



## Survey of the Place of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in the Albanian language and Literature

Zahra Rajabi

Abdulla Rexhepi

Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Arak University

Address, Iran

Department of Oriental Studies, Faculty of Philology, University of

Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina" Kosovo

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

Original Research Paper

Received Feb. 2018

Accepted Apr. 2018

#### Keywords:

Farsi language and Persian literature in Ottoman Territory

Persian literature in Albania

Ferdowsi Shahnameh

### ABSTRACT

Although Iran has always been the site of religious and political clashes and conflicts between different ethnic groups of east and west, Persian language and literature have been able to go beyond the borders of Iran due to its high human-ethical capacities and concepts and cross the geographical borders as a bridge between the East and the West. One of the Farsi transnational literary works is Ferdowsi Shahnameh which has penetrated to Balkan Peninsula in parallel to propagation of Farsi language and literature in the territory of Ottoman Turks. Albania is one of these Eastern European countries where can clearly see the presence trace of Farsi language and Persian literature and Shahnameh; Therefore, in this research the causes of Albanian poets attention to Persian literature and Shahnameh has been investigated.

This study shows in the country of Albania, Shahnameh has been of interest to Albanian poets for the case of linguistic authenticity, expression of ethical-historical and philosophical views in the form of poetry and use of nationalistic and antagonistic contents as a symbol form to point to their own time conditions.

### 1. Introduction

The Ottoman Turks who spread their rule in Europe to the Gibraltar and the Danube River, gradually dominated many parts of the Balkan Peninsula, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia in the fifteenth century; and, until about five centuries later, they ruled over these lands more or less. As said in the Turkish language, "Balkan" means the tree-covered mountains and it should have been named so after the Turkish tribes entered it in the 11th and 12th centuries (Todorova, 1997:27). The Ottomans, which themselves were under the influence of Iran's culture and literature, along with the religion of Islam, spread Persian language and literature in the Balkan Peninsula countries, because in their territory, Turkish was used for administrative and executive purposes, Arabic was used for religious and legal purposes, and finally, Persian was the language of literature, and especially poetry. Thus, during the rule of Turks over several centuries, Persian, Turkish and Arabic languages became important in this region. Regarding Persian, it should be said that despite all the national-religious differences and long wars between the two superpowers of Iran and the Ottoman Empire, Persian was a semi-official, stately and aristocratic language in the Ottoman Empire and Persian and the works of Persian language professors such as Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and the works of Rumi, Sa'di, and Hafez were taught among the families of Rijal and the elite (Safa, Vol 4, 1990:46).

According to what has been stated, the present research seeks to answer these questions in a descriptive-analytical way. How is the position of Persian language and literature, and in particular the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi in Albania? And in what ways did the literary leaders of the country pay attention to Shahnameh? It should be noted that so far the independent research carried out on this subject is an article entitled "The emergence and spread of Persian literature in Albania" (Rajabi & others, 2014), in which the popularity of Persian literature in Albania and the introduction of great poets of Persian poetry in Albania has been addressed.

## 2. Discussion

According to Dr. Amin Riahi, the Ottomans, who had glory and splendor in Constantinople, Istanbul and Byzantium, tried to revive customs and traditions of the courts of the great kings of the past, such as the Abbasids, and especially the Sassanids as they considered themselves the heirs of the caliphate in the Islamic world. From this point on, some of the ancient Iranian customs, such as poetry and literature, the Norouz ritual and Shahnameh, became prevalent in the Ottoman Empire and gradually became popular (Yazdanparast Larijani, Vol 3, 2007:59).

### 2-1. Persian literature in Albania

The country of Albania, which was conquered by Sultan Muhammad Fateh in the fifteenth century, was a part of the Ottoman Empire until the early 20th century, similar to other countries of the Balkan Peninsula, became familiar with Persian literature through the emirs, servants of the Ottoman Turks and Iranians who feared the rule of the Seljuk and fled from Khorasan to the Ottoman side. Most of the Iranians who immigrated to Anatolia due to political problems in Iran were Dervishes and Sufis who came along with soldiers during the advent of the Ottoman Army and promoted religion and Sufism in the Balkan region. All of them belonged to one of the Sufi schools of Khorasan. In fact, this was the same thing in the Balkans as did Molavi and other Iranian mystics 2-3 centuries ago in Anatolia (Rajab Agish, 2003:104). Turks founded schools and abbeys in many cities and regions of Albania, where Persian language and literature were taught because of its great artistic and literary capabilities and its supreme humane and universal themes. In these schools, which initially began with the name "Maktab", students began to study and memorize parts of Sa'di's Golestan and Boostan, and then Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Nezami's Khamaseh, and finally, Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi's Masnavi (ziaee, 2003:275).

Although the peak of the influence and power of the Ottomans and consequently Persian language and literature in the Balkans in the fifteenth century AD and in the era of the greatest Ottoman sultans, such as Muhammad Fateh, Baizid II, Salim I, and Suleiman, who were among the best supporters of Persian language and literature in this region and even they were Persian poets, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the greatest annotators of Persian literature in the Ottoman Empire emerged from among the Bosnians and Albanians, such as the Angharvi, Shamei, and Sudi (Amin Riyahi, 1971:96-97). Since the mystical sects such as Mowviah and Bektashiyah have been very popular among Albanian Muslims, they were taught in some of the religious schools of Masnavi as one of the main lessons; therefore, Persian language, along with Arabic and Turkish was taught as the main language in these schools. Of course, Persian language was taught in major schools in the major cities of Albania and was known as a language of poetry and literacy among educated and noble people (Osmani, 1996:38). Rajabi et al., in his article, introduced some of the most prominent figures of Persian literature in Albania, such as Nazim Faraghula, Asif Muhammad Pasha, Muhammad Eshkoudarai-Chakir, Naim Frashëri, (Rajabi & Others, 2014:105-109) and their literary activities.

### 2-2. Effect of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in Albania

Persian literature has always been dominant and conquerable due to its universal, philosophical, moral, cultural and mystical content, despite the fact that Iran has been politically defeated, and its all political ups and downs. One of these universal concepts of is "human" which is detailed in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. Since Ferdowsi, in his work, knows human having a celestial soul and a power of will and wisdom, and has ranked him as superior to nature and the upper stratum (razmjoo,1996:42), giving it a mystical-philosophical status; and such concepts as "greatness", "honor", "chivalry", "humanitarianism", "amnesty", "patriotism", "fighting cruelty" and many other high-quality human qualities, Shahnameh is one of the works that has always been addressed by different ethnic groups familiar with Persian. In Albania, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh was soon received by intellectuals from the arts and literature due to the socio-political conditions of the Balkan Peninsula, which were repeatedly invaded by the Romans, Turks and Hungarians, and with which there was constant conflict. Many Albanian intellectuals tried to awaken nationalism in their people by modeling Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. Among the most important literary and intellectual figures in Albania who have influenced and taken note of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh are as follows:

#### 2-2-1. Muhammad Naim Frashëri (1846-1900)

Naim Frashëri was one of the most famous Muslim poets of Albania in the period of the Albanian literary-cultural revival in the second half of the nineteenth century. Golshani regards the existence of Persian poetry as a sign of the influence of Persian literature and language on the Balkan Peninsula to the early twentieth century (Golshani, 1975:50). Although, like many other Albanian poets, he did not travel to Iran, he learned Persian language in the village of Frashër, his birthplace, and more interestingly, his first literary work, which was a poem entitled "Imagination", was written in Persian. His literary works were heavily influenced by the classical Persian literature and French poetry, contributed to the formation of contemporary Albanian literature and the encouragement of the spirit of Albanian patriotism and identity (<http://albania.blogfa.com/post-64.aspx>). In the middle of the political-social movements of the people of Albania against the Ottomans in 1897, Muhammad Na'im Frashëri composed the nationalist epic "History of Scanderbeg" influenced by Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, in which Alexander's personality, like Rostam, stands against and fights the Turks. The "Scanderbeg" poem caused many of the Albanian scholars to call Muhammad Naim Frashëri "Albanian Ferdowsi," as he, like Ferdowsi, is trying to maintain the ethnicity of the Albanian people (Sinani, 1997:24). In this work, the poet writes in the preface to the translation of the Homeric Iliad: "Arabs received much Greek knowledge, but they have their own style of poetry. Arabs have a lot of poets, but Persian poets are better than them, and one of the best Persian poets is Ferdowsi, the writer of

Shahnameh. In the Shahnameh, Ferdowsi speaks of the events of the ancient kings of Persia. Ferdowsi is also the crown of poets in Iran, and in the poetry is similar to Homer and Virgil. After Ferdowsi, poets such as Anvari, Nezami, Sa'di, Attar, Hafez Shirazi and Jami are the best, but none of them come to Ferdowsi's feet. In this regard, one of the Iranian poets has said: "Three poets have come down from the heaven: Ferdowsi, Anvari and Sa'di" (Frashëri, 1924:286), and refers to the two famous verses in the history of Persian literature narrated in Jami's Baharestan:

In the poem Prophets are three,

Said that all they be

Ferdowsi and Anvari and Sadi

Yet no prophet has come consequently

2-2-2. Shamseddin Sami Frashëri (1850-1904)

Sami was the younger brother of Naim Frashëri, who, like him, worked hard on Albania's cultural independence. He was acquainted with Italian, Greek, French, Arabic, Turkish and Persian, in the fields of linguistics, diction, writing, playwriting and translation. According to him, the cultural superiority of Iranians, despite all their political-social changes, kept their language and national culture alive, which is best shown in Shahnameh's Ferdowsi. Hence, Sami Frashëri, with vast knowledge of Eastern culture and the authentic language of Ferdowsi's work, translated parts of the Shahnameh as "The selection of Shahnameh" in Turkish, to "enable the masses of readers to use the Shahnameh and help Persian students to better understand its artistic value (Osmani, 1996:134). In addition to translating of parts of the Shahnameh, Sami wrote two plays, Kaveh and Sohrab, whose names are well known to have been influenced by Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. As in the Kaveh play, the Iranian people's revolt under the leadership of Kaveh against the barbarians and the autocratic government of their time is a symbol of a popular war for freedom and justice. Indeed, it is clear that although Sami could not directly refer to the Ottoman history, this strongly affirmed his position against the absolute power of Sultan [Abd al-Hamid II] at that time (Sinani, 2004:34) and tried to encourage people to fight for freedom and justice during the years of the Albanian national movement against the Ottoman regime. Sami Frashëri, in the introduction to this play, writes: "I can say that the reality of this play is completely in agreement with the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi ... But I must say that even the very Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is not perfectly compatible with the facts of history, although this work is literary masterpiece in the world of the east. Therefore, the characters like Zahak, Kaveh and Freydoon should not be considered real. As I used the names of the characters in this work, I have used Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in writing it" (Frashëri, 2005:24-25).

2-2-3. Hafiz Ali Korcah (1874-1957)

The last intellectual and literary figure in Albania, influenced by Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, is Hafiz Ali Korcah. He was a Muslim cleric and a political activist against the Ottoman regime. Hafez Ali Korcah was an intellectual who was familiar with Arabic, Persian and Turkish, and wrote and translated into these languages. He was imprisoned for some time in the late 19th century due to his political activities by the Ottoman government and communists. Korca has a long poem of about seventy-five thousand verses titled "The Holy History and the Four Caliphs", which is actually a religious epic, in which he describes the history of the creation of man, the life of the prophets, various Islamic issues, the history of the people of Albania, and the history of the first four caliphs after the Prophet (Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman, Ali) and responds to the attacks of Western ideas on Islamic religion, criticizes unbelieving intellectuals and criticizes illiterate clerics. Hafez Ali has been influenced by and used Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in compiling this religious epic in addition to works such as the interpretation of al-Manar, Qesas al-Anbia and Tabari's history (Ahmedi, 1999:135). Throughout the work of Hafiz Ali Korcah, the presence and influence of the spirit of the Shahnameh is tangible, and the poet shows the reflection of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh by highlighting concepts such as courage, patriotism, love for religion, and the invitation to humanity, heroism, literacy, morality and humanity. Of course, with this influential content, Hafiz Ali acknowledges in his various works during his work that in writing this work, the Shahnameh has been a model; he believes that the same thing Ferdowsi did by writing Shahnameh for Iran and the Iranians, he has also done for Albania and the Albanians. He even tries to use his Aryan race for proximity to Ferdowsi and says:

Both of us are Aryan

Our languages have train

I rose from Iran

And you are Albanian

(Korça, 2006:135)

3. Conclusion

The history of the rich, supranational, and metaphysical culture and language of Iranians in many lands of the world, including the Eastern European countries and the Balkans, dates back much earlier than entering or interacting directly with Iranians with the peoples of those lands. In this regard, given the political and social conditions of each of these countries, especially the philosophical, mystical, moral, wise and epic themes, there has been a more vivid and prominent manifestation of the Iranian culture supplied to these lands. The country of

Albania is one of these countries which, in view of its political situation in the nineteenth century, has benefited most from Persian literary works, especially Ferdowsi's Shahnam, which is clearly reflected in the works of great literary figures of Albania in this century, such as Muhammad Naim and Shamsuddin Frashëri and Hafez Ali Korcah. As it turned out, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh has become more instrumental and a model for preserving authenticity of national language and culture and encouraging people, due to its specialistic and epic content, rather than being an epic and fiction work of Persian language among these literary figures of Albania at the forefront of Albania's intellectual and militant class in the nineteenth century to revive its national identity and belief, and this again acknowledges the uniqueness and literary value of Ferdowsi's masterpiece.

### References

- 1 -Amin Riyahi, M. A (1971). "The influence of Persian language and literature on the Ottoman Empire". In Journal of Faculty of Literature & Humanities University of Tehran. No 1. PP 79-103. [In Persian].
- Safa, Z. A (1990). History of Literature in Iran. Vol 4. Fifth Edition. Tehran: Chista. [In Persian]
- Rajab Aghish, Y (2003). Sufism in the Balkans. Belgrade. [In Persian]
- Rajabi. A. A & Others (2014). "The emergence and prevalence of Persian literature in Albania". In Journal of Literature and Literature. No3. pp 97-112.
- Razmjoo, H (1996). A perfect and complete human being in the epic and mystical literature. Tehran: Amir Kabir. [In Persian]
- Ziaee, A. A (2003). The Land of Eagles - The History and Culture of the Albanian People. Tehran: Islamic Thought Foundation. [In Persian]
- Golshani, A. A (1975). Iranian culture in the Turks' territory. Tehran: Golshani Trading House. [In Persian]
- Yazdanparast Larijani, M. H (2007). Letter of Iran: of articles, poems and materials of Iranianology. Vol 3. Tehran: Information. [In Persian]
- Todorova, Maria N (1997). Imagining the Balkans. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ahmedi, dr. Ismail. (1999). Hafiz Ali Korça, Jeta dhe Vepra. Logosa – A, Shkup.
- Frashëri, Naim. (1924). Iliadhe e Omirit. Parathenie.
- Osmani, Shefik. (1996). Panetoni iranian dhe iranologët shqiptarë. S. Shirazi.
- Korça, Hafiz Ali.(2006). Historija e Shenjte dhe Kater Halifete.
- Shaban, Sinani.(1997). Prurje kulturore orientale. Onufri, Tiranë.
- Sinani, Shaban.(2004). Tjetri ne vepren e Sami Frasherit. Perla, nr. Tiranë.
- <http://albania.blogfa.com/post-64.aspx>