

TRACES OF PERSIAN LITERATURE ON NAIM FRASHERI'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the traces of Persian literature on Naim Frasheri's poetry. It also explores literary and extra literary factors that were of crucial significance during the process of his intellectual formation and ontological manifestation. The paper argues that author's ideas are the result of the interactions of different cultures, in our case Persian and Albanian cultures. We try to comprehend the social environment and presumptive reasons and sources of author's motivation and inspiration for his poetic creation. The extra literary factors which have been connecting the poet to Persian language and literature and some epistemes traced in Naim's poetry were found to be related to epistemic circulation of cultural and literary societies during the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan Region. In this context, special attention has been given to the influences, concepts, archetypes and topics of Persian literature in Naim's poetry in order to identify the most significant Persian traces in the epistemology and ontology of the Albanian people and their culture. A comparative analysis was conducted on the basis of the letters of poets such as Mewlana, Sa'adi and Hafiz Shirazi within the scope of this study.

Keywords: Persian Literature, Naim Frashëri, Albanian Literature, Mewlana Jalaluddin Rumi, Abul-Qasem Ferdowsi

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NAİM FRASHERİ’NİN ŞİİRİ ÜZERİNDEKİ FARS EDEBİYATININ İZLERİ

ÖZ

Bu çalışma Naim Frasheri’nin şiirleri üzerindeki Fars edebiyatının izlerini ele almaktadır. Frasheri’nin entelektüel gelişimi ve ontolojik tezahürü sürecinde çok önemli rol oynayan yazınsal ve yazın ötesi etmenleri de irdelemektedir. Çalışma ayrıca yazarın düşüncelerinin farklı kültürlerin, bu çalışma bağlamında Fars ve Arnavut kültürlerinin, etkileşiminin sonucu olduğunu tartışmaktadır. Çalışmada şairin şiirsel yaratımını güdüleyen ve ona ilham veren sosyal çevre ve olası nedenler ile kaynaklar anlaşılmasına çalışılmaktadır. Şairi Fars edebiyatına bağlamakta olan yazın ötesi etmenlerin ve Naim’in şiirinde izleri sürülen bazı epistemlerin Balkan topraklarındaki Osmanlı İmparatorluğu hakimiyetindeki kültürel ve yazınsal toplulukların epistemik dolaşımıyla ilişkili olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, çalışmada Arnavut halkı ve kültürünün epistemolojisi ve ontolojisinde yer alan en önemli Fars izlerini belirlemek amacıyla Naim’in şiirleri üzerindeki Fars edebiyatının etkilerine, kavramlarına, arketiplerine ve konularına özel bir önem atfedilmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında Mevlana, Sa’adi ve Hafız Şirazi gibi şairlerin mektuplarına dayanılarak karşılaştırmalı bir analiz gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fars Edebiyatı, Naim Frashëri, Arnavut Edebiyatı, Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, Ebul-Kasım Firdevsi

Introduction

Following the conquest and settlement of the Ottomans in the Balkan regions, after the 14th century, a new social system consisting of the army, administration, schools, mosques and Muslim Tekke’s was gradually installed. The epistemologies of Islamic culture brought by the Turks to the Balkans resulted from the Arabic language in science and theology, the Turkish language in the field of administration, and the Persian language in literature and culture. One of the main factors that led to the spread of Iranian literature and culture was the Persian language. The scope and influence of this language had gone so far that, in the lands ruled by the Ottoman Empire, knowledge of Persian and literary creation in this language was considered a cultural privilege, and those who spoke it were considered intellectual and civilized.¹ Such an approach to Persian was later extended into our Albanian

¹ Hayati Develi, *XVIII. Yüzyıl İstanbul Hayatına Dair ‘Risâle-i Garîbe*, Kitabevi, İstanbul 1998, p. 26.

region. The presence and importance of the Persian language in the Balkans is best documented by Aşık Çelebi (1520–1572) in the book *Meshâiru'sh-Shuârâ* where he writes: "... It is narrated that when a child was born in Prizren, it was given a mahlas (a poetic nickname) before it was given a name. The child born in Jenice of Vardar calls the bread "mama" in Persian. As for the children that were born in Prishtina, they hold a stamp in girdle. Hence, all this means that Prizren is a place of poets, Jenice of Vardar a place of Persian language and Pristina a place of administration ..."² Even Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682) mentions that he had seen dervishes who learned Persian in the Albanian regions. "... In fact, the famous traveler mentions in his notes that there are many people in the town who learn Persian, honor Ali and his family, and curse Muawiya and Yazid..."³ In madrassas and tekkes built by the Ottomans and dervishes who came from the Middle East, besides learning the Persian language, the mystical and poetic works of Iranian poets and mystics such as Farîdud-Dîn Attâr, Hâfez-e Shîrâzî, Sa'îdî Shîrâzî and many others were also read and studied. In this way, an Islamic cultural elite emerged and began to create literature in Arabic, Turkish and Persian, in the Albanian-populated areas, as well as in Bosnian-populated areas.⁴ In addition, an epistemology and cosmology began to be structured and incorporated into the worldview of "Persian-Turkic Islamic civilization",⁵ in which mystical-philosophical concepts prevailed. Apart from the Ottoman madrassas where besides theological and rational knowledge, Arabic and Persian languages⁶ and literature were also taught. The Tekke's were the places where classic Islamic mystical literary works were read and experienced. Among these Tekkes that contributed to the development and spread of mystical ideas and the Persian language among the Albanians, was the Tekke in the village of Frashër in Përmet, Albania, founded by dervish Tahir Nesibi, who came from the Horosan region.⁷ In this Tekke were educated great men of letters, intellectuals and activists of the Albanian nation, such as Dalip Frashëri,⁸

² Filiz Kılıç, *Aşık Çelebi, Meşâirü'sh-Shuârâ*, İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yay., İstanbul 2010. p. 43.

³ Nathalie Clayer, *Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar (Lindja e një kombi me shumicë myslimane në Evropë)*, (transl.) Artan Puto, Botimet Përprojekta, Tiranë 2012, p. 44.

⁴ Fehim Nametak, *Historija turske književnosti*, Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, Sarajevo 2013, p. 15.

⁵ Shahab Ahmad, *What Is Islam? - The Importance of Being Islamic*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2015. p. 134.

⁶ Sadik Mehmeti, *Shkollat dhe Arsimit në Kosovë*, IAP, Prishtine, p. 281.

⁷ Şemseddin Sami, *Hurdeçin*, Mihran Matbaası, İstanbul 1302/1885. p. 2.

⁸ Bektashi poet and translator into Turkish of Turkish poet Fuzûlî's work "Hadikat-s-Suedâ". This work is still preserved in manuscript.

Shahin Frashëri,⁹ brothers Abdyl,¹⁰ Naim and Shemseddin Sami Frashëri. Naim Frashëri was educated in the Islamic Oriental and the modern Occidental knowledge. He has been regarded as one of the founders of the modern Albanian nation, therefore received the epithet “national poet of Albanians”. The codes of great literatures, such as classical Greek and modern French romantic literature can be traced in Naim’s poetry. Nevertheless, it seems that the classical Persian literature has most significantly influenced him. Thus, in this paper, we will explore the Persian literary traces and influences on Naim Frasher’s literary creations. The relevance of this research has to do with the influence of Naim Frashëri’s ideas, archetypes and literary topics on the Albanian literature and thought in later periods. It also highlights the Persian literary and cultural influences on the Albanian literature, in particular, the traces of Persian mystical-cultural ideas in the foundations of contemporary Albanian culture.

1. Naim Frashëri’s links to Persian language and literature

Mehmet Naim Frashëri (1846 - 1900)¹¹ was born in the village Frashër Vilayet of Ioannina (today in the district of Permet, Albania) to a family formed by education stemming from Oriental-Islamic epistemology which subsequently also contributed to the construction of modern Albanian identity. The father Halit Bey belonged to the family of Ayas Bey, who according to Kokalari, had sought to create poetry in Turkish.¹² Whereas his mother, Emine, was born into the family of Ilyaz Bey Mirahor,¹³ which is known for its contributions and services to Islamic religion, particularly Bektashi order. Thus, Naim received his first lessons in a Bektashi religious environment. He was also part of Frasher’s well-known tekke in Përmet. Mit’hat Frashëri, alias Lumo Skendo, writes: “Also, he had a teacher Mehmet

⁹ Shahin Frashëri was an Albanian poet of the 19th century. His poem “Myhtarnameja” (Mukhtarnameh-Book of Mukhtar) is one of the longest and earliest epics in Albanian literature. It describes the events post Battle of Karbala of 680 AD where Husayn ibn Ali was killed, an important event in the chronology of Islam.

¹⁰ Abdyl Frashëri (1839 - 1892) was one of the first Albanian political ideologues of the Albanian National Awakening.

¹¹ For Naim’s life and work see: Rexhep Qosja, *Porosia e Madhe: Monografi mbi Krijimtarinë e Naim Frashërit*, Rilindja, Prishtina 1986.

¹² Musine Kokalari, *Naim Frashëri*, (transl.) Elinda Kokalari, Geer, Tiranë 1941, p. 260.

¹³ Ilyaz Bey Mirahori was an Albanian Janissary, scholar, and personal teacher of the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid II. Also known as Ilyaz Hoja, he was married to the daughter of Mehmet II and was the Sandzakbeg of the Sandzak of Korça.

Efendi, a scholar from whom he had learned Turkish, Arabic and Persian.”¹⁴ “Naim lived his childhood in village Frashër; took Turkish, Persian and Arabic lectures from the teacher (khawaja) in the village; he listened to older pupils recite poems in Persian”.¹⁵ According to this statement, we can figure out that Naim had expressed interest in Persian poetry from an early age. He had the opportunity to study at the Greek school “Zosiema”, where he would learn ancient Greek language and culture, and would become acquainted with modern European cultural developments, especially French Romantic literature, which also had an influence on him. However, he also studied Persian language and literature in Ioannina and continued to deepen his knowledge in Iranian studies. “Later, after coming to Ioannina and starting Persian lessons with Jacob effendi, Naim's interest on poems was further enhanced by the pursuit of Saadi, Hafez, and Ferdowsi”.¹⁶ Thus, he read and studied the poetic and philosophical works of the Iranian and Turkish poets and philosophers, thereby constructed his concepts of life and world on Persian epistemological data, which were also embodied in Bektashi theosophy teachings. These worldviews would also accompany Naim throughout his poetic creativity of the first period,¹⁷ during which a considerable part of his poetry was inspired by Oriental-Islamic culture, especially Persian. Therefore, because of his early education with oriental languages and knowledge, Naim Frashëri managed to write, create and even translate into Turkish and Persian.

The various Naim's writings also those of Lumo Skendo indicate that after his resettlement in Istanbul, he had been a teacher of Persian for some time. “On Fridays and Sundays, Naim never went to the office. Those days were also my lessons of Persian: we recited whole Golestān, then some piece of Bustān and Hafez”.¹⁸ He wrote and published a Persian grammar called “Qawā'id-e Fārsiye Ber Tarzi Novīn” (Rules of Persian Based on the New Method), which was published in Istanbul in 1871. This 168-page grammar

¹⁴ Was the son of Naim's brother (Abdyl Frashri), is the first and closest man to have written about Naim's life and work.

¹⁵ Lumo Skendo, *Naim Frashëri*, “Kristo Luarasi” Publishing House, Tiranë 1941, p. 9-10.

¹⁶ Lumo Skendo, “Naim be Frashëri - Studim dhe Kujtime”, *Kalendari Kombiar Journal*, Number 21, Tiranë 1926, p. 52.

¹⁷ As Krist Maloki has noted, although Naim taught and studied modern European knowledge, his early life apparently did not impress him, and it was only after settling in Istanbul and his presence in Sami's national activist society that Naim began to write about the nation, as well as translate the Homer's Iliad and French literature. See: Krist Maloki, *Oriental apo Okcidental*. Plejad, Tiranë 2003, p. 84-85.

¹⁸ Skendo, *ibid.*, p. 45.

is divided into two parts. The first part has 65 pages and contains information on the rules of the Persian language, especially the morphology, while the second part, which has 83 pages, consists of four exercises and a vocabulary in the end with some Persian - Ottoman words. In the introduction of the second part, Naim also criticizes the Persian language teaching system in the schools of the Ottoman Empire, thus, he uses this grammar to install a new teaching methodology of Persian. Naim Frasheri's Persian grammar was also written with the new grammar methodology of European languages and this may be considered the first modern Persian grammar.¹⁹ Furthermore, he expressed his first poetic experiences and inspirations in the Persian language and in 1885 in Istanbul published the poetry collection "Tekhayyulāt" (Dreams). The poetries were written in Mathnawi and the compilation has a total of 24 poems, each of them has a title in itself and below them when it was written. The work has a total of 501 couplets. Nikoubakht writes about this work of Frasheri:

"Perhaps Naim Frashëri at the age of 25, has come to the conclusion that the Persian language is the most appropriate means of expressing his poetic imaginations. Thus his poetic contemplations shed the treasure of Persian literature. The concepts and poetics of this literature as well as the poetic tradition of the Persian language helped the Albanian poet to express deep poetic experiences and evocation and thus resulted in the creation of the "Tehajjulāt" Collection. Or we might say so: The Summary "Tekhajjulāt" is a manifestation of Frasheri's intellectual and spiritual system, which is expressed in coordination with the opinions of great Iranian poets".²⁰

The compilation "Tekhayyulāt" is a bouquet of spiritual poems in the Persian language, while its poems have emerged as a spiritual and philosophical miniature. Its symbolism derives from the Qur'anic source, which is the very source that inspired the Persian poetry. The Persian verses of Naim, viewed from the rhetoric aspect are not so rich, few comparisons and metaphors are observed. Most of his metaphors are emotional and introductory, although we may occasionally see rich literary figures as well.

¹⁹ Because if we base ourselves on the first Persian grammar "Dastūr-e Sokhan" written by Mirzā Hābib Esfehāni in 1872 (1289 AH), then Naim published his grammar in 1288 H.K., a year before Mirzā Hābib.

²⁰ Naser Nikoubakht, *Divan-e Tekhayyulāt*, Mehmet Naim Frashëri. (ed.): Naser Nikoubakht, Center for International Cultural Studies in cooperation with Tarbiat Moadares University, Tehran 1396/2017, p. 28.

In general, where Naim describes nature his poetry is rhetorically rich, but from the moment he begins to express his experiences, spiritual state, subjective moods, such as love, hope, etc., we notice the narrowing and dimming of literary and artistic figures, and this results in poorer philosophical observations. Because of the fact that Naim has written all of his poetry in the form and metric of Mathnavi it is evident that Rumi had a significant influence on him. Therefore, A. Golshāni is of the opinion:

“The sweetness of Naim’s poetry lies not only in listening to Persian poetry from a European, but in the knowledge and acquisition that the poet has of the secrets, precision and syntagmas of Persian poetry and his achievement and degree of professionalism and mastery. In Naim’s poetry we see no boasting, self-exaltation, drifting, hyperbole and bigotry. In short, Naim’s poetry has everything a good poetry can have”.²¹

According to records, Naim Frashëri had also published a collection of poems in Persian called “Sokhenān-e bergozide” (Selected Words), of which Lumo Skendo also spoke: “I remember that one day while he was lining up books in cabine, Naim gave me a small volume, about 200 pages; it was handwritten poems of Persian poetry and told me that he did it when he was still a student, some kind of exercise of language and talent”, and then notes in the footnote: “here we are not talking about poems published with the title Tekhayyulāt”.²² Bursali Mehmed Tahir (Mehmet Tahir 1972:288) also mentions this collection of poems, while Hasan Kaleshi, quoting him, writes: “... there is also mention of a work that has the Persian title “Sokhenān-e bergozide”. Although I have tried hard I have not found this work in the libraries of Istanbul and Ankara”.²³ This collection of Naim has not been found yet and it is not known whether it consists of poetry or proverbs. Naim had prepared also a selection of Saadi Shirazi's Golistān book entitled “Tartib-e Jadīd Muntekhabāt-e Golistān” (New Classification of Gulistan Selection) which was published in Istanbul in 1321/1903, after his death. Naim’s concerns about the unconstructive way of teaching Persian in the Ottoman schools, also stimulated him to prepare this selection of Golistān in order to facilitate the teaching of this language. In its introduction, it is also stated that

²¹ Abdulkarim Golshāni, *Farhang-e Iran dar kalemrov-e Torkan: Ash'ar-e Farsi Naim Frashëri - Shaer va navisande-i karn-e nozdahom Albani*, Shiraz 1354/1953. p. 48.

²² Skendo, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

²³ Hasan Kaleshi, “Veprat turqisht dhe persisht të Naim Frashërit”, in *Gjurmime Albanologjike Journal/1-2*, IAP, Prishtinë 1970. p. 152.

a decision has been made to make this book a textbook for schools in the Ottoman Empire. The above records and the published works of Naim Frashëri indicate that he had a broad background and a very deep connection with the Persian language, through which he expressed his first poetic experiences and articulations. Poetic creation could perhaps be regarded as the most original ontological manifestation of an individual, maybe that was why Naim seemed to be more comfortable while writing in Persian at his very outset. It is also evident that he had carried on the mystical spirit, archetypes, poetics, topics and many figures of Persian literature into his literary work in Albanian language.

2. Traces of Persian literature in Naim Frashëri's poetry

The first Albanian poem published by Naim Frashëri is “Fjalët e Qiririt” (Words of the Candle). Through this poetry, Naim seems to unfold his poetic mission. The symbol of the Candle, borrowed from the Persian mystical poetry, marks the author's spiritual sacrifices in the service of mankind. However, as Bulo notices: “he has treated the Candle archetype in its original way and given it a new sound, departing in some points from the essential Persian mystical essence and spirit contained in its genesis, in order to emphasize poet's civic, humanistic and enlightenment mission to enlighten Albanians on the path to freedom.²⁴ The candle as a well-known archetype in Persian literature, especially the Hindi-style poets (Sabk-e Hindi), such as Saib Tabrizi, the beloved poet of Naim,²⁵ among other things symbolizes the poet who burns and melts for enlightenment and emancipation of society. Some examples from Persian poets bear a great resemblance to Naim's poetry and their concept of the Candle.

*Both of us burn ourselves for the benefit of friends
From us friends are in comfort, while we are in distress /boredom.²⁶
Until you don't burn and shine like a candle
Don't tell others about piety.²⁷
I got burned while from me hearts were warmed*

²⁴ Jorgo Bulo, “Naim Frashëri midis iluminizmit dhe misticizmi sufi” in *Perla Journal* /65, Number 2, Winter 2013, Iranian Cultural Foundation “Saadi Shirazi”, Tiranë 2013. p. 11.

²⁵ Sami, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

²⁶ Damghani Manuḡahri, *Diwan-e Manuḡahri*, (ed.) Muhammad Dabirseyaqi, Zawwar, Tehran 1363/1984, p. 71.

²⁷ Feridettin Attār, *Diwan-eAttār*, (ed.) Taqi Tafazzoli, Bongah-e Tarjumah wa nashr-e Ketab, Tehran 1345/1966, p. 143.

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*Just like a candle, I gave to the world, but didn't award anything to myself.*²⁸

Thus, inspired by Persian poets Naim identified himself with the Candle which is burning to enlighten others.

*I have dwelled among you / I'm getting fervid / to give you a little light / to make your night a day / I will melt, to drip / I will burn and get boiled to enlighten you / well so you see, know each other.*²⁹

Thus, a burnt and wasted poet (becomes Fanā), manages to be cleansed of the profane-earthly properties and vices, thus, illuminates his soul and mind. In this way, he is transformed into a candle or guide, who through his teachings and sermons illuminates other people who will know each other better. Once a man is enlightened, he may also be ready to know God. The concept of God for Naim is similar to the mystical conception of Allah, as the Absolute, Unique and Inalienable Being.

Considering the two approaches to the Oneness of Being (Wahdat Al Wujud) in the Islamic mystical tradition, the theoretical mysticism represented by Ibn Arabi and his followers, and the practical or love approach whose worthiest representative is Mevlânâ, then we can conclude that Naim is part of the latter, so he belongs to the school of love. Mevlânâ Rumi was a love poet and he watched everything in this world through this prism. In his masterpiece "Mathnavi-ye Ma'navi" speaks of the oneness of existence as a unified being reflecting on the plural things (creatures). He mentions symbols such as "wave and sea", "letters and words" and "one and plural" through which he wishes to emphasize the fact that the wave, although it appears above the sea is not separated from it; the written words cannot exist without the letters; the other letters cannot line up before the letter "A" (meaning Allah); none of the numbers can come before number "one".

*The sea is one, not a couple and two
the nature and essence of the waves are nothing but Him.*³⁰

²⁸ Mīrzā Muḥammad Sāib, *Kolliyāt-e Diwan-e Sāib*, (ed.) Muhammad Abbasi, Entesharat-e Jawahiri, Tehran n.p. 1373/1994, p. 639.

²⁹ Naim Frashëri, *Vepra I*, Rilindja, Prishtinë 1986, p. 9.

³⁰ Mewlana Jalaleddin Rumi, *Mathnawi -i Ma'nev*, (ed.) R.A. Nicholson, Sasan Publication, Tehran 1382/2003, Vol. 3. p. 30.

Naim Frashëri, like Mevlânâ Rumi, does not discuss the Oneness of Being on the theoretical plane in any of his works, although in his poems we may come across many verses that reflect this same approach to God and other creatures. Certainly, it cannot be said that Naim had such an outlook only because he belonged to the Bektashi sect of Islam, since he was well aware of the works and authors of other Eastern and Western schools and doctrines as well. Naim in his poetic work creates a very wide space for God and in many verses requires turning to Him and relying on Him, but always loving and respecting human being, nature and enlightening the mind and soul. In his work we have many verses expressing the pantheistic Islamic worldview.

*What you see is true God, / What you hear is his voice / All there is and is not in life / Is God himself.*³¹

For Rumi, only through love of the creatures, which belong to God, we can reach true love (aşk-ı hakiki), that is love for God. Because they both burn and become ashes for man. In many verses of his poems, Rumi says that God is in every direction you turn, God is in man, but in order to reach Him you have to dissolve in Him, that is to be cleansed of humanly vices and desires. In this sense, according to him the way that leads you to God is the love of man and nature.

*Who we are, O soul of our soul / Who are we that there could be distance between us
We are nothing and do not exist / You are the absolute, indeclinable being*³²

For Naim, like for Rumi everything we see and hear in this world is divine, and there is nothing but God in this life.

*“And the man and the cattle / And all that is in life / I love as a god / From whence their eyes turn / I see the true god there / He is one and there is no second.”*³³

It is also noteworthy that Rumi in the story “The man and Treasure” which we read in the sixth book of Mathnavi, demands that God is not sought at a distance, for he is inside of man. In this story we read that a man from

³¹ Frashëri, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

³² Rumi, *op.cit.*, p. 356.

³³ Frashëri, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

Baghdad goes to Egypt to seek wealth, but his journey fails and he is forced to return home disappointed. So when he arrives home and lies down to rest, the angel appears in a dream and announces to him that his possession was in his back yard all along and that his journey has been in vain. Mevlânâ in this allegorical narrative wants to emphasize that God should be sought within ourselves rather than wandering here and there.

One such idea about the search for God is found in Naim Frasheri too.

*Then, comrades, never / Do not seek God / Through walls and stones / Take a good look at man!*³⁴

This mystical concept of God as an absolute Being in Albanian literature has entered through Naim, and thus love for man, animal and nature is understood as love for the Creator.

Naim, whether in Turkish or Persian, or even Albanian, does not mention the name of Mevlânâ Jalâleddin Rumi. Although he mentions dozens of names of Iranian scholars, poets, historians, and philosophers in many places, especially in the second part of Persian Grammar, he does not say a single word about Rumi. He even translated, borrowed and recreated some fables from Rumi's Mathnavi, entitled "Weight", "Dragons with Friends", and "Two Bulls and a Wolf". Naim, unlike Rumi - who uses fables for expressing his philosophical, mystical ideas - greatly simplifies them and reduces them from a high mystical-philosophical level to a didactic moralizing level. Whereas, the direct influence of Rumi's Mesnevi on Naim Frasheri is found in the poem "Flute", over half of which is a literal translation of Rumi's "Neyname"³⁵ poetry. Naim's borrowing of Rumi has also been noted by Albanian literary scholars. For example, Eqrem Çabej calls the Naim's poem Flute "Naim's inspiration from Rumi",³⁶ Dhimitër Shuteriqi considers it "a recreation that cannot be separated from Naim's original poems",³⁷ Rexhep Qosja calls it "adaptation",³⁸ while Jorgo Bullo comparing

³⁴ Frashëri, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

³⁵ Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi*, Cambridge University Press, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.151299/page/n24>, (01.03.2020)

³⁶ Eqrem Çabej, *Elemente të gjuhësisë e të literaturës shqipe*, Botimet Çabej, Tiranë 1936, p. 48.

³⁷ Dhimitër Shuteriqi, *Naim Frashëri – Jeta dhe Vepra*, Botimet Naimi, Tiranë 1982, p. 85.

³⁸ Rexhep Qosja, *Historia e letërsisë shqipe, Romantizmi III*, Rilindja, Prishtinë 1986, p. 133.

the two texts, of Naimi and Rumi, argues for considerable similarity of this poetry with Rumi's Neyname, but states that the Albanian author was inspired by Rumi and recreated his poetry.³⁹ Naim's poem "Flute" in poetic form differs from Rumi's Ney-name Mathnavi form. The flute is a poem in four-strophes, with eight-stringed syllables and the alternating rhyme ab, ab, and has a total of 14 strophes. Up to the ninth strophe, Naim remained faithful, even directly translating the verses of Rumi, while from the 10th verse onwards he created his original verses, but always being under the influence of the earlier verses. To see the similarities and differences between these two poems, we are referring to some verses of this poem translated into English.

*Listen what tells the flute - It narrates the deserted exiles,
Laments the black world - In true words.
Ever since I was separated - From friends and from friendship,
Women and men have cried - From my sobbing's!
I have punctured my chest - I have done holey,
And I cried and groaned - With thousand sighs!
And with the cheerful world - I become friend and participate,
And with the poisoned ones - I become a trusted friend.
In every way it comes - I cry with longing,
Everywhere and whenever - My heart sighs!
The whole world is listening to me - From outside, they see me,
My desire is not understood - They don't know my inner fire
People stay with me - I'm crying and craving,
But they don't know my secret sorrow - So I never get clemency.⁴⁰*

This sentimental emotion of separation from genesis, as well as this life/world which is alien and worthless for the poet/mystic expanded and influenced not only this poem but almost all of Naim's poetic creativity, even his epic poems. For this reason, K. Maloki had criticized Naim for bringing fatalistic mystical - Buddhist ideas into the Albanian literature and culture.⁴¹ However, Frashëri didn't suffice only with mystical inspirations, he also read and was inspired by Persian epic poetry. After his resettlement in Istanbul in 1871, he began engaging in political activities which would undoubtedly reflect on his poetic creations. Even during this period, he became more interested in the Persian epic than in the mysticism, because he and his brothers would create the movement for the independence of the Albanians

³⁹ Jorgo Bullo, *Magjia dhe Magjistaret e fjalës*, Dituria, Tiranë 1998, p. 247.

⁴⁰ Frashëri, *op.cit.*, p. 172-173.

⁴¹ Krist Maloki, *Oriental apo Oksidental*, Plejad, Tiranë 2003, p. 85.

from the Ottoman Empire and lay the foundations of modern Albanian identity.

3. Naim and the Persian epic

The first references about human knowledge in “*Ekhtarat wa Kashfiyyat*” (Inventions and Discoveries) are borrowed from Persian mythology, from the Ferdowsi’s Epic of *Shahnameh*. According to this we can find out that, influenced by the latter Naim also thought that man in this world first appeared in the mountains of Persia. Thus, the Iranian top epic *Shahnameh*, of which not only few traces can be found in his creations, is Naim's epistemological starting point. In the *Shahnameh*, Ferdowsi talks about the creation of the world, the first man, the first king, and the origins of the many elements and mechanisms that ensure the continuation of human life in this world. In his literary work titled “*Ekhtārāt wa Kashfiyyāt*” Naim writes: “In the beginnings of the Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*, based on antiquity, the initial state of man is described in this way⁴², and then brings up the text of Husheng’s story. Therefore, it is not an coincident that Naim and Sami Frashëri⁴³ were committed to this epic masterpiece. They both knew very well Ferdowsi’s work, and the latter influenced the structuring of their ethnic and national ideas. In effect, Eqrem Çabej, a pioneer scholar in the field of Albanian studies, claims that Naim’s aim to create a long epic poem such as the great Persian epic,⁴⁴ caused his work “*The Story of Skanderbeg*” not to become Albanian national epic. “*The Highland Lute*” by the author Gjergj Fishta (1871 –1940) took its place.

Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* was one of the most widely translated Persian literary work in foreign languages both in the East and West. Thereupon it “was also translated and read in the cultural geosphere of the Ottoman Empire, although not as much as the works of Saadi, Hafez and Jami”.⁴⁵ But

⁴² Mehmed Naim Frashëri, *Ekhtārāt wa Kashfiyyāt*, Mehran, İstanbul 1298/1880, p. 3-5.

⁴³ In addition to translating from the Persian into Turkish a selection of *Shahnameh*, which is preserved in the manuscript, Sami also wrote the play *Gave, the Blacksmith*, as well as *Suhrab*, the latter still missing. As Kemal Erol observes, Sami wrote these works to express political criticism of the oppression of the time. See: Kemal Erol, “Şemsettin Sami’nin Besa ve Gâve Adlı piyeslerinde Sömürüye Karşı Politik Eleştiri”, *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Volume IX, Number 44, June 2016.

⁴⁴ Eqrem Çabej, *Shqiptarët midis Perëndimit dhe Lindjes*, Botimet Çabej, Tiranë 2006, p. 111.

⁴⁵ Halil Inalcik, *Has-Bağçede Aş u Tarab: Nedimler Şâirler Mutribler*, İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul 2015, p. 23.

Shahname's worldviews and motives were also driving the Muslim peoples ruled by The Sultanate/Caliphate which was the greatest religious-political authority. To think of their own ethnicities and nations, and relying on it they legitimized and justified their nationalist and liberationist ideas, which could be considered as "traitorous" towards Empire or Caliphate. Therefore, many Albanian intellectuals read and even attempted to imitate Shahnameh,⁴⁶ in this way by taking it as an example they tried to arouse nationalism in their people.⁴⁷ In addition to the poetic dimensions of Shahnameh there were also the aspects of nationality and patriotism that made Naim come to the conclusion: "the best are the Persian poets and the greatest among them is Ferdowsi, who has written Shahnameh, recounts the events of the kingdoms of Persia very beautifully and is said to be wisest poet".⁴⁸ Thus, Frashëri would follow the path of Ferdowsi and use all his talents and abilities in the creation of the modern Albanian nation. For Naim, as for Ferdowsi, language was primary because it would then create the possibilities of creation, culture and literature, and as a result would keep alive the spirit and ethnic identity of the people. Shahname's traces can be found throughout Naim's work, but it seems that most of its impact can be found in Skanderbeg's History.

The metanarration of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and Naim's "Skanderbeg's History" is the conflict/confrontation or a dualism between good and evil, which also has its source in ancient Iranian teachings. The Shahnameh is full of stories of confrontation between the Good, that is manifested through the Iranians, Jamshid, Rrustam, Zal, etc. and the Evil that is represented by Turan, Sohrab, Dahaq, Satan etc... There the confrontation begins between the stone and the fire from which the iron results. The encounter is perceived between nature and animals, and man, between Rustem and Suhrab, between the dark spiritual powers and the bright powers

⁴⁶ Hafiz Ali Korça in his work also intends to imitate Ferdowsi and as if he created a Shahnameh for Albanians:

*I'm like Ferdowsi I'm not saying it / But I have done as much work -
As the poor Ferdowsi / If he was alive today-
He would tell me and you / You have suffered with history-
Like me with Shahnameh / That I tired myself
We are both Aryan / Languages have a harmony-
I came from Persia / You came out of Albania*

Hafiz Ali Korça, *Historia e shenjtë edhe katër halifetë*, Logos A, Shkup 2013, p. 34.

⁴⁷ Zahra Rajabi & Abdulla Rexhepi, "Survey of the Place of Ferdosi's Shahnameh in the Albanian Language and Literature", in *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods (MJLTM)*, Volume 8, Number 4, August 2018, p. 117.

⁴⁸ Naim Frashëri, *Vepra 6*, Rilindja, Prishtinë 1986, p. 286.

of man Also in Skanderbeg's History. Stories are structured around the topic of conflict between Albanian Hero Skanderbeg who fought for liberation of Albania and Albanians on one side and the Sultan and his army that had occupied Albanian lands.

In the Shahnameh, Iran is a symbol of good, as Ferdowsi as well states:

*Iran is like a garden in springtime
where always flowers with scent blossom
It is surrounded by soldiers and walls
At the top of the spears lies the blow
Beware, you are crossing it's wall
and making angry the Iranians.⁴⁹*

As for Naim, Albania is:

*"... Albania always
has been highly praised,
there were late men,
famous, wise and brave..."⁵⁰
"... O desolate Adrianople!
that was the throne of wickedness,
a bad name for life
you have got with mankind..."⁵¹*

As can be understood from the above verses, Albania is represented as a symbol of good, of glory which had wise people, while the Adrianople then capital of the Ottoman Empire, as a desert place and a symbol of evil and wickedness. However, it should be noted that Naim's patriotism is very different from the epics and legends of the Middle Ages. They saw their ethnicities as a divine mission to establish "Justice" on earth. European nationalism resulting from European romanticism, from which Naim was inspired was more universal and rational. Naim's ideas are closer to this approach of European national and ethnic ideas.

⁴⁹ Abul-Qasem Ferdowsi, *Shahname-i Ferdowsi*, Ketab-e Saraye Nik, Tehran 1378/1999, p. 539.

⁵⁰ Naim Frashëri, *Vepra 3*, Rilindja, Prishtinë 1986, p. 8.

⁵¹ Frashëri, *ibid.*, p. 56.

Conclusion

The analysis of this study has shown that Naim Frashëri, as a poet who was formed with Persian knowledge and culture, have expressed his first linguistic writings and first poetic experiences in the Persian language. Therefore, he was able to connect the Albanian entity with a great world culture and literature. Persian grammar, his Persian poetry compilation "Takhayyulat", the selection of Saadi's the Golistān and his unpublished work "Sokhenān-e bergozide", mark a valuable contribution to Persian language and literature. Besides, based on his Albanian poetry we conclude that Naim was influenced by concepts, figures and topics of Persian literature, such as *candle, butterfly, nightingale, the mystical concept of God* and many others. Through his works, many of these elements of Persian literature succeeded in penetrating and settled down in Albanian literature and culture.

Naim Frashëri managed to combine the spirit of patriotism, of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh with European romantic ideas for the nation, and thus to create poems that inspired the Albanian people to be liberated from the Ottoman Empire. Through the immense influence he left on Albanian literature and culture, Naim Frashëri brought a kind of the mystic concept of love and God, such as all things are god (pantheism), and the idea that the poet / intellectual just like the candle should burn for the enlightenment and emancipation of his people. He beautified an Albanian being, identified with pragmatic, practical and physical values with a particular conception of mystical love and an idea of God as an absolute Being. Naim, also brought an Eastern mystical imagination in Albanian literature through which the reader could make connections to very deep and distant spiritual realms and segments. Above all, he instilled universal love for everything, starting from man, animals, nature, and every other living organism, because to him, they all constitute God, the Supreme Creator. These mystical ideas and teachings of Naim have left deep traces in the structures and segments of Albanian intellectuals and readers.

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