



## ARNAVUTLUK RİTÜEL TAKVİM ŐARKILARININ SENTEZİ

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### SYNTHESIS OF ALBANIAN RITUAL CALENDAR SONGS

**ÖZ** Ritüel takvim Őarkıları sözlü edebiyatımızın veya folklorumuzun çok uzun bir tarihsel dönemini kapsar. Folklor halkın yařamının bir parçasıdır; halkın gelenek ve inançları ile yakından bağlantılıdır ve sadece geçmişimizi ve bugünümüzü değil, aynı zamanda geleceđi kimlik değerlerimiz üzerine inşa etmemize de yardımcı olur. Bu çalışma, sadece meraktan değil, aynı zamanda sözlü edebiyatımız ve folklorumuzun, özellikle de takvim ritüel Őarkılarının bir kısmının incelenmesine olan ciddi ilginin uyanıřı için bir testtir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sözlü Edebiyat, Ritüel Takvim Őarkıları, Folklor, Arnavut Kültürü

**ABSTRACT** Calendar ritual songs span a very long historical period of our oral literature or folklore. Folklore is part of the people's lives; it is closely linked to the customs and beliefs of the people and helps us to know not only our past and present but also to build the future on our identity values. This paper is a test for awakening not only of the curiosity but also an awakening of the serious interest in the study of our oral literature and folklore, especially the part of the calendar ritual songs.

**Keywords:** Oral Literature, Ritual Calendar Songs, Folklore, Albanian Culture

## INTRODUCTION

Oral literature plays an important role in ethnic cultures as a folk tradition. It is the area in which scholars who study culture, anthropologists, and sociologists find answers to many questions they may have. The Albanian folk tradition in general and its lyrical calendar poetry are rich in their content, history, and variety.

Even in modern times of rapid technological development, the desire to recognize this kind of art and literature culture has not ceased. It is treated not only in the professional and expert and research areas but it also finds space in individual daily life, even among young people, starting with different symbols in the forms of tattoos, various online games, or even integrating into films and very popular and well-liked series. The presence of such elements from the tradition and folklore of antiquity even in today's life, despite the high technological development and the stunning digital inventions of the day in human life, proves for the seventh time the thought that the source of all human knowledge, the way of life and the way of dealing with the phenomena of nature is first manifested, expressed and shaped in such creations of the oral creativity of the people. Treating oral literature as a distinct field of art literature today encompasses a wide range of fields that do not necessarily relate only to literature. Today we have areas like folklore, anthropology, ethnomusicology, ancient art, symbols, sociolinguistics, or folk culture, etc. (Qiriazı, 1989)

Since oral literature has been created in particular social conditions, and in long historical periods, since antiquity, we can freely say that it was shaped and built together with the struggle for human existence and development. (Fetiu, 2009)

Man, in primitive times learned to observe religious rites, feasts for hunting, for the beginning of seasons and to associate them with ritual songs that you may still encounter in places not affected by 'modernity'. The primitive society was a society of farmers and farmers. The livestock and farmer are interested in the weather he will do during the four seasons: the weather has been linked to the prosperity of livestock and crops. Man's weakness in the face of nature and vain beliefs led to a series of rites by which man sought to influence the mysterious forces to prosper his work throughout the year. Thus, all their rites and songs are related to primitive living conditions, seasons of the year, and the activities and activities of daily life. This concerned, for example, the farmer's interests in raising livestock and in a good harvest, as well as in the good health of the people and their increase, i.e. for increasing the domestic workforce. Many rites concern the protection of man, livestock, and the harvest from the "wrath" of the forces of nature. The changes that myths have undergone over the centuries, then, are normal and inevitable, even justified, because they prove that mythology is a specific ideology, as is the poetry, art on which the ages have been stamped.

In this period and for these rituals we find that lyric is the most widespread genre of oral literature, which develops through songs and is accompanied by certain rituals of pagan religious character and which are later also worn by later religious garments. So, the lyric of popular literature, especially that of the calendar songs which in Albanian literature are known as "Motmot's Songs" (Solar year songs) mainly exhibit aspects of human life, dealing with spiritual sensations such as joys and sorrows. (Siceca, 1990) This kind of oral literature is not only found among Albanians but also found in other nations and ethnic groups around the world, while in our Balkan region there are many similarities. The peculiarity of these lyrical calendar songs is that they have a wide range of themes and motifs and a long period of creation and existence.

Our oral creativity in lyrical calendar poetry preserves the great variety of ancient rites, customs, and cults associated with various songs, dances and games, the tracing of which is very important. In this part of the oral creativity, even today in various celebrations songs are heard, games are played in which layers of former pagan and pre pagan rituals are preserved. (Bogdani, 1994) Since lyric (songs) has accompanied human life in all situations of life: in fields and plains, along with agricultural work, where crops are planted or where wheat is harvested; even on the mountains with cattle, where shepherds take care of the sheep; (Fetiu, 1983) on the hunt or when the trees were cut down for heat, when they ignited the fire near the fireplace. In family life, when there is birth or marriage, when they dance and sing songs that children and young people enjoy; (Mustafa, 1979) during the birth, near the cradle of infants, in genuine lovers' meetings and weddings; trekking in the mountains or the seas, in wars, on the battlefields or near the dead.

This is the period when the first myths were born. The word myth refers to ancient Greek (from myth-story, tradition) and has the meaning of the naive story that explains divine, natural and human phenomena (Tirta, 2004).



Mythology, as a very ancient worldview, has been subject to the historical demands of the various eras in which it has made its living. People began to give spiritual meaning to things they could not explain or even understand. In this way, they began to interconnect the various situations with the most supernatural attributes creating mythical figures and powers. So, behind every fantastic imagination was a real phenomenon. The spark that came from the collision of clouds with the opposite electric charge was attributed to Zeus throwing lightning from the top of Olympus; the storm as a natural occurrence was attributed to Poseidon, who, furiously, stirred the bottom of the sea with his fork. There is no occurrence of nature, but also the spirit world and the relationships between humans so that it is not captured so much in poetry and imagination by the conscience of the ancient primitive man (Tirta, 2004). In its infancy, mythology was simpler and rudimentary. The predominance of animal figures was less than that of plants. "In the early stages, the deities were in the form of wild animals and trees. It is known that human-shaped deities are of a later stage in the history of religions. Zeus, for example, before becoming king of Olympus, was an eagle in some tribes, woodpecker in others; Hera was a cow; Athena- owl and Artemida - bear. It would be wrong, however, to think that this is a sudden and rapid transformation. It is rather a very slow and quite gradual passage. Of course, our goal is neither to evangelize ritual songs nor to secularize the Bible, but simply to ascertain possible coincidences between the figures and their motives as the first step to a deeper critical examination of the relationship between these two worlds. The motifs and figures to be taken here to illustrate cultural parallels are found not only in the Albanian secular tradition; are wider. Some are inter-Balkan motives, some are European. But here we are interested first of all in their mutual impact on Albanian developments. In most cases, biblical literature, which we refer to for parallels to the "Motmot's ritual songs, "is a medium, a 'mediator' of an ancient, pre-biblical, mythological, pagan subject." (Pllana, 1965)

As is well known, like other fields of national culture, oral literature has begun to be written late. More precisely, it has begun to be collected and to be studied late. The Albanian National Renaissance is regarded as the period of the Albanian national culture, when the spiritual values of the people's heritage have been put into service to the history and life of these people, and have become the part of European cultural goods. It is enough to mention here only Elena Gjika's studies, or her translation of De Rada's major work, "Rhapsody of an Arbëresh Poem" (1866) in the five major European languages, to clarify this scope and interest. (De Rada, 1886) Historically it is known that the oral creativity of the Albanian people was also collected by the creators of ancient literature (Budi, Bardhi, and others), as it is called until now in the history of Albanian literature, but they have collected and foreigners have also studied, whether as travelers of Albania, as diplomatic personnel or as members of various study expeditions. (Hykolli, 2016) However, as it was said, the National Renaissance was the one that laid the foundation for both the systematic gathering and the study of oral literature of the Albanian people. Also, through the creators of the National Renaissance, these values have been made known to European cultural opinion and beyond. On this occasion the most popular of this period should be mentioned, starting from Jeronim de Rada's father, Mikel de Rada, to continue with Thimi Mitko and Zef Jubani, to Vinçenc Prenushi with friends. Problems of this nature arise when we study the songs that are related to the calendar rites. Each season has its holidays, with similar rites and special rites. Most holidays are between "Calender" season (December 25) and St. John's (June 24), i.e. from winter to summer. After this day, we can only say that we have only one important holiday, that of the Saint Demetris (Shën Mitri), in October. The Motmot's holiday calendar begins with the "Calender" on December 24, when the sun's power is renewed (winter solstice). The old pagan feast of Christianity made the day of Christ's "birth", Christmas. This same day, though celebrated only by Christians, has also left its mark on Muslim customs: thus, the Muslims of Shkodra celebrate the day of the first snowfall, as the "Kulanat" (as the north calls them). The holiday is known throughout Europe and the name comes from the Latin ~ calender ~ (whence the word calendar comes from). (Zojzi, 1949). It follows that oral creativity was born and developed as a human need to express the inner world, the feelings, and meditations associated with life, with its work, without ever being detached from the influence of natural phenomena and social life flows. Not coincidentally, the calendar songs cover all the experiences of our human social life and spiritual life, depending on the impact of those phenomena, whether of nature or social circumstances. Through these oral creations, higher forms of artistic communication were developed, which further enriched the spirit world and elevated the level of human thinking, always preserving the characteristics of the periods, especially the preceding ones, of creation. We find this characteristic in other peoples as well, especially in those types of oral creativity that preserve layers of ancient peoples' mythology, whose traces have been preserved in the processes of social change. Such oral creations were not created and developed only in one period, or only by one generation of Albanian society. They came from generation to generations, passing through centuries of social life, ever-evolving, and transforming, but also keeping track of this processing over time. Sometimes, however, they fade away and are forgotten. As old as the people themselves are, is the oral creativity of the Albanian people in its entirety, and therefore the calendar songs, remain ever fresh. It is no coincidence that the original creation, over time, meets in different variants. Attempts



to penetrate within the multi-layered character of these creations would have been unsuccessful if we started from a single criterion. The combination of several criteria paves the way for a search most likely to succeed. These criteria must take into account the character of the philosophical and aesthetic imagination of the world; progressive stages of human thought development; the natural chronological flow of society's development cycles; the main features of progress level that world art has known since antiquity to this day; political history and historical geography; as well as other phenomena that enter into a changing relationship between them. Such a proceeding implies a multiple comparison, literary and non-literary, internal and external, historical and national. It is also necessary in the case of searching for a layer of oriental influences in the motto's ritual songs, to the extent that it would be necessary to separate the other layers. The unfavorable conditions of affirming these songs in the face of the Albanian Cycle of Highlander songs, or the products of lightly politicized historical epic, seem like 'childish work', though they are not, making it necessary that research on the historical and literary layers is necessary from the start or the origin prior to their own minimal foreign - counter. This contrast makes it easy to identify and describe the Albanian character of such songs. Every nation is inclined to believe and appreciate its form of thought and emotion modeling. In this sense, ethnocentrism is seen as an incentive for affirming cultures, at least until it has led to self-exclusion. Equally strong and persistent has been the interest of scholars to highlight the place of history in Albanian folklore, especially those belonging to the cycle of Highlanders songs. The scientific initiatives for evaluating the history-oral literature reports were intended to present the relative conditionality of this product to its history. Through this comparison it has been possible to draw attention to the fundamental issues of the debates and controversy of scholars in this field; to broadly explain the relationship between folk art and historical developments, dependencies and independence between collective memory and archival documentation on these developments; to emphasize the role of ethnocultural in explaining the historical and spatial source of Albanians as a people, their place of formation and the interminable continuity of the world of national values in the Albanian land; to highlight the specifics of the historical evolution of national culture and to critically evaluate traditionalist methods. These processes and ways of development have also been subjected to the oral creativity of the calendar songs, as one of the source creations, where the poetic muse of the popular creator unfolds in all its time in all the periods of our individual and collective life. , to reach what is called the revival of the soul of popular genius. The life of the individual and the life of the collective, even in this part of the oral creativity, that is to say in the songs of the calendar, has managed, in almost all periods, to preserve something from the individual and transform its character of collective creation. Similar to the lyrical work songs, as in the lyrical ritual songs, human love for work, for nature and its unknowns, for the livestock that was part of human life, for wealth and fertility, testifies to the demand for renewal of the life cycle. Such rituals as this one for the coming of spring, or the reception and conveyance of the swallow, have all the peoples of the Balkans. In our folklore tradition is preserved even today in almost all areas where Albanians live, in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Eastern Kosovo, and Chameria, but are also preserved in the Arbëresh of Italy and the Arbëresh of Zadar. Magical acts are still alive in children nowadays, but even so is the belief that the abolition of summer (which is a red, white, yellow, blue spider that they have put into their hands), standing, or neck, the first day of March, as the spring departs) testifies to the belief that the evils brought about by the winter season are over. Such superstitions have followed the lives of all the nations of this area, where they have encountered and coexisted different cultures of different peoples and languages, from antiquity to the present. Since the early stages of the development of social life songs and rites have been created for almost all months of the year. Even today, when reading attentively, when followed with perseverance, whether in the form when they are recorded as rites and songs, or in the present form, when they have become largely children's games, one wonders at their accuracy even in the description of the plans of the months of the year, also in decomposing the main components of the particular characteristics of each month, but also in understanding their importance in the daily life of the man of that time. There have been times in the life of the Albanian people, when everything, even the values of these rituals, of the calendar songs, were either attempted to be forgotten or transformed, giving different colors to the ideological affiliations of the systems. But, as always in history, they endured these ideological mysticisms, either in their value or in the immense wealth they give to the daily lives of man and children. Intellectuals of all times in the lives of the Albanian people, endowed with a genuine culture and scientific information of the time, have always had respect for their value and weight as valuable rites and customs, not only for the lives of the ancients but for culture in general, so they have been valued and recognized as one of the core values of our culture. Similar to their European and Balkan brethren, Albanian intellectuals, especially those of the national Renaissance, have acted in this direction. This approach has continued afterwards, after during the twentieth century and still goes on. So, intellectuals like: Naim and Sami Frashëri, Çajupi, and Mjeda, later Gurakuqi and Konica, as well as others who collect, publish and study these values of tradition. Throughout the centuries, the Albanian people, in addition to other forms of spiritual and material creativity, have also cultivated various games, mainly in the pagan spirit that are a significant type of dramatic oral creativity. Like all other peoples of the Balkans or most of them, such games were played on special occasions,

especially during the winter season, then at different pagan and religious holidays, at different family calendar rites, at weddings and other celebrations. Games, with all the features in common with the cultures of the peoples who live under this sky, also have special features. Created and preserved from generation to generation, through different periods, and from different layers of Albanian society, which in one way or another represented an elite type of society in that period. So, all of these creations, regardless of their character, whether pagan or religious, have been created, cultivated and passed through generations, in centuries, thanks to this creative elite of Albanian society. Therefore, as part of our popular culture, it has preserved over the centuries those elements of our being that have saved us from perishing as a nation. (Elsie, 2012) In later historical processes, they have become part of the formation and affirmation as a modern nation. Family rituals and the songs that accompany them relate to the most important moments of human and family life, birth, marriage, and death. Their strongly ancient origins are closely linked to the life of the farmer and farming and largely reflect that life, with all the new elements that may have appeared in the rites and songs. Likewise, although Christianity and Islamism had as much influence as possible on our ancient family rites, these, as well as the "Motmot's ritual songs, retained their pagan character. The art of oral creativity in general, but also of creations of this kind, reflects the life and its phenomena by becoming the spokesman for the living reality of different eras, evolving and evolving with it. Taken at this level of appreciation, these creations are more than a record of the events that have taken place, of the way of life of the inhabitants of this under heaven, of coping with the social and natural difficulties they have faced. They are also the spirit of all these great transformations, whether of social laws, or natural phenomena. Otherwise, they would not have been able to withstand the demands of the changing times, even without this side of their great value. Such cults, always imbued with mythical figures and beings, are constitutive of the structure of the lyrical songs of the calendar rites, not only in the oral creativity of the Albanian people but also in other Balkan peoples. They did not disappear before the religious influence, or before the norms of totalitarian systems that brought the waves of change during the different periods. A permanent element of the structure of these creations is time and space. In their structure, these creations have enclosed endless spaces, heavenly and earthly, thus enabling that eternal side of art, even these creations, which melt in their beds the great surprise of the development of events, events, phenomena, which to the ordinary mind of the common man are elusive, or impossible.

## CONCLUSION

Ritual calendar songs as a spiritual creation of a people created from ancient times and inherited from generation to generation and constantly renewed and enriched with new phenomena depending on the time and place constitute the precious treasure of our special tradition.

Albanian calendar songs provide us with a visible picture, not only of the creativity and spiritual life of a nation, looking at it from different angles: the social, economic, family, mythological, canonical, inter-human and moral aspects. Human and national development across different periods of history is artistically presented and helps us to better understand our ancestors, their living conditions, and the progress and changes they have gone through. Through these calendar songs, we can also see the different influences that have come through migrations and the influx of peoples or even the spread of different religions. In spite of all the changes and developments that Albanians have had since ancient times, though still unformed in a developed intellectual society to develop a rich spiritual life and this life has been able to present and visualize it artistically.

Studying these songs, of the rich folk tradition and oral literature helps us to know each other better to empower our national identity and cultivate our spiritual values and riches for future generations.

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