

CONTRIBUTIONS OF BALKAN COUNTRIES TO CLASSICAL TURKISH LITERATURE

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Be bu Rûm illeridür bunda suhandânlar olur

Bu İrem gülşenidür murg-ı hoş-elhânlar olur

Abstract

If one of the signs of the level of development of countries is cities, the other is the level of the life of science, art and culture performed in these cities. Viewing the situation of Balkan geography under the domination of Ottomans since 15th century, it is seen that there was a very lively literary and cultural life especially in some city centres. These centres were not only creating a convenient environment but were also raising poets and writers for many large centres, initially to Istanbul. Places like Skopje, Pristina, Prizren, Yenice Vardar, Shkodra, Silk, Plovdiv, Kyustendil, Bitola, Smederevo, Sarajevo, Tetovo, İştib, Serres were the centres we know the life of literature was lively and where a good number of poets were brought up. Among these, it is known that especially in 16. Century, numerous poets grew in Pristina, Prizren, Skopje and Vardar Yenice. In this paper, the contributions these four Balkan cities made to classical Turkish literature are discussed in sum.

Key Words: *The Balkans, Rumelia, city, Classical Turkish literature*

Introduction

That a geographical region is not formed with natural and geographical conditions is a truth known especially by city historians. Above all, telling residential areas are formed with human effect more that everything else may be seen as a

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supernumerary discourse. However, the decisiveness of mankind over the geography is a clear reality that the history of humanity shows us and this influence goes on for missions of years without interruption. Moreover, this decisive influence does not become only as physical changes of space, but also in the dimensions of culture and arts in a more long-lasting way. So, if a nation which rule over a region in a period of history withdraws from that place, its influences and permanent evidences of its existence goes on through these cultural and artistic influences.

The migration wave which began / was made to begin in Balkan geography after the Ottoman army in the command of Sultan Murat I completed the First Battle of Kosovo with victory in 1389 resulted that this beautiful, strategical lands substantially became Turkish. No matter they were lost in the years of Interregnum (1402-1413) and aftermath for short times, these lands stayed in the domination of Ottomans from the Second Battle of Kosovo (1448) until the Balkan War in 1912 without any interruption. Balkan countries which did not have big political and social problems for a long period as 500 years, so became the ground for all kinds of scientific, cultural and artistic activity. As it is not possible to glance at all these activities in the Balkans within the limits of a paper, we will be contented with giving brief information about the literary life. In addition, we have to state that, because of the same reason, we are obliged to narrow it down with a few cities that became prominent in the life of literature.

Just like all kinds of scientific and cultural activity, literary life continues its existence as a part of social life. In history the states' being powerful and consistent and the individuals' being peaceful and prosperous provided that the social activities were also powerful, productive and rich. In the Ottoman Era Balkan geography which extended with raids since the ends of 14th century, the life of literature is seen to have awakened since 15th century. Especially in the 16th century when the state reached its peak in all respects and became a world power, it can be stated easily that the awakening seen in every place of the empire reached its highest level. It must be also indicated that the same success became prominent in main centres, initially in Istanbul. In fact, Istanbul showed a very fast development after the conquest and even in the beginnings of 16th century, it reached a great level in every respect. Thanks to the sultans who knew about science, art, literature and who were also poets; the palace became an asylum to which the poets took sanctuary with this identity, presenting a poem to the sultan with various occasions became nearly the duty of the poets and it became the biggest centre and used as the gathering centre for writing poetry that had already began to be accepted as a profession. After the conquest, migrations to Istanbul because of both economical and educational reasons turned the capital city into a capital of culture and art. Bursa and Edirne, the former capital cities before the conquest, could continue their liveliness in cultural life as significant and big cities of the country to some extent no matter they lost their brilliant eras to Istanbul. Likewise, in big cities like Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus which are farther to the centre, scientific and cultural activities continued.

In classical Ottoman period, the sanjaks' of the lineages were important for being gathering-places for literature. Sultan's sons sent to some cities like Manisa, Kütahya, Amasya, Trabzon as governors developed these cities based upon their interest in science, art and literature and turned these cities into art centres no matter they were overshadowed by Istanbul. These cities, which kept their significance until the tradition of sultan's sons to go to sanjak was removed in the beginnings of 17th century, stayed important in the life of art of the country for long years no matter they weakened after this date. Even today, these cities can give a message to the people of our day with the architectural and cultural power they have brought from the history.

In addition to sultans, statesmen staying in the highest ranks of the government and who have various important duties contributed much to the world of literature both as poets and friends of poets. Owing to these statesmen who organised literary talks and provided scientific discussion environments in their mansions, a serious cultural life was created in Istanbul and every corner of the Empire. From that community, rich people knowing about, loving and being within literature and art went down in history as art lovers which made the Classical Turkish Literature to experience its most brilliant period.

As known, the development policy of the Ottoman Empire was always to the West. Even when it was an end principality, Ottoman Beys provided their development with the raids to the land of Byzantium and afterwards, as they gained power, extended their boundaries with the lands of other Anatolian principalities. Especially in the years after passing to Rumelia and the invasion of Edirne; through the raids into the middles of Balkans and victories gained, Ottomans began to obtain the Balkan lands and Rumelia always stayed in an important position. These lands having grown people for the highest ranks of the state had the same success in the areas of literature and art, as well. "This region smelling blood and gunpowder before the Ottomans became a heaven of peace, the native population went on their daily life, people were freed from assimilation, gained the right of representation and got the opportunity to benefit from the benedictions of the age. Influenced by the innovations of the new civilization, the Albanian people had the possibility to enrich their tribal language by taking a good number of Turkish and Arabic, Persian words which Turkish had adopted before."¹

From Bosnia to Albania, from Macedonia to Kosovo, from Serbia to Bulgaria and Greece; in the places which were the lands of Ottoman Empire in that day, certain cities became prominent both as political centres and gathering places for literature just like in Anatolia. Lots of cities like Skopje, Pristina, Prizren, Yenice Vardar, Shkodra, Silk, Plovdiv, Kyustendil, Monastery, Sofia, Didymoteicho, Smederevo, Sarajevo, Tetovo, Tırhala, İştib, Serres, Yenipazar, Veliko, Karaferye, Tirana were the places where people served to Turkish Literature. Because of various factors such as demographic structure, being the centre of sanjak or not and geographical

¹ Sipahioğlu; *Tarihi ve Siyasi Yönüyle Kosova*, BAY Yayınları, Prizren 2009, 22-23.

location, some of these cities became prominent more than the others by means of the liveliness of cultural life. Skopje, Vardar Yenice, Pristina and Prizren were important cities in this sense. Aside from the extensivity of the topic, we have to deal with these four cities briefly as they made more contributions to Classical Turkish Literature. As there are enough information initially in annuals and old historical books like *The Travel book of Evliya Çelebi*, in related parts of *The Encyclopedia of Islam* and in the book *Cities of Istanbul*¹, and as our aim is not to give information about these cities, we refer this detailed information to these kinds of works.

“Throughout history, Balkans has been a bridge between West-East, Byzantium-Rome, Turkish-Islam World and the West and witnessed the migrations of lots of cultures and nations. As a result of this historical reality, Balkans has a feature to have constuctions representing different cultures and civilisations such as Ancient Greece, Byzantium, Rome, Christianity and Turkish-Islam (...) We learn from the documents that in the period of Turkish domination of more than five centuries 16.000 Turkish works of foundation were built in Balkans (...) Most of these buildings constructed in the period of Ottoman Empire were destroyed because of natural disasters, deliberate construction plans, political attitudes and wars.”² It is certain that some negative aspects arising from the geographical location of this region have effective and decisive role in this. Because “Balkans constitute one of the most complex and inconsistent regions of the world due to its social-cultural structure. In the Balkans which experienced their longest period of peace and stability in the period of Ottomans, the domination of a quietness was also seen cyclically during cold war.”³

The roots of Turkish literature in Balkan geography goes back to the second half of 15th century. When the politics of Turkification and Islamification began to give the results desired, literary activity also began to be stronger. But according to a study, for example Macedonian Turkish literature was claimed to have began after the Second World War and until 1970s, despite the literary tradition of hundreds of years in these lands, this claim was tried to be accepted as the “official history” of the Macedonian Turkish literature.⁴ It would not be wrong to extend this for the other Turkish regions of Balkans.

Âşık Çelebi (d. 1572), who was one of our leading biography writers to have been born in Prizren and died in Skopje, describes the condition of the city mentioned in that time by always making descriptions of spaces in his famous work *Meşairü’ş-şuara*. Pointing out various aspects of cities, he writes down valuable notes to

¹ P. Tuğlacı; *Osmanlı Şehirleri*, Milliyet Yayınları, Ankara 1985.

² Sarımay; “Geçmişten Günümüze Kosova”, *Kök Araştırmalar*, I, 4 (Bahar 1999), Ankara 1999, 151.

³ İbrahimgil; “Balkanlar ve Kosova’daki Türk Kültür Mirasımızın Dünü Bugünü”, *Vakıf ve Kültür*, I, 4 (Bahar 1999), Ankara 1999, 6.

⁴ *Başlangıcından Günümüze Kadar Türkiye Dışındaki Türk Edebiyatları Antoloisi (Nesir-Nazım)*, 7, Makedonya Türk Edebiyatı ve Yugoslavya (Kosova) Türk Edebiyatı, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara, 75.

history. One of the most interesting of these descriptions is seen in the item of “Nehari”. He gives this information telling about the country of Nehari: “Mevlidi Rûmili’nde Prezrin’dür. Kasaba-i mezkûre Rûmili’nde serv ü semen-i ma’rifet olan hâkdân ve menba’-ı cûy-ı nazm u nesr olan gülistân olmagla meşhûr bir şehri şöret-âyındür. Rivâyet olunur ki Prezrin’de oğlan togsa adından mukaddem mahlas korlar.Yenice’de togan oğlan baba diyecek vakt Fârsî söyler.Priştine’de oğlan togsa dividi bilinde togar dirler.Binâen alâ-zâlik Prezrin şâir menbaı ve Yenice Fârsî ocağı ve Piriştine kâtib yatagıdır.”¹ These statements of Çelebi summarize what we try to mention here in brief. It will not be an exaggeration to say there wouldn’t be any other person who can make such exact statements as he did about the lands he was born and died.

About the histories of cities, the genre şehrengiz has a significant place. Arabian and Persian literatures have the tradition of writing şehrengiz, on the other hand it is seen that the really good examples of the genre were began to be written in Turkish Literature since 16th century. It is possible to put these poets and works in this order: Mesihî (d. 1512) *Şehrengiz der-Medh-i Cüvânân-ı Edirne*, Lâmiî Çelebi (d. 1531-32) *Şehrengiz-i Bursa*, Hayreti (d. 1534) *Şehrengiz-i Belgrat*, *Şehrengiz-i Yenice*, Usulî (d. 1538) *Şehrengiz-i Yenice*, İshak Çelebi (d. 1542) *Şehrengiz-i Bursa*, Cefayî (d. 1543) *Şehrengiz-i Rize*, Nihali (d. 1543) *Şehrengiz*, Kerimi (d. 1544) *Şehrengiz-i Edirne*, Zati (d. 1546) *Şehrengiz-i Edirne*, Rahmî (d. 1565) *Şehrengiz-i Yenişehir*, Taşlıcalı Yahya (d. 1582) *Şehrengiz-i İstanbul*, *Şehrengiz-i İstanbul* (It is after the sebeb-i telif part of *Şâh u Gedâ*), Cemalî (d. 1583) *Şehrengiz-i İstanbul*, *Şehrengiz-i Siroz*, Ulvî (d. 1585) *Şehrengiz-i Manisa*, Gelibolulu Âlî (d. 1599) *Şehrengiz-i Berây-ı Hüb-rûyân-ı Gelibolu*, Çalıkzade Mehmet Manî (d. 1599) *Şehrengiz-i Bursa*, Fakirî (16th cent.) *Şehrengiz-i İstanbul*, Siyamî (16th cent.) *Şehrengiz-i Antakya*, Çorlulu Kâtip (16th cent.) *Şehrengiz* (İstanbul, Vize), Beyanî (16th cent.) *Şehrengiz-i Sinop*, Halilî (16th cent.) *Şehrengiz-i Bursa*, *Şehrengiz-i İstanbul* (16th cent., the author is not known), Vechî (d. 1610) *Şehrengiz-i Gelibolu*, Hacı Derviş (d. 1630-31) *Şehrengiz-i Mostar*, Nazik Abdullah (d. 1686-87) *Şehrengiz-i Bursa*, Neşatî (d. 1674) *Şehrengiz-i Edirne*, Tab’î (17th cent.) *Şehrengiz-i İstanbul*, İsmail Belîğ (d. 1729) *Şehrengiz-i Bursa*, Vahid Mahtumî (d. 1732) *Şehrengiz-i Yenişehir-i Fenâr (Lâlezâr)*, *Şehrengiz-i İstanbul der-Hûbân-ı Zenân* (the author is not known), *Şehrengiz-i Manisa* (the author is not known), *Şehrengiz-i Siroz* (the author is not known). There are also şehrensizs whose names are mentioned in resources but which are not obtained yet.²

The libraries founded in Ottoman Era have an important role in that Turkish culture and literature had lasting roots in Balkans. These libraries are among the places which enabled a productive environment of science, art and literature to be created.

¹ Aşık Çelebi; *Meşâ’irü’ş-şuarâ* (haz. Filiz Kılıç), II, İstanbul Enstitüsü Yayınları, İstanbul 2010, 904.

² Akkuş; *Türk Edebiyatında Şehr-engizler ve Bursa Şehr-engizleri*, Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Basılmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, (Danışman: Doç. Dr. Haluk İpekten), Erzurum 1987, 29 vd. Bu konuda daha fazla bilgi için bkz. A. S. Levend; *Türk Edebiyatında Şehrengizler ve Şehrengizlerde* Baha Matbaası, İstanbul 1958.

As far as known, the first library in Balkans under the domination of Ottomans was the İsa Bey library found in 1469 in Skopje by İsa Bey. Apart from this, İshak Çelebi, Hüsrev Bey and Mehmet Pasha founded libraries in Manastır, Sarajevo and Prizren. Also the poet Suzi Çelebi founded a library in Prizren with his name.¹ Suzi Çelebi and his library will be mentioned in detail. In that way, the place of the libraries in the life of culture of the region and their role in growing poets will become apparent more clearly.

When the poets having grown in Balkan geography are read, it is seen that they have a specific style of poetry. They write about various subjects in their poems. "Poets from Rumelia write about the wars in Rumelia and praise the raiders and ghazis of that region with encomias. Poets of Rumelia chose their subject-matters mostly from the social life of their region. For instance, most of the city names they wrote about in their poems were cities of Rumelia like Skopje and Vardar Yenice which were also their hometowns. As they live together with local Christians, they resemble the world to church, love to the icon in the church and the lover to the follower of clergy of love; they give place to motif such as The Bible, Jesus, Mary, zünnâr, saints which are related to Christianity.

They use elements about war in metaphors enormously as they lived in borders, in regions of raiding quarries."² Poets of Rumelia who were extremely intimate and vigorous in their expression, especially chose a reckless utterance. We do not think it is good to give details about the lives of poets while dealing with such features of them -as most of them are also well-known- and want not to make unnecessary repetitions.

Pristina

Pristina is one of the oldest settlements of Balkan geography and it is a place as a continuation of a Roman city.³ The city, which had a great significance in some periods of history, sometimes gave this significance to Skopje and nearly retired to pasture.

Having developed since 15th century, the literary life of Pristina peaked in 16th century like some other cities of Rumelia and the city made really important contributions to Classical Ottoman literature. We have stated before that from the notes in biographies, Pristina is known to be a centre growing clerks for the

¹ Bu konu ile ilgili olarak bkz. F. Karamuço; "Prizrenli Suzi Çelebi Kütüphanesi", *Sûzî Çelebi (Araştırma-İnceleme)*, BAY Yayınları, Prizren 1998.

² Çeltik; "Rumeli Şairlerinde Yöresel Kültür", 104-106. Konu ile ilgili örnek beyitler için bu makaleye bakılabilir. Ayrıca daha geniş bilgi için bkz. M. İsen; "Akıncılığın Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatına Katkıları", *Türkiye Günlüğü*, 49, Ocak-Şubat 1998. M. İsen; "Tezkirelerin Işığında Divan Edebiyatına Bakışlar: Osmanlı Kültür Coğrafyasına Bakış", *Ötelerden Bir Ses*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara 1997. H. Çeltik; "Rumeli Şairlerinde Reel sevgili ve Âşık Tipi", *G.Ü. Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi (Dr. Himmet Biray Özel Sayısı)*, 1999, 520-534.

³ Kiel; "Pristine" *DİA*, 34, 346.

Ottoman country. According to a study on this matter, the profession of twelve per cent of 3182 Divan poets in biographies is clerkship.¹

In fact, when the importance of Pristina in Ottoman history is evaluated, it is not a place where a good number of poets existed, but if compared with the other significant cities of Rumelia, its contribution can not be denied. Again in the same study, it was fixated that the city stays among Edirne, Sarajevo, Serres, Yenicesi Vardar, Skopje, Bitola, Plovdiv, Thessaloniki, Sofia and Belgrade which are more important centres of culture than Pristina and that six poets were from here.²

While telling about Levhi, Âşık Çelebi praises Pristina as “Rumeli’nde şüara vü zurefa menbaı olmagla meşhûr olan şehr-i şöhret-âsâr Priştine’ dendür. Ol şehr-i dehr-âşûb bunun gibi nice gevher-i bî-nihayeye ma’ dendür”³ And Hasan Çelebi mentions Pristina with praise as he tells where Mesîhi was from: “Zemini tesâdüm-i eşrâr u azdâddan dûr ve hevâsı gayet itidal ile meşhûr ve âb-ı pür-safâsı ayn-ı çeşme-i zülâl olmagla mezkûr olup havâli-i Üsküb’de Priştine dimekle ma’lûm-ı cumhûr olan kasaba-i safâ-mevfûrdandur”⁴

Mesîhi (d. 1512) is assuredly the most famous of the poets Pristina brought to Turkish literature. Mesîhi of Pristina, having lived in the second half of 15th century and the first quarter of the 16th, grew up in a period when literature completed its foundation and had a classical identity and when poets began to compete with Persian poets and to see themselves superior. Owing to the goodness of his writing and his ingenuity as an author, he was appointed to the clerkship of Hadım Ali Pasha (d. 1511). However, as Mesîhi was a person loving libation and spending his time in pubs or recreation areas according to the climate with libation, had a comfortable live with the tolerance of the pasha for a perios and after the death of the pasha, he became poor and completed his life in shortage. “Of the traditional subjects of Ottoman poetry, the needless effort of mankind in life, changelessness of destiny, that the life must be enjoyed as the world is temporary, earthly pleasures, drunkenness of wine and love etc. are the main subjects he wrote about in his poems.⁵ Besides, the poet is not senseless to the problems of his age and the society he lived in. It is possible to say his poems has a social dimension. He was anxious with the interest to the foreign poets no matter Turkish poetry had reached a level to compete with the Persian poetry and -maybe upon an event- he does not hesitate to express this openly:

Mesîhî gökden insen sana yir yok

¹ İsen; “Kültür Tarihi Açısından Priştine ve Bu Şehir Doğumlu Divan Şairleri”, *Türk Kültürü*, 342 (Ekim 1991), 618.

² İsen; agm, *Ötelerden Bir Ses*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara 1997, 145.

³ Âşık Çelebi; age, II, 743.

⁴ Hasan Çelebi; *Tezkiretü’ş-şüara*, (haz. İbrahim Kutluk), II, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1989, 898.

⁵ Mengi; *Mesîhî Dîvânı*, AKM Yayınları, Ankara 1995, 4.

Yüri var gel Arabdan ya Acemden

The most significant work of the poet is his *Divan*. It is possible to see the most beautiful examples of gazellas and eulogies of Ottoman poetry. His poem *Bahariye* written in the verse murabba is very famous and was translated to English, French, German, Italian, Albanian and Serbian. On the other hand, resources agree that Mesihi was the first şehrengiz writer in Turkish literature. His Şehrengiz, which includes totally 178 couplets, is in his *Divan* and tells about Edirne. Doubtlessly, Mesihi has a very special place in şehrengiz writing which would develop after him. And *Gül-i Sad-berg* which is a prose work contains the letters of the poet.

Apart from Mesihi, resources record Azmi, Levhi, Nuhi, Hatifi and Mustafa Çelebi to be from Pristina. The first three of them are brothers. We don't have detailed information about the lifes and literary personality either of these three poet brothers or the other two. But especially when we talk about brothers, what the resources write about Pristina is significant as they give information about the situation of the city in that age.

Prizren

One of the most important cities in Balkan geography in terms of Turkish culture and literature, Prizren is nearly a capital of culture of Kosovo today. After the domination of Ottomans, Turkish language settled in this region and caused lots of poets and writer to grow here. Even today, it is seen that Turkish is widely spoken in the city. Ottomans named Prizren which is a beautiful city with its nature and history "with similes -using the names mentioned in mosque tablets- as Pür-zeyn or Pürzerin (city full of ornaments)."¹ "Before the fragmentation of Yugoslavia, Prizren was the only city of Balkans where three languages were spoken. Albanian, Turkish and Serbian were spoken by the townspeople and also were used in newspapers, periodicals and even in the names of streets."²

Prizren is the first city reflecting the Ottoman heritage in Balkans. A large number of architectural monuments some of which are still standing today, clearly shows the Muslim-Turkish identity of the city. Tablets belonging to some of these works can be seen today. Nimetullah hafız has made a new research on the new-found tablets of İsa Dede Fountain, Mahmut Pasha Clock Tower, Emin Pasha Fountain, the fountain in the house of Davut Peroli and the house of Tahir Efendi.³

Prizren is also a city of foundations. It is a known truth that in Ottoman Empire the system of foundations had a great importance. These foundations had first degree

¹ Vırmiça; "Geçmişten Günümüze Prizren Camileri", *Türk Dünyası Tarih Dergisi*, 188 (Ekim 1996), 31.

² Kiel; "Prizren", *DİA*, 34, 349.

³ Hafız; "Prizren'de Yeni Bulunan Birkaç Türk Yazıtı", *Bellekten*, XXXIX, 154 (Nisan 1975), Ankara 1975, 225-232. Benzer bir çalışma Priştine kitabeleri üzerine de yapılmıştır: N. Hafız-M. Asim; "Priştine Kitabeleri", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 11, Ankara, 205-226.

role in ensuring the peace and harmony of the society. It won't be wrong to say that in this way the city became rich both economically and culturally. We are only mentioning the names of some of the foundations in Prizren: "The Foundation of Mehmet Pasha Mosque and Madrasah, The Foundation of Sartor Mehmet Efendi Mosque, The Foundation of Hodja Ali Mosque, The Foundation of Sofu Sinan Pasha, The Foundation of Emin Pasha Madrasah, The Foundation of Boçe Village Mosque, The Foundation of Gora/Bostan Village Süleyman Bey Mosque..."¹

It must be stated that in the number of poets it grew up, the city has a special place among the other Balkan cities. This situation was the same even in the 16th century. According to a study on Âşik Çelebi, when the Turkish population in Prizren is examined, it is seen that the number of poets and witters has a high rate.² In the surveys made on the poet biographies of 16th century, six poets were seen to have been from Prizren.³ And also in the survey we have made, eight poets from Prizren were seen. In addition to Mümin, Nehari, Sa'yi, Suzi, Sücudi and Şem'i, poets with appellatives Bahari and Fakiri were grown up in this city.

Among these names, especially Suzi and Şem'i take attention in the sense of their poetry and they gave to cultural life. Suzi, having lived in the second half of the 15th century and the first quarter of the 16th century is from Prizren and in addition to being a poet, he is also known with his being a dervish and a soldier. When he was only a youngster, he joined the soldiers of the famous raider Mihaloğlu Ali Bey and took role in lots of raids actively. "As he was an intelligent and literate person, he was appointed to the clerkship of Ali Bey and continued this job successfully."⁴ After the death of Ali Bey he returned to Prizren and died there.

In the history of Turkish literature, Suzi is known with his work *Gazavatname*. This work in which he told the campaigns and raids of Mihaloğlu Ali Bey in verse is a mesnevi of 15.000 couplets. The work tells about the life and the holy wars of Ali Bey and in that sense, includes valuable knowledge about the raiding activities of the age. Most probably, it was completed in Prizren after the death of Ali Bey.

Apart from being a poet, Suzi is a person who made contributions to Turkish culture and supported the scientific and literary development of the region with the library he founded in Prizren by donating his books. This library consisting of worthy manuscripts was robbed in time, especially in the years of war and the manuscripts were stolen and brought to the libraries in various cities of Europe. It is possible to

¹ Bayram; "Balkanlar ve Kosova", Vakıf ve Kültür, I, 4 (Bahar 1999), Ankara 1999, 4-5.

² İsen; "Çağdaş Prizren Şairleri", *Ötelerden Bir Ses*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara 1997, 150. Ayrıca bkz. A. S. Recepoğlu; "Prizren ve Türk Dünyası", *Bilig*, 1 (Bahar 1996), 145.

³ İsen; "Çağdaş Prizren Şairleri", *Ötelerden Bir Ses*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara 1997, 150. Ayrıca bkz. A. S.

⁴ Osi; "Suzi Çelebi ve Eserleri Hakkında Birkaç Veri", *Medeniyet*, 1, 2002, 77.

see his books in Ankara, Berlin, Budapest, Haydeberg, Vatican, Vienna, Zagreb and in some other libraries.¹

One of the famous poets of Prizren is Şem'i (d. 1529). Of the poets of Kanuni period, came to Istanbul after his childhood and youth in Prizren, went on his education here, joined the discipline of Şeyh Vefa and reached the place of sheikhdom. Şem'i was confused with the poets using the same appellative for years, initially with Şem'i Mustafa known with the nickname "Şârih-i Mesnevi".²

Şem'i was an enormously kind and lyrical poet. No matter he was a dervish having spent most of his life in Vefa Hanka, sufism is seen in his poems not as an aim, but a tool. He used the concepts of sufism as symbols with which he tried to create the deepness of meaning. Şem'i was a close friend of Mesîhi of Pristina. One day, his going to watch women with Mesîhi in Galata was described by a person who saw them as:

Galatada Mesîhî deyre gitmiş

Meger Şem'î anunla bile varmış

İşidenler galat idüp dediler

Mesîhî kiliseye mum iletmiş

The kind-unconventional view of poetry of Şem'i is described by himself as:

Kaldı ayakda safâ kandîli yandırmak gerek

Bu mahabbet şem'ini başdan uyandırmak gerek

Teşnedür âlem şarâb-ı ıřka kandırmak gerek

Câm-ı Cem sun sâkiyâ Sultân Süleymân devridür

Bir perî yüzli melekdür iki âlemden murâd

Yoksa bu fânî cihândan almadı bir kimse dad

Kanı Keyhusrev kanı Kayser ya kanı Keykubâd

Câm-ı Cem sun sâkiyâ Sultân Süleymân devridür

¹ Karamuço; agm, 212.

² Karaveliođlu; "Türk Edebiyatında Aynı Mahlası Kullanmış Olan Şairlerin Karıştırılması Meselesi", *Journal of Turkish Studies (Türklük Bilgisi Arařtırmaları)*, 34/II, Harvard Aralık 2010, 183-195. Ayrıca bkz. Karaveliođlu; "Prizren'de Bir Facia Yahut Şairin Başına Gelenler", *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 16, İstanbul 2007, 199-221.

6-7

All forms of love are told in the poetry of Şem'i. He points out that he is the passenger of the way to love and what he means is divine love:

Sâlik-i ışkam benüm pîrim harâbât ehlidür

Gûşe-i meyhâne künc-i hân-ķâhumdur benüm

G.118

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Şem'i is a poet who uses Turkish language very skillfully. None of the words stays sham in his good style. Words were chosen specifically and with a gracious imagination and thought. When his style is considered, it can not be told that he chose a figurative expression. His exhibiting his imaginations with the beauty of expression is from the significant features of his style. Biographies mention him with praise. For example, Hasan Çelebi says that his fire scattering words burns the hearts of all people; the fire of his words which gives pleasure and enthusiasm to the reader is seen by everyone near of far just like the flame of a shining candle.¹ His poems are bright and soft. All the lines are are amorous and enchanting like a blade of candle from the fire of love. And Âşık Çelebi states that he is never inferior from his contemporaries and the poetry of nobody can guide to the village of love as his.²

When the style and use of language of Şem'i is examined carefully, it is seen that he uses Turkish idioms enormously. The poet, having lived in a period when the Ottoman poetry completed its formation and gained a classical identity shows a great ingenuity in using idioms. That he is not known much and is confused with other poets no matter he is a really strong poet is because there is not a registered copy of his *Divan* in Turkish libraries. *Divan* was prepared by us as a PhD dissertation by comparing copies from a private corpus in Turkey, from Manchester and Cairo; ³ also he was discussed with other poets named Şem'i in an article.⁴

Prizren is maintaining the life of literature today in a way proper to the mission he brought from history with the strong cultural savings it has. In our age, we see Turkish language lives in Prizren as a language of literature. Poets such as Nusret Dişo Ülkü, Nimetullah Hâfız, Hasan Mercan, Bayram İbrahim, İskender Muzbeğ,

¹Hasan Çelebi; *Tezkiretü'ş-Şuarâ*, I, 524.

²Kılıç; age, III, 1443.

³Karavelioğlu; *On Altıncı Yüzyıl Şairlerinden Prizrenli Şem'i'nin Divanının Edisyon Kritiği ve İncelenmesi*, 2 c., Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, (Danışman: Prof. Dr. Orhan Bilgin), İstanbul 2005.

⁴Karavelioğlu; "Türk Edebiyatında Şem'i Mahlaslı Şairler ve Pirizrenli Şem'i", *TDED*, c. XXXII, İstanbul 2005, s. 65-80.

Altay Suroy, Zeynel Beksaç, A. Rifat Yeşeren continues to keep Turkish literature alive in Prizren.¹

Skopje

Skopje, which made a fast progress under the domination of Ottomans since the 15th century, became the biggest center of the region in a short time as the sanjak centre. So it turned to be a city in the land of Rumelia where scientific, cultural and artistic activities were conducted intensively. Its geographical position and the easiness of transportation becomes prominent in its gaining these features. Pointing out this situation, Mustafa İsen fixates that “Skopje was the financial, political and cultural centre of the region during the periods of Roman, Byzantium and Slavic rules. Doubtlessly, the city owes this role to its being just in the middle of Balkan Peninsula and staying in the intersection point of some ways. Additionally, its being the centre of a large region had an active role in the city’s being the focus of opinions and arts.”² In the Ottoman Empire, madrasahs and dervish lodges were significant in the development of cultural life. The great madrasah Fatih Sultan Mehmet founded in İstanbul after he’d conquered the city and other madrasah that the following sultans made took the focus of scientific life from the distant and scattered cities of the province to some larger centres. Üsküp, like Baghdad, Bursa, Edirne, Cairo, Erzurum and Sarajevo was one of these centres.³

Mudarris who dominated the life of educatin in 15th and initially in 16th centuries in madrasahs of Skopje and some of whom were very famous were significant people for the liveliness of the life of education in the city. According to a study made on this subject, these scientists carried out their duties in Skopje: Molla Şücâeddin İlyas (2. Murat period), Molla Ahmet Paşa (Fatih period), Molla Sarı Gürz (2. Beyazıt and Yavuz periods), Molla İbnü’l-Muîd (2. Beyazıt period), Molla Mustafa bin Halil (Yavuz period), Molla Arap (Yavuz period), Molla Leyszade (Kanuni period), Molla Mimarzade (Kanuni period), Molla İsameddin Ahmet bin Mustafa -Taşköprülüzade- (Kanuni period), Molla Hasan Çelebi (Kanuni period), Molla İshak Çelebi (Yavuz and Kanuni periods), Molla Hüsameddin (Kanuni period).⁴

The role of the life of sufism in Skopje in its bein a centre of culture and literature can not be denied. Because, as known the centres of religion were not only places where a religious life was experienced, but each of them was also a school and a centre which had educational roles fort he society. We meet this information about the subject in *Kosova Salnamesi*: “Tekâyâ ve zevâyâ nokta-i nazarından dahi Üsküb pek mamûrdur. Rûfâî, Mevlevî, Kadîrî, Sinânî, Halvetî, Celvetî, Nakşî turuk-ı

¹ Bu konuda ayrıntılı bilgi için bkz. M. İsen; agm, 153-154.

² İsen; “Kültür Tarihimize Üsküp ve Üsküplü Divan Şâirleri”, *Ötelerden Bir Ses*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara 1997, 131.

³ İsen; age, 132.

⁴ Furat; “Üsküp Medresesi’nde Hocalık Yapmış Osmanlı Âlimleri”, *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12, İstanbul 1998, 89-94.

âliyesiyle daha bazı tariklere mensub tekkelerde meşayih-i kirâm mevcut olduğu gibi her birinde birçok mürid ve dervişân gün gece meşgûl-i ezkâr-ı rahmet olmaktadır.”¹

Skopje is a very rich city in point of Ottoman architecture. According to a study, around 350 works of architecture like mosques, schools, inns, baths, fountains, clock towers, bridges were built in the Ottoman period in Skopje.² But, unfortunately, most of them were destroyed because of various reasons. On the other hand, in a work about the history of Skopje, that the city lost its importance in time is told with reasons: “After Turks seized power, they passed the boundaries of Bosnia, Serbia and Albania going inwards and extending the cycle of deployment; and they dispatched and managed all the materiels from Skopje through the way of Nova Birdo. As Skopje was the centre of military operation and distribution, it had a successful trade until the Turkish armies invaded Belgrade. As they made all the delivery of soldiers and materiels through Tuna in the battles and conflicts after they passed the boundaries of Hungary and Austria, Skopje and Nova Birdo lost their importance in trade.”³

However, for long centuries Skopje became a place where lots of poets and authors were born and grew up and is the first one of the cities having contributed to Turkish literature considerably. Some of these poets went to the centres of science and culture of the world, especially to İstanbul after completing their first education; then they standed with skillful poets and in gathering places for literature to improve their abilities of poetry. In the survey we have made on biographies of poets, the poets with appellatives Atâ, Dülgerzade, Dürri, Fenni, Feridi, Haki, Hanif Çelebi, Hemdemi, Hevesi, İshak Çelebi, İzari, La’li, Mehmet Çelebi, Şeyh Mehmet Emin Çelebi, Miri, Muidi, Nami, Niyazi, Özri, Pir Muhammet, Rızayi, Riyazi, Seydi, Sıhri, Şeyda Çelebi, Tului, Vahdeti, Valihi, Vusuli, Zari were seen to be from Skopje.⁴ All of these poets lived in the 16th century. As in whole the geography of the Empire, the literary life is lively in also Skopje and after that time we can not see the names of a good number of poets in collections of biographies. Of the poets mentioned, İshak Çelebi from the period of Yavuz must be spoken of doubtlessly in the first place because of his character and his literary personality.

Born and grew in Skopje, İshak Çelebi went on his education in İstanbul, first became a mudarris and worked in Serez, Bursa, İznik and Edirne; and at last chose to be a kadı and became the kadı of Damascus. Most eulogies in his Divan were written for Sultan Selim I whom he knew well. All the resources giving information

¹ Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Kosova, Üsküp 1314, 115.

² Özer; “Osmanlı’nın Balkanlar’daki Uç Şehri: Üsküp”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, 60 (Aralık 1998), 27.

³Sâlih Âsım; *Üsküb Târîhi ve Civârı*(Sad. Süleyman Baki), Rumeli Türkleri Vakfı, İstanbul 2004, 27.

⁴ Bu konuda yapılan bir tez için bkz. H. Yakup; *Üsküplü Divan Şairleri*, Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisanz Tezi (Danışman: Prof. Dr. Mustafa İsen), Ankara 2000. Benzer bir araştırma daha önce de yapılmıştı. Bkz. İsen; age, 133 vd.

about him say he was a person rind tempared, freed from concerns and reckless. He even went to the East campaign with Nihali Cafer Çelebi and Köse Bazen to chat with the sultan and stayed there for a while, but was removed because of his reckless behaviours.

The poet felt he would die in his bed and told this famous couplet for his death:

Gelicek hâlet-i nez'e didi târîhini İshâk

Yönelidüm cânib-i Hakka başı açık yalın ayak (944/1538-39)

Resources praise the poetry of İshak Çelebi with a prudent style. He had sayings in type what the old people called sehl-i münteni. Like Necati, using words and idioms in some different meanings is also seen in his writing.¹ In addition to his *Divan*, he has a work called *Selimname* which he told the campaigns and victories of Sultan Selim I. The work that he wrote with an artistic style is a valuable book which became a resource for the historical books written after it. The poet has another work named *İmtihan Risalesi*.

Yenice Vardar

Yenice (Yannitsa) which is today a small city in the North of Greece, in Western Thrace region made significant contributions to classical Turkish literature by redounding significant and average poets to it when the city was a land of Ottoman Empire. Called as Yenice, Yenice Vardar or Vardar Yenicesi; also had its place in Turkish literature about which şehrengizs were written. No matter it was not a busy cultural centre, the city brought a good number of poets to our literature, which reveals that in the bright eras of the Ottoman Empire, even the ordinary regions distant from the centre were quite productive in the sense of cultural efficiency.

The most important poets of Yenice Vardar were Hayali Beğ, Hayreti and Usuli. Hayali Beğ, who developed a specific style of in Ottoman poetry and who is considered as first class is a poet of the period of Suleyman the Magnificent. As a carefree, rint poet who can not restrain his unconcerned heart is a poet of gazelles who wrote eulogies of twenty couplets and who did not write masnavi. His real success in gazelles is that he put sufistic symbols skillfully into his poetry and that he told metaphorical love together with divine love. Philosophical ideas have an important place in his poems. Idea comes before the beauty of expression in his poetry.

Hayali is an unrestricted, unconcerned, a stroller and a rint poet. He never gives importance to worldly properties. As he was an unconcerned person, he didn't write a masnavi despite the insistences of Âşık Çelebi.² In spite of the fortune he'd gained, Hayali Beğ did not leave anything behind and that was because he had

¹ Çavuşoğlu-Tanyeri; *Üsküblü İshâk Çelebi Dîvan*, MSÜ Yayınları, İstanbul 1990, 9.

²Tarlan; *Hayâlî Bey Dîvânı*, Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, İstanbul 1945, XVI.

experienced an enormously irregular and idle life and had a soul giving no significance to possessions.

Şah Tahmasp appreciated his poetry as some of his poets were read before him and drank a full for the love of him. And Hayali who knew about that incident expressed who and how famous a poet he was by writing the couplet:¹

Ben Hayâlî Rûmda bir rind-i dür-âşâm iken

Câm-ı Fağfûrî ier Hâkân-ı Türkistân bana

One of the most famous of the poets from Yenice Vardar, Hayreti was a poet having lived in the 16th century and can be considered among those who wrote a great number of gazelles. He was an easygoing, unrestricted, mystical poet who generally wrote about sufistic subjects and sang pleasantly the divine love. It is seen that he wrote about the most common aspects of the human and divine love. Despite that rind way of expression, there is not enough evidence in his gazelles to say he was a first class, successful poet. He has a şehrengiz in verse murabba in which he told about the beauties and beautiful women of the city Belgrade and it is well-known from the people interested in the subject.

The poems of Hayreti do not have a concern of art in form. Sometimes the poet is a dreamer and sometimes a mystical dervish.² His heart is not tied to any caring. He is away from the concerns of rank and service and the charm of world possessions. He sang the stirs in his soul to the immenseness of the land of Rumelia freely; revealed his unconcerned thoughts without restrictions in mystical and philosophical ideas.

One of the important poets of Yenice Vardar having lived in 16th century was Usuli. He was a member of Gülşeni order and it is understood both from the expressions of resources and some of his poems that he had some esoteric and hurufi tendencies. In his time, he was known as “Fazlullah-ı Sani” and “Sırr-ı Seyyid Nesimi”. His poems have a clear influence of Nesimi. Tendencies related to Melametis and Kalenderis are clearly seen in his poetry.

Usuli is seen as a sufi poet who never truckled to any person, who was satisfied, who mocked pure devoutness and who prioritised love all the time. That is, sufism is an important aspect in his poetry.³ His wrote poems of rescript full of messages; he prioritises the idea and tries to give this in a lyrical style as much as he can.⁴

Poets that Yenice Vardar brought to our literature are not limited with these. In the surveys we have made in collections of biographies, poets from Yenice such as Garibi, Âgehi, İlahi, Tab’i, Deruni, Selman, Sırrı, Şani, Günahi, Yusuf-ı Sine-çâk,

¹Tarlan; age, XVII.

²Çavuşođlu-Tanyeri; *Hayretî Dîvan*, Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, İstanbul 1981, XVII.

³İsen; *Usûlî Divanı*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara 1990, 17.

⁴İsen; age, 18.

Sai, Tal'ati, Seyyit Çelebi, Sıdkı, Razi and Zari who lived in 16th century are seen as some of the poets from thousands of them who provided the development and continuation of literature of Ottoman country.

The contributions of Balkan geography to classical Turkish literature is assuredly not limited with these. We have already stated we are making a limitation of cities. There are a considerable amount of poets who were born and lived in other cities than Pristina, Prizren, Skopje and Vardar Yenice. When biographies were scanned, these names are encountered: Mevlana Âhi, Sehayi, Rızayi (Niğbolu), Haleti Çelebi, Cinani, Zühdi, Hazani, Rüşühi, Visali, Hadi (Sofya), Hadidi (Ferecik), Haki-i Rumi, Zuhuri, Celal Efendi, Haveri, Mevlana Sami, Sabayi, Sinan Çelebi, İyani, Medihi, Vahyi, Vezni, Kâtip Hasan, Civani, Feyzi (Manastır), Hayali-i Kâtip, Tariki, Nalişi, Nuri (Tuna), Âli, Yeşilzade Riyazi Ahmet, Fani, Rızayi, Bezmi, Cefayi, Revnaki, Saki, Tabibi, Haleti, Nalişi, Ruhi (Filibe), Şîrî Ali Bey, Hükmi Bey (Hersek), Kandi-i Sirozi, Niyazi, Vasfi, Bedri, Zineti-i Sirozi, Lâyihi, Nisari, Hafız-ı Sirozi, Sühayi, Kabuli, Zeyni, Medihi, Makami, Sa'di (Serez, Siroz), Muammayi, Baki-i Selaniki, Sun'i, Ma'nevi, Necahi, Şairi (Selanik), Helaki-i Rumi (Dobruca), Rızayi Efendi, Abdülvasi Çelebi (Dimetoka), Bâlî (Göllükesriye), Haleti Efendi (İlca), Hulusi, Arşi, Vahdeti (Yenibazar), Rumuzi Çelebi, Salahi, Bahari, Cevani (Tırhala), Sabri (Demirhisar), Sadri, Tab'i (İştib), Tariki, Cinani (Semendire), Arifi, Saili (Yenişehir), Gubari (Hopeşte), Fani (Alacahisar), Muidi, Fakiri, Sücudi, Tului (Kalkandelen), Emani, Beyani (Ruşçuk), Beyani (Yanbolu), Cevheri, Garami, Baba Hasan (Karaferye), Haleti (Köstendil), Hasibi (Budin), Hilmi (Mora), Hürremi, Şani (Bosna), Derviş (Mostar), Şîrî (Silistre), Zaifi, (Kıratova), Tariki, Zarifi (Vidin), Firdevsi (Mizistre), Rızayi (Tırnova), Meyli (Novaberde), Salih Çelebi (Vılcıtrın), Şikâri (İpsala).

There are also poets whose names are not stated clearly but are told to be from Rumelia. Poets such as Kebiri, Nazifi Çelebi, Nihani, Mevlana Sünni, Şeyda, Şinasi, Tarzi, Feyzi Çelebi, Bâlî, Penahi, Siyahi, Subhi, Kutbi, Amri, Yahya are among these.

Certainly, these names may have been written with different city names in different biographies. That is the reason of name repetitions. In fact, we have not conducted a study to differentiate this. In addition, an appellative was used by more than one poet. This is one of the important problems we meet in Turkish literature¹ and requires other detailed studies. On the other hand, this richness is enough to reveal clearly how productive a ground of poetry the lands of Rumelia had.

Conclusion

The fact that there was a gathering place of literature in every corner in the periods when the classical Turkish literature developed and works in highest levels were

¹¹ Karavelioğlu; "Türk Edebiyatında Aynı Mahlası Kullanan Şairlerin Karıştırılması Meselesi", *Journal of Turkish Studies (Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları)*, 34/II, Harvard Aralık 2010, 183-195.

created reveals enough information about the strong roots of Turkish literature. Especially İstanbul and other centres in different regions developed in the patronage of art-lover rulers in these places and created grounds for Turkish to be a world language and the Turkish literature to be a world literature. Pristina, Prizren, Skopje and Vardar Yenice which become prominent among the cities of Rumelia mentioned above have a significant place in Turkish literature not only with poets they grew, but also with the cultural savings for raising these poets, scientists and artists. The role of the cultural saving these cities brought from the history is clear in that even today the region has a Muslim-Turkish identity and Turkish language continues to be written and spoken. Also it must be remembered that the city Taşlıca which is within the boundaries of Montenegro today and which is known as Pljevlja with its name in Serbian is the place having presented the grand Divan poet Yahya Bey to Ottoman country and Ottoman literature. In this study which we reviewed the contributions of Balkan geography to classical Turkish literature in brief; the significant place of this region, which were lost haplessly and with indefinable sorrows, in Turkish culture were tried to be fixated.

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