort which accrues from the run-away tactics of the guerillas is worth the political and economic damage to the country which they cause (R. Hibbert, Albania's National Liberation Struggle, 1991, 64-65).

[MSJ]