

INTERTEXTUALITY OF PERSIAN AND ALBANIAN LITERATURE (*STUDY SAMPLE: QURAN NARRATIVE OF JUSUF AND ZULEJHA*)

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ABSTRACT

After accepting Islam, the Persians began receiving strong influences from Arabs, in all fields of knowledge, including the religious one. One of the indicators of this particular influence is, their early interest for the contribution to the story of Yusuf, originally told in a dedicated chapter in the Qur'an (surah 12). Persians have given numerous literary works on the subject. In Persian, this story is narrated in three forms: in verse (in mathnawi rhymed couplets), in prose, and in prose and verse combined. I think it would be sufficient in this paper, just to give a clearer idea about, when the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha started to be elaborated in the Persian literature and about the most prominent authors, who have undertaken such a task.

I will compare those Persian literary works– up to 30, authored by writers such as Ferdowsi, Jami, Khawari Shirazi, Balkhi, Umku Bukhari, al-Kharvi etc. – with literary works on the same theme, by Albanian authors such as Hafiz Ali Korça and Muhamed Kyçyku.

I will argue that, the interest and contribution of Persians to the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha has been great. One thing that deserves attention is the fact that, in relating the story of Yusuf, Persians have paid attention to the artistic and literary aspect of it, in contrast to the Arabic works, which mainly focus on the religious and moral aspect of the story.

KEYWORDS: Yusuf, Zulaikha, Persian Literature, Albanian Literature, Literary Influence

INTRODUCTION

After embracing Islam, the Persians began receiving strong influences from Arabs in all fields of knowledge including, of course, the religious one, as well as in literary creativity. One of the indicators of this particular influence is their early interest for and contribution to the story of Yusuf, originally told in a dedicated chapter in the Qur'an (surah 12). In this paper, besides a general evaluation of the story of Yusuf in the historical aspect, I will particularly try to give a clearer idea about, when the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha started to be elaborated in the Persian literature and about the most prominent authors, who have undertaken such a task. I will compare those Persian literary works– up to 30, authored by writers, such as Ferdowsi, Jami, Khawari Shirazi, Balhki, Umku Bukhari, Kharvi etc. – with literary works on the same theme by Albanian authors, such as Hafiz Ali Korça and Muhamed Kyçyku.

Persian-Albanian Literary Influences

Being in contact for centuries with the Oriental culture, through the Ottoman Empire, Albanian authors have borrowed themes, motives, narratives and characters from that culture and incorporated them into the Albanian literature. It should be pointed out that, at the time of the Ottoman Empire, the Albanian cultural elite was fairly acquainted with the

main Oriental languages: Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Moreover, the Ottoman literary tradition did not involve writing in one of these languages only, but rather was a mix of all three languages. In the book titled *Historia e shtetit, shoqërisë dhe qytetërimit osman* (A History of the Ottoman State, Society and Civilization) published by the Albanian Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization in 2009, it is stated that “after the conquest of Constantinople, the official and literary language used in sultan’s palace and in other cultural and artistic centers evolved due to the addition of words, idioms, expressions and long rhymed Arabic and Persian sentences, thus taking the form of a language of elites difficult to be understood by common people and quite distant to their speech. So, it wasn’t enough to fluently speak all three languages by themselves, in order to be able to read an Ottoman text.”¹

Indeed, in his *Fjalor i Orientalizmave* (A Dictionary of Oriental Loanwords in Albanian)², Tahir Dizdari has included 505 words of Persian origin used in Albanian³, although only about 270 have been included in *Fjalor i Gjuhës së Sotme Shqipe* (A Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian)⁴. Other authors, such as Norbert Jokl, Shaban Demiraj, Emil Lafe and Jusuf Shpuza⁵ have also written about the Persian linguistic influences on Albanian, pointing out the considerable influences to the lexicon of common Albanian speech.

Besides the linguistic influence, Prof. Shaban Sinani has also taken notice of literary influence of Persian literature on Albanian literature, pointing out correspondences between the Albanian and Persian epics.⁶ He examines Ferdowsi’s *Shahnama*, as a work which has influenced the Albanian epics in style and in its translation to Albanian, made according to the Albanian epic model.

Although, many other studies have been made on the linguistic influence of Persian, on Albanian⁷, unfortunately only a few have been made on the literary influence, which is of particular importance. I shall mention here a short study, made by Prof. Jorgo Buló “Naim Frashëri dhe poezia persiane” (Naim Frashëri and Persian Poetry) which examines Naim Frashëri’s *Tahayyulat* (Dreams) poem written in Persian, which has ensured him, a place in the Persian literature⁸. Besides this poem, Buló points out influences of Persian literary models and style in Naim Frashëri’s Albanian poetry, as in “*Bagëti e bujqësi*” (Herds and Crops), “*Lulet e verësë*” (The Summer Flowers) and other works. The Persian influence is also present in Sami Frashëri’s writings, as Prof. Gazmend Shpuza has more broadly written about.⁹

In the context of such influence of Persian literature on Albanian literature, I shall present the Qur’anic narrative of Yusuf’s story, taken as a theme in many works by Persian authors and Albanian ones as well.

¹ Group of authors, *Historia e shtetit, shoqërisë dhe qytetërimit osman* (vol. 2), Instituti Shqiptar i Mendimit dhe Qytetërimit Islam, Tiranë, p. 24.

² It was published by Instituti i Mendimit dhe Qytetërimit Islam as a single volume including 4406 articles.

³ Jašar Redžepagić, *Islamsko-persijska kultura i uticaj persiskog jezika u nas*, Belgrade, 1996, p. 10.

⁴ Emil Lafe, “Fondi i persizmave në shqipen e sotme dhe në zhvillimin historik të shqipes prej mesjetës e këndeje” *Lidhjet shqiptaro-iraniene* (studime të zgjedhura historike-kulturore), Fondacioni Kulturor “Sadi Shirazi”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 54.

⁵ See: *Lidhjet shqiptaro-iraniene* (studime të zgjedhura historike-kulturore), Fondacioni Kulturor “Sadi Shirazi”, Tiranë, 2010 & *Studime për Iranin në Shqipëri*, Ideart, Tiranë, 2010.

⁶ Shaban Sinani, “Eposi shqiptar dhe eposi pers: ngjashmëri e paralele”, *Studime për Iranin në Shqipëri*, Ideart, Tiranë, 2010, p. 244-270.

⁷ See: *Perla* journal, issues 1996/2 & 1999/1, which include a number of comparative in linguistics.

⁸ Jorgo Buló, “Naim Frashëri dhe poezia persiane”, *Perla* 1999/1, p. 57-60.

⁹ See: Gazmend Shpuza, *Bota iraniane në veprën e Sami Frashërit*, Onufri, Tiranë, 2004.

Yusuf's Story

The story of Yusuf which will be treated in this paper is of ancient origin. It involves many historical episodes full of surprises and various themes and motives. The historical aspect also involves the geographic one about the places where the story unfolds, their antiquity, the migration of people and characters from one place to another, etc. So the story of Yusuf can be evaluated and studied in two dimensions: historical and geographic.

According to the available sources Yusuf, peace be upon him, was from a lineage of prophets. He was the son of Ya'qub (Jacob), son of Ishaq (Isaac), son of Ibrahim (Abraham), peace be upon them all.¹⁰ They used to live in Harran, but later migrated to Shechem, or Sihem¹¹, in Canaan¹², today's Palestine.

Yusuf was born in 1745 B.C. in Harran and dies in 1635 B.C. in Egypt. These dates are found in Larousse Encyclopedia¹³ and in Sami Frashëri's Kamus¹⁴, but there are also statements that he was born in 1906¹⁵ B.C. If it is assumed that Yusuf has lived in Egypt during the rule of the Hyksos, the first version is more likely. Regarding his age, all sources agree that he lived 110 years.¹⁶ Yusuf was the most beloved son of his father. The reason for that was that Ya'qub saw in the little Yusuf signs that, he would become a chosen one and a great personality in human history,¹⁷ as it would happen indeed. According to the Bible however, the reason for Ya'qub's distinguished love for Yusuf was, due to the fact that, the later was born when his father was old.¹⁸ Because of his father's love for Yusuf, the latter's brothers became jealous of him and were driven to do him harm. They would wait for the moment to physically eliminate him. With this plan in mind they would continuously implore their father to let Yusuf go with them, promising him that they wouldn't let any harm touch him.¹⁹ After some attempts they persuaded their father to let Yusuf go with them to play or to herd the flock and there does the story begin for Yusuf. His brothers threw him into a well in a place near Dothan, north of Shechem, where the caravans to Egypt would pass.²⁰ According to some accounts Yusuf remained trapped in the well for

¹⁰ Abu Ja'far at-Tabari, *Tarikh at-Tabari – tarikh al-Umem wa al-muluk*, vol. I, 2nd ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, Beirut, 1998, p. 200; Ibn Athir, *Al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh*, vol. I, 6th ed., Dar al-kitabi al-Arabi, Beirut, p. 78; Enes Karić, *Semantika Kur'ana*, Bemust, Sarajevo, 1998, p. 513-530.

¹¹ *Bibla, Besëlidhja e vjetër dhe Besëlidhja e re*, translated and annotated by Dom Simon Filipaj, Ferizaj, 1994, Genesis, 12: 6.

¹² Canaan is an ancient land where first civilizations have appeared, comprising territories of ancient Syria and Palestine. The name is thought to have derived from Canaan, son of Ham, son of Noah. In Canaan dwelled Prophet Ya'qub and his family who at a certain historical moment migrated to Egypt where their descendants would face great persecution by the ruling Egyptians and would migrate again from Egypt under the leadership of Prophet Musa. After wandering for forty years in the desert they finally settled in Palestine which at that time consisted of the southeastern part of Canaan. Canaan was Phoenicia and its inhabitants were the Phoenicians. They were a Semitic people and spoke a language related to Arabic. (According to Sami Frashërit, *Kamus al-A'lam*, vol. V, İstanbul, 1896, p. 3900; also see: *Türkiye diyanet vakfi İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 23, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, İstanbul, 2001, p. 193-194).

¹³ Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire Universel du XIX, Siecle IX*, 1017 – cited by H. Dolu, p. 1.

¹⁴ Sami Frashëri, *Kamus al-A'lam*, vol. VI, İstanbul, 1889-1898, p. 4814.

¹⁵ Mevdudi, *Tefhimu'l Kur'an - Kur'anın Anlamı ve Tefsiri*, vol. 2, p. 436, İstanbul, 1997.

¹⁶ Bible, Genesis 50: 26; S. Frashëri, vol. VI, p. 4814.

¹⁷ *Kur'ani përkthim me komentim*, translated and annotated by H. Sherif Ahmeti, Kryesia e Bashkësisë Islame për RSS, Prishtinë, 1988, Jusuf: 6.

¹⁸ Bible, Genesis 37: 3; also see: Muhammed Reshid Rida, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. XII, 2nd ed., Dar al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, p. 268.

¹⁹ Qur'an, Jusuf: 11-12; There is also another opinion that Yusuf's brothers were jealous because their grandfather Ishaq had special love for Yusuf. See: Prof. Dr. Ekrem Sarıkcıoğlu, *Başlangıçtan Günümüze Dinler Tarihi*, 3rd ed. Isparta, 2000, p. 46.

²⁰ Bible, Genesis 37: 24.

three days until a caravan coming from Gilead and going to Egypt pulled him out.²¹ The traders in the caravan took Yusuf and sold him in Egypt for a low price. Yusuf was bought by Aziz²² or Potiphar²³, a minister in Egypt. According to the sources and to the events that would unfold, at that time Yusuf must have been 17-18 years old.²⁴ Another version is that he was 12 years old when he came first to Egypt.²⁵ However the first version is more likely. Yusuf stayed in the house of Aziz or Potiphar for about 2-3 years. Seeing that, he was a very honest person, his master entrusted him all household affairs. But Yusuf was also an extremely handsome lad and so the wife of his master fell in love with him.²⁶ But, after Yusuf rejected her offer, she ran a plot against him and had him imprisoned. But, thanks to his gift of interpreting dreams, by interpreting the king's dream, Yusuf was not only freed from prison, but he was also given great authority in Egypt, as the administrator of its economy. This fact is made evident by all historical documents and corresponds to the period of Hyksos rule.²⁷

Based on historical sources and various studies, we can conclude that, the story of Yusuf is a historical reality. The characters are real too. The most important among them is Yusuf.²⁸ In the story are also mentioned Ya'qub and Rachel, Yusuf's parents, that is, Yusuf's brothers who display different characters, Yusuf's sons Ephraim and Manasseh, Potiphar and his wife Zulaikha, women of Egypt, king's baker and cupbearer, the trader, etc. However the name Zulaikha is mentioned neither in the Bible nor in the Qur'an. So, it is not clear when and how her name started to appear. Some think that her name first appeared in the Talmud.²⁹ According to historians and Qur'an commentators, Zulaikha³⁰ was the wife of Aziz, a beautiful woman from a very rich family. She was the daughter of Taymus, the king of Maghreb.³¹ Although it's not known, when she was mentioned by the name Zulaikha, she is mentioned as Ra'ila in Tabari's Tarikh written in the third century, after the Hijra (9th-10th centuries A.D.). In the Islamic history books and Qur'an interpretations, she is consistently mentioned as Zulaikha, the wife of Yusuf.³² Since, we don't have other evidences about the name Zulaikha, we shall consider that, the wife of Aziz, although not mentioned by name in the Qur'an, was Zulaikha.

²¹ Mawdudi, Tefhimu'l Kur'an, vëll. II, İnsan Yayınları, İstanbul, 1997, p. 438.

²² Qur'an, Yusuf: 21.

²³ Bible, Genesis 37: 36.

²⁴ Genesis 37:2; also see: M. R. Rida., vol. XII, p. 268.

²⁵ Muhammed al-Wakil, Nadharat fi ahseni al-kisas, vol I, Dar al-Kalem, Damascus, ed-Dar ash-Shamiyah, Beirut, 1994, p. 307; At-Tabari, vol I, f. 441.

²⁶ Muhiddin Abdalhamid, Wa akhيران tazawwaja Jusufu min Zulaikha, Maktabat al-Khadamat al-Hadith, 1994, p. 33.

²⁷ İslam Ansiklopedisi, vol. XIII, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, İstanbul, 1986, p. 441-443.

²⁸ Dr. Mahmud al-Bostani, Dirasatun fenniyyatun fi kisasi al-Qur'an, Mujamma al-Buhuthi al-Islamiyyah, Mashhad, 1408h, p. 190; Sayyid Qutub, Fi Dhilal al-Qur'an, 11th ed., Dar ash-Shuruq, Beirut-Cairo, 1985, vol. IV, p. 1951-1952.

²⁹ Mawdudi, p. 448.

³⁰ The name Zulaikha originates from the stem Zulkha, a diminutive form which has the meanings: coy, coquettish, perfumed. The name Ra'ila (from Hebrew) has the same meaning. There is also an opinion that the name Zulaikha was given because of her deception to Potiphar. The famous Arabologist Ibn Mandhur in his major work Lisan al-Arab gives these meaning for the root Z-L-KH: lost (batil), impact and pain in the back, etc. See: Ibn Mandhur, Lisan al-Arab, vol. VI, Daru Ihyai at-Turathi al-Arabi & Muesseset at-Tarikhi al-Arabi, Beirut, 1997, p. 67-68, 2nd ed.; Also see: Teufik Muftić, Arapsko-Bosanski Rječnik, El-Kalem, Sarajevo, 1997, p. 598, 3rd ed. Dr. Ahmad Yusuf, among other meanings he gives for the name Zulaikha as an Egyptian name, says it means medicine, or healing of the heart. See: Dr. Ahmad Yusuf, Misru fi al-Qur'ani wa as-sunnati, Dar al-Maarif, p. 28-29.

³¹ According to Menşeyinden beri Yusuf Hikayesi ve Türk Edebiyatındaki Versiyonları (Ph.D. thesis), İstanbul, 1953, p. 9. Although it is stated here that Zulaikha was the daughter of the King of Maghreb, we cited the Bible above that Zulaikha-Asenath was the daughter of the Priest of Heliopolis. See Bible, Genesis 41: 45. Also see: Orhan Hançerlioğlu, Dünya İnançları Sözlüğü, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1993, p. 566, 2nd ed.

³² Ibn Mandhur, Lisanu al-Arab, vol. VI, Daru Ihyai at-Turathi al-Arabi & Muesseset at-Tarikhi al-Arabi, Beirut, 1997, p. 68.

It can't be excluded as a possibility that, the wife of Potiphar Asenath mentioned in the Bible was later named Zulaikha or Ra'ila.³³ This will remain an unsettled issue. However, what we can say for sure is that, Zulaikha not mentioned by name in the Qur'an and the Bible, is a real person, just like the other characters in the story of Yusuf. It could even be said that, she is only little less important than Yusuf.

Yusuf and Zulaikha in Persian Literature

As an ancient Indo-European people, Persians have engaged themselves in writing, since early times. Persian authors have written in prose and verse, whether the first works were in prose or verse remains an open issue.³⁴ However, the reputation of Persians in the world literature, for creating literary works, especially in verse, is indisputable. Theirs are great figures in the world literature, such as: Daqiqi, Ferdowsi, Saadi, Jami, Shirazi and many others. They have written in many different genres, with various themes. The content of their works generally consists of relation of historical events, description of the beauties of spring, appraisal of love, youth, flowers, wine, etc. So, we can say that Persian literature is characterized mainly by poetry, and mostly by lyrical one in it.³⁵

Persians were the first non-Arab people who embraced Islam. After that point they started receiving great influences by Arabs in all fields of knowledge including, of course, the religious one, namely the Islamic. One of the indicators of this particular influence is their early interest for and contribution to the story of Yusuf, originally told in a dedicated chapter in the Qur'an (surah 12), as we related above. Persians have given numerous literary works on the subject. In Persian, this story is narrated in three forms: in verse (in mathnawi rhymed couplets), in prose, and in prose and verse combined.³⁶ On the basis of these aspects, we can get a clearer idea about, when the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha started to be elaborated in the Persian literature, and who were the most prominent authors who took the subject.

Storey, one of the prominent historians of Persian literature, has put forth the idea that Ferdowsi (d. 1020), the author of the famous Shahnama³⁷ written in verse, is the first Persian author who wrote a poem about Yusuf and Zulaikha in Persian.³⁸ He wrote it in the mutekarib model, according to the model of Shahnama, offering in it realistic descriptions of people and events.³⁹ However, some historians of literature consider this second major work of him, so far from the characteristics of Shahnama that, they dispute his authorship altogether, attributing it to a Saljuk courtier from Heart, who dedicated the poem to Togan Shah Alparslan.⁴⁰ They hold that, compared to Shahnama, the poem is much weaker in language and style. However, other scholars explain the fact on account that, Ferdowsi wrote it in his old age, when he was

³³ The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. XI, Leiden, 2001, p. 353.

³⁴ Nerkez Smailagić, Leksikon Islama, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1990, p. 472.

³⁵ Sadek Hedajat, Tregime persiane, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1966, p. 5.

³⁶ Halide Dolu, Menşeyinden beri Yusuf Hikayesi ve Türk Edebiyatındaki Versiyonları (Doctorature thesis), İstanbul, 1953, p. 109.

³⁷ Epi Shahnama, "The Book of Kings" is Ferdowsi's most famous work. He finished it around 990 after working for twenty years on it. It contains some 50.000 couplets. It relates the history of Iran from the beginning to the Arab conquest. (Grup autorësh, Historia e Letërsisë Botërore, vol. I, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1987, p. 162; Also see: Iz persijske poezije, selected and adapted by Fehim Bajraktarević, Izdavačka Radna Organizacija "Rad", Beograd, 1985, p. 92).

³⁸ C. A. Storey, Persian, literature, vol. 5, p. 576-584; See also Dr. Ismail Ahmedi, Hafiz Ali Korça – Jeta dhe vepra, Logos-A, Skopje, 1999, p. 162; İskender Pala, Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü, Ötüken, İstanbul, 2000, p. 420.

³⁹ The fifteenth meter in Arabic poetry consisting of eight repetitions of the FU-U-LUN measure.

⁴⁰ Bećir Džaka, Istorija perzijske književnosti (od nastanka do kraja 15. vijeka), Naučnoistraživački institut "Ibn Sina", Sarajevo, 1997, p. 134.

also troubled by material concerns.⁴¹ The majority of them are of the opinion that, it belongs to Ferdowsi and the theme was not taken again by Persian poets for a long time after him. However, it remains disputable whether Yusuf and Zulaikha of Ferdowsi was the first poem, on the subject in Persian or it is preceded by poems of other authors, before him. Based on later studies, we would say that, it's not the first poem. Studies have revealed two other Persian authors, who have written poems about Yusuf and Zulaikha, before Ferdowsi. They are Abu Muayyad al-Balkhi and Bahtiyari. The conclusion is based on a manuscript by Ferdowsi, who himself names these two authors as the first, who have written poems on the theme of Yusuf and Zulaikha.⁴²

After Balkhi, Al-Bahtiyari and Firdwesi, a number of Persian authors would write poems about the story of Yusuf. Among them, we would mention Shihabaddin Umku Bukhari (d. 1150), Ruknaddin Masud Kharvi, also known as Mawlana Ruknaddin Masud b. Muhammad Imamzada, an author named Muhammad, who wrote his poem in the Turkish dialect of Crimea.⁴³

However, as the Persian author who wrote on the theme of Yusuf and Zulaikha, with more success than others, according to Persian literature historians, is Nuraddin Abdurrahman al-Jami (1414-1492), who surpassed Ferdowsi on the subject, with the power of his poetry, the richness of his expression and the historical description of the story.⁴⁴

Jami's Yusuf and Zulaikha is a Sufi poem of love, finished in 1483 and dedicated to Sultan Husayn Baykara.⁴⁵ The whole poem is written in Sufi symbolism, within the context of Sufi tradition, beauty, love and panegyric. It's an original hymn to ideal love.⁴⁶ Jami is considered as the last of the great Persian poets. He was born in Jam, in Herat province. He was a prolific scholar and talented writer, who wrote in all genres of classical poetry.⁴⁷

Another important work on the story of Yusuf in Persian is the one written around 200 years ago, by Khawari Shirazi, a famous Persian scholar. In his work titled Yusuf and Zulaikha – the best of stories, the author emphasizes the moral power of Yusuf, who withstood all provocations by Zulaikha. The story is related in a chronology, clearly influenced by the Qur'an narrative.

As these few names, we mentioned reveal, the interest for and contribution to the theme of Yusuf and Zulaikha, by Persian authors has been great. The most important aspect that should be emphasized is the fact that, in relating the story of Yusuf, Persians have paid attention to the artistic and literary aspect of it, in contrast to the Arabic works, which mainly focus on the religious and moral aspect of the story.

Other Persian Authors, who have written About the Story of Yusuf and Zulaikha through Other Themes, are

- Kremali Gademayari, wrote Vistan Zulaikhaya [From Vistani to Zulaikha], Tehran Shiveh, 1380;

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 137.

⁴² Dr. Amin Abdalmajid Badawi, *Al-Kissatu fi al-adabi al-farisi*, Dar en-Nahdat al-Arabiyyah, Beirut, 1981, p. 234.

⁴³ İskender Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, Ötüken, İstanbul, 2000, p. 420.

⁴⁴ Dr. Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça – Jeta dhe vepra*, Logos-A, Skopje, 1999, p. 164.

⁴⁵ For more on the poem see: Zeynep Korkmaz, "Hüseyin Baykara adına yazılmış Çağatayca Yūsuf ve Züleyhâ Mesnevisinin tanınmayan bir yazması ve eserin yazarı", *Türkoloji Dergisi*, III, 1, Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, Ankara, 1968, p. 7-48; Also see: B. Džaka, p. 430.

⁴⁶ Bećir Džaka, *Istorija perzijske književnosti (od nastanka do kraja 15. vijeka)*, Naučnoistraživački institut "Ibn Sina", Sarajevo, 1997, p. 431.

⁴⁷ Group of authors, *Historia e Letërsisë Botërore*, vol. I, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1987, p. 178.

- Inayatullah Shekibapur, wrote the poem Eshkakai Zulaikha – hakester arzuha [Tears of Zulaikha – melting of her desires], Tehran, 1371;
- Maryam Desgaip, wrote Halati Hadhrat Ya'qub wa Yusuf wa Zulaikha [The situation of Hadhrat Ya'qub, Yusuf and Zulaikha], Tehran, 1373;
- Ahmed Shehbazi, wrote Destani Shurungiz Yusuf wa Zulaikha [The intriguing and beautiful story of Yusuf and Zulaikha]; Mashhad, 1380;
- Jalal Settari, wrote Derdi ashki Zulaikha [Zulaikha's grief for love], Tehran/Tus, 1372;
- Abdalfettah Arap, wrote Sajdai Yusuf wa Zulaikha az zevaye ashk wa irfan [The praying mat of Yusuf and Zulaikha from the perspective of wisdom and love], Tehran/Sena, 1379.
- Persian authors who have written about Yusuf's story in prose are not few. Such works are found either as stories or as commentaries on the respective chapter from the Qur'an. The most famous are:
- Abu Naser Ahmed b. Ahmed b. Nasr Bukhari, wrote Anis al-muridin wa Rawdhat al-muhibbin, which includes, among others, a commentary on the surah Yusuf. It was written in Belh, in 1082.
- Muhammad Farahi (d. 1501) from Herat, has written the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha titled Tefsir-i sure-i Yusuf (Ahsen al-Kisas) etc.

As it can be seen from the few works that, we mentioned from the mountain of works in Persian, about the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha, the interest for and contribution to the story by Persian authors has been great. The poems on the theme number about 30 and the works written in prose are not few either.⁴⁸ But, besides the quantitative aspect, their quality is also impressive so that, authors in other languages have in many cases been influenced by Persian authors, besides the original source.

Yusuf and Zulaikha in Albanian Literature

In this, spirit can be explained in the coming of the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha, to the Albanian literature. A typical author in Muhamed Kyçyku, one of the bejtexhi poets, as well as Hafiz Ali Korça, an Islamic scholar and speaker of Oriental languages, who has also written a poem about Yusuf and Zulaikha in Albanian. Another poem was written by the famous poet Çajupi ("Zolejka"), however it should be noted that Kyçyku and Korça knew Persian and had access to the Persian literary corpus, in which the story is found in abundance.

Muhamet Çami was the first to write the poem Jusufi e Zulejhaja (dashuri përvëluese) (Yusuf and Zulaikha, a fervent love) in Albanian.⁴⁹ He also wrote other poems⁵⁰ in Albanian with Arabic script, as well as in Turkish and Arabic.⁵¹ These works in two major languages of the Orient, written by an Albanian poet raise the question of the cultural identity of

⁴⁸ Sa'id Arbab-Shirani says that "About a hundred versions have been written in Persian and Turkish literature on the story, of which fifty are Persian, twenty eight Turkish-Ottoman and six are Indian." See: "Shapes of a Myth: Literature Transformations of the Joseph Figure", diss., Princeton U, 1975, 29, 48, quoted by J. Stokes, p. 35-46.

⁴⁹ Muhamet Çami, Jusufi e Zulejhaja – Dashuri përvëluese, Shtëpia botuese vehtjake Hasan Tahsini, Tiranë, 1992, p. 5.

⁵⁰ To Osman Myderrizi is due the merit for a masterful transcription of Jusufi e Zulejhaja. He has also written the first article about the author and his poem at Buletini i Shkencave Shoqërore 2/1955.

⁵¹ Dhori Qiriazhi, Jusufi dhe Zelihaja, Perla 1/1999, p. 75.

his writings on which studies have little dwelled upon, so far.

Jusufi me Zelihanë a më e bukura e ngjarjeve (Yusuf and Zulaikha or the best of stories)⁵² is an original poem by Hafiz Ali Korça, which ensured him a place in the history of Albanian literature. This poem shows the true merit of the author and his skill in treating the same literary themes as famous Persian, Arab and Turkish classics did. The poem is made up by 3104 couplets.⁵³ The quatrain has been used in it, as by Khayam in Persian literature, Ahmad Shawki in Arabic literature and Nezimi, Muhamet Çami etc. in Albanian literature. Hafiz Ali Korça relates the story artistically while not departing much from the original inspiring concepts in the Qur'anic source.

Thanks to these poets, Yusuf and Zulaikha belong to the Albanian culture as much as to the overall Oriental culture, be it Arab, Persian or Turkish. It is important to point out that, Muhamet Çami-Kyçyku and Hafiz Ali Korça are the only authors in Albanian literature who have put forth full works on the story, based on the 12th chapter of the Qur'an, Surah Yusuf. This chapter, by the very Qur'anic expression, is the best of stories, so that's why these two authors took to elaborate on it. But besides the influence of the Qur'anic chapter, we can assume that they were also influenced by the Oriental literary corpus they were acquainted with, such as Persian, Arabian and Turkish literary traditions.

The poem about Yusuf and Zulaikha in Albanian literature is a topic treated earlier as well, but an exhaustive study has been lacking, because the poem elaborates on a Qur'anic and religious theme. Some schematic and unworthy evaluations have been made on such works. According to Mahmud Hysa, the presence of this Qur'anic story in Albanian literature was first pointed out by Ismail Ahmedi, who drew attention to its presence in our literature and its importance for our comparative studies.⁵⁴

The examination of the main aspect of these works and comparative studies, on Korça's Jusufi e Zelihaja and Çami-Kyçyku's Jusufi e Zulejhaja would be of interest, since apart from their moral and artistic value, through comparative studies these works, would also reveal the characteristics of the poetic erotica.

In conclusion, we can say that, this example shows the influence of Persian culture on Albanian culture has occurred intensely, among the Albanian bejtexhi poets, but they are also to be found in other aspects of material and spiritual life of Albanians.

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⁵² Hafiz Ali Korça Jusufi me Zelihanë a më e bukura e ngjarjeve (ahsen-ul-kasas), Shtypshkronja Elbasani, Elbasan, 1342-1923.

⁵³ Dr. I. Ahmedi, p. 167.

⁵⁴ Mahmud Hysa, *Alamiada Shqiptare I*, Logos-A, Skopje, 2000, p. 169.

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