

THE INFLUENCE OF FRIEDRICH SCHILLER'S WORKS ON ALBANIAN AUTHORS

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Introduction

Albania, as it is already known, is a small country that won its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, after suffering for almost 500 years under Turkish rule. Throughout this period, Albanians, in addition to the wars for liberation, have also fought and worked for their cultural development. The new ideas which were spreading in Europe and beyond, were not allowed in the land of the eagles, and this is probably the main reason of these people's inferiority over the centuries. The Albanian language was not allowed to be written and those who used it were punished, books in the Albanian language were not allowed to be printed by both the Ottoman regime and the Greek Church of Istanbul (Patriarchate).

In spite of this repression, against the educated Albanian individuals, the Illuminist ideas began to spread in the Albanian language, through writings as well as translations of world authors, among whom is F. Schiller, one of the most famous writers of the world literature. In Albania, after Shakespeare, this author became one of the most famous and beloved poets for the Albanian youth.

For the first time in the Albanian press, the name of F. Schiller is mentioned in 1897, in the magazine named "Albania" which was published in Bucharest, Romania. Here, where there was a colony of Albanians, in this magazine was published an article dedicated to the Schiller's life and about the author are known only his initials R. N.¹

In Albanian press we find Schiller's name for the second time after five years, in 1902, in the magazine named "Albania" which used to be published in London. In July of the same year, was published the Schiller's poem "Mirë se vjen pranverë e bukur – Welcome beautiful spring" brought in prose in Albanian language, but unfortunately the name of the translator is not known².

In November 1905, the same magazine "Albania" publishes an article titled "Rrota e jetës – The wheel of life Schiller 1805", author of which is Faik Konica. In this article which was subsidized by Balhausplatz, gives a distorted image of the prominent writer, who is called "rebel against society", but this, according to the author S. Luarasi, comes because Faik Konica was serving in the monarchy of the Habsburgs and could not come out against them³.

As it can be seen, these articles have been published in Albanian language magazines which used to be published abroad. The poem "Lamtumira e Hektorit – Farewell to Hector" was translated in Albania which contains the data: Shkodër, 18.10.1915" and translated by Hil Mosi⁴. Even though, this poem was translated in Albania, again it was published abroad in the magazine named "Kalendari kombiar" of Sofia, in 1916.

Later on, in the magazine named "Djalëria", which belonged to the students who used to study in Vienna, in number 20 of the year 1920 we read the poem "Shetitja -Walk" written by Schiller, and brought in a perfect way in Albanian language by Jani Basho. The same magazine, in the number 17 of the year 1922, has published "Kanga e kumbonës – The bell song", translated in Albanian language by doctor Kristo Maloki in Graz, who used to write under the nickname Lepeteni⁵.

The translator Hil Mosi since 1915 brought in Albanian language the abbreviated version of the drama "Cubat - Thieves", which he adapted according to the Albanian circumstances. This drama, titled "Cubat" turns the characters into Albanian protagonists. Thus, Karl Mori is now the son of an Albanian leader, who fights against his brother who has joined the Turks⁶.

¹ Skënder Luarasi, Shileri në Shqipëri, te Nëntori, No. 5, maj 1960. pg. 170.

² Ibid to footnote 1. pg. 170.

³ Ibid. Pg. 170-171.

⁴ Ibid. Pg. 171.

⁵ Ibid. Pg. 171.

⁶ Niko Vangjeli. Drita, No. 44, 14 October 1984, pg. 14.

From Schiller's plays, the first completed translation is "Wilhelm Tell", translated by Skënder Luarasi in 1931 and was published in the magazine "Minerva"⁷. The aim of this translation was the patriotic, educational and cultural education of students". This play was published in Tirana in 1934, by the printing house "Gutenberg", whereas after a year and a half, in 1936 it was republished in Durrës, by "Stamles" which included a group of students. The reprint in Durrës was made in five thousand copies, which were sold in a very short time.

Translation and publication of this drama written by Schiller in Albanian language echoed in the Albanian press of that time. Hence, the editorial board of the magazine "Flaka", of the youth of Korça, in June 1935 in the main article among other things consists the following:

"Our poor literature is now enriched with a perfect translation of a classic work from the best of German literature such as "Wilhelm Tell. ... this is a masterpiece where freedom and human rights are protected, which are as old as the human existence itself"⁸.

The newspaper "Illyria" dated 15 July 1934, writes the following: " We also have translators who are skilled and diligent workers, who have done translation of difficult masterpieces. At the top of them is Skënder Luarasi with works of Schiller "Sakuntala of Kalidasa", "Wilhelm Tell", and "Novels" of Oscar Wilde ..."⁹.

The newspaper " Demokratia" dated: 23 September 1934, publishes an article in regards to the translation of the drama of Wilhelm Tell, whereas among other things, he writes the following: " ... Mr. Skënder Luarasi has managed to translate this masterpiece so beautifully with all its details, which teaches the youth to love and defend the freedom..."¹⁰.

Regarding the echo of the drama Wilhelm Tell in Albania, the translator Skënder Luarasi himself has preserved documents of the time, where he gives us a very significant fact. He states as in the following: "With the exception of the clerical press in Shkodra, all other Albanian notebooks welcomed the publication of "Wilhelm Tell" in Albanian language with a great joy"¹¹.

Translation of the work "Wilhelm Tell" by Skënder Luarasi was so perfect that, according to the newspaper "Besa", dated 27 March 1935, even the German Academy in Munich also decorated the translator with a silver medal. The newspaper has published an article titled "Çuajtja e letrarit shqiptar – Achievement of the Albanian literature" where it is written: "We are informed that the German Academy in Munich confirmed the Albanian translator professor. Skënder Luarasi the silver medal of the German Academy for his translation of the Work: Wilhelm Tell" by Friedrich Schiller"¹².

After the publication of the drama "Wilhelm Tell" , the same was introduced in school's curriculum, whereas special parts of this drama were introduced on the stage and performed in dormitory theaters, especially the apple part, that of the narrow street and the death of Atinghausen. The following verses of this work: *Stay close to the faithful homeland, and conquer it with all of your heart, And the old one collapses, times are changing, A new life is flourishing in ruins.* Such were given to the students at topics in order to write Essays. These verses have had a great impact on the Albanian youth, as one of them, the national hero Qemal Stafa, writes as follows: "Golden words, words full of meaning, many years ago have flowed fluently from the pen of a great idealist, Schiller, whose soul, eager for new things, among which, the first place takes the freedom of people ... Schiller had understood the old. We have also understood..."¹³

Regarding the draft for these verses, the translator Skënder Luarasi was invited by the Director to his office and was reprimanded for his revolutionary ideas, but he replied: "I say what I feel and think and no one has the right to impose himself on me, especially you Mr. Director, since you are here only to maintain the discipline"¹⁴.

⁷ Albania. No. 54, dated March 7th 2006, pg. 20 – 21.

⁸ Skënder Luarasi, Schiler in Albania, te Nëntori, No. 5, May 1960. Pg. 171.

⁹ Albania. No.53, dated March 5th 2006, pg.18.

¹⁰ Ibid, pg.18.

¹¹ Skënder Luarasi, Schiler in Albania, te Nëntori, No. 5, May 1960. Pg. 172.

¹² Albania. No.53, dated March 5th 2006, pg.18.

¹³ Niko Vangjeli. Drita, No. 44, 14 Ocotber 1984, pg. 14.

¹⁴ Rilindja, No. 18, dated 5 May 1993, pg. 8.

An interesting fact is that the drama of "Wilhelm Tell" was one of the most favorite works for Migjen, (Milosh Gjergj Nikolla) the poet of Albanian population, who mainly underlined the expressions that mobilized the population against the Tyrants such as: "*The sign of fire will continue lighting, and Tyrant's queues will become ashes; Even if the King violates our rights, we can live among the mountains without a king, we want to live free as our ancestors were, or we better die than live as slaves*"¹⁵.

The drama "Wilhelm Tell", translated by Skënder Luarasi, was republished in 1936 and was included in high schools curriculum. Whereas, after the Second World War it has been republished in 1962, 1975, 2004.

Another article on the drama "Wilhelm Tell" was published even in the newspaper "Kombi" of Vlora, in March 1938. Here, the author does not mention the name of the translator due to political reasons, as he had volunteered in the Spanish War, but still closes his article with the words: "Many tribes and people who sadly suffer under the hooves of tyrants are waiting for the Tell's arrow"¹⁶.

After the occupation of Albania by fascist Italy, in the newspaper "Little Tomor", on May 10, 1943, a student wrote: "The Albanian world knows Schiller from the translation of his works into Albanian. "His famous drama 'Wilhelm Tell', which was given to us Albanians with an excellent translation by a teacher of our language, has captured everyone's heart." Also, in Albanian language were translated in prose two ballads of Schiller, apparently from Italian language: "Gjahtari i Alpeve – The Hunter of the Alps"¹⁷.

During the war, parts of this drama were played in the areas liberated by the occupiers and attempts were made that fragments of it to be played in Tirana prison in 1942, but "fragments of this major work were organized as a theatrical performance condensed within the limitations of the prison ", says the director Milto Kutali¹⁸.

As mentioned above, special parts of this drama were staged in the dormitory theaters in Shkodra, Vlora. But even during the Italian occupation, attempts were made to put this drama on stage. Thus, at the end of 1942, the high school students of Tirana wanted to put on stage "Wilhelm Tell", but at the last moment it was stopped by the state authorities, as inappropriate, because "... with this show they want to appeal to the people to rise up in the war against the fascist government..."¹⁹.

After the liberation of Albania, Schiller's plays that was translated was "Intrigë e Dashuri - Intrigue and Love", which was published in 1955 by the State Publishing Company. Four thousand copies were sold immediately. Furthermore, in May 1955 was published "Përbetimi i Fieskos në Gjenovë - Fiesko's Oath in Genova", while the plays "Hajdutët - Thieves, Intrigë e Dashuri - Intrigue and Love" were published in 1958 in a single volume²⁰.

Schiller's plays, mainly "Wilhelm Tell", has also been staged in Albanian scenes. For the first time this drama was staged in the city of Korça, in 1910, by the girls' school. All roles were played by women and the role of Wilhelm Tell was played by Sandra (Alexandra) Ilo. It's worth mentioning that this drama was translated by two brothers Menduz and Lutfi Zavalani, but the exact date is not known. Sandra Ilo, after the show stated the following: "We did not expect the environment of Korça to receive this show so well"²¹, given that Albanian women in those years did not go out on the streets and not to mention playing the role of a man.

The other drama, "Intrigë e Dashuri - Intrigue and Love", translated in 1955, was put on stage and for the first time it was presented on January 10, 1957. This drama was successfully presented twenty-eight times until June 14, 1959. In the 1960s of the last century, Schiller was read in all high schools of Albania and his works occupied a prominent place in the curriculum of the University of Tirana²².

¹⁵ Rilindja, No.18, dated: 5 May 1993, pg.8. "Lahuta e Malcisë! Në penën dhe vlerësimin e Qemal Stafës.

¹⁶ Skënder Luarasi, Schiler in Albania, te Nëntori, No. 5, May 1960. Pg. 172.

¹⁷ Skënder Luarasi, Schiler in Albania, te Nëntori, No. 5, May 1960. Pg. 173.

¹⁸ Shihni një Vilhelm Tel me 25 vjeçarë" at Albanian Magazine, No. 3402, dated 15 January 2006, pg. 26.

¹⁹ Qevqep Kambo. How the drama was organized 'Wilhelm Tell' on: 1943 at the high school of Tirana even though it was not put on stage. Zëri i Rinisë, 10 January 1996, pg. 14.

²⁰ Skënder Luarasi, Schiler in Albania, te Nëntori, No. 5, May 1960. Pg. 174.

²¹ Sandra Ilo. Woman who played Wilhelm Tell. Panorama newspaper, nr 2211, 23 November 2008, pg. 18.

²² Skënder Luarasi, Schiler in Albania, te Nëntori, No. 5, May 1960. Pg. 174.

The drama "Wilhelm Tell", translated by Skënder Luarasi, was staged in 2006 by students of the Academy of Arts, with the help of the Swiss Embassy. The drama was played in Tirana and in seven other cities of Albania.

Another drama by Schiller, which has been staged in Albanian scenes, is "Luiza Miller", which has been successful.

In the Albanian periodical press there have been constant articles about Schiller. Hence, in the newspaper *Bashkimi*, No. 297, dated 14 December 1945, the best essay was published with the topic "E vjetra shembet, kohët po ndryshojnë, një jetë re po lulëzon germadhash - The old collapses, times are changing, a new life is flourishing in ruins". The fact that these are Schiller's verses and are given as an essay topic immediately after the liberation of the country, shows that Schiller in those years was widely read in Albania.

In the magazine *Nëntori*, No. 5 in 1955, the Albanian playwright Kolë Jakova published an article on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the death of F. Schiller, where among other things he wrote: "Schiller's works are a valuable asset in the general treasure of the world literature ... No one before Schiller has appealed in German language so loudly and with passion for the overthrow of tyrants"²³. The Albanian author generally analyzes all of Schiller's plays from the point of view of class, revolutions, overthrow of classes, against religious belief, etc. Here the Albanian playwright brings a very interesting fact. The Russian prince Putjatin, whilst talking to Goethe, said the following: "If I were the almighty God, I would not have created the world, if I had known that in this world would be written the drama" *Cubat – Thieves* by Schiller"²⁴. Regarding the drama "Don Carlos", where Schiller hits the church, he writes to his friend Reinhold: "I want my knife to go through the tragedy side, straight to the heart of this human race, which she has scratched so easily up to this day"²⁵.

In 1984, the University of Tirana published the dispensation "Foreign Literature, for XVII - XVIII centuries", which talks about German literature and a special place is given to the works of F. Schiller. In over 20 pages, are analyzed all the works of this outstanding playwright.

In the Albanian press there have been constant articles about F. Schiller, even though his plays were no longer being staged over time. Thus, the newspaper "Drita" dated October 14, 1984 has published two articles. One is titled "Flamurbajtësi i ideve të mëdha - Flag bearer of the great ideas", where the Albanian author Niko Vangjeli raises the personality of Schiller, and specifically states: "Schiller created a multifaceted work as playwright, lyric poet, writer, prose writer, historian, publicist and art theorist. After Shakespeare, with his creations he completed the stage with great dramatic creatures of world literature"²⁶.

In the same newspaper there is another article by the German translator Afrim Koçi, titled "Schiller for the theater". In this article, the author relies on Schiller's assessments and opinions regarding the theater, its importance, where he also brings expressions such as: "*More than any other social institution, theater is the school of practical wisdom, a guide in civic life, the appropriate key to open the darkest recesses of the human soul. ... Without blushing, we watch as how the mask falls on the theater mirror and deep down we thank ourselves for the valuable lesson. ... Only the theater is capable ... because it penetrates into all areas of human knowledge, consumes all situations and illuminates all corners of the soul, because only the soul knows how to find the shortest path of the mind and heart*"²⁷. In 1989 the Higher Institute of Arts published the dispensation "History of the World Theater" where in 9 pages analyzes Schiller's dramaturgical creativity. As mentioned, his dramas have been analyzed in the perspective of the class war, the overthrow of regimes etc.

²³ Kolë Jakova. Friedrich Schiler. November, No. 5, 1955, pg, 100.

²⁴ Kolë Jakova. Friedrich Schiler. November, No. 5, 1955, pg, 100.

²⁵ Kolë Jakova. Friedrich Schiler. November, No. 5, 1955, pg, 103.

²⁶ Flamurbajtësi i ideve të mëdha, newspaper Drita, no. 44, dated 14 October 1984, pg. 14.

²⁷ Schiler for the theatre, newspaper Drita, No. 44, dated 14 October 1984, pg. 14.

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