

THE INFLUENCE OF OTTOMAN CULTURE ON THE WAY OF LIFE OF ALBANIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Aim. This paper aims to highlight the elements of Ottoman culture that have influenced Albanians' culture and way of life. Albania was under Ottoman occupation for five centuries, which has had various consequences on the country's economic, cultural, and social life.

Methods. To realize this study, a series of methods have been used, such as research, comparative, and cartographic methods. The comparative method consists of the authors confronting each other regarding the influences of Ottoman culture and how widespread it became in Albanian culture. The cartographic method aims to explain the extent of Ottoman work in Albania and whether it managed to penetrate Albanian territorial integrity.

Results. Whether we like it or not, Ottoman influences are already part of our heritage in values, customs, traditions, beliefs, material culture, folklore, clothing, architecture, and the life of Albanians.

Conclusion. The study has enabled a better understanding of the constructions of the time, their quality, level, and extent; at the same time, they testify to historical phenomena, such as the process of resistance to the invaders, the Islamization of the Albanian population, and the beginning of economic growth and especially of cities.

Keywords: culture, Ottoman, society, Albanian, traditions

INTRODUCTION

Albanian culture has been and is an autochthonous culture that has passed through various stages of development. Of the development process of Albanian society from antiquity to the present day. Internal and external factors influence the development process. The internal factor has contributed to local culture's preservation, cultivation, and enrichment. External factors have influenced the constant contact with different countries in the ancient, medieval, and modern world, including economic and commercial views and especially the subjugating and invading views continuously present in the Albanian territories.

If we refer to the Ottoman occupation, it has left its mark on Albania, both economically and culturally. Ottoman influences are already part of our heritage: values, customs, traditions, beliefs, material culture, folklore, art, music, clothing, architecture, lifestyle, etc. The Ottoman presence in Albania was huge because Albania has been, for 500 years, part of a vast mosaic of military, economic, and cultural invasions.

Ottoman cultural influences are present in every cell of Albanian culture. Significant influences are noticed in the linguistic element, where many Turkish words have become part of the daily linguistic jargon.

Traces of Ottoman influence are also seen in the religious context, where over 60% of the Albanian population today is Islamic, which is a process of Ottoman policy for the Islamization of all peoples conquered by it. The Islamization of the population in Albania began in the 15th century and continued until the end of the 17th century (Frashëri, 2004).

Ottoman influences have been present in Albania's repertoire of traditional clothing. We will mention her clothes with *dimiq* and a vest for women and those with *panties* for men. Also, the Ottoman influence has been very present in the architecture of the buildings.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify the influential elements of Ottoman culture in Albanian culture. The study aims to:

- Identify influential Ottoman cultural elements in the local culture and how much weight they had in adapting the Albanian mentality.
- Assess the consequences of this direct impact and how many efforts have been made to preserve the indigenous identity and local culture.
- To analyze each evaluative element in a historical context and how much these foreign cultural interventions are respected or preserved today in Albanian society.

- To identify the current problems of reconciliation and disagreement with this new cultural reality and the attitudes of centuries-old foreign and domestic policies regarding this phenomenon, known or unknown in different decades.
- Analyze every possible effort of Albanian society to avoid this cultural coexistence, which has affected their entire way of life.

The central problem we try to answer in this study is this: How has the Ottoman cultural element influenced the mentality and way of life, and how much have they accepted or opposed this new unknown reality that, over the centuries, has become part of Albanian society?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to conduct the study is based on the use and combination of primary and secondary data. Providing data was made possible through the review of literature in the historical field, in addition to the territorial occupation by the Ottomans. A series of methods, such as research, comparative, and cartographic methods, have been used to realize this study.

The research method has been to use all existing literature on the Ottoman occupation of Albania and the consequences it has brought for centuries throughout Albanian society's way of life. Various studies and publications of historians, archaeologists, and local and foreign scholars have been used regarding the preservation of the Ottoman cultural heritage and cultural adaptation in Albanian society.

The comparative method consists of the authors' confrontation regarding the influences of Ottoman culture and how widespread it became in Albanian culture. At the same time, one must look at the authors' argumentative view of how they treat the Ottoman cultural occupation compared to the military one.

The cartographic method aims to explain the extent of the Ottoman occupation of Albania and whether it penetrated the entire Albanian territorial integrity.

OVERVIEW OF THE OTTOMAN OCCUPATION IN THE BALKANS AND ALBANIA

The Ottoman Empire was one of the most significant political forces that shaped the history of the Balkans and especially Albania for an extended period. Indeed, from the fourteenth century to the early twentieth century, the Ottoman state was the most significant political body, becoming a threat to Europe and the Balkans. Moreover, the Ottoman occupation is often regarded as responsible for economic backwardness and political turmoil, further influencing many Balkan countries today (Frashëri, 2004).

Indeed, as in many other societies ruled by great multinational empires with many religions, people have resisted and sought ways to adapt to historical situations or build a better fortune for themselves and the communities to which they belonged (Dojaka, 1983). Sometimes, this involved “negotiating” with rulers and actively cooperating with them to gain certain individual or collective privileges. This can also be interpreted as submission to the authorities, or conversely, it can also be seen as a choice of a passive or active form of resistance. This also means that everyday life was usually more important than political issues (Gjergji, 2002).

Historians have expressed different and often contradictory opinions about this process. Most of them presented it from the national point of view, although people in the late Middle Ages rarely viewed the world according to ethnic boundaries.

These historians have presented this process as a series of heroic military achievements in which their people fought bravely against powerful enemies. For some Albanian historians (Frashëri, 2004), the true nature of the conquest process has been more complicated. Ethnic, religious, and ethical divisions were often not so clear. Securing collaborators was often as important as fighting. Heroism and devotion to certain ideals were part of the same picture, where cruelty, suffering, and deception were found (Shkodra, 1985).

The present territory of the Republic of Albania remained part of the Ottoman Empire until 1912, when Albania declared independence (Mihaçevi, 2006).

OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE IN ALBANIA

The objects of the Islamic cult occupy an essential place in the framework of the architecture of the Late Middle Ages (15th—19th centuries). They extend to all areas inhabited by Albanians, thus being clear material evidence of a period of the history of the Albanian people and architecture and construction in particular. Their study has enabled a better understanding of the constructions of the time, their level and extent, as well as to testify to such historical phenomena as the process of resistance to the occupier and the Islamization of the Albanian population, as well as the beginning of the rise of economic development of the country and especially of the cities, along with Albanian scholars (Muka, 1991). The contribution of the Dutch scholar Machiel Kiel is essential in his works, primarily the monograph *Ottoman Architecture in Albania (1385-1912)*. Of particular interest for these studies were the data of travelers who have visited Albanian territories, among whom the most important is Evlia Çelebi (17th century), who describes the Albanian areas with numerous data on life, people, and constructions. Unfortunately, we are the only country that does not have a complete scientific publication of the relevant part of the *Sejahat* name.

In the 15th—20th century, Albania's territory developed various forms of architecture, including defensive constructions, social and Islamic cult constructions, post-Byzantine church architecture, and famous dwellings (Muka, 2001).

From the buildings that initially met in the centers where the occupier's presence was confirmed, with the beginning of large-scale Islamization of the country, objects of Islamic cult were built almost everywhere, becoming a characteristic element in each center's inhabited architectural and urban physiognomy (Muka, 1976).

The castle of Vlora was undoubtedly one of the most accomplished military constructions of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman traveler of the 17th century, Evlia Çelebi, writes that "those who have not seen the fortresses of Sekedin, Bender, and Vlora do not know the mastery of the Ottomans." (Baçe & Karasikaj, 1973, p. 46). Çelebi also says that the architect of the castle of Vlora was Sinan, the author of the white tower of Thessaloniki. The walls were surrounded by a ditch filled with water with a width of 30-40 m. This gap surrounding the castle from the ground was connected to the sea through two sleeves (Baçe & Karasikaj, 1973).

The first mosques served as military garrisons and were built over the gates of castles, such as those in the castles of Elbasan, Tepelena, Bashtova, etc., which were as simple as buildings and covered with wooden roofs (Riza, 1979a,b).

However, from the last years of the 15th century, all mosques were equipped with porticoes. However, during the 17th century and especially in the 18th—19th century, more porches were used, with wooden structures that occupied large areas (Kavaja, Berat, Tirana) (Muka, 1988). The interior of the mosques was very light; the walls and domes were often covered with murals (Riza, 1982).

A unique construction genre was inns, which served as lodges for traders from rural areas or other cities. The Inn of Elbasan in the old bazaar of the city of Korça is worth mentioning, where mainly merchants from Elbasan stayed (Shkodra, 1973).

From the 15th to the beginning of the 16th century, Albanian towns were reduced to small centers, which also served as local markets. The 15th century marked an overall increase in civic centers, which were expanded by new residents coming from the countryside (Muka, 1988).

At the end of the 17th century, the growth of cities' economic role led to the creation of large markets with an inter-provincial character. The architecture of the famous dwelling is distinguished for a clear continuity of forms and solutions in its development path, following and reflecting the progress of the conditions and the way of life (Riza, 1979c).

The civic dwelling of the 16th -19th century takes place in four main types:

- Dwellings with firehouses, characteristic of Tirana and the surrounding villages, represent one of the Albanian dwelling's most ancient and characteristic types of architecture (Muka, 1991).

- Apartments with a porch are another type of apartment that develops in several variants. The open apartment with patios is the dominant type in Central Albania. The main feature of this type is its connection with the yard and nature.
- Apartments with a loggia are often found in Berat, less often in Lezha, Kruja, etc. It prevails in Shkodra, such as the building of the Ethnographic Museum in Kruja, Luigj Gurakuqi in Shkodra, the apartments of the Toptanas in Tirana, etc.
- Due to its protective features, the Gjirokastra dwelling is named the ‘civic tower.’ This civic dwelling reached its peak development in the 18th century. A typical example of this housing is Zakat in Gjirokastra (Muka, 2001).

ISLAMIZATION OF THE ALBANIAN POPULATION

Throughout history, the unity of religion has played a crucial role in integrating medieval empires. In the Renaissance period, the role of beliefs in integrating national ethnocultural units became more critical, particularly during Humanism, Enlightenment, and National Renaissance. This historical experience demonstrates the significance of religion and beliefs in integration. Data from interdisciplinary Albanian research shows that the role of Islamization in Albania was complex: political, ethnocultural, philosophical, religious, linguistic, educational, artistic, legal, etc.

In the 18th—19th century, Islamism flourished as a religion and culture in Albania. The spread of Islam in Albania created some influential elements that we can mention:

- A vast network of Islamic educational and cultural institutions was established, and metopes and madrasas were taught Islamic religion and oriental literature in Ottoman and Arabic.
- Islam left traces in the customary life of Albanians through the intervention of several names of sharia. However, sharia remained the everyday ruling code of Albanians. The acceptance of Islam by Albanians is also explained by the role that this religion would play in the differentiation of Albanians from Slavs (Kosovo area) and Greeks (Chameria area) who, especially after the 17th century, had begun an assimilation policy towards Albanians (Frashëri, 2004).

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ALBANIAN SOCIETY AND THEIR RIGHTS IN THE FAMILY DURING THE OTTOMAN RULE

Documents and studies about the period in question show that women were also engaged in social life in addition to the family environment. Thus, they were given the right to practice the craft she practiced (testing) independently (Onuzi, 1982).

Regarding employment, the researcher Zija Shkodra emphasized that most women were engaged in domestic crafts. This phenomenon is more noticeable in urban centers, such as the Albanian cities of the time, such as Elbasan, Berat, Shkodra, Prizren, Skopje, etc. (Shkodra, 1977).

Many documents show women who have gained the right to independently practice the trade they owned or inherited the business that their parents may have had, especially in Elbasan. It is worth noting that many of these women are observed to belong to other faiths, i.e., non-Muslims (Gjergji, 1976).

Scholars say that during the 15th—19th century, many bridges, such as the Lady in Labova, Cine in Rrëzoma, Vasha in Gur i Bardhë, etc., were constructed, and their construction was funded by various women (Gjergji, 2002).

The family is the core institution of society, and in the Albanian tradition, it occupies an extraordinary place. In the case of women, Islamic law and, consequently, Ottoman rule gave her rights, which for the time constituted considerable progress. Thus, one of the fundamental rights given to women was inheritance. For example, when a man died and had only his wife as heiress, she was entitled to receive only a quarter of the property left, while the rest passed to the state treasury (Onuzi, 2004).

Another element in the context of women's rights within the family is the issue of divorce. The amount paid in divorce varied according to the family's property, and the payment consisted of money and material elements.

Another aspect related to a woman's rights in married life and within the family is the issue of administering inherited property. Studies conducted based on the documents of the time show that the woman had the right to manage her property and income inherited from her family, donated, or earned during the period of marriage (Onuzi, 1982).

ALBANIAN CLOTHING IN THE FACE OF ORIENTAL INFLUENCE

During the seventeenth century, the features of the urban dress of the upper and middle classes still fluctuated between East and West. The data available on clothing in this century still needs to be more comprehensive and sufficient to create a complete picture of the situation.

Documentary records show that class differences were evident even in clothing in this century. Archival records show that for the last quarter of the 18th century, the clothing of the wealthy and artisans in our cities influenced oriental fashion for Muslims and Christians. Characteristic ornaments for men are silver rings, studs, and chains, but they also carry costly weapons such as swords with silver gloves, knives, and rifles (Gjergji, 1976).

For the history of costumes, it is interesting to know what fabrics were imported for clothing. According to a Venetian consul La Fontana report, in 1769, coats, silk fabrics, damask, and thin fabrics woven with gold and silver threads came to the Shkodra pier.

For the dress of Muslim women of the upper bourgeoisie, we have data from a will written at the end of the century, which mentions pieces of clothing that were kept in the second half of the 18th century. There, we learn that at this time, the clothing of the women of this stratum in the city of Shkodra consisted of a long fabric shirt, *breneveka*, and then came the long and expensive *dollomaja* made of *shahmerani* (costly fabric woven with gold and silver thread, which was brought from Istanbul) On top of which the antenna is just as long, then the velvet vest and finally its Kamakshi or velvet coat of cloth, which was already preferred (Shkodra, 1977).

Even in the dress of the Christian parish, the oriental features were quite conspicuous. Such was the clothing of the founder Shamo around 1725 in Korça, consisting of a white shirt, on which comes the *dolloma* high up to the bulk of the legs and the bottom, barely compressed with a wide belt. Similar to Shamo's dress is the dress of the founder painted on a fresco in the Church of St. Thanas of Voskopoja in 1745.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, men's folk costumes continued developing on the same main types we have known in previous centuries.

In terms of civic clothing, Turkish-Oriental elements were undoubtedly clothing such as *dollomaja*, long anterior, *binishi*, *kondoshi*, scarves made of red cloth, etc., used mainly by the Muslimised nobility of our principal cities of this time, but also Christians of wealthy strata here and there (Shkodra, 1985).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in the last thirty years, an authentic source of great value is the photographs taken in the studios of photographers already working in the country's leading centers. Among them, materials of great interest for the study of clothing are found in the wealthy photo library of Marubi in Shkodra, as the oldest photograph, followed later by other photographers, both in Shkodra and in other cities, the well-known painter Kole Idromeno, who was also a photographer.

Marubi's rich photo library has helped many scholars design and illustrate their works. Thus, many photographs of Marubi have been used by Edouard Schneider, Lovro Mijacevic, Marcin Czerminski, Luigi Pennazzi, Alexandre Théodore Degrand, Franc Nopca, etc.

The contribution of the other patriot of this period, Zef Jubani, who, in many places and his writings, gives positive assessments of the highlanders' popular culture and good traditions and raises the need for their encouragement. He notes that even the Albanians who moved to Italy have preserved these traditions, especially in clothing. The idea that folk costumes are part of the precious national heritage has been expressed in his writings by Fan Noli (June 1911) by others, and these should be learned and taught.

CONCLUSION

As seen above, this study provides a broad overview of Ottoman cultural influences on Albanian culture. It affected all spheres of life, economic, political, and social, i.e., Albanians' entire way of life.

This paper covers some essential elements, more specifically, Ottoman Architecture in Albania, which has had a significant impact on the development of cities, where indisputably the most prominent place was occupied by objects of Islamic cult, which extended to all the territories inhabited by Albanians, thus being clear material evidence of a period of the history of the Albanian people in general and of architecture and construction in particular.

Their study provides a better understanding of the constructions of the time, their quality, level, and extent; at the same time, they testify to historical phenomena, such as the process of resistance to the invaders, the Islamization of the Albanian population, and the beginning of economic growth and especially of cities. Also, the Islamization of the Albanian population was another influential element in Albanian culture and society. Archival documents show that although Albania was going through a difficult period, the Albanian woman enjoyed some fundamental rights, such as the right to inheritance, engagement, and marriage, the right to property and its management, and the right to apply to the courts. For her rights, etc. Also, the documents show that she was engaged outside the home, engaging in various professions and activating for the benefit of society through endowments or similar institutions.

Among the factors that have influenced some aspects of the development of clothing, we can mention The disintegration of the closed household economy, the ever-increasing influence of the city on the village, the increased exchange and circulation of goods that brought the most intensive entry of materials fabricated in peasant dress and on the social plane, the deepening of the stratification of society and the contradictions between social classes.

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