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## **OSMANLI İDARESİNDE ARNAVUTLARDA ARAPÇA ÖĞRETME/ÖĞRENME GELENEĞİ VE MEVCUT DURUM**

### **Öz**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Arapça öğrenimi ve öğretiminin Arnavut toplumu ve toprakları arasındaki farklı zaman dilimleri, yönetim sistemleri, savaşlar ve okul-kuruluş aşamaları boyunca geçtiği süreçleri tanımlamaya odaklanmaktır. Bu araştırma, Osmanlılar tarafından yönetilen Arnavutlar döneminden günümüzdeki duruma kıyasen tarihsel bir yaklaşımla gerçekleştirilmektedir. Çalışma, bize Osmanlı İmparatorluğu döneminde Arapçanın statüsünün ne olduğunu ne kadar ayrıcalıklı olduğunu anlatmaktadır.

Çalışmamız aynı zamanda Arapça öğretme metodolojisine ışık tutarak, bu yöntemlerin öğrenciler üzerindeki etkisini ve bu süre zarfında kullanılan materyalleri açıklamaktadır. Ayrıca, Arnavutlar arasında İslam kültürünün, Arapça öğrenme/öğretmede, Araplarla ilişkilerinde ve Kur'an-ı Kerim'in onlara karşı büyük prestijli statüsünde önemli bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir.

İslâm'ın Arnavutlar tarafından yoğun kabul görmesi, genel olarak İslam dini ve kültürü ve özellikle de Arapçayı öğrenmekle yakından ilgilendiklerinin bir göstergesiydi.

Şimdiye kadar yapılan diğer araştırmalarda, Arnavutluk topraklarındaki Arapçanın Priştine Üniversitesi Filoloji Fakültesi Şarkiyat Bölümünden ziyade, ağırlıklı olarak dini kurumlarda öğretildiğini görülmüştür.

Tüm bunlardan, Arapça öğretiminin birçok kritik aşamadan geçtiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Görüldüğü şekilde, Osmanlı hakimiyeti döneminde, Arnavutlar arasında Arapça öğrenimi daha yoğun bir şekilde sürdürülmüştür.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Arapça öğretimi/öğrenimi, Arnavutluk/Arnavutlar, okullar, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Şarkiyat Araştırmaları.

## **TRADITION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE AMONG THE ALBANIANS DURING THE OTTOMAN RULING AND THE CURRENT SITUATION**

### **Abstract**

The aim purpose of this paper will be focused in describing the processes through which Arabic language learning and teaching has gone, across different time periods, governing systems, wars and schools-establishment phases between the Albanian society and their lands. This research is realized through the historical approach from the period of Albanians who were ruled by the Ottomans, compared to the nowadays situation. The study tells us what the status of the Arabic language was at the time of the Ottoman Empire, it was highly privileged.

This investigation also highlights the methodology of teaching Arabic and describes the effect which these methods had on pupils and students, and the material used during that time. It also tells us, that Islamic culture has played an important role in learning/teaching Arabic among the Albanians, their relations with Arabs, and the large prestigious status of the Holy Quran to them.

The great acceptance of Islam by the Albanians was an indication that they were keenly interested in learning Islamic Religion and Culture in general, and the Arabic language in particular. In further observations to date, we have found that the Arabic language in Albanian lands, is mainly taught in religious institutions, except the Department of Oriental Studies beside the Faculty of Philology at the University of Pristina in Kosovo.

From all this, it is concluded that the teaching of the Arabic language has gone through many critical stages. It seems like, at the period of Ottoman ruling, education in Arabic to Albanians was more advanced.

**Key words:** Arabic Language learning/teaching, Albania/Albanians, Schools, Ottoman Empire, Oriental Studies.

### **1. Introduction**

Albanians and Arabs share very deep historical and cultural relations based on the common Islamic culture. The Albanian lands have been joining the Ottoman Empire since the late fourteenth century. Ottoman Turks empire began to expand from the late 14th century, starting from Anatol to the Balkans. Thus, by entering the fifteenth century, the Turks almost dominated the Balkan

Peninsula. Albania, therefore, became part of the Ottoman Empire and most of the Albanian population embraced Islam during this time. Learning of the Arabic Language was one of the imperative means of sustaining the administrative system which the Ottomans inherited from the Seljuk Turks and in which Turkish culture was not the predominant character in Islamic society, but it was fused into a common Islamic culture (Bata 2009: 164). As for the present, when we talk about "Learning a Foreign Language" then, Albanians usually only think of learning languages like English, German, French and other common European Languages. There is a very strong conviction which is embedded among Albanian Muslims that, Learning Arabic is also part of religious education.

## 2. A short historical overview

The Albanian Islamic Culture was widely emerged, especially after the embracing of the Islam by the Albanian peoples in the late fourteenth century. A language from which they gradually adopted its letters in order to write their Albanian language. Thus, the Language of the Qur'an took a very prestigious status into Albanians life. Traditional schools, in the Ottoman Empire, were the only educational institutions whose official education language was Turkish. As for Arabic grammar and morphology learning in those schools, it was for the purpose of accommodating religious books and as the main Islamic reference (Kaleshi 2012: 29). Therefore, the desired goal of teaching Arabic was not to teach the language itself, but rather to establish religious education through the language of the Qur'an. As for the Ottoman period, it can be studied in terms of teaching the Arabic language in two phases, the first in "The pre-establishment phase of official schools" (1299-1773 CE), and the second phase in "The phase of the official schools" (Kaleshi 2012: 187).

### 2.1. The pre-establishment phase of official schools" (1299-1773 CE)

The education language, during that period was arabic. However, the aim of teaching and learning Arabic was only to understand textbooks which were applied along that time. Also for right comprehension of the Main Islamic Sources from the Tafseer<sup>1</sup>, Hadiṭ<sup>2</sup> and Fiqh<sup>3</sup> of Islamic Religion. Learning Arabic depended on learning grammatical and morphological rules by memorizing the whole morphology books, such as: "Al-Amṭilah", "Binā'u", "Maṣṣūd", "Al-Shāfiyyah"<sup>4</sup> and syntactical books as: "Al-A'wāmil", "Izhār", "Al-kāfiyyah", "Molla Jāmi'u"<sup>5</sup> ...etc. The teaching methodology was to teach the aforementioned books and then learning them by heart.

This method was based on giving grammar first, then followed by some random examples and often avoiding from the linguistic context. These schools did not have an officially supported Curricula that time. Hence, the knowledge of the students about the content of these books was substantially limited by rules and explanations, most of them impractical. That is why they were learning information about the Arabic language, not the Arabic language itself. Therefore, teaching

<sup>1</sup> Qur'anic Commentary, interpretation and explanation.

<sup>2</sup> Sayings of Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>3</sup> Islamic jurisprudence.

<sup>4</sup> Textbooks of madrasas during the Ottoman Empire

<sup>5</sup> Textbooks of that time

the Arabic language at this phase, was more like it has been the teaching Latin and Greek to the West in ancient times.

## 2.2. The phase of official schools (1773-1923 CE)

At this phase, for the first time, official schools, at the level of high school, were established. Those schools were overseen by the <Academy of Sciences> (Ministry of Education) at a time when traditional schools, funded by endowments, continued to function based on the old curriculum. The teaching of Arabic, at these <New> Schools, took the place of supporting materials for teaching the Ottoman Turkish language beside the Persian language. The Arabic language has been taught in these <New> schools, within the framework of teaching Arabic grammatical rules in order to facilitate the study of Ottoman Turkish, which became a <Mixed>language with Turkish, Arabic and Persian elements, by enriching vocabulary, linguistic structures and syntax. It is easy to assess the reasons why the process of teaching Arabic failed at these schools, if we take under consideration the fact that the teachers weren't able to make a very easy dialog between them and Arabs at their era. Therefore, the situation of teaching Arabic in these <New> schools was not different and better from the education system that took place in traditional schools before them.

## 3. Searching for new curricula

Teaching Arabic in traditional schools remained the same as before, during the phase of the official schools, in which some individual efforts emerged and made successful steps in order to teach better Arabic Language. For instance, Haj Ibrahim Effendi, he was the founder of the Dar El Taalem<sup>6</sup> Elementary School in 1882 CE, who was known for his new methodology of teaching Arabic to the pupils of that school, who were between 11 and 14 years old. That's why the sultan and the government ordered to develop and implement the so-called "Teaching Arabic Language according to the methodology of Haji Ibrahim Effendi" which is based on an adequate full explanation of Arabic Grammatical rules for the students in order to write them in their notebooks. Thus, the adequate exercises will be conducted based on the student's explained rules. Also, in every class, students were involved to repeat the previous lessons, learn new grammatical rules and then memorizing them, in addition to pay attention at the skills of speaking and translating from Turkish to Arabic. However, this method did not gain overall popularity and remained an individual effort.

For the sake of truth, Arabic, at the time of Ottoman Empire, was taught at the highest levels. It is not surprisingly that a large number of Albanians wrote their books in Arabic (Kaleshi 2012: 30). At this case, it is worthy to mention some books of Albanians that were written in Arabic: Muderris Ali Effendi, Suzi, Neharī, Ashik Çelebi, Shemi, Behari, Mehmet Tahir Effendi, Haji Rustem Efendi Şhporta and a lot of others. Haji Ymer Lutfi Paçarizi, the most prominent writer who wrote a number of Religious books in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. Among the most important books of this author was the book called Ed-dāru'l-yetīm fī tafsīr alam. This, and other books, till these days, are kept in the International Archive of Kosovo.

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<sup>6</sup>"Education House"

#### 4. Teaching Arabic after the establishment of the Republic of Albania

Five hundred years after Ottoman rule, Albania was declared independent in the year 1912 as a result of the London Conference that ended the First Balkan War, and after the weakening of the Ottoman state in the Balkans; Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria declared war, and each country sought to move their borders over the rest of the empire's lands. Thus, Albania was invaded by Serbia from the north and by Greece from the south, which set the country to a patch of land around the southern coastal city of Vlora. Thus, the superpowers drew the borders of the current Albania, leaving more than half of the Albanian population outside the new country. The borders between Albania and its neighbors were drawn up in 1913 after the bulk of the Ottoman Empire's lands were dissolved, hence the new demarcation of the border left many Albanians out of Albania. Also, this group of population was divided between Serbia and Montenegro which before then included, what is known nowadays as the Republic of North Macedonia. Many Albanians sound themselves under the rule of the Serbian government. On the other hand, the revolt of the local Greeks in the south of the country led to the formation of an autonomous region for them within the borders of Albania. It is known that the Albanian language until the end of the Ottoman rule was written in Arabic letters and there are still manuscripts, books, and epitaphs that prove this bright truth.

#### 5. The oldest epitaph inscriptions in the Albanian lands were in Arabic

The oldest inscription on gravestones, revealed by Dr. Hasan Kaleshi, is at the mosque, found in the city of Monastery in the Republic of North Macedonia. According to the Vakouf-Namah of Kotchi Bey, it was written in the year 1435 (Kaleshi 2012: 33). Even today, there is an inscription at the Mosque of Emin Pasha in Prizren, and the inscription of this grave is as follows:

”صاحب الخيرات و الحسنات بريزريني طاهر باشازاده محمى أمين باشا يسر الله تعالى كل ما فى الدارين ما  
A man with good deeds and full of  
charities, Tahir Pashazade Mehmet Emin Pasha from Prizren, may Allah The Almighty  
be pleased to him in both Worlds and reward him with what he wants. The year one  
thousand two hundred and forty-seven 1247.

These various inscriptions on the gravestones, written in Arabic, are found throughout the Albanian lands, starting from the beginning of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Among other cultural heritages, written in Arabic and found in Albanian lands, there is also a procure authorization which reads as follows:

المدعوة ”شهد فى مجلس الشرع الشريف الرجالن العادلان محمود السيراج و محمد بن عثمان السراج و كلت المرأة  
اسمان بنت امير الرجل المدعو بعثمان بن مصطفى لطلب جفها الكائن فى نمة زوجها المدعو بسليمان الذى طلقها  
من قبل و لم تعط جفها من المهر و مقفة العدة و قيل الوكالة المشروحة و التزم بالقيام بامرها من المرافعة و  
و حرر ذلك فى اواخر جماد. المحاسمة حسب الحال توكيلا صحيحا شرعيا و قبولاً صريحاً مرعياً حرى ذلك  
الأخرة

شهود

على باشا - حسن بكزاد - على چلبى - الحاج محمد و غيرهم.”

“Attending the High-honored Sharia Council, are the two righteous men, Mahmud Siraj and Muhammad ibn Uthman As-Siraj, invited the woman called Ismahan bint<sup>7</sup> Emir-the man whose name is Uthman bin<sup>8</sup> Mustafa, to seek her dower as a pact with her husband called Suleyman, who divorced her before but did not give her the legitime dower and interruption of her waiting period after being divorced. In front of the Shariah judiciary, standing up, sentenced the order that, according to the situation, the final verdict to give her the legitime Shariatic compensation which she sincerely accepted. The verdict was issued and ordered around the end of the month Jumada-Al-Akhirah<sup>9</sup>. Witnesses: Ali Pasha, Hasan Begzadi, Ali Chelebi, Haj Muhammad and others (Kaleshi 2012: 50).

## 6. Teaching Arabic in Albania after the start of the communist system

After the end of the Second World War, Albania was ruled by the Communists. This system began to close all schools and traditional Katatib<sup>10</sup> everywhere in the country. This continued until the abolition of the communist system in 1991. Teaching and learning Arabic and the Islamic education, with the help of teachers from Kosovo, Macedonia and the Islamic world, began immediately after the demolition of that system. Nowadays, Arabic is taught in a large number of high schools everywhere in Albania and also at the University of Tirana.<sup>11</sup> Currently, Turkish foundations support the process of Islamic education and other general sciences, and also Arabic in every one of these schools and universities in Albania, with a diverse educational platform. Teaching Arabic Language in Kosovo, after the First World War

After the Ottoman empire ended its rule upon the Albanian lands, the superpowers drew the borders of the current Albania, leaving more than half of the Albanian population outside the new country. After the ending of the first world war, Albanian lands remain outside of Albania, under the conquest of the kingdom of Serbo-Croatia and Slovenia. Then, this kingdom was renamed in 1929, and its name became Yugoslavia, within which Kosovo remained as well. Besides the creation of the Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia and Slovenia, the Islamic Sheikdom was also reestablished. As mentioned above, many Albanians found themselves under the Serbian regime. In Kosovo’s early days, several types of Islamic schools were operating, where Arabic was taught, in addition to religious subjects (Vokri 1990: 190). Due to the absence of suitable schools, students had to study in private houses, in mosques or hospices, where they provided religious lessons and Arabic Language Lectures. The educational language at this phase, was Arabic, Turkish and Albanian, and those who used to work in these schools were the Imams, teachers and muftis (Vokri 1990: 190). After a short period of time, the Serbian army arrived in Kosovo, dropped the students and teachers out of their schools, and closed all of them. The fate of Albanians education in Macedonia, during the two world wars, was the same as in Kosovo. Teaching Arabic Language in Kosovo, after the Second World War

After the Second World War, in 1946, the Province of Kosovo was joined to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Sharia courts were closed in 1946, and other schools, where the pupil were

<sup>7</sup> Daughter of...

<sup>8</sup> Son of...

<sup>9</sup> Islamic month.

<sup>10</sup> Little traditional madrasas-schools.

<sup>11</sup> Capital of Albania.

learning Arabic and basic knowledges about the Qur'an, also were closed. Secret resistant actions were taken against these measures. As people continued to circulate Islamic books, and children were providing education in Mosques, some Sufi and Darvish orders of mysticism followed celebration of their occasions at home.

Since 1952, the School Alauddin has been established, which is an Islamic High School and had an important role in fields of Islamic Education for fifty years. It preserved the Islamic heritage and spreaded tolerant teachings of Islam between Muslims in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Sandzak and the rest of the Muslim areas in the Balkan Peninsula.

The Alaudin Madrasa-School, is considered to be a living model presenting a large number of Islamic Schools which were operating at the Balkans. In its beginnings, this school had the status of an Elementary School, but at 1962 it became a Secondary Islamic School. The period of learning and getting graduated was five years, later on it became four years. During this time of studying, students receive 25 academic subjects, and all the academic staff is qualified. So far, this madrasa has graduated 1, 100 students. During these four years, Arabic Language, except the other religious subjects, is taught, and during that period of studying, learning the Arabic language depends on learning syntactic and morphological rules.

In 1974-75, branch of Oriental Studies at the University of Pristina began its work, and this year marks the fortieth founding anniversary of this Department. Among the other universities of the Albanian lands, this was the only one. It is specialized in teaching of linguistics and literature of Arabic, Turkish and Persian, and also with a special focus on Arabic Language, its civilization role and the relation between it and the Islamic Civilization. This Department aims to provide for the students expanded basic information in specialization of scientific research, which would optimally give them the opportunity to perform their duties to prepare and specialize them generally, and also to achieve these goals, in the academic courses, it was taken into account for these researches to be based on Serious Scientific Foundations surrounding the fundamentals of the material about Arabic Language.

The duration of Bachelor studies at the Orientalistic Department is four years, during which the student must successfully pass all his/her obligations in order to be awarded a Diploma on Specific graduation<sup>12</sup> (License) in Oriental Studies.

The faculty of linguistics requires to be learned the Oriental Languages such as Arabic, Turkish and Persian. In the communist era, it was more popular to the Albanians to learn Arabic, due to the extensive economic and trade relation between Yugoslavia and the Arab Countries. This provided a large number of jobs in translation from Albanian into Arabic, but today the is no relationship between Kosovo and the others, so it has been paid less attention to the Arabic Language and became replaced by English or other European languages.

## **7. Teaching Arabic in Macedonia, after the Second World War**

The Republic of Macedonia<sup>13</sup> (It is a country located in the middle of the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe). It is one of the states which was part of Yugoslavia and left it, and in 1991

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<sup>12</sup> Qualification

declared its independence. After two Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913, the states of the Ottoman Empire dissolved in Europe, afterwards most of those Ottoman lands were divided between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia.

The Republic of Macedonia was part of the Ottoman Empire for almost five centuries. Approximately 33 is the percentage of declared Muslims nowadays. As it is known, Skopje during the Rule of the Ottoman Empire, was the capital of the Balkans, or in other words it was the center of the sultan. Of course, intense attention follows with the revival of the Islamic Rituals and Muslims education about their Religion.

In year 1440 the Madrasa Ishak Bey in Skopje, was established (Rexhepagiq 1970), later on this school was renamed and now is called The Great Madrasa Isa Bey, which was one of the largest schools in the Balkan Peninsula (Kaleshi 2012: 29). Evliya Çelebi at his Sayahatname says: the most famous madrasas were those of Sulltan Murat Han, Madrasa Jahja Pasha, Isa Pasha, Mustafa Pasha and Madrasa Karluzadeh.

But, after the desolation of the Ottoman Empire at the Balkan territories and the creation of the Serbia-Croatia and Slovenia kingdom, all Religious School, like these Madrasas, were closed. Just The Great Madrasa of Isa Bey continued operating till year 1945, but even this only school, at the period at the communism, got enclosed. All this, after the Second World War.

However, after forty years, (in 1984) this school resumed work. Even in this School, Arabic Language subjects, are taught alongside Religious subjects, as they are in all other Religious Schools in the Balkans. Like the Madrasa Alauddin in Pristina, also the Madrasa Isa Bey in Skopje, had an important role in Islamic Education during the past thirty-year period. Now, Arabic is taught in the Republic of North-Macedonia, even in the Faculty of Islamic Studies, which was established in year 1995.

### **Conclusion**

The process of teaching Arabic Language to Albanians throughout history, has gone through many difficult and critical situations. At the era of Ottoman rule, teaching Arabic to Albanians, was more productive and successful. Today, all academic and educational institutions, where Arabic Language is studied, are Religious institutions, except the Department of Oriental Studies which works within the State University of Pristina.

It is worth noting, that the religious schools – as mentioned above - are supported by charitable or governmental institutions from Islamic Countries. But, when it comes to Oriental Studies, unfortunately, there is not a single serious support. Even though, the professors of these Orientalistic fields, are exactly they who mostly contributed to the Arabic Language. One of whom is the translator of the Holy Quran, who, for the first time translated it completely into Albanian. Moreover, professors of this branch compiled books about teaching and learning the Arabic Language and translated several books of Arabic Literature in Albanian.

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<sup>13</sup> Now, North-Macedonia

Furthermore, a wide dictionary from Arabic into Albanian made of two volumes, has come out from the academic staff of this department. And lots of other various scientific and cultural activities.

Indeed, this department of the Oriental Studies, is in dire need of support by Academic Cadres from the Arab Universities to prepare and qualify students as better as possible.

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