

# Vernacular culture of Gjakova: emic approach of music tradition

**Behar Arllati**

Corresponding Author, Prof. Dr., UBT College, Prishtina, Kosovo.  
Email: behar.arllati@ubt-uni.net ORCID: 0009-0006-7019-3479

**Aida Gjickolli**

MA. Sci., UBT College, Prishtina, Kosovo.  
Email: aida.gjickolli@ubt-uni.net ORCID: 0000-0002-8251-144X

DOI 10.12975/rastmd.20251313 Submitted December 17, 2024 Accepted March 7, 2025

## Abstract

This paper aims to present the vernacular cultural development in general and through it, the development of song's, presents the folkloric types of Gjakova's well known as Gjakova's Aheng (Party), and also his role for all Kosovo society in generally. On the other hand, this short study aims to shed light on music in the period from 1770 until XX century, 1980 year. Due to this period of more than 250 years happened many changes of musicians, types of songs, styles of singing etc., aims of this paper is to elaborate social values and role of aheng as unique vernacular culture through which overcoming many musicians, songs and music instruments (not only from Gjakova) have paraded. During this period, many things have changed and many transformations have been made in the Jakova's culture especially at Aheng. The tradition of singing in Jakova was started with 'Tayfa' (the group of 5 to 10 musicians who playing music in family ceremonies). The main types of songs that were sung at that time (18th-19th century) were lyric, epic, boys and dilbers songs, ballads, song of migration and elegies. Through those songs, musicians show all hers virtuosity playing in instruments and also expressed their feelings towards loved or any dissatisfaction towards the leadership of the time that belonged to the Ottoman Empire as they were Albanians. The music practiced at that time at Jakova (completely vernacular) coincided with the music practiced in Shkodra-with same name-Heng (Shkodra)-Aheng (Gjakova). If we compare the age of Shkodra (2500 years), with the city of Jakova (less than 450 years), we can just imagine how much rapid development the city of Jakova has had. However, those more than 200 songs represents an imposing, a very large value, based on the fact that other cities in Kosovo had no tradition of ceremonial music. In this paper it will be precisely this type of ceremonial music, Aheng, Tajfa and the multiple types of songs that will be the powerful base of music tradition of Gjakova, will be supported.

## Keywords

*cultural heritage, Gjakova's Aheng, Gjakova's song, local music, lyrics, Urban music*

## Introduction

The City of Gjakova was founded as a settlement at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the middle of the Dukagjin Plain, in the middle of the vertical Prizren-Peja road which was a continuation of the old Athens-Dubrovnik road (Vala, 2015). In Antiquity and maybe even before that, a branch of the road "Via de Zenta" passed that started from the skeleton of the Southern Adriatic: Tivar, Budva and Kotor to Ribnica (today's Podgorica) and then to Plavë and Peja and indirectly connected the locality that today is known as the

city of Gjakova(Osmani, 2003). Gjakova lies in the tectonic valley of the Dukagjin Plain, near of Accursed Mountain, Mount's Pashtrik, Mountain of Sharr and Mount of Mokna. The city lies between latitude 42.22 degrees and longitude 20.26 degrees, with an altitude of 365-385 m above sea level and belongs to the Drini i Bardhë (White Drini) river basin. It is well known that the geographical position of Kosovo is of special importance for Southeast Europe because, as an integral part of the central Southeast region, there are shorter routes to the Adriatic Sea and the Aegean Sea.

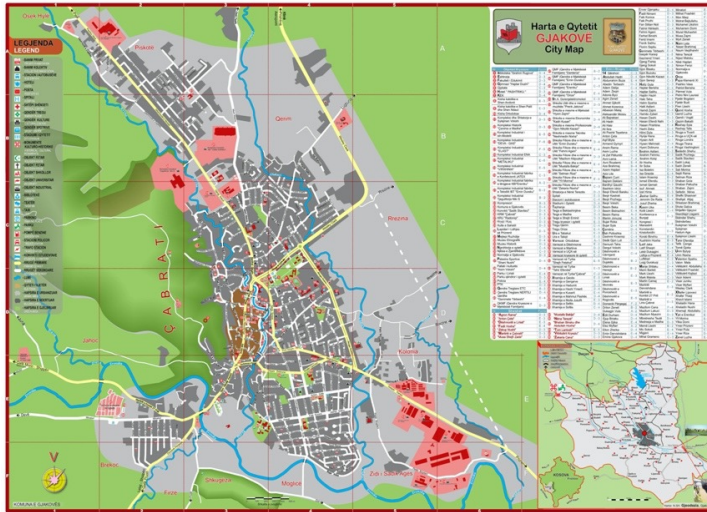


Photo 1. Map of Gjakova City (web 1)

As the gravitating, administrative-territorial, educational and cultural seat of Dukagjin, it never took the dominant role even though it was a center with city functions. In fact, the most suitable conditions for social, political, urban, economic, cultural-educational advancement, according to all criteria, the central city of the Dukagjin Plain would have to be Gjakova. This center has economic capacity, human resources, road traffic surveillance service, civil airport, city where the main roads of the Dukagjin Plain north-south intersect with other roads that end from the eastern direction and that connect Gjakova with the region of Prekorupa - the territories of Rahovec, Klinë and Malisheva.

On the other side, the roads to the south and southwest that connect Gjakova with areas of the Republic of Albania such as: Has, Kruma. The highlands of Gjakova, Morina Pass, Prush Pass, Kukës, exit to the national highway and the connection with Shkodra, should have been a signal for Gjakova to rise to the level of the second metropolis in Kosovo. A part of the road "Via de Zenta" that started from Shengjin, continued to Shkodra, then in the valley of the white Drin in the direction of Prizren, and on the right side, through Kosovo, continues to Nish, Sofia, Constantinople (Istanbul), passed through the territory of the city of Gjakova.

This area was inhabited in ancient times by the Illyrians (Dardana), while the Roman element was in some command post. Traces of life in Gjakovë go back to the Illyrian period and we find them especially on the western side of the Erenik River, across the Tabake Bridge. It is thought that they belong to the ancient city of Gabuleo, a name that we find on the maps of the century. I-IV on the right bank of the Krena River where there is a single mound (Osmani, 2003). To be formed and established as a city, a mosque had to be built, which was named after its builder Sulejman Hadum Agha Mosque. According to legend<sup>1</sup>, Sulejman Agha was a Christian who was crippled as he was deaf and dumb and sexually incompetent as his genitals were totally undeveloped. Sulejmani's father married a girl named Bjeshkë. When Bjeshka was pregnant, he clashed with other shepherds and in a fight with them, he was killed. Bjeshka gave birth to a son, apparently, in order, but later it was proven that he was severely handicapped. Widowed at a very young age Bjeshka married again. In order not to have problems with the future husband who might not accept Bjeshka to take her and her mute son with him when

<sup>1</sup> Based on the field collections made by Osman Koka (and not only him), who has left this legend-manuscript still unpublished. Also, those data is obtained from oral tradition.

he gets married, Bjeshka's brothers tried to keep the boy but Bjeshka resisted. She begged them to let her with her to the man she was going to marry. She begged also and her future husband to allow her to take the boy with her on the day of her marriage. Since her son was 5-6 years old and disabled, her future husband agreed. The little boy naturally had many abilities, but no one, not even her (young) husband, managed to understand the abilities he had. These abilities of Süleyman would only be realized as Süleyman grew up under the supervision of the Ottoman Empire (OE). However, in childhood that was, his mother used to send him to look after the sheep. Of course, the child was calm, did not cause any problems, did not ask for anything and followed what his mother told him. As a small child, he got tired quickly and often fell asleep, on the lawn which, in most cases, was exposed to the strong sun.

One day he falls asleep in the sun. Meanwhile, a falcon was chasing a mouse that was looking for a place to hide from danger. The mouse gets under the body of the sleeping child while the falcon began to hover in the air and the location of the falcon coincided with the shadow it cast on the child. Civil and military power used a one-man post. This man was called a Tatar (a type of courier) who went in all directions.

One Tatar went from Peja to Shkodra, while the other one went from Shkodra to Peja. By the way, at that time, Tatar who carried the mail, took notes and reported on what was happening in the command passed there first. When the Tatar sees the falcon hovering over the child and protecting him from the strong sun while the child sleeps, he immediately notes this unprecedented phenomenon and after a few days reports it as a case. Tatar kept a notebook where he recorded every event he saw; views, impressions, eventual suffering, atmospheric or any other character obstacles, conversations with the people, aid's, etc., were noted in the block in question. It happens eventually

that someone attacked the Tatars, poor that country, person, or that population there. In Istanbul, the leaders were surprised to see this child who neither spoke nor heard nor had distinctive genitals. In any case, the boy began to learn the language and the necessary subjects while expressing an extraordinary interest in war strategy and leadership. Also, Sulejmani achieved high levels in the studies of astronomy, physics, mathematics, drawing and geometry. Even during his stay in Istanbul, he started innovating a Astrosyllabic Table with which he measured the time, the movements of the sun, the moon and other stars and which was actually a carefully crafted board that he also takes with him when comes to his villages. This Table is kept even today in the Collection of manuscripts in the National and University Library of Kosovo, and constitutes an added value for the city of Gjakova.



Photo 2. Astrosyllabic table (The final look, 1594) innovated and built by Sulejman Efendi Hadum Aga-Builder of the Hadum mosque, used in the Muvakit-hane<sup>2</sup> of Gjakova<sup>3</sup>

This Table had the shape of a quarter of a circle. As can be seen in the photo, there were many lines in different directions. There was also a note in the Ottoman language. This can also be considered as the first Astrosyllabic Table in the World according to which today the prediction of the stars-signs of the Horoscope is made. In Istanbul,

<sup>2</sup> Muvakit Hane (tur.)- Temporary household.

<sup>3</sup> Photo by Shkelzen Rexha-Collection of manuscripts and artifacts in the National and University Library of Kosovo.

he attended the “Enderum Humayun” school as a first step to obtain important positions, first the title ‘Hadim’ in the Royal Court of Sultan Murat III (according to Wikipedia he ruled during the years 1574-1595) and later the title Aga. According to Taraphane<sup>4</sup> (Dizdari, 2005) of Novoberda, Sulejmani was one of the first converts to Islam in Gjakova. The boy gradually acquires extraordinary skills in the field of negotiation strategy and reaches high positions. The Sulejman was already a leader after finished the “Enderum Humayun” school, the Sultan offered him to choose a property to become his and for him to lead. He chooses his place around the villages of Guskë<sup>5</sup>, Meje, and Brekoc-his birthplace. Precisely in 1576, he returned to Gjakova and settled in the village of Guska. Now as a leader, Sulejmani (converted to Islam) arrives with his army in his homeland. He decides to set up tents at village Guska near the village of Meje. Local residents welcome him as he immediately distributed a lot of aid, knowing that those locals were once his fellow villagers. However, over time, from the large number of animals that were brought there, from the tents as well as the soldiers themselves, the field begins to be damaged and become useless. When the villagers express this concern, he immediately orders them to relocate. During this time of stay, none of the former fellow villagers manage to recognize him. Sulejman was very happy when he saw his relatives, his former friends who played, his fellow villagers... but he did not dare for a moment to tell them who he really was. This was gnawing at him from the inside but... he wondered who would believe him if he told them what he had achieved. But where to go and place all those tents, people and horses? Sulejmani decides to settle on a lawn by a swamp. There he finds a family who says that the land with the entire swamp was his. This was Jak Vula. Since Jaku had

committed a crime and was hiding while food, etc., was brought to him by some church servants, Sulejman got the idea to enter into negotiations to buy this land so that Jaku could get rich and have his own money for living freely. Jak told the priests everything he talked to Suleiman and they advised him what to do. One day Suleiman said to him: “Would you sell me a piece of land as large as a buffalo hide”? - I will think about it - says Jaku and immediately consults with the priests. They say ‘yes’ not knowing Sulejman’s mind. “But, whatever you build in that place, this space must bear my name”-says Jaku. Sulejman Hadum Agha agreed to the condition set by Jak Vula.

To make the space as large as possible, Sulejman slaughtered a very large bull, skinned it and left it to dry. After the skin is dry, it is cut into thin threads in a circular shape with sharp tools. After it is finished, the length of thread, as thick as a very thin rope, was too long, and in the presence of Yak and his family, Suleiman’s officers begin to surround the land with the thread obtained from the buffalo skin. Jaku is stunned by Sulejmani’s idea, but he can’t oppose it since that’s how they agreed. Finally, when the entire rope was finished, it was understood that Sulejmani had benefited from a very large space from Jaku, who had thought completely differently. Since the agreement was for this place to bear the name of Yak, Suleiman called this place ‘Yakovasi’ which meant Yak’s Field in the Ottoman language. The field of Yak - Jakovasi-Jakova. In the field of Jaku - Jakova, Sulejmani will start work on the construction of the Mosque, which is still called the same today - Hadum Mosque. It was the year 1585. First he built a Hamam (Dizdari, 2005)<sup>6</sup> for the workers to bathe after the tiring construction work, then he built two Inns, one to sleep and the other to eat, and then he started building the Mosque. The mosque was completed in 1594. In order to make life easier and more affordable, Sulejmani built at least 500

<sup>4</sup>Taraphane - place where money was printed. The places where the money should be sent were also determined there. The city of Jakovo also appears there.

<sup>5</sup> The grave of Bjeshka, the mother of Sulejman Hadum Aga is in the village Guska-village of Gjakova city.

<sup>6</sup> Hamam- the Bath place. Big place-Bathroom- where can Bath many peoples at the sametime.

different shops and workshops around the mosque which came increasing in number as shops or as small family factories. Many of the builders, who were mainly from Dibra, decided to live here, in Jakova. Others came and rented shops while the payment of the tax called Haraç was also put into operation. Those who did this work was called Haraqî-a (Arllati & Rugova, 2015). In 1606, Jakova was constituted by the Ottoman Empire as Kasaba. From this year the very rapid flowering of this country begins. All the 17th and 18th centuries mark an extremely large development of the city in all aspects, such as: in terms of population, economic development, increase in the number of craft activities, trade development with different cities and countries dominated by Italy, Albania, Turkey, Croatia, France... or Shkodra, Venice, Trieste, Istanbul, Paris, Dubrovnik, Kotorr etc., without leaving out nearby centers, such as Prizren, Skopje, etc. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Jakova became one of the main Albanian manufacturing and commercial centers, having the city of Shkodra as its loyal supervisor and guardian. With the development of trade and economy, the well-being of the population that knew little poverty also increased. In the seventeenth century was born the first cultural "institution" of the time called Sofra. The table represented the gathering of several close people (max 12) who gathered for any family occasion, such as a birth, death, engagement, marriage, etc. In Sofra, they will also begin the tradition of singing in the city of Jakova.

### Literature Review

It is already known that folklore in general and the music (in particular) that accompanies it has existed in every nation and at every time. "Folklore is a naturally occurring and necessary component of any social group. Folklore does not need to be old; it continues through the modern day. It is created, transmitted, and used to establish "us" and "them" within a given group (Schmidt-Lauber, 2012). Such a thing, of course, happened to the Albanians as

one of the oldest peoples of the world. Consequently, also in various Albanian areas of which Kosovo and Gjakova as a city of Kosovo is part. It seems that in the case of the musical tradition of the city of Gjakova, the so-called Applied Folklore has been practiced through which other economic, social, etc. problems have been tried to be reduced to a minimum. In the musical tradition of the city of Gjakova, Folklore was related to the vernacular culture, it was part of that culture (Douillet, 2008). This vernacular culture was the way of life; it was the life of this people from an anthropological point of view. In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, there was no school institution, even elementary, let alone any school where music would be taught. Therefore, the customs and traditions handed down from generation to generation were a 'school' for the inhabitants here. They knew that a ritual (like that of the marriage where the bride gathered her female relatives on the eve of the marriage, for example) and that's what all the girls did a few days before the wedding.

So the oral transmission, the oral tradition of the type "this is what my mother (or my father) did, this is what I should do" was the only orientation on which life was built. As Shelemay (1996) notes, the "transmission of tradition" is a process of communication, where musical materials are passed down from one person to another, whether in oral, aural, or written forms. In the case of Gjakova's musical tradition, this communication occurred primarily through live performances and other oral forms of transmission. Over the years, this culture began to be enriched thanks to the arrivals within the city, in which case a cultural diversity began to be created which, gradually, became united as an alliance and was used by all or most of the inhabitants. When in the 20th century folklore began to be studied from different angles and fields because of this cultural diversity, then different researchers began to study the diverse alliance of folklore

studies with other academic fields offers a variety of theoretical vantage points and research tools to the field of folklore studies even as it continues to be a point of discussion within the field (Zumwalt, 1988). As Mostowlansky & Rota says, The emic approach aims to understand the cultural meaning and significance of a particular behavior or practice, as it is understood by the people who engage in it (Mostowlansky & Rota, 2020). Also a local music tradition like in this case-Jakova music tradition, based on Emic knowledge and interpretations are those existing within a culture, which are ‘determined by local custom, meaning, and belief’ and best described by a ‘native’ of the culture.

### **Research Importance**

The research article “Vernacular Culture of Gjakova: Emic Approach of Music Tradition” is of particular importance for Kosovar society, as it focuses on the preservation and analysis of musical heritage, as a key element of local identity and culture. The folk music of Gjakova, as part of the overall tradition of Kosovo, has a profound impact on the formation of collective consciousness and can be used as a tool for understanding the cultural, social and historical development of the region. Using an emic approach, which emphasizes the internal perspective of the community, this article aims to explore musical meanings and practices as important elements of the social and cultural life of Gjakova. This is important as it can help preserve musical traditions at a time when globalization and external influences can threaten the authenticity of these practices. The analysis of these legacies can also contribute to developing a deeper understanding of cultural diversity in Kosovo and promote the cultural identity of the region at a broader level.

### **Research Problem**

The primary aim of this research is to explore and analyze the development and social significance of Gjakova’s unique musical traditions, particularly focusing on the

Aheng and the role of the Tayfa ensemble within the community. Specifically, the study investigates the evolution of these traditions from the 18th to the 20th century, examining how they have transformed and been shaped by both local and external influences over time.

Key goals include:

- Analyzing the key musical forms of the Aheng tradition and their social, cultural, and political context.
- Investigating the evolution of folk music in Gjakova, tracing its historical and cultural roots.
- Examining how these musical traditions contribute to local identity, collective memory, and community resilience in the face of globalization.
- Exploring the preservation of these practices and their role in maintaining the cultural heritage of Kosovo, particularly in a contemporary context.

This research aims to fill a gap in understanding Gjakova’s folk music and its influence on broader cultural practices in Kosovo, contributing to the preservation of these vital cultural traditions.

### **Method**

#### **Research Model**

The research model applied in this study is primarily qualitative. The reason for this choice is that the study focuses on an in-depth analysis of historical documents, oral traditions, song texts, and melodies passed down through generations in the Gjakova region. These cultural elements, particularly folk songs, offer valuable insight into the vernacular music tradition and its societal significance. Since the time of the creation of these songs, formal state institutions did not exist, and as such, the cultural practices were passed down informally, primarily through oral traditions and gatherings like *sofra* (a traditional communal meal

setting where music was played and sung). As emphasized by Minbaeva, Ledeneva, Muratbekova-Touron, and Horak (2023, as cited in Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008; Padgett & Powell, 2012), informal institutions rely on informal networks, which provide cultural channels through which the 'rules of the game' are transmitted and transformed. In the absence of formal state institutions, such informal gatherings like *sofra* played a critical role in preserving and evolving these cultural traditions, reinforcing the social fabric and collective memory of the community.

The research methodology used is historical analysis followed by textual and musical interpretation, which enables us to view these traditions from a contemporary perspective, while also taking into account their historical, social, and cultural contexts. This approach allows for a detailed examination of how these songs were created, why they emerged at specific times, and how they reflect the social dynamics and collective memory of the Gjakova community during the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This method of analysis is appropriate because it considers the cultural significance of these traditions in the absence of formal documentation or institutional support, instead focusing on the informal yet crucial role of communal gatherings in preserving these musical forms. By analyzing both the texts and melodies of the songs, the research provides a comprehensive view of the cultural heritage of Gjakova and its contribution to the broader Kosovo tradition.

### Documents

The data for this research was primarily obtained through the collection of historical documents, handwritten manuscripts, old photographs, and musical notation manuscripts. These tools were essential for accessing the traditional songs and musical practices of Gjakova, as they serve as key sources that reflect the local culture and its transformation over time. The manuscripts include texts of songs, as well as musical

transcriptions that document the melodies and musical scales used in the folk tradition. Additionally, tables of *makams* (musical scales) were included to understand the specific structures and modes in the songs. Other relevant literature was also used to approach the research from a broader historical and cultural perspective, including writings that contextualize the role of music and its evolution in the region. The reason for choosing these tools is that they offer direct insight into the vernacular culture of Gjakova, particularly in a period when the songs were passed down orally and not written down or institutionalized. These documents and materials are key to understanding how the tradition evolved and how the community preserved its cultural heritage.

### Analysis

The analysis of the collected data was conducted through an anthropological approach, focusing on understanding how the traditional music of Gjakova developed over time and its role in the community. The analysis is centered on how these folk traditions transitioned from a vernacular form (informally passed down and practiced) to an institutionalized form (formalized and systematized). This shift was crucial to understanding the broader cultural and social changes in the region. In addition, the analysis looked at the historical context in which these songs and musical practices were created, exploring the socio-political conditions under which they emerged, especially during periods of Ottoman rule. Through this approach, the research uncovered how music and songs reflected the community's resistance, identity, and social values, providing an in-depth understanding of Gjakova's cultural evolution. The study also analyzed the texts and melodies of the songs to explore the relationship between the lyrical content and the musical structures, particularly in how they reflect the socio-cultural environment of the time.

## **Process**

The research process began due to the lack of precise or detailed data on the topic, which spurred the decision to gather more information about the vernacular music of Gjakova and its historical significance. The collection of materials began several years ago, with the process spanning approximately 20 years. The primary sources were obtained from various archives, including family archives, state archives, and institutional archives such as schools and museums. These materials were preserved across generations, primarily in families of musicians, with some materials also found in public institutions in Albania, Kosovo, and parts of North Macedonia where Albanian communities live. Throughout the process, a thorough examination of the collected materials was conducted to ensure the validity of the research, considering the importance of the folk songs and their preservation. The location of the materials was mainly in Albania, Kosovo, and areas with Albanian populations in North Macedonia. The validity of the research was further strengthened by recognizing the historical value of the collected materials, which reveal an extraordinary and long-standing cultural creativity. These materials are invaluable for understanding how folk music and songs have contributed to the shaping of Gjakova's cultural heritage and how they have been passed down and transformed over the centuries.

## **Ethic**

In conducting this research, ethical considerations have been carefully observed. Ethical sensitivities have been observed in obtaining the necessary permissions for the use of the documents selected as data within the scope of the research.

## **Results**

### **The start of Tradition-When, Who ... - Sofra's, Order's and Aheng**

Since its foundation as a city until 1916, the city of Jakova<sup>7</sup> had no Albanian school. This means that for 422 years of existence (from year 1594), this city had no educational institution. In 1916, the first elementary school called "Skenderbeu" was opened, and Wilhelm zu Wied, German prince picture stood in the classrooms. There was no question of music schools, but this is where the official teaching begins, since one of the subjects was Music. This is where the breakdown of cultural vernacularism for the city of Gjakova begins. Since its foundation as a city until 1916, the city of Gjakova had no Albanian school. This means that for 421 years of existence, this city had no educational institution. In 1916, the first elementary school called "Skenderbeu" was opened, and Prince Wied's picture stood in the classrooms. There was no question of music schools, but this is where the official teaching begins, since one of the subjects was Music. This is where the breakdown of cultural vernacularism for the city of Gjakova begins. However, cultural vernacularism continues through three institutions founded by the people of Gjakova driven by the great desire for education. These three informal institutions were Sofra, Order's (Rendi) and Ahengu. All three of these will continue to function even after the opening of the first Albanian school in 1916.

Until that time, everything was done non-institutionally and based on the traditions of the ancestors and normal and natural human rules. From time to time there was a person who had the good fortune to study and finish a school in a European country or even in Egypt or Turkey, who, when he came to Gjakova, taught others how to advance in educational advancement. These people taught others how to form and establish an association, mainly humanitarian, then how such association's work, what was needed

---

<sup>7</sup> The early name of today's city is Gjakova.



for the formation and establishment of an association, a branch of an association, a club, etc.

Until 1946, cultural vernacularism continued after the Second World War had already ended. Until then, only three informal institutions were fully functional in terms of music: Sofra, Order's and Ahengu.

All three of these institutions, although informal, performed their function wonderfully and contributed to raising the masses, educating them, teaching and maintaining the habits of courtesy, humanity, job education and many other things. The oldest of those three institutions was Sofra.

### Sofra's<sup>8</sup>

In Sofra, will begin the tradition of singing in the city of Jakova-(pseudo) institutionally but no one knows when the Party in Jakova started. What is known is that the song and music began in Sofra many centuries ago, before the city of Jakova was established, before the year 1585, when Sulejman Hadum Agha Mosque started to be built from the Masters of Dibra and finished in the year 1594. In 1630, the city of Jakova had a very first PhD (Doctor of Science). It was Osman Efendi, which, 25 years after Jakova was established as Casaba from the Ottoman Empire, in 1606. According to Evlia Çelebi, three hundred shops with a thousand kinds of craftsmen, where goods from the most diverse handicrafts were produced and sold, were a compelling base that this city would develop rapidly. After a few years, "Grand Bazaar of Jakova 'contained' 1100 shops, which almost all were filled with different wares" (Myller, 1838). Now, every guest who came to Jakova to stay a few days or to buy something tried to buy a house and shop for

<sup>8</sup> A place for dining, a round wooden table with a height of about 30-35 cm and a diameter ranging from 1m-2.5m even 3m, where a certain number of people can sit depending on its diameter. The musicians were seated at the table and were served brandy and food. The other people are sitting on couches. It was in use almost throughout the Balkans almost until the 80s. Today it is used very rarely and in some deep and distant village from today's civilization.

living and working there. Trade with more developed cities, such as Shkodra, Prizren, Corfu, Istanbul, and Dubrovnik, began to flourish. The city with the most commercial cooperation, exchange of goods, trade with raw materials for the production of final products or sales, was Shkodra, which can be figuratively called "the big sister of the city of Jakova". In all this cooperation, the so-called after-work part or the fun part of everyday life also played an important role, where music took the main place. For this reason, the first musical instruments, however primitive they were, began to be produced in the Grand Bazaar of Jakova. Very quickly, in the Grand Bazaar of Jakova started to establish a first institution's (with economic character) like Esnaf (Dizdari, 2005). Thus, the guilds (esnaf) of tailors (tailors), tanners (tanners), Kazaz's (silk yarn, silver and gold workers), shoemakers, clothiers, blacksmiths, bakers and many other handicrafts were formed and each Guild was very well organized. Guilds helped poor families, takes to work workless people for help etc. At every celebration, they distributed food aid, clothing, hygiene and helped families who had sons and daughters to marry. The guilds also helped in cases of death by sending aid to the family that had lost a loved one or in case if somebody was sick and need money to buy medics. This kind of help was something usually behavior for any of shop-owners at Big Bazaar. In case of celebrations, different musicians offer his music to play and sung at somebody's son's or daughter's marriage. According to Evlia Çelebi<sup>9</sup>, "It is a beautiful city in

<sup>9</sup> Evlija Çelebi Sejjahatnamesi (real name Muhammed Dhil-li ibni Dervishi) was a tourist of c. XVII who walked and visited not only the lands of Ottoman Empire, but also more widely, as in Asia, Arabia, Egypt, Russia, Germany and Sweden. And wherever he went, he wrote about history, geography, economics, language, race, customs, agriculture, commerce, faith, industry, culture, character, social life, legends, architecture, fairy tales, legends, etc. of that country. So he wrote about everything he saw and heard. This work is important especially for Turkish literature in general, but also more for the countries for it which he wrote, since we are dealing with a document from the time-c. XVII. He visited Albania and Albanian cities in 1622.

Dukagjin Prefecture, there are two thousand elegant houses on a plain. There are two large mosques, many mosques and canteens covered with lead... There is a hammam to satisfy the heart and about three hundred shops with a thousand kinds of craftsmen; the climate is healthy and the inhabitants very loving and beautiful. This is where the ammunition and ammunition prepared in Kotor was unloaded... "(Celebi, 1967:338) . If such a description was made only 27 years after the foundation of the city, we can say that the city of Jakova must have had at least over a thousand houses before its foundation (16<sup>th</sup> century). So, there is no question that Jakova was a significant locality or settlement. And, in this Grand Bazaar where everything flourished, even music and humanity had their deserved place. All this thanks to the generosity of the citizens of Gjakova. Gradually, initiatives were launched to shape and concretize the ideas of entertainment for all those workers who were in the Grand Bazaar. The first way was Sofra gjakovare.

This form of after-work entertainment included a close, mostly family circle that, over time, grew. In time, entertainment was spent in a different way - in Rende (Orders). The orders constituted the second form of entertainment, more open than the Sofra because included members of the same craft, not just family members, e.g. guilds of leather workers, tailors, etc. They usually gathered together on a day of the week which was set in advance. Then everyone in turn did the same thing until they were all done. Aheng was a third way.

The party was the most inclusive. Friends, relatives, colleagues, other acquaintances were invited there - in a word, it was the most massive. Aheng (The party-Banquet) lasted even longer and was organized in cases of marriages, engagements, circumcisions, in cases when a young man returned from the army, courtship, etc. In these three ways (Sofra, Orders and Aheng) of entertainment and celebration, the entire set of songs called

Aheng would be created and based. From ordinary people, Sofra passes and becomes the privilege of the rich. Consequently, now the table is laid only by the rich. This happens because the Guild starts organizing another meeting called Rend (Order).

### Orders

Sofras, in most cases, had no music while they were among the common people. When Sofra passed as a privilege of the rich, they began to enrich it with a musical group, however small it was, one or two singers, one or two instruments, and now they were going to change the rules. Only the music group sat in Sofra. The other attendees, including the organizer, sat high up on couches. Only the musicians were served with raki and meze (Dizdari, 2005). Others around also drank, but with just few appetizers. The practice of the Order<sup>10</sup> had been organized in the city of Shkodra for many years before, but there were some additional rules that could not be applied in the city of Jakova. In addition, in Shkodër Rendet were called 'Rede', without 'n'.<sup>11</sup> As the number of crafts grew greatly, the respective Guilds of each craftsman began to organize some sort of entertainment held every Saturday after Sunday was off. First of all, was appointed an administrator named Qehaja (Dizdari, 2005). The Qehaja had his rights which he obliged everyone in the Order to enforce or, otherwise, punishment would follow. In fact, Qehaja kept some cigarettes cut in half and if someone broke the rules, he would throw half of the cigarette away and by this it was meant that that person was punished. Qehaja made the law and his decision was not discussed. Punishment was already predetermined for anyone who threw half a cigarette. The convicted person was forced to throw a certain amount of money into the container designated for this

<sup>10</sup> Alb. Rend-Eng. -Order-Turn; It's your turn; Turn Off. Each of the 12 appointed persons had the obligation to organize the ceremony according to the rules set in advance.

<sup>11</sup> From Serbo-Croatian Red-et- In the Albanian language it is written and pronounced Rende while in the Serbo-Croatian language it is written and pronounced Red-Rede.

job. At the very end of the evening, as soon as the party was over, the collected money was taken and sent to families who were in poor economic conditions. The orders had a maximum of 12 guildy heads. Everyone was obliged to organize the order on a Saturday, every week. The order was not held only in cases of celebrations (state, religious or family), the death of any member of the family of a member who was a participant in the order and in cases of illness that made it impossible to maintain the organization of the order. Who would hold it first, second and so on, was cast by lot, but this was not a problem.

Everyone who had the Order had the right to invite 2 guests. He had determined the types of meats, pies, salads, etc. to prepare. This 'obligation' was put in place so that no one would be put in an unenviable position if they did not have the economic opportunity. But, everyone had the right to prepare something else extra food if he wanted. Thus, after each order, there were at least 4-5 another families who benefited in money as well as food that was not used - intact food, and here the human aspect came to the fore. Each person who had the Order invited the musicians they knew and wanted. In those cases, music was something imperative. During the each round, the participants told different stories, mainly with a comic-entertaining connotation, but also played some typical Albanian games. Many traditional civic songs were born during the musical performances in these orders. This is how the sole of traditional Jakova songs was created.

### Aheng

The party in the city of Gjakova had the character of a typical familiar organization on the occasion of family-not general social fun. In Aheng, which was later called Banquet, hundreds of members of the extended family from the father's side as the head of the family, as well as the mother's, including extended relatives, participated. Aheng could last up to 3 or more days and was

organized in the bride's house-family, while the main celebration was held in the groom's house. More than at Sofra's and Orders, Jakova's songs were created at Aheng's. The party was organized by a family member who married the boy or circumcised one or more small boys. The party lasted much longer. They were attended by min. 100 people, women, men, children, etc. Until the end of the century XIX, women with children, etc. enjoyed separately from the men. From the beginning of the century XX (until today) for the first time among the Albanians in Kosovo, Ahengu begins to be held and organized jointly by men and women. There were the relatives of the person marrying the boy, relatives, colleagues and friends. The music started in the evening and in some cases lasted up to three days without interruption, of course with breaks. All the songs of the Party were sung there. In the century XIX Ahengu gjakovar numbered about 180 songs, which was an impressive number. The songs of Ahengu Gjakovar were not sung according to the Makams (Sokoli, 1965), as in Shkodra, with the rules of the Makams. In Jakova they were sung as they were heard and all non-Jakova songs received a new version. There are some that in the country of origin (e.g. Berat, Shkodër, Tirana, etc.) have changed over the years and decades, in the city of Gjakova they have been preserved and 'conserved' as initial variants from the cities of origin precisely because the Jakova's musicians have not known Makams. There are 12 Turkish Makams used in the city of Shkodra:

*Vernacular culture of Gjakova: emic approach of music tradition*

**Table 1.** Musical makams used in the city of Shkodra, Albania. This data was obtained from researcher Ramadan Sokoli (Sokoli 1965)

Nr.	Name	Type	Explanations of practice in Albania	Finalis
1	Dyqah Hümeyun	Hîqaz	Start with Peshref - (Instrumental Piece)	La (A)
2	Zyl	Hîqaz Hümeyun	First Cord of Violin tuned in Re (D). Also called Ziil Hava for the very high tones.	Re (D)
3	Gjys	Nîkrîz	Makam Gjys also has a Finalis Re grade but has a different construction structure.	Re (D)
4	Raas	Rast	Typicall 'Albanian' Makam, different of Turkish, Egyptian, Syrian or Persian Makam. Usually is bimodale with Major and Minor too.	Sol (G)
5	Sergjah	Segâh B	The interval from base to Gr. IV is Tritonus and also has F# in Grade V. Often the grade IV is altered downwards correcting tritonus but creating Hiatus Eb-F# sametime.	Si (B)
6	Huzam	Hüzzam	Except in grades 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6, there are semitones between gr. 7 and 1 for the subtonic support. Here also exist and a Hiatus between gr. 4-5. Gr. IV oscillates between B and Bb. while Gr. V between C and C#.	F#
7	Nevish	Eviç	8va of T is diminished so there are semitones in gr. VII-VIII.	F#
8	Hysejn	Bayati (in Asiran) Muhayyer	It's the same as natural minor with halftone in gr. II-III and V-VI.	Mi (E)
9	Sabah	Beyatî	It looks the same as Ziil and Gjyz as the final has the grade Re (D) but has a different structure. The order of tones is the same as natural minor, but the modal functions fluctuate between tones and semitones.	Re (D)
10	Leva	Rast	Same as natural Do-minor but with a different modal structure. Not infrequently it is inverted for the 4th below, based on G (G), but also based on A, where many Shkodra songs are found.	Do (C) (G) or (A) opt.
11	Nihavend	(Buselik-Nihavend)	The IV G degree is always raised by a semitone and the scheme is odd with two flattened 2nds and 4 semitones.	Re (D)
12	Divan	Zîrgüleli-Hîcaz (Zengüle)	There are two augmented 2s (gr. 2-3 and 5-6) as well as 4 semitones (gr. 1-2; 3-4; 5-6 and 7-8).	Re (D)

Another term used in Shkodra for Makamet is the term Perde<sup>12</sup>. The term Perde is also used in Jakova, perhaps more than in Shkodra, just as the term Makam is also used but with a special characteristic-no one of Jakova musicians has known ever the exact meaning of these terms except the first known musician, the musician the oldest one, about whom quite a bit is known-Hamez Kovaçi-Çarkaxhiu. Hamëz Kovaçi together with Haxhi Perolli (who was older than Hamza Kovaçi), Kola Qorri and Uka Vraniqi and Jahja Efendi Xharra (who was the youngest one), formed the Tajfa of

Jakova<sup>13</sup> around 1850 after the assassination of Dah Polloshka against Reshit Pasha in 1845 and his heroic death. The Tajfa of Jakova operated until the first decade of the XX-th century when this group started to be called Circle (Alb. Rreth) or simply Group. Later it was called the Musical Group. Moreover, if the Shkodra's Heng have around 400 songs (The Academy of Albanological Studies (AAS), 1955), the Jakova's Aheng, at the end of the XIX century, had no more than 180-

<sup>13</sup> Oriental music group of 5-10 person's analogy of Trubadur and trouvères-performer, were historically consecutive and based in different regions of France while minnesingers and meistersingers were in Germany. Tajfa has the the same function. They played with wind instruments (Zurla), in percussion instruments (Tupan-drum), Def-Daire, Darabuk and string instruments (Sharki, bugari, etc.). Tajfa was led by Mehterbash who, in fact, was the chief musician. Jakova's Tajfa is the last Tajfa formed on Albanians cities and the only one in Kosovo.

<sup>12</sup> Tur. Perdë- Each of the divisions, each of the designated parts to be touched with the fingers in the chordophone musical instruments-positions in the Guitar, Sharki, Violin, Lute, Laud, Buzuki, Kanun, etc.

200 songs. Among the first well known song in Shkodra is the song entitled “The Song of Brahim Gjoci” from 1769, not earlier. The first song found in Jakova dates back to 1770

and is titled “Rrahi teli për spahi” (Beat wire for spahi)<sup>14</sup>, just a year after Shkodra’s first song.

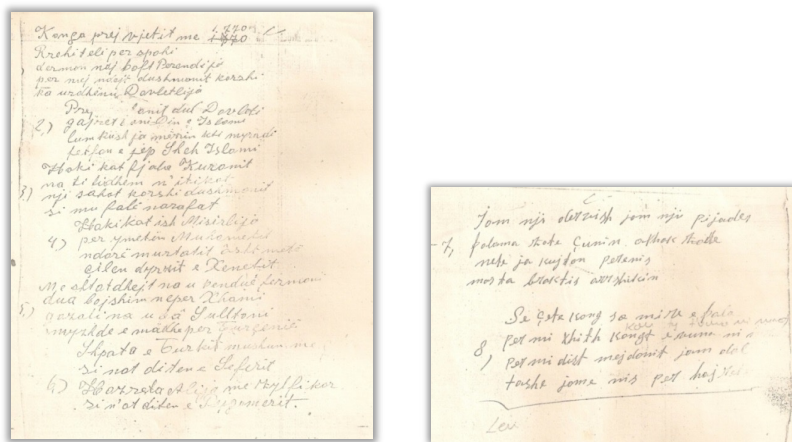


Photo 3. “Beat wire for spahi” of Haxhi Perolli, the oldest Gjakova’s song-1770-year, pg.1

Original text<sup>15</sup>

Beat wire for Spahi

Haxhi Perolli  
(Song from year 1770)

Introduction-Instrumental  
**Andante**  
Transcribed by Behar Arllati

7

11 **Kënga**  
O bea - te wi - re o

16  
for Spa - hij - e ma - y go - od ma - ke

22  
a so - lu - tion for we will fa - ce with E - ne - my E A -

29  
li - a go - ver - nant or - de - red

35  
to us E ja - - - re.  
D.C. al Fine

40

Figure 1. “Beat wire for spahi” of Haxhi Perolli, the oldest Gjakova’s song-1770-year, notation

<sup>14</sup> Manuscript found and preserved by Qamili i Vogël. Spahi-cavalry formation at the time of the Bushatlli dynasty in Shkodra at XVIII-th century.

<sup>15</sup> There are only 5 stanzas in the handwriting-manuscript of the teacher of the patriot Ibrahim Kolçi (1888-1960) from 1930. The 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> stanzas is missing. In addition, there are and some minor changes in the 4<sup>th</sup> stanza.

Another song that goes deeper in time is the one entitled “Listen friends what Nezimi says” a song from the city of Berat. Since Nezim Berati (Frakulla), also known as Ibrahim Nezimi, died in 1760, he was born

in 1670, this song must have been written and created at least around 1735 or even earlier, it turns out that Jakova musicians had knowledge of songs different and before 1770 when the first known Jakova song dates.

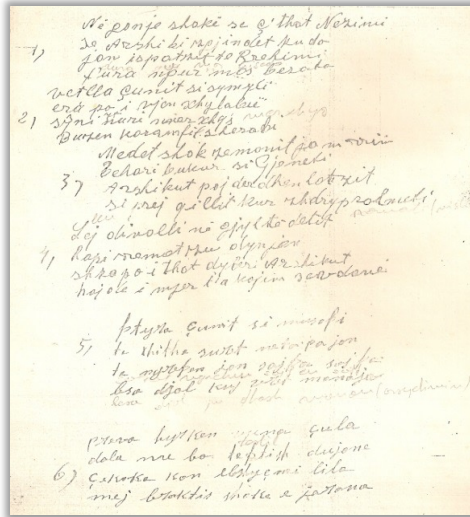


Photo 4. “Listen, friends, what Nezim says” - Lyric of the Song by Nezim Berati (1670-1760)

There are also many songs from Divani (Abazi-Egro, 2009)<sup>16</sup> i Nezim Berat that were sung and well known by musicians. Moreover,

based on oral tradition, Hamëz Kovaçi-Çarkaxhiu knew all the songs of Ali Ufki Bey’s Mecmua.<sup>17</sup>



Photo 5. Page from Ali Ufki’s Mecmua saz & Soz- Bibliothèque nationale de France (Ufki, 1650)

<sup>16</sup>In oriental poetics, Divan is a work of a poet according to a certain system, classical poems (Kaside, Gazele, etc.). Usually, the Divans were written by the so-called Bejtexhinj poets who wrote Albanian poems-songs with the Arabic alphabet. Besides Nezim Berati, there are many other Albanian poets who belong to this period, such as: Muhamet Kyçyku-Çami, Hasan Zyko Kamberi, Molla Hysen Dobraci, etc.

<sup>17</sup>Vojtieg Bobowski-Converted Ali Ufki Bey (1610-1675) as the chief musician of the Sultan’s Court collected and wrote various popular songs (with lyrics and music notes) in a collection that was published after his death (See also Cem Behar). He was the great master of the time who knew by heart the entire Mecmua of Ali Ufki as Hamëz Kovaçi knew it.

However, after the first found and preserved song that dates back to 1770, there follow many songs whose exact year of creation is unknown but, based on its content from the text, it can be said that they belong to those years and decades of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. From this period of time are the songs “With 1300 naze<sup>18</sup>”, “That love entered me too much”-by Kol Qorri<sup>19</sup>, “I crossed the door of Istanbul”, “The thirty days in Ramadan” by Hamëz Kovaçi, “Dah Polloshka’s song” of the year 1847 also by Hamza Kovaçi, “Bash te teqja e Shejh Salihi” (Manuscript-Haxhi Perolli year 1850), “30 days in Ramadan/ with three circle miserable like I am”, “Bylbyl you are my tulip”, Elif Adi Ibrahim” a both song created by Hamza Kovaçi<sup>20</sup>, “Down there at the mill” created by Jahja Efendi Xharra after a sporadic battle between a 20-year-old named Rexhep Gërçari with the Turkish soldiers where, after the fight, Rexhep kills several Turkish soldiers and is finally killed-song of period of before Prizren Ligue, aprox. Year 1875; “May your hand become golden” of Dahim Patoku (1863-1939), “Elif se u marush” song which was recorded on a Shellac record by blind Shkodra’s singer Shtjefën Jakova-Blind Jakov (born between 1857-1862, died 1828), “A Vezir<sup>21</sup> comes to this land” etc.

Song after song, their number grew steadily as did the number of instrumentalists who, in most cases, also was the singer. This is how other musicians began to appear, among whom we must single out the instrumentalist in the sharkia Ramadan Ganga, Dahim Patoku, Abedin Din Bakija-sharkia, Ymer Tullumi-bugaria, the creator of lyrics and songs Beqir Baraku whose songs became more popular

in Shkodra than in Gjakova and the iconic figure of the city in the field of music whose life is reflected in Albanological Researches-Ethnomusicology, Ymer Riza, the master of the 12-string sharkia. The musicians knowed even today and who belong to the 18<sup>th</sup> century are Haxhi Perolli (the oldest one) - birthday unknown, Hamza Kovaçi-Çarkaxhiu - around 1790, Uka Vraniqi - around 1795 and Kolë Çorri - around 1799-1800. The other members of Tajfa of Jakova Jahja Xharra and Ramadan Ganga, were born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. All these musicians were born in the XIX-th century-Jahja Xharra-1835, Ramadan Ganga in 1852, Dahim Patoku-1863, Abedin-Din Bakija-1874, Ymer Tullumi-1884, Ymer Riza-1885, Beqir Efendi Baraku-1896 year.

<sup>18</sup> Naze, Tur.-Sqimatar (Arab.)- A person who has complaints and dissatisfaction about everything, especially food.

<sup>19</sup> Kol Qorri (around 1800-1870), Friend and co-musician with Hamëz Kovaçi, a few years younger, virtuoso singer and instrumentalist with whom Hamëz Kovaçi created Tajfa e Gjakova, the only one in Kosovar spaces.

<sup>20</sup> Hamza Kovaçi-Çarkaxhiu was born around 1790-1795 and died around 1865-1868 is considered the first known musician of the city of Gjakova.

<sup>21</sup> Vezir tur- The highest official in the administration of the Ottoman Empire.

Song of the year 1836 by Hamza Kovaci-Carkaxhiu

T'tridhjetën ditë në Ramazan  
[On the 30th day of Ramadan]

Introduction (Song of year 1836-Dedicated to Sulejman Bey Vrioni,  
Andante leader of Berat 1835-1837) Lyrics and the Melody:  
Hamza Kovaçi-Çarkaxhiu

The SONG

T'tri-dhje-tën dit' në Ra - ma - zan  
[On thir - tyth day in Ra - ma - dan]

do - la me shi - kju o dyl - be - rin Tur - që - ni -  
16 I went out to look - ked o dil - be - ri\* Tur - ke -  
- a baj - shin - o is - pat fo - lin mir'  
18 y tes - ti - fi - ed They spooke we -  
- për Su - lej - man o Be - gin.  
20 ell of Su - lej - man o Be - y.]

Figure 2. Song<sup>22</sup> of the year 1836 by Hamza Kovaci-Carkaxhiu

These musicians together, together with Qamil Muhaxhiri (known as Qamili i Vogël) and Mazllum Mejzini from 20<sup>th</sup> century (Qamil Muhaxhiri - 1923, Mazllum Mejzini - 1930), created the sole of the Gjakova song, a very powerful and unique sole not only for the cities of Kosovo but also wider.

### The Era of Ymer Riza

Ymer Riza was born in 1885 and died in 1961. Since he was very rich, throughout his life he helped his fellow citizens both by entertaining them and by sending them food, clothing and hygiene items until he melted all the wealth he had. He died in deep misery, abandoned by his friends and co-musicians, and was buried in the presence of just few people. Today, when the name Ymer Riza is mentioned, the city of Gjakova is meant, and vice versa when the city of Gjakova is mentioned, in the musical sense, the name of Ymer Riza is meant. Ymer Riza establish the first new rules of singing, unlike Tajfa, he increased the authority and value of each singer and instrumentalist. With his authority, he even managed to penetrate the upper aristocratic layers of the city and

<sup>22</sup> X - Dilber-i (pers.) - From 'del': Heart, bear-bearer. Acquirer, stealer of hearts. Kënga këndohet në dy variante:

Pas secilës strofë, bëhet përcjellja e fillimit-hyrjes për të vazhduar strofa e dytë, etj., dhe. The song is sung in two variants:

a) After each stanza, there is the introduction, and b) The introduction is done only at the beginning. The other stanzas in a row are sung as in Shkodra beys, with the singers changing according to a certain order. The second variant is much more preferred.



force everyone to appreciate every musician or singer. Ymer Riza is the only one who with his group managed to record a (one) song in a wax cylinder by the Slovenian anthropologist Matija Murko (Murko, 1951) his son Stanislav-Stanko Murko with his relative Dr.Vladimir Murko, ing. in the year 1930,<sup>23</sup> thus doing a rare service to the city of Gjakova and all of Kosovo. There are several authors of dictionaries, lexicons and encyclopedias who mention Ymer Riza as a creator, singer and virtuoso instrumentalist on the 12-string sharki. All Gjakova's instrumentalists in sharki since Hamëz Kovaçi-Çarkaxhiu until the 30s of the 20th century have played in 12-string sharki. Without a doubt, the greatest master of all time was and remained Ymer Riza. The number of songs that Ymer Riza has created is not great, but his songs are emblematic. One of them even reached the level of a folk Hymn "O lily, white lily".

Music, according to the rules established by Ymer Riza, prevailed until the early 60s and still continues today (with lower intensity). His rules were so strict that nobody dared to break them, not even the musicians from Peja<sup>24</sup> with whom he collaborated and who were not familiarized with the rules established by Ymer Riza. Under the leadership of Ymer Riza (and even after his death), his musical company had reached such a high level that it had managed to include Waltzes in the repertoire, as was the case with the waltz "Danube Waves" by the Romanian composer Ion Ivanovici<sup>25</sup>. Such high levels when completely amateur musicians play with folk instruments such waltzes are rarely encountered even to this day. This Waltz has been recorded and is a rare evidence of the musical level that the city of Gjakova had, without forgetting here also other musical works of the highest artistic level.

<sup>23</sup> The Phonography no. 152 in wax cylinders.

<sup>24</sup> The well-known Peja musicians of Ymer Riza's era (although younger in age) were Zija Tabaku, Make Sadiku, Hivzi Vokshi, etc.

<sup>25</sup> Hivanovici, I. (n.d.). Waves of the Danube. Archived 2011-09-30 at the Wayback Machine. johann-strauss.org.uk.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Ymer Riza started and finished his musical activity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He continued to play music with musicians born later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century very successfully keeping the leader's primacy until his death in 1961. During his time as well as after his death, the sole of the traditional Gjakova song was added with the songs of the creators Qamil Muhaxhiri-Qamili i Vogël and Mazllum Mejzini who both together created about 160 songs, significantly increasing the number of songs. The tradition and rules were preserved intact, as in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and this tradition and these rules did not change until the mid-80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while many music groups were created, songs were recorded on vinyl discs, had dozens of young singers emerged who performed according to the new style and standards of music and not according to the standards of Sofra and Orders. The old type of music in Sofra and Orders continues even today but with a very low intensity and it can be said that this type of music is being abandoned as this way of music is now considered backward, very old and primitive.

The old songs that were sung 200 years ago continue to be sung today with new orchestras and arrangements, but the tradition of sitting in Sofra is still practiced today, already in all the cities of Kosovo, among which the name Sofra is jealously guarded mostly city of Peja<sup>26</sup>. The city of Peja should be mentioned for the preservation of typical Albanian songs, as the musicians of Gjakovare had done at least a century earlier. This is considered a success of Peja musicians who not only never forgot the songs but, moreover, constantly sang and renewed them. This preservation of the city of Peja of the songs that were first sung in the city of Gjakova has come about because of the visits that the musicians from Peja

<sup>26</sup> Having close proximity and close cooperation with the musicians of Gjakova, since the beginning of the 20th century, the musicians from Peja also adopted Sofra as a way of playing. So it can be said that even in the city of Peja, the tradition of Sofra goes back a century

made to the city of Gjakova invited by the musicians but also vice versa because of the invitations made to the musicians from them Peja. Other cities of Kosovo (Prizren, Prishtina, Gjilan, Mitrovica, Ferizaj or Vushtria where artistic music began in the second decade of the 20th century, etc.) learned these songs as “Gjakova’s songs” spreading in this way the songs of authentic Albanian songs that stand as opposition to the creation of new styles that have nothing to do with the tradition of Albanian singing, or with the Gjakova’s tradition of singing, or even with the authentic values of Albanian songs that transmit very humane and very positive messages.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

The city of Gjakova, although one of the youngest cities in Kosovo (among the larger cities), is part of the group of the most developed Albanian cities in the field of traditional folk song, alongside powerful cities such as Shkodra, Berat, Tirana, Elbasan and Korça. This idea is consistent with the study of Spiro J. Shetuni, where he emphasizes that the musical styles of cities such as Shkodra, Berat and Gjakova constitute an essential part of traditional Albanian urban music (Shetuni, 2019). He further emphasizes that these musical styles are deeply integrated into the lives of local residents, celebrated and known both nationally and internationally (Shetuni, 2019). In this context, Gjakova, despite being one of the youngest cities, plays a crucial role in the preservation and development of Albanian folk song, similar to the older and more well-known cities such as Shkodra and Tirana. With the first (and only) Tajfa in Kosovo, with the oldest documented songs, with the first after Tajfa music groups, with the first traditional song recorded on a wax cylinder, with the first recordings on vinyl records at the 60<sup>th</sup> year of 20th century, with the most of musicians in the 19th and 20th centuries, this city should be considered great and extremely important for all Albanian spaces in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and

diaspora. Moreover, this city has played an extraordinary role in preserving and ‘conserving’ the songs of other cities, such as: the cities of Shkodra, Berat, Elbasan and Berat, etc. In a casual conversation, I heard the renowned Albanian tenor Bashkim Pacuku say, “If you’ve lost any song, look for it in Shkodra.” This phrase highlights the deep cultural significance of certain traditional songs that have transcended geographical boundaries. Shkodra, known for its rich musical heritage, serves as a key location where music—sometimes originating from other regions—has been preserved and cherished. Anyone may not believe it, but the old songs of these cities in Albania have been sung more in the city of Gjakova (and even in Peja) than in their countries of origin. These songs, continuously sung even during the period of dictatorial communism in Albania, have been appropriated and redefined in the eyes of others. They are now referred to as “old Gjakova songs,” even though they do not originally come from Gjakova. However, these songs have deep historical roots that extend back to the Ottoman period, a time when the Balkans were significantly influenced by the music and culture of the Ottoman Empire. The music of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in its urban centers, flourished in cities like Shkodra, where many traditional songs were preserved. The songs themselves were built upon scales and maqamat (modes) derived from the Arab world, reflecting the deep influence of Arabic music on the Ottomans. This is consistent with the argument that the Ottoman Empire, during its reign, adopted musical structures from its Arab predecessors. As noted in the literature, “the longest-standing basic principles of music’s structure in the documented history of the Persian-speaking world emerged and thrived within the context of dynastic rule that succeeded the waning Islamic Caliphate. With Islam underpinning the rise of Mongol and Turkic kingdoms in the thirteenth century, different versions of the same basic concept of the twelve-maqam system appeared on opposite sides of the

Caliphate's domain in West and Central Asia" (Lucas E. Ann, 2008). The influence of Arabic maqamat was then passed to the Ottomans, and with the Ottoman expansion into the Balkans, these musical traditions spread further, eventually making their way into Albanian cities like Shkodra and Gjakova.

Moreover, the spread of Ottoman-influenced music across the Balkans was not limited to traditional folk songs alone. In the late Ottoman period, a flourishing music café culture helped popularize Ottoman urban music, which was heavily based on the light classical and folk music that had originated in the Arab world. As noted in a study on the Ottoman legacy, "the music café repertoire in Greece before the Second World War consisted of Ottoman popular pieces and new compositions in that style," and similar influences were seen across the Balkans, including in Albania and Kosovo (Pennanen, 2008). These influences, particularly the incorporation of the twelve-maqam system and Ottoman modes, can be traced back to their Arab roots, shaping the traditional music of Albania and Kosovo. Thus, the songs of Gjakova, often referred to as "old Gjakova songs," are in fact products of this rich and complex cultural exchange. Although these songs were redefined and reappropriated by the people of Gjakova, their origins can be traced back to the Arab world, then to the Ottomans, and finally to their adaptation in the Balkans, particularly in Shkodra. The influence of the Arab maqamat system on Ottoman music provided the foundation for the songs that are now cherished as part of the cultural heritage of Gjakova. The role of the city of Gjakova is so crucial that it can be said that in terms of culture, this city has influenced the differences between the cities of Albania and the cities of Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Southern Serbia to be much smaller. It seems unbelievable but it is more than true that the culture of this city (without denying the culture that existed in other cities of Kosovo) has influenced very positively and in favor of all Albanians who lived outside the official

borders of Albania. This is related to the economic power, the broad culture that the citizens of Gjakova had, the humanitarian spirit, their early education as well as the development of the national identity so important for the Albanian people in general since no radical change has been made without the help of the people of Gjakova while many changes in the national aspect started exactly in this city (we remember on this occasion the battle of September 1878 in Gjakova where Mehmet Ali Pasha Maxharri or Maxharr Pasha was killed by the Albanian forces when the Albanians' need and demands for independence began).

Even today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the city of Gjakova stands with the same views and ideas despite the lack of interest of all Kosovar governments after the war of 1999. The city of Gjakova already has its true civic values frozen for centuries and does not bow down easily. This is the strength that this city has transmitted for centuries, where, as a very important integral part, was the traditional music and civic songs of the city of Gjakova.

Gjakova, located in the heart of the Dukagjin Plain, has historically served as an important commercial hub in the region, surrounded by significant cities such as Peja and Prizren. This city has been a vital center for trade and business, particularly due to the Great Bazaar, one of the largest in the Western Balkans. Visitors to Gjakova seeking work in this bustling marketplace encountered a rich cultural and commercial environment, which facilitated the blending of diverse traditions. As highlighted, the Old Bazaar, covering an area of approximately 35,000 m<sup>2</sup> and housing 525 shops, has been the economic heart of Gjakova. This marketplace not only fostered economic activity but also provided a space for various individuals to integrate into the local community, embracing the customs and traditions of the Gjakovar people. In this context, it is evident that the Great Bazaar of Gjakova has played a crucial role not only in the economic development of

the city but also in strengthening its cultural identity, allowing newcomers to feel part of the community after many decades of integration.

Since the city of Gjakova had (and still has) one of the biggest bazaars in the Western Balkans, even the newcomers have challenged themselves to work in the Grand Bazaar of Gjakova. This has made this city accept different arrivals and consequently also people with different traditions and customs, who, then, have accepted the traditions of the Gjakovars and have become Gjakovars, after many decades. This can also be seen in the field-reality with the presence of songs from the cities of Albania (Tirana, Shkodra, Berati, Elbasan, etc.); of Turkey (mainly dominated by the cities of Istanbul, Bursa, Edrine, etc.); of Greece (Arvanite songs, Chameria area with the cities of Filati, Suli, Gumenica, then Thessaloniki, etc.); of Montenegro (Ulqin, Tivari, Kotor, etc.) or other European countries, such as: Italy, France, Austria, Russia, etc. Many songs from these states (cities) have become part of the tradition of singing in the city of Gjakova - part of the Gjakova's Aheng (Party).

## **Recommendations**

### **For Further Studies**

Given the findings of this study on the vernacular music culture of Gjakova and its transformation over time, future research could explore the following:

- A deeper comparative study of the folk music traditions of Gjakova with other regions in Kosovo and the broader Balkans, examining how regional identities influence musical practices.
- Research focusing on the impact of globalization and modernity on the preservation and evolution of folk music traditions in Kosovo, with a particular focus on how contemporary practices affect authenticity.

- Further ethnomusicological studies on how music serves as a tool for community cohesion and the transmission of cultural values in Gjakova and similar cultural contexts.

- A more extensive investigation into the role of “sofra” and other communal spaces in the development and perpetuation of musical traditions.

### **For Applicants**

For future applicants and researchers in this field, it is recommended that:

- You build on the foundation of historical and cultural documents, but also consider conducting oral interviews and fieldwork to gain a more comprehensive understanding of folk music traditions in contemporary contexts.

- Engage with communities directly involved in the musical practices of Gjakova to better understand how these traditions are perceived today and to bridge the gap between scholarly work and the living cultural heritage.

- Explore multidisciplinary approaches that combine ethnomusicology, history, anthropology, and sociology to offer richer analyses of cultural practices like the Gjakova “aheng.”

### **Limitation of Study**

Despite the thorough research, several limitations exist within this study:

- The study primarily relies on historical documents, written texts, and oral traditions, which may not fully capture the living, evolving practices of folk music in Gjakova.

- There is limited access to certain archival materials and folk music documents, as many valuable sources are not yet digitized or have been lost over time.

- The scope of this research was largely confined to written and oral documents from Kosovo and Albania; therefore, future studies might benefit from a broader geographic perspective, including the diaspora.
- A focus on Gjakova's specific "aheng" tradition may not fully represent the diversity of folk music practices across Kosovo, meaning further studies could look at other regions in more detail.

### **Acknowledgment**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the completion of this study. Special thanks goes to the Albanian families who preserved and shared with us invaluable folkloric documents and materials, such as song texts, old photographs, and transcribed musical notes, which were essential for this research. We also wish to thank our colleagues PhD.Student Armend Xhoni, Dr. Migena Arllati, for their support and valuable suggestions throughout the development of this work, we also thank them for their help with the translation of the materials. Finally, we extend our deep appreciation to UBT College for providing the opportunity to carry out this study and for the academic support offered during the entire process.

## References

- Abazi-Egro, G. (2009). *Divani [Divan]*. Toena.
- Arllati, M., & Rugova, M. (2015). *Patronymic in Gjakova-surnames, family names. Shoqata e Intelektualeve "Jakova" [Association of Intellectuals 'Jakova']*.
- Čelebi, E., & Šabanović, H. (Trans.). (1954). *Putopis; odlomci o Jugoslovenskom zemljama [Translation of Evliya Çelebi Siyhatnamesi]*. Svjetlost. (Original work published 1640).
- Dizdari, T. (2005). *Fjalor i orientalizmave në gjuhën shqipe [Dictionary of orientalisms in the Albanian language]*. In *Dictionary of oriental loanwords in Albanian (Vols. 1-1202)*. ISESCO.
- Douillet, C. (2008). Constructing vernacular culture in the trans-Caribbean (review). *Anthropological Quarterly*, 81(3), 741-746. <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.0.0025>
- Lucas, A. E. (2019). *Music of a thousand years: A new history of Persian musical traditions* (p. 25). University of California Press.
- Minbaeva, D., Ledeneva, A., Muratbekova-Touron, M., & Horak, S. (2023). Explaining the persistence of informal institutions: The role of informal networks. *Academy of Management Review*, 48(3), 556-574. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2020.0224>
- Mostowlansky, T., & Rota, A. (2020). *Emic and etic*. The Open encyclopedia of anthropology. <https://doi.org/10.29164/20emicetic>
- Osmani, J. (2003). *Vendbanimet e Kosoves [The settlements of Kosovo]*. Samozal.
- Owen-Smith, J., & Powell, W.W. 2008. Networks and institutions. In Royston Greenwood,
- Christine Oliver, Roy Suddaby and Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson (eds.). *The Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*: 596-623. New York: Sage.
- Padgett, J.F., & Powell, W.W. 2012. *The emergence of organizations and markets*. Princeton University Press.
- Pennanen, R. P. (2008). Lost in scales: Balkan folk music research and the Ottoman legacy. *Muzikologija*, 8, 127-147. <https://muzikologija-musicology.com/index.php/MM/article/view/380>
- Schmidt-Lauber, B. (2012). *Seeing, hearing, feeling, writing: approaches and methods in ethnographic research from the perspective of ethnological analysis of the present*. Wiley-Blackwell, 559-578. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118379936.ch29>
- Sokoli, R. (1965). *Folklori muzikor Shqiptar: morfologjia (Albanian musical folklore: morphology)*. Institute of Folklore.
- Shelemay, K. K. (1996). The Ethnomusicologist and the Transmission of Tradition. *The Journal of Musicology*, 14(1), 35-51. <https://doi.org/10.2307/763956>
- Shetuni, S. J. (2019). The musical style of the cities of central Albania and Kosovo. *Telegrafi*. Retrieved from <https://telegrafi.com/en/stili-muzikor-qyteteve-te-shqiperise-se-mesme-dhe-te-kosoves/>
- The Academy of Albanological Studies (AAS). (1955). *Kenget e Hengut Shkodran [The songs of Shkodra's Heng]*. AAS; Sound Archive. <http://asa.edu.al/site/>
- Ufki, A. (1650). *Mecmua ou album de poésies turques, la plupart sans aucun nom d'auteur, quelques-unes de Necâtî, dans les marges [Mecmua or album of Turkish poetry, most without any author's name, some by Necâtî, in the margins]*. Bibliothèque nationale de France; BnF Gallica. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84150086.image>
- Vala, N. (2015). *Kjo eshte Gjakova [This is Gjakova]*. Ardi Graphic.
- Zumwalt, L. R. (1988). *American folklore scholarship: a dialogue of dissent*. Indiana University Press.

## Web sites

**Web 1.** [https://kk.rks-gov.net/gjakove/?page\\_id=200000112](https://kk.rks-gov.net/gjakove/?page_id=200000112)

## Biodata of Authors



Prof. Dr. **Behar Arllati**, was born in Gjakova on 11.08.1964. He completed my elementary music school in parallel with primary school. I completed my high school in Gjakova. He completed the Faculty of Music in Prishtina in 2003 when he earned the title of Professor of Musical Art. He completed MA studies in Tirana in 2013 at IAKSA, Department of Ethnology-Folklore-Folklore Specialty, when he earned the scientific degree MA. Sci. He completed Doctoral studies also in Tirana, at ASA, Department of Ethnology-Folklore-Folklore Specialty in 2019, where he earned the scientific degree Dr. Sci.

**Affiliation:** University for Business and Technology: Pristina, XK  
2022-10 to present | Lecturer (Modern Music, Digital Production and Management)

**Email:** behar.arllati@ubt-uni.net

**ORCID:** 0009-0006-7019-3479

**Academiaedu:** <https://independent.academia.edu/ArllatiBehar>



Prof. Msc **Aida Gjikolli**, was born on 21.09.1966 in Peja. She completed primary school in Pejë and at the same time she also completed elementary music school - Piano. She finished high school (1984) and the Faculty in Pristina (1988). Years 2011- 2013 FMU-Skopje and UNIVERSUM Prishtina Master of Arts in Management. Years 2015 - 2016 Tirana University of Arts - Faculty of Music - Master - Music Pedagogy - Solfege.

**Affiliation:** University for Business and Technology: Pristina, XK  
2019 to present | Lecturer (Modern Music, Digital Production and Management) **Employment**

**ORCID:** 0000-0002-8251-144X

**Email:** aida.gjikolli@ubt-uni.net

