

PERSIAN LANGUAGE AS VEHICLE OF ISLAMIC CULTURAL MEMORY IN OTTOMAN BOSNIA

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Öz

Bu çalışmada İslâm kültür ve medeniyetinin Balkanlara katkısı üzerinde durulacaktır. İslâm medeniyeti dairesinin tevarüs ettiği medeniyetler sentezi, Osmanlı fetihleri ve Osmanlı idaresi vasıtasıyla Bosna-Hersek'e de ulaşmıştır. İslâm ilim, felsefe ve sanatının zirve başarısına İran kökenli ilim ve sanat adamlarının katkısını da hatırlamak gerekir. Türkler de bilim, felsefe ve özellikle edebiyatta Farsların güçlü etkisi altında kalmışlardır. Bu da Bosna-Hersek kültüründe ve özellikle edebiyat geleneğinde iz bırakmıştır. Türk idaresi zamanında Türkçe, Arapça ve Farsça eserler meydana koyan Bosna-Hersek kökenli uzun bir müellif listesi bulunmaktadır. Bundan dolayı, bu çalışmada kültürel hafıza olarak Fars dilinde Boşnak edebiyat geleneğinin elyazmaları haznesine vurgu yapılacaktır. Farsça eserler diğer iki dile nazaran daha az sayıdadır, ancak içerik ve Fars kültür ve edebiyat geleneğinin etkisi açısından onları geçmektedir. Farsça, ya da İran'ın manevi geleneğinin etkisi altındaki edebiyat, tasavvuf damgası taşımaktadır. İslâm medeniyet dairesi zaman ve mekanı birleştirmiştir ve Osmanlı devleti Doğu ve Batıyı birleştiren kültürel-lisanî bir köprü olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *İslam Kültürü, Fars dili, Bosna, Osmanlı Devleti, kültürel hafıza*

Abstract

This work represents an attempt to point out, within the framework of Islamic culture and civilisation in the Balkans, at a segment of creativity of Bosnians in the Persian language and a segment influenced by Persian culture within the Bosnian territory. Islam is not only a religion but also a civilisation and culture, which by the means of Ottoman conquest and Ottoman Rule came to Bosnia and Herzegovina. As Ottomans were in science and philosophy, in literature especially, very much influenced by Persians, they also left a trace on the culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on literary tradition especially. Numerous manuscripts of different Persian works have also been preserved in manuscript collections all over Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is an indicator of interest (curiosity) Bosnians had for creativity in this language. Although there were mostly copies of poetry, since Persian enjoyed a reputation as a language of poetry in Bosnia, other fields were also represented, such as: dictionaries, handbooks for teaching Persian, grammars and other in this copies. The Islamic civilisation circle and the Ottoman Empire respectively, as representative of this circle in this area were cultural and historical and languages bridge that have spanned time and space, and joined the civilisation of the outermost East and the outermost West of the Ottoman Empire. This civilisation bridge has been lasting to this very day.

Key words: *Islamic Culture, Persian language, Bosnia, Ottoman Empire, cultural memory*

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It is a historical fact that for the excellent rise and development of Islamic science, philosophy and culture, the members of Persian culture were deserving, although the Persian culture is geographically remote to Bosnia. The famous representatives of that culture such as Zakariya Razi, Farabi, Ibn Sina, Biruni, Mawlawi, Sadi, Hafiz, and many others in the fields of philosophy, science and culture, in their scope of activity combined ancient tradition with Islamic culture of their epoch, and with their creative contributions synthesized the civilization of the antiquity and the new era respectively.

Thus Islam, not only as a religion but as a civilization and culture as well, mediated by Ottoman rule, reached Bosnia and Herzegovina and brought the influences of the Iranian civilization and culture. The Ottomans were, in sciences and philosophy, and particularly in literature, under the influence of Persian culture, which has also left trace in Bosnia-Herzegovina's culture, especially in literary tradition over the lengthy period of the Ottoman Empire, where, apart from Turkish, Arabic and Persian languages were also used. This is how we can explain the phenomenon that many authors in Bosnia and Herzegovina wrote poetry and fiction in the Ottoman, Arabic and Persian languages. There are many authors of Bosnian origins who wrote in Oriental languages during Ottoman rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this paper, my intention is to highlight Persian literary influence on the cultural heritage of the Bosniaks represented through their literary works in the Persian language, and in Turkish as well, which were written under a powerful influence of Persian classics. The literature in Persian in Bosnia and Herzegovina mainly bear a mark of *tasawwuf* which, again, is under a powerful influence of the Iranian spiritual tradition. All Ottoman poets, whether in the East or in the West of Empire, whether they wrote in Persian or Turkish, had their models among the Persian classic poets. Simply, that was a reflection of elegance, spirituality, trends in literary fashion of the highest style and expression.

Among the most prominent poets who are known to have written poetry in Persian are **Mahmud-pasha Adni**, who lived and wrote in the 15th century. Mahmud-pasha is one of the oldest diwan poets (d. 879/1474). He was of Greek origin, from Novo Brdo close to Kruševac. This dignitary went to Istanbul for education as a boy. He started his education in Edirne, and then continued it in Istanbul. He was a part of the retinue of prince Mehmed II, and when the latter became a sultan (1451) he started his career: from the janissary aga, Rumeli kazasker, Rumeli beylerbey to the position of the vizier. He participated in all the major battles of the time while serving at the court. He was a noted writer and a culture and education protagonist. He was a learned vizier, popular and respected statesman, extremely capable military leader, maecenas, active

protagonist of the cultured life, but also a first poet among the grand viziers of the Ottoman Empire who wrote under the mahlas Adni (Edenic, paradisiacal). He spoke and wrote in all the three languages of the Islamic culture (Arabic, Turkish, Persian), he was a successful poet and stylist. In the opinion of historians and tezkir authors, his most perfect poems were in Persian. In his Persian *Diwan*, which was not alphabetically ordered, there are 47 gazels and 21 mufreds, 3 qasidas, 16 muammas, 7 rubais and some articles in prosis.²

The greatest Bosniak poet in the Ottoman-Turkish literature at the end of the 16th century was a **Dervish-pasha Bayazidaga-zade** from Mostar. Dervīsh-pasha has a reputation of an extremely talented lyrical poet among the court dignitaries and belongs to the important historical personages in the history of Bosnia of the 16th century. He was born in Mostar, and in his early age he reached the court in Istanbul, where he continued his education and career: he was a main falconer, adviser, deputy in Egra (Erlau, Hungary), Bosnian beylerbey (1599 and 1602). According to some chroniclers (Pechevi, Selaniki) he was an embodiment of the morality, honour, wisdom and courage. He participated in many battles and was killed during a battle at Csepel (Hungary) in 1603. In his city, Mostar, he established pious endowments.

Among others, his teacher was the famous Ahmed Sūdī, who helped him to learn excellent Persian and get well-acquainted with the Persian poetry. On the order of Sultan Murat III, he translated from Persian into Turkish the ethical-mystic epic *Sehā-nāme* by the poet Binnā'ī and entitled it *Murād-nāme* in honour of the Sultan. Bajazidaga-zade's following of Persian literature is told of in the manuscripts he endowed to the waqf of his medresa library he built in Mostar. Among them are Rumi's *Masnawī*, Hafīz's *Dīwān*, Sadi's *Gulistān*, the Commentary on Sadi's *Gulistān* by Sūdī Bosnewī and others, all of them selected works of Persian classical literature. Fewzī Mostārī explicitly said that he had written one *Diwan* in Turkish and one *Diwan* in Persian. To date they have not been discovered.³

From other works in Persian written by Dervīsh-pasha, we encounter a shorter mathnawi *Qasīda sūriyya* from the work *Zubda al-aṣ'ār* written in 1582. upon the event of the circumcision of prince Mehmed.⁴ His gazel in Persian that he wrote on the eve of his death is also known, as well as two rubais⁵ at the end

² Šabanović, 1973, pp. 39-43; Stavrides, 2001.

³ Mostarac, 1973, pp. 117-118; Bašagić, 1986, pp. 65-80; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 116-129.

⁴ Toska, 1999, pp. 293-358.

⁵ Bašagić, 1986, p. 76

of the waqfnama for the mosque he built in his hometown Mostar (adjacent to the mosque he built a mekteb, a medresa and a library).⁶

Among the more prominent Bosniak authors in Persian, these poets should be mentioned:

Hasan Ziyā'ī Chelebī or **Ziyā'ī Mostārī**, is one of the earliest and most talented diwan poets of the subtle artistic poetics of the 16th century. The title Chelebi in his name indicates a highly educated person, and it is known that he was a very gifted calligrapher, and knew the three important languages of the Islamic culture, as well as being a gifted poet. Hasan Ziya'i died of plague in 993/1585 in Mostar.⁷ Ziya'i's Diwan, one of the larger Bosniak diwans (641 poems), is marked by diverse poetic forms and fulfills high aesthetic criteria. There is a qasida (consisting of 27 bayts), but there are also 14 gazels and a qit'a in Persian in the Diwan.

Muhammed Karamusa-zade Nihādī, muderis, lived and died in Sarajevo in 996/1587,⁸ where he was educated and where he worked as is known through a note in a mecmua of the Chronicle of Muhamed Enveri Kadić. According to this note Mehmed Handžić established that he was a muderris and that he died in 996/1587. This is confirmed by another note from another Sarajevo mecmua: *Karamusa-zade Muhammed-efendi eṣ-ṣehir bi Nihadi es-Sarayi*. This poet was mentioned as the author of the two tarih inscriptions on the Mehmed-pasha Sokolović bridge (1571 and 1577/8) in the *Seyahatname* by Evliya Chelebi, in the part from 1664 when he mentions Višegrad. The only known manuscript of Nihadi's *Diwan* is in Berlin, and belonged to a collection of a Prussian ambassador in Istanbul, Von Ditz, who was an orientalist and a well known collector of manuscripts. The *Diwan* contains 94 gazels, eight of which are in Persian.

Dervis-pasha's son **Ahmed-bey** (died 1641) was also a poet and he wrote in Turkish and Persian under his poetic name **Sabūhī**. There is little information about this poet. Of his poetry, in *Bulbulistan* Fewzi says that his poems are powerful and beautiful, full of allegories and a deeper sense.⁹

Ahmed Bosnewī Tālib (died 1674) is also known as Suleymāniyelī Ahmed-efendi since he lived in proximity to the Suleymaniye Mosque. He was born in Bosnia, where he obtained the elementary education, and after that he continued his education in Istanbul. He was in the retinue of Kara Fadil Ahmed-

⁶ See: Hasandedić, 1980.

⁷ Bašagić, 1986, p. 48; Šabanović, 1973 pp. 72-76; *Hasan Ziyā'ī*, 2002.

⁸ Hammer-Purgstall, 1837, II, pp. 549-50; Handžić, 1935, pp. 534-537; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 77-81; Gačanin, 2012, pp. 281-300.

⁹ Mostarac, 1973, pp. 118-119; Bašagić, 1986, pp. 120-121; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 242-243.

pasha, and after that in the retinue of Ahmed-pasha Köprulu-zade. Later, he advanced in his career and became a khwajagan (higher administrative position of the royal Diwan). After that, he was promoted to a position of the reisul-kuttab (Diwan secretary) and he died while doing his service in 1085/1674-5.. He wrote *Diwan*, where among the poems in Arabic and Turkish, there are 5 gazels and 6 qita's in Persian. In his gazels he speaks about his spiritual streaming. As for his poetry in Persian, it is written in a simple and elegant language.¹⁰

Zekeriyyā b. Abdullāh Sukkerī was born in Sarajevo, where he spent the larger part of his life and then moved to Istanbul. He was a great stylist, calligrapher, very eloquent and elegant, which eased his way to the retinue of Ahmed-pasha Chuprilic, and later helped him become a secretary of the Royal Diwan, where he worked until his death in 1097/1686. He was a member of the Mewlawi tariqat. His *Diwan* contains a *saqinama* in Persian in the *Masnawi* form, in which he makes variations to the famous Hafiz's bayt: *Come on wine-bearer, give the cup to me*, and two riddles and two tarihs in Persian.¹¹

Mehmed Fewzī was from Bosnia. According to the tezkire of Şaykī and Şafā'ī, but also according to the information given by the poet himself in his *Diwan*, Mehmed Fevzī was from Bosnia, and Sarajevo more specifically. He was born in 1048/1638. During his early youth he went to Istanbul and lived in Üsküdaru. After his formal education, he was working as a scribe in the court office for a long time. On the basis of an elegy, it is known that the members of his family died of plague and that the only family member who survived was his little son who was 17 months old. Also, he participated in the military march to Chehrin in 1678. He died after the campaign on Chirgin, after 1678. He wrote a *Diwan*, which, among other, contains 6 gazels, 6 rubais, and a qit'a in Persian.¹²

Ahmed Mostārī Rushdī, known as **Sahhāf**, was born in 1047/1637 in Mostar. While still a boy, he came to Istanbul where he became one of the court pages ('ağami ôġlan). He was a mudaris, and later withdrew from the public service and managed a bookshop. Rushdī gained a reputation of a gifted poet, with the emphasized philosophical imagination and Sufi symbolism.¹³ Rushdī Sahhaf died in 1699/1700.¹⁴ He wrote a *Diwan*, in which there are three gazels and a qit'a in Persian among other poetical forms.

¹⁰ Bašagić, 1986, p. 131; Handžić, 1999, p. 88; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 340-341; Gačanin, 2009.

¹¹ Bašagić, 1986, pp. 141-142; Šabanović, 1973, p. 367; Erol, 1994; Gačanin 2004, pp. 149-163.

¹² Bašagić, 1986, pp. 129-130; Handžić 1999, p.54; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 338-339; Kaplan, 2008.

¹³ Mostarac, 1973, p. 122.

¹⁴ Bašagić, 1986, pp. 155-159; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 385-389; Ekici, 2006.

Abdullāh Salāhuddīn Bosnewī emphasized his Bosnian origins in his name, and his poetic name is Salāhī, but he regularly added Ushshaki, since he was a shaykh of the ushshaki tariqa. He was born in Sarajevo in 1117/1717. His father hajji Muhamed Abdulaziz-bey was from Sarajevo and, among other cities, he served in Kastoriya (Kesriye, Bitola region) where Salahi was born in 1117/1717. He received his elementary education in Kastorija, while he obtained higher education in Istanbul. Salahi returns to Bosnia when Hekimoğlu Ali-pasha was appointed as a governor of Bosnia. He was a participant of the battle between the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1737 close to Banja Luka. He worked in public service, and then with vezier's permission withdrew from it and turned to the spiritual way and scholarly work. Tāhir-aga Tekya gave him *irshad* for the sheikh of ushaqi's tariqat. He died in 1782.¹⁵ Mehmet Akkuş wrote a study on this scholar, where he gives information from the author's notes on himself in his works, and from the Vassaf's work *Sefine-i Evliyā*. Vassaf names Salāhī an Ottoman Muhyiddin Arabi, because of his sufi education and familiarity with the teachings on the Unity of Being. He wrote a large number of verses in Persian, and among others, 33 nats.

Haji **Mustafā Bosnewī Mukhlisī** was born in the end of the 17th century in Gornji Vakuf. This author was very educated, and spoke and wrote in all three Oriental languages. He was a qadī, traveller, diplomat and a poet. It is known that he took part in the battle near Banja Luka in 1737. He died in his birthplace, Gornji Vakuf, after 1750. Mukhlisi wrote in all the three languages, and a poem of his is known for alternate verses in Arabic, Turkish and Persian¹⁶. This poem is known as a panegyric to Ali-pasha for his victory at Banja Luka.¹⁷ Also, his mufred written upon the famous Hafiz's verse was found, as well as a few verses of a qasida in Persian.

Ahmed Akovalizade Hātem was a nakshibandi sheikh. It is not known where he was born and where he grew up. It is only known that he was educated in Istanbul. He spent some time in Misr and Hijaz, where he received *irshad* from the sheikh Ahmed Jurjani for nakshibandi tarikat. He was appointed a qadi in 1160/1754 in Yenişehir (Larissa, Greece) where he died the same year. Sheikh Hatem was an erudite - mufessir, fāqih, philologist, mathematician, musicologist, an excellent calligrapher and a poet. He left a small diwan in Persian, among other scholar and literary works.¹⁸

¹⁵ Akkuş, 1998.

¹⁶ Kadić, VI, 162 (part two).

¹⁷ Handžić, 1999, pp. 49-51; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 453-46; Mušić, 1973, pp. 89-119.

¹⁸ Handžić, 1999, pp. 12-14; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 467-469; Gačanin, 2011b; Gačanin, 2011a.

There is a number of poets who are said to have written poetry in Persian, in shorter or longer poetry forms, but to date only fragments of their poetic opus have been found, dispersed over poetry collections. In some cases there is an evidence that they wrote in Persian, but there are no further information on this. Apart from the mentioned poets, there are other names too (but the list remains open): **Muhammed Chaki Arshi** (died 1571), **Vahdeti** from Dobrun near Vishegrad (died 1571), **Tewakkulī-dede Saraylī** (17th century), **sheik Huseyn Lāmekānī** (died 1625), **Hasan Kāfī Aqhisārī** (died 1615), **Husrev-pasha** (died 1630), **Ali-bey Pasha-zade Wusletī** (died 1688), **Ahmed Yusrī** (died 1693/94), **Mustafa Ledunnī** (died 1720/21), **Muhammed Nerkesī Saraylī** (the 17th century) whose poems in Persian are simpler and more understandable than the ones in Turkish, which he wrote in the fashion of his time – non-classical and affected, **Mustafa Eyyubī** or **Sheik Yūyo** (died 1707) one of the most fruitful, prominent Bosniak writers and the most exquisite sons of Herzegovina, **Reshīd Mehmed Bosnewī** (the 17th century), **Nābī Tuzlewī** from Tuzla (the 17th century), **Osman Shehdī** (died 1769), **Abdullah Salahuddin Salahi** (died 1782), **Muhammed Shākir Muīd-zade** (u. 1858), **Sālih Sidqī Muvekkīt** (died 1888) and others.¹⁹

The last great representative of the Ottoman literature in Bosnia is **Sheik Fewzī Mostārī** (died 1747). The overall opus bears a strong mark of the teaching of alaluddin Rumi and of the Mawlawī dervish order. He is the only Bosniak who wrote an independent literary work *Bulbulistan* in Persian in 1739, and which has been preserved to date.²⁰ *Bulbulistūn* is a mystic-didactic work written in prose, interwoven with verses in which the writer makes conclusions or sums up his tales in prose or inserts an occasional aphorism.²¹ The work was written according to the model of similar works of classical Persian and Ottoman literature (*Baharistān* by Jami; *Bustān* and *Gulistān*, ethical-didactic works by Sadi; *Nigaristān* by Ibn Kamal and *Sunbulistān* by Sheik Shujā'a). About the uncertainty of life and inevitability of destiny, he in *Bulbulistān*, among other things, says:

By all means you shall live to what is written down

*You can take out nothing even if you had Plato's wisdom*²²

Certain Bosnian authors became famous as commentators of Persian classics. Undoubtedly, one of the best connoisseurs of Persian classics and the

¹⁹ See: Bašagić, 1931; Handžić, 1933; Šabanović, 1973; Balić, 1973.

²⁰ Manuscripts: Zagreb, HAZU The Oriental Collection, No 6, 2 (6-II) fol. 9b-56b, copied by Mustafa b. Salih of Mostar (1163/1750); Bratislava, University Library TG 14, No 595.

²¹ Handžić, 1933 p. 61; Šabanović, 1973, pp. 449-452; Mostarac 1973.

²² Mostari, 1973, p. 85.

transposing of their ideas, poetic forms, motifs and themes of the Persian mythology and literature, and the constructions of the Persian language itself, was a Bosniak **Ahmed Sūdī** of Čajniče (the 16th century). There is no important work in the East or the West about Ottoman-Turkish science and literature where this scholar is not mentioned, nor is there a work where a complete review of his life and work is given. Sudi enriched Ottoman-Turkish scholarly literature with his commentaries on the most relevant works of Persian classical literature.²³ He wrote commentaries on Hafiz's *Diwan*, on Sadi's *Bustan*²⁴ and *Gulistan*²⁵ and on *Mesnewi* by Jalaluddin Rumi, he translated some Arabic grammar works, and glossed one philosophic work.

These classics were interpreted by other Ottoman scientists, such as Lami, Sururi, Ibn Seyyid Ali, Kafi, and especially Shem`ī Mustafa of Prizren, but Sudi did not follow their examples, he would often dispute them, even bitterly attack them. It is exactly because of his independent understanding that his commentaries on Persian classics have special relevance. His originality expressed itself in the interpretation of Hafiz, Persian greatest lyric poet (died 1389). Europe's best editions of Hafiz are based on his review and commentary. His works, by their original methodology approach and values, outdo other works of this kind.

Apart from this author, 360 couplets of Rumi's *Masnawi* were commented on by the famous mystic `Abdullah **Bosnewi** (died 1644) in Turkish, also in *Masnawi* verses, so that his versed book – commentary contains about 400 manuscript pages.

As commentators on Persian-Turkish Dictionary *Tukhfe-i Shāhidī*, the most frequently commented on dictionary of that kind in Oriental literature in general, by Ibrahim Shāhidī (1470-1550) are also Bosniaks **Ali Zekī-efendi** called **Kimyāger** (died 1711), a known poet in the Turkish language, who had no equal in writing riddles and tarihs/chronograms, and **Mustafa Eyyubī – Sheikh Yuyo**.

These several names may serve only as an illustration that these works were copied and lectured on, read and studied for centuries, from age to age, generation after generation. Quotation of all known Bosnian scribes, even of Persian works only, would require a lot of time and would be a lengthy list of names from different parts of BiH, and from various fields and periods.

²³ Šabanović, 1973, pp. 89-95.

²⁴ Karatay, TYK II, 2222-2225.

²⁵ Karatay, TYK II, 2210.

Persian Language as Vehicle of Cultural Memory in Ottoman Bosnia

It is known that a large number of manuscripts disappeared in the ravages of wars and other catastrophes, or simply decayed with time, or due to human negligence, but manuscripts which have been preserved to date tell of BiH people's interest in written works. Manuscripts, books written by the industrious ones, either for own needs or to order for others, but always with a wish to be read and used, to outlive their authors or scribes, to last.

This overview has been written with a wish to remind the academic public of the Bosniaks who wrote in the Persian language, either as authors, commentators, scribes, or simply lovers of the written work in the Persian language. For us, every mention of them highlights the treasures created over centuries of Islamic culture in the Balkans, in Bosnia as a part of that geographic area especially.

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