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# The Impact of Turkish Poetics in Albanian Poetry and Folk Culture

Arnavut Şiirindeki Türk Şiir Sanatı İzleri ve onun Arnavut Halk Kültürüne Etkisi

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## Abstract

Albanian poetry of Oriental tradition which began to emerge during the Ottoman period, that continued throughout the twentieth century, was structured within the schematization and poetic formulations of the Turkish tradition. The Albanian poets of the period originally succeeded to create in Turkish, Persian and Arabic languages, where subsequently introduced this tradition to their Albanian creativity. Communist ideological studies had ignored, even deliberately overlooked, judging as the poetry and culture of the national enemy. But our research argues that this type of literature had an enormous influence in the culture and particularly in the national Albanian literature. Thus, the Albanian poetry, created within Ottoman poetical and aesthetic-philosophical systems, has left deep traces in Albanian mentality and culture and has occupied an important place in the structuring of the Albanian mentality. Our paper argues that this poetry tradition reflects the ontological and epistemological condition of the Albanian people for many

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centuries, which has also penetrated deeply into the subjugation of Albanians. The paper additionally assesses the traces that Turkish classical poetry has left in Albanian folk culture and folk literature.

**Keywords:** *Classical Turkish poetry, Albanian poetry, Aljamiado literature, Beytejis literature, Albanian folk culture*

## Öz

Arnavut Doğu şiiri geleneği, Osmanlı döneminde ortaya çıkmış ve 20. yüzyıla kadar da varlığını sürdürmüştür. Bu süreç içinde de Türk şiir geleneğinin şiirsel muhtevası ve formülasyonları içinde Arnavut şiiri teşekülüne devam etmiştir. Dönemin Arnavut şairleri ilk başlarda Türkçe, Farsça ve Arapça olarak edebi eser vermeyi başarabilmişler, daha sonra bu şiir geleneğini Arnavut dilinde yazılan eserlerine taşımışlardır. Bu nedenle Arnavut şairler, bazı kavram ve motiflerin ya da Klasik Osmanlı-Türk edebi söylemlerinin Arnavut Edebiyat Tarihine girmesine sebep olmuşlardır. Bu tür edebi söylemlerin kaynağı, temel olarak Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun eğitim kurumlarında ve daha sonra Arnavut topraklarında kurulan medreselere taşınan Arap-Fars-Türk bilgi geleneğidir ki sonraları Arnavut dilinde de etkili olmuş; dini eserler yazılmasından daha çok Arnavutça ilk şiir eserlerinin meydana gelmesine sebep olmuştur. Albanoloji çalışmalarında, bu edebi gelenek "Arap alfabesiyle Arnavut edebiyatı", "Alhamiado edebiyatı" ve "Beyteciler edebiyatı" gibi farklı isimlerle adlandırılmıştır. Lakin, bu tür şiir geleneğinin isimlendirilmesi ve bazı araştırmacıların çalışmalarından çıkan sonuçlar, onu ürettiği ortamdan saptırılmış ve ona belirsiz farklı boyutlar kazandırmıştır. Bu nedenle, bu isimlendirilmeler, şiirsel ve kültürel referanslarından ve kaynaklarından, yani Osmanlı kültür geleneğinden uzaklaştırdığı kanısındayız. Ayrıca komünist ideoloji mantığının çerçevesinde olan çalışmalar, Arnavut milletin düşmanın şiiri ve kültürü olarak değerlendirilerek, kasten gözden kaçırılmışlardır. Albanoloji çalışmalarında hala bu şiire karşı önyargılı ve bilimsel dışı tutumlar gözükmektedir. Bazı Arnavut araştırmacılarına göre, bu şiir geleneği geçmişte bazı edebi ortamlarda sınırlı kalmıştır ve ondan sonra gelişen Arnavut kültüründe hiçbir katkısı olmamıştır. Ancak araştırmamız, bu tür bir edebiyatın, Arnavut kültürüne, özellikle Arnavut halk edebiyatında büyük bir etkisi olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, Arnavut İslam-Doğu şiiri geleneğinin şiirsel biçimlerini ele alıyor ve bazı Arnavut bilim insanlarının bu şiirin Arnavut halk edebiyatından etkilendiği kanaatini sorgularken, yine bu şiirin klasik Türk şiirinin tam etkisi altında olduğunu da savunuyor. Hali hazırda, Arnavut şiirine yansıyan Türk klasik şiirinin şiirseliği, estetiği ve kavramları, Arnavut topraklarında Tekke geleneğinde, Arnavutça'da Mevlid okuma dini törenlerinde ve çok sayıda Arnavut halk şarkılarında bulunmaktadır. Böylece, Osmanlı şiir ve estetik-felsefi sistemler içinde yaratılan Arnavut edebiyatı, Arnavut zihniyetinin ve kültürünün derinden etkilediğini ve ayrıca, Arnavut zihniyetinin yapılanmasında önemli bir yer olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Bu nedenle bu tür bir şiirsel yaratıcılık, hala yeterince yayınlanmadığı, çalışılmadığı ve yorumlanmadığı söylemek mümkün, lakin Arnavut edebiyat tarihinin ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak kabul edilmelidir. Makalemiz, bu şiirin yüzyıllarca Arnavut halkının ontolo-

jik ve epistemolojik durumunu yansıttığını, ve hatta bu milletin derin bilinçaltına işlediğini görüşünü öne sunuyor. Çalışma ayrıca, Türk klasik şiirinin Arnavut halk edebiyatında ve halk kültüründe bıraktığı izleri de değerlendirmektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *Klasik Türk şiiri, Arnavut şiiri, Alhamiado edebiyatı, Beyteciler edebiyatı, Arnavut halk kültürü*

## Introduction

With the penetration of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, along with the Ottoman military artillery and administration, the mechanisms of production of knowledge and art were installed, thus throughout those centuries of Ottoman rule, albeit likewise after the withdrawal, this knowledge and art continued to extend their influence in the Balkan society, including the Albanian society. The Ottomans opened schools, mosques, teqes and other cultural facilities in the Balkans, where the Albanians were educated and introduced to the Turkish Islamic culture, which they embraced and indigenised as their own for a very short period of time. As a result, the people of Balkan who agreed to become part of the Ottoman Empire's political and cultural system experienced radical ontological, epistemological and cosmological transformations. During the Ottoman presence, Albanian people had formed theological and philosophical-aesthetic theories, which subsequently deeply influenced the mentality and cultural identity of the Albanians. Thus, within the system of Ottoman worldview of art, philosophy and aesthetics, there occurred Albanian creators who reached the highest peaks of poetry of the period, among whom we can mention Mesihî of Prishtina, Yahya bey Dukagini, etc. Within the Ottoman ruling system, there were created local pashaliks in the Albanian regions, in the courtyards of which were organized entertainment nights where poetry was read. Since the participants and leaders of these pashaliks did not have sophisticated intellectual education, they could not understand the poetry in Persian and Turkish language, hence the need for creations in Albanian. On the other hand, creations in Albanian began in the teqes as well, so that its members understood the significance of poetry and ilahi, hence enjoyed the spiritual-mystical teachings and were educated in this spirit. Consequently, Albanian people acquired a new and rich culture qualitywise as well as quantitywise.

The late-poetry studies presented the poetry "God, Do Not Leave Me Without Coffee" by Muchizada Libohova as the first Albanian poetry created under the influence of classical Turkish poetry. (Qosja, 1984:67, Elsie, 2005:45). This poetry was created in 1724. (Shuteriqi, 1976: 106). Yet, Nehat Krasniqi in his latest book (Krasniqi, 2017: 362) brings an Albanian poetry by Muçe / Mustafa Libohova in the Ottoman alphabet, for whom he writes that lived in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to Krasniqi, the origins of this Albanian poetry can be pushed even further, maybe a hundred years back. In addition to this poetry, so far have been published "Diwani" by Nezim Frakulla and "Myhtarname" by Shahin Frashëri, "Diwan" by Sheh Maliqi, "Poetical Compilation" by Zenel Bastari, works of Mehmet / Muhamet Kyçyku, works of hafiz Ali Korça and hafiz Ali Ulqinaku. Likewise, there were published 20 Mawlids in Albanian (poems for the Prophet). All these publications create an opportunity for a clearer picture in regard to this literature.

The number of Albanian poets who created under classical Turkish-Islamic poetry forms and concepts goes up to 38, of which one is a female and the other males. (Hajdari, 2010:103-421, Krasniqi, 2017:321-422).

Up to the present, a number of studies have been conducted in respect of this kind of Albanian literature, although still, many topics and aspects have remained untreated and unknown, and one of these topics is the poetics of this poetry and its connections to classical Turkish poetry. Researchers such as Osman Muderrizi (1954), Hasan Kaleshi (1970/2015), Hajdar Salihu (2010), Abdulla Hamiti (2008) and Nehat Krasniqi (2017) have highlighted the epistemological and philosophical-aesthetic dimensions of Albanian poetry under the influence of classical Turkish literature, as well as, a considerable number of this literature have been transcribed in Albanian language current alphabet. Nonetheless, among them we did not encounter a convergence regarding the naming of this poetry, moreover there can be noticed some discordance in terms of its poetic forms. Thus, in this article, we will strive to problematize the naming of this poetry by the scholars to the present time, which we consider unsuitable, where we will argue with concrete evidence that the Albanian poetry of the oriental school, in every dimension, is under the influence, or say otherwise, it is a copy of classical Ottoman-Turkish poetry.

Invariably, among some Albanian intellectuals (Kadare, 2006; Apolloni, 2016), this literature in certain circles of creators is considered limited which has not been able to extend its impact on Albanian culture. While our research argues that this kind of literature has had a great influence on culture, in particular, on Albanian folk literature.

The research methodology used in our work is library-based, whilst, the study methodology is descriptive and analytical. In addition to the published bibliography, we have also used manuscripts of Albanian poetry in the Ottoman alphabet, some of which are in the libraries of Kosovo, Albania and Turkey, since we are of the opinion that in order to explore the poetic forms of Albanian poetry under the influence of classical Turkish poetry, the manuscripts of this poetry written in the Albanian alphabet with Ottoman graphs are crucial.

### **1. Controversial naming of this literature**

In respect of the naming of Albanian literature created under the influence of Turkish classical literature, we still do not have a unique and comprehensive name among Albanian studies, consequently, in current studies this type of literature has been referred to as “Albanian literature in Arabic alphabet”, “Aljamiado literature” and “Beyteji literature”. Nevertheless, with a further sight, we notice that all three of these names have had substantial problems, where not only that none of them can not define the main dimensions of this poetry but they deviate it and connect it to other contexts.

At the beginning of studies on this literary legacy, the term “Albanian Literature in Arabic alphabet” was in more extensive usage, which defined the Albanian-language literature written in the Arabic script. Although this Arabic alphabet was initially modified by the Persians, adding four letters (p, ch, j, g), and later it was adapted by Turks to the phonological system of their language. Thus, Albanians borrowed such alphabet from the Turks, similarly,

trying to adapt it to the Albanian language. Therefore, the alphabet that Albanians borrowed, had lost many of the Arabic phonological features, and resembled more the phonetic system of the Turkish alphabet.

Hence, the naming of this literature as “Albanian literature in Arabic alphabet” is limited and highly technical, as it only takes into account the graphs of Arabic alphabet and denies the Turkish and Persian phonological elements. If we additionally consider the phonetic system of these languages, then it would have been better to call it Turkish alphabet, since the Turkish language alphabet is more similar to Albanian than the Arabic one. Concurrently, apart from the alphabet, this literature had borrowed oriental poetry, aesthetics, semantics and semiology with Turkish accent, so the desertion of the alphabet alone does not mean discarding of every feature of this literature. Hence such naming would be too restrictive and not wide-ranging.

The other naming of this literature is “Beyteji literature”, meaning, the literature woven in “beyte-verse” and, apparently, the word “beyteji” has had a pejorative meaning. “By beyteji, it was meant simple people who occasionally created verses that satirize different things, hence, it alluded to a doodler, rhymer and these were ironic words for a person who aimed to achieve the craft and skill of a poet.” (Hamiti, 2008: 17). In addition to this fact, if the term “beyt” refers only to poetry then it should be noted that within this legacy there are also texts in prose which would be left out of the naming “Beyteji literature”.

The third naming is “Aljamiado literature”, the term used for the first time by Hasan Kaleshi (Kaleshi, 1970/2015), which afterwards became the most widespread term among Albanian and foreign scholars. As others have written (Kaleshi, 2015: 18, Hysa, 2000: 84), the word Aljamiado was a Spanish form of the Arabic word “Al Agamija”. The Arabs used the word “agam” for “the foreigner, not the Arab, but the barbarian, the Persian” (Hatibi, 1385: 69-76). This word was later used in Spain for the literatures of some nations who wrote literature in Spanish language, but with Arabic alphabet (Kaleshi, 2015: 21, Krasniqi, 2017: 341). It is worth mentioning that the word Al-Agamia was also used by the Arabs of Spain to name the Romance languages of their neighbours (Krasniqi, 2017: 341). Starting from the source meaning of Al-Agam, the stranger, barbarian, we comprehend that this word was used for the “other”, “the stranger” and “the barbarian”, and we must be mindful of the fact that in the past Persians in pejorative were called “agam” by the Arabs.

The naming of this literature, with the term Aljamiado, has also been doubted by Rexhep Ismajli who besides considering it as “generalised, that can let aside the peculiarity of different cultures, as well as, it can be mechanic, if it does not take into consideration the circumstances of the formation, creation and functioning of various literatures in cultural contexts,” correspondingly, he righteously concludes that the “mechanical transfer of the term aljamiado from the tradition of Roman-Arabic contacts to an Albanian tradition can be contradictory, because beyond the writing, in the Albanian tradition we can talk about Albanian-Persian contacts and the Ottoman complex as a whole.” (Ismajli, 2000: 33-37). Thus, from the texts available today it turns out that this kind of Albanian literature was completely under the influence of classical Turco-Persian literature. We must also be cognizant of the fact that there is a big difference between Arabic Islamic culture and Turco-Persian

Islamic culture. Some scholars divide Islamic civilizations into the Islamic Civilization of the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic Turco-Persian Civilisation (Frye, 1991: 21-33). Nevertheless, as Shahab Ahmad also notes, the Turco-Persian civilization expanded from the Balkans to Bangladesh and the institutions of these regions where the same educational system was installed, resulting in cultural similarities (Ahmad, 2015: 76). Among these similarities is the poetry created by these nations. Thus, if the term *Aljamiado* has named the literature of nations – that in communication with the Arabs - created under the influence of Arabic language and literature, then it may be deficient and perhaps not appropriate to name a literature that is created under the influence of Turco-Persian literature.

Accordingly, given that Ottoman culture was entwined by the three major Islamic cultures, the Arab, Persian and Turkish (Develi, 1998/38) and as a result of the synthesis of these cultures, “an Ottoman cultural school was created to cultivate a rich cultural creativity, especially literary one.” (Karateke, 1995:13) Due to this and the naming of this literature as “Albanian literature with Arabic alphabet”, “*Aljamiado* literature” and “*Beyteji* literature” remove it from its poetic and cultural references, hence from the Ottoman cultural school. Thus, giving it other names, as it has been done so far, we are of the opinion that it deviates from the Ottoman context and can link it to other cultural worldviews with which Albanian culture has had no contact.

## **2. Poetics of Ottoman poetry in Albanian poetry**

The Albanian poetry of the Ottoman tradition was created within the poetic structure of classical Turco-Persian poetry, even if some scholars came to other conclusions. Osman Muderrizi has far earlier expressed the opinion that the Albanian poetry of oriental tradition was created within the frames of the Albanian folk verse. Muderrizi asserts that “the verse construction technique in Nezimi’s *Diwan* is folk technique. This technique with all its merits and shortcomings did not remain only in Nezimi<sup>1</sup> but passed on to all the other poets of the Albanian literature with the Arabic alphabet.” (Muderrizi, 1954: 75). Whereas Hasan Kaleshi considers this statement of Muderrizi unsustainable and writes: “In the thitherto writings on Nezimi, it is regularly emphasized that he has abandoned the Arabic quantitative metre system and has received the verse of folk poetry. We are very sceptical of this finding, moreover, we are inclined to believe that Nezim has adhered to quantitative metre.” (Kaleshi, 2015: 21) Hence in this manner Kaleshi in attempt to prove his attitude compares the poetry of *Muçizada Coffee* with a Turkish poetry. Whereas Rexhep Ismajli considers this proof of Kaleshi insufficient to conclude that this literary tradition was created under the influence of the Arabic quantitative metre. (Ismajli, 2000: 36) In his study on *Nezim Frakulla*, Abdullah Hamiti suffices only to mention the attitudes of these Albanian scholars and does not pronounce on this issue. Hamiti although he asserts that “it is natural that the literature in the Oriental languages, as well as in the Albanian language, have followed the principles of Oriental poetics, when it comes to the form, the genre, the ideal of life, and ultimately the artistic ideal,” nonetheless, a little below he makes an unsustainable statement when he states: “... we must emphasize the fact that the poets of our lands, in addition to the adoption of the principles of Arab-Persian poetry and literature, are simultaneously fed with the expression and forms of our folk poetry, where they displayed more realism and expressed more deeply the local environment.” (Hamiti, 2008: 43).

Nonetheless, “Metre (aruz) was the main element sustaining Arabic poetry, and later Persian and Turkish, just as the pillar keeps the tent standing. For him, the aruz for the basis takes the form of poetry, not the number of syllables. Consequently, the important point was the form of the syllables, but not the number of the syllables, therefore, these syllables determined the quality of a poem. These forms of Arabic metres then penetrated the Persians.” (Pala, 2006: 14). The same metre with all its features can be seen in the Albanian creativity of the poets who wrote with the Ottoman script. Besides, now that we have published many texts from this literature and that we have at hand a considerable number of their manuscripts and publications in the original, the poets of this tradition have tried to respect the metre of classical Turkish poetry at its extreme. “Something like this can be seen in their original writings, since the transcripts could not retain every element of the Arabic-Ottoman script, or even the transcripts consciously or unconsciously did not maintain the length and the shortness of pronouncements, rhythm, rhyme, and in many cases have not transliterated every phoneme of oriental language.” (Levend, 2014:132) The themes and the artistic concepts (mazmun) of poetry codified in ancient Arabic-Persian rhetoric, and repeated by Turkish classical poetry, are evidently seen in the creativity of Albanian poets. Persian and Turkish classical poetry is overcrowded with such themes and figurative concepts that, as according to many scholars and literary critics, they killed the beauty of this poetry. (Sami, 1298: 87-88)



Facsimile from the manuscript of “Vahbiye Sharif”, work of Tahir Efendi Boshniak

As seen in this manuscript, the work “Vahbiye” by Tahir Efendi Boshnjak (aka The Great Efendi)<sup>2</sup>, written in Albanian using Ottoman scripts, began with the well-known metrics “fâilâtun fâilâtun fâilât”. Like Tahir Efendi, the other authors of this tradition were also loyal to this metrics. To observe the loyalty of Albanian poets of oriental tradition to classical Ottoman poetry and rhetoric, one must first see the almost sacred significance of poetry’s

norms and systems in the tradition of poetic creativity in the Orient, as well as, punctual dedication to the finer details during the application of this poetry and rhetoric in their creativity. Poetics and rhetoric were taught with great dedication in Ottoman educational institutions on Albanian lands, with the aim of qualification and specialization to read, comprehend and interpret the sacred Islamic texts. Due to this reason in this Albanian poetry, especially in its colossuses, we can find almost all the features of Turkish classical poetry, such as in poetic creations in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic where we encounter: praise with his poetry by the poet himself; the dominance of poetry to prose; the priority of the non-religious and individual themes while less space is given to religious and social topics; use of Arabic-Persian-Turkish quantitative metre; the insignificance of the entirety of poetry but of the couplets (beyt); language and expressions were artistic and adorned; and many other similar features. Therefore, when we read poetry created in the Ottoman alphabet, it results that they were not only loyal to this poetry but also did not allow any element of native Albanian poetry penetrate their creations. In the poetry of the Albanian poets of the Ottoman tradition one can see all forms and types of classical poetry of the orient, starting from the hadeeth, the gazelle, the mesnevi, to the rubairat, ilahi and the teria.

### **3. The extent and impact of this poem in Albanian culture**

In the Communist ideological studies and literature prevailed a harsh and hostile discourse against the Muslim identity of Albanians and Islamic culture, in general. Thus, scholars formed in this ideological system described the Albanian literature of the Ottoman tradition as the creation of the invader and the enemy, furthermore, by giving it another direction, they did not hesitate to call it “homosexual literature” (Kadare, 2006: 6). While some other scholars claimed that this literary creation ended with the withdrawal of the Ottomans from the Balkans, and thus failed to leave traces in Albanian culture. According to Apolloni, this Beyteji literature died alongside the deaths of its authors (Apolloni, 2016: 21). Nevertheless, wider researches prove that this literature has continued to be written in Albania until after the Second World War, although it was written in Albanian alphabet. While in Kosovo and other Albanian territories this kind of poetry continued to be written until by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even in both Ottoman and the Albanian alphabets.

Regarding the fact that if this poetry has been read or just created, the visits and the participation in the mystical life and rites of Albanian teqe (dervish lodge), we see evidence that this poetry is still read, interpreted and mystical beliefs of Albanian dervishes are constructed according to the teachings of mystic poets or mystical poets. In most of these teques, the poetry of Mevlana and Yunus Emre is read as well and in many cases are likewise read in Turkish. During the rituals of the month of Muharrem, fragments from Hadika by Fusuli, translated by Dalip Frashëri, Mukhtarname by Shahin Frashëri, and Karbala by Naim Frashëri are still read in the teques (Rexhepagiq, 2003: 56). Otherwise, in many Albanian ceremonies still continue the reading of poems of Mawlid. Mawlid in Albanian is read in several versions and in the past this poem was considered one of the main references of structuring religious beliefs of Muslim Albanians. The poem of Mawlid also continues to be the most read and most experienced poetry among Albanians.

The Albanian poetry of Ottoman tradition is likewise the main reference of urban folk music and song, which is still very acceptable to the Albanian environment. Albanians refer to these songs as “urban songs” or “yare”, from the Turkish word “Yâr”, meaning beloved one. This genre of music is sung and heard in all Albanian territories, even the Balkans. When we study the poetry of Isuf Myzyri (1929-1939), one of the greatest creators of Albanian urban song texts, we note that they contain all the poetic, aesthetic and philosophical elements of Turkish-Persian gazelle. Myzyri’s songs are sung and continue to be sung in all Albanian lands and are interpreted by the greatest masters of Albanian folk songs such as Qamili i vogël<sup>3</sup> and Nexhmije Pagarusha<sup>4</sup>. Urban songs are structured on the motifs and lyrical outlines of the lost-Turkish ghazel, “whose traces are still noticed in the folk cultures of the Eastern nations” (Andrews & Kalpaklı, 2005: 195) Below we are bringing a poetry-song by Myzyri with the intent to notice the similarity to the shape and content of the ghazels.

<p>Kur pata nji lule t’bukur  Thashë se do ta kem përher.  Iku fluturoi si flutur  Edhe s’mujta me i marr erë.  Lulen n’dorë unë kur e pata  Kimetin nuk ia dita.  Vaj sa shpejt na u ngrys nata  Unë këtë gja nuk e prita.  Lulja prej dorës ç’më ra  Unë nga gjumi u zgjova.  Më la të shkretë si gur varri  Dhe nga mendja shkallova.  Unë prej lules s’kam t’largu’  Si asht gjithë kjo dashuni  Dhe sa vjen duke u shtu’  Merre kupën edhe pi.  Dy herë leva n’Elbasan  Njofta lulen e vërtetë.  Pije Myzyr si t’kam thanë  Kjo është jeta e vërtetë.</p>	<p>When I had a flower  I thought I would have it forever.  But it flew like a butterfly  Even its smell cannot smell I.  When I used to have a flower  I did not know its value.  Alas, how quick the night has ended  This is not what I awaited.  From my hand fell the flower  I woke up from my slumber.  As a tombstone desolate it left me  And from my mind it crazed me.  I will never depart from my flower  As long as this love will not be over  And it still be the grower  You take this cup and drink it over.  Twice was I born in Elbasan  And I knew the true flower.  Drink you Myzyr as I said  This is the real life I meant.</p>
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The traces of this poem are found in the rhapsodies, or as called by the people “shahir”, deriving from the Turkish word “Şair” meaning the poet. Albanian folk songs with an epic and patriotic character are full of motives, metaphors and symbols from the Albanian poetry of the Ottoman tradition. As for the experience, we are mentioning a well-known and liked song by Kosovo Albanians, called “Aleph, Aleph, it is better to die” sang by Rizah Bllaca<sup>5</sup>, as well as, by other singers. The song is written in 14 stanzas. Before each stanza we have a kind of lamenting refrain “Amoon ja dost (Alas, my Friend)” and it also ends with “haj haj (hey, hey)” or “medet medet (help, help)”. Most of the stanzas apart from three, start with

a letter from the Arabic-Ottoman alphabet. Many Albanian poetries, and many folk songs, begin with the word that names the first Arabic alphabet letter, Aleph, but that in the mystic discourse has the meaning of *Allah*.

<p><b>Aman ja dost,</b>  Hej, <b>Elif Elif</b>, ma mirë me vdek, tuk se mrrini vilajeti  HEJ! <b>Be</b> Bilahi se kujtova para nej na munoj dovleti  haj haaj.  Aman he dost,  <b>Tek</b> texhrube le ta bojmë tuk qe e mrijem ahir zamanin  Hej edhe baba i turqenijes i dha krye Din-Dushmanit  Medet, medet  Aman ja dost  <b>Xhym</b> xhynahet i bojna tybe inshallah vjen isaf-inçari  Asht habit fort ky hallki, sheriatin ja u dan qyfari, haj haj  Aman ja dost  Ej i hutuem o kjo jetë, mos t'ia rren menja e insanit  Hej, <b>dall</b> dynjaja kuj' s'i ka met, masi s'i met hazreti Sulejmanit  Ja dost, he dost.</p> <p>Aman ja dost,  E <b>ze</b> zullumi qe na zhdrypi edhe u shtrua turqenia  HEJ! Rej rixha atij sulltani, ata i preftë hazreti Mehdi, haj haj...</p>	<p>Alas my Friend,  Oh, Aleph, Aleph, it's better to die, before vilayet (ottoman empire) comes  Oh, by God, I've heard we were troubled by gov't hey, hey,</p> <p>Alas thou Friend,  We must have this assay, as we lived to this day  As the father of Turks allowed the infidel Help, help</p> <p>Alas my Friend  We will repent, hope the ruler mercy will show  The folks are tormented, as infidel makes the law  Hey, hey</p> <p>Alas my friend  Confusing is life, in deception don't be World wasn't left to holly Suleiman, it won't be to thee  Oh Friend, thou Friend,</p> <p>Alas my friend,  Violence grew the Turk has submitted oh Hey! Beseech the Sultan, and may holly Mehdi catch the foe...</p>
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As it is seen, the Albanian poetry of the Ottoman tradition has not only continued to be created and read, but it has managed to extend its influence through the deeper dimensions of the spiritual and intellectual lives of Albanians besides even nowadays many continue to experience and enjoy this culture. This poetry and as a result, this intellectual tradition continues to influence the epistemological and ontological dimensions of a large part of the Albanian people.

Nevertheless, after the founding of the Albanian state, particularly after the installation of the communist system in Albania and Yugoslavia, this Islamic literature and culture, which during the five centuries of Ottoman rule reflected the ontological, epistemological and

cosmological condition of the majority of Albanians, not only was denied in its entirety, and was discredited as a foreign culture and as an enemy's culture, but it was neither explored nor subjected to literary criticism and philosophical studies. The communist regime used all state structures to install a new ideological discourse based on Marxism-Leninism, through which it aimed to create a new communist Albanian who had to disengage all cultural connections with his past. As a result of this initiative, all literary, philosophical, religious and cultural creativity had to be forgotten, and so the Albanian people "experienced a great ontological crack" (Shayegan, 1386: 24-35) the consequences of which are felt to this day. Setting up a new educational system created a new language and discourse that formed scholars and scientists who did not understand their not too distant past. All of these events caused the culture of Islamic prowess, including the Albanian poetry of the Muslim area, to remain unexplored, uninterpreted and incomprehensible.

### Conclusion

The naming of the Albanian literature of the Ottoman school as "Albanian literature of Arabic alphabet", "Aljamido literature" and "Beytejis literature" are not all the dimensions of this literature, hence are very incomplete and not all-inclusive. Such naming can detract Albanian poetry from the Ottoman context and may relate it to other contexts, such as the Arabic context, with which Albanian culture has no direct connection. The Albanian poets who created under the Ottoman poetics have fanatically preserved the quantitative Turco-Persian metric, due to this, they were forced to use Arabic, Persian and Turkish words. The allegations that this poem was influenced by Albanian folk poetry appeared as unstable since, initially, this poem was elitist and the introduction of any folk element was considered a weakness and a flaw of the poetry while the poet himself and this approach and sensitivity was also transferred to our Albanian poets. Such allegations were the result of not reading this poetry from the original texts in the Ottoman alphabet, or by not knowing Arabic-Persian-Turkish poetics and rhetoric. Thus, the Albanian poetry, created within Ottoman poetical and aesthetic-philosophical systems, has left deep traces in Albanian mentality and culture and has occupied an important place in the structuring of the Albanian mentality. Due to this reason this kind of poetic creativity is considered an inherent part of the history of Albanian literature, where although it can be said that it is still not sufficiently published, studied and interpreted. Therefore, studies of this poetic creation, apart from being considered contributions to literary studies and criticism, may also serve for critical Albanian cultural studies, particularly in the studies of the Albanian nation identity stratification.

### Endnotes

- 1 Ibrahim Nezimi-Frakulla (1685-1760) is one of the most productive poets of Albanian poetry of the Ottoman tradition. He wrote a Divan in Albanian, two Divans in Turkish, one in Persian and one in Arabic.
- 2 Tahir Efendi Boshniak (1770-1850), religious scholar and poet from Kosovo. He is the author of several religious works in Albanian, Turkish and Arabic.
- 3 Qamili i Vogel (1923-1991) was a popular singer of Rhapsodic Traditional music.
- 4 Nexhmije Pagarusha (1933-) is a popular Albanian vocalist, musician and actress from Kosovo.
- 5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J89aQRMJ7R0>

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