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Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the inaugural issue of the *The Journal of Eastern Europe and Balkan Studies*, an international, peer-reviewed academic journal published by Baku Slavic University. The establishment of this journal reflects our strong commitment to advancing high-quality scholarship and fostering intellectual exchange in the diverse and evolving field of Slavic Studies.

The Journal of Eastern Europe and Balkan Studies seeks to provide a platform for original research that explores the linguistic, literary, cultural, historical, and geopolitical dimensions of the Slavic world. Our aim is to bridge traditional philological research with contemporary interdisciplinary approaches, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of Slavic societies in both regional and global contexts.

The Journal's aims and scope encompass linguistics, literature, cultural studies, geopolitics, regional studies, and intercultural communication. By embracing such a wide range of disciplines, *The Journal of Eastern Europe and Balkan Studies* hopes to bring together scholars from different academic backgrounds and to encourage dialogue across borders and perspectives.

All submissions undergo a rigorous double-blind peer review process conducted by distinguished experts in the field, ensuring that only original and high-quality research is published. The journal also adheres strictly to international ethical standards in academic publishing. With the launch of this journal, we look forward to building a vibrant scholarly community and establishing *The Journal of Eastern Europe and Balkan Studies* as a reputable forum for academic dialogue. We warmly invite you to contribute your research, book reviews, or scholarly essays, and to join us in shaping the intellectual journey of this journal.

On behalf of the editorial board, I would like to extend my gratitude to all contributors, reviewers, and colleagues who support the development of *The Journal of Eastern Europe and Balkan Studies*. Together, we will work to ensure that this journal becomes a respected platform for advancing Slavic Studies worldwide.

We welcome your active engagement and look forward to your valuable contributions.

Sincerely,

Anar Naghiyev

Rector, Baku Slavic University

Editor-in-Chief

Journal of Eastern Europe and Balkan Studies

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NICKNAMING IN ALBANIA AS A FORM OF LINGUISTIC PLAY

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of nicknames in Albania, based on data collected through a structured questionnaire. The aim of the study is to understand the social, emotional, and practical functions of nicknames across different cultural and geographical contexts within the country. The findings indicate that nicknames are widely present and used in both urban and rural settings. Their use is often linked to name shortening, physical or personality traits, personal experiences, or the need to distinguish between individuals with common names. The paper also examines individual perceptions of nicknames, focusing on the identity and emotional dimensions they carry. This study contributes to the field of Albanian onomastics and enhances our understanding of the relationship between language and social identity.

Keywords: nicknaming, Albania, linguistic play, onomastics, social identity, cultural context.

Introduction

Nicknames represent a distinct form of personal naming, deeply rooted in culture and closely intertwined with processes of social interaction. They emerge and acquire meaning within specific situational and contextual settings, reflecting relationships and unspoken agreements among members of a community. Their meaning is not confined to lexical definitions or etymological history, but is explained through their use in everyday communication, until they become the common way of identifying an individual. Thus, nicknames are not merely linguistic elements but also indicators of how meaning and significance are constructed in social interaction.

Since Ancient Greece, names have been treated as fundamental components in linguistic and philosophical studies, serving as a lens through which to understand forms of interpersonal communication and the mechanisms underlying the organization of social reality. Classical philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle regarded names as keys to understanding the relationship between words and their referents, granting this topic a significance that has endured in linguistic and philosophical thought to the present day (Hough, 2016). Although the theory of names is among the earliest fields of linguistic inquiry - problematized as early as Plato's *Cratylus* (Coates, 2018:14) - the systematic study of nicknames in Albania has remained limited. In Albanian culture, however, nicknames persist as a stable element of social communication, serving as markers of identity, tools of humor, or, at times, forms of stigmatization. Their meaning is constructed through the practice of use and accepted by the group through a process akin to a "linguistics game" in the Wittgensteinian sense, where the rules are determined by the context itself.

This study aims to examine nicknames in Albania as both a linguistic and social phenomenon, viewing them as products of relationships, rules, and negotiated meanings within the community.

Through an analysis of their history, functions, and uses, the research seeks to shed light on their role as mechanisms for the construction and maintenance of individual and collective identity.

2. Names as a linguistics game in Wittgenstein's perspective

In Wittgenstein's later philosophical corpus, few notions hold as central and representative a status as the concept of the "language game". This concept recurs throughout his manuscripts, beginning with *Philosophical Investigations*, written in 1932–33, shortly after his return to Cambridge, and continuing through to *On Certainty,* his final work.

In the introduction to *Philosophical Investigations* (2009), one of the most influential works in twentieth-century philosophy of language, Ludwig Wittgenstein states:
"the words in language name objects - sentences are combinations of such names. – In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands" (38).

From this perspective, language is not merely a static system of signs but a dynamic tool that derives meaning from use. Wittgenstein suggests that the process of using words can be understood as a kind of game, similar to the way children learn their native language. For Wittgenstein (2009), the "language game" encompasses not only language as a system but also all the activities in which it is embedded and from which it derives its meaning. He expresses this as follows:
"We can also think of the whole process of using words in (2) as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games "language-games" and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game. And the processes of naming the stones and of repeating words after someone might also be called language-games. Think of certain uses that are made of words in games like ring-a-ring-a-roses. I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the activities into which it is woven, a "language-game" (44).

As he further clarifies, the phrase "language game" is used to emphasize that speaking a language is part of an activity or a form of life. Malcolm Budd, in his article "Wittgenstein on Meaning, Interpretation and Rules" (1984), examines how Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations*, understands the meaning of words, interpretation, and linguistic rules. Budd analyzes the tension between Wittgenstein's claim that "the meaning of a word lies in its use" and in our everyday experience, according to which we often grasp the meaning of a word instantly, as soon as we hear or utter it. In this work, he emphasizes that Wittgenstein connects meaning with practice and social use, rather than with a fixed definition or a mental image (1984:318).

Budd explores Wittgenstein's idea of "rule-following", arguing that interpretation is not an internal process encoded in the mind, but a shared practice embedded within a "form of life" and a social context (1984:319). He understands the "language game" as a framework for explaining how words acquire meaning through use and through agreement within the linguistic community. According to Budd's reading, meaning is thus not a private mental entity but a social practice, shaped by collective norms and sustained by everyday linguistic interactions. By shifting the focus away from fixed definitions or mental representations, Wittgenstein situates language within the fabric of ordinary life, where understanding a linguistic sign involves participation in a network of relationships, habits, and shared conventions.

From this perspective, we can also explain the functioning of nicknames in communication. A nickname has no meaning as a "fixed definition" and cannot be reduced to a mental image in an individual; it gains significance only within the social practice in which it is used. Within a social group, a nickname is not merely a substitute for a given name, but a sign of relationships, humor,

closeness, or even hierarchy among members. As Wittgenstein notes about words in general, nicknames too acquire meaning within the "form of life" in which they are used: a nickname may be a sign of affection in a close circle of friends, while in another context it may sound derogatory. In this way, they clearly demonstrate that the meaning of language is not internal and isolated but emerges from and lives within shared social practices.

3. Nicknames as social conventions and markers of power

The analysis of nicknames, due to their transient nature, is expected to offer a closer view of the relationship between language, culture, and society than the more static elements of the linguistic system (Phillips, 1990). Wierzbicka (1992) emphasizes that "those parts of language that relate to the relationship between speaker and hearer are among the most likely to reflect living and ongoing culture" (375). Precisely for this reason, optional categories - such as nicknames - are more likely to reflect the cultural trends of their time, while the fundamental structures of language, such as the system of personal pronouns, for example, usually remain resistant even to strong social pressures. In this sense, Phillips (1990) considers nicknames to be relatively reliable indicators of current attitudes and trends (281).

Michael Adams (2009) explains this dimension by viewing nicknames as forms of power within a social group: they may be imposed by others, or they may function based on a reciprocal agreement between the one who gives and the one who bears the nickname. This process, according to him, is the result of social negotiation, that is, a political act in itself, where the nickname becomes a token of the established relationship (81). Previous research has shown that nicknames are closely linked to power relations. Morgan, O'Neill and Harré (1979:5) emphasize that young people often receive nicknames from peers, playmates, friends or family members, and that these names reflect how others perceive them. Power here is not overt, but is constructed through rules of communication and politeness, which define the boundaries of acceptability, as we stated in the introduction of this study. It is precisely these rules, with all their complexity, that form the basis on which the power relationship between the one who assigns the nickname and the one who bears it is continuously and invisibly negotiated, much like in any other human relationship.

From another perspective, Adams (2009) observes that every act of naming has an illocutionary dimension, that is, an act of judgment and evaluation of the one being named:
"At least at first, the act of naming involves an illocutionary act in which the name-giver judges or evaluates the one being named, in order to select an 'appropriate' name. [...] After the naming act, that is, after the initial application [...], the illocutionary force of judgment diminishes or disappears, and the name becomes merely a convention" (83).

In the case of nicknames, this evaluative force remains much more present than with official names, as they are often used to draw distinctions, classifications, or evaluations.

An interesting connection to the theory of names is also offered by Saul Kripke, who in "Naming and Necessity" (1972) opposed descriptivist approaches (Frege, Russell), proposing a model of reference based on a causal-communicative chain. This model helps to understand how nicknames, despite their unofficial nature, also function as stable referential elements within a community.

From a pragmatic perspective, the use of nicknames can also be seen as a violation or negotiation of the rules of politeness. Adams (2009) connects this to the Cooperative Principle, according to which communication functions based on shared objectives. However, as Robin Lakoff (1973) argues, nicknames often operate within a special framework of politeness, where the violation of rules is not only tolerated but also necessary for the creation of closeness. She points out: "The more

nicknames you have for a person, the more likely it is that you have discussed intimate matters with them; that is, both are part of situation R3, and one derives from the other" (302). This shows that, although formally breaking norms of politeness, nicknames often reinforce solidarity and the sense of belonging within a group (Lakoff 1973:298). Nevertheless, this function remains deeply dependent on context: within close relationships, the use of nicknames creates intimacy and trust, whereas outside this framework it may be perceived as disrespectful or as an inappropriate imposition. In this way, the pragmatics of nicknames demonstrate their complete dependence on social relationships and on the power dynamics that accompany them.

4. Methodology

This study is based on a combined quantitative and qualitative approach, drawing on data collected through a structured questionnaire and the sociolinguistic analysis of nicknames reported by participants. For the collection of quantitative data, a questionnaire was designed via the Google Forms platform, consisting of ten questions. Its aim was to gather information on the respondents' place of residence, age, and gender; the use of nicknames in their community; their role in daily life; the ways they are created; their presence in official documents; as well as the respondents' personal feelings regarding their use. Part of the questionnaire also focused on perceptions of the spread of nicknames in rural versus urban settings, while participants were invited to provide concrete examples of nicknames they themselves use.

A total of 215 individuals participated in the study, selected voluntarily through online distribution of the questionnaire and direct interviews. The sample is dominated by females (84%), while males and other gender categories are represented to a much lesser degree. In terms of age, the 18–25 group is the most represented (57%), whereas adults and the elderly are less present. Geographically, the data are concentrated mainly in Tirana (66%), with smaller representations from other cities such as Tropoja, Durrës, Korça, Mirdita, Kruja, and others.

The analysis was carried out on two levels: quantitative, through counting and calculating percentages according to the main categories (origin of nicknames, ways of creation, frequency of use); and, qualitative, through the classification of collected nicknames according to their sociolinguistic functions (affectionate, descriptive, ironic, stigmatizing, metaphorical, etc.).

The study relies on the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics, viewing nicknames as linguistic elements that play a role in the construction of individual and collective identities. Nicknames are interpreted as signs of social relationships, where intimacy, power, humor, or even stigmatization intertwine.

It should be noted that several methodological limitations were encountered during the study. First, the predominance of female participants limits the possibility of drawing balanced conclusions about the use of nicknames across different genders. Second, the concentration of data in Tirana makes the sample less representative of the realities of rural areas or other cities in the country. Third, since the questionnaire was distributed online and on a voluntary basis, participants are primarily representative of the groups most active on social media – namely young people aged 18-25. Despite these limitations, the study provides a valuable overview of how nicknames are used and perceived in the Albanian context, paving the way for further, broader, and comparative research.

5. Analysis and Findings

Place of Residence

From the analysis of the questionnaire data, it results that the majority of respondents come from the city of Tirana: 135 individuals, making up about 66% of the sample. This dominance may be linked to the higher population density in the capital, as well as easier access to participants, who were initially found among students of the Faculty of History and Philology, University of Tirana. After Tirana, the most represented city is Tropoja with 15 individuals (7.3%), indicating a particular interest from this northern area. In third place is Durrës with 11 individuals (5.4%), followed by Korça with 9 individuals (4.4%). Mirdita (6 individuals, 2.9%) and Kruja (5 individuals, 2.4%) also have a considerable representation, while cities such as Kukës, Vlorë, Elbasan, and Burrel are represented by 3-4 individuals each. Meanwhile, other cities such as Laç, Fier, Berat, Dibër, Tepelenë, Lushnjë, Përrenjas, Përmet, and Pogradec are represented by only 1-2 participants, showing a more limited presence in this survey.

Age

The collected data show that the sample is clearly dominated by young people. The age group 18-25 is the most represented, with 123 individuals, accounting for about 57% of respondents. This result indicates that young people have shown the greatest interest in the questionnaire on nicknames, which may be linked to the fact that they are more exposed to their use in social circles and everyday communication. They are followed by the 26-40 age group, with 56 individuals (26%), representing about one-quarter of the sample. This contingent demonstrates that the phenomenon of nicknames is not limited only to young people but is also present among active adults. The 41-60 age group has a more modest representation, with 19 individuals (9%), while minors under 18 total 16 individuals (7%). Finally, only one person over 60 participated in the survey, making this age group virtually unrepresented.

The distribution of ages in the sample suggests that nicknames are most common and most natural in the communication of younger generations. However, the noticeable presence of adults in their use shows that the phenomenon is not exclusively youthful but is spread across different levels of social life.

Gender

The questionnaire data show a marked dominance of female participation, with 181 respondents, or about 84% of the sample. This result indicates that interest in the questionnaire on nicknames was significantly higher among women, making the female perspective more prominent in the analysis. In contrast, the participation of men was much more limited, which restricts the full representation of the phenomenon from their point of view.

However, this should not be interpreted as a lack of male involvement in the creation and use of nicknames. On the contrary, studies such as that of Betty S. Phillips (1990) have shown that men are often those who create the most nicknames, and that the nicknames attributed to them are less related to emotional or aesthetic traits compared to those given to women. These findings suggest the need for further studies that examine gender differences in the use and function of nicknames, relying not only on broader participation but also on a more balanced analysis that reflects the roles, perceptions, and connotations attributed to different genders in diverse social and cultural contexts.

Nicknames for Personal Names

When respondents were asked whether nicknames are commonly used for personal names in their area, the overwhelming majority gave affirmative answers. A total of 122 individuals (56.7%) stated that nicknames are used a lot, confirming this practice as a common element of culture and everyday communication. Meanwhile, 68 individuals (31.6%) said they are used to some extent, which still indicates a visible presence of the phenomenon. By contrast, 23 individuals (10.7%) believed that their use is not very widespread, while only a very small percentage (around 1%) considered the practice nonexistent.

Overall, the results clearly show that the use of nicknames is deeply rooted in society and is perceived by the majority as a common and natural practice, while only a minimal portion of the population regards it as unimportant or absent.

Use of Nicknames in everyday life

When respondents were asked whether they themselves use nicknames in their daily lives, the results were very clear: 178 individuals (82.8%) affirmed that they do, while only 37 individuals (17.2%) said they do not. This result shows that the phenomenon of nicknames is not merely a general social perception, but also a personal practice for many individuals. Most young people and adults have integrated the use of nicknames as part of their communication – whether in social, family, or professional relationships. The results demonstrate that nicknames are not only common in Albanian culture but also a strong element of both personal and social identity.

Creation of Nicknames

The data collected from the questionnaire show that the most common ways of creating nicknames are through shortening of the name (113 responses, 52.6%) and through affectionate or softened forms of the name (110 responses, 51.2%). These two categories clearly dominate, demonstrating that transforming a name into shorter, simpler, or more endearing forms is the main mechanism of nickname production. This suggests that nicknames are closely tied to everyday communicative practices and to the desire to create intimacy and closeness in social relationships.
A considerable percentage of respondents (39.5%) associate nicknames with physical traits or aspects of personality, showing that the observation of individual characteristics remains a strong source of naming. Meanwhile, specific events or experiences served as the basis in 17.2% of cases, indicating that nicknames can also function as a form of "social memory" for particular episodes or experiences. Finally, only a small proportion of them (7%) are linked to common family names, created mainly for functional purposes of distinction.

In general terms, the data demonstrate that nicknames are a product of the interplay between language and social relations: they originate primarily from personal names, but also from the traits and experiences that accompany individuals within the community. This diversity of sources underlines that nicknames are not only forms of everyday communication but also elements of social culture that reflect ways of interaction, differentiation, and interpersonal closeness.

The official use of Nicknames

The data show that the official use of nicknames is a very rare practice. The overwhelming majority of respondents (145) stated that nicknames are not used in documents or in formal settings, thus underlining the clear distinction between the social use of nicknames and institutional discourse. A smaller number of informants (23) reported having encountered such cases, which indicates that

although uncommon, this practice does exist in certain specific contexts. Meanwhile, a considerable group of individuals (47) were uncertain, suggesting either a lack of direct experience with this phenomenon or uncertainty about its presence. These findings emphasize that nicknames remain primarily confined to the informal sphere of communication, while their official use is the exception rather than the rule.

Attitudes toward the use of Nicknames

The analysis of responses shows that attitudes toward the use of nicknames are varied, but a neutral perception predominates. More than half of the respondents (110) stated that nicknames do not hold particular significance for them, considering them a common element with no real impact on everyday life. A considerable portion of participants (83) view them positively, associating nicknames with personal and cultural identity. This demonstrates that, for many individuals, a nickname is more than just a label – it becomes a marker of belonging and social closeness. By contrast, only a small minority (22) expressed negative attitudes, emphasizing that they dislike being addressed by a nickname.

These results suggest that the use of nicknames in Albanian culture is experienced mainly as a natural and often harmless phenomenon, though for some individuals it also carries identity value. However, the presence of negative perceptions, albeit limited, indicates that nicknames can sometimes be experienced as undesirable or diminishing, making their meaning dependent on the context and the social relationships in which they are used.

Village & City

When asked whether nicknames are more commonly used in rural or urban settings, the majority of respondents stated that they appear more frequently in villages. Their arguments were linked to several key factors: smaller and closer communities: in smaller communities, people know each other better, often connected through kinship or neighborhood ties, which favors the emergence of nicknames; need for differentiation: in cases where several individuals share the same name, nicknames become a functional way of distinguishing them; tradition and communication style: in rural settings, communication is simpler, more direct, and less constrained, giving nicknames a role as expressions of affection or humor; shared life context: agricultural and pastoral activities, along with a close connection to nature, generate a wide range of nicknames tied to everyday life.

A smaller portion of respondents argued that nicknames are more widespread in cities. According to them, this is due to social scope and diversity: cities comprise more individuals, varied social situations, educational and work institutions, and a dynamic youth culture, all of which provide fertile ground for the emergence of nicknames. The urban culture offers diverse ideas, humor, and situations that stimulate the creation and use of nicknames.

A considerable number of informants stressed that the use of nicknames is common in both cities and villages. They highlighted that the appearance of nicknames is not directly tied to residence, but more to individual traits and the closeness of interpersonal relationships. According to them, nicknames are an element of Albanian culture and emerge wherever strong social or family bonds exist.

A smaller number of responses indicated that some individuals had no clear stance or believed that the use of nicknames varies depending on the situation and the level of education. From the analysis of the data provided by informants, it can be observed that the use of nicknames is not confined solely to rural or urban environments but constitutes a widespread practice throughout Albanian society. Although the village is often seen as the most natural setting for their emergence, the city also

provides rich contexts for the creation of nicknames. At its core, the occurrence of nicknames is more closely connected to social relationships, interpersonal closeness, and cultural tradition than to a specific place of residence.

5.1. Types of Nicknames identified in the collected corpus

Before presenting the analysis, it is important to clarify that the following section lists the nicknames collected through the questionnaire conducted during the research. The nicknames are reproduced exactly as provided by the informants, without any grammatical or orthographic intervention. This approach aims to preserve the authenticity of the linguistic data and reflect the natural variation and creativity present in the original responses.

5.1.1. Nicknames derived from words denoting physical traits

Physical Looks	*Kokëtul* (bald-head), *kokëkuqe* (redhead), *biondina* (the blonde/blondie), *gjatoshe* (the tall one), *tullaci* (baldy), *sybukra* (pretty eyes), *qeros* (bald), *sykaltër* (blue eyes), *barkder* (potbelly), *kokedru* (wooden head), *stekë bilardoje* (billiard cue), *shkurre* (bush), *shkurtrabiqi* (short lamb), *xhuxhi/xhuxhe* (dwarf), *bardho* (the fair/light-skinned one), *bardhoshi* (little fair one), *leshverdhe* (yellow-haired / blondy).
Body Size / Shape	*Buçko* (chubby/plump one), *topi* (ball), *picirruke* (tiny one/little squirt), *trashaluqe* (fat girl), *tuli* (softie), *tulja* (chubby), *byrazer* (bro/buddy), *barkshpum* (big-bellied).
Distinctive Features	*Veshllapush* (flap-ears), *kokëmadh* (big-headed), *gjysëm* (half-one), *kokosh* (cockerel), *koktas* (bowl head).

5.1.2. Nicknames based on character traits and personality

Positive qualities	*Trimi* (the Brave), *zemër-luan* (lion-hearted), *luan* (lion), *analiste* (the analyst), *sportisti* (the sportsman), *oratorja* (the orator), njëshi (number one), *medalisti* (the medalist), *florini* (the golden one), *presidente* (the president), *bosi* (the boss), *gjenerali* (the general), *mbret* (the king), *kollo* (big guy), *doktori* (the doctor), *profesori* (the professor).
Negative / mocking qualities	*Budall* (fool), *budallaqe* (silly girl), *matuf* (dotard), *hut* (clumsy), *i çmendur* (crazy), *përtaci* (slacker), *llafazane* (talkative), *servilja* (sycophant), *mendjemadhi* (conceited), *bloza* (grimy), *shushkë* (slut), *koprrac* (miser), *qelbsinë* (jerk), *shtriga* (witch), *djallezira* (cunning), *taleban* (extremist), *sarcenstruale* (moody), *mafia* (the mafia), *qypi* (clay pot), *qorr* (the blind).
Humorous character	*slowmotion, tornado, karagjoz* (goofball), *king, mbret* (the king), *FBI, UFO, or dekem* (deadbeat).

5.1.3. Nicknames derived from animal names or nature

Animals	*Majmun* (monkey), *breshkë* (turtle), *tigri* (tiger), *panda, buf* (owl), *qyqe* (cuckoo), *dhelpra* (fox), *ari* (bear), *miu* (mouse), *mace* (cat), *bletë* (bee), *lepurush* (bunny), *ujku* (wolf), *kali* (horse), *ketri* (squirrel), *qukapiku* (woodpecker), *zogu* (bird), *pilivesë* (dragonfly), *dallandyshe* (swallow), *drenushe* (deer), *grenza* (wasp), *shushkë* (moth), *kunadhe* (weasel).
Plants / foods	*Rrush* (grape), *pjeshka* (peach), *lule* (flower), *trëndafil* (rose), *karafil* (carnation), *qepë* (onion), *kungull* (pumpkin), *kastravec* (cucumber), *patëllxhan* (eggplant), *petull* (pancake), *zambak* (lily), *qofte* (meatball), *salom* (salami), *byrek* (pie), *petull* (pancake).

5.1.4. Nicknames based on affectionate words

Affectionate words	*Zemër* (sweetheart), *shpirt* (soul), *zemrushe* (sweetie), *ylli* (star), *beb* (baby), *loçe* (sweetie), *mamushi* (mommy), *engjëll* (angel), *darling*, *bello* (handsome), *jeta* (life), *bebëllush* (little baby), *loçkë* (sweetheart), *kukull* (doll).
Family endearments	*Lali* (bro), *motrushe* (sis), *nushi* (sweetheart), *byrazer* (brother), *cuni im* (my boy).

5.1.5. Nicknames derived from personal names (diminutives or shortened forms)

Didi, Caci, Losh/Lol, Nuci, Dupi, Esi, Eda, Dina, Moza/Pupi, Diu-Didi (Hamdi), *Bubu* (Bulëza), *Musta* (Mustafa), *Tati* (Rifati), *Kiarushe* (Kiara), *Bimi* (Ibrahim), *Nini* (Nisjeta), *Borush* (Debora), *Zule/ Zeli, Jezo* (Jesmina), *Eti* (from a childhood self-naming).

5.1.6. Nicknames derived from objects or metaphorical comparisons

Topi (chubby), *qypi* (dumb pot), *fuçi* (barrel), *plep* (poplar tree), *shkop thane* (stick), *stekë* (cue), *kapaku* (the lid), *qoshja* (the corner), *bomba* (the bomb), *pallosh* (lunkhead), *taptup* (bouncy).

5.1.7. Nicknames with inappropriate, crude, or vulgar meanings

Kurvë (Derogatory term for a promiscuous woman), *kar* (Vulgar slang for male genitalia), *trap* (Insult implying stupidity or clumsiness), *bythqir* (Highly offensive homophobic slur), *jevg* (Racist slur referring to Roma people), *vagabond* (Drifter), *banxhe* (Derogatory slang for an unkempt or rude woman).

Conclusions

The nicknames collected from the questionnaire provide rich material for sociolinguistic analysis, demonstrating their function as indicators of social relationships, cultural perceptions, and everyday communicative practices. Their categorization reveals several key domains: first, a large group is related to physical features ("Baldhead," "Tallie," "Chubby," "Shorty," "The Bald One"), suggesting that the body and outward appearance remain important elements in the process of unconventional naming.

Secondly, a considerable number of nicknames focus on personality traits or behavior ("Sleepyhead," "Talkative," "Comedian," "The Brave," "Lazybones"), turning the nickname into an

instrument of social categorization and a means of creating temporary identities within a group. Alongside these, there is a noticeable use of animal metaphors ("Bunny," "Turtle," "Tiger," "Cuckoo," "Bug"), which serve to draw parallels between human characteristics and the symbolic qualities associated with certain animals.

Another important group is linked to affection and endearment expressions ("Sweetheart," "Star," "Soul," "Angel"), where the nickname's function is mainly expressive and emotional, used to deepen intimate relationships. Equally significant is the transformation of personal names through shortening or modification ("Didi," "Losh," "Caci"), which reflects linguistic processes of phonetic reduction and semantic softening. On the other hand, there are also nicknames created from metaphors of everyday objects ("Meatball," "Cucumber," "Pumpkin," "Billiard Stick"), where humor and irony play a central role.

The material also includes nicknames associated with social roles and identities ("The President," "The Boss," "The Orator," "The Athlete"), which reflect hierarchies, status, or stereotypes within the community. A smaller but not insignificant group consists of vulgar and offensive nicknames, demonstrating that this linguistic phenomenon is not always neutral, but can also serve as a means of social exclusion or stigmatization.

Overall, this inventory of nicknames confirms their polysemous function: as signs of closeness and affection, as mechanisms of humor and irony, but also as tools of stigmatization and marginalization. For this reason, they should be regarded as important indicators of the dynamics of everyday language and social relations. Further comparative research, focusing on gender, age, and regional dimensions of their use, could contribute to a deeper understanding of the role that nicknames play in the construction of identities and relationships within Albanian communities.

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BRIDGING DISPLACEMENT: THE BALKAN PENINSULA, REFUGEE CHILDHOOD, AND EDUCATION AS A LIMINAL PASSAGE FROM CONFLICT TO BELONGING

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Abstract

This article examines the Balkans as a bridge between East and West and education as a bridge from war to peace for refugee children. Drawing on historical analysis and qualitative fieldwork in a multicultural school in Athens, it highlights challenges of language, trauma, and transience, and demonstrates how education fosters resilience, social cohesion, and integration in historically and culturally complex contexts.

Keywords: Balkans, education, refugees, Greece, intercultural schooling, bridge

Introduction

The Balkan Peninsula has long served as a symbolic and geopolitical hinge between East and West, a region historically characterized by pluralism, cultural crossings, migrations, and cyclical eruptions of conflict. While scholars often emphasize its image as a frontier or an internal periphery of Europe, the Balkans also function as a dynamic social geography in which borders, sovereignties, and identities are continuously negotiated (Todorova 1997; Mazower 2000). This duality—stability intertwined with flux, belonging intertwined with exclusion—makes the Balkans a revealing site for examining contemporary forms of forced migration, particularly the experiences of refugee children.

The massive displacement flows of the post-2015 period reactivated the region's traditional role as a migratory corridor. The so-called Balkan Route, which channels refugees from the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa toward Northern and Western Europe, transformed the region into a liminal passageway: a space of transit, bureaucracy, waiting, and uncertainty. If the Balkan Peninsula itself can be conceptualized through parallel metaphors of transit, negotiation, and hybridity, the region mirrors the transitional experiences of the children who traverse it. In this context, thousands of children found themselves negotiating not only geographical displacement but also emotional and developmental ruptures, educational discontinuities, and psychosocial stress. Therefore, this parallelism is not merely symbolic. It offers a conceptual framework for understanding refugee education as a process grounded in liminality, negotiation, and layered belonging—qualities that define both the Balkan region and the lived experience of displacement. Just as the Balkans exist "in between" different civilizational narratives, refugee children exist "in between" countries, identities, and life stories

Against this background, education emerges as a crucial mode of intervention. Beyond its legal status as a right, schooling becomes a stabilizing force capable of mitigating trauma, restoring daily structure, offering social connectedness, and building linguistic and cognitive competencies that enable participation and belonging in new contexts (Dryden-Peterson 2020). Education can be understood as a *micro-bridge*, analogous to the Balkans as a *macro-bridge*: both are liminal structures in which transitions occur, identities are reconstructed, and possibilities for future life trajectories are negotiated.

This article explores these parallels through a dual analytical perspective. First, it revisits the conceptual history of the Balkans as a bridge, drawing from discursive, historical, and political

analyses. Second, it examines refugee education in the region, culminating in a detailed case study of a multicultural public school in Athens—here anonymized as the Athens Intercultural School. This school, with decades of experience serving diverse populations, became an intensive testing ground for refugee educational integration after 2015. By analyzing the school's evolution through the frameworks of intercultural pedagogy, trauma-informed practice, and social integration theory, the article argues that refugee education in the Balkans exemplifies both the structural limitations of states under pressure and the transformative capacity of educators and communities to generate inclusive micro-environments.

The argument unfolds through an analytical methodology that integrates auto-ethnographic insight, comparative policy review, and interdisciplinary theoretical synthesis. The result is a comprehensive examination of how refugee children navigate displacement and how Balkan educational institutions attempt—sometimes successfully, sometimes precariously—to function as bridges from war to peace, from instability to predictability, from marginalization to recognition.

Methodology

The methodological framework of this study is intentionally multi-layered, in order to capture both the structural and experiential dimensions of refugee education within the Balkan region.

1. Auto-ethnographic Foundation

As the analysis includes longitudinal observations and professional experiences from working at the Athens Intercultural School, the study adopts an auto-ethnographic orientation (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner2011). This approach positions lived pedagogical experience as legitimate data, while acknowledging partiality and subjectivity. The purpose is not to generalize statistically but to illustrate how macro-level forces —migration policies, resource shortages, culturaltensions— manifest concretely in everyday school life.

2. Discursive Analysis of Balkan Representations

The section on Balkan cultural-historical identity draws from discourse analysis, primarily the works of Todorova(1997), Bakić-Hayden (1995), and subsequent scholarship on regional othering. This perspective enables the examination of how narratives of liminality, backwardness, and hybridity shape both policy and public sentiment toward refugees, influencing the environment in which education takes place.

3. Comparative Policy and Practice Review

Policy documents, reports by NGOs, and academic studies from Greece, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia provide comparative insights into how the region manages refugee schooling. Through a comparative qualitative policy review, cross-regional patterns and divergences emerge, revealing both structural constraints and innovative practices.

Interdisciplinary Literature Integration

The analysis draws on a wide interdisciplinary literature, including:

refugee education and educational access (Mendenhall et al. 2017; Dryden-Peterson 2020)

trauma-informed pedagogy (Brunzell, Waters, and Stokes 2019)

child development under displacement (Hart 2014)

intercultural and inclusive education theories (Banks 2016; Arnot and Pinson 2010)

migration and integration studies (Ager and Strang2008)

Combining these forms of knowledge allows for a nuanced reading of the educational experiences described in the case study.

<h1 style="text-align:center">The Balkans as a Historical and Symbolic Bridge</h1>

A Region of Entangled Histories

The Balkans are often narrated as a region where empires collide, identities overlap, and cultural boundaries blur. Scholars frequently argue that the Peninsula's history cannot be understood through a linear narrative but rather as a set of palimpsestic layers, each representing a different era's political and cultural influences (Mazower2000). Roman roads, Byzantine monasteries, Ottoman mosques, Habsburg city planning, and Yugoslav socialist architecture form a mosaic that defies simplistic categorization. This layered past continues to shape contemporary identity negotiations.

The Concept of Balkanism

Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (1997) critically examined how Western Europe constructed the Balkans as a liminal internal Other. Unlike Orientalism'sdistant exoticism, Balkanism is an ambivalent discourse: the Balkans are close enough to Europe to provoke anxiety about similarity, yet distant enough to justify paternalistic attitudes. This perception persists in contemporary debates about EU enlargement, where Balkan states are often portrayed as perpetually "not yet ready," even when meeting formal criteria (Vachudova2014).

Nesting Orientalisms and Internal Hierarchies

Bakić-Hayden's (1995) idea of nesting orientalismsdeepens this analysis by showing how each society in Eastern Europe positions itself as more European than its neighbor. These hierarchical constructions also influence attitudes toward refugees: states may externalize responsibility by claiming their own fragility, passivity, or marginality. This discursive pattern partly explains inconsistent regional coordination on migration and education.

Migration and the Re-emergence of Liminality

The post-2015 refugee flows reinforced the Balkans' liminal position. As families traversed multiple borders, often being pushed forward or backward by shifting policies, the region became a geography of temporary encampments, abandoned buildings, informal settlements, and overcrowded reception centers (Crawley et al. 2019). In many cases, this liminal passage lasted months or years, severely disrupting children's access to education and emotional stability.

Education Under Pressure

The educational systems of Balkan states were not designed for such sudden demographic changes. Even before the crisis, many schools faced shortages of teachers, outdated infrastructure, and insufficient support services. The sudden arrival of thousands of children with diverse linguistic backgrounds, trauma histories, and irregular schooling trajectories placed unprecedented strain on the systems. Despite EU-funded initiatives, gaps between policy and implementation remained large (Stergiou and Simopoulos 2024).

<h1 style="text-align:center">Education as a Liminal Structure</h1>

Schools as Spaces of Stability

For children who have experienced conflict, forced migration, or prolonged precarity, the school environment can become a crucial stabilizing structure. Trauma research underscores the importance of predictable routines, safe relationships, and opportunities for skill development in supporting children's recovery and development (Brunzell et al. 2019). When formal schooling is absent, children

face cognitive regression, emotional withdrawal, and increasing vulnerability to exploitation (Hart 2014).

Schooling as Identity Reconstruction

Beyond cognitive learning, schooling plays an essential role in reconstructing disrupted identities. It offers: a) peer relationships that generate belonging, b)languageacquisition that enables participation in social life, c) adult mentorship that fosters trust, and c) symbolic recognition of children as learners and rights-bearing subjects.

Schools thus serve as sites where children move from the status of refugee—often associated with victimhood or marginality—to student, a role imbued with agency and potential (Pinson and Arnot 2010).

Educational Inequalities as Structural Violence

Despite its transformative potential, schooling can also reproduce structural inequalities. Refugee children face barriers such as limited access to mother-tongue instruction, inadequate psychological support, cultural misunderstandings, and discrimination. Shortages of trained teachers, interpreters, and mediators inhibit meaningful integration. Such barriers constitute a form of structural violence (Galtung 1969), where systems fail to prevent avoidable harm.

The Capabilities Approach and Educational Justice

Nussbaum (2011) and Sen (1999) frame education as central to developing human capabilities— imagination, reasoning, social affiliation, and the ability to shape one's environment. Refugee children's capabilities are doubly constrained: by past trauma and present precarity. A "capabilities' approach" to refugee education requires:linguistic accessibility, culturally responsive curricula,psychosocial support and flexible pathways recognizing disrupted educational histories.

Regional Overview: Refugee Education across the Balkans

Serbia

Serbia adopted formal inclusion policies but struggled with implementation. Although asylum-seeking children are legally entitled to enroll in public schools, interpreter shortages and unprepared teachers hinder effective participation (Filipović and Lukić 2019). NGOs provide interim educational support, but gaps remain.

North Macedonia

Non-formal education spaces run by NGOs such as UNICEF and SOS Children's Villages offer multilingual, psychosocial, and digital learning opportunities (Byrne 2020). However, transitions from non-formal to formal schooling remain weak.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia faces fragmented governance structures and political sensitivities around ethnic segregation ("two schools under one roof"), which complicate refugee inclusion (OSCE 2018). Despite this, innovative digital education initiatives helped mitigate educational loss.

Educating Refugee Students in a Multicultural School in Athens: A Case Study of Structural Tension and Transformative Practice

The case of the Athens Intercultural School offers an analytically rich lens for understanding the tensions, innovations, and contradictions embedded in refugee education within a Balkan context. The school has, for decades, served as a microcosm of Greek multicultural reality, bringing together students of diverse linguistic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds—ranging from Greek Christian and Muslim children of Thrace to Roma communities and immigrant populations from Albania, Georgia, Russia, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka, etc. As such, it was well positioned to receive newly arriving refugee students after 2015. Yet, the scale, speed, and complexity of the refugee influx radically transformed the institution, exposing both the strengths of its intercultural ethos and the fragility of its infrastructure.

While Greek educational legislation formally recognizes intercultural schools as specialized institutions designed to support students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Law 2413/1996), the practical mechanisms for achieving this goal were insufficient for the extraordinary demographic pressures that unfolded. As refugee families arrived in Greece—often exhausted, traumatized, and uncertain of their future—educational authorities relied on existing intercultural schools to absorb students as rapidly as possible. However the above did not apply only to intercultural schools but to most schools especially those at various urban centers. The Athens Intercultural School thus became a de facto frontline institution in the national response, even though it had neither the necessary resources nor the structural preparation to handle such magnitude.

Demographics and Daily Realities in the Athens Intercultural School

Between 2015 and 2020, the student population of the school shifted dramatically. Within months, classrooms that previously had minority-majority balances of Greek-speaking long-settled immigrant children were now overwhelmingly composed of newly arrived refugee students from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and, to a lesser degree, African countries such as Somalia, Eritrea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many of these children had experienced arrests, pushbacks, or prolonged stays in overcrowded island camps before reaching Athens (Human Rights Watch 2017). Others had endured life-threatening journeys across the Aegean Sea.

These experiences manifested in the school environment as patterns of behavioral withdrawal, heightened anxiety, intermittent aggression linked to trauma, and, in several cases, difficulty concentrating or forming stable relationships. Trauma-informed education literature identifies such symptoms as common among children exposed to violence, loss, or displacement (Brunzell, Waters, and Stokes 2019; Betancourt et al. 2012). Teachers at the school observed that even when refugee students were highly motivated to learn, their emotional regulation was frequently disrupted by memories of conflict or the unpredictability of their current living situation in camps or temporary shelters.

Adding to these challenges was the fluidity of student presence. Many students attended the school for only a few months before their families moved toward Northern Europe or were relocated to other facilities. This instability made long-term curriculum planning difficult and undermined efforts to build consistent linguistic or academic progress. Students often disappeared without warning, leaving classmates and teachers without closure, which in turn destabilized classroom cohesion.

Teachers as Frontline Responders: Professional Exhaustion and Ethical Commitment

The role of teachers became central to mediating the gap between policy and reality. As documented in the growing literature on Greek refugee education, educators frequently found themselves performing multiple roles simultaneously—linguistic facilitators, social workers, psychologists, cultural mediators, and advocates (Stathopoulou et al. 2025; Arnot and Pinson 2010). At the Athens

Intercultural School, these roles intensified due to the density of refugee enrollment and the severe shortage of specialized support personnel.

Greek educational policy, despite its commitment to inclusive refugee education, has historically suffered from chronic understaffing, rigid bureaucratic processes, and a shortage of interpreter-mediator positions (Simopoulos and Alexandridis 2019). As a result, teachers often improvised solutions: relying on bilingual students to interpret for their peers; creating handmade visual materials to explain basic concepts; or collaborating with NGOs to provide psychosocial support on an ad hoc basis.

This improvisation, although often effective in the short term, contributed to long-term burnout. Teachers described feeling emotionally depleted, intellectually overextended, and professionally unsupported. These conditions align with international findings that refugee education—especially in emergency or transitional contexts—places extraordinary stress on teachers who lack adequate systemic backing (Mendenhall et al. 2017; Taylor and Sidhu 2012).

Nevertheless, the school also exhibited examples of remarkable professional resilience. Teachers formed informal networks to share resources, coordinated team-teaching approaches despite limited preparation time, and cultivated classroom environments emphasizing dignity, safety, and belonging. Many educators reframed their roles not simply as transmitters of knowledge but as guardians of children's well-being during a deeply vulnerable stage of their lives.

Linguistic Barriers and Pedagogical Innovation

Language acquisition constituted perhaps the most immediate and substantial barrier. Refugee students entering the school arrived with varying degrees of literacy in their own languages, often depending on disruptions to prior education or cultural norms around schooling (Crea 2016). While some Syrian and Afghan students possessed strong literacy backgrounds in Arabic, Kurdish, or Dari, many others had experienced long-term interruptions that resulted in partial or fragile literacy. A smaller number had never attended formal school at all.

Greek, a linguistically distant language from Arabic or Farsi, presented significant challenges. The school's Greek-as-a-second-language (GSL) program, long established, proved insufficient for the sudden explosion in demand. Standardized textbooks were largely unusable for students with interrupted education or those beginning literacy from scratch. Teachers thus developed differentiated instructional strategies, integrating visual aids, gestures, bilingual materials sourced from NGOs, and project-based learning to promote communicative competence.

International research supports such approaches. Cummins (2001) emphasizes that meaningful language acquisition requires both cognitive challenge and contextual support, while García and Wei (2014) advocate for translanguaging practices that allow multilingual students to use their full linguistic repertoires. At the Athens Intercultural School, teachers incorporated translanguaging intuitively—allowing students to write notes in their home languages, pairing speakers of similar languages, and encouraging peer explanation. Although these strategies were not formally institutionalized, they significantly improved student confidence and participation.

Parent–School Relations: Mistrust, Mediation, and Structural Obstacles

Parental involvement is widely recognized as a key factor in student success (Epstein 2018). Yet, in the context of refugee families, parental engagement is shaped by layers of systemic and psychosocial obstacles. For parents living in Athens's refugee camps or temporary accommodations, daily survival often took priority over school engagement. Language barriers hindered communication with teachers, while unfamiliarity with school expectations generated misunderstandings around attendance, homework, or behavioral norms.

The absence of adequate cultural mediators amplified these issues. Without Arabic, Farsi, or Kurdish-speaking staff, even the simplest administrative processes—such as signing permission slips or

attending parent–teacher meetings—became complicated. Some parents avoided the school space altogether, feeling intimidated or fearful of institutional interaction due to prior negative experiences with authorities during their migration journey.

Despite these challenges, the school made concerted efforts to build trust. Teachers organized informal open-door days, used WhatsApp or groups with volunteer interpreters, and collaborated with NGOs to provide orientation sessions on the Greek education system. Over time, these initiatives yielded modest improvements in parental engagement. Some parents began to attend events or volunteer for school celebrations. Although participation remained uneven, these early steps demonstrated that trust-building in refugee education requires both patience and consistent relational work.

School Climate and Peer Relations: Between Solidarity and Segregation

The presence of refugee students reshaped peer dynamics within the school. Initially, linguistic barriers created pockets of separation, with refugee children clustering according to language group or country of origin. However, as teachers introduced collaborative learning projects, mixed-language groupings, and intercultural activities—such as storytelling festivals, shared cooking projects, and art exhibitions—peer relationships gradually diversified.

Studies on intercultural school climates indicate that structured collaborative activities are key to reducing prejudice and fostering belonging (Banks 2016). This pattern held true at the Athens Intercultural School. Greek and long-established immigrant students showed curiosity about refugee classmates and sometimes developed strong friendships. Yet, tensions occasionally surfaced, particularly around competition for resources, misunderstandings stemming from cultural differences, or internal hierarchies among refugee groups.

Moreover, the constant mobility of refugee students—arriving and disappearing unpredictably—made it difficult for children to form stable long-term friendships. Some students expressed sadness or anxiety when peers suddenly left for Germany, Sweden, or the Netherlands. These emotional losses, repeated over time, contributed to a sense of impermanence within the school community.

Despite these challenges, the school gradually cultivated a climate of mutual respect. The intercultural ethos that had defined the institution long before the refugee influx provided a foundational framework, enabling teachers and students to approach diversity as a shared educational value rather than a disruptive anomaly.

Structural Limitations: Policy Gaps and Bureaucratic Realities

Although Greece implemented a series of national policies to support refugee education—including the establishment of Reception Classes (ΔΥΕΠ), Refugee Education Coordinators, and specialized training modules—the implementation lagged behind formal commitments. Frequent delays in hiring teachers, insufficient numbers of mediators, and lack of targeted funding created what Arnot and Pinson (2010) call "structural fragility"—a condition in which schools are expected to solve systemic social problems without adequate institutional support.

Many schools such as the one in Athens were disproportionately affected by this fragility. Their student populations required extensive linguistic and psychosocial support, yet resource allocation from the Ministry of Education followed standard formulas based on enrollment numbers rather than need. As a result, schools serving the highest-need populations often operated with fewer resources than mainstream schools in more affluent districts.

Additionally, bureaucratic rigidity made it difficult for schools to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Hiring an additional teacher or interpreter required lengthy administrative procedures, preventing timely responses. Funding cycles for NGO partnerships were often short-term, creating inconsistent program continuity. Teachers reported that by the time a new refugee program was established, the student population had shifted dramatically, rendering the intervention partially obsolete.

These systemic obstacles underscore a broader insight: refugee education cannot rely solely on the goodwill or creativity of individual schools. While local initiatives can mitigate harm, sustainable change requires coordinated national policy frameworks that prioritize equity, flexibility, and long-term investment (Dryden-Peterson 2020).

Education as a Bridge: Theoretical Synthesis

The metaphor of education as a bridge resonates strongly in the context of refugee schooling. Drawing from liminality theory (Turner 1969), one might view education as a transitional space—neither the instability of displacement nor the security of integration, but a threshold where identities are renegotiated. Refugee students occupy this liminal zone, shifting between past trauma and future aspirations, between marginalization and participation.

Education serves several bridging functions:

Temporal Bridge: It connects the child's pre-war life with potential future stability, creating continuity amidst disruption.

Social Bridge: It enables participation in peer networks, fostering inclusion and belonging.

Cultural Bridge: It provides orientation to new societal norms while respecting heritage cultures, thus supporting hybrid identity formation (Garcíaand Wei 2014).

Psychological Bridge: Through routine, safety, and supportive relationships, it helps reduce trauma symptoms and strengthen resilience (Betancourt et al. 2012).

Structural Bridge: It links children to institutional frameworks—healthcare, social services, citizenship procedures—essential for long-term integration.

Toward a Holistic Framework for Refugee Education in the Balkans

The case of the Athens Intercultural School highlights the need for a comprehensive, multilayered framework encompassing pedagogy, psychosocial support, school governance, and policy design. Drawing on interdisciplinary research and field experience, such a framework should include:

Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Based Pedagogy: Teachers must be equipped to recognize trauma symptoms, create predictable routines, and utilize strengths-based strategies. Training should focus on emotional regulation, attachment theory, and practical classroom techniques (Brunzell et al. 2019).

Linguistic Inclusion and Translanguaging: Schools should support home-language maintenance while promoting Greek acquisition. Bilingual materials, diagnostic literacy assessments, and structured translanguaging practices can facilitate rapid language development (Cummins 2001; García and Wei 2014).

Intercultural Competence Across the School Community: Students, teachers, and families must engage in intercultural learning that challenges stereotypes and fosters empathy. Curricular reform should incorporate refugees' narratives, local migrant histories, and global citizenship education (Banks 2016).

Strengthening Parent–School Relations: Hiring cultural mediators, providing interpretation services, and organizing parent orientation workshops are essential for building trust. Flexible meeting times and community-based outreach can further enhance engagement (Epstein 2018).

Policy Flexibility and Resource Allocation: Governments must adopt agile funding mechanisms and differentiated resource allocation models that account for the disproportionate needs of schools serving refugee populations. Long-term, stable funding for NGO partnerships is crucial.

⬜⬜Regional Cooperation Across the Balkans: Given the transnational nature of refugee movement, Balkan states should coordinate educational records, share best practices, and develop mobility-friendly systems to prevent loss of learning during transit.

Conclusion

The experience of the Athens Intercultural School provides a vivid illustration of the challenges and possibilities inherent in refugee education within the Balkans. The region's longstanding identity as a bridge—geographical, cultural, and political—parallels the role education plays in the lives of displaced children: a threshold space where past and future converge, where vulnerability meets aspiration, and where the foundations of belonging are slowly constructed.

Despite systemic limitations, the efforts of teachers, students, and communities demonstrate that education can serve as a powerful mechanism for restoring dignity, building resilience, and promoting inclusion. Yet local initiatives, no matter how committed, cannot substitute for robust national and regional policies capable of ensuring equity and sustainability.

As global displacement continues to rise, the Balkan Peninsula will likely remain a critical corridor of human movement. Its schools, therefore, must be supported not only as sites of learning but as vital infrastructures of human rights. By investing in trauma-informed pedagogy, linguistic inclusion, intercultural competence, and flexible policy frameworks, the region can embody its historic role as a bridge—not only between East and West, but between conflict and peace, displacement and belonging, vulnerability and human flourishing.

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IVO ANDRIĆ, THE BALKANS AND WORLD LITERATURE

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Abstract

The only Nobel Prize winner from ex-Yugoslavia and the author of the famous Serbian novel The Bridge on the Drina (1945), Ivo Andrić represented the ideals of cultural unity and religious tolerance in the Balkans during his lifetime. As war erupted in the 1990s, Andrić and his work became the target of political accusations, including claims of inciting hatred and even genocide. Despite this turbulent reception, Andrić's literature continues to show that the Balkans have far more to offer the world than inevitable political struggles – a unique and compelling voice in World Literature.

Keywords*: Ivo Andrić (1892–1975), The Bridge on the Drina (1945), Balkans, World Literature, Nation.*

Introduction

There are not many places in Europe with such a turbulent history as the Balkans, with such a mixture of religious and national identities, cultural divisions and intertwined traditions, and there were certainly not many authors able to express and represent this complexity as well as Ivo Andrić (1892–1975). Born in Bosnia to a Catholic family, Andrić declared Serbian nationality in official documents after the Second World War. Throughout most of his life, he also supported the Yugoslav ideology, serving as a professional diplomat. He published his early poems in Zagreb in 1914, in an anthology of young Croatian lyric poets, and later lived and published his major prose works in Belgrade, many of which deal extensively with – Bosnian history [cf. 8].

Andrić received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1961 as a "Yugoslav writer" [10; 562], thus becoming the embodiment of a literary author in the region. He donated the entire sum of 250,000 Swedish crowns to the development of libraries in Bosnia and Herzegovina [7; 116]. At the time, for obvious reasons, Andrić was widely seen – both by his compatriots and foreign commentators – as a cohesive force in the Balkans, a promoter of cultural understanding and cohabitation [cf. 9; 130–131]. An excerpt from the speech delivered by Andre Österling, a member of the Nobel Comitte, during the 1961 award ceremony, effectively exemplifies this viewpoint:

The study of history and philosophy has inevitably led him to ask what forces, in the blows and bitterness of antagonisms and conflicts, act to fashion a people and a nation. His own spiritual attitude is crucial in that respect. Considering these antagonisms with a deliberate and acquired serenity, he endeavours to see them all in the light of reason and with a profoundly human spirit. Herein lies, in the last analysis, the major theme of all his work; from the Balkans it brings to the entire world a stoic message, as our generation has experienced it. [10; 564]

Needless to say, the civil war in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s brought about a significant shift in perspectives. The reception of Andrić's work entered a new phase marked by intense

polemics and frequent misinterpretations. Some of the most extreme examples illustrate just how much politics can distort the understanding of artistic expression. In a politically charged speech delivered in Sarajevo in 1992, the Croatian writer and journalist Ivan Lovrenović addressed the main arguments used to exclude Andrić from Croatian literature. Lovrenović clearly does not seek to deny the alleged validity of these arguments, but he does challenge their literary justification:

For what reasons? Roughly speaking, in a taxative overview, here they are: Andrić threw away Bosnian and Croatian and embraced the Serbian dialect, Andrić was a royal Yugoslav diplomat, Andrić refused to be included in the Croatian anthology, Andrić declared himself a Serbian writer, Andrić lived in Belgrade, and, finally, Andrić was two-faced, double-crossing, insincere, in any case a Serbian-Yugoslav whore and a traitor!

Even if these allegations are justified, let us have a look at where they belong. Exclusively to the personal-private, civic-moral and political domain. They have absolutely nothing to do with literature. [15; 44 – translated by B. V.][1]

In 1995, Dubravko Horvatić, Vice-President of Croatia's leading cultural institution, Matica hrvatska, wrote a preface to a collection of Andrić's early prose poems, published as part of the "Croatian Classics" ("Hrvatski klasici") series. His accusations against Andrić – including the false charge of inciting genocide – were as startling as they were widespread. Horvatić claimed that Andrić's novel *The Bridge on the Drina* (*На Дрини ћуприја*), along with his correspondence with Zdenka Marković from April 1923, "not only reek of national betrayal, but represent a call for genocide against his own [Croatian] people" [11; 9 – translated by B. V.].[2] Despite donating his entire Nobel Prize award to libraries in Bosnia, Andrić was nonetheless fervently accused of opportunism. Even the author's funeral, in Horvatić's view, aroused serious suspicion:

Completely dedicated to "acquiring money and fame", as he writes as early as 1921, Andrić wins the Nobel Prize for literature in 1961. He died in Belgrade on March 13th 1975. (According to the unofficial versions of the story, Andrić died on March 7th. However, since the death of a politician and 'people hero' V. Vlahović was announced the very same day, Andrić's death had to be announced later, as to prevent two pompous funeral ceremonies organized at the highest level of the state from happening at the same time.) [12; 11 – translated by B. V.][3]

When it comes to Andrić and Bosniak literary criticism from the 1990s, one should also consider its proponents in a broader context. In May 1999, Muhidin Pašić, president of the Bosniak Cultural Community in Tuzla, demanded that the Street of Ivo Andrić in the city be renamed [18; 222]. This decision provoked divided reactions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, prompting Pašić to explain his actions:

I can say with confidence that Ivo Andrić, precisely on the account of his literary works, is to be held even more responsible than the very proponents of the project of 'Greater Serbia'. He is one of the ideological architects of this project, along with some members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences

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[1] " Koji su to razlozi? Grubo govoreći, u taksativnom pregledu, evo ih: Andrić je zabacio ijekavicu i primio ekavicu, Andrić je bio kraljevski jugodiplomat, Andrić je odbio uvrštavanje u hrvatsku antologiju, Andrić se izjasnio kao srpski pisac, Andrić je živio u Beogradu, i, konačno, Andrić je bio dvoličan, prevrtljiv, neiskren, u svakom slučaju srpsko-jugoslavenska kurva i izdajnik! // Sve i ako su zasnovana, pogledajmo kamo spadaju ova spočitavanja. Isključivo u osobno-privatnu, građansko-moralnu i političku domenu. S književnim određenjima ti kriteriji nemaju ama baš ništa."

[2] " riječi koje vonjaju ne samo na nacionalnu izdaju, nego i na poziv za genocidom nad vlastitim narodom"

[3] "Uloživši sve svoje nastojanje da 'stiče(m) novac i slavu', kako piše još 1921., Andrić 1961. dobiva Nobelovu nagradu za književnost. Umro je u Beogradu 13. ožujka 1975. (Prema neslužbenim verzijama umro je 7. III., no kako je istoga dana objavljena smrt političara i 'narodnog heroja' V. Vlahovića, Andrićeva je smrt objavljena kasnije, da ne bi došlo istodobno do dvije pompozne posmrtne svečanosti na najvišoj državnoj razini)."

and Arts. If Andrić were alive, we would probably have initiated the process of determining his responsibility for the crimes in Bosnia, for all the atrocities inflicted upon the Bosniak people. [qtd. in 18; 223 – translated by B. V.][4]

This unfortunate event led to the organization of a conference titled „The Works of Ivo Andrić in a Historical and Social Context" („Djelo Ive Andrića u historijskom i društvenom kontekstu") held in Tuzla in November 1999. Its pronounced political agenda is highlighted by the involvement of Muhidin Pašić as a member of the editorial board for the conference proceedings, published under the title *Andrić and the Bosniaks* (*Andrić i Bošnjaci*). As noted in the "Word of the editors" ("Riječ uredništva"):

In the complex reality of the Balkans in the past and today, the Bosniaks have been and still are under attack by enemy ideologies, which considered Bosniaks should be expatriated because of their alleged 'historical guilt'. Among the firmest literary standpoints of this anti-Bosniak ideology, which to this very day inspire anti-Bosniak action, are the works by Njegoš, Mažuranić and Andrić. Getting to know and interpreting those works in a way that does not exhaust itself in the immanent approach to the literary work for Bosniaks is an important part in the fight for survival, a fight that has been dramatically intensified by the latest events (Aggression on the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992–1995). The editors want this collection to be a useful contribution to that struggle, and as a sign of such thinking, they are handing it over to the public. [5; 7 – translated by B. V.; cf. 18; 224][5]

Various contributions in this collection took this "fight for survival" from the field of warfare to the arena of literary studies. In an effort to answer the question: "[h]ow Andrić, through his art, supports the ideology of genocidal actors against his neighbors" [16; 119 – translated by B. V.],[6] Rasim Muminović recalls the harsh words of Adil Zulfikarpašić: "While Bosnian *chetniks* conducted the slaughters of Muslims, Andrić wrote his novels which were supposed to be their justification. It was an attempt to create an aliby for those crimes." [qtd. in 16; 122 – translated by B. V.; cf. 18; 233].[7]

Among these novels accused of inciting hatred toward Muslims, *The Bridge on the Drina* holds a prominent place. Andrić's famous work traces the centuries-long history of the small Bosnian town of Višegrad and its multicultural inhabitants, centered around a beautiful bridge on the river Drina. The bridge was built by Mehmed Paša Sokolović, the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century, to connect his birthplace with the eastern world. It symbolizes the ideal of beauty, the resilience of life, and man's eternal struggle to overcome divisions and hardship – experiences all too familiar in Balkan history. In the first chapter, Andrić sets the stage for his literary "chronicle", comprising history and legend, fact and fiction. Both of these essential elements of human existence emerge in a well-known episode early in the novel, showcasing Andrić's talent for transforming a simple description

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[4] " Slobodan sam kazati da Ivo Andrić, upravo zbog svojih literarnih djela, snosi veliku odgovornost, veću možda i od samih realizatora projekta 'Velika Srbija'. On je jedan od ideoloških arhitekata tog projekta, zajedno sa nekim članovima SANU–a. Da je živ, vjerovatno bismo pokrenuli utvrđivanje njegove odgovornost i za zločine u Bosni, za sve strahote koje su se dogodile bošnjačkom narodu."

[5] "U složenoj balkanskoj zbilji prošlosti i savremenosti Bošnjaci su bili i još uvijek jesu na udaru neprijateljskih ideologija koje su smatrale da je riječ o narodu kojeg zbog njegove 'historijske krivice' treba prognati sa ovih prostora. U književnoj dionici te protivbošnjačke ideologije najsnažnije uporišne stope, koje do dana današnjeg pothranjuju protivbošnjačku praksu, jesu djela NJegoša, Mažuranića i Andrića. Upoznavanje i tumačenje tih djela na način koji se ne iscrpljuje u imanentnom pristupu književnom djelu za Bošnjake je važna dionica u borbi za opstanak, borbi koja je dramatično zaoštrena najnovijim zbivanjima (Agresijom na Republiku Bosnu i Hercegovinu 1992–1995). Uredništvo želi da ovaj zbornik bude koristan prilog toj borbi i u znaku takvog razmišljanja predaje ga javnosti."

[6] "Kako Andrić svojom umjetnošću podržava ideologiju genocidnih aktera prema susjedima?"

[7] "Dok su bosanski četnici vršili pokolje muslimana, dotle je Andrić pisao svoje romane koji su trebali da budu opravdanje pokolja muslimana. To je bio pokušaj stvaranja alibija za te zločine."

into a study of Balkan mentality. The narrator's attention turns to hollows on the riverbanks, which appear as if left by the hoof of an enormous horse:

The children who fished for tiddlers all day in the summer along these stony banks knew that these were hoofprints of ancient days and long dead warriors. Great heroes lived on earth in those days, when the stone had not yet hardened and was soft as the earth and the horses, like the warriors, were of colossal growth. Only for the Serbian children these were the prints of the hooves of Šarac, the horse of Kraljević Marko, which had remained there from the time when Kraljević Marko himself was in prison up there in the Old Fortress and escaped, flying down the slope and leaping the Drina, for at that time there was no bridge. But the Turkish children knew that it had not been Kraljević Marko, nor could it have been (for whence could a bastard Christian dog have had such strength or such a horse!) any but Djerzelez Alija on his winged charger which, as everyone knew, despised ferries and ferrymen and leapt over rivers as if they were watercourses. They did not even squabble about this, so convinced were both sides in their own belief. And there was never an instance of any one of them being able to convince another, or that any one had changed his belief. [3; 27–28][8]

Andrić dissects the total, albeit peaceful, indifference of both Christians and Muslims to each other's views in a calm and understanding manner. The firm belief of Serbian children in the feats of their epic hero Marko Kraljević is no different in nature from the belief of Muslim children in Alija Đerzelez, the hero of Muslim epic poetry [cf. 17; 225, 229–230]. Both of these national mythologies are presented *sub specie aeternitatis* and dismantled with refined, composed irony. One gets the impression that the narrator is almost nostalgic for a time when "the stone was soft as the earth", in contrast to the present day, when beliefs have already hardened like rock. The history of the Balkans, however, teaches us that there is something far worse than peacefully ignoring one's "rivals". Andrić was deeply aware of the outbreaks of terrible violence between people of different faiths and customs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And although *The Bridge on the Drina* contains many depictions of violence, the author never loses sight of the historical, social, and cultural forces behind them – forces deeply rooted in human nature. The very purpose of literature, according to Andrić and his Nobel Prize speech, was to serve "man and humanity," not to spread hatred or point fingers at real or imagined enemies:

Each assumes the moral responsibility for his own story and each must be allowed to tell it freely. But, in conclusion, it is to be hoped that the story told by today's author to his contemporaries, irrespective of its form and content, should be neither tarnished by hate nor obscured by the noise of homicidal machines, but that it should be born out of love and inspired by the breadth of ideas of a free and serene human mind. For the storyteller and his work serve no purpose unless they serve, in one way or another, man and humanity. That is the essential point. [1; 567–568][9]

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[8] "Деца, која дуж те камените обале, за летњих дана, по вас дан лове ситну рибу, знају да су то трагови давних времена и старих ратника. Тада су на земљи живели велики јунаци, камен је још био незрео и мек као земља, а коњи су били, као и јунаци, џиновског раста. Само, за српску децу то су трагови Шарчевих копита, остали још од онда кад је Краљевић Марко тамновао горе у Старом граду па побегао из њега, спустио се низ брдо и прескочио Дрину, на којој тада није било ћурприје. А турска деца знају да то није био Краљевић Марко нит' је могао бити (јер откуд влаху и копилану таква сила и такав коњ!), него Ђерзелез Алија, на својој крилатој бедевији, који је као што је познато презирао скеле и скелеџије и прескакао реке као поточиће. Они се о томе и не препиру, толико су и једни и други убеђени у тачност свога веровања. И нема примера да је икад ико успео да кога разувери или да је ко променио своје мишљење." [2; 14–15]

[9] "свак сноси моралну одговорност за оно што прича, и сваког треба пустити да слободно прича. Али допуштено је, мислим, на крају пожелети да прича коју данашњи приповедач прича људима свога времена, без обзира на њен облик и њену тему, не буде ни затрована мржњом ни заглушена грмљавином убилачког оружја, него што је могућно више покретана љубављу и вођена ширином и ведрином слободног људског

It is almost saddening to see how the reception of a literary opus that advocated for tolerance, creativity, and the universality of the human spirit ended up marked by terrible divisions, destruction, and the proliferation of national differences. In various editions and interpretations, Andrić has, up until this moment, been granted almost ten "citizenships": Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Bosniak, Yugoslav, Balkan, South Slavic and Shtokavian.[10] The question of Andrić's inclusion in the ever so mobile cannon of World Literature, despite its obvious relevance and urgency, does not appear to be nearly as present as the question of his national appurtenance. The latter, unfortunately, cannot be explained by Pascale Casanova's still fairly optimistic account of national literatures competing to become part of the world cannon, of peripheries struggling to find their place in the center – both spatial and temporal [6; 75]. A different set of laws seems to be at work here, a mechanism that might be dubbed the "philosophy of parochialism" [14; cf. 13]. The province does not fight for the present or for international prestige, it fights over its past and local specificity [13; 255–256; 14; 25]

World Literature is unlikely to resolve the dillemmas surrounding Andrić's nationality or the supposed "nationality" of his work. What it can do, however, is place South Slavic literary scholarship within a radically expanded and soberingly pragmatic context. Consider, for example, an anthology of World Literature that seeks to include Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian literary traditions. On their own, and simply due to limited geopolitical influence, none of these literatures would likely attract the attention of an international publisher. The only realistic path for the ex-Yugoslav or Balkan republics to enter the canon of World Literature is, in fact, to do so together. In such a context, the endless debates about Andrić's national identity may well be relegated to a curious footnote. Some literary critics have even argued that "in times to come, Andrić will be considered one of the so-called 'polyvalent' authors […] and yet again become, if not a 'Yugoslav', than a South Slavic author" [9; 141 – translated by B. V.].[11] Let us, therefore, take Andrić's rich, multicultural body of work as a bridge between the world and the Balkans. Let us introduce Andrić – and other writers from the region – to international audiences. At least then, we will have something even more worth arguing over.

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духа. Јер, приповедач и његово дело не служе ничем ако на један или на други начин не служе човеку и човечности." [4; 148–149]

[10] A name which refers to a common Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian dialect [cf. 9; 140–141].

[11] "Andrić će u budućnosti pripadati 'polivalentnim' autorima [...] i tako opet postati, ako ne 'jugoslovenski', a ono 'južnoslovenski' autor".

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CULTURAL CROSSROADS: TURKIC INFLUENCES IN THE UNESCO CITIES OF AZERBAIJAN AND ALBANIA

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of Turkic and Ottoman direct and indirect influences on the urban and architecture character of four UNESCO cities: Baku and Sheki in Azerbaijan, and Gjirokastër and Berat in Albania. Although geographically distant, these cities share common patterns of urban space organization, urban morphology, and some similar architectural elements. The study investigates distinctive and shared cultural features in urbanism, architecture, and decorative arts. This paper underscores the importance of preserving these cities as living testimonies of shared yet locally distinct traditions.

Keywords: Turkic influence, ottoman influence, Albania, Azerbaijan, UNESCO cities, art, architecture, preservation

Introduction

The cultural history of Azerbaijan and Albania, though geographically distant, reveal an intrinsically convergence in urban and architectural development due to Turkic and Ottoman influences. In Azerbaijan, this influence began around the 10th and 11th century with the arrival Oghuz Turks in South Caucasus, and were consolidated during the dynasty of the Seljuk Turks in the 11th century o [4; 3080]. Subsequent Ottoman expansion in the 16th century further reinforced these traditions, integrating Islamic architectural principles with local building practices [6; 2]. The Ottomans relied on Turkic knowledge, institutions and cultural forms inherited from the Seljuks, while also invented new Islamic cultural models adapting to different context. As a result, their empire, extended in a vast area widely spread Turkic cultural traditions, from North Africa and the Middle East to Southeast Europe. In this sense, the Ottomans become the main transmitters of Turkic culture in Albania and into the Balkans more in general.

Albanian cities of Gjirokastër and Berat, in contrast, experienced Turkic heritage indirectly under the Ottoman administration. In almost five centuries of Ottoman rule, Albania absorbed ottoman culture and religious influence that had their roots in Turkic heritage. This influence is evident in the transformation of existing urban centers by introducing castles, bridges, mosques, tombs, hammams, tekkes, and traditional houses [3; 1]. Azerbaijan, on the other side experienced direct Turkic cultural influence, which was transformed later into ottoman culture. Despite modalities, in both countries, this influence is visible in architecture features and urban morphology.

Methodolody

This study is based on a comparative case study approach, analyzing four UNESCO-protected cities: Baku and Sheki in Azerbaijan, and Gjirokastër and Berat in Albania. The main sources include historical maps, UNESCO documentation, authors previous research and literature review. The analyses of these cities will be based on three main aspects: 1. Historical and cultural background; 2. Urban morphology; 3. Residential architecture. Comparative tables, maps and images are used to synthesize and illustrate research findings.

Geographical Areas and Case Study Definition

The selected case studies are located in two different countries Azerbaijan and Albania, the first is in the South Caucasus in Asia and the second in the Balkans, in Southeast Europe. In both countries there are two UNESCO-listed cities with a rich urban and architectural heritage influenced by Turkic and Islamic culture. In Azerbaijan, the old city of Baku, part of the capital city is on the Caspian Sea Coast, while Sheki, is located on the slopes of the Greater Caucasus mauntain. In Albania, Gjirokastra, is located in the south part of the country, in the Drino Valley, and Berat, almost centrally located, along the Osum River between two mountains.

Historical and Cultural Overview of Baku, Sheki, Gjirokastër, and Berat

The old cities of Baku and Sheki in Azerbaijan, along with the old traditional cities of Gjirokastra and Berat in Albania, have been nominated in the last decades UNESCO protected site, due to their rich historical, architectural, and urban layers shaped by Turkic, Persian, and Ottoman influences. Each city reflects its own interaction with the imperial powers that have shaped them over centuries, with some of them developing as strategic economic centers or administrative hub.

Until the mid-19th century, Baku was developed within the fortified walls of the Old City. Its position on the Caspian Sea favored its development as a center for oil, textiles, and trade. The capture of Baku by Ottoman Sultan Murat III in 1585 reinforced further its role as a fortified commercial and residential center, shaping the dense urban fabric that survives today [2].

The old city of Sheki, at the foot of Greater Caucasus Mountain, flourished end expanded due to silk production and agriculture, especially under the Safavid and Qajar dynasties. Its urban form is open and organic and is characterized by typical Muslim cities public buildings such as caravanserais, mosques, and hammams while its architecture reflects mainly Persian traditions, with residences with courtyard.

Gjirokastër and Berat came under Ottoman rule in 1479, which lasted until Albanian independence in 1912. They were both developed as provincial administrative centers. During the ottoman period they gain not only new neighborhoods, but also new religious and civic buildings and housing types evolved to ottoman features but were influenced by local cultural, religious, and economic features of each city. The economy of Baku was based on oil and trade, Sheki's on silk and agriculture, while the Albanian cities grew mainly through agriculture, crafts, textiles, and wine production. In the early 19th century, population in these cities ranged from 10,000 to 25,000, with Sheki's historic core the largest covering 120.5 ha and Baku's the smallest covering only 21.5 ha (*Table 1*.).

These cities present diverse religious communities, with in genera a dominance of muslims: Baku hostled small Orthodox, Baha'i, and Russian Orthodox communities, Sheki hosted small Christian and Hebraic community, Gjirokastër had very small Orthodox and Bektashi minorities while Berat had a large orthodox community, alongside with significant Muslim and Bektashi populations. Cultural, religious, and economic features have influenced the urban fabric and the various architecture characteristics of both cities.

Table 1. Comparative Table: Key Aspects of urban profile of Baku, Sheki, Gjirokastër, and Berat old towns

Parameters	Baku	Sheki	Gjirokastër	Berat
Start of Turkic Influence	11th century (Seljuk Empire)	11th century (Seljuk Empire)	N/A	N/A
Start of Ottoman Influence	6th century (Ottoman expansion)	**16th Century**: Persian period (Safavid and Qajar)	1479 (Ottoman expansion)	1479 (Ottoman expansion)
End of Turkic Influence	Early 19th century (Russian conquest)	Early 19th century (Russian conquest)	N/A	N/A
End of Ottoman Influence	Early 19th century (Russian conquest)	Early 19th century (Russian conquest)	1912 (Albanian independence)	1912 (Albanian independence)
UNESCO Historical Area	21.5 ha	120.5 ha	67.8 ha	58.9 ha
Religious Composition of Historical area	**Islam,** Orthodox Christianity, Baha'i, Russian Orthodox	**Islam**, Orthodox Christianity, Jews	**Islam,** Orthodox Christianity, Bektashi Islam	**Orthodox,** Christianity, Bektashi Islam
Estimated Population (Early 19th Century)	20,000–25,000	10,000–15,000	15,000–20,000	20,000–25,000
Status During Turkic/Ottoman Period	Strategic port	Regional center, Silk Road hub	Ottoman provincial center, military and administrative hub	Ottoman provincial capital, trade and military hub
Economic Development	Oil, cotton, textiles, trade	Silk production, agriculture	Agriculture, craftsmanship, trade	Agriculture, crafts, wine, textiles

4. Urban Morphology of UNESCO-Protected Areas. A comparison analyses.

4.1 Baku and Sheki, Azerbaijan

The old city of Baku presents a dense and compact layout enclosed by fortress walls, typical in many Muslim cities. The urban form is characterized by a labyrinthic layout with narrow winding streets, courtyards, and public buildings such as mosques, caravanserais, and the Maiden Tower (

Figure *1*). The urban fabric is defined by attached stone buildings, which are often two-story with arched entrances and rooftop terraces. Ottoman architectural influence is particularly notable in the domed mosques, minarets, and decorative motifs and the presence of commercial spaces and public baths (hammams), typical in Muslim cities.

The urban morphology of the old city of Sheki is also defined by a low-rise, with narrow winding streets, but has a more open urban form, integrated into the natural landscape and nestled between the Greater Caucasus Mountains. It represents a model of sustainable urbanism (Figure 2). The urban fabric is articulated through stone buildings, often houses with courtyard with rooftop gardens, typical of Turkic architectural traditions. Apart from residential buildings there was a bazaar and caravanserais, and historical palatial structures, particularly the Sheki Khan's Palace, which reflects the influence of both Turkic, Ottoman and Persian styles [8].
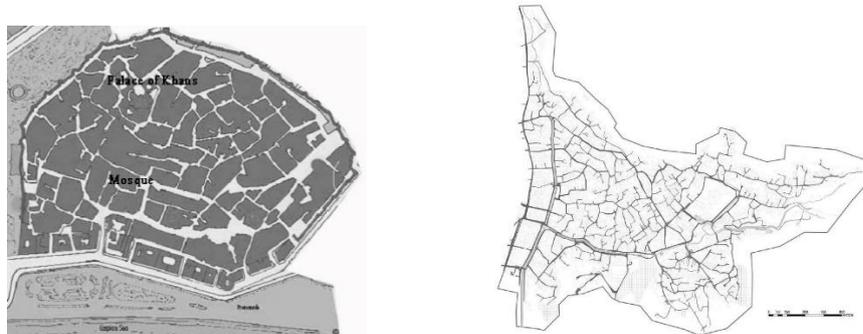
Figure 1. Map of Old Baku (Source: Interfase. (2011, December 6). Wikimedia Commons)
Figure 2. Map of historical area of Sheki (Source: State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2020)

4.2 Gjirokastra and Berat, Albania

The origins of city of Gjirokastra are closely tied to the castle, which was the ancient nucleus of settlement together with a small neighborhood at the foot of the castle. Following Ottoman occupation in 1419, Gjirokastra became an important administrative center of the empire. As a result, the city spreading in various neighborhoods separated by the rugged hilly terrain in an open urban form integrated with the topography and the surrounding green landscape. Its urban structure developed through a slope-based narrow street system with 5 main roads, radiating outward from the castle and the central Pazar area, with neighborhoods articulated according to the natural conditions of the terrain: along ridges, on moderate slopes, in steep areas, and in the valleys between ridges [5; 138-147]. Neighborhoods are characterized by winding alleys and by the presence of small mosques, hammams and tower houses set within large courtyards (Figure 4). The orientation of these houses follows the terrain, maximizing the views and natural light. This orientation and the architecture feature of the houses creates a distinctive urban landscape that reflects the synthesis of Ottoman planning principles with the local environment.

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The origins of the old city of Berat are closely tied to its castle. Following the Ottoman conquest of 1417, the city developed first within the limits of its medieval fortifications, maintaining a compact, enclosed structure in three main neighborhoods and later in the 18th century it gradually expanded into new Muslim neighborhoods. During this period, Berat had 6 separated neighborhoods, Kala, Mangalem, Përroi, Vakëfi, Gorica, and Murat Çelepi, each shaped by the different terrain morphologies. The street pattern was organic. On flat terrain or gentle slopes, houses had larger courtyards and the buildings density was law, while on steeper slopes, building were attached to each other and had smaller yards around (

Figure *3*). During this period new public buildings were constructed such as mosques, the bazaar, caravanserais, hammams, and tekkes. The most prestigious one was erected in the city center, at the foot of Mangalem neighborhood, while smaller mosques were building in each neighborhood to serve local communities. Houses, mainly made of stone, originally of the medieval time were transformed in the 18th century, adding lighter structures to the upper floors and the introduction of the "ekrer" element along the street, typical of Ottoman architecture, which were destroyed folloring 18th century earthquake. New Ottoman houses of the period were also made of stone and often feature open porches on both floors, known as *hajat* and *çardak*.
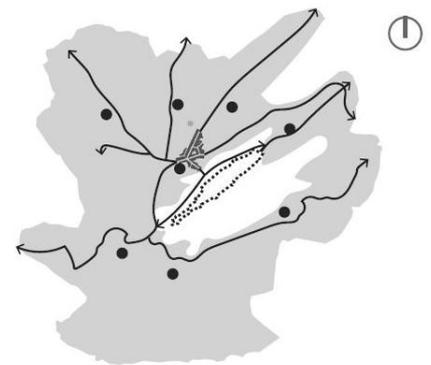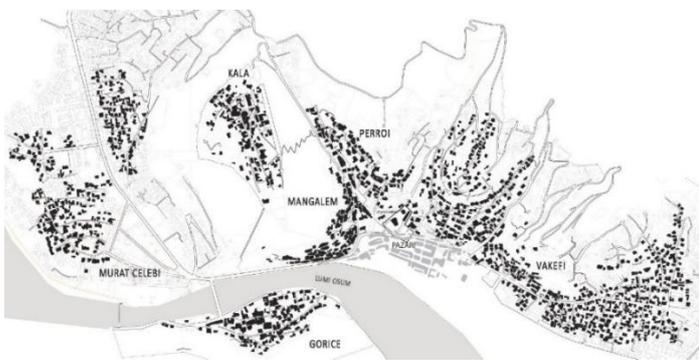
Figure 3. Map of Berat urban extension during ottoman period (Source: Author)
Figure 4. Map of Gjirokastra urban structure during ottoman period (Source: Authors)

5. Residential architecture

5.1 Traditional Residential architecture in Baku
The traditional residential architecture of old Baku, shaped under Ottoman and broader Turkic influences between the 17th and 19th centuries, is characterized by one to three stories limestone houses with flat roofs, and protruding oriel windows (*erkər*) or semi-open loggias (*çardak*) on the upper floors, which project outward over the street or internal courtyard. This element was usually made of carved wooden screens, and originate from *mashrabiya* tradition, which ensured privacy for residents, allowing light and ventilation of the inside space. In this regard, they reflect the influence of Turkic domestic traditions, Persian decorative elements, and the religious principles of privacy. In Baku, this element can still be found in the houses along Kichik Gala Street and Boyuk Gala Street, where *erkər*-type balconies extend toward the road space on from the upper stories (

Figure *5*).

Figure 5. Old Town Baku, house with closed balconies (Source: Streetview)
Figure 6. Sheki traditional houses (Source: UNESCO, 2019)

Traditional houses in old Sheki are typically one to three stories, made out of stone, bricks, and wood. Their layout closely resembles the Ottoman house model, organized around verandas (*seyvan*) or wooden balconies (*eyvan*) that serve as transitional spaces between the interior and exterior. Due to different climatic conditions, Sheki houses are characterized by their pitched roofs, on a contrary to the flat roofs of Baki traditional houses (Figure 6). They interior are very rich in decorations being adorned with wall paintings, frescoes, and other ornamental details.

5.2 Traditional Residential architecture in Gjirokasta and Berat

The traditional Ottoman houses of Gjirokastra, often referred to as kulla (tower-houses), were primarily built between the 17th and 19th centuries. These houses are typically two to four stories high, constructed predominantly from local limestone [7]. Their design combines domestic and defensive functions: the lower levels served for storage and livestock and has few small openings, while the upper floors housed family quarters featuring larger windows and wooden verandas (*çardak*), with the central structural part of the veranda often built in wood. All houses have pitched roofs covered with stone tiles, typical for this region (

Figure *7*). Gjirokastër house reflects the Ottoman-Balkan domestic typology responding to privacy, social structure and prestige, and a vertical division of functions, but responds also to local context and landscape characteristics.

The traditional Ottoman houses of Berat represent a distinctive typology with 2-3 floors, where functions are clearly divided between service areas on the ground floor, family rooms on the middle floors, and the guest room on the top floor. Houses were built with stone walls and wooden elements on the upper levels, have tiled roofs, numerous windows, and verandas opened to the view.
Both houses in Berat and Gjirokastra have many interior decorations including carved ceilings, wooden *musandra*, and wall paintings with typical motives of ottoman tradition.
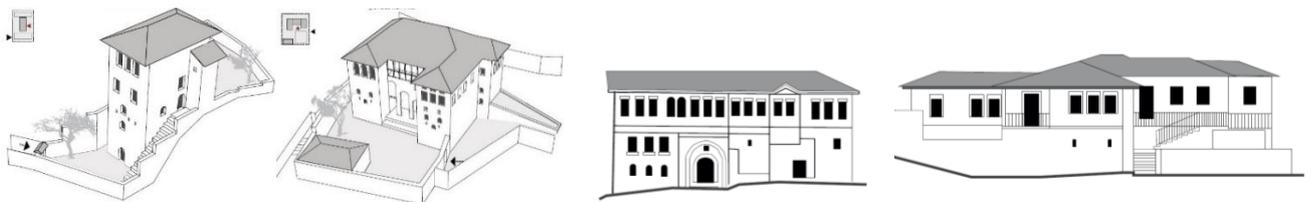

Figure 7. Tower house typology in Gjirokastra (Source, Papa, 2020)
Figure 8. Berat house typology (Source: Authors drawing, based on National Archive materials)

5.3 Comparative Analysis of Ottoman and Turkic domestic Architecture

The traditional domestic architecture of Baku, Sheki, Gjirokastër, and Berat is the result of Ottoman and Turkic influence in the use of various typical elements, but they present also a singularity given by the different geographical context, local climate, and social and cultural contexts, resulting in distinctive regional house typologies. Each of the cities present common Ottoman and Turkic elements such as the use of balconies, verandas or loggias, and principles of design such as the emphasis on privacy. On the other hand, local adaptations (roof type, materials, and climatic responses) define each region's distinctive architectural identity.

The old city of Baku stands out for its compact urban form. The historical part of Sheki is renowned for the integration of various materials in the house construction and the rich decorated interiors.

Gjirokasta features defensive stone tower houses which are close to the basement and more open and decorated on the opper levels. Berat demonstrates the adaptation of exiting typologies to ottoman house features and the construction of new houses with typical ottoman elements such as the *chardak* and *hajat*. (
Table 2).

Table 2. Comparative analyses of domestic architecture in Azerbajan and Albania UNESCO cities

City	Materials	Form & Layout	Key Features	Influences
Baku	Local limestone	2–3 stories, courtyard houses	Flat roofs, arched entrances, andaruni/biruni division	Turkic-Islamic with Persian & Ottoman
Sheki	Stone, brick, wood	1-3 stories, eyvan houses	Wooden balconies and terraces, shebeke windows, frescoes, pitched roofs	Ottoman + local Caucasian
Gjirokastër	Stone + wood (small parts)	2–4 stories, tower-house (kullë) typology	Massive stone walls, defensive character, large upper windows, wall paintings in interior and exterior (Maily in wealthy families)	Ottoman with local fortified adaptation
Berat	Stone (base), wood (upper)	2–3 stories, terraced hillside houses	Stone basements, Whitewashed walls, rows of windows, wooden balconies, Erker.	Domestic + ottoman influence

Conclusions

In the four analyzed cities in Azerbajan and Albania, despite different regions, historical and cultural context, there are common urban and architectural elements related to Ottoman and Turkic traditions. However, their application varies depending on different contexts in response regional adaptation to local climate, topography, availability of sources and materials, etc.

a. Shared architectural vocabulary

The residential architecture of Baku, Sheki, Gjirokastër, and Berat illustrates a shared Ottoman and Turkic architectural vocabulary, which is visible in the use of verandas, balconies (çardak/eyvan), oriel windows (erkər), and vertical zoning of domestic functions. Privacy, hierarchical spatial organization, and social prestige were central design concerns across all four contexts and derive from religious background.

b. Local Adaptations

In the four analyzed cities, there are some aspects of architecture and urban design that are adapted to local conditions. In Baku, for example, houses feature flat roofs, while Sheki's houses employ pitched, stone-tiled roofs adapted to local climatic conditions. In Gjirokastër, residential buildings present a tower (kulla) typology, reflecting defensive needs while in Berat, houses are on 2-3 floor and more open. On the other hand, their upper floor and the pronounced *erker*, which characterize today's landscape, were built in timber, s structure introduced after an earthquake of the 18th century to improve seismic resilience.

c. Urban Morphology and Topographical Integration

All the cities are shaped based on principles of Islam, which reflect human relations in the design and conceptualization of urban space. Baku is a compact walled city with winding narrow streets and the lack of large open spaces. Sheki, Gjirokastër, and Berat, present an open organic form, integrated with the landscape. The urban patterns in both cities, reflect levels of privacy. In addition, streets form, courtyards, and building orientations respond to topography and climatic conditions, demonstrating a landscape approach characterizing Ottoman and Turkic design principles.

This study show how Turkic and Ottoman cultural models were never strictly imposed but were instead reinterpreted based on various contexts, producing unique urban and architectural expressions. Cities in Azerbaijan and Albania do not only represent their own historical urban and architecture development but highlight also their importance as living testimonies of shared yet locally distinct traditions.

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LINGUISTIC TRACES OF OTTOMAN INFLUENCE: SERBIAN SURNAMES DERIVED FROM TURKISH TERMS FOR CRAFTSMEN AND PROFESSIONS[12]

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Abstract

In the Serbian surname corpus there is a big part on surnames of Turkish origin and its` detailed analysis of the antroponymic corpus overcomes the frame of this paper, so we will focus on those derived from Turkish terms for craftsmen and professions. Surnames derived from terms for craftsmen and professions can be found all across Europe. Also, they exist both in the Azeri and the Serbian language. By origin these surnames were nicknames, standing next to the name, in times when surnames didn't exist in today`s sense, aiming to distinguish a person among other members of one community.

Key Words: *onomastic, surnames, Serbian, Turkish, craftsman, professions*

Introduction

The onomastic system of one language is the result of cultural-historical facts of some region at a certain point in time. Onomastic is the special part of lexical system. In the Serbian surname corpus there is a big part of surnames of Turkish origin and its` detailed analysis of the antroponymic corpus overcomes the frame of this paper, so we will focus on those derived from Turkish terms for craftsmen and professions.

Each surname has its own semantic characteristic. Kurbanov put emphasis on the fact that the semantic analyses of antroponyms is a very important issue [5; 81]. The first surnames in the whole world were formed as possesive adjectives from fathers' names (patronymic), rarely from mothers' names (matronymic).

Surnames derived from terms for craftsmen and professions can be found all across Europe. By origin these surnames were bynames (nicknames), standing next to the name, in times when surnames didn't exist in today`s sense, aiming to distinguish, identify and differentiate a person among other members of one community with the same given name. A byname (or a nickname) is name a person bears added to his or her real name [1: 238].

Bynames of occupation are reflected in the large number of surnames today. In medieval times many bynames were formed from terms for crafts or trade such as English *Baker, Barker* (tanner), *Brewer, Webber*, *Chaucer (shoe-maker), Cheesewright (cheesemaker), Lister* (dyer), *Thrower (silk-winder), Whittier (white leather-dresser),* German Fischer *fisherman*, Bauer *peasant*, Schneider *tailor*

[1: 244; 8; preface]. The modern surnames represent an exellent description of the medieval societes. The top fourteen positions of the most common surnames in Germany are held by occupational names with Müller *miller,* Meier *tenant farmer* and Schmidt *smith* as the most common [11: 319].

Also, these surnames exist both in the Azeri and the Serbian language. In Azeri language they do not represent a big group of surnames, for example *Avcıyev* Hasan, *Demirciyev* Kamil, *Çobanova* Aynur [5; 84].

Dictionaries represent important source for Onomastics. Most linguistic dictionaries include proper nouns [4; 80]. In Serbia few surname dictionaries have been published [7; 6; 14]. The material for this paper was mainly excerpted from the Dictionary of the Standard and Vernacular Serbo-Croatian Language of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Since 1959, 22 volumes of the *SASA Dictionary* [9] have come out (*а–послужитељство*). Judging by the corpus of around six million cards, the *SASA Dictionary* will comprise more than 30 volumes with at least 500,000 entries. Surnames that are interesting in semantic or morphological way are given as SASA Dictionary entries [13; article 222]. Etymology is not given for names and surnames, but after definition under the designation *compare* (*isporedi*) as a note of origin could be given the word that onomastic has been derived from [13; article 224], for example:

Amidžić *prezime* ; isp. Amidža (Amidžić *surname*; cf. Amidža). Compared word *Amidža* represents nickname in Serbian derived from word *amidža*, uncle (tur. amca).

Asurdžić *prezime;* isp. asurdžija (Asurdžić *surname*; cf. asurdžija). Compared word *asurdžija* means *mat maker.*

Some onomastic entries are defined as *a nickname that became surname*:

Bakal, –ala *nadimak koji je postao prezime.*

Bakal–ala *nickname that became surname.* Additional corpus is based on Serbian online fixed network telephone lines guide.[13]

The Ottoman Empire conquered territories of the Balkans where the South Slavic peoples lived in the 14th century. Since then direct and intesive cultural contacts have begun. By conquering territories the Ottomans were also bringing their cultural-civilizational heritage and inter alia new and till then unknown crafts in Serbia had been established: *jewelry* (kujundžiluk)*, tanning (of animal hides)* (tabakluk)*, furriery* (ćurčiluk)*, making of kettles/boilers* (kazandžiluk)*, making of silk thread* (kazazluk)*, barber`s craft* (berberluk)*, boza making* (bozadžiluk) etc. The urban population was serving the Ottoman administration and developing crafts. Based on that, many Serbian surnames derived from Turkish terms for craftsmen were formed.

Handcrafts in Serbia have been divided into town and village ones and just traditional handcrafts that are the subject of our paper, represent reflection of a several centuries long   tradition of living in a village or in a town, as well as strong Turkish influence in this area. On the other hand, some surnames such as *Bašanski, Bašić* (baš < tur. baş, chief, head) *Ćajačić* (ćehaja, ćaja < tur. kâhya: head of a trade guild), *Ćiračanin* (čirak < tur. çırak: apprentice, tiro) *Kalfić* (kalfa < tur. kalfa: experienced apprentice workman), *Šegrt* (šegrt < tur. şakirt: apprentice, tiro) testify about existing of firm organization and complete handcrafts hierarchy [15; 46].

An analysis of Turcisms naming craftsmen and professions has shown that they have mostly become out-of-date and a part of the passive lexical fund in the past fifty years. The concept *zanat* (craft) itself represents a Balkan turcism in the Serbian language and signifies *carefully studied,*

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[13] http://www.11811.rs/BeleStrane/Index

perfected workmanship of an object by hand or with the help of primitive tools, craft; dealing with such workmanship as a permanent occupation.

Analysis of all Turcisms in Serbian has shown that Turcisms in recent fifty years have become out-of-date and a part of the passive lexical fund. The results have shown that there are about 3000 Turcisms nowadays in literary language and this is one third from the whole number of Turcisms noted in the Dictionary by Škaljić [10]. From 3000 turicsms, 50% belong to archaic Turcisms [2; 559].

For example, lexeme *terzija* (tailor) was the part of the general lexical fund sixty years ago, while today belongs to the passive lexical fund. This word, despite the developed derivation (→ *terzijin, terzijica, terzijski, terzilica, terziluk*) do not exist in active usage of speakers of contemporary Serbian language and is replaced with word *krojač*. From 88 students of Teacher Education Faculty of the University of Belgrade just one student knew the meaning of lexeme *terzija* [2; 488].

Fourteen years after Great Migration of Serbs led by the Patriarch Arsenije III Čarnojevic to Hungary as a result of Great Turkish War, population census (1704) in the town of Taban shows overcome of craft terminology of Turkish origin. Significant number of lexemes naming craftsmen, professions and titles represent turcisms: *abadžija (aba maker)*, *bakalin (grocer)*, *balugdžija (fisherman)*, *barjaktar (flagbearer)*, *bojadžija (painter)*, *bozadžija (maker of boza)*, *dunđer (builder)*, *kalajdžija* (tinker; tinner), *kapamadžija* (dealer in ready-made clothing), *kašikćija* (spoon maker), *kujundžija* (jeweler), *luledžija* (maker/seller of clay or meerschaum pipe bowls), *simidžija* (maker/seller of simits), *subaša* (chief of police), *tabak* (tanner (of animal hides), *telal* (town crier), *ćurčija* (furrier), *čoban* (shepard), *čorbadžija* (Christian notable in Turkish towns) etc. Population census from 1738 and 1740 register certain number of surnames derived from Turkish terms for craftsmen, for example *Buzadžija, Tabak, Terzija, Torbar* and *Ćurčija*. Surnames derived from certain craftsman in population census from 1704 represented nicknames, standing next to the name as a byname and aiming to distinguish a person among other members of Taban's community. According to these surnames based on appellative lexis it could be talked about early establishing of surnames in this region with regard to some other regions [3]. Later Serbian King Aleksandar Karadjordjevic ordered in 1851 establishing of permanent surnames given after the oldest and the most important ancestors. Just from 1900 surnames became settled. After First World War system of identification based on surnames became in use all over the Balkans. The example from the town of Taban in Hungary could be the example how bynames developed into hereditary surnames. Thus, in general drawing a line between bynames and hereditary surnames is not easy, because it is difficult to definitely make conclusion whether a given denotation is still a name of a craft or profession or may be consider as a (proto)surname.

The Ottoman Tax registers (*Tahrir Defterleri*) represent very important and significant source for studying onomastics of Serbian territories. Tax registers included detailed information on tax-paying subjects and taxable resources, fiscal duties, offering the base for studying the demographic, economic and social history of the Middle East and Eastern Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They also tell us about the long history of certain crafts. For example Ottoman tax register of Kruševac region from 1584 included information about 14 tailors (krojači), makers/sellers of leather goods (sarači), carpenters (who constructs the wooden framework of a building) (dunđeri), 6 tanners (of animal hides) (tabak), 5 butchers (kasapi) and 2 makers/sellers of halvah (halvadžija) written next to the tax/paying craftsmen [16; 54].

There are over 120 craftsmen and professional names of Turkish origin in Serbian language [2; 96–97]. From over 120 craftsmen and professional names of Turkish origin 57 names have been derived surnames, mostly from those crafts and professions generally needed in old times:

ABADŽIJA < tur. abacı: maker/seller of coarse wool cloth/garments → **Abadžija**, **Abadžin**, **Abadžić**

ALVADŽIJA < tur. helvacı: maker/seller of halvah → **Alvadžić, Alvadžijević, Alvadžin**

AMALIN < tur. hamal: porter, carrier → **Amalović**

ASURDŽIJA < tur. hasırcı: mat maker → **Asurdžić**

BAKAL < tur. bakkal: grocer → **Bakal, Bakalčić**

BARUDŽIJA < tur. barutçu: gunpowder maker/seller → **Barudžija**

BAŽDAR < tur. bajdar: customs officer→ **Baždar**

BERBER(IN) < tur. berber: barber → **Berber**, **Berberović**

BOSTANDŽIJA < tur. bostancı: vegetable gardener → **Bostandžić**

BOJADŽIJA < tur. boyacı: dyer → **Bojadžija**

BOZADŽIJA < tur. bozacı: maker/seller of boza → **Bozalo, Bozadžija**

BUNARDŽIJA < tur. bunarcı: maker and repairer of draw well → **Bunardžija**

BURMUDŽIJA < tur. burnutçu: snuff maker → **Burmudžija**

ČENGIJA < tur. çengi: dancing girl → **Čengija**

ČIRAK < tur. çırak: apprentice, tiro → **Ćiraković, Ćirak, Ćiračanin**

ČIZMADŽIJA < tur. çizmeci: maker/seller of high topped boots → **Čizmadžija, Čizmar, Čizmadija, Čizmarević**

ČOBAN(IN) < tur. çoban: shepherd → **Čobanski, Čobanin, Čobanov**

ČOHADŽIJA < tur. çuhacı: weaver/seller of broadcloth → **Čohadžić**

ĆEBEDŽIJA < tur. kebeci: maker of felt pieces → **Ćebedžija**

ĆURČIJA < tur. kürkçü: furrier → **Ćurčija, Ćurčin, Ćurčić**

DUNĐER < tur. dülger: carpenter (who constructs the wooden framework of a building) **Dunđer, Dunđerin, Dunđerović, Dunđerski**

DUVANDŽIJA < tur. duhan[14]: tobacco → **Duvandžija, Duvančić**

DŽAMBAS < tur. horse dealer: tobacco → **Džambas, Džambasović, Džambazović**

DŽELAT < tur. cellât: public executioner → **Dželatović**

DŽELEBDŽIJA < tur. celep: drover, cattle dealer → **Dželebdžić**

EKMEKČIJA < tur. ekmekçi: baker/seller of bread → **Ekmedžić**

FURUNDŽIJA < tur. fırıncı: baker → **Furundžija**

KALAUZ < tur. kılavuz: guide; broker → **Kalauz, Kalauzović**

KAZAZ < tur. kazaz: maker of silk thread → **Kazazić, Kazazović**

KAZANDŽIJA < tur. kazancı: maker/repairer/seller of kettles/boilers → **Kazanović, Kazandžija, Kazandžić**

KALAJDŽIJA < tur. kalaycı: tinker; tinner → **Kalajdžija, Kalajdžić, Kalajžić**

KALDRMDŽIJA < tur. kaldırımcı: one who lays paving stones → **Kaldrmdžić**

KALFA < tur. kalfa: experienced apprentice workman → **Kalfić**

KASAP(IN) < tur. kasap: butcher → **Kasap, Kasapinović**, **Kasapić, Kasapović, Kasapski**

KAPAMADŽIJA < tur. kapamacı: dealer in ready-made clothing → **Kapamadžija**

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[14] Arabism *duhan* is for a long time replaced by Turkish lexeme tütün. A. Tietze [12; 658] cites the source from 16th century as a conformation.

KATRANDŽIJA < tur. katrancı: person who makes/sella tar → **Katrandžić**

KOVANDŽIJA < tur. kovan: hive → **Kovandžić**

KUJUNDŽIJA < tur. kuyumcu: jeweler → **Kujunđić, Kujundžija, Kujundžić, Kolundžija, Kolundžić, Kulundžić**

LULEDŽIJA < tur. lüleci: maker/seller of clay or meerschaum pipe bowls → **Luledžija**

MUMDŽIJA < tur. mumcu: candlemaker, chandler → **Mumdžić**

MUTAVDŽIJA < tur. mutaf: weaver of goat`s-haır artıcles → **Mutap, Mutavdžić, Mutabdžija, Mutavdžija, Mutabdžić, Mutapović, Mutapčija**

NALBANTA < tur. nalbant: horseshoer → **Nalbanta, Nalbantjan**

NEIMAR < tur. mimar: architect → **Neimarević**

ODABAŠA < tur. odabaşı: person in charge of the rooms in a caravansary or inn → **Odabašić, Odobašić**

PELIVAN < tur. pehlivan: sirk sanatçısı → **Pelivanović**

RABADŽIJA < tur. arabacı: driver of a cart/wagon → **Rabadžić**

RAKİDŽIJA < tur. rakıcı: maker/seller of raki → **Rakidžija, Rakidžić**

SAGRADŽIJA < tur. → sağrı: rump of an animal → **Sagradžija**

SARAČ < tur. saraç: maker/seller of leather goods → **Sarač, Saračević**

SEIZ < tur. seyis: groom, stableman → **Seizović**

SIMIDŽIJA < tur. simitçi: maker/seller of simits → **Simidžija**

ŠERBEDŽIJA < tur. şerbetçi: maker/seller of sherbet → **Šerbedžija**

ŠEGRT < tur. şakirt: apprentice, tiro → **Šegrt**

TABAK < tur. tabak: tanner (of animal hides) → **Tabak, Tabaković**

TERZIJA < tur. terzi: tailor → **Terzija, Terzić**

TUFEGDŽIJA < tur. tüfekçi: gunsmith → **Tufegdžić, Tufekčić**

Turkish terms for craftsmen and professions are well adapted to the Serbian phonological system, although the foreign origin of surnames can often be recognized by the name suffix *-džija*: *Bojadžija, Bunardžija, Kapamadžija, Rakidžija, Čizmadžija, Simidžija*. These surnames as well as surnames *Kalauz, Berber, Sarač, Šegrt, Tabak* etc. have been classified as simple (morphologically underived) that testifies they are well adapted into Serbian surname pattern. In Turkish there are also many simple surnames of the same origin: *Demirci, Ekmekçi, Terzi, Bardakçi, Kasap, Mumcu, Tüfekçi*. Suffix *-čija/-džija* (*-ci*, *-cı*, *-cu*, *-cü/-çi*, *-çı*, *-çu*, *-çü*) is the most productive among Turkish sufixes in Serbian language. Among analyzed lexemes there are a few derived in word-formation process from Turkish base word and suffix *-čija/-džija* that do not exist in contemporary Turkish language [2; 171–172].

duvandžija (duhandžija) (← tur. duhan, tobacco) tobacco seller;

kovandžija (← tur. kovan, hive) beekeeper;

mutavdžija (← tur. mutaf, weaver of goat`s-haır artıcles) weaver of goat`s-haır artıcles;

dželebdžija (← tur. celep, drover, cattle dealer) drover, cattle dealer.

The most common ending for Serbian surnames is the patronymically marked diminutive "-ić" suffix. From bynames with Turkish suffix *–džija* are derived surnames with "-ić" suffix such as: *Abadžić, Alvadžić, Kazandžić, Kovandžić, Mumdžić, Mutavdžić, Terzić, Tufegdžić* etc.

Among analyzed surnames there are also those formed by compound suffix form *–ović/-ević*, from possessive adjective suffix *–ov* and diminutive suffix *–ić*: *Alvadžijević, Berberović, Kazazović, Kasapović, Tabaković.*

The general lexical fund of one language is divided into two groups: appellative vocabulary and onomastic vocabulary [5; 22–23]. In onomastic vocabulary interlanguage and intercultural contacts are reflected as it could be seen from the analyzed material. Also by being nonsemantic words, semantic laws are not referring to surnames. The surnames derived from Turkish terms for craftsmen and professions *Abadžija, Ekmečić, Kazazović, Kalajdžić (Kalajžić), Mutavdžija (Mutavdžić, Mutabdžija, Mutavdžija), Terzija (Terzić), Tufegdžić, Odabašić (Odobašić) Amalin (Amalović) Ćirak (Ćiraković)* tell us that *maker of coarse wool cloth (abadžija)*, *bread baker (ekmedžija), maker of silk thread (kazaz), tinker (kalajdžija), weaver of goat`s hair articles (mutap), tailor (terzija), gunsmith (tufegdžija), person in charge of the rooms in a caravansary or inn (odabaša), porter, carrier (amalin), apprentice, tiro (čirak)* existed and that without them everyday life could not be imagined. Most of these traditional crafts do not exist today and were lost long time ago, some of them have changed their names and some still exist. They represent an important part of cultural heritage and just through surnames the traces of different crafts and professions have been saved.

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SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES AZERBAIJANI STUDENTS FACE WHILE LEARNING THE GREEK LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Learning a foreign language is a complex process influenced by linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. One of the most common difficulties is the difference in phonetics and pronunciation, as learners may struggle with sounds absent in the native language. Another challenge is grammar and syntax, especially when the target language follows structural rules that differ significantly from the learner's mother tongue. Vocabulary acquisition also presents obstacles, particularly when words carry multiple meanings, or cultural associations unfamiliar to learners. Altogether, these difficulties highlight the need for effective teaching strategies, continuous practice, and cultural immersion to support successful foreign language acquisition.

The study of foreign languages is influenced by the linguistic and cultural background of learners. For Azerbaijani students, the Greek language presents both bridges and barriers. While Greek and Azerbaijani languages belong to different language families – Indo-European and Turkic respectively – historical contacts and cultural exchanges have produced notable similarities, alongside significant structural differences. Azerbaijani students who engage in learning the Greek language bring with them a Turkic linguistic system, cultural experiences shaped by (Ellis, 2015, 225) both Eastern and Western traditions, and a history of multilingualism. These factors create both advantages and difficulties in acquiring Greek. Identifying these similarities and differences is essential not only for understanding the learner's perspective but also for informing teaching methods and curriculum design This article examines the main similarities and differences Azerbaijani learners encounter while studying the Greek language.

Key words: Azerbaijani learners, Greek language acquisition, similarities and differences, linguistic challenges, vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, grammar comparison

Similarities

Both Greek and Azerbaijani languages contain a number of Turkish-origin words due to historical interactions with the Ottoman Empire. For example, words related to food, household items, and daily life are recognizable in both languages due to shared historical influences during the Ottoman period (Mackridge, 2009, 156). Such common lexical items provide learners with a limited but useful set of recognizable vocabulary that eases the acquisition of certain words. Examples such as μπακλαβάς (baklava), καφές (coffee), ντολμάς (dolma) are familiar to Azerbaijani learners, helping them to feel

cultural proximity and build confidence when approaching Greek vocabulary. Here are some Turkish-origin words in Greek and their translation in Azerbaijani:

Greek word // Turkish-origin // Azerbaijani word

Μπακλαβάς // baklava // paxlava

Κεφτές // kefte // köftə

Γιαούρτι // yoğurt // yoqurt

Ντολμάς // dolma // dolma

Καϊμάκι // kaymak // qaymaq

Τσάϊ // çay // çay

Καφές // kofe // kofe

Καπάκι // kapak // qapaq

Μπαξές // bahçe(farsi) // baxça

Ντουλάπι //dolap // şkaf

Μπελάς // bela // bəla

Ντέρτι //dert(farsi) // dərd

Γιακάς // yaka // yaxa

Τσέπη // cep // cip

Τσάντα // çanta // çanta

Κουσούρι // kusur(arabic) // qüsur

Νταής / /dayı // dayı

Τεμπέλης //tembel // tənbəl

Κέφι // keyif(arab) // kef

Σόι // soy // soy

Adaptability to different alphabets is somehow makes the learning of a different alphabet more acceptable. Azerbaijanis have historically used three writing systems – Arabic, Cyrillic, and Latin. This prior experience with alphabetic transition makes them more adaptable when encountering the Greek script, unlike learners who have only been exposed to one writing system.

Azerbaijani students often grow up in a multilingual setting with exposure to Azerbaijani, Russian, English, and sometimes Turkish. This background fosters metalinguistic awareness and facilitates adaptation to Greek as an additional foreign language. Due to geographical proximity and Mediterranean – Caucasian cultural exchanges, some cultural concepts, traditions, and historical references are familiar to Azerbaijani learners. However, centuries of contact between the Mediterranean and the Caucasus regions have created cultural and lexical intersections that provide Azerbaijani learners with certain points of familiarity.

Phonetic approach to writing makes the learning process easier too and this is the next similarity. Both Azerbaijani and Greek follow relatively phonetic orthographies, where letters usually correspondent to specific sounds. This similarity allows Azerbaijani students to grasp Greek reading and spelling rules faster compared to students from languages with less phonetic spelling, such as English or French.

Declension is one of the most important grammatical systems in the Greek language. It refers to the way nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and articles change their endings depending on their role in a sentence. Unlike English or Azerbaijani, Greek uses a highly inflected structure, meaning that grammatical relationships are shown not only through word order but mainly through changes in word endings. Understanding declension is essential for learners because it affects almost every part of

speech and determines how sentences are formed. In Greek, the form of a word changes according to gender, number, and case.

The next similarity is in the case system awareness. Although Azerbaijani belongs to the Turkic language family and Greek to the Indo-European family, both languages employ of grammatical cases. Azerbaijani has six cases, while Greek uses four cases: nominative, genitive, accusative, and vocative. These cases are used to indicate the grammatical function of a noun or pronoun within a sentence. Here are the cases:

1. Nominative case (Adlıq) indicates the subject of the sentence, what performs the action.
2. Genitive case (Yiyəlik) indicates possession or belonging.
3. Dative case (Yönlük) indicates the direction or recipient of an action.
4. Accusative case (Təsirlik) indicates the direct object of the verb.
5. Locative case (Yerlik) indicates location or position.
6. Ablative case (Çıxışlıq) indicates origin or separation.
7. Vocative case (Κλητική, Çağırış) is used in Greek language. This case is used for directly addressing someone or something.

1. Nominative:
This case generally marks the subject of a sentence or an indefinite object. It does not have a specific suffix; it is the base form of the noun.
o   Example:
o   *The book* is on the table.
o   *Kitab* stolun üstündədir.
o   *Το βιβλίο* είναι πάνω στο τραπέζι.
o   The following first words in these sentences are in the Nominative case: the book, kitab, το βιβλίο.
o   Example:
o   *The student* saw the teacher.
o   *Tələbə* müəllimi gördü.
o   *Ο φοιτητής* είδε τον καθηγητή. The following words in these sentences are in the nominative case: the student, tələbə, ο φοιτητής.

2. Accusative:
This case marks the definite direct object of a transitive verb.
o   Example:
o   We read *the book* yesterday.
o   Biz *kitabı* dünən oxuduq.
o   Εμείς διαβάσαμε *το βιβλίο* χτες.
The suffix "-ı" marks "kitab" (book) as the definite direct object. Here are the words: the book, kitabı, το βιβλίο are in the accusative case.
o   Example:
o   Will you see *the teacher* tomorrow?
o   *Müəllimi* sabah görəcəksən?
o   Θα δεις *τον καθηγητή* αύριο;
The suffix "-i" marks "müəllimi" (teacher) as the definite direct object. Here are the words: the teacher, müəllimi, τον καθηγητή indicate the accusative case.

3. Genitive:

This case indicates possession or belonging.

o   Example:

o   ***The student's*** bag.

o   ***Tələbənin*** çantası.

o   Η τσάντα ***του φοιτητή.***

o   The suffix "-in" marks "" (student's) as the possessor.

o   Here the words: student's, tələbənin, του φοιτητή indicate the possessive or genitive case.

o   Example:

o   The programme ***of the lesson***.

o   ***Dərsin*** proqramı.

o   Το πρόγραμμα ***του μαθήματος***. The suffix "-in" marks "dərsin" (lesson) as the possessor. Here the words: the lesson, dərsin, του μαθήματος indicate the genitive case.

4. Dative:

This case indicates the indirect object or direction towards something.

o   Example:

o   I gave a book ***to my friend***.

o   Mən kitabı ***dostuma*** verdim.

o   Έδωσα το βιβλίο **στον φίλο μου**.

o   The suffix "-a" marks "dostuma" (to my friend) as the recipient of the action.

o   Example:

o   I went ***to school***.

o   ***Məktəbə*** getdim.

o   Πήγα **στο σχολείο**.

o   The suffix "-ə" marks "məktəbə" (to school) as the destination. Here the words: to school, məktəbə, στο σχολείο indicate destination.

o   As we mentioned above Greek language does not have dative, locative and ablative cases but with the help of Accusative and prepositions, we can achieve the right combination of words. The dative, locative, ablative have been replaced by accusative case with prepositions.

5. Locative case indicates location or position.

o   Example:

o   The children are ***at home.***

o   Uşaqlar ***evdədirlər***.

o   Τα παιδιά είναι **στο σπίτι**.

The suffix "-də" marks "evdə" (at home) as the location. Here are the words: at home, evdə, στο σπίτι indicate location.

o   Example:

o   We played ***in the yard***.

o   Biz ***həyətdə*** oynadıq.

o   Εμείς παίξαμε **στην αυλή**.

The suffix "-də" marks " həyətdə " (in the yard) as the location.

6. Ablative case indicates movement away from something.

o   Example:

o   I come *from work*.

o   Mən *işdən* gəlirəm.

o   Εγώ έρχομαι *από τη δουλειά*.

The suffix "-dən" marks "işdən" (from work) as the source of the movement.

o   Example:

o   Yesterday she came back *from Baku*.

o   Dünən *Bakıdan* qayıtdı.

o   Χτες γύρισε *από το Μπακού*.

The suffix "-dan" marks "Bakıdan" (Baku) as the origin of the movement.

7. Vocative case (Κλητική) is used in Greek language. This case is used for directly addressing someone or something.

•   **Example:** *Μαρία*, έλα εδώ! - *Maria,* come here!

•   **Example:** *Στέφανε*, γεια σου; Τι κάνεις; *Stefane*, hi! How are you?

Azerbaijani is an agglutinative language, meaning that grammatical functions are often expressed through adding suffixes to words. The case system is a key part of this agglutinative structure, allowing for precise expression of relationships between words in a sentence, according to a paper on grammatical outcomes.

Declension helps express meaning precisely. It allows Greek speakers to understand who performs an action, who receives it, and how different parts of a sentence relate to each other. Without the correct use of cases and endings, sentences can become confusing or grammatically incorrect. To master declension, students should learn nouns together with their articles, pay attention to singular and plural patterns, and practice with tables and examples. Reading simple texts and repeating forms aloud helps reinforce learning. Exposure to authentic Greek, such as songs or dialogues, also supports memorization.

Differences

There are also some differences which students encounter while the learning of any foreign language. Despite adaptability, the Greek alphabet presents unique challenges. Azerbaijani learners are familiar with the Latin script: while Greek uses its own unique alphabet. This requires learners not only memorize new letters but also adapt to new sound-letter correspondences (Holton, Mackridge and Philippaki-Warburton, 2012, 408). Certain letters and sounds – such as Θ(th) , Δ(dh/dz) do not exist in Azerbaijani and are often replaced with /s/ or /d/ Students may struggle with both pronunciation and listening comprehension.

Stress placement in Greek, which is phonemic, also causes confusion, as each word should be stressed during the writing. Some students are not good at word stressing and when they change the place of stressing, they could change the meaning of the Greek word. We call these kind of words paronyms. Paronyms are near-homophones ("sound-alike"), near-homographs ("lookalike") and near-cognates ("mean alike") — words that are similar but not identical in pronunciation, spelling, and lexical meaning — which may cause confusion in their understanding (reception) and usage (production).

Here are some paronyms in Greek language:

Γέρνω (to bend, to lean) – γερνώ(to get older)

γέρος (old man) – γερός (healthy)

νόμος(law) – νομός (county, district)

παίρνω (to take) – περνώ (to pass, to go through)

πίνω (to drink) – πεινώ (to be hungry)

σχολείο (school) – σχόλιο (comment)

χώρος (space, place) – χορός (dance)

The Greek language, both ancient and modern, is a highly inflected language. This means that words – especially nouns, adjectives, and articles – change form depending on their grammatical role in a sentence. Two central features of this structure are grammatical gender and declension. Understanding these concept is fundamental for anyone studying Greek because they determine how words behave, combine, and create meaning.

One of the greatest difficulties lies in mastering Greek's three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Every noun belongs to one of these categories, and its gender affects the form of the article, adjectives, and sometimes the verb forms associated with it. Azerbaijani language does not employ grammatical gender, which makes agreement between articles, adjectives, and nouns. It is a new and challenging concept for learners. The gender of a noun affects the form of other words that modify it, such as adjectives and articles, requiring agreement. Each noun in Greek has a specific gender and these genders do not only apply exclusively to nouns referring to people, but also to nouns that refer to things or animals. Therefore, gender should be viewed as a grammatical attribute of a noun and not necessarily as the sex of a person, animal, or thing.

The **masculine gender** includes nouns referring to male persons and animals, but it also contains many objects, occupations, and abstract ideas. Masculine nouns commonly end in –**ας, -ης, -ος**, though there are exceptions due to the long history and influences of the language.

Masculine nouns are accompanied by the definite article **ο,** and adjectives **describing** them must also appear in the masculine form. For example: ο καλός άνθρωπος / good man / yaxşı insan. Here the article, the adjective and the noun are in masculine gender. This agreement between the noun and the surrounding words is one of the central features of Greek grammar.

The **feminine gender** includes nouns reffering to female persons or animals, but it also encompasses a wide range of objects, cities, abstract concepts, and natural elements. Most feminine nouns end in –**α, - η,** with a smaller number ending in –**ος.**

Examples:

η μητέρα / ana / mother

η πόρτα / qapı / door

η αγάπη / sevgi / love

η οδός / küçə / street

η λεωφόρος / prospekt / avenue

The definite article for feminine nouns is **η**, and adjectives take feminine endings when modifying these nouns. For instance, in the phrase η όμορφη πόλη / the beautiful city / gözəl şəhər, both the article and the adjective reflect the feminine gender of the noun πόλη.

The **neuter gender** is widely used in Greek and is not limited to objects. Neuter nouns can refer to children, animals, concepts, and collective or abstract ideas. They end in **ι, -ο, -μα.**

Examples:

Το παιδί – the child

Το βιβλίο – the book

Το σώμα – the body

Neuter nouns take the definite article **το**, and adjectives describing them must appear in the neuter form. For example: το μικρό σπίτι / the small house / balaca ev. Neauter nouns also have a unique characteristic: their nominative, accusative, and vocative forms are usually identical, especially in the singular, which simplifies some aspects of grammar.

For learners, of Greek, mastering gender is one of the first grammatical challenges. However, once the basic patterns are understood, gender becomes a helpful structuring tool:
It makes vocabulary easier to organize.
It simplifies the prediction of article and adjective forms.
It supports reading comprehension and listening accuracy.

Grammatical gender is a fundamental feature of Modern Greek, shaping the morphology and syntax of nouns. Understanding gender allows learners to produce accurate sentences, recognize grammatical relationships, and access deeper structures of Greek grammar. Despite occasional irregularities, the system is highly organized and remains one of the defining characteristics of the Greek language.

Additionally, Greek makes extensive use of articles, which Azerbaijani lacks, creating further syntactic and semantic difficulties. Articles play a central role in the grammar of Modern Greek. The definite articles in Greek directly indicate a word's gender and is used together with a noun. They are used more frequently than in English and carry important information about gender, number, and case. Greek has two types of articles: definite (equivalent to "the") and indefinite (equivalent to "a / an"). Mastering the use and form of articles is essential for accurate communication, as they interact with almost every noun phrase in the language.

The definite article in Greek has several forms, depending on the gender (masculine, feminine, neuter), number (singular or plural), and grammatical case (nominative, genitive, accusative). The basic nominative forms are **ο** (masculine), **η** (feminine), and **το** (neuter), which correspond to "the". These forms change in different cases, especially in the accusative, which is very common in everyday speech.

Masculine: ο, του, τον.
Feminine: η, της, την.
Neuter: το, του, το.
In the plural, the forms are:
Masculine: οι, των, τους.
Feminine: οι, των, τις.
Neuter: τα, των, τα.
These forms make the relationships in a sentence clear. For example: βλέπω τον φίλο μου / I see my friend /dostumu görürəm uses the accusative article **τον** to mark the direct object.
Here are some examples in the nominative case:
Masculine:
ο Φίλιππος/Phillipos , ο μηχανικός/engineer, ο ωκεανός/ocean
ο Δημήτρης/Dimitris, ο κλέφτης/thief, ο μαθητής/pupil
ο Ανδρέας/Andreas, ο πατέρας/father, ο άντρας/man, husband
Feminine:
η Κατερίνα/Katerina, η ιστορία/history, η σαλάτα/salad
η Βερονίκη/Veroniki, η φυσική/phisics, η αδελφή/sister.
Neuter:

το μουσείο/museum, το αεροπλάνο/plane, το γλυκό/sweet

το καράβι/ship, το μπαλόνι/ baloon, το χαρτί/paper

το δίπλωμα/diploma, το άρωμα/perfume, το μάθημα/lesson.

Here are some examples in the accusative case:

As it is the same in English, we will compare the words only with Azerbaijani.

τον Φίλιππο/ Filliposu, τον μηχανικό/mühəndisi, τον ωκεανό / okeanı.

τον Δημήτρη/ Dimitrisi, τον κλέφτη / oğrunu, τον μαθητή / şagirdi.

τον Ανδρέα/Andreası, τον πατέρα/atanı, τον άντρα/kişini

Feminine:

την Κατερίνα/Katerinanı, την ιστορία/tarixi, την σαλάτα/salatı

τη Βερονίκη/ Verinikini, τη φυσική/ fizikanı, την αδελφή/ bacını.

Neuter:

το μουσείο/muzeyi, το αεροπλάνο/təyyarəni, το γλυκό/şirniyyatı.

το καράβι/ gəmini, το μπαλόνι/ şarı, το χαρτί/ kağızı

το δίπλωμα/ diplomu, το άρωμα/ ətiri, το μάθημα/ dərsi.

The indefinite article in Greek exists only in the singular, because Greek does not have a plural equivalent to "some". The forms are:

Masculine: ένας

Feminine: μία

Neuter: ένα

Here are some examples:

Έχω **ένα** βιβλίο. I have a book.

Είδα **έναν** άνδρα στον δρόμο.I saw a man on the street.

Μια μέρα, γνώρισα **ένα** κορίτσι. One day, I met a girl.

Θέλω **ένα** ποτήρι νερό. I want a glass of water.

These articles are used in contexts where the noun refers to a non-specific or unknown item, much like in English. In everyday speech, only the nominative and accusative forms of the indefinite article are frequently used; genitive forms exist historically but are rarely applied in modern usage.

Greek uses articles more broadly than English. They appear before nouns referring to general concepts, such as η αγάπη / love / sevgi, and before languages, for example τα ελληνικά / the Greek language / yunan dili. Articles are also commonly used with names, particularly in informal contexts, as in Ο Γιάννης ήρθε / John came / Con gəldi. In addition, Greek employs the definite article with days of the week, τη Δευτέρα / on Monday / Bazar ertəsi, and with countries, such as η Ελλάδα /Greece / Yunanıstan.

However, there are cases where Greek does not use an article. Professions typically appear without articles. Είμαι δάσκαλος / I am a teacher / Mən müəlliməm. Some uncountable nouns may also omit the article, especially when referring to an unspecified quantity, as in θέλω νερό / I want water / Mən su istəyirəm.

For learners of Greek, articles provide valuable clues about grammatical structure. As the articles always reveal the gender, number, and case of the noun, the help decode sentence meaning. Learning nouns together with their articles – such as η πόλη, ο δρόμος, το παιδί – is a highly effective strategy for mastering Greek grammar.

Morphological complexity is another difference between Greek and Azerbaijani. Greek is an inflectional language with a rich system of declensions and conjugations. Azerbaijani, by contrast, is

agglutinative language. The structural difference between inflectional and agglutinative morphology creates difficulties in mastering Greek noun cases, verb conjugations, and agreement rules.

Word order plays a central role in understanding and producing grammatically correct sentences. The basic word order in Azerbaijani is subject – object – verb. The verb is always in the end of the sentence. The basic word order in Greek is subject – verb – object, similar to English and Russian. This difference often leads to syntactic interference, where Azerbaijani learners apply their native word order when constructing Greek sentences (Comrie, 1989, 139). The essential difference here is that Azerbaijani learners must adapt to placing the verb earlier in Greek sentences.

Here are some examples.

Uşaqlar dondurma *yeyirlər.*

Children *are eating* ice-cream.

Τα παιδιά *τρώνε* παγωτό.

As we can see from the examples, the verb in Azerbaijani sentence structure is in the end of the sentence, while in Greek and English it comes right after subject.

Another difference is in the position of adverbs. In Azerbaijani the adverbs are usually placed before the verb, while in Greek they often appear after the verb.

Here are some examples:

Biz *gec* qayıtdıq.

Γυρίσαμε *αργά.*

We came back *late.*

Azerbaijani prefers pre-verbal adverbs, while Greek allows more flexibility but often uses post-verbal adverbs.

The next difference is in forming negation form. Negation is expressed by adding the suffix – ma/mə to the verb. In Greek it is expressed by adding δεν//δε before the verb.

Onlar rəqs et**mə**dilər.

They **did not** dance.

Αυτοί **δεν** χόρεψαν.

Azerbaijani attaches negation to the verb, while Greek uses a separate word (negative particle) placed before the verb.

One more difference is in vocabulary. Beyond Turkish loanwords, Greek vocabulary largely stems from Indo-European roots, while Azerbaijani derives from Turkic origins. This results in fewer cognates and requires Azerbaijani students to memorize a significant number of new lexical items.

Learning Greek presents both opportunities and challenges for Azerbaijani students. On the one hand, certain similarities – such as the presence of Turkish –origin loanwords in both Greek and Azerbaijani, shared elements of Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultural contexts, and the flexibility of both languages in everyday communication - provide important bridges that ease the learning process. These commonalities help learners build vocabulary, develop cultural awareness, and foster motivation.

On the other hand, significant differences between the two languages create obstacles that require targeted pedagogical strategies. The Greek alphabet, the rich system of grammatical articles, gender agreement, complex verb conjugations, and differences in word order often challenge Azerbaijani learners, whose native language follows a Turkic structure with agglutinative morphology.

Shared cultural influences, phonetic writing systems, and experience with grammatical cases provide a supportive foundation. However, key linguistic differences – such as the Greek alphabet, grammatical gender, complex verb conjugations, and syntactic patterns – pose considerable challenges.

Ultimately, these challenges and opportunities do not merely shape language acquisition but also contribute to deeper cultural understanding and dialogue between Azerbaijan and Greece.

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THE REFLECTION OF HUMAN–SOCİETY RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN DRAMA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN THE BALKAN AND BRITISH CONTEXTS

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Abstract

This article examines how human-society relations are reflected in modern European drama by contrasting a few British and Balkan playwrights. The research looks at how social injustice, systemic violence, the distortion of communal values, and individual alienation are portrayed in the works of Dusan Kovacevic, Biljana Srbljanovic, and Edward Bond. Using satire, grotesque, and allegorical techniques, Kovacevic and Srbljanovic illustrate collective trauma, political corruption, and the generational transmission of violence in the post-Yugoslav and post-socialist Balkan context. As an illustration of how societal dysfunction permeates close-knit family structures, Srbljanovic's Family Stories shows children mimicking adult cruelty.

In contrast, Edward Bond's British plays, like Lear and Saved, reveal moral and structural failings in urban and post-industrial society through confrontational stage violence and stark realism. Bond confronts viewers with normalized violence and alienation by using startling theatrical events as a diagnostic lens and an ethical provocation. Although Balkan and British dramatists employ different artistic approaches, they both emphasize theater's function as a critical medium for reflecting and challenging social realities and depict interpersonal relationships as microcosms of societal dysfunction.

The article integrates insights from comparative literature, socio-philosophical approaches, and theater semiotics through a methodological combination of textual analysis, historical contextualization, and performance studies. The results show how content and dramaturgical form interact to communicate social critique through characterization, narrative structure, and stage direction. In the end, the study shows that modern European drama, in all cultural and historical contexts, continues to be an essential tool for exploring the moral, social, and psychological aspects of the relationship between the individual and society, encouraging audience contemplation and critical engagement with today's moral dilemmas.

Keywords: *Edward Bond, Biljana Srbljanovic, European drama, Balkan theater, British theater, social injustice, alienation, comparative analysis*

Introductıon

In the context of social injustice, systemic violence, and alienation, modern European drama has emerged as a potent medium for examining the intricate relationship between the individual and society since the late 20th century. During the turbulent post-Yugoslav and post-socialist eras, Balkan playwrights like Dusan Kovacevic and Biljana Srbljanovic have provided striking depictions of

collective trauma, corruption, and the breakdown of social values. Their writings serve as cultural mirrors reflecting the inconsistencies and breakdown of Balkan societies; they are frequently laced with satire, irony, or fractured narratives. Srbljanovic's celebrated play Family Stories (1997), for example, illustrates how social deformation permeates even the most private spheres of human existence by using the voices of children who mimic the violent actions of adults to depict the destruction of war and transition (Srbljanovic, 1997; Fabulamundi, 2018).

In contrast, Edward Bond has created a radical theatrical language in British drama that reveals the mechanisms of alienation and violence in an urban, industrial, and post-industrial setting. A group of disgruntled youths infamously stoning a baby in his groundbreaking play Saved (1965) shocked audiences and ultimately led to the abolition of theater censorship in Britain (Bond, 1965; The Guardian, 2024). Bond's portrayal of violence serves as a purposeful aesthetic and political tactic rather than being gratuitous: "Violence shapes and obsesses our society, and if we do not stop being violent, we have no future" (Bond, 1978, p. 13). Bond believes that theater should arouse viewers' emotions, elicit critical thinking, and eventually act as a catalyst for social change (Sierz, 2001; Encyclopaedia.com, 2019).

Therefore, Bond employs the startling directness of theatrical violence to highlight the shortcomings of contemporary British society, whereas Balkan playwrights frequently depict violence and alienation through the prisms of collective trauma, political corruption, and satirical allegory. Nonetheless, both traditions agree that theater must reflect, critique, and address the pressing moral issues of its day rather than continuing to be divorced from history and society.

This article's objective is to compare the ways in which certain Balkan playwrights—most notably Srbljanovic and Kovacevic—and Edward Bond depict human-society relations. In particular, the study will concentrate on the themes of systemic violence, social injustice, individual alienation, and the distortion of collective values. By contrasting these customs, the article aims to highlight both culturally particular aesthetic techniques derived from various historical-political experiences and universal issues that cut across national borders.

This work's methodology is based on the ideas of theater theory, sociophilosophical approaches, and comparative literary studies. Contextual information about the plays' sociopolitical settings will be integrated with textual analysis of a few chosen plays. By doing this, the article places itself at the nexus of performance studies, social history, and literature, adding to larger discussions about how drama functions in resolving conflicts between both individual agency and group structures in modern-day Europe. (Page 63 of Aston & Savona, 1991).

Materials and methods

The study's methodological framework, which is based on theater studies and comparative literature, focuses on how dramaturgical texts both create and reflect societal images. Representative works by Biljana Srbljanovic (Porodicne price / Family Stories, 1998), Edward Bond (Saved, 1965; Lear, 1971), and Dusan Kovacevic (Balkanski špijun / The Balkan Spy, 1983; Profesionalac / The Professional, 1990) make up the primary corpus. The selection of these texts was based on their thematic focus on institutional violence, systemic injustice, and the alienation of the individual in oppressive or collapsing socio-political environments. The study aims to show how Balkan and British dramaturgy, despite coming from distinct cultural and political backgrounds, overlap in their concern

with the destructive relationship between the individual and society by comparing and contrasting these plays.

The first step in the analysis is close reading, a technique based on literary studies and hermeneutics that makes it possible to spot recurrent themes like surveillance, paranoia, broken families, and normalized violence. The use of absurdity and satire as tools to reveal authoritarian logic and the distortions of normal social relations under totalitarian pressure is examined in Kovacevic's dramaturgy, which is frequently described as "tragicomic grotesque" (Jović, 2010, p. 214). In contrast, Srbljanovic's plays are viewed through the prism of post-conflict cultural analysis and trauma studies. Her child characters mimic the cruelty of adults, presenting war trauma as a transgenerational phenomenon, according to scholars like Fisher (2004, p. 211). His own theoretical works, especially his essays on rational theater (Bond, 1997), and secondary criticism that emphasizes his insistence that stage violence serves as a diagnostic tool rather than sensationalism (Sierz, 2001, pp. 46–52) are two ways to study Bond's theater.

Contextual-historical analysis, which places the plays in their respective sociopolitical contexts, and performance analysis, which looks at how they were staged and received, are two essential components of the comparative methodology. The historical aspect is crucial because the late socialist and post-Yugoslav transitions in the Balkans gave rise to dramaturgies that conveyed mistrust, estrangement, and absurdity in the face of systemic breakdown (Ramet, 2005, p. 142). Bond's plays, in contrast, came into being in Britain during the crisis of the 1960s and 1970s, when class relations and established social structures were severely strained. Since both Bond's Saved and Srbljanovic's Family Stories sparked public controversy and political discussions regarding censorship, morality, and the place of theater in society, the performance component is equally important (Rebellato, 2012, pp. 88–90; Fisher, 2004, p. 213).

This study uses a variety of secondary sources in addition to primary sources. Among these are critical works on violence and representation (Zizek, 2008), cultural-historical studies of Yugoslavia and Britain (Ramet, 2005; Morgan, 2006), and theoretical texts on drama and performance (Carlson, 2004). The method is multidisciplinary in that it integrates reception studies, historical contextualization, and textual interpretation. Comparing content is only one goal; another is to determine how dramaturgical form—such as structure, characterization, and stage directions—helps express social critique. For example, Srbljanovic's Family Stories' disjointed structure and young protagonists are interpreted as a formal representation of disintegration and inherited violence, whereas Bond's striking stage actions and stark minimalism are seen as tactics to compel viewers to confront moral issues.

The study concludes by applying concepts from comparative theater semiotics, which support the claim made by Aston and Savona that "theatre is a sign-system" that both produces and contests social meanings (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 63). Because of this semiotic viewpoint, the plays can be interpreted as performative events whose meaning is negotiated by the audience, the performance, and the text rather than just as narratives. Thus, the combination of literary criticism, historical study, and semiotic analysis offers a comprehensive methodological framework that makes it possible to examine the ways in which British and Balkan dramaturgy differ in visual techniques influenced by different cultural traditions while converge in their critique of modernity.

Results and discussions

In spite of their disparate historical and cultural backgrounds, Edward Bond's Saved (1965) and Biljana Srbljanovic's Family Stories (1998) both explore the ways in which violence and alienation are ingrained in society. Within the post-Yugoslav setting of Srbljanovic, familial and interpersonal dynamics reflect social fragmentation, political instability, and the aftermath of war, with even children internalizing the patterns of cruelty they witness in adults (Fisher, 2004, pp. 210–212). Intergenerational transmission of trauma and social dysfunction is demonstrated by the play's disturbing portrayal of children performing violent rituals, which normalizes cruelty in societies characterized by political unrest and war.

Bond's Saved, on the other hand, looks at the systemic and structural causes of violence in a postwar, industrial Britain. Bond's method, which is sometimes referred to as "rational theatre", emphasizes confronting moral quandaries head-on through startling onstage incidents (Sierz, 2001, pp. 46–48). For instance, the notorious baby stoning scene is meant to provoke thought about society's complicity in normalized violence rather than to create a sensation. According to Bond, alienation results from both moral decay and institutional failure, highlighting the fact that socioeconomic systems, not just individual acts, are to blame for the breakdown of human ties (Mander, 2018, pp. 36–37).

One important area of agreement between Srbljanovic and Bond is how they view interpersonal relationships as reflections of social dysfunction. Family Stories depicts how systemic trauma infiltrates even the closest relationships by showing how children imitate the behaviors and fears of adults, making the home a site where inherited social violence appears (Ramet, 2005, p. 142). Similar to this, the interactions between the characters in urban London in Saved show how communities sustain violence and alienation through complicity, inaction, or indifference in response to social neglect and disempowerment (Rebellato, 2012, pp. 88–90). Thus, both dramatists use the microcosm of the family or neighborhood as a prism through which to view the macro-level social breakdown.

The aesthetic and dramatic approaches differ significantly in spite of this thematic convergence. By combining the grotesque aspects of postwar society with the innocence of childhood, Srbljanovic uses allegorical and grotesque elements. Critics point out that her use of absurdity turns the theatrical experience into a meditation on inherited social failures by increasing the audience's awareness of moral and ethical decay (Fisher, 2004, p. 211). To increase the ethical shock, Bond, on the other hand, favors stark realism and sparse staging. In order for audiences to concentrate on the structural causes of violence rather than the psychological makeup of individual characters, his characters are frequently purposefully psychologically underdeveloped, acting as archetypes of societal dysfunction rather than unique individuals (Sierz, 2001, p. 50). Both playwrights use theatrical form in this way to support their themes: Srbljanovic emphasizes inherited trauma through fragmentation and allegory, while Bond emphasizes systemic societal critique through direct action and sparse staging.

The function of audience participation in both theatrical traditions is another topic of debate. Through discomfort and moral ambiguity, Srbljanovic's plays encourage viewers to witness the generational effects of trauma and consider their social responsibility (Tobacco Factory Theatres, 2005). But Bond's theater is more confrontational, frequently provoking visceral reactions through the graphic depiction of violence, forcing viewers to directly consider moral decisions and social conventions (Jabir, 2018, p. 37). Although they accomplish this through different affective and cognitive pathways, both strategies emphasize theater's potential as a vehicle for social critique.

Lastly, the comparative reading implies that although Balkan and British dramatists address distinct historical crises, they share a common portrayal of alienation as a contributing factor to and a result of social violence. Bond externalizes violence through radical realism to question moral responsibility and systemic oppression, while Srbljanovic internalizes it within the domestic and allegorical framework to reflect the intergenerational effects of war. Both methods highlight the intricate interactions among social structures, interpersonal relationships, and individual psychology, showing how issues of justice, violence, and social cohesiveness are still relevant in modern European theater (Morgan, 2006, pp. 67–70).

In conclusion, the analysis emphasizes how Family Stories and Saved offer complementary perspectives on the workings of human-society interaction. Bond uses shocking realism and logical theater to reveal systemic violence and moral decay, while Srbljanovic uses allegory, grotesque characterization, and narrative fragmentation to highlight inherited trauma and societal breakdown. These plays collectively provide a sophisticated understanding of how the ethical and social structures of their respective societies are reflected, criticized, and challenged by modern European dramaturgy.

Conclusion

The comparison between Edward Bond's Saved and Biljana Srbljanovic's Family Stories highlights how modern European theater can shed light on the intricate relationships between people and their communities. Both playwrights show that social alienation and systemic violence are not just personal experiences but have their roots in political, social, and cultural systems that influence moral frameworks, interpersonal relationships, and behavior. Working within the post-Yugoslav context, Srbljanovic demonstrates how social norms collapsing, war-induced instability, and collective trauma are internalized within families and passed down to the next generation. This illustrates the long-lasting effects of conflict on moral awareness and social cohesiveness (Fisher, 2004, pp. 210–213). She emphasizes the ethical duty of observers to identify and address social dysfunction by using grotesque, allegorical techniques that allow audiences to see the tragedy and absurdity inherent in inherited violence.

Bond, however, places his criticism within the context of rational theater, employing shock and stark realism to elicit direct moral contemplation. The way that violence is dramatized in Saved highlights the institutional and structural causes of social neglect and alienation while forcing viewers to face the normalization of cruelty in daily life (Sierz, 2001, pp. 46–52). Bond's approach emphasizes how moral theater must confront complacency, showing that ethical consciousness must go beyond merely observing society; it must also involve critically interacting with its conditions. Despite their different approaches to aesthetics, both playwrights highlight the interaction between personal experience and societal structures, proving that theater serves as a mirror and a critique of society.

Furthermore, the study shows that the two traditions' aesthetic differences—the rational, confrontational realism in Britain and the allegorical grotesque in the Balkans—reflect different socio-historical forces and cultural priorities. Bond's plays explore urban disenfranchisement, class oppression, and moral alienation in post-industrial Britain, while Srbljanovic's work tackles the generational effects of war and political fragmentation (Mander, 2018, pp. 36–37; Ramet, 2005, pp. 140–145). However, both strategically use theatrical form: character dynamics, narrative fragmentation, and staging techniques are all used to highlight the ways in which alienation and violence are sustained. This illustrates how the theater medium offers a critical perspective and a place

for introspection while enabling the nuanced investigation of the ethical, social, and psychological facets of human existence.

In conclusion, the comparison of Saved and Family Stories demonstrates the ongoing value of modern European dramaturgy in examining the interactions between individuals and society. Although they do so in historically and culturally particular ways, both pieces highlight the moral, psychological, and societal repercussions of systemic violence and alienation. Srbljanovic and Bond show how theater is an active force in exposing, challenging, and possibly changing the systems that lead to cruelty, injustice, and alienation rather than just reflecting social reality. They demonstrate how theater can promote social responsibility and ethical awareness by forcing audiences to acknowledge their own roles as witnesses and participants in the moral landscapes of their societies through their unique approaches—one confrontational, one allegorical (Rebellato, 2012, pp. 88–90; Morgan, 2006, pp. 65–72).

In the end, this analysis demonstrates that studying European dramaturgy—especially in comparative settings—offers important insights into how societies organize human experience and the potential of theater as a platform for moral intervention. Through an analysis of the connections between trauma, violence, and social alienation in both Balkan and British contexts, this study highlights the importance of critically engaging with both historical and modern social realities and shows how theater can reveal the deep interdependence of the individual and the collective.

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THE BALKANS IN TRANSLATION: THE TRANSFORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN WESTERN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE REGION'S LITERATURE

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of translation as a pivotal mechanism in shaping and transforming the national identities of the Balkans within Western literary representations. The study focuses on the works of Ivo Andrić, Dubravka Ugrešić, Ismail Kadare, and Milorad Pavić, whose texts, once translated into Western languages, acquire new layers of cultural meaning and interpretation. Drawing on postcolonial theoretical frameworks by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, as well as Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation, the analysis demonstrates that translation is far from a neutral act. Instead, it is shaped by ideological, political, and market forces that can either reinforce entrenched stereotypes or subvert them. The research highlights the active role of translators and publishers as co-creators in the production of meaning, showing that translation can serve both as a site of symbolic appropriation and as a medium of cultural resistance. By critically engaging with translation practices, the paper underscores the potential for fostering a more nuanced and mutually respectful intercultural dialogue between the Balkans and the West.

Keywords: *translation, national identity, the Balkans, postcolonial theory, cultural representation, intercultural dialogue*

Introduction

For centuries, the Balkans have occupied a distinct, almost mythologized place in the European imagination. Situated at the crossroads of civilizations, the region has alternately been perceived as a bridge between East and West, or as a zone of perpetual conflict, ethnic diversity, and cultural ambiguity. This is a space where the legacies of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires intersect with Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim traditions, multilingualism, and hybrid cultural codes. Such a complex, ambivalent, and multilayered image of the Balkans has been actively constructed and reconstructed in Western cultural narratives—particularly through the translation of literary works.

The translation of Balkan literature into Western languages represents a process shaped not only by linguistic concerns but also by cultural and political agendas. The selection of works for translation, the rendering of national realities, and the interpretation of historical events directly influence how the region is imagined in the minds of Western readers. Translation thus becomes a form of cultural mediation capable of reinforcing national myths or reshaping them to align with the expectations of the target audience.

This phenomenon became especially pronounced in the final decades of the twentieth century, when the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the conflicts of the 1990s sparked heightened interest among Western publishers, translators, and scholars in Balkan literature. Writers whose works were translated into English, French, German, and other languages often came to be regarded as "representatives" of their nations and cultures within the global literary arena. However, translation did not always preserve

the original context: certain themes were amplified, others were softened or entirely omitted, and stylistic features were adjusted to suit the tastes of foreign audiences.

In this respect, the translator emerges not merely as a linguistic intermediary but as an interpreter and co-author who—consciously or unconsciously—shapes the representation of national identity. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak observes, translation inevitably carries an element of ideological filtering, reflecting not only the author's intent but also the cultural positioning of the translator, publisher, and target market.

Postcolonial and post-imperial theoretical perspectives, developed by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Maria Todorova, make it possible to situate translations of Balkan literature within a broader framework: as part of a discourse on the "periphery" and the "Other" in European culture. In this sense, translation becomes an act of representation in which the Balkans may appear as an "exotic frontier," a "zone of chronic instability," or, conversely, as a "European cultural borderland" marked by a unique synthesis of traditions.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the translation of Balkan literature into Western languages contributes to the transformation of the region's national identities. Special attention is devoted to the works of Ivo Andrić, Dubravka Ugrešić, Ismail Kadare, and Milorad Pavić, as well as to the role of translators and publishing strategies in shaping Western perceptions of the Balkans.

Methodologically, the research combines cultural-historical analysis, comparative literary studies, translation theory, and postcolonial criticism, alongside concepts from representation theory. This interdisciplinary approach enables the identification of not only linguistic but also ideological, cultural, and symbolic shifts that occur when a text moves from one cultural sphere to another.

The relevance of the study is defined by several factors:
- the growing interest in the region in the context of globalization and migration;
- the need for a critical examination of how the image of the Balkans is constructed in Western cultural and academic discourses;
- the importance of understanding translation as an act of cultural mediation and identity transformation.

In this way, the present research not only sheds light on the interplay between literature, translation, and cultural representation but also contributes to a broader understanding of translation's role in shaping transnational identities in the contemporary world.

Historical and Cultural Context of the Balkans

For centuries, the Balkan Peninsula has stood at the crossroads of history and culture, shaped by a unique interplay of encounters, conflicts, and exchanges. Geographically situated at the juncture of trade, military, and cultural routes, the region has consistently functioned as a meeting point—and at times a battleground—between empires, faiths, and ethnic groups.

From the late fourteenth century onwards, large parts of the Balkans came under Ottoman rule. This resulted in the emergence of a richly layered, multilingual, and multicultural environment where Islamic, Orthodox, and Catholic traditions coexisted and interacted. The Ottoman legacy is still visible today—not only in architecture, cuisine, and everyday life, but also in the imagery, themes, and symbolism found in literature, shaping a distinct poetics of memory.

Meanwhile, the northern and western areas of the peninsula fell under the influence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This brought with it European modernization projects, administrative

structures, and an alternative cultural identity model. As a result, Balkan culture developed a profound dualism: on one side, an Oriental heritage; on the other, a Central European sense of modernity.

The nineteenth century marked the era of national revivals, when literature served not merely artistic ends but also political ones, becoming an essential tool in forging national identities. Folkloric motifs, epic poetry, and historical novels contributed to embedding the concept of "the nation" into the cultural imagination. Writers, folklorists, and translators played pivotal roles in this process, often using translation as a means of enriching—or even creating—the national literary canon.

The twentieth century brought sweeping political and cultural transformations. The impact of two World Wars, socialist state-building, and ultimately the disintegration of Yugoslavia left deep imprints on the region's literature. During much of this period, literary production was shaped by ideological agendas, from socialist realism to anti-war prose and émigré writing. In the post-1990s landscape, themes of memory, trauma, identity, and cultural fragmentation came to the forefront.

The way the Balkans have been perceived outside the region has been heavily influenced by translators and publishers. Western portrayals often emphasize war, ethnic divisions, and "exotic" characteristics, reinforcing the stereotype of the Balkans as a perpetual crisis zone. As Maria Todorova notes in her landmark work *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), such narratives have helped cement the region's position as Europe's "periphery," marked by a culturally ambivalent image.

Contemporary Balkan literature spans a wide range of aesthetic strategies—from the postmodern textual playfulness of Milorad Pavić to the documentary-style engagement with historical trauma seen in the works of Svetislav Basara and Dubravka Ugrešić. Yet, when these works are translated into Western languages, they not only reach broader audiences but also undergo a process of cultural reconfiguration, adapted to the frameworks and expectations of the global literary market.

Understanding the historical and cultural backdrop of the Balkans is therefore essential for any analysis of translation's role in transforming national identities. It sheds light on both the internal cultural dynamics of the region and the external forces that shape its representation on the global stage.

Translation as a Form of Cultural Mediation

The translation of literary works has long ceased to be perceived as a neutral process concerned solely with transferring meaning from one language to another. Contemporary scholarship in translation studies, cultural theory, and postcolonial criticism approaches translation as a complex act of cultural mediation—one that encompasses the selection of texts, the interpretation of cultural codes, and the adaptation of a work to meet the expectations of its target audience.

Homi K. Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), argues that translation generates a "third space" — an *in-between* context where different cultural identities encounter, interact, and transform one another. In the case of the Balkans, this "third space" often becomes an arena where local narratives and Western interpretations engage in a dynamic struggle, with national images being reframed in line with global cultural trends.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her seminal essay *The Politics of Translation* (1993), emphasizes the inherently political nature of translation, noting that translators inevitably filter the source text through their own ideological perspectives as well as through the value system of the target culture. Applied to Balkan literature, this implies that translation can either preserve authentic cultural markers or, conversely, neutralize them to render the text "accessible" and "marketable" to Western readers.

Stuart Hall, in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), conceptualizes representation as the production of meaning, wherein language, imagery, and cultural

codes participate in shaping perceptions of "the other." In the translation of Balkan literature, this process is particularly charged, given that Western audiences often approach the region through entrenched stereotypes—as a "zone of perpetual conflict" or an "exotic periphery of Europe" (Todorova, 1997).

From the standpoint of translation theory, the translator may be seen as a figurative "border agent" (Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 1995), making deliberate choices between "domestication" and "foreignization." Domestication entails adapting cultural realities to the norms of the target language and culture, while foreignization seeks to preserve the otherness of the original, emphasizing its cultural specificity. In the Balkan context, this choice is particularly consequential, as it determines whether national identity is presented in its unaltered form or reshaped to fit the expectations of a so-called "universal" Western readership.

Moreover, the translation of Balkan literature is frequently embedded within institutional and grant-supported frameworks (such as EU *Creative Europe*, PEN International, or national cultural institutes). These structures introduce an additional layer of deliberate cultural positioning. The selection of works, authors, and themes that receive institutional backing directly affects which aspects of national identity are foregrounded for global readerships.

Thus, within the Balkan context, translation operates as a form of cultural diplomacy in which translators, publishers, and cultural institutions collaboratively participate in shaping the region's image. This process cannot be understood merely as a linguistic exercise; it constitutes part of a broader cultural-political dynamic, where the transformation of national identities emerges as one of the most significant outcomes of translational activity.

Key Authors and Case Studies

1. Ivo Andrić (1892–1975)

Winner of the 1961 Nobel Prize in Literature, Andrić is one of the central figures in representing Balkan history and culture. His novel *Na Drini ćuprija* (*The Bridge on the Drina*, 1945) is often viewed as a chronicle of Bosnia's multiethnic history spanning several centuries. In translations (English — Lovett F. Edwards, 1959; German — Eberhard Schütz, 1992), there is a tendency to smooth out complex religious and ethnic terms, making the narrative more "universal" for the Western reader. For instance, certain Ottoman titles and terms of significant cultural importance are replaced with more general descriptions.

As a result, the Balkans are portrayed not as a site of cultural conflict, but as a space of "eternal human drama," aligning the novel with a universalist humanist tradition and distancing it from its specific historical and national context.

2. Dubravka Ugrešić (1949–2023)

A Croatian writer known for her anti-war and anti-nationalist stance, especially in the context of the wars of the 1990s. Her essays and novels (*The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*, 1998; *Baba Yaga Laid an Egg*, 2009) were often published in English-speaking countries with emphasis on her critique of nationalism.

In translations (Celia Hawkesworth, Ellen Elias-Bursac), the author's sarcasm and irony are preserved, yet in some cases cultural allusions related to the post-Yugoslav space are supplemented with explanations or adapted.

In Western reception, Ugrešić becomes "the voice of liberal Croatia" and a symbol of critical engagement with national politics, whereas in the original her position is more complex, encompassing deep cultural reflection that cannot be reduced to political statements.

3. Ismail Kadare (1936–)

An Albanian writer whose works cover historical and political themes, from the Ottoman legacy to Albania's isolation under Enver Hoxha. Many of his works (*The General of the Dead Army*, *Chronicle in Stone*) were translated into Western languages not directly from Albanian but from French versions prepared by Kadare himself and his translator Jusuf Vrioni. This already introduced modifications to the text, adapting it for a Francophone audience. As a result, Albanian cultural specificity was partially transformed into a kind of "European universality," contributing to Kadare's positioning as a "European classic" with Albanian roots, rather than as a purely national writer.

4. Milorad Pavić (1929–2009)

A Serbian postmodernist and author of *Dictionary of the Khazars* (1984), one of the region's most internationally recognized works.

In translations (Christina Pribićević-Zorić, English, 1988), his formal play — nonlinear structure, and the existence of "male" and "female" editions — is preserved, but certain wordplays and allusions to South Slavic culture are adapted or replaced with more accessible analogues. For the Western reader, Pavić becomes a representative of "exotic postmodernism" with "mystical" Balkan roots, reinforcing the perception of the region as a source of unusual cultural experiments, but potentially diverting attention from deeper historical and cultural subtexts.

Summary of Case Studies

An analysis of these authors' works shows that translation is not only a linguistic process but also a cultural and political practice, in which both the form of the text and the image of national identity are transformed. In each case, translators and publishers participate in constructing a "version of the Balkans" for the Western audience — a process that may lead either to expanding cultural dialogue or to simplifying and stereotyping complex cultural realities.

The Problem of Representation

One of the central issues in studying the translation of Balkan literature into Western languages is the question of representation — how and in what terms the Balkans are portrayed and perceived through the prism of translation and Western cultural interpretation. Edward Said, in his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), demonstrated that the West traditionally constructs the "Other" through stereotypes and simplifications, turning complex regions into "exotic," "barbaric," or "dangerous" spaces. As Maria Todorova writes in *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), the Balkans occupy in the European imagination the place of Europe's "periphery" — a "zone of instability" and "perpetual conflict." These stereotypes are reinforced not only in political discourse but also in cultural products, including literature and its translations. In Western translations of Balkan texts, the focus is often placed on violence, ethnic conflicts, and political crises. This is partly due to the Western reader's expectation of a "dramatic" and "conflict-

driven" depiction of the region, which influences the choice of works for translation and the ways in which they are interpreted. As a result, works that are multifaceted and complex in their original form may be perceived in the West primarily through the lens of conflict and trauma. Stuart Hall's concept of representation emphasizes that the meaning and image of the "Other" are created and reinforced through cultural practices, including language and text. Translation, therefore, becomes one of the mechanisms of meaning production and consolidation. In the case of the Balkans, this process contributes to the formation of stable "meta-narratives" — stories that do not so much reflect reality as create it in the eyes of the Western audience. Furthermore, this "orientalization" of the Balkans often leads to the exclusion or neglect of the region's internal cultural diversity and polyphony. National, religious, and linguistic differences are reduced to a common stereotype of "warring peoples," simplifying and distorting the cultural landscape.

It is important to note that such representation is not inevitable. Some translators and scholars actively seek to counter these stereotypes by preserving cultural specificities, employing foreignization, and providing contextual information for the reader. However, such efforts face challenges from publishing constraints and audience expectations. Thus, the problem of representation in the translation of Balkan literature is not only a question of textual accuracy but also one of power and ideology, which shape the image of the region in the global cultural space. This calls for critical reflection and an interdisciplinary approach, combining literary studies, cultural studies, and translation studies.

The Role of the Translator

In the process of transferring Balkan literature into Western languages, the translator acts not merely as a mediator but as an active creator and interpreter, shaping the final image of the text and, correspondingly, the national identity of the region.

Michael Henry Heim, a renowned American translator specializing in Russian and Balkan languages, repeatedly emphasized that translation is an act of selection and interpretation, where the translator bears responsibility for conveying not only meaning but also cultural context. His translations of Balkan authors sought to preserve original cultural markers while simultaneously making the texts accessible and appealing to Western readers.

Celia Hawkesworth, who translated works by Dubravka Ugrešić and other South Slavic authors, noted that the translator must balance preserving the "otherness" of the text with its domestication for the target audience. Her studies highlight the translator's role as a "cultural mediator" capable of both dismantling and reinforcing stereotypes about the Balkans.

Peter Constantine, another prominent translator of Balkan literature, pointed to the influence of publishing decisions and marketing strategies on the selection of texts and stylistic choices in translation. According to him, translators often find themselves "caught" between loyalty to the original and the demands of the Western book market, which in turn affects the ultimate portrayal of the Balkans in translation.

Thus, the translator's role transcends a mere technical task — they become a co-author of the text, with their decisions and approaches directly impacting the formation of Western representations of Balkan culture and national identities.

Conclusion

The translation of Balkan literature into Western languages is a complex and multifaceted process intertwining linguistic, cultural, and political dimensions. Translation involves not only the transmission of text but also the active formation and transformation of national identities, rendering it a powerful tool of cultural mediation.

An analysis of key authors such as Ivo Andrić, Dubravka Ugrešić, Ismail Kadare, and Milorad Pavić demonstrates that each act of translation is accompanied by adaptations and interpretations reflecting the expectations and stereotypes of Western audiences. Translators, publishers, and cultural institutions serve as "co-authors" and "mediators" who influence the image of the Balkans both within national and international cultural contexts.

The issue of representation, highlighted in the theories of Edward Said and Maria Todorova, underscores the necessity of a critical approach to analyzing translation as a cultural phenomenon, wherein entrenched stereotypes may be reproduced or, conversely, challenged.

Overall, the translation of Balkan literature is not only a bridge between languages but also a contested field of identity in which the interests of authors, translators, publishers, and readers intersect. Understanding these processes is essential for fostering intercultural dialogue and deepening comprehension of the complex multinational Balkan region.

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THE HISTORICAL DEPTH AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE TURKISH LANGUAGE IN THE BALKANS

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Abstract

This study explores the historical foundations, cultural influences, and strategic significance of the Turkish language in the Balkans from multiple perspectives. The presence of Turkish in this region is not merely a legacy of Ottoman rule but rather reflects a deep historical continuum that stretches from the Scythians and Huns to the Avars and Ottomans. Centuries of interaction with local populations have transformed the Turkish language into more than a marker of ethnic identity—it has also become a vital medium of cultural exchange and coexistence. In the contemporary era, the revitalization of the Turkish language in the Balkans is not solely a pedagogical concern; it carries strategic importance for preserving cultural influence, safeguarding historical memory, and strengthening the unity of the Turkic world. Historically, the Balkans have represented a part of Europe closely connected to the Turkic world through shared linguistic, religious, and cultural values. Accordingly, the Turkish language continues to serve as a crucial instrument in maintaining these enduring ties. This article examines both the historical trajectory and the present dynamics of the Turkish language in the Balkans, analyzing its role within the frameworks of cultural diplomacy and soft power. It highlights the historical and geopolitical significance of the region in the broader context of the Turkic world. Ultimately, sustaining the Turkish language in the Balkans is not merely an act of preserving national or ethnic identity but a strategic endeavor to reconstruct a wider cultural and civilizational geography.

Keywords: Balkans, Turkish language, cultural diplomacy, historical memory, soft power, strategic significance.

Introduction

Learning a foreign language is not merely about acquiring a new means of communication. It also provides access to the history, culture, social structure, and worldview of the country to which the language belongs. In this regard, language is not only a tool for individual development but also a strategic medium that enables cultural interaction and international connectivity. An increasing interest in a particular language contributes to the formation of perceptions about the country associated with that language, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of soft power policies. From this perspective, when assessing Türkiye's soft power strategy in the Balkans, the teaching and presence of the Turkish language should not be viewed solely as a pedagogical matter but also as a phenomenon of historical and geopolitical significance. The growing interest in the Turkish language demonstrates that Türkiye's historical influence and instruments of cultural diplomacy in the Balkans remain relevant today. This can be considered one of the most tangible indicators of Türkiye's soft power potential.

The presence of the Turkish language in the Balkans is rooted in the very essence of the term *"Balkan."* The word itself is of Turkic origin, which underscores the deep historical traces of the Turks in this geography. In Turkish, *"Balkan"* means "mountainous region," and since the Ottoman period, it has been used to denote this vast area. However, the presence of Turks in the Balkans did not begin with the Ottomans; it was shaped through the historical settlement of various Turkic tribes—from the Scythians and Huns to the Avars, Pechenegs, and Kipchaks—across different periods of history. These settlements were not temporary migratory movements but rather the foundation for enduring cultural interactions and socio-political structures. By the 13th and 14th centuries, Turkic tribes had gained political and military strength and participated actively in state-building processes across the Balkans. The region also became the first major arena in which the Ottoman state evolved and expanded. Therefore, the Balkans should not be perceived merely as a conquered territory but as a foundational space for the formation of both the Ottoman state and Turkish civilization.

During the Ottoman Empire's 550-year rule over the Balkans, the region functioned not only as an administrative center but also as a tolerant space characterized by intercultural interaction, multilingualism, and religious diversity. Thanks to the Ottoman principle of multi-layered governance, which favored coexistence rather than assimilation, the Turkish language was met with respect and affection by local communities and became widely accepted as a common means of communication. However, beginning in the 19th century, as the Ottoman Empire lost political power in the region, ethnic nationalist movements emerged in the Balkans. During this period, Turks and non-Turkish Muslims faced severe oppression, forced migrations, and even assimilation policies that reached the level of ethnic cleansing. These events disrupted the natural development of the Turkish language in the region and weakened its sociocultural position.

Given this historical background, the revitalization and preservation of the Turkish language in the Balkans today is not merely a matter of language policy but a crucial priority for maintaining historical memory, ensuring cultural continuity, and sustaining strategic influence. The primary aim of this study is to analyze the historical roots, cultural impacts, and contemporary strategic role of the Turkish language in the Balkans through a multidimensional approach.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and historical-descriptive research design to explore the evolution, cultural significance, and strategic role of the Turkish language in the Balkans from the Ottoman era to the present day. The research interprets the Turkish language not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as a vehicle of cultural diplomacy, identity preservation, and soft power within the broader context of the Turkic world. A multidisciplinary framework has been employed, integrating perspectives from history, sociolinguistics, political science, and cultural studies. Through this approach, the study examines the Turkish language both as a historical legacy and a modern diplomatic instrument, revealing how it has contributed to cultural continuity and intercultural dialogue in the Balkans.

The Strategic Importance of the Turkish Language in the Balkans from 1923 to the Present

Following the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923, the Balkan territories remained outside its new political borders. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, new nation-states emerged across the Balkans. The primary policy pursued by nationalist groups during this period was "De-

Ottomanization"—a systematic effort to eliminate traces of the Ottoman legacy. Historical monuments and architectural structures inherited from the Ottomans were destroyed, place names were changed, and extensive attempts were made to remove Turkish elements from the languages of other Balkan nations. Despite these efforts to erase Turkish influence, the Ottoman legacy continues to manifest itself throughout the Balkan geography today.

The Strategic Role of the Turkish Language in the Balkans from the 1990s to the Present

Until the 1990s, Türkiye's Balkan policy primarily revolved around issues of security and stability. However, following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Türkiye's approach toward the region underwent a significant transformation. Alongside political and economic engagement, increasing emphasis was placed on cultural relations. Contrary to claims made by some researchers that this represented a form of "Neo-Ottomanism," Türkiye's approach was, in fact, a strategic attempt to reintegrate into a region with which it has historically shared numerous common values and cultural ties.

Although Türkiye's interest in the Balkans during the 1990s was relatively limited, after 2002, with the reorientation of its foreign policy, the Balkans became one of the primary targets of Türkiye's soft power strategy. The main objective of Turkish foreign diplomacy was to promote Türkiye's history and culture through the establishment of new institutions dedicated to the teaching of the Turkish language. The teaching of Turkish in the Balkans has been directed toward two main groups: Communities of Turkic origin who had historically settled in the Balkans and whose mother tongue is Turkish. Members of other ethnic groups who, for various reasons, have developed an interest in learning the Turkish language and culture. Currently, the total Turkish population living in the Balkans is estimated at approximately 2.25 million people, distributed as follows: 500,000 in Bulgaria, 100,000 in North Macedonia, 200,000 in Greece, 1 million in Romania, 80,000 in Kosovo, 50,000 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 30,000 in Serbia. Although these figures are based on official sources, unofficial data suggest that the number of Turks living in the Balkans may be considerably higher. Despite forced migrations, massacres, and assimilation policies, the continued presence of nearly two million Turks in the Balkans—an enduring legacy of the Ottoman period—makes the strengthening of the Turkish language in the region both necessary and strategically significant. Furthermore, the number of non-Turkish Balkan peoples showing interest in the Turkish language has been rapidly increasing. One of the major factors driving this interest is the widespread popularity of Turkish television series broadcast across the region, which has significantly boosted cultural curiosity and motivation to learn Turkish.

In the promotion and teaching of Turkish, in addition to the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye, the Türkiye Maarif Foundation plays a particularly important role, as it holds the legal authority to establish educational institutions abroad. The Foundation currently operates 43 schools, 2 educational institutions, and 1 university (the University of New York Tirana) across Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia. It provides comprehensive educational opportunities from preschool to university for both local Turkish communities and those interested in learning the Turkish language. The Foundation also offers libraries, cultural centers, and sports facilities, publishes educational materials, supports curricula, and organizes symposia, conferences, and seminars aimed at promoting Turkish language and culture throughout the region.

Historical Context: From the Ottoman Era to the Present

Throughout history, the Balkan Peninsula has served as a crossroads of civilizations and a focal point of cultural and political confrontation. During the 550-year rule of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish language functioned not only as the language of administration but also as a lingua franca and a key vehicle for the transmission of Turkish culture. In the modern era, Turkish has transcended its traditional role as a marker of ethnic identity to become a strategic instrument of Türkiye's *soft power* diplomacy.

The Ottoman expansion into the Balkans brought not only military and political transformations but also profound cultural and spiritual changes. Turkish became the *lingua franca* of the region, used not only by Muslim communities but also by diverse ethnic and religious groups. However, following the Balkan Wars of 1912 and the subsequent withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire, the status of the Turkish language underwent significant decline. Large segments of the Turkish population were subjected to forced migration, while those who remained became victims of assimilation policies. Despite these challenges, Turkish communities continued to resist cultural erasure, striving to preserve their national identity and heritage.

North Macedonia, in particular, experienced drastic political and ethnic shifts during and after the Balkan Wars, having been an Ottoman vilayet prior to 1912. The majority of Turks were expelled from the region, while those who remained under the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (and later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) between 1912 and 1944 lost many of their basic rights. During the Second World War, the Turkish population again faced severe repression; education and publications in Turkish were nearly eradicated.

The establishment of the Republic of Macedonia within the Yugoslav federation in 1944 marked a turning point. Turkish-language education was reinstated, teachers were trained, and textbooks were published. This revival gained momentum with the founding of the *Birlik* newspaper and publishing house in 1953, which became a cornerstone of Turkish cultural life in the region.
In contrast, Greece—excluding the Turks of Western Thrace—does not officially recognize any ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities within its borders. Despite the rulings of international bodies such as the EU, UN, and Council of Europe, Greece continues to violate the rights of its Turkish minority. Although the Turks of Western Thrace were granted minority status and full civil rights under the Treaty of Lausanne, the Greek authorities today deny their Turkish ethnic identity, referring to them merely as a "Muslim minority." Consequently, the Turkish population of Western Thrace faces significant challenges in maintaining their language and national identity.

Soft Power Policy in the Context of Historical Background and Cultural Heritage

In the international relations of the 21st century, *soft power* has become one of the primary instruments of diplomacy, often taking precedence over traditional *hard power* approaches. Conceptually articulated by Joseph Nye, *soft power* refers to a state's ability to influence other nations through the appeal of its cultural values rather than through coercion or force. Within this framework, Türkiye's foreign policy—particularly over the past two decades—has increasingly emphasized strategies of soft power through cultural diplomacy, educational initiatives, and media exports. The central placement of the Turkish language in this strategy ensures that it functions not merely as a means of communication but as a key conduit for cultural transmission and influence-building.

For nearly five centuries, the Balkans constituted an integral part of the Ottoman Empire. During this period, the Turkish language, along with Ottoman cultural, religious, and social structures, became deeply intertwined with the life of local peoples. This historical legacy provides a solid cultural foundation for Türkiye's contemporary relations with the Balkan states and serves as one of the main pillars of its current soft power policy. By integrating these historical ties with modern geopolitical objectives, Türkiye has been reshaping its relations with Balkan countries within the framework of cultural diplomacy. One of the central components of this process is the systematic promotion and dissemination of the Turkish language.

Institutional Structures for the Promotion of Turkish

State institutions play a crucial role in implementing Türkiye's soft power strategy across the Balkans:

- **Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA)** – Although originally established with a focus on Central Asia, TİKA plays a pivotal role in the Balkans due to the historical and cultural ties linking the region with Turkestan. Through projects aimed at strengthening educational infrastructure, restoring historical monuments, and supporting the Turkish language, TİKA contributes to the consolidation of Turkish cultural presence in the region.

- **Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF)** – This foundation operates by establishing educational institutions abroad, directly providing Turkish language education while serving as a vital channel for the transmission of cultural values. TMF not only teaches the language but also promotes Türkiye's educational model, value system, and cultural outlook.

- **Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)** – Founded in 2010, YTB functions within the framework of Türkiye's diaspora policy, targeting both Turkish communities abroad and "kindred nations." Through scholarship programs, cultural camps, and youth organizations, the agency fosters stronger linguistic and cultural ties between the youth of the Balkans, Türkiye, and the broader Turkic world.

Collectively, these institutions operationalize Türkiye's soft power strategy by linking linguistic promotion with education, cultural heritage preservation, and transnational identity-building, thereby reinforcing Türkiye's cultural and political influence throughout the Balkan region.

The Role of Media and Culture

In transforming the Turkish language into an instrument of soft power, not only state institutions but also media and cultural production play a decisive role. Since the 2010s, Turkish television series have gained immense global popularity, attracting a particularly large audience in the Balkans. Today, Türkiye ranks as the world's second-largest exporter of television dramas after the United States, strengthening its cultural influence through content distributed to more than 150 countries. Research indicates that approximately 82% of individuals learning Turkish cite Turkish TV series as their primary motivation. These productions not only introduce the Turkish language but also convey models of Turkish family life, social relations, and cultural values. Their everyday expressions and accessible style facilitate the learning process for Balkan audiences.

The Turkish language today serves not only as a means of communication but also as a strategic soft power component of Türkiye's foreign policy. The historical, cultural, and ethnic connections between Türkiye and the Balkans have made the implementation of this strategy more effective. Through the coordinated efforts of institutions such as TİKA, the Turkish Maarif Foundation, and the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)—together with the widespread impact of Turkish TV series and media products—the Turkish language is presented to Balkan societies both as a language worth learning and as a cultural medium for reconstructing shared historical memory. Consequently, the Turkish language in the Balkans today represents not only the heritage of the past but also a diplomatic tool for the future, bridging historical continuity with contemporary cultural diplomacy and soft power strategies.

Strategic Significance and Geopolitical Perspectives

Unlike the independent Turkic states within the Turkic world, the preservation of national identity, language, and traditions among Turkish communities living within the borders of other nations has today become a matter of national struggle. In this context, for the Turks of the Balkans, language functions as a bridge between the past and the future. As part of this national struggle, the Turkish language must first be cherished and transmitted within the family environment to the younger generations. Cultural customs and traditions should be passed on to children, and extracurricular activities should aim to strengthen the younger generation's connection to the Turkish language.

Today, Turkish in the Balkans is not only the bearer of ethnic identity but also a vehicle of Türkiye's and the broader Turkic world's cultural, economic, and political interests. Although this situation is occasionally criticized internationally as a manifestation of so-called "Neo-Ottomanism," Türkiye presents it instead as an effort to build a "geography of affection" grounded in shared historical and cultural values. The Balkans remain a sensitive geopolitical zone due to their complex ethnic and religious composition. While some countries display great interest in the Turkish language and culture, others harbor deep-seated suspicions and "historical traumas." For instance, in Greece, the Turks of Western Thrace continue to face significant violations of linguistic and cultural rights, particularly regarding mother-tongue education and the expression of national identity. The Balkans constitute one of the primary regions of Türkiye's active foreign policy, where the teaching of Turkish is among the top priorities within the framework of soft power diplomacy. The ideological foundation of this policy rests on the notion that the Turkish language is the key to preserving national identity. Turkish language instruction in the Balkans thus plays a vital role in helping native Turkish-speaking communities safeguard their cultural and ethnic heritage.

Although Turkish is officially regarded as a "foreign language" in many Balkan states, in reality it is anything but foreign. During the Ottoman era, Turkish served as the lingua franca of the region, and as a result, between 3,000 and 7,000 Turkish-origin words can still be found in the Balkan languages. Considering nearly five and a half centuries of Ottoman presence, Turkish today continues to be a crucial medium through which Balkan peoples can access and understand their own historical and cultural legacy. Revitalizing the Turkish language in the region thus also signifies reviving Turkish cultural influence and bridging the "geography of affection" between the Balkans and the Turkic world. However, this process must account for each Balkan country's unique socio-cultural context. In some countries, initiatives centered around shared Islamic heritage may prove effective, while in others, such approaches could produce adverse effects. Similarly, ethnic and regional attitudes toward Turks vary significantly—respect and affinity may prevail in one area, while prejudice and hostility persist in

another. For this reason, Türkiye's soft power strategy in the Balkans emphasizes a context-sensitive, country-specific approach, implementing projects tailored to local diversities in order to strengthen linguistic, cultural, and historical bonds throughout the region.

The Bonds Between the Balkans and the Turkic World: An Analysis of Contemporary Strategic Position

Throughout history, the Balkans have been a crossroads where diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural communities coexisted—a multilayered space of civilizations. This geography has served not only as a passageway between Europe and Asia but also as a zone of interaction where different cultural codes, linguistic elements, and social structures have continuously intersected. Turkic communities, too, have long been an integral part of this cultural mosaic, leaving indelible traces across the Balkans. Today, in several Balkan countries, the Turkish language still holds the status of an official or recognized minority language and is actively used in education and the media. However, this reality is not the result of uninterrupted historical continuity but rather the outcome of a long and persistent struggle for identity preservation. Turks living in North Macedonia and Bulgaria, for instance, strive not only to maintain their ethnic existence but also to preserve their language and cultural heritage. At this point, the language functions not merely as a tool of communication but as a repository of collective memory, historical identity, and national belonging. The relationship between the Balkans and the Turkic world is not confined to the Ottoman period. The presence of ancient Turkic tribes such as the Scythians, Huns, Avars, and Pechenegs in the region demonstrates that the Balkans have held significance for Turkic history since early times. Nonetheless, the 550-year Ottoman rule institutionalized these connections politically, culturally, and linguistically. Although these ties weakened following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Balkan Turks continued to preserve their links with Türkiye and the wider Turkic world. At the heart of this resilience stands the Turkish language, which remains the main pillar of cultural continuity and identity.

Following the 1990s, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian Turkic states, renewed efforts toward Turkic reintegration emerged. In this context, İsmail Bey Gaspıralı's vision—"Unity in Language, Thought, and Action"—has evolved from a cultural slogan into a strategic paradigm guiding the modern Turkic world. The Balkans, therefore, should once again be regarded as the western gateway of the Turkic world, a region of geopolitical and cultural significance not only for Türkiye but also for the Turkic nations of Central Asia. Situated at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, the Balkans provide a vital link facilitating the integration of the Turkic world with Europe. The historical presence and contemporary strategic importance of the Turkish language in the Balkans should thus be viewed not merely as a regional matter, but as a fundamental element of the cultural unity and continuity of the entire Turkic world. Today, Turkish in the Balkans represents not only a means of preserving national identity for ethnic Turks but also a medium of cultural rapprochement for other communities. This dual function transforms Turkish from a mere communicative tool into a carrier of civilization.

By sustaining the Turkish language in the Balkans, both historical memory is preserved and a shared cultural platform for the future is constructed. This dynamic serves as a cornerstone for regional peace, cultural pluralism, and strategic cooperation, reaffirming the enduring role of the Turkish language as a bridge between civilizations and a pillar of transnational cultural diplomacy.

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FROM NORTH MACEDONIA TO THE TURKIC WORLD: COMMON VALUES AND A COMMON FUTURE THROUGH THE POWER OF LITERATURE, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE

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Abstract

This study examines the cultural identity of North Macedonia and its contributions to education and intercultural interaction through the shared historical and cultural values of the Turkic World. The Turkic World encompasses a vast civilization that stretches from Central Asia to Anatolia and from the Caucasus to the Balkans, shaped by language, religion, history, and traditions. The study discusses how intercultural interaction and multiculturalism create dynamics in education, culture, and identity specifically in the context of North Macedonia, highlighting the role of universities in this process. Education is addressed not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a critical element in fostering social cohesion, democratization, and intercultural communication. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of preserving the Turkish language, alphabet policies, the unifying function of literature, and cultural ties established with different regions of the Turkic World, particularly Azerbaijan. As a result, the Turks of North Macedonia are evaluated as a strategic community that preserves the collective memory of the Turkic World while maintaining their identity and contributing to intercultural interaction.

Keywords: *North Macedonia, Turkic World, shared values, language, culture.*

Introduction

The Turkic world represents a cultural unity that carries the traces of a deep-rooted civilization stretching across a vast geography—from Central Asia to the Balkans, from the Caucasus to Anatolia. This unity is shaped not only by geographical boundaries but also by a shared language, religion, history, and traditions. One of the most significant bearers of this great heritage is the Turkish community of North Macedonia, which has preserved its presence in the Balkans for centuries. Established during the Ottoman Empire's settlement in the region, the institutionalized Turkish presence continued to leave its mark even after the empire's withdrawal, forming a rich social structure in terms of culture, language, traditions, and lifestyle.

Individuals with different or similar cultural values living on the same territory may adopt or adapt to a certain cultural structure through interactions with dominant and subcultures; this process is known as intercultural learning. Such learning is based on mutual acceptance, linguistic and religious pluralism, respect, and tolerance. It encompasses not only national but also universal values. Multiculturalism is often compared to a garden full of flowers of different colors, symbolizing the diversity and richness it brings. According to Ergin (2000), the path to preserving and developing each culture lies in respecting individuals' natural rights, protecting them equally, and recognizing every

person as a potential source of culture. Living in North Macedonia means both honoring the historical heritage of the past and looking to the future with hope. It also signifies maintaining one's national identity in a land where the call to prayer harmonizes with church bells, and different religions and languages coexist. Throughout history, North Macedonia has offered a societal model characterized by multiculturalism and multi-religiosity, where various ethnic communities live together and intercultural interaction can be vividly observed. In this context, the Turkish community has not only preserved its language, culture, and values for centuries but has also made significant contributions to the process of intercultural exchange.

Today, intercultural interaction is considered not only as the coexistence of different communities but also as a guarantee of social richness, democratization, and peaceful coexistence. However, the concept of multiculturalism is subject to diverse perspectives: while some argue that differences enrich social life, others criticize it for potentially undermining social cohesion. The aim of this study is to discuss the significance of intercultural interaction through the example of North Macedonia, to examine the dynamics emerging within the multicultural social structure in terms of education, culture, and identity, and to explore the competencies individuals need to possess in this process. The study emphasizes the importance of intercultural interaction for social peace, identity preservation, and democratization, while also aiming to contribute to the understanding of the Turks of North Macedonia within the framework of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

According to Kirişci (2010), the Balkans serve as a strategically important bridge not only for Türkiye but also for the Turkic republics of Central Asia. This region, acting as a gateway for Turkish culture to the West, strengthens the interaction between Türkiye, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, thereby contributing to the Turkic world's role as a more influential global actor.

The Turks of North Macedonia should be regarded as a strategic element that preserves historical memory and sustains linguistic and cultural heritage within the Turkic world. Their historical role, social resilience, and cultural productivity are significant not only regionally but also globally in the context of Turkish culture. Today, the Turks of North Macedonia strive to carry the traces of the past into the present and transmit them to the future. Building cultural connections with other Turkic nations facing similar challenges—particularly with Azerbaijan, which shares close linguistic, cultural, and historical ties—will play an essential role in strengthening this bond. Both communities have interacted with different civilizations throughout history, yet they have managed to transform these interactions into sources of cultural richness without compromising their core identities.

If a meaningful and sustainable integration within the Turkic world is to be achieved, the promotion and support of Turks in the Balkans is essential. Being a Turk in the Balkans is not merely an ethnic identity but also a symbol of cultural resistance, preservation of historical heritage, and hope for the future. As Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, a native of Skopje, once said, *"Places where the Turkish language is not spoken cannot truly be considered the homeland."* The Turks of North Macedonia have proven over centuries that they are not tenants but rightful hosts of these lands, having successfully preserved their culture and language.

According to Aksakal (2011), although the strong cultural, linguistic, and political ties established between the Balkans and the Turkic world during the Ottoman Empire weakened after its collapse, cultural interactions have persisted to this day. This study aims to draw attention to the position of North Macedonian Turks within the Turkic world and to provide scholarly contributions to the preservation, promotion, and transmission of their cultural heritage to future generations. Cultural interaction, reinforcement of common values, and strengthening of the sense of belonging constitute the main focal points of this study.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretative research design to examine the cultural identity of the Turkish community in North Macedonia within the broader framework of the Turkic World. The research aims to analyze the interconnections between education, intercultural interaction, and cultural preservation, focusing on how shared historical and linguistic values contribute to maintaining a collective identity across diverse geographies.

Unity and Solidarity in the Turkic World Through Education

Education is the most powerful element that shapes the spirit of a nation. In a rapidly changing and transforming world, the ability to manage this change lies in shaping society through education. In this new global order, societies that share common historical and cultural foundations—whether in the past, present, or future—must engage in mutual cooperation and solidarity not only politically but also in fields such as education, health, security, and technology. Education is one of the most fundamental areas shaping the future of societies and playing a central role in the construction of individual and collective identities. Especially in multicultural geographies where diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities coexist, education serves as a decisive instrument not merely for the transmission of knowledge but also for social integration, intercultural interaction, and the cultivation of democratic values.

In this regard, North Macedonia—where different cultures and faiths have coexisted throughout history—presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, this diversity enables social richness and cultural exchange; on the other hand, it reveals the necessity for integration and inclusivity within the educational system. The Turkish community in North Macedonia, while preserving its language, culture, and values for centuries, has simultaneously cultivated a culture of coexistence with other nations. This demonstrates that education assumes a critical role not only in the transmission of national identity but also in fostering intercultural communication and tolerance. In the modern era, education functions as a bridge that supports individuals' academic development while promoting mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among different communities.

Universities, as the most dynamic actors in the process of intercultural interaction, are not only institutions where scientific knowledge is produced but also central platforms for fostering international cooperation, ensuring cultural integration, and strengthening social solidarity. Indeed, the academic collaboration between Baku Slavic University and Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje clearly demonstrates that bridges built through education yield significant results beyond academia, extending into cultural and social domains. Such initiatives contribute to the mutual recognition of different languages and cultures, providing students not only with opportunities to learn languages but also to discover the diversity of a shared civilization existing across various regions. Therefore, universities should be viewed as dynamic centers where different cultures converge, common values are cultivated, and contributions to social peace are made beyond the mere transfer of knowledge.

From the perspective of intercultural interaction, education emerges as a balancing factor between the preservation of diverse identities and the strengthening of social unity. Today, when we speak of the Turkic world, we should envision a vast geography stretching from Türkiye to Azerbaijan, from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to North Macedonia. This geography is once again converging around a shared awareness of language, culture, and history, thus forming a strong foundation for unity.

The idea system pioneered by Ismail Gasprinsky, who emphasized the principle of *"unity in language, thought, and action,"* gained depth and significance through the contributions of prominent thinkers and writers such as Ziya Gökalp, Zeki Velidi Togan, Halid Said, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, and Chingiz Aitmatov. Today, sustaining this great ideal and transmitting it to future generations has become one of the fundamental missions of educational institutions.

In this context, it should be remembered that Baku Slavic University plays a significant role on the educational front as both a carrier and implementer of this mission. Universities should not only be centers of scientific production but also dynamic actors of international solidarity and cultural integration. The unification of the Turkic World around shared values is not merely a nostalgic ideal; it is a necessity in light of contemporary geopolitical and cultural realities. Education stands as the most effective means of achieving this unity.

The Unifying Power of Language and Culture in Preserving the Turkish Language

Language and culture are the two fundamental pillars that ensure the continuity of a nation. In this context, the Turkish language is not merely a means of communication but a living entity that carries, shapes, and reflects the memory, spirit, and identity of the Turkish nation. Wherever Turkish is spoken, Turkish culture lives on—and as the culture survives, so too does the existence and continuity of the nation remain secure.

Throughout history, the Turkish nation has ruled across diverse geographies, founded numerous states, and led various civilizations. The most enduring common denominator in this multilayered historical process has been the language itself. From the wisdom-filled teachings of Ahmad Yasawi to the aesthetic depth of Fuzuli, from Ismail Gasprinsky's call for modernization to Mehmet Akif's idealized vision of youth, the Turkish language has served as the carrier of this cultural and intellectual heritage to the present day. Nations that fail to preserve their language are ultimately doomed to lose their identity. Language is not merely a tool for expressing individual thought; it is a fundamental structural element that conveys a nation's cultural identity, historical accumulation, and social cohesion. National consciousness, cultural continuity, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge are largely sustained through language. Therefore, throughout history, Turkish intellectuals have undertaken various efforts to protect, enrich, and establish Turkish as a common medium of communication.

In the 11th century, Mahmud al-Kashgari, with his *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk*, systematically documented the Turkish lexicon, revealing the richness of the language. In the 14th century, Ashık Pasha, through his *Garibname*, contributed to the dissemination of Turkish among the common people. These efforts, in line with the linguistic understanding and social structures of their times, laid the groundwork for Turkish to gain legitimacy as a language of science, literature, and religion. In the modern era—particularly from the 19th century onward—the Tanzimat intellectuals took significant steps toward linguistic simplification and integration with the public. Figures such as Reşid Pasha, Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, Ahmet Vefik Pasha, Şemsettin Sami, and Süleyman Pasha contributed to the development of Turkish as a language of science and education through their grammatical and lexicographical works.

The most concrete manifestation of this ideal was the First Turkological Congress, held in Baku from February 26 to March 6, 1926. This congress, which brought together Turkish representatives from various regions, not only discussed the reform of the alphabet but also the idea of establishing a common literary language. The subsequent studies initiated by this congress aimed to elevate Turkish

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as a language of science and culture. The First Turkological Congress thus represents a historical turning point in terms of the simplification, standardization, and strengthening of cultural identity through the Turkish language.

The Unifying Function of Literature

In North Macedonia, the Turks have preserved their language and cultural identity for centuries. Therefore, flexibility and inclusiveness should be the fundamental principles of alphabet policies. Efforts toward alphabet standardization in the Turkic world should be carried out from a holistic perspective—not limited to Central Asia or Anatolia, but encompassing Turks living in the diaspora as well. Any decision regarding a common alphabet or language that overlooks the contributions, experiences, and current situation of the Turks of Macedonia may undermine both their sense of belonging and the ideal of cultural unity. In the studies of alphabet and linguistic unity across the Turkic world, we should not be regarded merely as inheritors of a historical legacy but as an active and integral part of it today.

Indeed, literature—like language—has played a vital role in enlightening the public, addressing social issues, and supporting modernization. In novels, poems, and essays, themes such as individual freedom, social structure, education, morality, and tradition have come to the forefront. The Orkhon Inscriptions do not belong solely to Central Asia, nor Yunus Emre only to Anatolia, nor Chinghiz Aitmatov merely to the Kyrgyz steppes; they are all shared monuments of our collective memory. In this process, the Turkish language curriculum in North Macedonia has included not only Anatolian-centered writers but also classical and contemporary representatives of Azerbaijani literature. Alongside classical figures such as Nizami Ganjavi (12th century), Fuzûlî (16th century), Molla Panah Vagif (18th century), Mirza Fatali Akhundov (19th century), and Mirza Alakbar Sabir (early 20th century), contemporary authors like Bakhtiyar Vahabzade (1925–2009), Anar Rzayev (1938–), and Nabi Khazri (1924–2007) are also featured in textbooks. Through their works, students acquire not only literary knowledge but also linguistic and intellectual depth, while gaining an understanding of national unity and solidarity.

Folk tales and epics—integral parts of oral culture—have also gained significance in this context. Folk stories such as *Tahir and Zühre*, *Ashık Garip*, *Aslı and Kerem*, and *Köroğlu*, together with Fuzûlî's *Leylî and Mecnun*, have been included in school curricula. Through these works, cultural values such as love, heroism, sacrifice, and justice are transmitted, helping students develop both literary formation and a strong sense of national identity and historical awareness. This approach enables readers to understand writers not only through their biographies but also through their poetic structures. For example, in issue no. 8 of the *Sesler* magazine (1966), a poem by the prominent Azerbaijani poet Rasul Rza was published in translation by Ilhami Emin. Other issues of the magazine featured short biographical introductions and works by key figures such as Molla Panah Vagif, Bakhtiyar Vahabzade, and Nabi Khazri. These writings were not only directed toward literary enthusiasts but also aimed to raise awareness among the Turks of North Macedonia about the Turkic world and the broader Turkestan geography. Such publications contributed to the construction of a shared literary and cultural identity, and this awareness was reflected in the works of poets of that period.

In Macedonia, figures such as Âşık Çelebi, the mystic Muhammed Nur-ul Arabi, and Sheikh Sadeddin Efendi; as well as Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Yaşar Nabi, Şevket Rado, Hüseyin Süleyman, Şükrü Ramo, Necati Zekeriya, Ilhami Emin, Fahri Kaya, and hundreds of other Turkish writers and artists

born in or connected to Macedonia, have all contributed—and continue to contribute—to Turkish culture, thought, and literature, as well as to intercultural interaction, through their works and intellectual efforts. Especially in poetry, works concerning Turkestan and the Turkic world as a whole should be regarded as deliberate choices reflecting a conscious effort to preserve the historical and cultural bonds with the region.

Conclusion

The Turks of North Macedonia have demonstrated, through centuries of perseverance, that they are an inseparable part of the Turkic world by preserving their identity, language, and culture in the geography where they have long lived. This community is not merely the custodian of a historical legacy but also plays a strategic role today in fostering intercultural interaction, multiculturalism, and social solidarity. As this study has shown, the case of North Macedonia illustrates the decisive role that language, literature, and culture play in identity formation, the establishment of social harmony, and the strengthening of democratization.

If a lasting unity within the Turkic world is to be achieved, education must serve as one of the most effective instruments in this process. The transmission of a shared language, culture, and historical consciousness to younger generations will provide a solid foundation for shaping the future of the Turkic world. This study further reveals that the Turkish language in this geography functions not merely as a means of communication but also as a symbol of identity and a marker of historical belonging. The role of educational institutions—particularly universities—is vital in this regard. Education should not be viewed solely as the transmission of knowledge but as a space where diverse cultures meet, shared values are cultivated, and intercultural dialogue is constructed. In this sense, it forms the essential ground for unity and solidarity across the Turkic world. Academic and cultural collaborations stretching from Baku to Skopje, from Almaty to Istanbul, contribute significantly to the consolidation of a shared civilizational consciousness. Language and literature sustain the collective memory of the Turkish nation, ensuring the continuity of identity and belonging through intergenerational transmission. The contributions of the Turks of North Macedonia to both classical and modern Turkish literature possess not only regional significance but also universal value that concerns the entire Turkic world. In this context, the preservation of the Turkish language and the unifying power of literature emerge as indispensable instruments in the construction of a shared cultural identity. Thus, the Turks of Macedonia should be regarded not merely as heirs of the past but as architects of the future.

In conclusion, the reinforcement of shared values, the maintenance of cultural continuity, and the building of a strong sense of unity for the future of the Turkic world depend on preserving and supporting the existence of Turkish communities in the Balkans. The Turks of North Macedonia should therefore be recognized as both the bearers and practitioners of this great ideal. Their historical heritage, cultural production, and contributions to education represent a strategic richness for the future of the Turkic world. Consequently, initiatives carried out in the framework of intercultural interaction, multiculturalism, and education constitute the key to constructing a shared future—not only for North Macedonia but for the entire Turkic world.

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ARCHETYPES ACROSS AZERBAIJANI AND BALKAN LITERARY TRADITIONS

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Abstract

This study examines the role of archetypes as cultural signifiers across Azerbaijani and Balkan literary traditions, focusing on how shared myths and symbols both unify and distinguish these cultures. Drawing on Jung's theory of archetypes as collective unconscious patterns (Jung, 1968) and Frye's structuralist approach to literary symbolism (Frye, 1957), the paper conducts a comparative analysis of folk narratives, epic poetry, and modern prose from both regions. The research highlights recurring archetypes such as the Hero, the Trickster, and the Great Mother, showing how their thematic reinterpretations reflect historical experiences, socio-political transformations, and cross-cultural exchanges (Campbell, 2004; Propp, 1968). Through semiotic and textual analysis, it argues that while Azerbaijani and Balkan literatures share archetypal foundations rooted in ancient oral traditions, their cultural identities are articulated through unique narrative adaptations shaped by regional histories, religions, and linguistic diversity. The findings contribute to broader discussions on the intersection of comparative literature, cultural identity, and the persistence of myth in modern narratives.

Keywords: Literary Archetypes, Comparative studies, Cultural identity, Mythic Symbolism, Epic Narratives, Intercultural Motifs and Themes.

Introduction

Archetypes – universal symbolic patterns residing within the collective unconscious—serve as foundational elements in the construction of cultural narratives and literary expression (Jung, 1968; Campbell, 2008). These recurring motifs transcend temporal and geographical boundaries, providing societies with shared frameworks to articulate existential concerns, social values, and identity. The Balkans, with its complex history of cultural intersections, political upheavals, and ethnic diversity, presents a fertile context for the exploration of archetypal figures. Prominent archetypes such as the Hero, the Trickster, and the Martyr permeate Balkan oral traditions and literature, embodying themes of resistance, resilience, and communal memory shaped by centuries of conflict and transformation (Todorova, 2009; Petrović, 2020; Vucinich, 1991).

Similarly, Azerbaijani literature, deeply embedded in its rich oral heritage exemplified by epics like *Kitabi-Dədə Qorqud*, utilizes archetypes that reflect tribal values, spiritual destiny, and social cohesion (Mammadli, 2019; Yusifli, 2013). The Hero and Mother archetypes, central to Azerbaijani narrative tradition, symbolize courage, moral integrity, and cultural continuity within a framework influenced by Turkic, Islamic, and Caucasian cultural paradigms (Hasanov, 2015).

A comparative study of these literary traditions reveals how archetypes function as both universal constructs and culturally contingent symbols. Despite sharing a common mythological and folkloric heritage, Azerbaijani and Balkan literatures diverge in their narrative treatments of archetypal

motifs due to distinct historical trajectories, religious influences, and socio-political contexts (Propp, 1968; Eliade, 1991). This paper examines these convergences and divergences, highlighting the dynamic role of archetypes in preserving cultural memory, shaping identity, and sustaining narrative continuity within and between these regions. Employing an interdisciplinary approach that integrates literary criticism, comparative mythology, and cultural studies, the research aims to deepen understanding of archetypal resonance in the literary landscapes of Azerbaijan and the Balkans.

Archetypal theory, rooted in the pioneering work of Carl Gustav Jung (1968), posits that certain universal symbols and motifs reside within the collective unconscious and recur across diverse cultures and literary traditions. Joseph Campbell (2008) expanded this paradigm by illustrating how mythic structures, particularly the Hero's journey, manifest as common narrative frameworks globally. Complementing these insights, Vladimir Propp's (1968) morphological approach offers a systematic analysis of the narrative functions that underpin archetypal characters in folk literature.

In the Balkan context, Petrović (2020) underscores the persistence of archetypal figures such as the Hero, the Trickster, and the Martyr within epic poetry and folk narratives. These archetypes function as cultural touchstones, reflecting and reinforcing communal identity amid historical turbulence. For instance, the Serbian epic hero Marko Kraljević epitomizes strength and resistance, symbolizing national pride during periods of foreign domination (Vucinich, 1991). Similarly, Todorova's (2009) *Imagining the Balkans* critically examines the role of archetypal imagery in shaping regional identities within a complex socio-political milieu.

Azerbaijani literature, deeply influenced by its oral epic traditions, notably the *Kitabi-Dədə Qorqud*, foregrounds archetypes that convey tribal loyalty, spiritual destiny, and social cohesion (Mammadli, 2019; Yusifli, 2013). The Hero archetype in Azerbaijani narratives embodies both martial valor and ethical integrity, while the Mother archetype symbolizes nurturing strength and cultural continuity (Hasanov, 2015). These figures are intricately woven into the fabric of Azerbaijani cultural and religious life, reflecting influences from Turkic mythology and Islamic mysticism.

Comparative scholarship reveals that although Azerbaijani and Balkan literatures share foundational archetypal patterns derived from common mythological and folkloric sources, their expressions diverge in response to differing historical experiences, religious traditions, and linguistic landscapes (Eliade, 1991; Kristeva, 1986). For example, Balkan heroic archetypes frequently emphasize themes of external conflict and national liberation, whereas Azerbaijani archetypes often focus on internal spiritual quests and social unity (Propp, 1968; Mammadli, 2019). This dynamic interplay highlights the adaptability of archetypes as cultural instruments that simultaneously embody universal human experiences and localized identities.

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative literary analysis approach to explore archetypal motifs within Azerbaijani and Balkan literary traditions. The primary texts analyzed include the Azerbaijani oral epic *Kitabi-Dədə Qorqud* (Mammadli, 2019) and selected South Slavic epic poems, such as narratives featuring the Serbian hero Marko Kraljević (Petrović, 2020; Vucinich, 1991). These works were chosen for their canonical status and rich archetypal content.

The analytical framework draws on Jung's theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes (Jung, 1968), Campbell's monomyth model (Campbell, 2008), and Propp's structural functions in folk narratives (Propp, 1968). Through close textual reading and semiotic analysis, the study identifies key archetypal figures—such as the Hero, the Mother, and the Trickster—and examines their thematic roles and symbolic meanings.

For example, the figure of Basat in *Kitabi-Dədə Qorqud* is analyzed as an embodiment of the Hero archetype, whose quests represent both physical valor and moral righteousness (Mammadli,

2019). Similarly, Marko Kraljević's portrayal in Serbian epics is examined as a heroic archetype symbolizing resistance and national identity (Petrović, 2020). The study also considers the presence and function of the Trickster in Balkan folklore, a motif less prominent in Azerbaijani narratives (Todorova, 2009).

By comparing these literary traditions, the research highlights how shared archetypal patterns are adapted to distinct historical, religious, and cultural contexts. The scope is limited to these representative works to ensure focused and in-depth analysis.

The comparative analysis of Azerbaijani and Balkan literary traditions reveals both convergences in archetypal frameworks and significant divergences shaped by historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts.

In Azerbaijani literature, the *Kitabi-Dədə Qorqud* stands as a central text where archetypal motifs are vividly portrayed. The Hero archetype, embodied by characters such as Basat and Bamsi, serves as a moral compass and a defender of tribal values (Mammadli, 2019). Basat's heroic quests often involve confronting supernatural entities and overcoming insurmountable obstacles, which symbolize the community's struggle to maintain social order and spiritual harmony. These narratives emphasize the inseparability of physical bravery and ethical integrity, illustrating how individual heroism is intrinsically linked to collective well-being. The Mother archetype is another recurrent figure, representing nurturing strength and cultural continuity. Women in Azerbaijani epics function as preservers of tradition and mediators of social cohesion, embodying the enduring spirit of the community (Hasanov, 2015; Yusifli, 2013).

Conversely, in the Balkan literary canon, the archetypal Hero frequently emerges as a figure of resistance and national identity amidst historical turmoil. The epic figure of Marko Kraljević, prominent in Serbian folklore, exemplifies this archetype through his legendary defiance against Ottoman rule (Petrović, 2020; Vucinich, 1991). Marko's characterization is multifaceted; he is simultaneously a flawed human and a symbol of heroic idealism, which reflects the complex realities of Balkan societies under foreign domination. Moreover, the Trickster archetype holds a notable place in Balkan oral traditions, functioning as a subversive agent who challenges authority, exposes social hypocrisy, and provides a space for communal critique (Todorova, 2009). This figure's prominence underscores the Balkans' socio-political complexity and the role of folklore as a medium for negotiating power and resistance.

While both traditions share the Hero archetype, the emphasis differs markedly. Azerbaijani narratives focus on the Hero's spiritual and ethical dimensions within a tribal and religiously influenced framework, often highlighting themes of destiny, honor, and communal solidarity (Mammadli, 2019). In contrast, Balkan heroes embody collective aspirations for freedom and survival, shaped by centuries of conflict and diverse ethno-religious influences (Petrović, 2020; Todorova, 2009). The divergent roles of the Trickster in these literatures further illustrate the cultural specificity of archetypal deployment: marginal or absent in Azerbaijani narratives, the Trickster in the Balkans serves as a necessary foil to heroic ideals and a voice of social dissent.

Despite these differences, both Azerbaijani and Balkan literary traditions utilize archetypes as essential mechanisms for cultural memory and identity formation. Archetypal figures act as symbolic vessels that transmit collective values, historical experiences, and social norms across generations, adapting over time to reflect changing realities. This dynamic underscores the dual nature of archetypes as both universal and contextually malleable constructs, revealing how literature functions as a living dialogue between inherited mythic patterns and localized cultural expression.

The findings underscore the intricate and dynamic relationship between universal archetypal frameworks and their culturally specific adaptations within Azerbaijani and Balkan literary traditions. Consistent with Jungian theory (Jung, 1968), archetypes such as the Hero and the Mother function as fundamental symbolic structures that facilitate the construction and transmission of collective identities across generations. These archetypes act as mythic vessels that both unify and differentiate cultural narratives. However, their distinct manifestations within each region reveal the profound impact of divergent historical, religious, and socio-political contexts on the shaping of literary expression.

In Azerbaijani literature, the Hero archetype predominantly emphasizes spiritual integrity, moral rectitude, and the promotion of communal cohesion. These attributes align closely with Turkic and Islamic cultural values, reflecting an ethos that prizes inner virtue alongside social responsibility (Mammadli, 2019; Yusifli, 2013). This perspective resonates with Eliade's (1991) assertion that mythological motifs serve as mediators between the sacred and the profane, embedding ethical paradigms within narrative traditions that reinforce cultural continuity. Similarly, the Mother archetype operates as a vital symbol of nurturing strength, protection, and the preservation of heritage, reinforcing social stability and the transmission of cultural memory (Hasanov, 2015). Together, these archetypes help to articulate a cohesive vision of identity that is deeply rooted in spiritual and communal values. In contrast, the archetypal landscape of the Balkans reflects a complex historical milieu marked by centuries of foreign domination, shifting political borders, and a mosaic of ethno-religious identities. Within this context, the Hero archetype—exemplified by legendary figures such as Marko Kraljević—embodies themes of resistance, national pride, and the assertion of cultural sovereignty. This archetype functions as a focal point for collective memory, serving to inspire resilience and unity among diverse communities (Petrović, 2020; Vucinich, 1991). Additionally, the prominent role of the Trickster archetype in Balkan folklore introduces a nuanced, often subversive voice that challenges established authority and social norms. This figure reflects the complex and sometimes contentious social dynamics of the region, signaling a more ambivalent relationship with power and tradition than that typically observed in Azerbaijani narratives (Todorova, 2009). These divergent emphases illustrate the inherent malleability of archetypes, which, while grounded in universal aspects of human experience, are dynamically reinterpreted and reshaped to address specific cultural and historical realities (Campbell, 2008; Propp, 1968). This dual capacity allows archetypes to function simultaneously as enduring mythic templates and as evolving cultural instruments that mediate identity formation and the preservation of collective memory. This adaptability aligns with Kristeva's (1986) concept of intertextuality, wherein symbolic meanings are not fixed but continuously transformed through cultural dialogue, narrative exchange, and textual interplay.

Moreover, this comparative analysis contributes valuable insights to literary studies by demonstrating how archetypal analysis can illuminate processes of cultural exchange, resistance, and identity construction across distinct geopolitical and cultural regions. The findings suggest that archetypal narratives are not merely static relics of a shared human unconscious but are living, context-sensitive frameworks that adapt to reflect shifting socio-political realities. This understanding invites further scholarly inquiry, particularly into how contemporary forces such as modernization, globalization, and digital communication are influencing the evolution of archetypal motifs within Azerbaijani and Balkan literatures. Future research might also broaden the scope to include other literary genres, such as prose, drama, and modern media, to more comprehensively map the transformation and persistence of archetypes in the 21st century.

This study has elucidated how archetypal figures serve as enduring yet adaptable symbols within Azerbaijani and Balkan literary traditions. Although both cultures draw upon a shared

mythological heritage, their distinct historical trajectories, religious influences, and socio-political realities have shaped unique interpretations and narrative functions of archetypes. The Azerbaijani Hero, as exemplified in *Kitabi-Dədə Qorqud*, reflects spiritual integrity, moral valor, and communal cohesion, whereas the Balkan Hero often embodies resistance, national identity, and the complex realities of ethno-political conflict. Similarly, the Trickster archetype's prominence in Balkan folklore illustrates a cultural space for social critique and subversion, a motif comparatively less emphasized in Azerbaijani narratives.

This comparative analysis confirms the dual nature of archetypes as universal symbolic structures that are simultaneously culturally specific and historically contingent. Their continued presence and evolution within literature affirm their centrality in mediating collective memory, cultural identity, and social values. By engaging with these archetypal patterns, both Azerbaijani and Balkan literatures negotiate continuity and change, preserving their cultural heritage while responding to contemporary challenges.

Future research may benefit from expanding the scope to include modern literary forms and the impact of globalization, exploring how archetypal motifs are reinterpreted in contemporary contexts. Such inquiry will deepen our understanding of the dynamic relationship between myth, culture, and identity in a rapidly changing world.

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