

Towards the paths of developing a discipline: Albanian folkloristics in Kosovo



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ABSTRACT

From the end of the Second World War to the 1990s, Albanian folklore from throughout the Yugoslav space was collected and studied in Kosovo. This opened the possibility of a contact and a collaboration with schools and trends developing in folklore studies among all the peoples of Yugoslavia and beyond. However, this was not the case with folklore studies developing over the border in Albania. Scholarly communication with Albania became possible during the 1990s, yet alongside this conversation there were circumstances that affected the physical existence of the Albanian people in Kosovo. This brought about a period of stagnation from the point of view of folklore studies. For scholars of folklore, as for the whole population at this time, the accent was on survival. Albanian folklore scholars in Kosovo only managed to publish a few learned journal issues a year, thanks to donations from the Albanian Diaspora in Europe.

After the year 2000, the conditions and opportunities for the development in the study of Albanian folklore in Kosovo changed completely. This provided an opportunity not only to open out to other Albanians in the Balkans, but also to come to terms with trends and perspectives in folklore studies across Europe. In this encounter, the theoretical and conceptual legacy of folklore studies in Kosovo has also been faced with the shift in the boundaries of the discipline of folklore studies, as well as its interplay with social and cultural anthropology, as has been the case for many other peoples in Europe.

In my paper I will try to present the historical background and circumstances of Albanians living in Kosovo, which influenced the research and publications of the Folklore Department at the Institute of Albanology in Prishtina, as the only institution for the academic treatment of Albanian folklore. Through presenting its research methodology, paradigms, publications as well as its status today, I try to give an overview of folkloristics in Kosovo.

KEYWORDS

folkloristics, Albanians, Kosovo, Institute of Albanology, research, publications

The Republic of Kosovo today, known in the former Yugoslavia as the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo, was inhabited by about 90% ethnic Albanians who shared the same language and cultural heritage with other Albanians living elsewhere in Yugoslavia (in the other Yugoslav republics of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro), but also with Albanians living in the adjacent state in Albania. Due to the tense circumstances between these two states, Yugoslavia and Albania, the Albanians living in these two states were divided by the political border, which was inaccessible to ordinary citizens¹, until the early 1990s. This fact should be taken into account, while studying the development of Albanian folklore in Kosovo.

1 The performance of these relations was not always at the same intensity of interruption throughout the whole period of tense relations between these two states (1948-1990).



THE FIRST PUBLICATIONS OF ALBANIAN FOLKLORISTICS

Albanian folklore studies, by definition, includes the research of entire folk culture of the Albanian nation in the diachronic and synchronous aspect, which implies the folklore of all Albanians wherever they were and are around the world. As such, Albanian folklore study is considered to be born among Albanian Diaspora in Rome in 1635, when the Albanian Catholic clergyman Frang Bardhi (originally from the Northern Albania) published a Latin-Albanian Dictionary. In this dictionary he included 113 Albanian folk proverbs translated into Latin and Italian (Gega-Musa, 2007: 269-276). Then, other works of folklore were published in the settlements of the Arbëresh² in Italy. Of particular importance for Albanian folklore is the year 1836 when the professor from Arbëresh College in Calabria, Girolamo De Rada, published in Florence the book titled "*Rapsodie di un poema Albanese*" (*Rhapsody of an Arbëresh poem*) in which he included 72 folk songs from Arbëresh settlements in Naples, with an Italian translation. This is considered the beginning of the first great work of Albanian folklore collection (Skendi, no year of publication, 21; Zheji, 1998, 16). Other publications of Albanian folklore were from Albanian settlements in Egypt (Thimi Mitko, "*Bëleta shqyptare*" [*The Albanian Bee*] (1878)), in Sofia (Spiro Dine "*Valët e detit*" [*The waves of the sea*], in Sarajevo Vinçenc Prenushi "*Kangë popullore gegnishte*" [*Folk Songs in Gheg dialect*]) (1911), etc. (Skendi, no publication year: 25). After the proclamation of Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, the state-building projects began, which meant also the collection and publishing of folklore, the preparation and publication of 15 volumes with different types and genres of Albanian folklore under the title "*Visaret e Kombit*" (*The Treasures of the Nation*), which were published under the auspices of the Franciscans of Shkodra (Scadar). The compilation of these volumes was based on the comprehensive concept of Albanian folklore, which thanks to the service of the Franciscans and their associates, gathered material from all areas

Since it was influenced by local politics and global one, too, history recognizes tensions such as the 1968 Kosovo Albanian demonstrations with the requirement to allow the use of the national flag (the flag of Albanians), but also the easing period, such as inter-university exchange agreements between Pristina and Tirana in the early 1970's. The Constitution of 1974, which provided Kosovo with autonomy, but without the right to detach itself from Yugoslavia, brought a new period of time which was manifested by openings for communication and visits between two states, although they were always heavily depicted by state operators, even when they were both family and private visits. The demand of Albanian Students and intellectuals in 1981 for the Republic of Kosovo, which was followed by imprisonment and murders, such as the events after 1981, also followed with tension and interruption of contacts. All tense political periods were based on the ethnic Albanian identity expressed by Kosovo Albanians, which the Yugoslav state has tried to suppress with forms of violence and repression.

- 2 Arbëreshs are an Albanian ethnic and linguistic group in Southern Italy, mostly concentrated in scattered villages in the regions of Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria, Molise and Sicily. They are the descendants of mostly Tosk Albanian refugees, who fled from Albania between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries in consequence of the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans.

inhabited by Albanians. Kreshnik songs (heroic songs or songs of frontier warriors), ballads, folktales, lyric songs, laments, lullabies or cradle songs, as well as customs from all areas where Albanians lived were collected. *The Lute of Kosovo* was a volume in itself which contained lullabies, wedding songs, laments and heroic songs or so-called songs of manhood (Arllati, 2017: 147–164), all items collected in Kosovo.



ALBANIAN FOLKLORE MATERIALS PUBLISHED BY FOREIGN SCHOLARS

Apart from Albanian collectors, items of Albanian folklore had also been published by foreign scholars, long before Albanian ones. Some of them, serving as missionaries of various kinds in Albanian settlements, were attracted to the beauty and distinctiveness of the Albanian folk traditions and published special works on folklore. Among these authors are the German diplomat and linguist Johann Georg von Hahn (his works published: “*Albanesische Studien*”, Bd. 1–3, Jena 1854, “*Griechische und albanesische Märchen*”, Bd. 1–2, Leipzig 1864, München/Berlin 1918; “*Reise durch die Gebiete von Drin und Wardar*”, Wien 1867); the French consul August Dozon (his work: “*Contes albanais, recueillis et traduits*” collected and translated, published in Paris 1881); the Danish linguist Holger Pedersen, and the scholar Maximilian Lambertz (Their collected folkloric material was published in Sarajevo, 1917, as “*Volkspoesie der Albaner: eine einführende Studien*”). They included a lot of material from Albanian folklore in their work, just as notes, as additions to cultural dictionaries or as research studies. The most attractive genre that excited foreign researchers was the Albanian heroic epic songs, which were sung by the highlanders of the Northern areas of Albania and Kosovo, (in Northern Albanian dialect — Gheg) which is well known as the *Cycle of Kreshnik songs*.

The first interest in this sung mythic cycle came from the well-known Slovenian linguist Jernej Kopitar (1780–1844) in Vienna, who had correspondence with many academic authorities of the time. Among European linguists, he was considered a valued academic and thinker. In a correspondence with John Baring about the publication of Clement Forie’s “*Modern Greek Folk Songs*” (Paris, 1824–25), he writes: “There is no doubt that Greek songs published from Forie are imitated by those of Albanians. We have to make comparisons between Albanian, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian songs. Which of these people has invented them” (Miodrag Ibrovac, *Claude Fauriel et la fortune européenne des poesies populaires greque et serbe* (B. Comptes rendus de Kopitar), Didier, Paris, 1966, 193–203, (quoted by Pllana 2004: 365)).

According to the same source, Kopitar had asked his student, Vuk Karadžić, to collect the Albanian folk songs. So, in 1830 he had brought twelve Albanian folk songs (along with the translation into Serbian), three lyric and nine epic ones, recorded by two subjects from Peja/Peć (Kosovo). Although they were then recorded by Vuk Karadžić, these materials were published by Norbert Jokl only in 1921 (Pllana, 2004: 380).

Gustav Meyer was the first foreign (German) scholar who collected and published in Albanian a fragment (15 verses) of an Albanian song in 1897, which was published in Vienna along with other material from Albanian folklore, in his work “*Albanesische Studien*” VI (Neziri, 1997: 25–30). Matthias Murko (1861–1952) was an-



other Slovenian-born ethnologist who recognized the tradition of epic songs sung in Albanian, but did not accept them as genuine, while defending the viewpoint that they were versions of the Serbo-Croatian epic. Berisha, who is referring to him as Czech scholar (Murko was professor of the Charles University in Prague where he lived until his death), has worked on Murko's publications for Serbo-Croatian national epic. Matthias Murkos's thoughts and data about the Albanian oral epic (which Murko referred to as a Muslim tradition), although incomplete and scarce compared to the Serbian-Croatian epic, are of particular importance to Albanian historical studies because they provide field-based evidence for the spread and cultivating an epic song to Albanians in the last century. The singing records and bilingual singers (singing in Albanian and Bosnian languages) are of unique importance for comparative studies of Balkan epics, the undeniable part of which is the Albanian versions of epic songs. Based on data found on Murko's collection, even that he considered it as Muslim tradition, Berisha has recognized many of these materials as Albanian, because of the Albanian ethnographic features that belonged to Arnaut and many Muslim singers, such as their traditional costumes, their memory recorded or details of their origin. As Murko wrote in 1951, quoted by Berisha "From old Serbia, only the Arnauts (Albanians) have remained illiterate, whom have preserved the oral tradition very well, so they are still 'singing for everything' and always creating new songs" (Berisha A. 1989: 279).

Albanian epic songs were also recorded by the American researchers Milman Parry and Albert Lord, who, in search of the Homeric epic, arrived in the Balkans in the 1930s, and, in the Sandžak area in Serbia, recorded long songs from bilingual rhapsodists (four of the five singers from whom recorded the songs were Albanians and one of them sang in both languages, Salih Ugljanin) (Kolsti, 1990). The formulaic theory was built on the basis of the Serbian-Croatian epic, but according to David Elmer, who speaks of today's virtual publications of Parry-Lord,

"Even among the epics, which have always received more attention than anything else, scholars will find that there are significant discoveries yet to be made. Lord's Albanian collection, which includes some of the longest Albanian epics ever recorded but remains unpublished, stands out in this regard" (Elmer 2013: 348).

When we are talking about foreign authors and their work with Albanian folklore, we cannot overcome the work that Canadian researcher Robert Elsie did for the revelation of values of Albanian oral and textual heritage. Many of the Albanian folklore works, included old materials from archives that he collected, translated into English, studied and published, are accessible to each of his web-pages³ and Albanians remain indebted to Elsie, for the great work he has done in comparison to his short life. He died on October 2, 2017.

3 Robert Elsie, <www.elsie.de> [accessed 20.04.2019]; Robert Elsie, *Texts and Documents of Albanian History*, <www.albanianhistory.net> [accessed 20.04.2019].

ALBANIAN FOLKLORISTICS IN KOSOVO – THE DEVELOPMENT PATHS



The declaration of Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and the following definition of the borders of the Albanian state by the Conference of Ambassadors in London (1913) left many settlements inhabited by a majority of ethnic Albanians outside the Albanian state borders. This also applied to Kosovo, which despite efforts made, continued to belong to Yugoslavia after the end of the Second World War. Later (1948). Because of the collapse of diplomatic relations between Albania and Yugoslavia, the border between these two states was closed, preventing any communication, even between families.

Kosovo was a country that had just emerged from the war (the Second World War), with a poor and uneducated population. The first post-war decades began with great hardships. The lack of high schools and universities meant that the first scholars had to study in Belgrade, and later in Zagreb and Ljubljana, until the University of Prishtina was opened in 1970. While first generations of Kosovo students from the technical and medicine sciences have studied in Zagreb and Ljubljana, most of the social science students were educated in Belgrade. Scholars of linguistics and literary history, or of the philosophy, were the beginners of the folkloristic work. The collecting of folklore, initially of folk songs about historical figures, folktales and anecdotes, had begun to be made by students who had completed their studies in Belgrade at the Faculty of Philosophy.

Albanian folklore materials in Kosovo, (small collections done by enthusiast scholars), first started to be published in the daily newspaper *Rilindja*, but also in periodical journals. A book with folk songs from different regions of Kosovo, entitled "*Kangë popullore shqiptare të Kosovës dhe Metohisë*" (*The Albanian folk songs from Kosovo and Metohia*), which was collected by Albanian philologist Zekeria Rexha (educated in Tirana, Paris and Belgrade), was published in Prishtina in the year 1951, but because of the theme of historical songs that was judged to be capable of inspiring nationalistic sentiments of one nation against another, all three thousand copies were destroyed immediately after the book was released and the author was deported to Albania (Shita, 2007). Subsequently, three other authors, two Albanian students with their professor from Belgrade, took some of these materials, removed the "dangerous" songs by adding many other genres of folk songs, and published them in three volumes with the same title in 1953 (Daçetoviç et al, 1953). These were considered as a first volume of Albanian folkloristic published in Kosovo.

In the same year (1953) the Institute of Albanology was established in Prishtina. This was an institution where the language, literature, history and culture of Kosovo Albanians would be researched, studied and published. In the year 1955, in unfavorable circumstances for Albanians in Kosovo (there were discriminatory policies against the Albanian Muslim population forcing them to declare as Turks therefore to migrate them to Turkey (see more Grmek et al. 2010, (156–195)), the Institute of Albanology was closed. After 12 years, the situation changed and other political circumstances helped in the reopening of the Institute of Albanology (1967) and then the opening of the University of Prishtina (1970). In this year, the Folklore department (within the Institute) was established. The head of it was Professor Anton Çetta



(1920–1995). He had completed his elementary and secondary education in Albania and graduated at Belgrade University in Romanian philology. At the same time, he was lecturing on Albanian Literature, History of Literature, and Latin Language at the University of Prishtina.

WORKING ACTIVITY OF THE FOLKLORE DEPARTMENT IN PRISHTINA (PUBLICATIONS OF THE FOLK-VOLUMES)

Anton Çetta (1920–1995) is considered to be the founder of Albanian folklore studies in Kosovo and after the reopening of the Institute of Albanology in Prishtina, he chaired the Department of Folklore. When professor Çetta took on the task of founding the Folklore Department at the Institute of Albanology in Prishtina, the collection of folk literature was thought to be something abstract and that how much of this treasure existed in the field, was unknown (Berisha Rr., 2011, 142). He formulated the project to collect and publish twenty-eight volumes of various genres of folk literature, which the Folklore Department would prepare. This was the primary task of the department as, at the end of the 1960s, folkloristics as a discipline was incomprehensible without the grounding of folklore material in the archives. To accomplish this task, Çetta first gathered colleagues within the Department and then created a network of external collaborators, mainly his former students and scholars, who researched folk material in the field and brought it to the department (Mustafa, 2011, 127). Nearly thirty volumes of collected materials were published, mostly prepared by Çetta, his colleagues and collaborators. The chosen criteria for collecting and publishing of those materials were genre-based. This resulted in published volumes with collected oral-texts titled:

- *Këngë kreshnike* [Kreshnik songs or Songs of Frontier Warriors], (Çetta, ed. 1974), (Berisha Rr., et al. (eds.) 1991), (Çetta, et al, (eds) 1993);
- *Këngë epike legjendare* [Legendary epic songs] (Neziri 1997, 2009, 2011);
- *Balada dhe Legjenda* [Ballads and Legends] (Çetta, Berisha (eds) 1974);
- *Këngë popullore historike I-IV* [Historical folk songs I-IV] from different periods (Pllana, et al, (eds.) 1978); (Syla 1982); (Fetiu, et al. (eds.) 2007, Berisha Rr. et al, 2007; Syla et al.2007; Zejnullahu et al., 2007);
- *Këngë dasme* [Lyric wedding songs] (Çetta, Berisha A. (eds.)1982; 1984; Rukiqi (ed.) 2009);
- *Këngë dashurie* [Lyric love songs] (Mustafa, Berisha Rr. (eds.) 1979); (Berisha Rr., Mustafa (eds.) 1987);
- *Këngë dhe lojëra të fëmijëve* [Children's songs and games] (Fetiu (ed.), 1983);
- *Ninulla* [Lullabies] (Fetiu (ed.) 1982);
- *Vajttime* [Laments] (Çetta, Berisha A. (eds.) 1987; Ulaj (ed.) 2009);
- *Përralla* [Fairytale] (Çetta 1979 (ed.), 1982);
- *Balada dhe legjenda*, [Ballads and legends] (Çetta (ed.) 1974);
- *Kallëzime* [Folk Tales] (Mustafa (ed.) 1987);
- *Anekdotë* [Anecdotes] (Çetta, et al., (eds.) 1987; Çetta, et al., (eds.) 1988);

- *Fabula* [Fables] (Mustafa, Zejnullahu (eds.) 2008);
- and other small forms of oral narratives (Kajtazi (ed.) 2015), (Çetta (ed.) 1995); (Çetta (ed.) 2000); (Çetta (ed.) 2001), (Ulaj, 2011).



All these volumes and collected materials were organized according to the genre system and their collecting in the field was done according to this system (Honko 1976) as well as the publication. The focus of the publication was text, not voice or performance. The recording was done by reel-to-reel audio tape recording (Uher brand), then the sound material was transcribed, but only the text was published. Every volume in the end was equipped with several tables filled with data for the performers and collectors. Since then was dominant the concept on the role of performer only as the bearer of folklore, the data about performers and collectors were done more statistically. So, from that time when the folklore paradigm was “the text is king” (Honko, 2000, 7) we have published volumes with lines and texts of songs and narratives. Here are the types of folklore collected from all areas where Albanians live in the former Yugoslavia, but there are also items from Albanian folklore in Albania as well as Albanian Diaspora in Italy and Greece. Publication of sound materials was not practical. For various reasons, the publication of these volumes took four decades. This publication of collections of Albanian folklore served as a solid base for the folklore studies that came later. As sub-branch of the Folklore Department, there was always the Ethnomusicology branch which functioned along with the folklore research and fieldwork. The folklore materials from the fieldwork were treated also for the melodic and ethno-musicological aspect. Mostly folk instruments as well as folk festivals and the typical way of folk singing from the different zones were the preoccupations of the Albanian ethnomusicologists from the Folklore department, which we can see in their publications (Munishi 1979: 1987), whose focus were also the choral music of Albanians (Munishi 1988).

ACADEMIC SCIENTIFIC WORK BASED ON THE FOLKLORE MATERIAL PUBLICATIONS

The 1974 Constitution guaranteed Kosovo autonomy within Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which meant giving to Kosovo Albanians to develop the study of their national culture. More students had the chance to complete their higher education inside and outside Yugoslavia and to participate in the international conferences and congresses. Contacts with a wider literature and international folklore scholars resulted in a larger intellectual production for Albanian researchers, who published a number of books on poetics of the earlier published genres of Albanian folklore volumes. This was considered as the second phase of Albanian folkloristics in Kosovo. All the publications of the new perspectives on Albanian folklore published on this time were in Albanian language, but for practical needs of understanding we will present here the translation of titles in English. So, the titles in English of these Albanian scholarly publications are: *The Poetics of Albanian Folk Ballad* (Fetiu, 1987), *The Poetics of Albanian Folk Lyric* (Vinca 1989), *The Poetics of Albanian Fairy Tale* (Mustafa, 2003), *Approaching the Poetics of Albanian Oral Literature* (Berisha A. 1997), *The Poetics*



of stylistic figure of comparison in Albanian folk lyric (Neziri, 2004), *The Poetics of Riddle* (Gega-Musa, 2009), along with other poetical issues upon historical folk songs (Zejnullahu 1987, Sylja 1982). Although there were some monographic publications, articles on folklore were published regularly in the scientific journal “Gjurmime Albanologjike” (*Albanological Research*). It was published by the Institute of Albanology since the year 1971 in three series (Philology series, History series and the series of Folklore & Ethnology). Albanian folklore studies grew with this journal. The articles published in *Gjurmime* treated folklore analytically. An individual was considered as a bearer of tradition while his art was qualified as a treasure of national culture and heritage. Until today there are 47 volumes of the journal published, in three series.

The approach to folk materials was largely elevated and seen within its creative context. Theories and methods of research used in these papers were in correspondence with folkloristic publications published in other republics of Yugoslavia, which regularly came to the Library of the Institute of Albanology, with who the Institute was in contact. In the context of developments of Kosovo Albanian folkloristic within the Yugoslav area, very important was the organization of the twentieth Congress of the Association of Yugoslav Folklorists which was held on 24–28 September of the year 1986 in Prishtina. Under the auspices of Albanian folklorist Professor Shëfqet Pllana and the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Prishtina, this congress brought together about 200 folklore scholars from Yugoslavia, Europe and the world. According to Enver Mehmeti’s chronicle, the two main topics of the congress were ‘Folklore of Kosovo’ and ‘Continuity and Changes in Folk Creation’, while the themes of the sections were related to the epic of the South Slavs and the Albanian epic as well as various theoretical aspects and practice of classification of folk literature. Other topics included issues of ethnomusicology, ethno-choreology and children’s folklore. The special topics of these sessions were the comparative themes from the Albanian and Serbo-Croatian epic, the ballads of the Yugoslav peoples as well as the topics of the classification of the categories of folklore, for which debates and discussions took place (Mehmeti, 1987: 221–222). Even though it was considered a special event and as a great achievement of Prishtina University and Kosovo at all, the papers from this conference were never published. The changes that followed briefly in Kosovo, as well as the drastic changes that faced the University of Prishtina after, seem to have left their mark on the finalization of publication of the works from this congress, which was almost the last one that was organized in ex-Yugoslavia.

WORKING CONDITIONS OUT OF THE WORKING PLACE DURING THE 1990’S

The political circumstances behind the developments in the field directly affected the development of Albanian folklore studies in Kosovo. Albanian folklore studies in Kosovo made progress until the beginning of the 1990s, when they started to decline. From 1989 and for the whole of the next decade, Albanians faced very difficult times and their very existence was threatened by the Milošević regime. Kosovo’s autonomy was revoked; Albanians were excluded from all levels of education, health services, and government jobs. This meant the interruption of all academic activities. Folklor-

ists together with their colleagues were expelled from the building of the Institute of Albanology. Like all other educators and researchers, they decided to organize their work privately, but because the state left them without financing they were forced to raise funds, a very difficult task in those circumstances. At a time when even their existence was in jeopardy, folklorists published only few small issues of the annual *Journal of Albanological Research*. The publication was realised thanks to the financial assistance of the Kosovo Diaspora in Europe and USA. In those difficult years, they also worked on transcribing and editing the materials collected until then. This is the only work that could be done in closed settings, as the fieldwork was impossible to accomplish. The Institute of Albanology was transferred to a private house, where researchers could continue their work but with a low capacity. Field research was impossible to accomplish due to financial inability, but also due to the fact that working outside the facility became dangerous.

Another problem was the difficulty of supplying literature, because collaborations with libraries and bookstores were discontinued. Contacts and cooperation with institutions and institutes in the former Yugoslavia were completely interrupted. The separation of Kosovo from the Yugoslav state meant also the disappearance of Kosovo folkloristic publications from this network. Publishing was to a certain extent ensured on an individual basis and in illegal forms, according to the existing state rules. On the other hand, the dissolution of Yugoslavia on an ethnic basis, which, as we saw, resulted in the dissolution of internal institutional relations, paved the way for new ethnic contacts among Albanians. The collapse of communism in Albania in the early 1990s and then the mass deportation of the Kosovo Albanian population during the 1999 war (when a million Albanians were violently made to leave their country by Serbian paramilitary forces and to seek shelter in Albania and Macedonia) facilitated the establishment of contacts within the Albanian population outside the borders of Kosovo. Especially with Albania, with which contacts for almost half a century had been too weak, communication was not easy. The meetings between acquaintances, as well as the meeting between people who were unknown to each other, caused great cultural shock. As has been said many times, wars, tragedies and disasters are the most powerful sources for creating folklore. This time, it also led to the creation of a project by the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana, which (together with colleagues from Kosovo) aimed to explore the “Cultural Survival of the Deported Albanians”, which took place in two phases: when deported Kosovars were refugees in Albania and later when they returned to their homes in Kosovo. Many colleagues from both sides of the border, who until then had heard of or had a chance to read each other's works, were now getting acquainted with each other, but also with the fieldwork they had only heard from previous generations. Though the fieldwork in Kosovo, the people who had just emerged from the war, with many losses and casualties, needed time to return to work and scholarship. Based on this fieldwork many years later there were published a volume on Hasi region, which is settled between Albania and Kosovo and the political border divided it for almost half of the century. The volume titled “*Tradita kulturore e Hasit*” [*Cultural Tradition of Has*] was completed by collecting works of folklorists and ethnographers from Kosovo and Albania, whose research were made in this region (Fetiu et al. (eds.), 2005).





NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR NEW APPROACHES TOWARD FOLKLORE

After the 2000s, the circumstances and opportunities for Kosovo citizens to travel changed thanks to the assistance provided by the developed countries of Europe and the USA, not only for food and shelter but also for educational needs. The opening of various academic foundations for the professional rehabilitation of staff and scholars from Prishtina University allowed them to take up specialized positions in similar institutions of developed countries. Thus members of academic staff from Kosovo had the opportunity to be profiled and rehabilitated, getting acquainted with and tracking the academic trends in Europe and beyond. In these circumstances, I had the opportunity to undertake specializations at some universities abroad, but here I will emphasize what gave orientation to my research and studies of Albanian folklore in general. The research visit that I made to Finland in the Folkloristic department of University of Turku in 2002 informed me about new approaches toward oral culture that I did not know before. Recognition of new methods and methodologies, as well as the possibility of coming into contact with texts and authors informed me of the method of oral history and its potential in folklore. Conceiving of folklore as the entirety of expression and cultural conduit from tradition, in conjunction with everyday practice, provided the opportunity for explanation of many past events, as well many practices, not only oral from the daily routine.

My previous knowledge which considered folklore only as the folk traditional knowledge, based on the genre system, clashed with this new understanding which gave me a wider potential for studying folklore. I soon realized that it gave me the possibility of expanding my knowledge base on new types of folklore in Albanian fieldwork, previously unknown in Albanian folkloristics. Thus, my next project was research and introduction of oral personal narrative as an oral genre in Albanian folklore. Researching and discovering the personal stories that field subjects kindly offered even when the folklorist sought other types of tradition, was an experience that my international colleagues had had before me (Hakamies 2006). This genre contained creative narrative, the alleged truthfulness, the narrator's persona in the form — 'I report', but with an apparent presence of the tradition as memory of generations in the type "had told me ...". These notions existed in Albanian folklore, but they had to be positioned into a theoretical genre, and I achieved this by combining modern theories from the European and American authors with materials from the local fieldwork. The use of oral history method in folklore studies was a novelty, not very widely accepted, when this study was published in 2009 (Dushi, 2009) but today it is increasingly being applied to research and studies from other humanities published in Kosovo.

In Turku I went back for my post-doctoral studies in 2011/2012, where I gained knowledge of new approaches towards folklore. Memory studies opened new perspectives. The other research project, which is related to trends in new research in Albanian folklore studies, is the personal story of inhabitants of the border areas with Albania. Those stories are followed over three generations and testify to an intergenerational memory of the consequences and damages made to ethnic Albanian family, culture and society caused by that political border. Through these narratives, I have succeeded in supplying the emotional side of history, which nobody could dare tell

of at the time when they happened. The border line can be seen symbolically in each sentence of these narrators, where the presence of division comes into their thoughts and emotions, into their narratives. Theoretical studies on borders and memory as well as anthropological approaches to folklore give me the opportunity to shed some light on some unreached issues of this border.



THE STATUS OF ALBANIAN FOLKLORISTICS TODAY

The contacts and collaboration between the folklore institutes in Tirana and Prishtina, as well as among Albanians in Macedonia and Montenegro, are free and unobstructed today, enabling joint research and joint conferences. Publications and collaborations have replaced isolation and excommunication, and today Albanian folklorists in the Balkans jointly aim for Europe. They are now able to participate in international conferences. They are alongside other scholars as representatives of the national folklore studies of their respective countries and cultures.

Kosovo Albanian folklorists in recent years have started to be present in international publications as well. Today there are tendencies among folklore scholars (still very few in number) to see folklore as being related to other disciplines, which helps them to open the boundaries of the concept and to try new approaches. The opportunity to use literature in foreign languages today opens up new perspectives to Albanian folklore, encouraging folklorists to find it in creative continuity online and in social networks. This is new approach which by classic folklorists continues to be seen as non-folklore, considering that folklore cannot be created outside of the village and much less in written form.

Over the last few years, there is an opening of Albanian folklore research and studies to new approaches and methods, but also it is growing presence of Albanian folkloristic, in conferences and in international publications. There is still much work to be done, but Albanian folklorists have started to be represented in international organizations such as SIEF, InASEA, Ballad Commission, ISFNR, and Finnish Folklore Fellows. They are few, but their presence today in international conferences and publications marks an opening for Kosovo Albanian folklore studies where they can be presented as autonomous entity. An important event was the organization of the 45th conference of the The Ballad Commission in Prishtina in 2015, titled *Parallel Words in Ballad and Folk Songs* which proceedings were published in 2017 (Dushi & Kadriu (eds.), 2017). There were organized also two international conferences on Albanian Epics, where were participants except presenting their papers (published later) have visited rhapsodist while performing live in their region the mountainous area. Along with some international participants there were many national folklorists from all Albanian-speaking regions, who treated the epic performances analytically. The aim of this conference was also the preparation step for applying of the Albanian Heroic Cycle for the UNESCO intangible world heritage (Neziri (ed.), 2016).

The Department of Folklore at the Institute of Albanology in Prishtina today has eight scholars, three of whom are ethnomusicologists and all carry out research projects which give new opportunity to Albanian folklore researches. The treatment of



oral narratives from the perspective of social and collective memory, but also through the oral history method, is giving a new perspective to Albanian folklore. Treating the rites of passage and family rituals from the anthropological perspective is enriching the possibility of deconstructing and understanding these vital processes, evidenced and stratified in the cultural heritage in general, and folklore in particular. Handling folk songs and ritual year ceremonies not just as a text or melody, but also as a context and textures, while giving the ability to analyze performance as a whole, with all its surrounding elements, is also opening folklore to other disciplines. Adopting new concepts such as 'written folklore', 'digital folklore' or the 'folklore of mass media' are giving the first results of Albanian folklore research and studies in Kosovo.

By opening the boundaries of the classical definition, thanks to new theoretical cognitive possibilities and interdisciplinary cooperation, which is being achieved through contact with foreign language schools and literature, folklorists are pushing their discipline forward. This is also achieved through their participation in international associations and organizations of the professional fields, but mostly through presentations of research results and Albanian folklore in international academic conferences, where Kosovo and the folklore created here are represented by Kosovo Albanian scholars, rather than their neighbours, as it has been the case until recently.

The regular participation of folklorists from Kosovo at the annual international ballad conferences, every two years conference of anthropologists of South-eastern Europe, folklore conferences in Macedonia and Bulgaria, oral history conference in Finland as well as the Baltic countries, even as guest lecturers in regional conferences, have begun to make Kosovo visible on the academic map of Europe. Also the professional schooling of ethnomusicologists in Turkey and Bulgaria, where they are specializing in narrow areas of music heritage issues, are pointing to new potential for Albanian folklore studies. Such a state of folkloristics is very encouraging, although this work still requires a lot of commitment, dedication, seriousness, and material support from state institutions. Also, Albanian folkloristic in Kosovo still needs to be involved in wider projects in the region, as well as in Europe. It continues to need greater presence in the academic programs within the country, to have the opportunity to prepare folklorists, researchers of the folklore from the basis, from the bachelor level, where they will define their orientation toward studying folklore.

To conclude, in the wake of research and studies that take place today on Albanian folklore in Kosovo, folklorists no longer have to risk of their physical existence but face another challenge: the lack of a conceptualized system of their discipline. Folkloristics along all this history in Albanian studies, risk being dissolved into fields of cultural and social anthropology, the disciplines that try every day to dominate both as denominations and methodologies, and for the fact that they represent a modern academic trend. Also, the lack of folkloristic presence in academic programs is another risk that does not facilitate the professional training of young folklorists. If such trends continue, Albanian folkloristic in Kosovo is likely to become a sub-discipline within anthropological or cultural studies. This will force folklore studies to change the name of the discipline and this may not always be pleasant. But it looks like this will be another form of survival, alongside another paradigm shift that is closing in on the horizon.

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