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ALJAMIADO AND ORIENTAL¹ LITERATURE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
(1463-1878)

»Jedna od važnijih značajki nacionalnog bića jednog naroda jest njegov jezik.«

»One of the most important characteristics of nation's nationality is its language.«

Muhamed Huković

Aljamiado literature is a regional and national phenomena. The texts are manuscripts which utilize the Arabic or Hebrew alphabets for transcribing the vernacular language of the nation where it appeared. And it appeared among peoples who lived under Arabian or Turkish reign for long periods of time. Under that influence it was spread in Europe from the Iberian peninsula to Haemos². It also appears among Chinese muslims and muslims in former Dutch colonies, but it is more frequent in Europe as in Albanian, Spanish, Bosnian and Bulgarian literature. Aljamiado is a literar phenomena with special aesthetic, ethic and ideal characteristics.

Adjusted Arabic alphabet for transcribing Slavic texts is called *arebica* or *arabica*, in which most works were written in the 17th, 18th and 19th century. It is important to mention that aljamiado literature and it's evolution in Bosnia and Herzegovina didn't end in 1878 with the occupation by the Austro-Hungarian empire. It became more intensive after reformation of the alphabet by Mehmed Đemaludin Čaušević and the expansion of printing. Arebica disappeared from usage when linguistic, cultural, sociologic, political and religious circumstances, which caused its appearance, disappeared.

Codex is a set of manuscripts containing texts in german, hungarian and latin written in arebica. In that certain codex the first bosnian arebic poem *Hirvat türkisi* by Mehmed Erdeljac³ was brought out. Not many authors of aljamiado are known, yet one of the last ones is - Muhamed Rušdi.

¹ There are discussions whether the *Orient* as such exists or whether it is a creation of West. The comprehension of it is not unified: sometimes it means arabic countries, sometimes it includes India and China etc.

² Balkan.

³ In *Forgotten heritage (Zaboravljena baština)* Huković notices on page 33 that the author is unknown and there are some indications that he could have slavic origins.

The language of aljamiado literature contains a lot of turk loanwords; some are abstract spiritual notions, some are brought from turkish cultural and social area along with Ottoman reign. On the other hand, there was an obvious tendency towards the mother tongue which is noticable at usage of native names for months and holidays⁴, others were creating bosnian-turkish dictionaries. The oldest is *Makbuli-arif* or *Potur-Šahidija* by Muhamed Hevai Uskufi. It was completed in 1631 as one of the oldest dictionaries in balkan lexicography. In preface he mentions that he was »Bosnevi«, which means Bosniak, and called his language bosnian⁵. Another author left notes on his mother tongue - Mula Mustafa Bašeskija in *Chronicle*⁶ (1746-1804) written in turkish.

The first notification of aljamiado is in Evlija Čelebija's *Travelogue* (1660). More intense research began in 1975 with the studies of Dr. Muhamed Hadžijahić *Review on published texts and researches on aljamiado literature questions (Osvrt na dosadašnje objavljene tekstove i istraživanja iz problematike alhamijado književnosti)* where the author includes everything known on the subject and which has been later on used by many other researchers.

Bosnian aljamiado can be found in the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, Archives of Herzegovina, National Museum, Library of Husrev-beg, ANUBiH, University Library in Belgrade and JAZU. Great sets of aljamiado texts, left by spanish Moriscos, are saved in the University Library and library of Academy of History in Madrid.

This literature can be classified depending on a style and structural characteristic, content and versification. It is already very different and unusual in historic continuity of south-slavic literatures. Beside linguistic and graphic difference, there also appears speciality in content and structure. Mysticism, etics and didactics are interweaved, occasionally influenced by folk songs. Certainly there are text which are impossible to define so severely. Yet the most frequent are religious and didactic motives and some were sung as lullabies *Elaheeya of Eden (Dženetska ilahija)* etc.

It would be wrong to conclude that all poetry contained religious themes. The oldest arabic literar text is love song, *Hirvat Türkisi*⁷, written by Mehmed Erdeljac in 1588. Some of the love poetry was influenced by folk tradition. This variety brings forward the name of Umihana

⁴ Bašeskija, Livnjak.

⁵ He mentions »Bosnia«, »Bosniak« and »bosnian« ten times. Similar to Hevai, Evlija Čelebija calls his tongue bosnian in the chapter *The language of bosnian and croatian peoples (Travelogue)*.

⁶ Translated from turkish Hazim Šabanović, Sarajevo, 1954.

⁷ *Croatian song*.

Čuvidina, first known female author in history of Bosnia. The other type was derived from oriental traditional literature. *Aškilijski elif-be* by Fejzo Softa is considered the most beautiful love song, formed according to the arabic alphabet.

Poems based on religious themes are called ilahija [eláheeya] that contain a variety of contents, motives, thoughts etc., for instance verses of devotion and loyalty to God with the intention to gain his mercy (Muhammed Hevai Uskufi: *We Pray To You, God*⁸). Others list virtues needed for dervish to find God (Šejh Sirrija: *If you want to be a dervish*⁹), the third kind in form of dialogues reveals an effort trying to find God talking to quotations of a chapter in Qur'an (Abdulvehab Ilhamija: *I Ask My Ya-Seen*¹⁰).

Originally kasîdes were moral and didactic poems, but they changed its nature on the Slavic ground. Its themes became profane with different approaches to readers. Children and youngsters are gently advised and directed to the right path (Mehmed Razi: *Kasîde*¹¹). The elders are preached, strictly criticized and demanded to accept given terms (Omer Humo: *Advices*¹²).

Versed notice is called arzuhal [arzoohal] in aljamiado literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It advocates, appeals and informs. Ones written for non-muslims are with the missionary and political purpose. They avouch and teach the superiority of islam, advice (Uskufii: *The Call in Faith*¹³), sometimes giving a threatening note. The other arzuhals, meant for muslims, express heroism of soldiers, anxiety, pessimism and lament about hard life on the frontier of the Ottoman empire (Mehmed-aga Prušćanin: *The Arzuhal of Duvanji*).

The prose is rare in bosnian aljamiado literature. There aren't many preserved handwritings from early periods, but many texts appear from the second half of the 19th century as a result of the general use of the print.

Religious texts are legends connected to religious mythology and stories about life of holy figures. Or, a story about a conversation of Muhammad and the devil (*Devilla*¹⁴). Works with wordly content are explanations of folklore sayings, books of traditional healing, exorcism etc. A cult of a child is also quite frequent (*The Death Of A Child*¹⁵). The most significant is considered *The*

⁸ *Molimo se tebi, Bože.*

⁹ *Ako hoćeš derviš bit.*

¹⁰ *Ja upitah svog Jasina.* Ya-Seen is a 36th chapter of Qur'an.

¹¹ *Kasida.*

¹² *Savjeti.*

¹³ *Poziv na vjeru.*

¹⁴ *Šejtannama.*

¹⁵ *Dječinja smrt.*

Prayer (Uskufi), the text holding the motif of universal love and kindness. It turns to God with a request to have mercy on sinners regardless the religion of East or West.

Aljamiado in BiH developed next to the one better known to literary historians – very rich literature in persian, arabic and turkish languages which scientific and literar value reached the value of the literature on the East and also contributed some names to it. Over 300 bosnian authors are known for writing in one of those languages, many are translated to several european languages. Aljamiado is less valued than literature written in one of the oriental languages on the territory of present Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Literature in eastern languages at that time was accessible only to higher social classes who could afford to study the East. The most frequent literar kind was commentary, compendium¹⁶, textbooks, lexicon. Arabian in BiH was famous as the language of science and religion. The richest literature was written in turkish.

Divan poetry in turkish dominated Ottoman literature. It comprehended wide areas with local specialities. Writing demanded knowledge of philosophy, philosophy of islam, tradition, history and also knowledge of persian and arabic language, therefore this poetry was born in highly intellectual circles to whom it was intended for. Although based on islamic religion and tradition, we can not call it religious. In *Divan*, the collection of poetry, were combined more than ten different genres. The most motives can be divided to three elementary ones¹⁷: eroticism, hedonism and mysticism and their specific poetic forms.

Motives of hedonism developed to their extreme form - mysticism. Vine, love and poetry were mixed in ectasy of drunkenness and oblivion, what opened new senses of direct feeling of the soul and ease the unification with the object of love¹⁸. Or, the hedonistic sinfulness inspired the poetry, which gave fairy feeling¹⁹ to cheerfull party. Very popular were works of great persian poets Hajjam and Hafiz, full of spirit and pleasure, happiness and joy, mind and thoughts. Turkish and native bosnian poets accepted hiperallegories and hipermetaphors of persian poetry as the result of mysticism in Persia.

¹⁶ A manual in which material of certain branch is presented briefly and synoptically.

¹⁷ Classification of dr. Muhsin Rizvić.

¹⁸ Mustafa Bošnjak.

¹⁹ Hasan Mostarac.

Ectasy and its philosophy overgrew to mysticism. Vine and love are symbolic allegories on the path to God, which means that poetizing and divinizing love in vine hide love toward God. This love, the foundation of sufism and poetry, is inspired by God, must be learned through human passion which itself is not the purpose but the means to the union with God and sincere love toward Him. This mystic love uses terminology of profane love and becomes symbolic, that is uses terminology of human passion to describe mystic love.

Safet-beg Bašagić (1870-1934), researcher of history of BiH and literar creativity of Bosniaks who wrote in oriental languages, noticed the influence of national spirit and muslim national lyric and epic, especially the influence of *sevdalinka*.