

Prof.Dr.HAJREDIN HOXHA
(Ph.D. in Qur'anic Exegesis & its Sciences)

Tafsir Doctrines in Balkans

Albanian Lands

During the Contemporary Period

(19th & 20th century)

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*Al it-tijahat al Fikriya wa al Diyniya fi al Dirasat al
Qur'aniya Leda 'Ulama' al Alban fi al Asri al Hadith
el Qarn 19 & 20*

الاتجاهات الفكرية والدينية في الدراسات القرآنية لدى علماء

الألبان في العصر الحديث، القرن 19 & 20

Translated from Albanian Language

Doktrinat e Tefsirit ne Trojet Shqiptare

Shek 19 & 20

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SPECIAL THANKS AND PRAYERS

- *To my beloved respected brother and hereo in Kuala Lumpur-Malaysia, Haji Dato Tengku Uzeir bin Ubaydi Lah,*
- *I am forever in your debt for helping me through my tough time.*
- *I'm humbled and grateful for your support.*
- *I will always remember how you helped me to get this wonderful academic work to get ready.*
- *I can only pray that someday the Almighty God, Allah (exalted be He) will repay you and your family.*
- *Thank you so much for all you have done to me and to my family.*

Brothers and Muslims like you are a real treasure!



APPROVAL

The present Ph.D. thesis has been supervised and approved
by:

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**Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences
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Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 2003

Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore and analyze the main intellectual and religious trends and tendencies in the writings of Albanian *Ulema* in their dealing with *Qur'anic studies*, in the modern time, in the Balkan Peninsula. In conducting this study, the researcher has utilized inductive, historical, critical and analytical methodologies. The Albanian lands in the Balkan Peninsula were governed and ruled by the Islamic Ottoman Empire for almost five centuries. This study has uncovered the political, social and religious situation in the Albanian lands before, during and after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Historically, to some extent and despite the conflicts and clashes, Albanians were able to show to the world a very good sample of peace, unity and harmony among themselves, as a multi religious and multi ethnic society. The attention and the engagement of the *Albanian Ulema* with the *Qur'anic sciences* have been tremendous since the spread of Islam, and have to be taken into consideration. Despite the tough and serious political, economical and religious challenges in the 19th and 20th centuries, they were not distracted from conducting their learning and teaching affairs. As a result of very close contacts and relations with different ideologies, cultures and civilizations within the Ottoman

mixed ethnicity and in the middle-east, the researcher based on different sources, was able to identify and discover five major ideological and religious orientations, in their contemporary *Qur'anic studies* and *exegesis*. Firstly, *the reformist religious approach*, secondly, *philosophical approach*, thirdly, *scientific experimental approach*, fourthly, *Sunni Maturidi dogmatic approach* and fifthly, *social approach*. The results and conclusions of this study are to be taken into consideration also, especially when we know that the current and modern historical sources of Albania are deviated almost completely and not to be trusted at all, because they failed to show to the Albanian people a real picture of Islam. They also failed to understand the great role and positive impact of Islam on their lives which was manifested by the Islamic Ottoman Empire. Therefore, there is an urgent need and an immediate task for rewriting the Albanian history in order to have a better understanding of Islam, which used to be prohibited, denied and rejected by the communist socialist leaders for many decades in the Albanian lands.

PREFACE BY GREAT PROFESSORS AND SCHOLARS

- 1- Prof.Dr.Imad Zuhayr Hafez- Al Madina Al
Munawarah**
- 2- Prof.Dr. Fahd bin Abdul Rahman Al Rumi-Al
Riyadh**
- 3- Prof.Dr.Mehmet Hayri Kirbasoglu-Ankara**
- 4- Prof.Dr.Muhamed Aydin-Sakarya**
- 5- Prof.Dr. Ali Ihsan Pala-Erzurum**

Bismil-lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim!

(In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate)

Praise belongs to God, may His benedictions and salutations be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his purified Family, and all his followers!

This pertinent Qur'anic study undertaken by our respected brother Dr. Hajredin Hoxha deals with very important aspects of the history, development and intellectual influence of major religious and scientific issues, from the point of view of Sunni *social* doctrine, as well as the *philosophical, empirical, and creedal* aspect. Dr. Hoxha has walked on the path of the methodology of the pious ancestors, bridging an important gap in the field, and staying away from passions and extremism in order to reach the truth.

We pray to the All-Mighty God to recompense him for this work, and to bless him with great rewards and good works, for everything that his precious hands have written!

God alone knows the intentions!

Prof. Dr. Imad Zuhayr Hafez

Professor of exegesis and Qur'anic sciences, Faculty of the Noble Qur'an

Dean of the Library, Islamic University of al Madina al Munawarah, Saudi Arabia.

Bismil-lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim!

(In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate)

Praise belongs to God, and may His benedictions and salutations be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his purified Family, and all his Companions!

When the paths are mingled, when passions and pleasantries rule, the need is felt for someone who will show the truth to people, who will turn their darkness into light, and enlighten their path.

The followers of desires and innovations continue to launch their ideas and raise doubts against the truth, but through His Will, God trained those who are able to face their suspicions, clearing the way for us, until falsehood vanishes and the truth becomes manifest.

In the past many heretics appeared who tried to fabricate sayings of the Prophet (God's peace and blessings be upon him!), in order to cover the truth from people, but the scholars of Hadith uncovered their fabrications and lies.

When Harun al-Rashid (may God have mercy upon him!) decided to execute a heretic, the latter said: *“What will you do with the forty thousand traditions I have fabricated, in which I allow the forbidden and forbid the allowed, without the Prophet*

having said anything about such issues?” Harun replied: “What will you do, O enemy of God, against Is’haq al-Fizari and Abdullah ibn Mubarak who sift through every word of these sayings?”

This is how the traditional scholars acted in cleansing exegesis from the vain *isra’iliat* stories, from fabricated hadith, from plots and doubts.

In modern times the passions and currents have abounded, but in almost every country there appeared scholars who speak up and leave written works, which are unknown to others. Therefore, the need arose for the scholars of Islam to oppose such doubts, to uncover their methods, and to separate the luminous benefits from false ideas. Such remarkable scholars opposed them with scientific works in different Islamic disciplines in places like India, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Africa, etc. Their studies were excellent, scholarly, precise, clarifying the truths and uncovering the fabrications, and thus the useful sciences, rulings, and guides came to the fore.

The respected brother, noted scholar and skilled professor Hajredin Hoxha investigated an important Muslim country, namely Albania. His study, which was his doctoral thesis in the Sciences of Revelation and Tradition at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences and Humanities of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (2003), deals with Albanian Muslims in the Balkans.

Even though dedication overcomes all obstacles, I know from personal experience in the field, that the study of different schools and orientations requires hard and difficult work. Therefore, we are fully aware of the great strain the author experienced and the numerous difficulties he went through during the study of these

intellectual orientations.

I am convinced that the author has not spared anything from his capacities to reach the goal. He has not focused exclusively in the field of exegesis, but he has also dealt with the historical background, namely the situation of Albanians before, during, and after the Ottoman rule. He has brought to light many known and unknown events, as well as manifest and hidden influences of the West in Albania. Albanians and their neighbours continue to feel their effects.

The author's effort deserves all praise, because it is marked by truthfulness and sincerity, which are qualities of the scholars of this Ummah.

I pray to God to recompense the scholar Hoxha for his work, and to make this book beneficial for Islam and Muslims, especially in Albanian lands!

I also call upon the scholars of the Ummah to continue on this path and get involved in precise studies on the intellectual orientations in every country, in order to cleanse the polluted environment of the Muslims and the whole world from fabrications and lies they are faced with.

May God's blessings and salutations be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his purified Family, and all his followers!

Prof. Dr. Fahd Abd al-Rahman al-Rumi

Faculty of Qur'anic Studies,

King Saud University -Riyadh- Saudi Arabia

Bismil-lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim!

(In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate)

Bismil-lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim!

(In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate)

I've read the work of my dear colleague and friend Assoc.prof. Dr Hajredin Hoxha on Contemporary Tefsir Trends among Albanian scholars (XIX & XX. Century) with curiosity and pleasure.

In Islamic Studies, the indisputable sovereignty of Arabic is extremely important for all the reasons that are known to everyone. This situation, which is valid especially in the past Islamic centuries, has begun to change to a certain extent in recent centuries. Now, in the Islamic world, the writings of Islam in various languages other than Arabic have started to create a serious accumulation.

Similarly, the developments in the world generally when mention Islam, from western side to so called middle east (“Al Sharq al Awsat”) regional developments generally in the world of public opinion, lead to the overlook of the developments in other regions of the Islamic World.

On the other hand, the developments in the Islamic World and especially in the field of Islamic Sciences and Islamic Thought cannot be devoted to Arabic only. On the one hand, Far Eastern Islamic countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia with a population close to the Arab population, on the other hand Persian and Urdu like Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, in addition,

Balkan Islamic countries and societies' languages are used, as well as Central Asian Islamic countries and finally languages such as Bosnian and Albanian, are also contributing to intellectual and intellectual production on Islam. Therefore, a good Islamic science researcher can no longer be limited to Arabic sources only, it is unthinkable to exclude developments in other languages. Because writing a work in Arabic does not always mean that it is more precious and important, and it does not mean that works in other languages are less valuable than written in Arabic. It is possible that the intellectual level a young scholar of Balkans such as the Wise Leader Aliya Izetbegovic could exceed most of the Arab thinkers. Despite his writing in Bosnian language, his work was translated in Turkish, English and Arabic and that the Islamic world should thank him for his magnificent ideas and actions. Thanks to Allah, I had a chance to meet him and know him from close.

Who knows, perhaps in the Balkans, many other Aliyas are waiting to be discovered. But since it is not common among the scholars of Islamic science and ideas to learn the Balkan languages, there is no other way to introduce these languages to those who do not know this language through translation of the works of these region languages until such curiosity occurs.

This study of the young Kosovar scholar Assoc.prof.Dr. Hajredin Hoxha invites us to meet with the people of the Balkans in the last period of the Middle Eastern period. His study is not only about Islamic sciences in Tafsir, he also

gives valuable information about the historical development of Islam in the Balkans and Albania in general from the Islamic point of view.

When the work is examined, it will be seen and understood that the Balkans in general and the Muslims of Albanian Lands in particular are not excluded from the political, cultural, social and religious intellectual developments in the Islamic world.

The Balkan Experience deserves special attention, as the developments in all parts of the Islamic World are important, it represents the five hundred years of European Islam and as a living example of religious tolerance and the experience of living together with non-Muslims.

I would like to thank Dr. Hajredin Hoxha who carried out such an important study that we can apply to get to know this experience very well. For his contributions to the Islamic Ummah and his contributions to the Muslim of Balkans it will be an enjoyable task for me to present my thanks and congratulations on behalf of science and idea.

We pray to Allah the Almighty for the increase in the number of people like Dr. Hajredin Hoxha and that the Muslims of Balkan can say “we are present” in the contribution in the Islamic sciences.

Prof.Dr. Mehmet Hayri KIRBAŞOĞLU

Hamed Bin Khalifa University
Faculty of Islamic Studies Qatar
Doha/ QATAR

04/20/2013

Bismil-lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim!

(In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate)

The Holy Quran has a special place in the eyes of Muslims. Because the Qur'an is the word of Almighty Allah and He sent a universal message to all mankind through Muhammad (*peace be upon him*). The Messenger of Allah (*peace be upon him*), who was sent to the whole humanity as the universal and the last prophet, completed this blessed message and made his declaration and became the first mufessir of the Noble Qur'an. Since then, Muslims, especially Muslim scholars, have made great efforts to understand and explain the Qur'an. In very early times, the Islamic sciences were divided into various branches of the Holy Qur'an, hence, the branch called "Science of Tafsir" has emerged as a scientific discipline of islamic studies. The Science of Tafsir among Islamic sciences has a great place and importance. As a matter of fact, great commentators have been trained in this field for centuries and produced unique valuable works.

Certainly, these efforts existed in every period and in every geography Islam reached and provided fruitful results. The Balkans, which are the gate of Islam extending to Europe (to the West), is one of the Islamic geographies that has made serious contributions to the service of the Qur'an. The efforts of the Albanian

scholars, who have the knowledge and knowledge of Kosova, are one of the conspicuous manifestations of these contributions. In this geography, despite the problems and hardships experienced by these people, these scientific activities have not stopped and have been continued by important figures.

Today, it still continues to cultivate important scholars in the field of tafsir as well as other Islamic sciences. One of the rings of this generation is my precious friend and my colleague Assoc. Prof.Dr. Hajredin Hoxha who made this valuable work. In this work, he has dealt with "A Study of the Exegese of the Modern Albanian Scholars in Modern Periods 19 and 20 century" with a great deal of wisdom and he truly filled a very important gap in this field. In his field, Dr Hajredin is really a man of deep knowledge who showed this work as a source for theology community.

The Turkish translation of this book, which I have seen with pleasure, it is of a particular importance for the Turkish readers, especially for the academic community which deals with tafsir. This book, which has been translated into Turkish by a successful translation by the Albanian theologians, will certainly add richness to our libraries in Turkey. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Hajredin, the author of the book. I would like to congratulate everyone who contributed to the meeting of the work with the Turkish readers, and I hope that this important work will be useful for the

readers and instructors. I wish other scientific studies of the author to be translated into Turkish.

Prof.Dr. Dr. Ali İhsan PALA
Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies
Qatar University
Doha / Qatar

4 April 2013

Bismil-lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim!

(In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate)

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, His peace and blessings be upon our beloved prophet Muhammad, the master of all messengers.

The work of our friend from Kosova, I have read some pages of his book entitled: *The Qur'anic Exegesis of the Modern Albanian Scholars* which covers the 19th and 20th century. Dr Hayrettin Hoxha has translated his as Ph.D thesis into Turkish language and its ready for publication. I've seen that his expression written in this study is useful, clear and in an understandable style. I can easily express that it is an important work for Albanians, which has filled a big gap in its field in terms of transmitting the late Tafsir scholars and their opinions and ideas. The study is of great importance in terms of exposing the recent political, social and religious history of Albanians and the reformative movements in the field of Tafsir.

May the Almighty Allah reward the author of this study, let Muslims benefit, and let him enjoy the beauties of this world and the Hereafter.

Prof.Dr. Muhammed AYDIN
Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies
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Doha –Qatar

4.4.2013

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

Bismil-lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim!

(In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate)

Respected English readers,

I feel honoured and privileged by God, who through His boundless mercy has made possible the translation and publication of my doctoral thesis; all praise and thanks belong to Him. I am presenting before you an effort and uninterrupted engagement of several years, which is indeed an inspiration from God the Mighty, and a guidance from Him into bringing out the contents of the archives of different libraries, and the religious and literary research studies and investigations of Albanian Muslim scholars, and especially their service in the interpretation and the commentary of the Qur'an. This study contains monographs by the most eminent Albanian contemporary scholars, who were also worthy interpreters and commentators of the Qur'an of different orientations and doctrines.

Besides the subject of exegesis and its doctrines, which have been dealt with in details, this work is concerned with other issues as well. The first chapter takes a look at Albanian historiography from an Islamic perspective. In this, our aim has never been to be biased against any particular religious or scientific group or institution. Our aim has been to bring to light the scientific truth about religion and history to the Albanian public. We have sought to contribute to the literary and religious heritage of our dear, sovereign, tolerant, and independent state of Kosova. We have done our best to offer a critical look of the social, political, and religious circumstances of our Albanian

lands in the Balkans, based on references from different languages, primarily Albanian, Arabic, English, Turkish and Bosnian; which have all been documented, leaving nothing to supposition our personal whims.

This historical introduction is deemed as essential for the understanding of the different currents and doctrines of exegesis in our lands, because the latter are closely related to our history, and therefore do not represent a digression from the subject-matter. I am hopeful in God's help for making this monographs useful guides and textbooks for high school and university courses, as well as my fellow imams in mosques, in madrasas and faculties, who are concerned with the commentary of the Qur'an, the methodology and history of exegesis and exegetes in Albanian lands.

Finally, I pray to God the All-Powerful that this work is published for His sake, and that its eventual recompense be saved for the day in which neither wealth nor family will matter, but only our sincerity and piety. I am grateful and wholeheartedly thankful to the honest brothers, colleagues, friends and sincere benefactors, who sacrificed their time, effort, and means for this book: Haji Dato Tengku Uzir bin Ubaydil-lah from Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, Haji Adem Kallkani in Istanbul-Turkey (from Tetova), and the translator of this work Mr. Edin Q. Lohja in the United States of America (from Shkodra). May God reward them with the Garden of Firdaus! Amen!

Yours in Humanity,

Assoc.Prof.Dr.Hajredin Hoxha,

**Academic Adviser and Educational Expert- Air Defense
Training Institute- Ministry of Defense, Doha, Qatar**

*(former professor at Community College - Taibah University, al
Madinah al Munawarah-Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Faculty of
Usuluddin-Sultan Sherif Ali Islamic University, Brunei, Faculty of
the Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences,
International Islamic University-Kuala Lumpur Malaysia,
Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies-Qatar University,
Community College of Qatar, Faculty of Islamic Studies – Hamad
bin Khalifa University-Qatar, Ahmad bin Muhammad Military
College of Qatar)*

Part I

ALBANIAN LANDS DURING THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD: THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1

- **REASONS FOR THE CHOICE OF THE TOPIC**
- **ITS PROBLEMATICS**
- **RELATED ISSUES**
- **IT'S IMPORTANCE**
- **PREVIOUS WORK ON THE SUBJECT**
- **METHOD OF THIS THESIS**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introduction:

Bismil-lahir-Rahmanir-Rahim!

(In the Name of God, the All-merciful, the Compassionate)

Praise belongs to God the All-Powerful, and in Him we seek succour, we pray for His guidance and ask Him to protect us from our faults and misdeeds. Whom He guides none can misguide, and whom He misguides none can guide.

I bear witness that there is no god but God, and that He is One and without a partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is His servant, His Messenger, His chosen and beloved. The most heartfelt benedictions are for the worthiest creature, our Prophet Muhammad, as well as his purified Progeny, his honoured and worthy Companions, as well as their followers until the Day of Judgment. He clarified the meanings of the Noble Qur'an to his Companions; whoever obeyed him was guided, and whoever disobeyed was destroyed.

Respected readers!

The elaboration of the subject of exegesis (*tafsir*) of the Book of God is generally considered as one of the most respected fields in the Islamic tradition. Countless scholars both in the past and present have greatly contributed to the clarification of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an as well as the intentions of its words, since the Qur'an includes countless and everlasting miracles, as long as there is life on earth, being a "sea without a shore".

Unlike any other book, the Qur'an has always been at the centre of attention and remains so, due to its miraculous nature. No one can add or subtract anything from it, because the Lord of the worlds has revealed it through the Noble Spirit (Gabriel) into the heart of His slave and Prophet, in pure Arabic.

All the efforts for retaining the Qur'an in the heart, commenting upon it, clarifying its words, and discovering its meanings, as well as copying and teaching it, besides God's promise to preserve and protect it, are a clear argument pointing to its miraculous nature at every time and place. Regarding this aspect, God the All-powerful says:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴾ [الحجر : 9]

*Verily, We have sent down the Dhikr (Qur'ân) and surely, We will guard it.*¹

Many great scholars and experts have excelled in this domain,

¹ al-Hijr: 9. All translations are taken from the www.qurancomplex.org version.

both in the past and in the present,² spending all their lives at the service of the Noble Qur'an by researching, clarifying, and reading it, besides establishing schools in various parts of the Islamic world, inspired by their faith in God and their love and devotion to His Book, which He sent down as a mercy, guidance and light for the whole world, as well as the preservation of the heritage and civilisation of Islam, and humanity in general. In this context, the orientalist J. J. G. Jansen says: *"Even the calligraphers and design masters spent their lives at the service of this Qur'an..."*³

Considering the fact that Albanian scholars have made considerable contributions in this field throughout ethnic Albanian lands,⁴ I felt the duty to research, study and present their efforts as documented by their books and manuscripts in different Islamic disciplines,⁵ which abound in the Ottoman libraries and elsewhere.

This matter requires that we shed light on their scholarly work within their historical, social and religious setting. Such an investigation will no doubt bring them closer to us, enabling us to

² In most serious libraries in the world one will find hundreds of books and treatises on the Qur'an, its secrets and miracles, both by Muslim and non-Muslim authors.

³ J. J. Jansen, *The Quran interpretation in Modern Egypt*, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1980.

⁴ See the important book on this subject written by the known Albanian orientalist Hasan Kaleshi, *The Contribution of Albanians in Islamic Learning*, eds. N. Ibrahim, M. Ajdini, Riyadh: International Organization of Student Federation, 1992.

⁵ Refer to the research by the Albanian historian Muhamed Mufaku-Arnauti in his *Albanian Culture in Arabic Script* and *Arabic-Islamic Reflections in Albanian Literature* as well as other works mentioned below.

grasp the way they lived their pure religion's principles, in accordance with the strong Rope of God, never falling prey to destructive orientations existing in those places, such as colonialism, atheism, communism and the great world powers, so that they could protect their wholesome religious inheritance and their culture.⁶

Such scholars remained steadfast and unswervingly protected their religion and Qur'an, learning the latter by heart, studying its reading, clarification, and exegesis, within their reach and existing possibilities. One must remember that they lived in rather difficult conditions, facing great hardships that may easily be compared to those of certain contemporary reformist scholars in several Arab countries.⁷

These scholars were typical examples of patience, resistance and persistent defence of their religious identity, despite experiencing all kinds of plight, and despite the political pressure and continuous tyranny they were exposed to in the Balkan countries they lived.

⁶ Muhamed Mufaku-Arnauti, *The Issue of Religion in Albania*, Kuwait, Al-Arabi Journal, 1978, p. 78; and *Albanian Culture in Arabic Script*, p. 75.

⁷ In our study of the different movements and currents of *tafsir* in the Arab world we find that the same encounters and circumstances were experienced by Muslims in the Balkans, especially in Albania. Their circumstances and encounters were related to their conflicts with the foreign invaders, the nature of power structure, the attitudes towards the Ottoman caliphate, their immigration in neighbouring countries for safety and religious reasons etc. See Fikret Karcic, *The Bosniaks and the challenges of modernity - Late Ottoman and Habsburg times*, El-Kalem, pp. 15, 97-98, Sarajevo 1999; If-fet Muhamed Sharkawi, *Religious Thought versus Modern Challenges: An Analytical Study of Tafsir Orientations in Contemporary Period*; Beirut: Dar al-Arabi, 2nd ed., 1979, p. 191.

Endless praises be to God the Magnificent for this contribution, because the history of the Albanian people was full of events, developments, and political as well as religious changes⁸ from earliest times, starting from the Roman, then Byzantine and Ottoman periods, all the way to the communist period. Therefore, we believe it is important to study the history of exegesis of the Noble Qur'an in those lands, as well as the movements and developments of this science, in order to know the attitudes of Albanian scholars in such encounters, and also understand the intellectual orientations that are observed in their Qur'anic studies.

They had truly benefitted from the Qur'anic text: *"sensational, rejuvenating and rich, but the different orientations that appeared did not originate from the Qur'anic text"*,⁹ on the contrary, they were a result of their co-operation with the Noble Qur'an, in conformity with the circumstances in which they lived and the scientific knowledge they had acquired from the Arab, Ottoman and Persian heritage.

Albanians produced such sincere scholars and contributors in the way of God who sacrificed everything to defend their Islamic and national identity vis-à-vis colonialism and disintegration. This specific characteristic of binding and unifying

⁸ Muhamed Mufaku-Arnauti, an historian and author of Albanian descent who lives and works in Jordan, writes: "Albanians are the only European people who embraced Islam in their majority." See *"Albanian Culture in Arabic Script"*; Kuwait, 1983, vol. I, p. 7.

the religious and national aspects is considered as one of the main features in the early as well as contemporary religious studies in Albanian. Such great scholars cannot be studied without special reference to the inseparable link between religion and homeland (*Feja dhe Kombi*). The foreign reader should not be surprised at or deny this characteristic, because they grew within a worldview that resulted from the religious, political, social and economical circumstances of their times. This orientation was a result of their reaction to foreign policies acting to their detriment. Albanian Muslim scholars were influenced so much from these circumstances that they could not possibly differentiate between the importance of defending their religion and defending their homeland.

I pray to the Almighty God to make me steadfast in words and deeds, to keep me away from the evil words, and to enable me to offer a successful review and analysis of this difficult and sensitive topic. In view of the lack of pertinent literature in the library of our Islamic University of Malaysia, the need arose for me to travel to Albania, Kosova, Macedonia and Turkey, and even Bosnia, in order to investigate the necessary literature for a maximally successful dissertation, and a genuine contribution in the scientific, religious, social and national aspect.

For the time being, this study is the first of its kind from an

⁹ This is the view of Sharkawi in his *Religious Thought and the Modern World*, p. 13.

Islamic perspective. I pray to the Almighty Lord to help me in this religious and scholarly duty, verily He is the best Helper and Supporter!

PROBLEMATICS OF THIS STUDY

The problematics of this topic is related to the fact that the cultural and ideological developments of Muslim scholars in Albania are still being studied by scholars of both Muslim and non-Muslim background from a variety of disciplines, based especially on ideological and religious orientations which appeared in Albanian scholarship. Several such studies dealt with Sufism, Shi‘ism, and Orientalism, especially those written by the more contemporary authors. Such scholars did not occupy themselves with the research of Qur’anic studies, especially exegesis (*tafsir*), since the latter was viewed in the general framework of Albanian inheritance.

This investigation deals with the study of the most important currents as well as intellectual and religious doctrines that have appeared in the past, as yet unresearched Qur’anic studies. It also seeks to shed light on the religious life and Islamic culture of Albanians that has existed for centuries, based on books, articles, speeches and research by contemporary Albanian

scholars.

During the second half of nineteenth century until the declaration of independence of Albania in 1912, there appeared several new currents in the field of Qur'anic studies due to the synthesis of the knowledge accumulated by Albanian scholars in different Muslim lands, especially the Arab world. They lived among peoples with a different culture and value system, and it was normal for them to be influenced by them, just as they would influence others in turn. Under such influence, Albanian society started reflecting the influence of civilizations and cultures existing in the Middle East¹⁰ faced with the challenges met by its Muslim populace¹¹ in the modern period.

This study will also focus on the most important currents of that time, based on concrete examples, and assess some major issues in particular, due to the impossibility of dealing with all the related issues in general.

The study will seek to address and answer the following questions:

1. *What were the most important challenges met by Albanian scholars in the contemporary period?*

2. *What was the contribution of Muslim scholars at the service of the Qur'an?*

¹⁰ Such as Egypt, Syria, Algeria and the Indian subcontinent.

3. *To what extent were they influenced by the existing doctrinal and religious schools in the Middle East?*

4. *Which were the most important intellectual and religious orientations observed in the Qur'anic studies of Albanian scholars?*

5. *How aware were the Albanian exegetes of the treasures of the Qur'anic text and its wide horizon of applicability?*

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study consists in serving as a defining point in a broader and more complete investigation of the currents, movements and developments in exegesis in Albanian lands. Such a study is non-existent in Arab libraries, as well as non-Arab libraries,¹² apart from the publication of a few brief contemporary works dealing with political and social reports on the religious and theological movements in Albanian lands, as well as on the perceived danger of Muslim Albanians to these territories. A study in need would take into consideration the influence of internal and external factors in the formation and

¹¹ Among which were: Immigration and abandoning homeland to the benefit of the colonizers; replacing the Arabic script with the Latin; foreign rule; Albanian unity before the common enemy and other questions which we shall deal with later.

development of such currents in Albanian lands, which differs in many aspects from other Balkan countries,¹³ especially since the Ottoman caliphate ruled for a very long period in this region, leaving noticeable Islamic traces up to the present, despite the decimation by the communist regime during the second half of the twentieth century.

There is an important point to note, regarding the fact that many Muslims, students and respected professors do not have access to such a study yet, just as they lack the much needed literature in studying and understanding the different currents of exegesis among Albanian scholars.

Moreover, I believe that such a study will contribute to the knowledge of mankind and the Muslims in general, and the students of the field in particular, contributing to the improvement of their scientific and academic level.

¹² Here we have in mind the study of the different currents in exegesis, Qur'anic studies and religious intelligentsia among Albanians, whereas the political and historical studies from an Orientalist perspective as well as the atheist approaches are numerous.

¹³ The main reasons being 1) The percentage of Muslims there is higher, exceeding 70%; and 2) The former Albanian communist state declared atheism from 1967 until 1991, considering itself the first atheist country in the world, same as the Chinese state where religious activities were baned during the years 1955-77. For more details see: Nathalie Clayer, "Islam, State and Society in Post-communist Albania" in: *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, pp. 115-38; Hugh Pullton, Taji Suha Faruki, *Muslim identity and the Balkan State*; editors, Hurst & Company London, 1997, p. 115.

EARLIER STUDIES

Based on the informations I possess and on the bibliographical references in different research works done in national and international universities, I have not come across a study which deals with the schools of exegesis among Albanians, and therefore it seems that the present study is the first of its kind summarizing in itself the field of exegesis.

I am continuously and attentively following every new publication from Islamic literature appearing in my language, English, Arabic, Turkish and Bosnian, through fellow Muslims who travel there, and through regular or electronic mail as well as telephone communication with fellow writers and clerics. In fact, the earlier studies I came across were incomplete and marginal, regarding a few Albanian personalities in the science of exegesis. Nonetheless, such incomplete studies were important as they were directly related to my topic. Despite their small number, these studies are of a great importance as far as documenting of bibliography is concerned. The materials which I consulted so far can be classified into the following criteria-categories:

1. Historical studies:

I thank God the Almighty for the opportunity to find some very important studies, which became my greatest help during the research, laying out the path to me for other studies. In my view, the leading studies in this aspect are those of Muhamed Mufaku Arnauti,¹⁴ who has made great contributions to Islam, to his homeland, and to Albanian literature and cultural inheritance in general. May God reward him for his outstanding contribution! I am grateful to him for his work.

In the introduction of his historical work: *Albanian Culture in Arabic Script*, Dr Mufaku emphasizes the strong historical relations between Albanians and Arabs throughout the centuries, and their great influence on the Ottoman caliphate, due to their close links with the Ottoman family and the leading positions they enjoyed in the government due to their great bravery. Albanian influence had reached the Arab lands, such as Egypt, Syria,

¹⁴ Muhamed Mufaku-Arnauti was born in Damascus to a family of immigrants from Kosova. He graduated in Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Damascus, where he also received his master's degree. He received his Ph.D. in comparative literature at the University of Prishtina (Kosova), in 1980, where he later taught at the Faculty of Oriental Studies. He has authored dozens of studies on the Arab-Yugoslav relations, such as *Pjesë nga poezia shqiptare bashkëkohore*; published in Damascus in 1981; *Studime mbi Islamin në Ballkan* (Beirut, 1983). He has translated works in prose and poetry into Albanian and Serbo-Croatian from hundreds of Arab authors. His books include *Albanian Culture in Arabic Script*, Kuwait, 1983; *Islam in Yugoslavia: from Belgrade to Sarajevo*, Amman, Dar al-Bashir, 1991; *Arab-Islamic Reflections in Albanian Literature*, published in Kuwait. He has also written the article *The Religious Question in Albania*, al-Arabi Journal, Kuwait, 1978 etc. He is presently lecturing history at the Aal al-Bayt University in Jordan, may God reward him for his contribution!

Palestine, Yemen, Algeria and Tunizia etc., leaving a good name and lasting humanitarian works which are still standing to this day.¹⁵

The author also stresses the struggle of the Albanians in defense of their Islamic identity and deals with the issue of Arabic alphabet, by documenting the stands of Albanian Muslim scholars who tried to protect the general public opinion from the abandonment of the Arabic alphabet and its replacement with the Latin script in Albanian speaking regions.¹⁶

“The question of the change of the alphabet was the first step of the great colonial powers to cut off the Albanian ties with the Ottoman Empire and indeed, on November 22, 1913 the Albanian State (the temporary law of civil administration in Albania) declared the separation of civil matters from the Shari‘ah dhe separation of the Islamic authorities in Albania from the Shaykh al-Islam.”¹⁷

Needless to say, this had an impact on the scholars of the time, whose different reactions we shall mention during the course of this book.

Among the historical studies of Mufaku-Arnauti is: *Islam in Yugoslavia: from Belgrade to Sarajevo* dealing with the

¹⁵ See: *Albanian Culture in Arabic Script*; pp. 11-37.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 73.

¹⁷ *ibid*, pp. 73-5.

Islamic history of Belgrade,¹⁸ in which he tries to shed light on the luminous aspects of Islamic history of this city, which still occupies an important place, because of its geostrategical position as the gate of the Balkans, being a meeting place between the East and the West, as well as the fact that in the past it witnessed confrontations among the great powers, such as the Roman and Byzantine empires. The geostrategical importance of Belgrade became clearer when the city fell to the Ottomans in 1521, thus turning from a Christian fortress into a center of jihad, wherefrom the Ottomans continued their penetration to other European countries.¹⁹

As we already pointed out, we do not intend to assess the author's views, but he is nonetheless right in speaking about a very important issue concerning the Arabs, who do not pay attention to this glorious chapter of the Islamic civilization in Belgrade as much as they did during the 1950's and 1960's when covering the different events taking place at the time in Yugoslavia. According to Mufaku-Arnauti, the reasons for the lack of such information among the Arabs are unknown.²⁰

The author points out that during the Ottoman rule there were 270 mosques, masjids and mihrabs in Belgrade, quoting the

¹⁸ Muhamed Mufaku-Arnauti, *Islami në Jugosllavi nga Beogradi në Sarajevë*; Aman, Dar al-Beshir, bot. I, p. 11.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 11.

²⁰ Ibid p. 12.

famous Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi.²¹ He criticizes some Arab authors who describe former Yugoslavia without referring to this Islamic aspect of Belgrade, but only mention one mosque in a few lines, neglecting its Eastern inheritance.²²

Among the valuable historical studies on the Balkans and Muslims in Yugoslavia in general, and Kosova and Bosnia in particular is the study of Prof. Abdullah Smajic: *Conflict in Yugoslavia and the Future of the Muslims*.²³ This work was written during the war in Bosnia and it is based on the author's perceptions of the direct Western plots against the Muslims in this European country. In this context, he writes: "The political crisis in Bosnia has created two opposing visions: the Western vision and the Islamic vision. According to the Europeans, the Bosnian tragedy is a humanitarian catastrophe, whereas according to the Islamic vision which is completely different and which gives one the shudders, it is a purely religious conflict against Islam and the Muslims in Europe."²⁴

In this rather important historical study on former Yugoslavia, the author uncovers some Serbian plots and secret documents showing their plan for the extirpation of Albanian Muslims from Kosova and Bosnia, along with other Muslim

²¹ Ibid, p. 34.

²² Ibid, p. 12.

²³ Abdullah Smaji: *As-Sira'u fi Yugoslavia wa mustakbal al-muslimin*; tr. Saib Alavi, Lahore: Institute of Political Studies; 1992.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

minorities, going back to the time of the former President Tito²⁵ (1945-1980), as well the period after his death (1980-1992).²⁶ Bearing in mind the situation of the Albanian and Bosnian Muslims in Yugoslavia, we could have a more complete view on their sharp conflict with their enemies, in trying to preserve their Islamic identity. As an example, we can mention one of the many Serbian²⁷ plots against the Muslims, in line with their tendencies from ancient times:

The *Al-Bayan* journal, which deals with Islamic issues, quotes the words of the former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic who in his infamous speech in Kosova, in the manifestation commemorating the 600th anniversary of the Battle in which the Serbs were defeated by the Ottomans, said: “*The Battle of Kosovo started six hundred years ago and ended today, and we are ready to sacrifice three hundred thousand Serbian fighters in order to uproot Islam - from Sarajevo all the way to Mecca.*”²⁸

²⁵ Tito was asked by the President of Egypt Jamal Abd al-Nasr if it was true that he tortured Muslims, and he replied: “There are no Muslims in Yugoslavia, they do not constitute a nation”, and they both agreed that religion cannot form a nation. “Our Muslims are Serbs converted into Islam during the Ottoman invasion,” says Tito! See: *Bosnia and Hercegovina, facts and numbers*, p. 32. We categorically reject Tito’s words as completely untrue. Albanian history belies his words, since the Muslim Albanians are not Serbs, but hail from the Illyrs.

²⁶ Ibid p. 14.

²⁷ On the role of Serbian orientalists in the justification of the killings and massacres of Muslims in the Balkans, see: Norman Cigar, *The role of Serbian orientalists in justification of genocide against Muslims of the Balkans*; Logos-A, Shkup 2003, 61-100.

²⁸ Safvet Vasfi, “M’satu Muslimi Kososva and Vajibuna Nahvehum” in *al-Bayan Journal*, no. 138, June 1994, London, p. 72.

Smajic stresses another important point on the effort to discover the true roots of the conflicts between Albanian and Bosnian Muslims, and the Serbs, trying to offer all options for its causes, starting with the historical roots and ending with the present developments. Albanian and Bosnians were rather isolated from the Islamic world due to their geographical positions in the middle of secular Europe, and this is a major and dangerous obstacle to any recovering process in the present and the future in their lands.²⁹

Among the religious and historical studies on the development of Islamic culture during the twentieth century is Dr. Ramiz Zekaj's work *The Development of Islamic Culture Among Albanians during the Twentieth Century*, in which the author presents a general analysis on the topic, filling a great void in our Islamic library, and rendering a great service to both Albanian and Arab readers and intellectuals. We can say that the study of Dr. Ramiz Zekaj is considered a brief encyclopaedia for many Albanian scholars and an accessible guide book of information on the historical traces of Islam in Albanian territories. As can be inferred from the title, the book does not deal with the movement of exegesis and its currents. His work is permeated by the analytic historical method. As we mentioned before, the great benefit of this study lies in the literature used in the form of bibliography,

²⁹ Smajic, *Al-Sira 'u fi Yugoslavia wa mustakbal al-muslimin*, pp. 15, 79.

documents and manuscripts used by the author during the research and compilation of the book. In our study on the movement and currents of exegesis we shall base ourselves in several works used in it, since they offer a great help in our research.

One of the valuable historical studies is the work of the known Albanian Professor Dr.Hasan Kaleshi, on the activity of Albanian scholars in Islamic sciences, *The Contribution of Albanians in Islamic Learning*.

In this study, Dr. Hasan Kaleshi, gathered the names of Albanian scholars of the Ottoman period in Albania, Kosova, Macedonia, based on their scientific contributions. He relates the names of the poets and literary writers who have written in Albanian using Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish alphabet. Then he mentions those who have written on Islamic history, Arabic language, Qur'an Exegesis, Hadith, Shari'ah, Philosophy, Astronomy, Psychology, Grammar etc.

One of the studies which helped me in my research is the work of the researcher Nexhat Ibrahim³⁰ *Islam in Illyrian-Albanian Lands through the Centuries*. The book consists of lectures given by the author on different occasions, basing himself mainly on literature in Bosnian. It is a rather useful and valuable study on Islamic history, especially with regards to the

³⁰ Prishtinë, Organization of Islamic Dawah, Kartoum, Sudan 2000.

bibliography used therein.

Among the contemporary studies which are directly related to my thesis on the Islamic awakening in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia and in Kosova, is Prof.Dr Fikret Karcic's *Islam in the Balkans*.³¹ In this book he speaks about the reasons, causes, and nature of the Islamic awakening in the region, as well as other important issues. Prof. Karcic has also an important work: *The Bosniaks and the challenges of Modernity-Late Ottoman and Hapsburk Time*, which I had a chance to make an Islamic review based on professor Karcic's request, and thanks to God this study was published in al Madina al Munawarah in 2009 in English and Arabic.

Another pertinent work to the topic is: *Në kujtim të brezave*³² written by three Faik Luli, Islam Dizdari and Nexhmi Bushati. This book contains the biographies and activities of forty Muslim personalities from the town of Shkodra, from the late 19th century up to the second half of twentieth century. This work is considered an invaluable Islamic encyclopaedia for the students of Albanian history. Unfortunately, it was impossible for me to find a copy, since it has been out of print for years.

One of the well-known Albanian scholars from Kosova, whose work concentrates on Islamic literature and spiritual

³¹ Dr. Fikret Karcic, *Islam in the Balkans*, Islamic Research Institute, Pakistan, International Islamic University, 1997.

³² Shkodër 1997.

inheritance in Albanian lands, has reviewed this book.³³ Among the topics dealt with are: the contribution of these forty scholars in the spread of Islam, their learning, their defence of the homeland and religion, and their common efforts against the Italian occupation and the communist system as well as the tortures and tragedies they went through during their lives full of hardship.

³³ Dr. Mahmud Hysa, *Alamiada shqiptare*, vol. 2, pp. 161-207, Shkup: Logos-A, 2000.

2. Intellectual and religious studies:

The main religious study that helped me prepare the thesis is Dr. Muhammad Sharkawi's *Religious Thought and the Modern Times*.³⁴ Although it deals with a specific place and concrete people, namely the modern reformers, it is compatible with the content and the method of my work, as the author lays out the history and development of exegesis.

Exegesis has gone through several periods since the time of the Prophet (God's peace and blessings be upon him!) to the present, during which several currents and doctrines, depending on the way of the study of the verses of Qur'an, such as the mu'tazilite doctrine, which is clearly visible in Zamakhshari's *Tafsir al-Kashshaf*; then the Sunni kalam doctrine in Fakhr al-Din Razi's commentary *Mafatih al-ghayb*, and finally the reformist social doctrine founded by the rationalist reformers in Egypt.

It is a common fact that every researcher benefits from his predecessors and likewise the author(Sharkawi) says that in his research he has greatly benefitted from certain Western orientalis, such as Goldziher's *The Doctrine of Islamic Exegesis*; the works of the French orientalist J. Jomier, *The*

Manar Commentary of the Qur'an, and Shaykh Tantawi and His *Qur'anic Commentary*; Ballion's *The Qur'anic Commentary in Modern Times*, as well as *Tafsir and Mufasssirun* by Shaykh Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi, may God have mercy upon his soul!

Among the contemporary studies which are related to my thesis is Dr. Ali Jurayshi's *Contemporary Ideological Doctrines*.³⁵ In this work the author offers a psychological analysis of the different ideologies that have spread East and West, penetrating into our Islamic world as currents and doctrines. This subject is of great importance, and very delicate, since:

a) Whoever who does not know *jahiliyya*, cannot know Islam; and whoever does not know evil, cannot know the truth;

b) Whoever does not know the enemies of Islam cannot help Islam, and whoever does not know their ways of hostility cannot fight them.³⁶

The author points out that in his work he has also studied intellectual currents in the West, such as masonry and forms of ideological conflicts, which are illustrated by democracy as a political movement, by capitalism as an economical symbol, and by existentialism and liberalism as social symbols.³⁷ I must

³⁴ This was initially a master's thesis and its title was: *It-tijahat al Tafsir fi Misre fi al Asri al Hadith*. Its second edition from 1979 bears the present title.

³⁵ Dr. Ali Juraysh, *Modern Ideological Doctrines*; al-Mansura, edition of al-Wafa, 1990.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 6.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

emphasize that many of these ideas have spread among Albanian intellectuals, in sharp contrast with the Muslim scholars in the Balkans, and precisely this point influenced me to concentrate on this specific point in my thesis. If we understand the dangers and the facts about such ideologies, then we can reach at a correct conclusion, and professor Ali Jurayshi is the best expert on the danger of such ideologies and doctrines. In brief, people must read this book carefully and precisely understand the meaning of such movements.

Another important work from this field is prof.Dr. Fahd ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Sulaiman Rumi's: *It-tijahat al Tafsir fi al Qarn al Rabi' Asher*.³⁸ It is worth noting that this book has bridged a great gap in Islamic literature, and that it constitutes a great service to the students of Qur'anic sciences in general and exegesis in particular.

This work deals with the formation, development, methods and doctrines of the classical commentators and a few later commentators, which are closely related to my thesis. The greatest benefit from this book is its extensive bibliography. However, no work of the Orientalists regarding Qur'anic studies has been consulted, be they Muslim or non-Muslim.

³⁸ First edition 1986, by the Center for Scientific Research, Fatwas, Da'wah, and Irshad in Saudi Arabia. The author has referred to Muhammad Ibrahim Sharif's *Ittijahat al Tajdid fi Tafsir al Qur'an fi Misr*, Shaykh Mustafa Muhammad Hadid al-Tayr's: *It-tijahat al tafsir fi el Asri el Hadith*, and Abd al-Majid Abd al-Salam al-Muhtasib's: *It-tijahat el Tafsir fi el Asr el rahin*.

I believe that Professor Fahd should have at least mentioned them, based on the usefulness of the subjects treated therein, despite the difficulty in accepting their views. He may have wished to guard from doubts such studies can cause, and has preferred instead not to mention them at all. This is even more, so since he has not refrained from mentioning commentators belongin to currents and fractions which are far more dangerous than the orientalist, and which have been written originaly in Arabic, such as Marxist interpretations of the Qur'an. The title of the book is inclusive of all countries and commentators, whereas the author has quoted only well-known Arab commentators. The fact is that there are non-Arab commentators living in non-Arab countries, and this is a reality which cannot be ignored, hence it would have been better if Professor Fahd confined his research both horizontally and vertically.

Among the religious and intellectual studies that deal with Albanian exegetes is Dr. Ismail Bardhi's work: *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu and his Qur'anic Exegesis*, originally written in Turkish and later translated into Albanian by the author. It combines the study of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu and certain relevant historical circumstances of Albania. The importance of this work lies in the fact that it is the first to focus on exegesis from a philosophical-dialectical approach. The author has not mentioned other currents in exegesis among Albanian Muslims and other

commentators of the period, but has focussed instead on a single personality of exegesis and therefore does not offer a complete reflection on the different currents of exegesis in Albanian lands. It is important to note that the author has dealt with this topic from his personal viewpoint, and that his method differs from my method in studying these personalities and their approaches in exegesis. The rich bibliography of this work has greatly helped me in widening my information sources. Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds, may He reward the author for his work!

Among the works pertinent to my topic is Prof. Emin Behrami's critical study on the four translations of the Qur'an into Albanian, *Scholarly Approaches to the Four Translations of the Qur'an*. According to the author, this compilation has sought to rectify certain mistakes done in the Albanian translations during the last two decades, as well as to draw the attention of scholars and readers in the future. This study is the first one to deal with the linguistic and topical problems faced by the translators of the Noble Qur'an in Albanian.

Among the research in oriental studies related to our topic is prof.Dr Enes Karic's work: *Semantika Kur'ana*.³⁹ In this work the author has gathered the most important works of the orientalist and thinkers, such as the Malaysian philosopher Sayid Muhammad Naqib al-Attas, the Japanese orientalist Toshihiko

³⁹ Enes Karic, *Semantika Kur'ana*, Bunust, Sarajevo, 1998.

Izutsu and many others. This work summarizes different research studies translated by the author from Arabic and English into Bosnian. The book is voluminous and it starts with the books written on the style, semantics and poetical aspects of the Qur'an. The author also mentions the reformist ideas of the distinguished Bosnian scholar prof.Husein Djozo on the method of commenting the Qur'an in modern times as well the reformist methodology in exegesis. This study is important for my topic, as it mentions new currents in Qur'anic exegesis in modern times, and the serious efforts of scholars and thinkers of Bosnia on the understanding and commentary of the Noble Qur'an. Professor Karic is well-known for his research on the Noble Qur'an and he has recently produced a translation of the Qur'an with a brief commentary in Bosnian. I pray to God the Glorious to help him, and I wish him every success.

Among the other studies that are closely related to my thesis is the work of the English orientalist H. T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans- Religion and society between Europe and the Arab World*.⁴⁰ The issues relevant to my research are many, especially as regards the historical and religious aspect, e.g. when he speaks about the relations between the Arabs and the different societies in the Balkans: Albanian, South-slavic, Bulgarian and even Hungarian. He also speaks about Eastern influences in the life,

⁴⁰ Hurst Company, London 1993.

learning, and inheritance of Bosnians, Albanians and Macedonians. The author has also studied Islamic phenomena within those societies, such as mosques, Sufi lodges, Islamic libraries, Islamic poets etc. He has furthermore described the history of Sufi movements in the Balkans and their relationship with Sufi doctrines in Central Asia, such as the Bektashi⁴¹ order, the Qadiriya order, the Mawlawiya order, the Halwatiya order, the Naqshbandiya order, the Malamatiya order, etc. The book also mentions the historical relations between Arabs and Albanians in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, and Egypt, with a special emphasis on the period Muhammad Ali Pasha, who was the governor of Egypt. The author has also considered the relations between Muslims and other peoples in the Balkans, as well as the common challenges they face in the future.

As these brief reviews show, there has not been a full and serious study on the commentaries, doctrines, movements, history and development of exegesis; and it is this gap that my study seeks to bridge. My study is a contribution with new data in the field of the study of the Qur'an in the Balkans, especially in Albanian territories.

⁴¹ For more details about this deviated Sufi order see: Dr.Hajredin Hoxha: *The Bektashi Sufi order-Introduction to its History and Beliefs* (in English and Albanian language), in press.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The method of this study is inductive, historical, analytical and critical, which implies a precise study, analysis and critical examination to the extent permitted by the respective literature, analyzing thoughts, currents and methods involved on the basis of the principles of the Noble Qur'an, the authentic Prophetic Sunnah, and the Sunni school of thought, and I will try to bring out their values from the sayings of the scholars of this field.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN ALBANIAN LANDS DURING THE OTOMAN PERIOD



Courtesy of

<http://freemalesia.blogspot.com/2013/01/cia-analysis-by-year-2035-albanian.html>

I: THE NATURE OF THE OTTOMAN RULE IN ALBANIAN TERRITORIES

A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO ALBANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The study and analysis of the history of Albanians in Albanian territories of today, and the territories usurped at the beginning of the twentieth century, is a difficult and sensitive issue. In order to be just and objective, one has to get involved in a long research and to be familiar with the works on the history of Albanians and Albania.

Besides, one must check the literature of ancient as well as contemporary history of Albania, in order to investigate in a comparative way the historical development and other important subjects related to Albanians. This is the only way in which one can understand the true position of Albanians, whereas on the contrary, if one studies it from the distance one is likely to reach wrong conclusions.

The second issue which is also very important and which must be considered when studying the history of Albanians is the fact that the existing version of both ancient and contemporary

history has been written and formulated by historians who were trained during the period of communist rule, and therefore following the Marxist method. One of these historians says: “*With the rise of dialectical materialism, history was transformed into a real science...*”⁴² The knowledge of the historical, political, social and religious circumstances prevailing in those lands, and the resistance of the Albanian scholars towards these allegations will enable us to better understand the intellectual and religious currents and doctrines which existed in the study of the Qur’an. “*The re-reading of the historical inheritance is an historian’s obligation*”⁴³ and we add that this obligation pertains to the true Muslim researcher and thinker who is concerned with his religion and homeland.

Albanians who exercised different duties in the Communist regime “*became poisoned in their hearts and minds by the Marxist-Leninist lies and fallacies which existed in this historiography.*”⁴⁴ “*Our history is still being written to serve Soviet communist goals and Russian-Slavic legends.*”⁴⁵

This worldview comes out clearly in modern sources of Albanian historiography, in which the communist editors express their sincere gratitude to Soviet and Bulgarian scholars for their

⁴² *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*; Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Instituti i Gjuhësisë dhe i Historisë, bot. III, vëll. I, p. 10.

⁴³ Justin MacCarthy, *Death and Exile-the Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922*, 3rd ed. USA, 1999, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Tajar Zavalani, *Historia e Shqipnisë*; London: 1957, pp. 9-11.

great role in the compilation and preparation of history textbooks.⁴⁶

In this context, we must point out the following facts:

1. The introduction to the main communist reference book on the topic, *The History of Albania* states: “According to the Marxist-Leninist theory that political and cultural developments can only be understood and analyzed based on the economical and social developments of the period in question, the new Albanian historiography has paid great attention to this theory and has based itself strongly in it.”⁴⁷ “History has become a real science in the full sense of the word only with the rise of materialist-dialectical method.”⁴⁸

In trying to clarify their views, Prof. Ali Jurayshi says: “Dialectics is based on the principle of contradictions, namely in the principle of opposition between parts of matter among themselves, then parts of the universe and finally the opposition between classes...”⁴⁹

However, this view (*dialectics*) is incorrect, as has been shown by science: “Dialectical materialism could not stand the test of the scientific truths. What has been discovered is only 7% and the undiscovered is 93%, and if we accept Marxist thesis that

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁴⁶ *Historia e Shqipërisë*, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës 1959, vol. I.

⁴⁷ *Historia e Shqipërisë*, Akademia e R.P.S. të Shqipërisë, Tiranë: Instituti i Gjuhësisë, 1984, 19; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*; vol. I, p. 10.

⁴⁸ *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, p. 10.

only the material aspect is important, the very fact that it is based on the 7% shows that it is absurd.”⁵⁰

Needless to say, the Noble Qur’an totally rejects the Marxist philosophy. God has created things in pairs, as the following verse says:

﴿ وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾ [الذاريات: 49]

And of everything We have created pairs, that you may remember
51

In another verse God says:

﴿ سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ وَمِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

[يس: 36]

*Glory be to Him Who has created all the pairs of that which the earth produces, as well as of their own kind, and of that which they know not.*⁵²

From these verses it becomes clear that each thing was created in pairs: human beings, animals, plants and the unknown. This is another argument for the power of the Magnificent God and the order He has created for life, which cannot exist without Him. Thus, the theory that every thing has been created on the basis of dialectical materialism is rejected as untenable. Therefore, the interpretation of history based on this method is

⁴⁹ Dr. Ali Juraysh, *Contemporary intellectual currents*, p. 182.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 162.

⁵¹ al-Dhari’at, 49.

⁵² Yasin, 36.

unacceptable and even Karl Marx⁵³ distanced himself from it, as has been shown by Engels.⁵⁴ According to some researchers, there is a great influence among orientalists in the formulation of the historical texts.⁵⁵ According to Marxism, the spirit is denied just because it cannot be seen and touched.⁵⁶

If we understand the invalidity of the Marxist and atheistic view of history, what method should we accept in the appropriate study of history?

According to some scholars, whom we agree with, there are other methods besides the Marxist, which cannot reach an understanding of history, be they geographical, biological, economical, social, psychological or political, since their interpretations are incomplete. If we understand this truth, we are left with the Islamic method, which is based on the principle of God's absolute will, the principle of the relationship between this world and the Hereafter, as well as the principle of human free will. All these factors have an additional role to the three latter principles, which are implied in the Islamic method.⁵⁷

Based on the above, we may reach at the following

⁵³ On the life and work of Marx see: William Simpson and Martin Toma, *Europe, 1783-1914*; Routledge, London, 1st ed., 2000, pp. 253-5.

⁵⁴ For more details see Said Ramadan Buti's *Naqd al-Awham al-Maddiyetti al-Jadaliyyati*; Dar al-Fikr, Damascus, 2nd ed., 1986.

⁵⁵ See Anwar al-Jundi, *Tas'hih Akbari Hata'in Fit-Ta'rikh al-Islam; Sultan Abd al-Hamid al-Thâni wa'l-Khilafah al-Islamiyyah*; Cairo, Dar al-kutub al-salafiyyah, 1407/1987, p. 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 21.

⁵⁷ *Ibid* 38-39; See also Halil Imad al-Din, *Med-hal ila Islamiyya al-Ma'rifah ma Iqtirah Islamiyya al-Ta'rikh*, I.I.U. Malaysia, 1st ed., 1990, pp. 50-90.

conclusions:

Albanian historiography during the communist regime has been characterized by the Marxist method and has been poisoned and deviated, which is why it does not offer a clear and objective reflection on Islam and the Muslims in the Balkans, especially the Albanians.⁵⁸

Once we understand this, what is the solution?

I believe that this whole history must be rewritten and reformulated in a new form from objective Albanian historians.

The history of middle Ages and contemporary Albania are closely related with Ottoman history, hence the situation of Albania cannot be fully understood, except in the framework of the history of the Ottoman state. Unfortunately among Albanians there is a strong aversion and a negative attitude towards the Ottoman period which has reached the proportions of a phenomenon. Such a phenomenon has become rooted in Albanian mentality and has produced a distancing from Islam. It has tainted even the ideas of objective Western scholars of Ottoman history.

This phenomenon has been pointed out by the Turkish historian Mehmet Maksudoglu, who writes: “*Western scholars have made very little use of original historical sources. The*

⁵⁸ If one compares any of the books of history written in Albania in 1954, 1965 and 1984 with those from 1989-2000 one will note the same Marxist method in the formulation of Albanian history, characterized by the attack against Islam and the Ottomans. According to these works, the Ottomans occupied Albanian territories and did not liberate them, and that they have brought the religion of the Arabs and not Islam.

*Ottoman truth has been on one side, and what has been written and published is on the other. The history of a country or a people cannot be understood if it is written by non-professional and non-objective foreigners.”*⁵⁹

This contradictory method has existed among the great majority of Albanian historians in their writing on and analysis of Ottoman history, except those whom God guarded from this blunder, but they are very few and not popular.

Secular and atheist Albanian historians have made a great mistake in using harsh words in their unscientific attack against the Ottoman Empire in all aspects, seeing no gain whatsoever for the Albanians. This is no doubt rejected both from the methodological, scientific aspect, and historical aspect. This phenomenon seeks to distort Islam and create hatred against Islam and the Muslims among the future generations of Albanians.

Some of the hatred inducing phrases against the Ottomans are: Turkish occupators, Turkish barbarians, the destructive Turkish drift, the Turkish nationalist pressure, the Turkish yoke, the Sick of the Bosphorus, how should we bury this sick, the sick has received a smashing wound by the European states, the rotten Turkish government!⁶⁰ Naturally all these terms are false and constitute parodies of historical truths. Some objective historians

⁵⁹ Mehmet Maksudoglu, *Ottoman history based mainly on Ottoman sources*, International Islamic University, Malaysia, 1993, pp. 4-9.

have tried to point out certain truths through which we can understand the nature of the Ottoman rule on Albanians.

1. “*The coming of the Ottomans found the overwhelming majority of Albanians under the domination of Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Byzantines*”⁶¹ whose danger for them was greater than the Ottoman rule.

2. The existence of the Ottoman state prevented the dissolution of Albanians as a nation from the danger of Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks and Byzantines. The Ottoman state protected Albanians by destroying the Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek princedoms⁶² and hence removing the danger of Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek assimilation.

3. The Ottoman state guaranteed religious and ethnical freedom and was not an exclusively Turkish institution. Rather, it was made of Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Albanians, Greeks, Bosnians, Serbs, Croats and Jews, who even controlled the economy.⁶³

4. The Ottoman state did not exert compulsion in religion and never coerced people to accept Islam, whereas the Serbs exerted a great deal of pressure and violence to force Albanians to accept Christianity. Albanians entered Islam voluntarily without

⁶⁰ Bedrush Shehu, *Çështja shqiptare në vitet 30 të shekullit XX*; Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, Prishtinë 1990, p. 35.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 51.

⁶² For more details see Nesim P. Alban Kaci, *Shqiptarët në Perandorinë Osmane*; Tirana, Albin, 1997, 35, 41, 125; Sami Frashëri, *Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është e çdo të bëhetë*, 36.

⁶³ Skender Rizaj, *Kosova gjatë shekujve XV-XVI-XVII, administrata, ekonomia, shoqëria dhe lëvizja popullore*; pp. 283-4.

any violence. Conversions were performed before a judge in the presence of two witnesses, which is confirmed by the documents of the Shari‘a courts, where their conversion without violence and pressure were registered.⁶⁴

On the other hand, the Albanian intellectuals and academics still teach their students that Islam was spread with the sword and that Albanians would have never voluntarily become Muslim! This idea attempts to revive old Albanian Christian rancours, to obfuscate the centuries-long religious coexistence and tolerance, and to sow enmity among Albanians with the help of certain missionary circles, in order to remove Albanians from Islam and convert them to their “original religion”, Christianity.

5. The conversion of Albanians into Islam did not imply their automatic transformation into Turks, Ottomans or Arabs, as most Albanians seem to believe, but it was the very opposite, because their life under Serbian and Byzantine rule was coupled with the process of a change in the national and spiritual identity. The language of the Serbs and the Greeks was the one which was used in churches too. Whereas the situation of Islam was different, since its sacred language is Arabic and the language of the ottoman state was quite another, and hence it did not threaten Albanians with the disappearance of their language

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 471-2.

and blood.⁶⁵

6. Certain administrative functions in the Ottoman Empire were in the hands of Albanians, whereas in the period of Serbian rule, as well as two decades ago in Kosova, the whole administration was in the hands of Serbs and Albanians had no saying whatsoever.

7. The intellectual elite of Albanian academics must be ashamed of the complete lies and falsehoods they have written against the Ottoman state in the history literature. The Ottomans never deported Albanians and Muslims from their lands in groups, as was done by the Greeks and the Serbs in the past and as the latter did as recently as a few years ago in Kosova, Bosnia and Macedonia.⁶⁶

8. It has been historically proven beyond any doubt by the greatest opponents of Islam and Muslims, namely certain Catholic missionary researchers, that the Ottomans did not arrive as usurpers of Albanian lands, but with the invitation of the Arberesh, the predecessors of Albanians, in order to put an end to

⁶⁵ Feraj, *Skicë e mendimit politik shqiptar*, p. 53; Shefqet Dibrani, *Feja në shërbim të kombit*, online publication; Ali M. Basha, *Islami në Shqipëri gjatë shekujve*; p. 19.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 56. See also: *The truth on Kosova*; the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania, Institute of History, Encyclopedia publishing house, Tirana 1993; Milan Sufly, *The Illyrians, the Albanians and the Slavs, problems of continuity and symbiosis*, p. 71; E. Pllana, *The Deportation of Albanians from the territory of Sanjak, Nish, and Kosova*; 73; Z. Shtylla, *The Deportation of Albanians in Yugoslavia after the Second World War 1950-66*, p. 222; Vaso Cubrilovic, *The Problem of minorities in the new Yugoslavia*, p. 30; Poullton Hough, Farouki Suha Taji, *Muslim identity and the Balkan state*, 168-169.

conflicts and power struggles among themselves.⁶⁷

This is an historical truth which cannot be ignored by the students of history. I believe that if history is re-read in an objective fashion, it will be cleared of such allegations and the future generations shall read it correctly, and they will understand that the Ottomans were liberators and not usurpers, they will see the truth of Islam without misinformations and fabrications, and also the great role of the Ottoman state for the Albanians in all aspects.⁶⁸

Albanian writers and scholars ignored the dominating religious factor in the history of Albanians⁶⁹ and the Balkan peoples in general, by confining historiography to the Marxist approach devoid of the religious element - a rather faulty and scientifically rejected method.

⁶⁷ Gjergj Gashi, *Arbëria dhe Vatikani*, 9; Nicollas Costa, *Albania an European Enigma*, p. 8; Stavro Skendi, *Zgjimi Kombëtar Shqiptar*; Phoenix, Tiranë, 1997, p. 17.

⁶⁸ Our call for a re-reading and new analysis of Albanian history is a continuation and confirmation of the call of our respected Albanian scholar prof. Dr. Muhamet Pirraku, who has had the idea of a re-reading and re-writing of history in a new vein, in his doctoral thesis of 1989, *Albanian National Culture up to the League of Prizren*, p. 32.

⁶⁹ The historical introduction to this dissertation is a study by us from an Islamic perspective and which for the time being is (2003) the only one, based on well-known authentic sources in Albanian and other languages. This historical study is a first step in the proper understanding of matters pertaining to the topic. God Alone knows how difficult it was for me to re-read our ancient and modern history, and to analyze it in order to understand the truth. I arrived at outstanding and positive results, and clearly saw the dark hand that caused the privation of our historiography from considering the Islamic religious factor from the Middle Ages to the present. The latter has been ignored in total, whereas other historians be they Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Serbian, English and even Albanian Catholic historians have not neglected this factor in their studies of Albanian history. I support the view that if Albanian history were to be studied from this aspect, we would arrive at new enlightening conclusions which are invaluable for our future generations, and it would positively influence the improvement of the wrong views of the Albanians on Islam!

The religious factor has been a main reason in starting the Balkan wars, just as it is in some Asian countries at the present. European historians too have tried to remove this factor from the life of peoples, as the scholar Justin McCarthy writes: *“In 1880 there was a vast territory where Muslims of the Balkans, Anatolia and Southern Russia lived. The Muslims of the Balkans were wiped out collectively by death or by small-group deportations from Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. In brief, these Muslims were lost and disappeared. Millions of Muslims, the majority of which were Turks, died, and millions of others migrated to Turkish territories. From 1821-1922 more than five million Muslims were exiled from their home and deported to unknown destinations. Some of those were depleted in wars; others died from hunger and were infected by diseases and epidemics during their search for shelter. The history of Anatolia, the Balkans and Caucasia cannot be properly studied or understood without taking into consideration the exiled Muslims and those who died in the process. The recognition of the issue of the decimation of the Muslims is of great importance in the historiography of the Ottoman state,⁷⁰ because they were victims of nationalism and imperialism. Be as it may, in Western [and Albanian] historiography nothing has been written about the plight of the Muslims in the Balkans, Anatolia and Caucasia. The history of*

⁷⁰ The text in brackets is my own, and it confirms this phenomenon among Albanians.

*these territories has been written without reference to the religious element related to the Muslims.”*⁷¹

It is not clear to me why Albanian researchers and historians neglected this important Islamic phenomenon, especially since the Serbian Church has played a historically negative role up to the present in the political, geographical and cultural aspect as well as in defending the Christian inheritance in a rather cunning way. This is clearly and publicly visible in the building of churches and monasteries in 1314 and since then Serbian Church has routed the Catholic Albanians, preventing them from practicing their religious rites.⁷²

In writing on the continuity of this phenomenon also during the Ottoman rule, the scholar Hysamedin Feraj writes: *“Historical discoveries up to the present proved that Albanian revolutions, Albanian civil defense and Albanian movements against the Ottoman state happened with the instigation of the religious factor and the urge of small European states against the Ottomans. The early movements for independence ... appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.”*⁷³

It is not true that religious wars against the Ottoman state have not existed among Albanians, quite the opposite.⁷⁴ It has been historically proven that the Catholic Albanian elite of the

⁷¹ Justin McCarthy, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-10.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 43.

⁷³ Feraj, Hysamedin, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

period converted to Orthodox Christianity, and a great number even established close relations with the Serbs, the Greeks, the Byzantines and the Bulgarians,⁷⁵ in order to unite against the Ottoman state and the Muslims.

There are those who wish to hide this historical truth through the so-called religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among the religions of Albanians. This tolerance is a false, hypocritical pretext, because Albanians have been identified with the symbol of atheism and nationalism, through the principle “for the Albanians’ religion is Albanianhood,”(*Feja e Shqiptarit eshte Shqiptaria!?*)⁷⁶ implying that Albanians are not interested in religion as they are in their national question!

The animosity hidden in the hearts of Catholic Albanians against the Muslim Albanians continued to exist and was not forgotten or forsaken.⁷⁷ There is no doubt that this historical legend has been sown and cultivated in the hearts of Albanians during the communist regime for ideological purposes, and it is obvious why the latter consider the Ottomans as their enemies, by saying that the general situations of Albanians worsened in all domains of life after the Ottoman invasion! This is an ideological distortion which has nothing to do with the truth.

⁷⁴ Bedrush Shehu, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

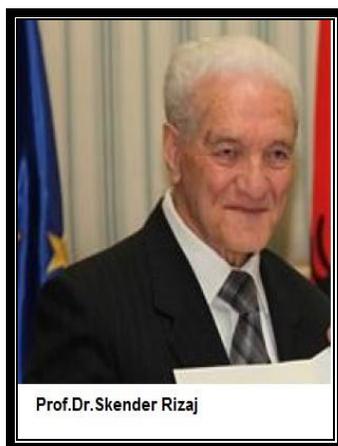
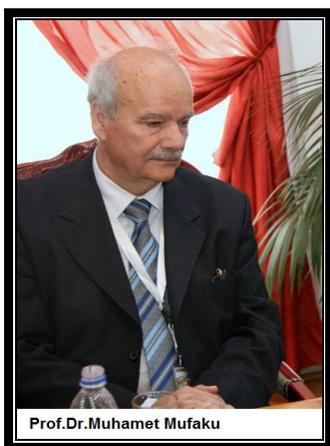
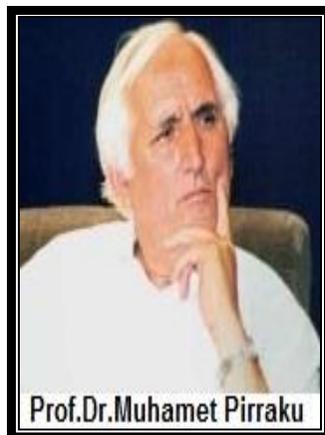
⁷⁵ Muhamet Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare*, p. 49.

⁷⁶ This saying has neither logical nor religious basis, and we consider it to be against the spirit of all divinely revealed religions.

From our research on the history of the Albanians, it is clear that among Albanian Catholics there has always been a deep-seated hatred against their Muslim brethren. Regarding this, the historian Georges Castellan writes: *“It is worth noting that Sunni Islam was faced with the Sufi sect of Bektashis as well as with those who embraced Islam superficially and kept two names simultaneously, one Muslim and another Christian... This religious tolerance was not enough for the disappearance of religious fanaticism which caused dissension and feud among them and which was incited by the clergy and the states supporting it, such as Orthodox Greece, and Catholic Austria and Italy.”*⁷⁸

⁷⁷ John Swire, *Albania - the Rise of a Kingdom*, p. 34-40; Mehdi Polisi, *Sami Frashëri vepra 9 - Personalitetet shqiptare në Kamusul-A'lam*; Logos-A, Shkup 1994, 33.

⁷⁸ Georges Castellan, *Histori e Ballkanit, Shekujt XIV-XX*; Çabej, Libra për një shoqëri të hapur, Tiranë 1991; p.128.



The most famous Albanian historians in the contemporary time with, objective and positive views about the rule of Ottoman Empire in Balkans.

II: THE CAUSES OF DECLINE OF THE OTTOMAN STATE AND ITS ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM: IT'S INFLUENCE ON ALBANIANS

This is a very important part of our research, and as we already pointed out, Albanian history is closely linked with the Ottoman history. It is well known that a great number of Albanian personalities have held crucial positions in the Ottoman state. Some of them were vezirs, sadrazems⁷⁹ and Shaykh al-Islam in that Empire. According to the studies and statistics of some scholars, during the Ottoman rule, about forty great Albanian personalities held high positions in the hierarchy of the Ottoman state, and thus any development in the Empire, be it positive or negative, was visibly reflected among Albanians, in the political, economical, social and religious aspects. Hence, we will focus on this point, in order to reveal the prevalent political and social circumstances of the period.

The other, more important aspect in this study is the revolt and uprising against the Ottoman state under the leadership of certain Islamic religious personalities, which reached its peak during the period of the weakening and decline of the Empire.

⁷⁹ *Sadr-i Azam*, a position similar to prime-minister; its equivalents are: *Sadr al-Ali*, *Sahib al-Dawlah*, etc. See: Suhayl Shaban, *al-Mu'jam al-Mawsu'i lil-Mustalahat al-Uthmaniyya al-Ta'rikhiyya*, Riyad: al-Malik Fahd al-Wataniyya, 1st ed., 2000, p. 143.

The weakening of the Ottoman state increased by the day and parallel to it the Albanians became weaker. The neighbouring Catholic and Orthodox countries such as Greece, Serbia and Montenegro sought independence as well as expansion of territories to the detriment of Albanian lands in the North, in the South and in the East. This period is also characterized by different European movements against the Ottoman state, which were encouraged by the latter's weakening. Therefore, the Ottoman state was forced to accept almost every deal it was offered, such as the "tanzimat reforms - the administrative reforms" introduced in their Empire. Besides the political situation, there were also the geographical threats and assimilation dangers for the Albanians.

We now turn to the factors that influenced the transformation of a great, powerful Ottoman state into a weak and destroyed entity, after a six-century long period. It is appropriate to start with the words of the famous Iraqi historian prof. Dr. Imad al-Din Khalil on the topic: *"Weakening does not imply a final decline and withdrawal from the battlefield; it does not come about abruptly, but rather as a result of different factors acting along centuries. This phenomenon is not influenced by a single factor, but a multitude of interconnected factors, and it must be analyzed separately if one wants to reach the truth. The phenomenon of the decline of a civilization starts slowly due to*

the influence of different religious, political, administrative, economical, social, geographical, and ethical factors."⁸⁰

All these factors can be summarized into the following points:

* According to some opinions the greatest factor in the weakening of the Ottoman state is its scientific, industrial and military regress.⁸¹

* According to some others, the national pride which arose among the ancient peoples living within the Empire was a more influential element, because they felt superior to Muslims. The beginning of these nationalist movements goes back to the Greek revolution in 1821.⁸²

* According to another opinion, the Russian military, political and religious expansionism or the so-called pan-Slavic Orthodox movement played a major role in the destruction of the Ottoman state, leading to the independence of Christians living within the Empire.⁸³

* The spread of bribery and corruption among local governors⁸⁴ was another influential factor in this regard. During the rule of the last Sultans, the religious feelings had swerved, the Shari'ah was not observed, and this influenced visibly the decline

⁸⁰ Hawlah 'Avam-i li Tedehvuril-Hadaretil-Islamijeti" in the magazine: *al-Tajdid*, International Islamic University, Malaysia, year VIII, 2000, pp. 9-49.

⁸¹ McCarthy, pp. 5-6; Hough Poulton, *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, p. 15.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ See the references of note 80, pp. 13, 14, 18.

of the Ottoman state, especially since only the first ten Sultans were righteous in the full sense of the term, as complying with and practicing the Shari‘ah.⁸⁵

* The loss of complete control as a consequence of the continuous wars, and the high cost, in people and means, of the political and military expansion of the Ottoman state into three continents (Asia, Europe and Africa). In its six century-long history the Empire was not involved in wars only during 28 years.⁸⁶

* The imitation of Western lifestyle by certain Sultans, such as buildings of fortresses, luxurious life and laish expenses influenced the weakening of the Empire, because of the great debts into which the state entered, until it bankrupted in the time of Sultan Abd al-Majid.⁸⁷

* The forsaking of religious and administrative duties, as well as the ignoring of the U’lama’s advice by certain Sultans visibly influenced in the weakening of the Ottoman state.⁸⁸

* According to some scholars, the period of the weakening and gradual decline of the Empire started with the death of the famous Sultan Sulayman Kanun, in 1566.⁸⁹

* According to other scholars, the Ottoman state during the

⁸⁴ Swire, p. 17; Elez Biberaj, *Albania a socialist maverick*, p. 13.

⁸⁵ Mehmet Maksudoglu, *Ottoman history based mainly on Ottoman sources*, pp. 340-6.

⁸⁶ Feraj, Hysamedin, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-77.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 95.

⁸⁸ Castellan, Georges, pp. 217-8; Nexhip P. Alpan, Nesim Koci, pp. 22-23.

last period combined the national idea with the Turkization policies, an idea which was launched and supported by the Jews of the Balkans, who lived in the Ottoman state and had Muslim names. This idea exploded like a time-bomb, causing the division of the Empire into smaller parts. Muslims are still suffering the consequences of such an idea.⁹⁰

* And finally, in our view, the marginalization of the Albanian issues during its last days had a great impact on its decline, and the rebellion of the Albanians against Ottoman Empire came as a reaction to its negligence in solving their national matters. Also the official proclamation of the administrative reforms and constitutional tanzimates is one of the most influential factors in the weakening and decline of the Ottoman state, because starting from this period the Empire began to crumble down.

This was a list of the internal and external factors which brought about the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Only God the Almighty knows the full truth about this religious and human tragedy!

No doubt, the most difficult and burdensome thing for

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 176.

⁹⁰ This is the opinion of my mentor, Muhammad Baha' al-Din Husayn, from Kurdistan (Iraq) may God bless his soul, professor at the department of Qur'anic and Hadith studies of the Islamic International University of Malaysia. God honoured me by appointing him as a member of the board for my thesis and I can hardly describe his great help and support through his instructions and scientific advise. I really appreciate his contribution and pray to

Albanians was the obligatory military service, which they opposed in every way. This Ottoman law was also coupled with items and taxes for the deffense of the new army's structure.⁹¹ The idea of these administrative reforms started from certain Ottomans who were educated in European countries.⁹²

The concept of reforms in the Ottoman state's political domain implied the formation of central power, whereas in the economic domain it meant the penetration of industry into the Ottoman state.⁹³

It can be argued that such political and social reforms helped the penetration of Western thought to the Ottoman Empire in general and the Muslim mind in particular. Also, the Zionist and Crusading plots were very important factors leading to the decline of the Ottoman state.

These state reforms influenced Albanians too, but negatively. For example, civil and military administrations before the reforms were almost entirely at the hands of Albanians, whereas after the application of the reforms the administrators came from the central Ottoman government and other ethnicities.⁹⁴ This made the Albanians react with anger, and conflict with the non-Albanians that were being sent by the High

the Almighty Lord to reward him and bless his soul with the highest level of Paradise, and to make me his like!

⁹¹ Zavalani, p. 170.

⁹² Rizaj, p. 51; Castellan, p. 219; Maksudoglu, pp. 328-329.

⁹³ Feraj, p. 68; Rizaj, p. 95; Hough Poullton, p. 15.

Porte of Ottoman Empire.

Among the negative consequences for the Albanians was the great damage suffered by the lower strata of society, such as the annulment of the military wage. Before the approval of this law, military service could be done for a wage. Also, before these new laws, the service would continue according to the wars, whereas after the reforms the period of military service lasted “from seven to twelve years.”⁹⁵

In this context, the contemporary Albanian historian Hysamedin Feraj writes: “*The nature of the reforms was looked upon as anti-Albanian, and this influenced the rise, formation and incitement of the idea [of national unity].*” They also interfered with Albanian traditions which were of great importance in the regulation of internal conflicts.

Therefore, this whole situation strengthened the idea of national unity against a common enemy! To the Albanians, this idea was the best and strongest means of realizing national and political safety, as it included all existing social and religious denominations. Accordingly, this idea ensured the political interests of all social strata in the domain of Albanian language, history, and culture. It created a political and cultural unity which served as the basis for the idea of Albanian nationalism.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ For more details see Feraj, pp. 68-77.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid*; Stavro Skendi, *Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*, pp. 17-83.

This was a brief summary of internal and external factors which had a negative impact on Albanians after the decline of the Ottoman state. There is no doubt that there are other factors, which shall hopefully be studied by other researchers, due to the limited space available to us in this thesis.

III: EUROPE AND THE UNITY OF ALBANIANS

The “Eastern issue” “Çështja Lindore”, is defenied by the historian Bedrush Shehu: “*Events in the Balkans and the goals of occupation by the big European countries, their efforts and projects in dividing the occupied territories, the international diplomatic dialogue for and against the Turks, the issue of enslaved people etc., constitute what the historians call the Eastern issue.*”⁹⁷

Based on my research of the historical events and developments in the Balkans, I came to the conclusion that there are several factors and causes which actively and directly influenced the question of Albanian national unity, the most important of which are:

- * The Russian-Austro-Hungarian conflict for domination in the Balkans;

- * The revival of the Turanian Turkish minority as a result of the French Revolution and the Slavic-Russian Orthodox movement for political domination;

- * The verdicts of the London and Berlin Conferences, the treaty between the Ottomans and the Russians at St Stefan on the future of the Albanians; and

⁹⁷ Bedrush Shehu, *Çështje shqiptare në vitet e 30-ta të Shekullit XIX*, p. 15.

* The formation of small Orthodox Christian states around Albania, such as Serbia, Greece, Montenegro and Bulgaria, which greatly threatened the future of Albanians.⁹⁸

Besides these factors, the European political developments played an important role with their projects of destroying the Ottoman state.⁹⁹ Both Albanian and non-Albanian Muslims experienced the developments of the Eastern issue.¹⁰⁰

As for the religious aspect of the Russian Slavic-Orthodox movement, it sought to liberate the Orthodox Christians from Ottoman and Austrian rule, with the pretext that the inhabitants of Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Slovenia are of common descent.¹⁰¹

They all believed that Europe had become sick and that it was time for it to collapse and disappear, in order to be replaced by a great Empire with its seat in Istanbul. When the Russian-Ottoman war (1853-6) started, they began to think it was time to found the much-awaited new Empire.¹⁰²

History tells us that the unification of East Germany and

⁹⁸ Feraj, p. 38.

⁹⁹ For more details on the Austro-Hungarian presence in Bosnia, see: Fikret Karcic, *The Bosniaks and the Challenges of modernity - Late Ottoman and Habsburg Times*; pp. 20-125; *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, July 1994, Oxford University Press; *Islam in the Balkans*; Alexander Lopasic, *Islamization of Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia*, pp. 163-86.

¹⁰⁰ See the two works of Skender Rizaj, *Lidhja shqiptare e Prizrenit*, p. 39; and *Historia e Përgjithshme: Koha e re 1453-1789*; Prishtinë: Universiteti i Kosovës në Prishtinë, bot. II, 1983, pp. 317-21, 355-6.

¹⁰¹ Skender Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*, p. 40; Mehdi Frashëri, *Historia e lashtë e Shqipërisë dhe shqiptarëve*, pp. 34-5.

West Germany in 1871 incited Russian sentiments for the realization of their ambitions and religious aspirations, which is clearly seen in the words of the most famous Russian orientalist, Nikolai Jakovlevich Danilevski in his book *Russia and Europe*: “During the nineteenth century the Eastern issue was a link in the chain of the long wars between Rome and Greece, that is, Catholic Rome and Orthodox Greece, and therefore the Germans were considered supporters of Rome since they were Catholic, whereas the Russians were Byzantine Orthodox partisans.”¹⁰³

Since Europe was dominated by three empires, Russia, Germany and Austro-Hungaria, these met often in Berlin, Vienna or St. Petersburg, to plan the future of Europe.¹⁰⁴ They raised issues on the positions of the Orthodox Christians; they would finance and support them, until instigating their uprising in Bosnia, Montenegro and Serbia, which finally took place.¹⁰⁵

Following such events, and with the instigation of the pan-Slavic movement, Serbia and Montenegro declared war to the Ottoman state on July 1st, 1876. At the same time, Britain declared war to the Ottomans, which made the situation worse for the latter.¹⁰⁶

All of the above resulted in the Berlin Conference, where

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 40.

¹⁰³ Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 44; Castellán, p. 342.

¹⁰⁵ Maksudoglu, p. 293; McCarthy, pp. 6,10,12.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 48.

the biggest European countries met from 23 December 1876 to 20 January 1877. The result was a long list of heavy demands on the Ottoman Empire. Among other issues, the conference discussed the question of Albanians.

The Conference came up with the following resolutions:

* Arms must be removed from the Muslims of Bulgaria and Bosnia;

* Their Muslim administrators must leave;

* The police force must be made exclusively of Christians;

* The Ottoman army would be allowed to occupy the high fortresses;

* Annulment of the 10% tax and replacement of foreign tax-collectors with local ones;

* Slavic languages were to be used in courts and administration;

* Governors must be Christian, just like in Lebanon; and

* Muslims who perpetrated crimes against the Christians must be punished and held responsible for monetary compensations.¹⁰⁷

This document did not mention the Albanian issue, which was left to oblivion. Western diplomats did not even refer to it.¹⁰⁸

After coming out humiliated from this Conference, whose

¹⁰⁷ Skender Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*; pp. 48-9; Nexhip P. Alpan-Nesim Koci, p. 34; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. 2; pp. 106-73.

resolutions they categorically rejected, the Ottomans were declared war by Russia on 26 June 1878. In these critical moments, Serbia and Montenegro too declared war on the Ottomans, fully using the latter's preoccupation with Russia, convinced that the Ottomans would no longer be able to rule over them.¹⁰⁹

Seeing the weakness of the Ottoman state both in numbers and in armaments, it soon became clear that it would be highly unfavourable to them to wage war with Russia, and the signs of defeat were already showing. Hence, the Ottomans were forced to sign an agreement with Russia in 29 points which were basically against the Albanians' political, geographical, national, and cultural future.¹¹⁰

Such a situation led Albanians to react strongly against these political developments, and thus from 1878 to 1885 they created the Albanian League of Prizren in order to defend from the danger threatening them as a nation. The Albanian League served as a general revolutionary impetus against the Ottoman state and its agreements with the great colonial powers which went to the detriment of Albanians. This League is of a great importance in the contemporary history of Albanians. According

¹⁰⁸ It was left out even by the Turkish historian Mehmet Maksudoglu, who in his book on the Ottoman Empire says nothing about the role of Albanians in the latter.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid p. 67; Uthman Uglu, *Mudhakkirât al-Amireti A'ishe: Walidiy as-Sultan Abd al-Hamid II*, pp. 11-56.

¹¹⁰ Skender Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*, pp. 69-70.

to the historian prof.Skender Rizaj there were four internal and external factors leading to its formation:

1. The discord between the great powers to the benefit of Albanians.

2. Political, social, and administrative reforms of the Ottoman state against Albanian interests.

3. The deportation and exile of a great number of Albanians; and

4. The great, pressing need for independence.¹¹¹

Initially the League did not seek separation from the Ottoman state, but independence in the framework of the Empire. The main cause of the rise of the League is easily inferred from the following words of a Turkish historian quoted by Rizaj: *“The Russian-Ottoman war of 1877 brought into the fore the fact that neighboring countries sought to expand their territories to the detriment of Albanian lands. This situation forced Albanians to think about their future and their situation in case the Ottoman Empire collapsed. Could they accept the Greek or Serbian rule and go back to enslavement? This was the major cause that encouraged the founding of the Albanian League in order to form a national government in Albania and then separate from Ottoman rule.”*¹¹²

As can be seen from this report, Albanians were threatened

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

from all sides. Rizaj points out that among the religious personalities who helped the founding of the League and participated in its meetings were the Shaykh Mufti Haxhi Ymer Prizreni,¹¹³ Shaykh Haxhi Zeka and the Qadi Shaykh Ahmed Korenica, as well as other personalities from Albanian lands¹¹⁴.

And finally, during the Balkan War of 1912-13, when Albanians were threatened by division dangers, they declared independence in Vlora, on November 28, 1912, under the leadership of the well-known activist and intellectual, Ismail Qemali.¹¹⁵

It was in these circumstances that Albanians opted for an independent state wherein they could settle and which they could defend. I believe that if the Ottoman state applied different policies towards the Albanians in protecting them and fulfilling some of their requests, the latter would have remained their supporters and helpers, as has been the norm historically.¹¹⁶ It is a known fact that in most military campaigns of the Empire the

¹¹² *Lidhja shqiptare e Prizrenit*, p. 115; cf. Mehmet Ali Ayni, *Milliyetçilik*, pp. 279-280.

¹¹³ He was born in the town of Prizren in 1820, and was a Sufi notorious for his religious and national activism. He died in Ulqin (present Montenegro) in 1886 in mysterious circumstances. He was persecuted by the Ottoman state. See: Abib Ahmeti, *Theranda, Prizreni ndër shekuj*; Orient, Prizren, 1996, pp. 175-7.

¹¹⁴ Participation of those Muslim clerics and scholars in the foundation of Albanian League as a symbol of national unity and rebellion against the actions of Ottoman Empire, according to Islam does not justify always this rebellion action against ruler of the country. The rebellion is allowed when the leader-ruler declares war against the Islamic teachings or demonstrates clear disbelief (*Kufrun Bawahun*).

¹¹⁵ For more details see: Skender Rizaj, *Lidhja shqiptare e Prizrenit*.

¹¹⁶ Nexhip P. Alpan-Nesim Koci, *Shqiptarët në Perandorinë Osmane*, p. 15; *Historia e Shqipërisë*, vol. 2, p. 243.

leaders were Albanians, because of their courage, faithfulness, command and military skills. Had the Ottomans thought in these lines and invested more in the Albanian issue, the Empire may have not collapsed. God knows best!

IV: THE QUESTION OF IMMIGRATION AND IMMIGRANTS

From what we have presented regarding the different developments, changes, and conflicts in Albanian territories, it can be seen that the Eastern issue had began to be treated from the political, economical, social, and religious aspect. One of the questions that arose was that of Muslim immigrants who were forced to migrate in different countries, taking along their religious beliefs, their soul and whatever could be carried.

The Russian, Serbian, and Bulgarian armies had agreed to carry out this project and started putting it to practice, forcing many Muslims to exile and replacing them with Serbian, Bulgarian, and Montenegrin settlers. In this section we shall deal with the most important events during the migration and deportation of Albanians.

According to the historians the political situation of Kosova was critical. The Albanian member of the Ottoman parliament, Osman Mustafa Efendi, says: *“The Kosovar towns of Pirot, Prokuplje and Leskovac which belong to the Wilayah of Kosova have been occupied by the Serbs. Every town of the Kosova Wilayah is considered Albania; nay, the soul and heart of*

Albania.”¹¹⁷

There is a long list of factors which contributed to the immigration of Albanians from their homeland; some were religious, and others were economic and political. However, it seems that the main cause was the obligatory military service in the Serbian army.¹¹⁸

Another reason for the migration of Muslim Albanians was the great terror and pressure from Russians, Serbs and Montenegrins¹¹⁹ to preserve Slavic Orthodox Christianity among them.

Historical literature is replete with facts about the most heinous crimes they did, such as: rape of Muslim women, usurpation and confiscation of the property of Muslims, burning of mosques, shops and properties, and other forms of terrible abuse which words cannot describe.¹²⁰

Albanian Muslims were preoccupied with defending of the national and religious identity, but due to the great pressures from

¹¹⁷ Skender Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*, pp. 77-8.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 79.

¹¹⁹ For more details on the slaughter, massacres and executions committed by the Serbs and Montenegrins, see the documentation quoted in *al-Majzaratu fi Jugosllafia*, Kuwait, Darul-Withaq; Zekeria Cana, *Gjenocidi i Malit të Zi mbi popullatën shqiptare 1912-13*; Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 1996, p. 11; Azem Ajdini, *Masakra serbo-malazeze e Tivarit*, Edlor: Tiranë, 1998; Huseyin Kansu, *Kosova inkici Bosnja olmasin*, Yildizlar Matbaasi, Istanbul 1998, pp. 11-33; Hakif Bajrami, “*Kosova-njëzet shekuj të identitetit të saj-argumente historike*”; Era, Prishtinë 2001, pp. 77-81; AIITC, *Gjenocidi serb në Kosovë*, Sesion shkencor, Qershor 1999, pp. 35, 44, 65; Harrila Kola, *Gjenocidi serb ndaj shqiptarëve në viset e tyre etnike në Jugosllavi, 1941-1967*; Elton: Tiranë 2000, pp. 116-222; Bedri Tahiri, *Adem Jashari legjendë e legjendave*; Rilindja, bot. III, Prishtinë 2001; *Agu i Lirisë-kronikë luftime, 22.02-22.06.1999*; Zëri i Kosovës, Prishtinë 2001.

the Serbs, Montenegrins, and Greeks they were forced to go in exile.¹²¹ Also, the fear of the Balkan Muslims from forced conversion into Slavic Orthodox Christians was an important factor in making Albanians consider exile as a way out. Such was not the case with the Muslims in Bulgaria, the great majority of whom converted into Christianity, in order to escape the horrendous executions and tortures by the Serbian and Bulgarian armies.¹²²

According to other historians the economical factor played a considerable role in the migration of Albanians. However, this is partially true, because only a small number had left their homes for economical motives. These ideas are prevalent among Western historians: “*Economical and social developments caused a wave of group migrations to Istanbul, their numbers being estimated at sixty thousand. They also headed for Greece, Egypt, Romania, Southern Russia, Italy, and finally America and Australia. Through contacts with their fellow countrymen they succeeded in playing an important role for defending the Albanian national identity.*”¹²³ The truth is that the Albanians from the southern part, who were Orthodox Christians, migrated for economic reasons, and not the Muslims who lived in the

¹²⁰ McCarthy, pp. 131-41.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 1, 19, 59, 94.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 152-153.

¹²³ Castellan, pp. 379-380.

northern part or in other Albanian wilayahs.¹²⁴

The forced migration of Albanians from their lands was an old Serbian project. A Serbian historian who was a staunch supporter of the idea of the deportation of Albanians and their replacement with other people from Yugoslavia has written that if Serbia wants to live in peace and security, it must cleanse its land from alien elements. He further wrote that Albanians and Muslims have migrated willingly without any violence or compulsion from the Russians, the Serbs or Bulgarians!¹²⁵

The phenomenon of the collective migration of Albanian Muslims took place according to a secret plan between Turkey and Yugoslavia during the period 1939-1944¹²⁶ in order to clear the Albanian lands and to place therein Serbian settlers. The Yugoslav regime forced into exile more than eight thousand Albanian Muslim families from Pirot, Leskovc, Prokuplje, Vranjë and Kurshumli¹²⁷ and other towns, by burning their houses, confiscating their properties, destroying their villages and using different violent methods. There was a great number of outraging crimes against the Albanian Muslims, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, when 182 Albanian villages were burnt

¹²⁴ Thëngjilli, *Historia e Shqipërisë*; p. 27; Mufaku, *Shqiptarët në botën arabe*, pp. 97-130; Haris Silajdzic, *Albanija i SAD*, Kroz archive Vashingtona; 1991, pp. 25-42.

¹²⁵ Rizaj, *op. cit.*; Zamir Shtylla, *The Deportation of Albanians in Yugoslavia after the Second World-War 1950-1966*, pp. 233-9; Vaso Cubrilovic, *The Problem of Minorities in the New Yugoslavia: The truth on Kosova*, pp. 301-6.

¹²⁶ This was during the rule of Ataturk, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

down or destroyed.¹²⁸

In the meantime, the Islamic religious leaders and the ‘Ulama’ did not sit still, but started thinking about the problems of their homeland and fellow Muslims, attentively following the political events. However, I have not come across any study on the activities of the Albanian ‘Ulama in such circumstances, as was the case with the Bosnian ‘Ulama, for example, in the Middle Ages. In 1563, the mufti of the municipality of Oran decreed the permissibility of practicing pious dissimulation (*taqiyya*) if Muslims are forced to convert to Christianity, permitting them to declare disbelief and polytheism orally, as long as their hearts were filled with faith.¹²⁹

Albanian lands did not lack such imams who rejected and fought against Serbian violence, dictatorship, tyranny and enmity. The mufti of Prizren and member of the Ottoman parliament, Zenel-Abidin Efendi, was a very brave personality. He understood the truth and the plight of Albanians and openly declared that if the situation continued, the place would be inhabited by new Serbs coming from Serbia, and the Muslims would lose the lands which their ancestors occupied for centuries. Zenel-Abidin presented a parliament report on the

¹²⁷ Emin Plana, *On the deportation of Albanians from the territory of Sanjak, of Nish, of Kosova 1877-1878: The Truth about Kosova*, pp. 73-78.

¹²⁸ Hakif Bajrami, *Kosova njëzet shekuj të identitetit të saj*, p. 84.

¹²⁹ Istac, vol. 6:1, Abdal-Rahim Muddathir, *Muslim Minorities in Western Societies, the Medieval scene*; 10.

Wilayah of Kosova, and after reading it he declared: “*Gentlemen! I just read the report on the Wilayah of Kosova in order to clarify before you the situation therein. To put it briefly, we must go and fight there! Otherwise we must either die, or choose another ‘alternative’ for securing and protecting our country.*”¹³⁰

The message contained in these sincere and resolute words did not reach the hearts of the listeners who were present! Sadly, the Muslims were deported from their villages and homes, because the Russians and Bulgarians destroyed and burnt their houses, forcing them to leave their centuries-long homes, as was the case in April 1877. The Russian army supplied Bulgarians with weapons, inciting them to wage holy war in the name of Orthodox Christianity, and instructing them to slaughter the Muslims and burn their houses. On the other hand, the Christian rulers in Montenegro threatened the local Muslims by forcing them to choose between abandoning their villages, and fighting for them.¹³¹ This situation was a very hard trial for Muslims, because both options were bitter.¹³² As far as we know, no Albanian Muslim accepted to serve in the Serbian or Montenegrin army, preferring instead to migrate with a broken

¹³⁰ Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*, p. 78; cf. Basbakanlik arsivi, Istanbul, Meclisi Meb'usan, II-ed, cild 13, Aralik 1877 -16 Subat, 1878 In'ikadlar, Istanbul 1954, pp. 77-8.

¹³¹ Rizaj, “Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit, 79.

¹³² On the statistics of the Albanians who migrated or were deported, see McCarthy, pp. 88-91, 159, 161, 162, 163, 164. According to Rizaj, the British ambassador to Istanbul, Layard, had declared that Russian and Bulgarian armies sought to deport all Muslims from the Balkans and confiscate their properties” (p. 81); Poullton, pp. 19-20.

heart.

Thus, the Albanians of Nish, which was a town of the Wilayah of Kosova, migrated to the central part of the latter; others went to Istanbul, where they had a difficult life, without property, land or income. According to statistical evidence, during the period from 1877 to 1879 more than one million Albanians and other Muslims were deported from the Balkans.¹³³

The behaviour of the Ottoman state during this period is shocking. It borrowed ships from England, France, Egypt and Russia to transport these immigrants to Edrene, Istanbul, Çanak Kala, Samsun and Izmir.¹³⁴

The number of the immigrants increased continuously, and their destinations were many. Their situation worsened to the extent that they started to beg on the streets of the towns they were placed in, as was the case in Prizren, where the numbers of the deported Muslims was ten thousand, and they were under the care of special councils formed for this purpose.¹³⁵

Despite the difficult conditions in which Albanian Muslims lived in exile, they did not remain passive. They wrote 145 complaints and participated in demonstrations in order to create public awareness, speaking up against the separation of their lands in favour of Serbia, and asking from the great Western

¹³³ Skender Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*, 80.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 80-81; Poullton, pp. 146-8.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*.

powers to allow their return home. But all of this was to no avail, their lands were lost and their properties went unreturned, and there was a lot of psychological suffering involved due to the uncertainty of their future. Only God knows the full truth of this matter!¹³⁶

Based on historical data we possess, it is clear that some Muslim immigrants left the Balkans for Anatolia, others went to Syria, Cyprus, Arabic Peninsula, Halep, Damascus, Adana, Diyarbakir, Thessaloniki, etc.¹³⁷ The Wilayah of Kosova itself became home to over 200 thousand immigrants, of which over 5000 settled in Kumanova (present Macedonia) as well as other parts which we cannot detail here.¹³⁸ However, we must clarify here a very important issue: the ardent desire of the Albanian immigrants in general, and the Muslims among them in particular, to return to their homes and properties was the cause of the death of some Ottoman administrators who obstructed them from going back.¹³⁹ This obstruction from the Ottoman state was actually preventing Albanians from defending their country from Serbian and Montenegrin attacks, as the decline of the Empire during

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 83.

¹³⁷ McCarthy, pp. 36-7, 65, 89; Yulian Konstantinov, *Strategies for sustaining a vulnerable identity: Case of Bulgarian Pomaks*, pp. 33-53.

¹³⁸ The number of Bosnian refugees exceeded 50 thousand during the Austro-Hungarian rule of 1878-1918. See: Karcic, *The Bosniaks and the Challenges of Modernity*, p. 53; Journal of Islamic Studies, 5:2, July 1994; Mufaku, *Two Hijras and two Fatwas*, 242.

¹³⁹ Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*, pp. 87-88.

that period had emboldened Serbia and Montenegro greatly.¹⁴⁰

According to the French, Ottoman and British sources we possess, the Albanian immigrants who lived in Greece continuously sought to return to their homeland.¹⁴¹

It is worth mentioning here the report of the Serbian ideologue of the deportation and exile of Albanian Muslims, Vaso Cubrilovic, in which he says: *“The process of banishing of the Turks (Albanians, Bosnians, Turks nd Cerkezis) from their villages and towns, and their replacement with newcomers from Serbia and Montenegro has been achieved much faster than we expected. The Serbs who were tortured by the Albanians and had stayed in uncleansed mountain territories came back to these emptied villages. The inhabitants of Montenegro gradually returned to these villages and towns which were cleansed of Albanians and Muslims, and hence new Serbian villages started blooming after their inexistence.”*¹⁴²

On the other hand, according to some Albanian and Turkish historians, the consequences of such a massive migration of Albanians, Turks and Bosnians were felt even by the Serbs. Rizaj

¹⁴⁰ Compare the proces of the immigration of Albanians with the immigration of the Bosnians, based on the data of *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5, 2 July,1994, “*Islam and Muslims in Bosnia*”; see also Mufaku, *Two Hijras and two Fatwas*, pp. 242-53.

¹⁴¹ Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit, p. 89; Ibrahim Daut Hoxha, *Viset kombëtare shqiptare në shtetin grek*, pp. 85, 99, 139, 170, 224, 233.

¹⁴² Commenting upon these words of Cubrilovic, Rizaj writes: “It is historically untrue that Albanians from the Kosova Wilayah hurt the Serbs. This is a lie and fabrication, as the opposite was the case. It is well known that the Albanian League protected Serbs too, and

states that the Serbs got their wheat, minerals and other trade products from the Muslims, whereas after the latter's massive exile, they were deprived of such uses. The Serbian historian Milan V. Smilanic warned the Serbs for the economic damage that would follow from the deportation of Albanians.¹⁴³

One of the political and social marks left by the forced migration of Albanians and Muslims from the Balkans was the creation of a deeply-seated hatred.¹⁴⁴ Those who until recently were neighbours in a town or village helping each other have nothing of that coexistence left.

In this context, the historian Skender Rizaj says that the number of the villages and towns which were emptied by the deportation of Muslims from Kosova was large, and they were later populated by Serbian settlers, and transformed into Serbian towns and villages. For example, at that time Leskovci was surrounded by 87 villages, with 2445 Muslim houses and 16327 inhabitants. Prokuplje had 72 villages, 785 houses and 13239 inhabitants and so on. The total number was 227 villages, 5793 houses and 42300 inhabitants.

Therefore, it is not surprising to see that Muslim scholars of this exceedingly difficult period in their history concentrated their efforts in two important issues:

that in those lands there were no ethnically pure Serbs." *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit*, pp. 97-8. See also Shefqet Dibrani, *Feja në shërbim të Kombit*, online publication.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 93.

1. The defense of the Islamic identity of their thought;
2. The defense of the Albanian national thought.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION IN ALBANIAN TERRITORIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

I: THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN ALBANIAN LANDS

Historical roots of the spread of Islam

The first contact of Albanians with the Arabs goes back to ancient times, and according to some opinions, before the birth of Christ.¹⁴⁵ Taking into consideration the favourable geostrategical position, direct trading relations as well as religious contacts between Albanians and Arabs as well as Turks have been established quite early in the pre-Ottoman period.¹⁴⁶ If we accept this fact, we can say that the penetration and spread of Islam in these territories was intensified even further through individual efforts.¹⁴⁷ Albanian Muslims comprised the majority of the population in the Balkans, and were situated in four Wilayahs, namely those of Kosova, Shkodra, Manastir and Yanina.¹⁴⁸

There are different opinions on the manner of the spread of Islam in these territories, especially among Albanian writers and historians. Some of them believe that Islam spread by the use of

¹⁴⁵ Muhamed Mufaku, *Shqiptarët në botën arabe*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Nexhat Ibrahim, *Islami në Ballkan para shekullit XV*, Zëri Islam: Prizren 2000, p. 6; Noel Malcolm, *Kosova: një histori e shkurtër*, pp. 96-119, 120-43.

¹⁴⁷ Ferit Duka, "Momente të kalimit në Islam të popullsisë shqiptare në shek. XV-XVI"; in: Simpoziumi Ndërkombëtar *Feja, kultura dhe tradita islame ndër shqiptarët*, Kryesia e Bashkësisë Islame të Kosovës, Prishtinë 1995; Selami Pulaha, "The Albanians in Kosova in the 12th -18th centuries", in *Truth on Kosova*, pp. 33-44.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid; Kristaq Prifti, "Popullsia Muslimane Shqiptare në Ballkan në fund të shek. XIX dhe në fillim të shek. XX" in *Truth on Kosova*, pp. 153-66.

force, violence and sword,¹⁴⁹ which is an unsubstantiated claim, as the majority of historians say that Islam spread through peaceful exhortation and goodly behaviour,¹⁵⁰ that is, through freedom of choice¹⁵¹ and no religious violence or compulsion.¹⁵² Another opinion is that Islam was spread both with force and peaceful means.¹⁵³ In this context, some historians have said: *“Islam spread rapidly in the Balkans at the time of the consolidation of the Ottoman rule. The people of the Balkans embraced Islam in different ways. The great majority of Bosnians entered Islam at once, and accepted the Ottoman rule without any resistance.¹⁵⁴ By the beginning of the sixteenth century Islam dominated over the whole Bosnia and Hercegovia¹⁵⁵ because the Bosnians belonged to the heretical Christian sect of Bogumils, whose teachings were in opposition to the dogmas of Orthodox Christianity, and were closer to Islam. Even though the Bosnians embraced Islam they did not become Turks, but preserved their*

¹⁴⁹ Don Shan Zefi, *Islamizimi i shqiptarëve gjatë shekujve*; Drita: Prizren 2000, pp. 57-86, 96, 102, 122, 123, 147, 148.

¹⁵⁰ Skendi, *Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*, pp. 21-2.

¹⁵¹ Dr. Muhamet Pirraku, “Roli i Islamit në integrimin e Shqipërisë etnikë dhe të kombit shqiptar”; në: *Feja, Kultura, dhe Traditat Islame ndër Shqiptarët*, pp. 41-54, 58.

¹⁵² Dr. Ali Hadri, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar për shkollat e mesme*, Enti i Teksteve dhe i Mjeteve Mësimore, Prishtinë 1967, p. 76.

¹⁵³ *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. IV, p. 104; Petrika Thëngjilli, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, pp. 306-312; “Historia e Popullit Shqiptar”- vëll. 1, 342-344; Mark Krasniqi, *Aspekte mitologjike-besime e bestytmi*, Rilindja, Prishtinë 1997, 70-81.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 70, 92.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 70, 92.

language and tradition.”¹⁵⁶

The overwhelming majority of Serbs, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Greeks did not embrace Islam. The few who became Muslims were assimilated into the Turkish ranks within a short period, because they were not accepted by the majority in their countries. The islamization of Albanians took place in a gradual and continuous way due to the influence of political, economical, social, psychological and other factors which we shall mention later.¹⁵⁷

Thus, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, half of the Albanian population living in towns had embraced Islam, and during the seventeenth century Islam spread in villages too. In general Islam did not interfere with the Albanian language, tradition and customs; rather it reinforced and preserved Albanian national sentiments.¹⁵⁸

The peaceful spreading of Islam is confirmed by facts that are recognized even by others. Vladislav Skaric, a well-known Serbian historian, writes: “*The Ottoman usurpers were characterized by religious tolerance and rarely forced people into Islam. Christians embraced Islam out of their free will. Those*

¹⁵⁶Ibid, p. 70, 92, also refer to: Muhamet Pirraku, “Roli i Islamit në integrimin e Shqipërisë etnikë dhe të kombit shqiptar”; në: *Feja, Kultura, dhe Traditat Islame ndër Shqiptarët*, pp. 41-54, 58.

¹⁵⁷ For legal and juridical reasons as well, but not for religious reasons enforcing them to accept Islam – as certain Albanian priests claim. See: Don Zef Shani’s *Islamizimi i shqiptarëve gjatë shekujve*, pp. 88, 101.

who were forced into Islam were the children of Christian soldiers serving in the Ottoman army.”¹⁵⁹

Thus, it is clear that Islam spread through peaceful means, and that people converted in groups, being content with it, since they enjoyed the new faith after their soul-searching and social humiliation in their environment. When they became convinced in the truth of Islam, they became respected after they were humiliated; they became powerful after they were weak; they became rulers and leaders after they were enslaved and occupied; they became rich and prosperous after they were poor; they saw the light of divine guidance after they lived in the darkness of polytheism, wretchedness and social injustice.

Albanians loved Islam and this is why they embraced it, because in it they were completely safe from those who wanted to harm them. Those who hold forth that Islam was spread by force and violence are either Marxists or fanatical Catholic preachers. This campaigning against Albanian Muslims continues to be part of the Crusading project of some European Christian missionaries, in order to sow doubt and swerving in their hearts.

II: REASONS FOR ALBANIANS' EMBRACING OF ISLAM

¹⁵⁸ Rizaj, *Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI, XVII, administrimi, ekonomia, shoqëria dhe lëvizja popullore*, pp. 460-461.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 461-2.

The issue of the reasons and causes¹⁶⁰ that influenced Albanians to accept Islam is rather difficult to fathom, and therefore we leave it to Almighty God, who knows the unseen and the visible, and only He knows what the hearts keep hidden.

The nature of this question is closely linked to the social, national, political and geographical circumstances. Also, because the reliable sources are so few, we are forced to refrain from a categorical opinion on the matter. And surely God knows best.¹⁶¹

Despite the difficulty of this issue, Albanian researchers and experts on the history of the Ottoman state have tried to reach at certain conclusions by studying human history and other civilizations, as to the reasons for the conversion of Albanians to Islam.

Such conclusions can be summarized into the following points:

According to some historians, there was a very strong reason encouraging Albanians to embrace Islam, which was psychological and spiritual in nature. This was closely linked with the history of religious wars that were waged against Islam in the Balkans from the tenth century, as well as the continuous

¹⁶⁰ For more details on the reasons of Albanians' conversion to Islam, see Abib Ahmeti, *Theranda-Prizreni ndër shekuj*, pp. 84-90; Mark Krasniqi, *Aspekte mitologjike: besime e bestytmi*, pp. 70-81.

¹⁶¹ Muhamet Pirraku, "Shkaqet e kalimit në Islam të shqiptarëve"; in *Përparimi*, Prishtinë 1991; (year XLV 2), pp. 185-6.

confrontation between the Greek Church and the Roman-Catholic Church from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, for domination in the Balkans. These events and conflicts had incited the hatred of Albanians and their abandonment of the Church, thereby seeking a way out in the new religion,¹⁶² because Islam offered them spiritual peace and precepts for happiness in both this life and the next.

Islam's influence on the lives of Albanians was great, as it played a central role in the question of national, cultural and political unity. With its tolerant, humanistic, universal, realistic, and social characteristics, Islam was not just a faith, but a lifestyle both individually and socially, an example for others and a dynamic culture with divine, moral, religious, educational, ethical, social, legal, technical, scientific and philosophical characteristics¹⁶³. Islam was not a religion of the Turks or the Arabs, but a universal religion and a global message, beyond colour, background, race, or nationality. Belief in the All-Powerful God encouraged them to leave the worship of idols and persons. These very same reasons that made the pagan Arabs to believe in God the Glorious were the ones that encouraged Albanians to accept Islam. These principles of Islam were closer

¹⁶² Muhamet Pirraku, "Roli i Islamit në integrimin e Shqipërisë etnike dhe të kombit shqiptar"; në: *Feja, kultura dhe tradita islame ndër shqiptarët*, pp. 42, 44.

¹⁶³ See also: Yusuf al Qaradawi, *el Khasais el Amme lil Islam*, Maktabatu Wahbah, 1999, 2nd edition, Cairo, pg:10-100

to the mindset of Albanians than other complicated religious and philosophical man-made beliefs.¹⁶⁴

According to some historians, the first to embrace Islam among the Albanians were the aristocracy, who sought to maintain their status in society and to enter the military and ruling elite of the Ottoman state. There were also those who wanted to gain riches and high status in the Ottoman Empire, who was the greatest world power of that time.”¹⁶⁵ In my opinion, the latter were a small minority and could not possibly account for the massive conversions to Islam for the reasons already mentioned.

According to some Christian Albanian historians, the lack of Christian and Orthodox theologians and clergy produced a spiritual vacuum in those who were not fully convinced in their religion, which they abandoned.¹⁶⁶

This claim is baseless, because the Vatican was in continuous contact with the Catholic clergy, helping them materially and spiritually, without ever taking distance from them.

One of the reasons for the conversion of Albanians to Islam was the open and tolerant nature of Islam, a characteristic that Orthodox Christianity lacked. Islam is an easy and simple religion to practice in everyday life, and Albanian children were

¹⁶⁴ See Muhamet Pirraku's article on why Albanians embraced Islam, in: Muhidin Ahmeti, "Rreth përhapjes së Islamit ndër shqiptarët"; Penda, Prizren, 2nd ed., pp. 25-34.

¹⁶⁵ Rizaj, "Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI, XVII, administrimi, ekonomia, shoqëria dhe lëvizja popullore", 463; Don Shan Zefi, *Islamizimi i shqiptarëve gjatë shekujve*, pp. 62-3.

¹⁶⁶ Stavro Skendi, *Zgjidhje kombëtar shqiptar*, pp. 22-23.

taught for free in schools. Thanks to Islam, people had a chance to climb the social ladder, unlike in Europe or in the Serbian feudal system.¹⁶⁷

Thus, Islam offered people dignity, a better social life as well as prosperity in this world and happiness in the Hereafter. As for the way their conversion to Islam was marked, the historians say that Albanians used to perform ceremonies. At times the head of a family would become Muslim, or the entire family, or even a single member. The convert had to present witnesses, who had to be righteous and Muslims, before the Shari‘ah judge (*qadi*) of the region, and declare the two testimonies of faith in his presence. Then the judge would repeat to him/her the two testimonies: “I bear witness that there is no god but God and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God”, (*Esh’hedu en la Ilahe il-lallah wa Esh’hedu en-ne Muhammeden abduhu wa Resuluhu*) after which he would give him/her a Muslim name. The judge would also record the name of the witnesses.¹⁶⁸

The converts declared the freedom of choosing the new religion and confirmed the lack of any pressure on them to do so. According to objective historians, this represented an honourable act for Albanians, through which they were protected from perdition and the cultural, national and religious assimilation

¹⁶⁷ Rizaq, *Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI, XVII, administrimi, ekonomia, shoqëria dhe lëvizja popullore*, pp. 473-4.

which they had experienced from the Serbian and Greek Churches, due to the latter's continuous violence to force them enter their ranks. Islam accepted and integrated into its practice many traditions and customs that Albanians had inherited. When the latter entered Islam, they were called Arnaut, in order to be distinguished from others.¹⁶⁹

Due to the acceptance of Islam by Albanians, according to some historians, the Church and the Christian clergy showed enmity and opposition towards national interests of the Albanians. Albanian Catholics in the North who did not enter Islam were completely dissolved and became Serbs and Montenegrins, thus losing their national identity and becoming assimilated culturally. Orthodox Christian Albanians from the South were also assimilated into the Greek Church or became Greeks. It is worth noting that Muslim scholars and clerics have recently started presenting Islam among Albanian Catholic and Orthodox Christians with wisdom and foresight in order to save them from total assimilation.¹⁷⁰

There are doubtless other, personal reasons for entering Islam among Albanians, which are known only to God. As we stated previously, faith and belief are matters of the unseen, which only God knows fully. What has been said so far is part of

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 470-2. See also Ahmeti, *Rreth përhapjes së Islamit ndër shqiptarë*; Thomas W. Arnold, *Përhapja e Islamit në Shqipëri*, pp. 5-24.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 474.

uncertain matters, and we believe that God, in His mercy and wisdom wanted to save them from perdition, disbelief, and idolatry, and to guide them to the light of Islam and the guidance of the Qur'an, as the Book of God testifies:

﴿ فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّمَا يَصْعَدُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ [الأنعام : 125]

" Those whom Allah (in His plan) willeth to guide,- He openeth their breast to Islam; those whom He willeth to leave straying,- He maketh their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies: thus doth Allah (heap) the penalty on those who refuse to believe " ¹⁷¹

The truth is that God indeed had guided their hearts to Islam. They embraced this religion because they witnessed the presence of valuable principles, such as the universality of its laws (*shumuliyat al-islam*), the simplicity and ease of practice as well as its middle-path moderation (*wasatiyyatul-islam*). This moderation is visible in the lasting principles of Islam such as the five pillars of faith, the six conditions of belief, and the moral principles, but also in the flexibility of its secondary principles, which are dynamic and can change with time and place, in hardship and ease, to meet the needs of the soul and body, of this

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 475.

¹⁷¹ Chapter al-An'am, 125.

life and the next. Islam is a divinely revealed religion, and its goals are also divine.¹⁷² Albanians who became Muslims had the perspicacity to see that Islam seeks to reform both individual and society, to preserve family and create a healthy community, and so they seized this opportunity without any hesitation or swerving,¹⁷³ because they felt the psychological and spiritual need for this Divine Law. They saw that Islam secures peace to people, helps them through hardships and dissent, enables them to achieve their goals, unites them in discord, saves them from fear, comforts them in despair, makes them discern between good and evil, brings them out of darkness into light and guides them in the path to salvation, the path of God the Glorious.¹⁷⁴

Certain Albanian contemporary Christian Catholic clerics have stated that Albanians entered Islam only superficially and not with conviction, in order to abandon it shortly afterwards, because of their weak faith. According to them, Albanians also embraced Islam for economical interests, as they are a people full of hatred against Muslims, who tend to change their religion

¹⁷² See the treatises of the Islamic martyr Shahid Hasan al-Banna, *Majmu'a rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna*; Kajro, Darut Tenzil li neshril Islami, 1992, p. 113, 155, 223, 243; Dr. Jusuf Qardawis' following references: *al-Mad'hal lidirasetis-Sunnetin-Nabawiyya*; 3rd. ed., 1992; *Mad'hal li Ma'rifeti Fahm al-Islam*; Cairo, Mektebetu Vehbe, 3rd edition, pp. 133-190; *al-Marjaiyya al-ulya fil-Islam lil-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah Davabit ve Mehadhir fil-fahmi wa al-tafsir*, Cairo, Mektebetu Vehbe, p. 240.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 190-269.

¹⁷⁴ Yusuf al-Qardawi, *al-Marjaiyyat al-uliya fi al-islam lil-Qur'an wa as-Sunnah*, p. 340; Isam Tulejme, *al-Qardawi faqihan*; Bur Se'id, Dar al-tewzi'i wa al-nashr al-islamiyya, 1st ed., 2000, pp. 57-87.

readily.¹⁷⁵

Even if this may be true in some individual cases which are the normal exception to the rule, it is inconceivable that some Albanians were hypocrits and pragmatists. Also, the phenomenon of conversion is not confined only to Albanians, but is common in individuals who are not under the guidance of any teacher or supporter of the same faith. Even the Companions of the Prophet Muhammed (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) were friends of Muslims who advised them, guided them and enjoined good and forbade evil, submitting themselves fully to the will of God and His Prophet. Despite such a lofty environment, there were however hypocrits among them, who are well known to history.

In this connection, I call upon all Albanian Catholics and their Priests, secular professors and intellectualls in general to refrain from such baseless accusations and claims against Islam and Muslims. Rather; they should be more rational and realistic and respectfull to the followers of other faiths. They should read more abou Islam, about al Qur'an, about the prophet Muhammed and his Companions, and not to judge Islam as a “terrorisit religion”! not to judge Muslims “as a terrosits”! They should promote peace, unity, tolerance, love and dialogue among themselves and

¹⁷⁵ Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare shqiptare deri në Lidhjen e Prizrenit*, pp. 279, 283, 289; Nathalie Clayer, “Islam, State, and Society in Post-communist Albania” in: *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, pp. 115-38.

others. They should respect the historical facts and numbers of new Muslims around the world. They should understand the power and spread of Islam in the past and present, the fastest growing and spreading religion in the world because of its true, easy, simple, rational, humanistic, social, spiritual, tolerant, dynamic Divine teachings. The Almighty God says in the Noble Qur'an:

﴿ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾

[المائدة:15-16]

O people of the Book! There hath come to you our Messenger, revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Book, and passing over much (that is now unnecessary): There hath come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book, Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light, - guideth them to a path that is straight. - (al Maidah:15-16)

In the beginning, individual Albanians could not find fellow believers in the new religion among their families, who were Christian. How could their faith increase in such an environment; how could their doubts be removed? According to Islam, a person's faith increases in accordance with his/her good deeds and worship, and it decreases from sins and evil deeds. Therefore, it is not surprising to see individual cases of

abandoning Islam during history. The hidden goal in the claims of such Christian Albanian Catholics is to convince Albanians that their past was Christian and as such they must revert to Christianity! Unfortunately, such ideas have become predominant in Albanian lands, thus contributing to the claims made by their enemies. But,

﴿يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾
[التوبة:32]

Fain would they extinguish Allah's light with their mouths, but Allah will not allow but that His light should be perfected, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it). (at-Tawba: 32)

III: CAUSES OF THE FLOURISHING OF ISLAM AMONG ALBANIANS

Immediately after Islam entered the hearts of Albanians,¹⁷⁶ their lives started to blossom in all domains, especially in education, architecture, and culture. Albanians started building mosques and places of worship in order to practice the Islamic rites regularly. This phenomenon dates back to the coming of the Ottomans in the region, which is proven by the fact there are mosques which were built around this time, such as the mosques of the Prizren Wilayah, namely the Mehmet Pasha - Bajrakli

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Mosque, built in 1573/4, the Sinan Pasha Mosque in 1615, Emin Pasha Mosque, as well as other mosques that were built later on.¹⁷⁷

Apart from this, the different Sufi orders had already penetrated in these territories and their followers had built their Sufi lodges near the mosques, in order to practice their Sufi rites. During the second half of the twentieth century these mosques became property of the state, protected by law.¹⁷⁸ There were a number of Sufi orders who proliferated in the region, and they have been studied in some detail in recent years.¹⁷⁹

Education in religious schools in Albanian lands was done in Turkish and Arabic, from the sixteenth century until the nineteenth century. Religious scholars and clerics taught the reading of the Qur'an and the Arab alphabet. In the bigger towns several high schools were opened, in which mainly religious subjects were taught. Regarding this important element, Dr Ramiz

¹⁷⁷ For more details on Islamic Ottoman architecture of the mosques in Prizren, see: Raif Virmica, *Prizren camileri*, Turk Demokratik Yayinlari, Prizren 1996, pp. 13-14, 16, 23, 24, 37; Ramiz Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i kulturës islame ndër shqiptarët gjatë shekullit XX*, pp 153-63; Faik Miftari, *Pakëz dritë për Kosovën*, NGL-BAF, Prizren 2001, pp. 31-38.

¹⁷⁸ On the history of Sufism and Sufi lodges see: Jashar Rexhepagiq, *Dervishët, rendet dhe teqet në Kosovë, në Sanxhak dhe në rajonet përreth Dukagjinit*, Pejë 1999, pp. 155-217, 219-264.

¹⁷⁹ On the doctrines of this Sufi sect see: John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Sufi order of Dervishes*, Hartford Seminary Press, 1937; Hajdar Salihu, *Poezia e bejtexhinjve*, Rilindja, Prishtinë 1987, 85-120; Baba Selim Rexhep Kaliçani, *Dede Ahmedi i gjallë mes nesh*, Fushë Krujë 2000; Hajredin Hoxha, *The Bektashi sufi order-Introduction to its History and Beleiefs*, in press; Dr. Ali Vishko, *Harabati Teqe e Tetovës dhe veprimtaria në të në periudhën e kaluar*, Design, Tetovë 1997; Roberto Maroco de la Roka, *Kombësia dhe feja në Shqipëri, 1920-1944*, përk. Luan Omari, Elena Gjika, Tiranë 1994, 37-44; H.T.Norris, *Islam in the Balkans-religion an society between Europe and the Arab world*, pp. 89, 123, 169, 174, 190, 211.

Zekaj has written the following in his thesis on the development of Islamic culture among the Albanians:

“After Islam entered these territories, Muslims started systematizing the Islamic teaching, building schools for teaching the basic principles of faith in Kosova, Macedonia, as well as several towns in Greece. They were integrated into the respective mosques, whose clerics taught in those schools. The education system was mixed, and included pupils from 6 to 14 years old. The subjects being taught were in Arabic whereas their explication was done in Albanian. In class, great importance was paid to Qur’an and its exegesis. Basic education lasted three years and was called preparatory stage (*rushdiya*). After the declaration of independence and the Yugoslan occupation, teaching in Albanian was prohibited in these schools, whereas Islamic schools that were attached to the mosques in Greece were shut down in 1912-1913 up to the present. Muslims of the occupied Albanian territories in Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro organized religious teaching through their Islamic Community Organization, in order to provide education for the younger generations. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were several Islamic schools in Shkodra, Tirana and other towns. Some Ottoman documents and registers confirm that in the northern as well as southern parts of Albania several schools were operating. The clerics and teachers like Shaykh Hafiz Ymer Shemsedin used

both alphabets in teaching, namely the Arab alphabet for the religious subjects and the Albanian alphabet for the natural and social sciences.

After the Balkan wars the teaching was interrupted for some time, and schools were transformed into depots, stables, or accommodation centers for immigrants, as was the case in Peja. A 1923 document sent by the Serbian Ministry of Religious Affairs to the Ministry of Education in Belgrade states that ‘Religious education among Albanians is a complicated and very important problem. There are nearly fifty muftis in these territories, as well as 600 imams and khatibs (preachers), not one of whom speaks Serbian; all of them are against the Serbian state and there is no village or town without a religious school which is highly esteemed by its inhabitants. These schools teach hatred and enmity against the Serbs’.”¹⁸⁰

Dr. Zekaj continues: “Despite the pressure and suppression from the state to ban religious education, this movement has continued, and, praise be to God the Almighty, it has not been interrupted at all. For example, in 1936 such schools in Kosova were functioning as *Sibyan Maktabs*. In the capitol area, Prishtina, there were 33 primary religious schools for children. Mitrovica had a madrasa too with 216 students, girls and boys. In Gjakova too, such schools were opened during the period between 1932

and 1938, and other schools were planned to be built, until their number reached 80. After the World War II, the situation in Albania changed drastically and the opening of such schools became almost meaningless due to the attitudes of the secular state against religion, hence such schools were closed for decades. Albanians from Kosova and Macedonia did not interrupt teaching, even though teachers did not receive wages for their work.

Religious high schools existed in other Albanian lands too, e.g. in Skoplje, Prizren, Shkodra, Elbasan, Berat, Vlorë, Ulqin, Yanina, Tetova, etc. In Skoplje there was a prestigious high school which had been built four centuries ago, during the Ottoman rule. It was called Isa Beg Madrasa. There is a madrasa in Prishtina too, which is called Alaudin, with branches in other towns. Many students have graduated from these schools who later became scholars of religion.”¹⁸¹

Parallel to the spread of Islamic ethics, there was a great impetus in the propagation of Christianity through the building of Orthodox churches and monasteries which included schools in Greek and supported Orthodox countries. There was a strong Catholic movement and vicious campaigning against Islam. Some Albanian priests had opened schools in Italian and they started

¹⁸⁰ See: Ramiz Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i kulturës islame ndër shqiptarët*, pp. 74-79 (cf. Yugoslav Archives, Ministarstvo Pravde Kraljevine Jugoslavije-vjersko odeljenje, 129, 4814/19).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81-85.

teaching Albanian in them, despite the small number of pupils, which never exceeded 10 in any of these schools.

The most well-known priests were Pjetër Bogdani, Frang Bardhi, Andrea Bogdani, etc., and their names are still glorified by Catholic Albanians and Marxists with Muslim names. The first Christian printing house was built and it published books and pamphlets. These priests applied the purely European methods in teaching, and their Albanian students would graduate in accordance with Western methods. This religious propaganda against Islam started in early nineteenth century.¹⁸²

In the meantime, the Albanian national movement had reached its literary and political peak with the *Rilindja* in the nineteenth century. This movement was characterized by a series of works in Arabic script by Muslim Albanian authors¹⁸³ such as the Diwans in Sufi poetry as well as prose. Some Diwans were translated from Arabic and Turkish, whereas the greatest part was translated from Persian.¹⁸⁴ Therefore the spread of Islam was marked by the simultaneous spread of Sufi orders and different Sufi doctrines.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. 4, p. 100; Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare shqiptare deri në Lidhjen e Prizrenit*, pp. 274, 278, 280, 456.

¹⁸³ Muhamed Mufaku, *al-Abjad al-Arabiyya fi al-thakafeti al-Albaniyya*, pp. 5-40; *Melamihu Arabijje Islamiyya fil-Adab al-Albani*; pp. 60-67; Muhamet Pirraku, *Gjurmime albanologjike-seria e shkencave filologjike*, 16/1986, Prishtinë 1987, 197-212; IX/1979-1980, 203-236; Naim Frashëri, *Vepra letrare 5-Qerbelaja*; 1996;13-316.

¹⁸⁴ Pirraku, *Kultura Kombëtare shqiptare deri në Lidhjen e Prizrenit*, p. 456.

¹⁸⁵ For more details on Sufi orders, their teachings, and some of the well-known scholars opinions, see: Muhammad Ahmad Durnayk, Siham Tawfik al-Misri, *Ibn Taymiyya wa al-*

Among the most well-known Albanian writers who contributed in the field of Bektashi Sufism were Dalip Frashëri, Naim Frashëri, Sami Frashëri, Hasan Zyko Kamberi, Sulejman Naibi, Sheh Kadria, Nezim Frakulla, Dervish Hasani, Baba Abidin Leskoviku, etc.¹⁸⁶ It is of no surprise to see the Sufi phenomenon among Albanians,¹⁸⁷ because the Ottoman state did not oppose the Sufi orders and their doctrines.¹⁸⁸ It agreed with Sufi thought, with the exception of the Bektashi sect.

In the course of the fundamental developments that Albanian lands underwent in different intellectual, literary, national, and religious domains, the Christian clergy translated their sacred texts¹⁸⁹ from Latin, Greek and Italian, which were quickly distributed throughout Albanian territories. This initiative took place under the logo of protecting Albanian language.¹⁹⁰

If we analyze these poetry and prose works we will see that they were means through which the social, religious, political, and

sufiyya, Tripoli: Maktabat al-Imân, 1st ed., 1992, pp. 53-167; Abd al-Rahman Badawi, *Shatahat sufiyya*, Kuwait, Wikalat al-matbu'at, 2nd ed., 1976, pp. 7-48; Irfan Abd al-Hamid Fattah, *Nesh'et al-falsafati al-sufiyya wa tatawuruha*, Beirut, Dar al-Jil, 1st ed., 1993, pp. 27-249; Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntaqi al-Nafis min Talbisi iblis*, Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, pp. 208-513; Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhhabi Ahl-i Tasawwuf*; commentary of Mahmud Amin al-Nawawi (Cairo, 1969); Abd al-Rahman al-Qushayri, *al-Risala* (Cairo, Maktabat Muhammad Ali Subaih, 1957), p. 126; al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-'Arabi, *al-Futuh al-Makkiyya*, (Beirut, Darus-Sadir, al-Bab 373).

¹⁸⁶ Salihu, *Poezia e bejtexhinje*, 13, 144, 147, 165, 265, 268, 289; Noris, *Islam in the Balkans*, pp.161-190; Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare*, pp. 273-4, 278, 309, 324.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ On the history of the Bible translation into Albanian and other languages, see the study of the Catholic scholar Engjëll Sedaj, *Bibla dhe përkthimet e saj në gjuhën shqipe*, Shtufi, Prishtinë 1999, pp. 94-121, 125-172.

¹⁹⁰ Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare*, pp. 368-456; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. 4, p. 100-1.

economical issues were raised. They portrayed the Albanian people in all domains as they saw themselves, because they had found the freedom to write on questions of liberation and Ottoman occupation, which they detested, because they did not care about the Albanian issue. In order to fulfill their goal of inciting hatred they used the harshest words. Another group considered the issue of poverty and unemployment, while others were preoccupied with the problem of immigration, especially those who had left their families in great misery.

In their writings one also comes across different economical issues, such as the problem of property and the love of wealth, be it among Muslims or not, the elite or simpletons. They also wrote on the spread of bribery and financial corruption, the question of blood feuds which had existed among Albanians for centuries¹⁹¹ as well as the bitter envy against some Muslim clerics, because of their ties with the Sultan.¹⁹²

The knowledge of Albanian literature, be it Sunni or Sufi, is of great importance, as it represents a great treasury pointing to the different trends of religious thought, beside reflecting

¹⁹¹ Blood feuds are an old phenomenon existing throughout ethnic Albanian territories. Sadly, this phenomenon has greatly increased lately, especially in Kosova. However, in 1990 there was a radical change in Albanian modern history, as a group of Albanian Muslim and Christian intellectuals initiated reconciliations among families involved in such feuds, and in great success reconciled hundreds of Albanian families for killings. For more details see: Anton Çeta, Zymer Neziri, Myrvete Dreshaj, Sadri Fetiu, Mehmet Halimi, *Pajtimi i gjaqeve 1990-1991*, Era, Prishtinë 2001; Pirraku, *Lëvizja mbarëpopullore shqiptare për faljen e gjaqeve, 1990-92 – kronikë*, Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, Prishtinë 1998.

¹⁹² Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare*, pp. 294, 362, 356.

Albanian society in general.

Another issue from this period is the great role played by Muslims in general in fostering religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among Albanians. According to them differences in religion must not be a source of hatred and division, as they were faced with a common enemy, namely the Ottoman Empire! This campaign was undertaken against Islam and the Muslims, at a time when neighbouring countries incited some Albanians to such destructive ideas. The colonizing powers found religious and intellectual means to realize their goals of Christianizing the Albanians.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 309-324, 393-394, 364-366, 380-388, 409-415, 440-453; Hajdar Salihu, *Poezia e bejtexhinjve*, pp. 133-141, 148-160, 212-213, 243-251; Historia e popullit shqiptar, vol. 4, pp. 105-6; Mark Krasniqi, "Toleranca fetare në lëvizjet çlirimtare të popullit shqiptar në shekujt XVII-XVIII"; në: *Feja, Kultura dhe Tradita Islame ndër Shqiptarët*, pp. 205-210; Mahmud Hysa, *Tema sociale në letërsinë islame shqiptare të shekujve XVIII-XIX*, 258-9.



Gathering of Albanian Scholars and believers in Mosque during religious occasions & the above picture is the crown prince of the King Ahmed Zogu.

These writings also deal with education, culture and literature.¹⁹⁴

An important factor in the blossoming of Islamic civilization among Albanians was also their travel in search of knowledge in different parts of the world. Some of them went to Egypt, at the

¹⁹⁴ See the literary work in three parts of the well-known Albanian scholar and exegete Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, which deal with political and social issues of the period 1920-1942. Petrit Kusi, *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, Vepra letrare - Dokrra hini, Grenxat e kuqe të Tiranës, Një ëndërr e ime*, botime enciklopedike, Tiranë 2000.

Az'har University, others went to India, and a good part went to Istanbul, the center of the Ottoman Empire. Beside these destinations, others went to Iran, Libya, Lebanon, France, Italy and elsewhere.¹⁹⁵ Among the Albanian immigrants who went to Arab countries and became renowned scholars we can mention:

Al shaykh al Muhaddith Abd al-Qadir Arnauti, who lived and worked in Damascus and was known as a Hadith scholar of Hadith in the twentieth century, and reviewer of a great opus of Hadith literature;

Al shaykh al Muhaddith Nasir al-Din Albani, who lived in Amman, where he spent all his life studying Hadith;

Al shaykh Muhaddith Shu'ayb Arnauti, who is equally authoritative, still alive.

Prof.Dr. Muhammad Mufaku-Arnauti, an historian living in Amman;

Al shaykh Vehbi Sulejman Gavoci, a well known jurist living in Damascus, who is known as an outstanding expert in Hanafi *fiqh*.¹⁹⁶

There have also been non-Muslims who travelled to Italy, Bulgaria and Greece in order to specialize in the Christian

¹⁹⁵ Mahmud Hysa, *Alamiada shqiptare*, vol. II, p. 170.

¹⁹⁶ We have not dealt with the religious contribution of this generation of outstanding scholars in our thesis, since they did not live and worked in Albanian lands, but rather in Arab territories. Needless to say, they are worthy of serious studies in the near future.

sciences, as well as in the U.S. for education and work¹⁹⁷ etc.

The influence of Turkish and Arabic schools on Albanian scholars was great, which can be clearly seen from their attitudes on certain social and religious issues. There is congruity between the graduates of al-Azhar and the graduates of Istanbul, because both groups referred to reforms in religious studies as well as certain other social issues.

In general, Albanian scholars did not reject the reformist ideas,¹⁹⁸ and we shall deal with this topic later in this book. Unfortunately, here we cannot elaborate further on other examples of the influence of foreign education systems and other civilizations on Albanian scholars, such as the Persian civilization, which was immense to the extent that many of them translated Persian works into Albanian, which are extant today. It is therefore evident that their contacts with other civilizations did not spare them from the side effects and negative influences.¹⁹⁹

Among the factors that influenced the blossoming of Islam among Albanians was the phenomenon of the learning of the Noble Qur'an by heart (*hifz*) which goes back to very early times. It was practiced and taught in maktabas and houses, and later there

¹⁹⁷ Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare*, pp. 393, 433, 418; Eqber Skendi, *Hoxhë Kadriu*, p. 14; Roberto Maroco de la Roca, *Kombësia dhe fetë në Shqipëri 1920-1944*”; 209; Qazim Xhelili, *Vehbi Dibra*, p. 12; Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça - Jeta dhe Vepra*, pp. 13-18; Shefik Osmani, *Panteoni iranian dhe iranologët shqiptarë*, Sadi Shirazi, Tiranë 1998; Ramiz Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i kulturës Islame ndër shqiptarët në shek XX*, pp. 258-381.

¹⁹⁸ Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça- jeta dhe vepra*, Logos-A, Shkup 1997, pp. 44-45.

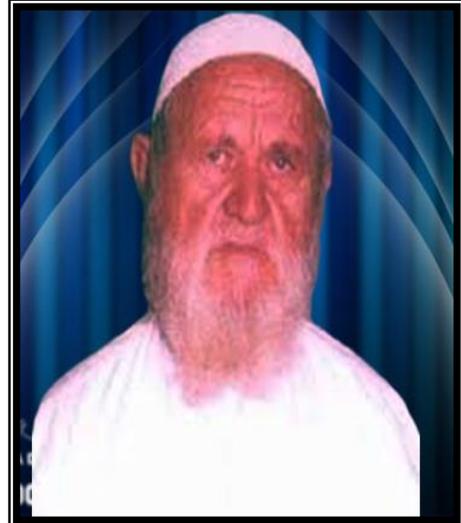
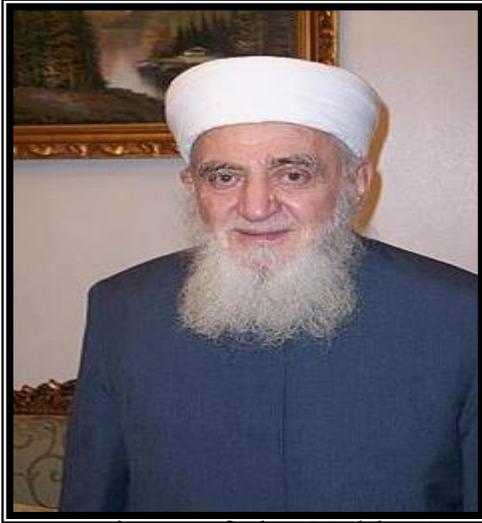
¹⁹⁹ Osmani, *vep. cit.*, pp. 92-108, 109-121, 132-133.

were special schools for religious instruction, for example in Prizren. During the Ottoman rule, the Gazi Mehmet Pasha Madrasa was built four centuries ago in Prizren. Many imams and memorisers of the Noble Qur'an have graduated from this school. Very few of its graduates did not learn the Qur'an by heart. According to some statistical data, from 1950-1994 seventy memorisers of the Noble Qur'an graduated from this school, the majority of which were men, but among the memorizers there were also ladies.²⁰⁰

In Macedonian towns where Albanians live, this phenomenon has lately become even more accentuated among clerics and Muslims in general. They produced Qur'an reciters with beautiful voices, and very precise memorisers. This precision in hifz comes as a result of early training since the age of 10 or 12, and there are cases when children as young as six have completed the hifz,²⁰¹ as was the case in Tetova ten years ago. From the available data on the Albanian Islamic scholars of the contemporary period it is evident that the majority of them were

²⁰⁰ Ramiz Zekaj, "Zhvillimi i kulturës Islame ndër shqiptarët në shek. XX"; 207; Faik Miftari, "*Pakëz dritë për Kosovën*"; 45-49; Tayyib Okiç, "*Tefsir ve hadis usulunun bazı meseleleri*"; Nun Yayincilik, Istanbul, Türkiye 1995, 141.

²⁰¹ The imam who taught this child is Shejh Muhaffiz Mulla Mahmud Asllani from Tetova, may God preserve him, whom I had the honour of meeting three years ago, when I witnessed his work with children in teaching them the hifz of the Qur'an. I saw that he was very skilfull and a true expert in producing huffaz, after dedicating a lifetime to this lofty goal. He leaves his home for morning prayers and comes back after evening prayers. The number of memorizers he has trained is 101(2003), and recently(2012) was awarded by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayib Erdogan for his outstanding works. May God make us his peers!



memorisers of the Noble Qur'an.

The desire for this discipline is still strong among Muslim Albanian. One cannot remain indifferent to the sight of children who do not speak Arabic, but are able to read the Noble Qur'an skilfully with all the rules of *tajwid*, in a beautiful, melodious voice.

Recently, a new school for the memorization of the Qur'a was built in Kavaja,²⁰² where other religious subjects are taught, with the emphasis on the Qur'anic *hifz*, besides English, and computer basics. We pray to God that such schools may spread in the future in other towns of Albania, Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro. We rely on God the Glorious, *He alone guides on the straight path!*

The most famous Albanian Scholars of Hadith in contemporary times in the Arab world: Al Sheikh Al Muhaddith Nasiruddin Al Albani, lived and died in Amman-Jordan, (right first row),

The most famous Albanian Scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence-Hanafi traditional school - in Arab world, Al Sheikh Wahbi Sulejman Gavoci, lived and died in Sharjah -United Arab Emirates

My historical pictures with Al Sheikh al Muhaddith Abdul Kadir Arnauti, lived and died in Damscuss- Syria, (left 2nd row) & with Al Sheikh Al Muhaddith Shuajb Al Arnaut lived and died in Amman-Jordan,(right 2nd row)



²⁰² See the journal *The Islamic Civilization News Periodic Bulletin* (Albanian Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization), Tiranë, 17.01.2001, 13.

PART TWO

**SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN ALBANIAN LANDS
AND THE REFORMIST DOCTRINE IN EXEGESIS**

CHAPTER ONE

**SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN ALBANIAN LANDS DURING
THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD**

CHAPTER TWO

**SUNNI REFORMIST SOCIAL DOCTRINE IN EXEGESIS
AS REFLECTED IN THE THOUGHT OF HAFIZ ALI ALI
KORÇA**

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN ALBANIAN LANDS DURING THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

The social situation in Albanian lands was replete with different events in various domains, and the study contained in this chapter serves as an introduction for the results to be obtained later in our thesis, when we deal with the topic of the reformist doctrine in exegesis.

The 1930's were marked by a vitality and scholarly dialogue between clerics and notorious secular atheists. The secularists had concentrated all their efforts and potentials in defense of atheism, in distancing the youth from religion, with the pretext of the freedom of speech!

The situation was so tense that certain intellectuals had compiled works in which Muslims were accused together with Christians, by using trivial but severe attacks against human dignity and honour, such as: *belief in Divine creation is a sign of stupidity; trinity is the shame of our time; Lord Messiah with an*

*ugly face does not believe that he is the son of God, but rather that he is the son of Joseph; Jesus is not the founder of Christianity, the Bible is a compilation of old tales*²⁰³ etc. These modern ideas pointed to the danger of such views and quarreling.

Here we will focus on the responses of Albanian religious thought and the role of such ideas in the arena of social and religious conflicts.

The second part of this chapter will complement the first, and I will try to elaborate on the social reformist doctrine in exegesis, and on the manner in which Albanian scholars tried to deal with these issues.

The first issue which preoccupied Albanians was the emancipation of Muslim women.

I: ALBANIANS AND MODERNISM

The echo of modernist thought from the Arab East, namely Egypt, had penetrated the whole Islamic world, especially India, Turkey, and Caucasus. Its effect on Albanian and Bosnian lands²⁰⁴ was no smaller.

²⁰³ See: Ali M. Basha, *Islami në Shqipëri gjatë shekujve*, pp. 156-7.

²⁰⁴ On the historical background of reformism and its influence on Bosnian religious thought in the late 19th century and early 20th century, as well as other countries which were under the direct or indirect influence of al-Az'har, see: Fikret Karcic, *Drustveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma*, Sarajevo 1990, pp. 29-67.

Since Az'har University was a major center of education²⁰⁵ in all scholarly domains, the Albanian youth that went there to study different disciplines established brotherly relations with the Egyptian scholars. Many of these students later became well-known and successful scholars of the contemporary period. This period is marked by the ideas of certain Muslim thinkers who were influenced by Western trends of thought and methodologies, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, and his student Rashid Rida, the dean of Az'har University Ahmad Maraghi and many others,²⁰⁶ who tried to introduce reforms in the teaching methods and the curricula of al-Az'har. This idea found followers in the Islamic world, such as in India, Turkey, Syria, Bosnia, Albania, etc.²⁰⁷

Among the political issues in which the reformist focused was the question of Muslim woman and her social role,²⁰⁸ which was seen as backward, regressive and imprisoned by the fetters of

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 69 (on the margins).

²⁰⁶ A lot has been written on the activities and works of the founders and thinkers of the reformist movement, both from Arab and Western authors. See: Fahd ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Rumi, *Manhaj al-madrasat al-islahiyyat al-'aqliyya fi al-tafsir*, Riyad, 2nd ed.. 1994, p. 1; Daniel Neil Crecelius, *The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967; J. J. G. Jansen, *Koran Interpretation in Modern Egypt*.

²⁰⁷ On the history of the revival of religious thought, reforms and famous reformers, see Abu Ala al-Mawdudi's *A short history of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, tr. Al-Ash'ari, the other Press, Petaling Jaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1999, pp. 24-77.

²⁰⁸ Gazmend Shpuza, *Kuvendime për historinë kombëtare*, pp. 231-236, 237-242.

tradition, compared to Western woman. She was not allowed to engage in political or social activities. Such reformist ideas visibly influenced the thoughts and ideas of Albanians studying in Egypt, Turkey and India, which were considered as international centers of learning and culture,²⁰⁹ and these students brought these reformist and rivalist ideas home.

If we take a closer look at the movement of the philosophy of Islamic thought in Albanian lands and the nature of the dialogue and the discourse which took place among the Albanian scholars and their opponents, we will notice that they were interested in the same worldly and religious issues. Such philosophical and religious matters will become clear if we consult the journals, newspapers and treatises published by the High Council of the Islamic Community of Albania in the larger towns. There has been no study of this phenomenon yet.

Before we proceed with the question of Albanian woman, we will pause to discuss an issue which was heavily debated among Albanian scholars, namely *ijtihad* and its principles,²¹⁰ which shows the high level of their expertise in Islamic disciplines. We shall return to this issue later, in order to elaborate on the differing views of these scholars who were trying to

²⁰⁹ De la Roka, *op. cit.*, p. 209; Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare shqiptare*, p. 393.

²¹⁰ One of the best works on *ijtihad* and its principles is Abu Is'haq al-Shatibi's (d. 790/1388) *al-Muwafakat fi usul al-shari'ah al-islamiyyah*, ed.

expound on religious and intellectual questions of their time which are still relevant.

According to historical documents there was a long and strong debate between the Albanian intellectual Mehdi Frashëri²¹¹ and Shaykh Hafiz Ismet Dibra.²¹² Mehdi Frashëri had published a series of articles in several Albanian newspapers regarding the reforms that Islam could undergo, to which articles Shaykh Hafiz Ismet Dibra responded in the monthly journal *Zani i Naltë*. This journal published religious articles and therefore enjoyed great respect and authority among Muslims and beyond. Shaykh Hafiz Ismet Dibra believed that Islam is not opposed to progress in knowledge and is able to meet the challenges of modernism, while accepting reform in a number of issues which are mentioned in the Hadith. These issues deal with matters of a specific nature and characteristics, whereas religious principles

Shaykh Ibrahim Ramadan, compiled and reviewed by Shaykh ‘Abd Allah Darraz, Beirut, Dar al-Ma’rifah, 4th ed., vol. IV, pp. 463-638.

²¹¹ Eminent Albanian writer, historian, and politician from the Frashër village in southern Albania (1872–1963). He was prime minister of Albania twice, and a member of the team that compiled the Albanian civil code. He authored books on Albania’s ancient history. See *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. 2, pp. 449, 452, 603.

²¹² He was born in Dibra e Madhe (present Macedonia) in 1886 and studied in Istanbul. He was an expert on *fiqh*, *tafsir*, *logics*, *philosophy*, and *hadith*, and greatly contributed to the Madrasa of Tirana. He spoke Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. He was offered to head a department of the Istanbul University, but he preferred to return to his home country. He was a partisan of truth, imprisoned twice by the communist regime for his religious convictions, spending 12 years in prison. See: Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i kulturës islame te shqiptarët*, pp. 312-314.

and the foundations of faith can never be subject to reform, as this would imply the destruction of religion from within.²¹³

The other point of their debate was the opinion of Mehdi Frashëri that the gate of *ijtihad* had been closed, based on the dream of Imam al-Ghazali. The response of Shaykh Hafiz Ismet Dibra was categorical and unequivocal, refuting this claim as incongruent with the principles of faith, and saying that the gate of *ijtihad* remained open until the day of judgement. He further asks if the author of this claim ever explained what he meant by the closing of the gate of *ijtihad*, clarifying that a dream does not constitute a source of the Shari‘ah, and that it cannot be used as an argument.²¹⁴

Mehdi Frashëri further claimed that a number of religious matters that were considered fixed and not subject to *ijtihad* could undergo reform. He claimed that if prayer on a mount is permissible without genuflection and prostration, then such a practice could be permissible in a mosque too, where people could pray on chairs without making these movements. Of course this syllogism is false and inapplicable, because Islam has special rules for travelling with regards to prayer and fasting. Shaykh Hafiz Ismet Dibra (may God have mercy upon his soul!) replied that these claims have no basis in Islamic sources, and that prayer

²¹³ On these polemics see: Ali M. Basha, *Islami në Shqipëri gjatë shekujve*, pp. 140-141.

on a mount is allowed only in case of necessity.²¹⁵ How can one compare something which is permitted only in case of need and illness, such as the case of praying while seated on a chair, with something which is done without any specific reason apart from laziness and caprice!/? How could such a comparison ever be made?!

These examples show the nature of debates on several religious issues among Albanians of that time. During the 1920's and 1930's, there appeared another scholar who became well-known for his ideas, his speeches, and his focus on the question of women's education and marital rights in Albania.²¹⁶ Haxhi Vehbi Dibra had compiled a compendium of forty articles on the principles and laws regarding marriage and divorce in Islam. It

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

²¹⁶ Haxhi Vehbi Dibra-Agolli (1867-1937) was known as a scholar, *mufti*, politician and *mujahid*. His father was also a mufti and hailed from a religious family. From an early age Vehbi Dibra showed interest for the great personalities of Albanian history. He studied in Istanbul, where he excelled, learning Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, and then specializing in Islamic philosophy, logics, and jurisprudence. He made contributions in politics and in religious reforms. His articles and speeches were published in the *Zani i Naltë* journal. His lectures on the commentary of the Sura al-Fatiha were published under the title *Ç'urdhënon Kur'ani – kuptimi i Fatihës me shpjegime*, and I managed to find a copy during my visit to the Islamic Community of Albania in Tirana. This copy had been sent to the author Ali M. Basha by the head of the Albanian Islamic Center in the U.S., Imam Vehbi Ismaili. Prof. Basha allowed me to photocopy this book, for which I am indebted to him! See: Qazim Xhelili, *Vehbi Dibra-personalitet dhe veprimtar i shquar i lëvizjes kombëtare*, Albin, Tiranë 1998, pp. 4-20; Ramiz

also dealt with some Albanian customs which were void, namely marriage for monetary compensations, besides the stipulated *mahr*. This compendium was very helpful for understanding the attitude toward religion prevalent among Albanians in general and communists in particular, who looked down upon religion with hatred, claiming that it implies regress and decadence.²¹⁷ Unfortunately, there was no Albanian translation or commentary of the Qur'an in order for the principles of the Shari'ah be understood better.²¹⁸

The question of women had a great echo among the Albanian intelligentsia, much like in the Arab world, especially the polemics on women emancipation and the veiling of their face and of hands. Albanian Muslim scholars entered this discourse because certain secularists had written an article in which they argued that the veil belonged to the Christian past of Albania, namely the period of the virgin celibate sisters from the time of the Christian queen, Caterina de Medici, as well as the times of Christian widows, who would cover their faces as a sign of respect of their deceased husbands. The article further claimed that the veil did not exist during the early period of Islam. In

Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i Kulturës Islame te shqiptarët gjatë shekullit XX*, ff. 288-291.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 142.

²¹⁸ For more details on his contributions see Xhelili, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-9.

Baghdad and Kordoba there were women scholars who taught with their faces uncovered.²¹⁹

Due to these discussions by reformist scholars, the reformist current started gaining strength and influencing the general opinion of Muslims as well as the more conservative U'lama. As a consequence, on March 1, 1937, the Islamic Community of Albania was forced to issue a verdict for the annulment of the veil of the face and hands of women, supporting their right to involvement in public life. On the basis of certain arguments from the Shari'ah on this issue, the members of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (*The Lasting Commission for Verdicts*) informed the Muslims through speeches, teachings and periodicals just as they informed the government of Ahmet Zogu.²²⁰ This verdict was signed by the members of the Muslim Community who supported it.²²¹

This scholarly activity of the Muslim U'lama was used by King Zogu in a negative way, in order to introduce other reforms which went against Islamic tenets, as they were made in

²¹⁹ Ali M. Basha, *Islami në Shqipëri gjatë shekujve*, pp. 142-143.

²²⁰ King Ahmet Zogu, son of Xhemal Pasha Zogoll, was born on 05.10.1895 in Burgajet of Mat (Albania). He was a prime minister, and then King (1925-1939). During his rule, Albania experienced corruption, misery, and political, religious, economical, and social decadence. He died in Paris in 1961. See Bernd J. Fischer, *King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania* (Boulder, 1984), pp. 11-27, 305-322; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. 2, pp. 546-613.

²²¹ *Ibid* p. 143.

collaboration with the Italians - *through their financial and spiritual support of Bektashi Sufi deviated order*-.²²²

The period 1920-1940 is known for its drastic modifications of the Shari‘ah in Albania,²²³ such as fundamental changes in civil rights.²²⁴ The government had adopted positive Western laws from Switzerland, France and Egypt, and it had undertaken steps for the change of religious symbols and their application, suspending the Islamic judges.

In 1921 there was a national consensus of Albanians against the Ottoman state, which resulted in the independence from Shaykh al-Islam and the Ottoman state. In March 1923, in a critical time for the Ottoman state, a conference was held in Tirana, in which the Grand mufti was chosen, and there was official cutting of relations with the Ottoman caliphate. Yet, in other Albanian towns the link with the Ottoman caliphate as well as obedience towards the orders from Istanbul continued, as was the case of Shkodra.²²⁵

²²² De la Roka, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-142; Ismail Bardhi, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-86. Frances Trix, *Spiritual discourse-learning with an Islamic master*, University of Pensilvania, 1993. *I wonder why the resepected translator did not translate this reality of the collaboration of Bektashis with Italians as it is original in Albanian book!?(H.Hoxha, author of the book)*

²²³ De la Roka, *op. cit.*, 27-28.

²²⁴ On the functioning of Shari‘ah courts, and the civil law in former Yugoslavia, see Karcic, *Šerijatski sudovi u Jugoslaviju 1918-1941*; Islamski Teoloski Fakultet, Biblioteka Posebnih Izdanja, Sarajevo, 1986, pp. 49-73.

²²⁵ De la Roka, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

In 1923, the first issue of the Islamic journal *Zani i Naltë* came out, in which Albanian scholars and thinkers wrote on contemporary subjects, such as reforms in religion, the question of the veil, and in 1937, the veil was finally banned.

In 1924, King Zogu issued a decree which forbade religious discrimination in Albania: “*There can be no religious discrimination whatsoever among Albanians. Muslims and Christians must find a solution to this question, and they must stop religious discords...*” Those who suffered the most from this new law were the Islamic clerics, who were forced out from political activity. The state replaced the well-known Muslim clerics, who no longer had any control of foreign donations. According to the state, religion must not be a political instrument, and the use of religion for any political goals was prohibited.²²⁶

In such unstable social and religious circumstances, religious principles and norms were annulled. For example, polygamy was banned. During this time the first attempts of partially²²⁷ translating the Qur’an were made,²²⁸ and different religious ideas were presented on the way of applying Islam.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 26-36.

²²⁷ On the permissibility of translating the Qur’an, see papers by Suad Jëldërim, Abdul-Qahhar al-Ani, and Habib al-Rahman Ibramsa, 7th International Conference of Translation: *The Translation of Religions Texts*, 6-8 December 1999, Kuala Lumpur, pp. 101-106, 293-315, 319-355.

²²⁸ On the history of the Qur’an translations into Albanian, see Feti Mehdiu’s study, *Përkthimet e Kur’anit në gjuhën shqipe*, Shkup: Logos-A, 1996.

Secondly, there was a strong initiative to ban the use of Arabic script for Albanian, and to replace it with Latin script. The 1928 constitution declares that Albania has no official religion. All religions are respected, and the use of religion for political purposes is prohibited. The principles upon which the Albanian state was founded were secularism,²²⁹ religious freedom of individuals, equality between religions, and using religion in favor of the secular state.²³⁰ In these circumstances, the Muslims' position started deteriorating, and living according to religious principles was made difficult for them.²³¹

In 1929 a big conference was held in Albania, with the participation of great Sunni scholars who took some difficult decisions, which were accepted by King Zogu: Arabic would be used only in sermons, lectures and speeches; all religious schools and educational centers would be controlled by the government; the majority of the big mosques in the larger towns were to be closed.

According to statistics, the number of mosques fell drastically after this conference. In 1929, the number of mosques in Albania was 990, whereas in 1934 it had shrunk to 560. The

²²⁹ On Islam and secularism see: al-Qardawi, *al-Islam wa al-almaniyya wajhan li wajhin*, Cairo: Maktab Wahba, 7th ed., 1997, pp. 74-106.

²³⁰ Ibid, p. 31-32.

²³¹ On King Zogu's life, background and political career see Fischer, op. cit., 11-29, 94, 114, 248.

clergy was forced to carry certificates issued by the state in order to be under the control and easy supervision by the latter.²³²

Among the personalities calling for reforms and liberation of Albanian women within the reformist religious framework was Sheikh Hoxhë Kadriu, who had graduated from the prestigious Al-Fatih high school in Istanbul, and later from the Faculty of Jurisprudence of the University of Istanbul. After graduation, he taught at the same university, where he gained reputation. He spent his life in religious, political, and national activities, at the service of Islam. His contemporaries state that he was very just and objective. After being appointed Minister of Justice in Albania, he introduced some changes in civil rights, regarding marriage. He sought to change the law which was inherited from the Ottoman state,²³³ and became known for his activities on the question of emancipation under specific rules and conditions.²³⁴

²³² Basha, pp. 140-6; Bardhi, pp. 75, 87; De la Roka, pp. 32-33.

²³³ Shaykh Hoxhë Kadri was born in 1878 in Prishtina. He received his elementary education in Turkish, and his high school education in Skoplje, excelling in many subjects. His parents sent him to study in Istanbul's al-Fatih school, where he studied Arabic, Persian, and different cultures. He was distinguished for his activities in religious and national reforms. In 1904 he entered the Faculty of Jurisprudence, where he later taught. He worked at the court of Istanbul, and later as independent lawyer, after passing all the exams. In 1921, he was appointed Minister of Justice in Albania, where he also started publishing the *Udha e së Vërtetës* Journal. He died in Tirana, in 1925. See: Eqber Skendi, *Hoxhë Kadri Prishtina*, Rilindja Journal, Prishtinë 1992, pp. 8-20, 217-219; Qemajl Morina, *Hoxhë Kadri Prishtina mendimtar Islam*, Kryesia e Bashkësisë Islame, Prishtinë 2000, pp. 7-97.

²³⁴ Eqber Skendi, *Hoxhë Kadriu-Kadri Prishtina*, pp. 35-102.

He was very objective in his writings and in the debates with his opponents, never stepping out of Islamic ethics in disagreement²³⁵ or getting even with anyone.²³⁶ One of his most well-known statements in the press during his debates with secularists was that woman is half of society, and therefore how can such a noble creature be abandoned, ignored, and disabled?! He did not agree with the secularists' view that women should uncover themselves, and he believed that women's education must not be conditioned upon their liberal dress. This thinker believed that women must perform honorable jobs in order to contribute in the strengthening of the country's economy. Hoxhë Kadri was against women driving cars, trains or aeroplanes.²³⁷

Regarding the issue of marriage, he believed that a Muslim woman's consent must be taken and that she must not be forced to marry a man she detests, as was customary in Albanian tradition. He was also a vehement opponent of hypocrisy.²³⁸ He had acquired strong Islamic and national values during and after his studies in Istanbul.²³⁹

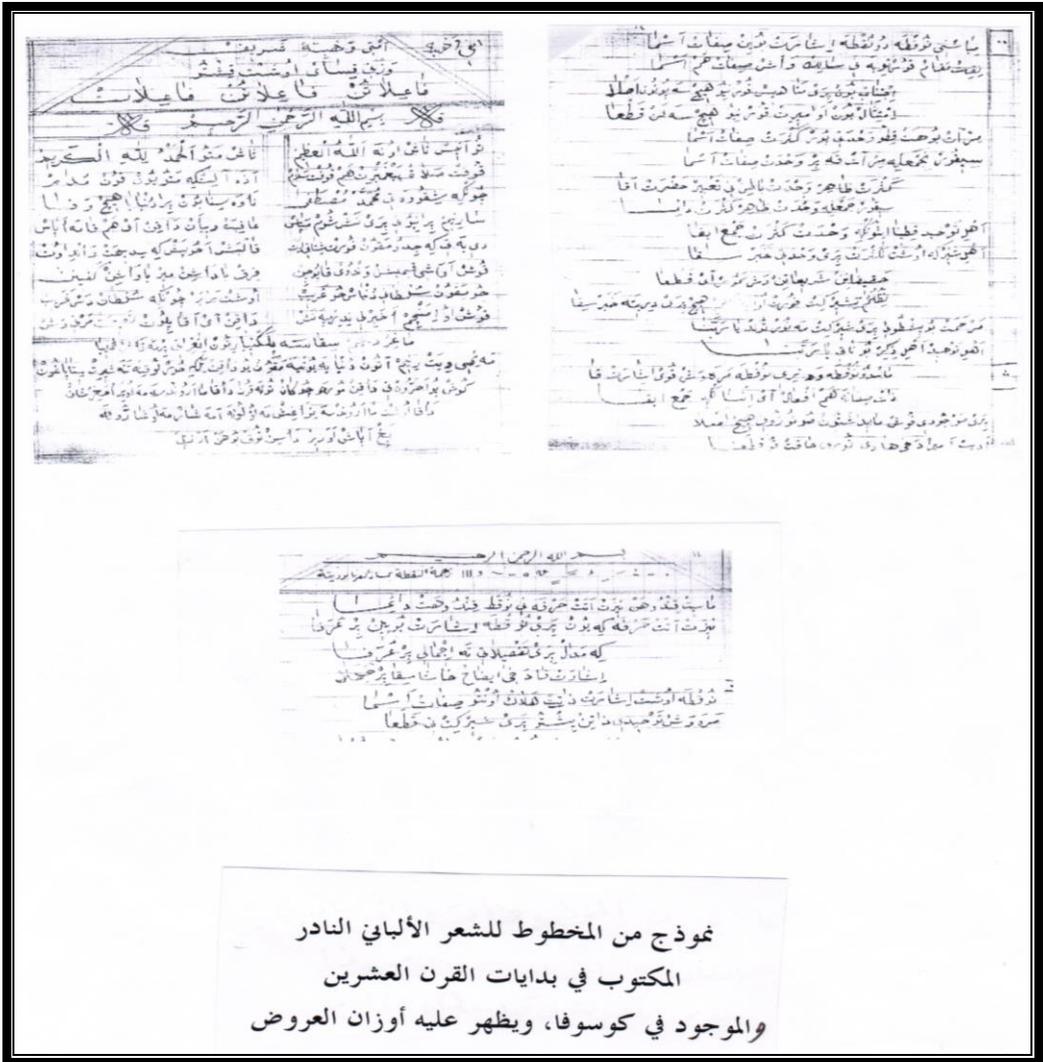
²³⁵ On the ethics of dialogue see, Taha Jabir al-Ulwani, *The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam*, 2nd ed., Kuala Lumpur: IIIT, 1992, pp. 97-98.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 152-154; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. 4, pp. 308-310.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 150-152.

²³⁸ *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. 4, pp. 308-310.

²³⁹ This important Islamic personality occupies a substantial place in studies on national and political activities and events, whose Islamic character has unfortunately been ignored. The best available work on this aspect is Qemajl Morina's *Hoxhë Kadri Prishtina - Mendimtar islam*.



A very rare manuscript (Islamic Poetry with Arabic letters & Albanian words) in Kosova- Courtesy of the prof. Dr. Muhamet Pirra

II: THE ALBANIAN ALPHABET: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The winds of reformism started blowing in all the domains of religious, cultural and scholarly life of Albanians. One of the issues which incorporated these three dimensions was the continuation of the use of the Arabic script *vis-a-vis* its replacement with the Latin alphabet. The weakening of the Ottoman state reached its peak at the turn of the twentieth century. The leaders of resistance against the Ottomans started appearing among the Turks themselves as well as other ethnicities. It has been historically proved that the teaching and using of Albanian language was prohibited for centuries by the Ottoman empire, whereas it was allowed²⁴⁰ for other minorities: Jewish, Serbian, Greek, Kurdish, etc.²⁴¹ The reason was perhaps because the Ottomans considered all Muslims as a single nation (*al Ummah*),²⁴² despite the differences in language and ethnicity, claiming that their language had to be that of the Ottoman state.

²⁴⁰ It is rather astonishing that Jews, Serbs, Greeks, and Kurds were allowed to write and even open schools in their tongues, whereas Albanians were prohibited from doing so, although more than 40 Ottoman Prime Ministers and functionaries as well as 2 Shaykh al-Islam were Albanians!?

²⁴¹ Skender Rizaj, *Kosova gjatë shekujve*, XV-XVII, p. 467; Skendi, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

²⁴² This information was kindly offered to us by Professor Karcic. According to our honored mentor Baha' al-Din Muhammad Husayn, if the Ottomans truly considered Muslims as a single nation, they should have used

Albanian language was permitted after the New Turks revolution, and until 1908 all schools in Albania were religion based, and Muslims, as well as Catholic and Orthodox Christians had their own special schools.²⁴³

The problem of education in Albania started getting resolved with the verdict of the Ottoman Ministry of Education, which permitted Albanians to attend I'dadiyya and Rushdiyya (elementary) schools in their own language.²⁴⁴

The question of the final decision about the use of the alphabet has been studied both in the past and present. According to some scholars, the path leading to the establishment of the Albanian alphabet was a very difficult one, full of victims and sacrifices. Huge efforts were put into it, and a lot of blood was spilled for the defense of this alphabet. Such sacrifices are considered a high point in Albanian history, and there are few events in the latter as important as the alphabet. The efforts of dealing with this social and educational problem in the life and history of Albanians were both individual and collective.²⁴⁵

Arabic and not Turkish as their language, because Arabic is the language of the Qur'an. In his opinion, the nationalist element influenced the Ottomans and the Turks to prohibit other people from using their own languages, and to teach them Turkish instead, which in his view constituted a harsh breach of their rights.

²⁴³ Stavro Skendi, *Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*, pp. 58, 334.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 335.

²⁴⁵ Tomorr Osmani, *Udha e shkronjave shqipe-Histori e alfabetit*, Shkodër: Idromeno, 1999, pp. 3-4.



Arabic manuscripts in Albania

(Courtesy of the Albanian Orientalist mr.Ermal Bega)

The search for a common alphabet for Albanian Muslims and others had received a great impetus in the nineteenth century. It arose from the Albanian intellectual elite living in exile due to the political and social circumstances of the period within the Ottoman Empire itself. Under such conditions, each people sought full independence.²⁴⁶ Before the penetration of Ottomans in Albanian lands, Albanian language was written in the Latin alphabet, as it was closer to the mother tongue,²⁴⁷ and Albanian lands were considered a part of the European continent. This opinion is supported by a number of scholars. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Albanian national feelings were rkindled as can be clearly seen in the translation of Christian sacred texts from Greek and Latin.

At the time several alphabets were being used, such as the Greek alphabet, the Latin alphabet and the Ottoman alphabet.²⁴⁸

In the period from 1831-1884 there were a number of individual efforts for an Albanian alphabet, and this period has become known as the Albanian National Renaissance, due to certain developments and changes that took place. The goal of this movement was the liberation and the unification of all Albanian lands, through organized resistance to the Turkish rule in every possible way.

²⁴⁶ Stavro Skendi, *Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*, p. 336.

²⁴⁷ Osmani, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

After this awakening, the relations between Albanians and Ottomans deteriorated greatly, due to the continuous opposition and resistance of the Albanian intellectuals. In 1876, a number of Albanian thinkers gathered with the intention to found an Albanian cultural society in Istanbul, which would assemble voluntary financial contributions for the publication of books in Albanian.²⁴⁹

This resistance peaked with the founding of the Albanian League in 1878, in Prizren, whose goal was the same as that of the Albanian national awakening. In such an unstable situation, a major change in the history of Albanians occurred. Both Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers declared that Albanians are a separate nation, and they must have their own flag. Another meeting was held in Istanbul in 1879, and a special alphabet was adopted for Albanian language.

Efforts to adopt a final version of the alphabet were marked by great disagreements which lasted until 1908, when a conference was held in the town of Manastir (in present day Macedonia), which was the center of one of the four wilayahs of Albanian lands. It was named the Congress of Manastir.²⁵⁰

Albanian literature in Latin script started dealing with the national question, through poetry, prose, and speeches. Parallel to this was the movement of the translation of the Bible and other

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 93.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 296.

sacred texts of Christianity. Several schools were opened in towns and villages, and Albanian was taught in the Greek alphabet, through the publication of books and studies dealing with Albanian grammar, written by Orthodox Christian clerics attached to Greece.²⁵¹

Beside this religious movement of translating sacred Christian texts, Muslim scholars' activities blossomed too, through the publication of works on Sufi poetry and *diwan* literature, as well as prose writings and articles in the Arab alphabet. Different books were translated from Arabic, Persian, and Turkish and there was a prolific focus in religious and literary publications. Several contemporary Albanian scholars from Macedonia, Kosova and Albania critically studied this literary opus in Arabic in the form of *sixhil-lat* and *diwan*, or manuscripts of short poetry and prose. The well-known scholar and orientalist prof. Hasan Kaleshi,²⁵² Osman Myderrizi, the historian prof. Muhamet Pirraku and the literary critic prof. Mahmud

²⁵⁰ Stavro Skendi, *Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*, pp. 5-6, 334-350.

²⁵¹ Tomorr Osmani, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-92.

²⁵² On the opus of this famous Albanian orientalist, there are two important works: Riza Sadiku, *Hasan Kaleshi - jeta dhe vepra*, Prishtinë: Grafoprin 1996; Feti Mehdiu and Safet Q. Purellku, *Hasan Kaleshi - Vepra I: Studime publicistike*, Shkup: Logos-A, 1996. His Ph.d. thesis title was: *Najstariji vakufski dokumenti iz Makedonije u Jugoslaviji na arapskom jeziku*, Beograd 1960.

Hysa,²⁵³ the scholars of literature and orientalism prof. Ismail Ahmedi and prof. Mehdi Polisi, etc. enjoy great authority due to their studies in Albanian literature and history.²⁵⁴

There were two main groups in the national awakening period:

1- The literary group who wrote in Albanian with Latin and Greek alphabet, consisting of Christian Albanian authors; and

2- The Muslim scholars who wrote in Albanian with Arabic alphabet.

The latter was widespread in the wilayah of Kosova, and Manastir, as well as other Albanian towns, and greatly influenced in the proliferation of Islamic literature until 1947.²⁵⁵ There are scholars who believe that Albanian works in Arabic script were being written even as late as 1970 in Kosova.²⁵⁶ Among such authors we mention the Sufi poet Nezim Frakulla, the scholar and

²⁵³ Ibid, p. 137. He has also published his studies on the works of other Albanian Muslim authors in the 2-volume compilation *Alamiada shqiptare*, Shkup: Logos-A, 2000.

²⁵⁴ We were privileged to meet with prof. Muhamet Pirraku, prof. Ismail Ahmedi and prof. Mehdi Polisi during the research for the present work. They greatly helped us to gather precious rare materials on the topic, for which we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude!

²⁵⁵ Tomorr Osmani, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

²⁵⁶ Muhamed Mufaku, *al-Thaqafat al-albaniyya bil-abjadiyya al-arabiyya*, pp. 2-20.

cleric Muhamed Kyçyku-Çami,²⁵⁷ cleric Tahir Efendi Boshnjaku, cleric Vesel Xheladin Guta²⁵⁸ and many others.

As a result of these efforts, four attitudes on the alphabet were appeared:

1. Adopting the Latin alphabet;

2. Adopting the Greek alphabet;

3. Adopting a new alphabet, unlike the previous ones;

dhe:

4. Adopting the Arabic-Ottoman inherited by the Ottoman period.

The fourth group argued that the Noble Qur'an was written in Arabic script, and therefore it cannot be written in Latin script. Also, writing from the left to the right is an imitation of the West which drove people away from Islam. Therefore the replacement of the Alphabet was considered a sin. Beside this conservative attitude there was the view of the reformist scholars, who declared that it is wrong to think that the Qur'an orders the use of

²⁵⁷ The well known Albanian scholar from Kosova, Professor Qazim Qazimi has written his Ph.D. thesis on Muhamed Kyçyku-Çami's poem: *Jusufi dhe Zylejhaja*. Parts of this poem were published in the: *Dituria Islame* Journal published by the Islamic Community of Kosova: "*Vepra letrare e Muhamed Kyçyku-Çamit dhe poetët e Lindjes*"; No. 133 (2001); No. 134-135 (2001), "*Jusufi e Zylejhaja-histori e poetizuar*"; Nr. 143 (2002); Nr. 144-145 (2002).

²⁵⁸ Mulla Vesel Xheladini-Guta, *Perëndia më frymëzoi*, Shkup: Focus; Salih Hajdari, *Poezia e Bejtexhinjve*, pp. 344-380, 429-476; Muhamet Pirraku, *Kultura kombëtare shqiptare deri në Lidhjen e Prizrenit*, pp. 226-

Arabic.²⁵⁹ Rather, this is optional and people cannot be forced to use this alphabet. Among the Albanian intellectuals who argued in these lines were Naum Veqilharxhi, Hasan Tahsini²⁶⁰ and Sami Frashëri.²⁶¹

The Albanians in exile, such as those in Alexandria, Instabul, Bucarest and Sophia, felt a vacuum from the lack of a common alphabet from all Albanians, and believed that this is the reason why Albanians have remained in backwardness. Sami Frashëri says: “*People and nations live through their languages, and if a people do not write in their language, they will disappear and be forgotten...*”²⁶²

After long disputes and debates, they finally reached an agreement for the approval of the common Albanian alphabet. Although in 1879 there were only some minor disagreements on

227, 229, 244-249; Osmani, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-142; Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i Kulturës Islame te shqiptarët gjatë shekullit XX*, pp. 252-381.

²⁵⁹ Stavro Skendi, *Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*, p. 340.

²⁶⁰ This Albanian cleric, astronomer, psychologist and mathematician from Çamëria was the first Rector of the Istanbul University. He was well versed in Albanian, Arab, French, Turkish, and Persian cultures and believed that the Arabic, Greek, and Latin alphabets were not suitable for Albanian language, due to the specific features of the latter. Thus, he proposed that Albanian should have its own alphabet, in accordance with its features. He proposed a version of this alphabet, which was however rejected. See: Ibrahim Daut Hoxha, *Hoxhë Hasan Tahsin Efendiu-të tjerët për të*, Tiranë: AIITC, 1998, pp. 8-11, 30-33, 40, 58, 78-145; Osmani, *op. cit.*; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. 4, pp. 135-9.

²⁶¹ Osmani, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-5; Stavro Skendi, *Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*, p. 340.

²⁶² Osmani, *op. cit.*

some letters, the issue of the alphabet had not been resolved definitely



Some of the famous Albanian (Muslims and Christians), thinkers, writers and nationalist activists who discussed the issue of the Albanian Alphabet

After the abdication of Sultan Abd al-Hamid II, the Islamic world entered a severe crisis, and Albanian intellectuals used this chaos by founding many national societies in Albania and abroad, for the sake of the development of Albanian education and independence.²⁶³ By the end of the period of the formation of the alphabet, from 14.11.1908 until 22.11.1908, a big Congress was held in which only a marginal discussion was devoted to the the view of the Shari‘ah on writing from right to left, as well as the difficulty of learning the Noble Qur’an. Therefore, it seems that this issue acquired religious colouring too. Among the bitter consequences of this national congress, was the dismissal of eight imams from their positions and their banning from practicing as preachers in several districts, with the pretext that they could not read in the new Latin alphabet. They were asked to bring certificates issued from the ministry of education proving that they attended training courses on the new alphabet, that they had learned it, and that they could read and write in it.²⁶⁴

This was followed by vehement reactions from Muslims of all ethnic Albanian territories, especially the Wilayahs of Shkodra

²⁶³ For further details see: Stavro Skendi, *op. cit.*, p. 342; Qazim Xhelili, *Vehbi Dibra-personalitet dhe veprimtar i shquar i lëvizjes kombëtare*, pp. 30-78.

²⁶⁴ Stavro Skendi, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

and Kosova, who felt that this was a step towards the Christianization of Albanian Muslims.²⁶⁵

In continuation of these national, social, and religious developments another congress was held on 22.07.1909 in Dibra e Madhe, to discuss the question of education. Its results were milder than those of the previous congress. It was decided that new elementary and high schools must be open throughout Albanian lands; the official language in education and administration would be Albanian. The peculiarity of this congress is that the question of the alphabet did not arise at all, the main issue being that each Albanian had to learn how to read and write in Albanian, no matter in what alphabet.²⁶⁶ The reason why the Ottoman state had not approved Albanians' requests on the alphabet was fear from their rebellion, as these requests would be followed by requests for final independence from the Ottoman Empire.

This fear led the Shaykh al-Islam to issue a verdict on 22.03.1910, prohibiting the use of the Latin alphabet, which was communicated to every Islamic center in Albanian towns. The Ottoman state had moreover started using violence in order to close all Albanian societies and centers devoted to this question. After eight months of a chaotic situation throughout Albanian

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 342.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 343.

territories the Home Office of the Ottoman state issued an unexpected verdict, which allowed the opening of all closed schools, as well as new ones. An article of this verdict alluded to the right of the Albanian people to learn their language with its own alphabet, whereas the Qur'an was to be learned only in Arabic script.²⁶⁷

After this verdict, the social tumult ended, and perhaps this served as an introduction to Albania's independence a year later, namely on 28 November 1912.

III: IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS IN TWENTIETH CENTURY ALBANIA

The first voices of social and religious reformism were heard at the turn of the twentieth century, and especially during its first three decades, which were replete with events and developments. Meanwhile, the communist ideology had been introduced to Albanians, and the economy and the political situation greatly deteriorated before the WW II due to the ideological polarisation in Europe.

All these developments in Europe created pessimism and fear about an uncertain future. Crime was soaring, and corruption

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 350.

was in the increase, just like social injustice and spying, which made people feel rather insecure.²⁶⁸

The idea of atheism had already appeared in society, propagating the principles of materialism through schools, societies, organizations, etc. Albanian U'lama sacrificed everything to defend Islam and their country from Italian and Greek occupiers.²⁶⁹ Among the U'lama who stood against the communist ideology coming from Europe we can mention the famous scholar Hafiz Ali Korça,²⁷⁰ who was a fearless defender of the truth. We shall later elaborate on his contributions in the field of exegesis, as a concrete example of the reformist movement, but here we will pause on another issues related to him.

Inspired by the obligation of defending religion from the destructive communist ideology, Hafiz Ali Korça published the book *Bolshevizma a çkatërrim i njerëzimit* ("Bolshevism is the destruction of mankind") in 1925. This work contains verses like:

*(Bolshevizma s'pajton kurrë Bolshevism can never
agree)*

*(Me dinin e Muhamedit With the religion of
Muhammad)*

²⁶⁸ Ali M. Basha, *Islami në Shqipëri gjatë shekujve*, p. 147.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 147-148.

(Çelët do ta kenë luftën They shall always be at war)
(Gjer ditën e Kiametit.²⁷¹ Until the Day of Judgement).

Hafiz Ali Korça was distinguished for his intelligence and original thought as well as quick decision-making.²⁷² He had understood the communist ideology in depth and warned people against it. Before clarifying the great harms of this ideology, he expounds on some Qur’anic principles on property.²⁷³ He mentions the verse:

﴿ وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنْ يُنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ
بَصِيرٌ ﴾

[الشورى: 27]

*And if God were to enlarge the provision for His slaves, they would surely rebel in the earth.*²⁷⁴

This verse means that God the Almighty has decreed that different levels of provisions are necessary for the continuation of life on earth, because if all people were equally rich, life would

²⁷⁰ There is a new and important monography on this Albanian religious personality, namely Ismail Ahmedi’s doctoral thesis on his life and works, *Hafiz Ali Korça - Jeta dhe Vepra*.

²⁷¹ We warmly thank Dr, Ramiz Zekaj, Mr.Ibrahim Gashi, and Prof.Dr. Ismail Ahmedi for enabling us access to the original copies of Hafiz Ali Korca’s works from the Albanian National Library.

²⁷² See: Vernon Bogdanor, *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Institutions*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 50-51; Joel Kriger, *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, Oxford University Press, 1993; Frank Bealey, *Russian Revolution*, Oxford 1999, p. 31.

²⁷³ Hafiz Ali Korça, *Bolshevizma a çkatërrim i njerëzimit*, Mbrothësia, Kristo P. Luarasi, 1925, 1.

²⁷⁴ Al-Shura: 27

stop. That is why we must all seek our provision, in order that the whole created order continues its path to God.²⁷⁵

Hafiz Ali Korça further clarified the origin of the communist ideology: *“The bitter and accursed Bolshevik tree was planted 70-80 years ago by Marx, and then it was nurished with the water of Lenin, and we want to inform our brethren for the great animosity that Jews bear in their hearts against Muslims. In the Sura al-Mai’dah, God the Glorious says:*

﴿لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا...﴾ ، [المائدة:82]

*Verily, you will find the strongest among men in enmity to the believers the Jews and the polytheists...”*²⁷⁶

All the catatrophes and hardships that have whelmed the Islamic world, from the ancient times up to the present have been instigated by the Jews and the polytheists, and many Jews converted to Islam in order to harm it and the Muslims. Abdullah ibn Saba’a spread ideas and doubts that contradicted Islam, saying: ‘Ali is God!’ (highly elevated is He above what they ascribe to Him). In the Battle of Siffin too, the Jews played they role in secret, and even the building of the Masjid al-dirar in

²⁷⁵ Ibid; see also Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça-Jeta dhe Vepra*, p. 45; *Largpamësia denoncuese për koncepcionin bolshevik-Hafiz Ali Korça*, Jehona, No. 5, Tiranë 2000, 10.

²⁷⁶ Chapter al-Ma’ida, 83.

Madina was supported by the Jews,²⁷⁷ in order to sow doubt and cause harm. In the past they have killed prophets and messengers of God, committing many crimes against humanity.”²⁷⁸

He also warns against the Jewish danger in economy. When they failed with their plots against Christians and Muslims, they turned to economical intrigues and the formation of masonic societies, such as the Freemasons Liberal Society, whose principle was “Brotherhood and Unity among all people”. Our scholar had understood well the danger from Marxism as an ideology which was invented in the name of civilization and progress, but which was essentially nothing but a war against religion, and a way to create indefinite chaos among people.²⁷⁹

He quotes from a scholar who was imprisoned in Russia: *“Whoever believes in the greater Resurrection let him see the smaller resurrection which has taken place in Russia and Czechoslovakia. Many innocent people were killed, many mosques and shrines were demolished, many wealthy men became poor, and many members of the elite became degraded and worthless, due to the application of socialism in the form of*

²⁷⁷ On the doctrines of ancient as well as contemporary sects and their danger for Islam and Muslims, see Irfan Abd al-Fattah Hamid’s *al-Yahudiyyat arduun ta’rikhiyyun wa al-harakat al-hadith fi al-yahudiyya*, Amman: Dar Ammar, 1st ed., 2002, pp. 34-245.

²⁷⁸ Hafiz Ali Korça, “Bolshevizma a çkatërrim i njerëzimit”; 7-8.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 10-11.

communism. The storm of Noah was on the water, whereas the storm of Marx is taking place in blood.”²⁸⁰

Hafiz Ali Korça focused on another important religious question, because both international and national events were marked by a religious element. He writes: *“Karl Marx ... believed that there must be a general revolution of the working class and the downtrodden, known as the proletariat. They must acquire power, whereas all spiritual principles having to do with religion, respect, honour, and shame must be abandoned and refused!”*

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Evidently, the ideology of atheist Russia and its 1917 revolution lead by Lenin spread like wildfire, and Hafiz Ali Korça had understood the great threat of this idea which was now spreading also among Muslims in Albania. He tried to explain Marxism to Albanian Muslims, in order for them to understand its nature from its founding fathers. Shaykh Hafiz Ali Korça pointed out that Bolsheviks banned all religion, and that many priests and imams were burned alive. Jamal al-Din Afghani had pointed out in a book written fifty years earlier that communism would destroy the world and humanity to its root.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 12-13.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 14.

²⁸² Shaykh Hafiz Ali Korça did not give references for this quote by Jamal al-Din Afghani.

This evil ideology burned Qur'ans, Bibles, and scientific books. The principles of communism rejected belief in God, religion, and prophethood. In its view, the time of sacred books has ended, and from now on we must follow the Marxist Qur'an! They rejected fasting and prayer, and claimed that true happiness comes from atheism. In state school, students were taught that God does not exist.²⁸³

Hafiz Korça's method was to always rely on wholesome arguments in dealing with a problem. Statistical data, which are hard to believe, show that the whole communist phenomenon has caused unspeakable tragedies to humanity.²⁸⁴

At the end of his discourse, the author wrote that the chances of the spread of this ideology in the world are great. He pointed out the great danger it posed for humanity, and stated that Islam does not need this failed system, because Islam embraces in itself democracy, brotherhood, and true equality – since the Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) made no distinction among his companions, and the institutions of *zakah*

²⁸³ Ibid, pp. 16-21; Daut I. Hoxha, *Hafiz Ali Korça - Veprimtaria e tij në lëmin e atdhetarisë dhe arsimit-kulturës shqiptare dhe arabe-osmanepersiane*, 1995, Tiranë, pp. 5-12.

²⁸⁴ Refer to the same book (pp. 22-3) for the horrifying statistical data.

and *sadaqat al-fitr* are a guarantee for brotherhood and true religious solidarity.²⁸⁵

Among those who opposed and fought this atheistic ideology was Haxhi Vehbi Dibra-Agolli, who wrote: “*Strange indeed! is atheism,²⁸⁶ disbelief and denial of God a cure for our divisions?! We never knew about this! For a people like the Albanians, religious divisions suffice, and they want to add another divisive element through a new ideology? Religion cannot be forced on people, but we are obligated to call and invite to it. The constitution guarantees religious freedom and the call to belief. If we accept such atheistic and secular fractions, we will no doubt divide ourselves even further, and we will weaken and be unable to face the enemy, which will lead to our destruction. The enemy is kept aloof only if we are united in a common lofty goal.*”²⁸⁷

In order to better know the truth on this challenge and Albanian Muslims’ resistance to it, one must go through the speeches, sermons, and scholarly articles written by the U’lama of the time. The latter grasped the reality of the Albanian Islamic

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 22-31. This matter pertains to truths which we cannot deal with fully here. Refer to Ismail Ahmedi’s monography for further details. We shall return to it in our discussion of *tafsir*.

²⁸⁶ On critiques of atheism, Marxism, and communism, refer to Shaykh Muhammad Ghazzali’s: *Kadhaif al-haqq*, Damascus: Dar al-qalam, 2nd ed., 1997, pp. 20-23, 187-207.

²⁸⁷ Ali M. Basha, *Islami në Shqipëri gjatë shekujve*, pp. 151-2.

ummah and its life. The preached during every day of the holy month of Ramadan in mosques, masjids, and gathering places of the community on exegesis-Tafsir, Hadith, Sufism, Ethics, role of worship, and of transactions. It is said that Haxhi Vehbi Dibra's commentary on the Surah al-Fatiha alone lasted several months, due to the breadth of meaning of this blessed chapter, and the great learning and knowledge of this scholar from the Tafsir, Linguistic, Sufi, and Juridical literature.

The journal of the Islamic Community of Albania published some of Vehbi Dibra's articles. We will quote a few passages from his commentary of the Chapter al-Fatiha, in order to see how he warned Albanian Muslims against the consequences of secularism, atheism, and other destructive ideologies, while pointing out the tolerance inherent in the Noble Qur'an and Islamic Law: "*The Noble Qur'an has defined the notions of civilization, it has clarified the principles of justice, administration, learning, production, trade, economy, brotherhood, and manners. The civilization to which the Qur'an invites guarantees happiness in this life and the next.*"²⁸⁸ His commentary of the verse:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴾ [النساء: 58]

²⁸⁸ Haxhi Vehbi Dibra, *Ç'urdhëron Kur'ani-Kuptimi i Fatihasë dhe shpjegime*, Harper Woods (MI), 1993, p. 3.

God commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice ²⁸⁹, stresses out that Albanian society of that period was undergoing administrative, social, and legal corruption: *“It is our obligation to choose a person who deserves to perform a given duty, and then he is obligated to act and judge with justice. Is not this important, valuable and lofty religious philosophy valid? The life and progress of every people depends on two conditions: loyalty and justice, capable and devoted administration, and judging with justice...”*²⁹⁰

In his commentary he further points out the efforts of the enemies of Islam to sow doubt in the hearts of the Muslims. He writes that it is not enough to rely only in the faith we have inherited from our parents, because it is imitative, but we are obligated to pass into the second stage, namely in inductive belief which is gained through the study of nature and our our own selves, in order to know the Creator.²⁹¹

With regards to the national issue and patriotism, it can be said that it was a strong priority of the U'lama of the time. All the Muslim clerics from ethnic Albanian territories supported and helped the idea of Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire before the latter's decline. They also played a very active

²⁸⁹ al-Nisa': 58.

²⁹⁰ See note 86.

role in the Movement of National Awakening, because they feared the neighbouring Christian countries would occupy the last remaining wilayah of the four in which Albanians lived. The Ottoman Empire was in its last days, incapable of defending even itself, and therefore Albanians united on the question of independence, in order to save themselves from occupation from the neighbouring countries. These scholars tried to cut off all relations with the Shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire, hence their references to the love of one's fatherland, state, independence, reprehensiveness of treason, spying and collaboration with foreigners..., these hot issues and discussions were present in their sermons.

The social and political exegesis was a noticeable phenomenon in sermons and speeches of Albanian U'lama of the period. For example, in the commentary of:

﴿ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴾ [الفاتحة: 4]

“*The Master of the Day of Judgement*” (al-Fatiha: 4), Vehbi Dibra says: “*Our deeds are watched by God the Magnificent and we shall answer before Him for each action we perform. Love for one's country has great merit in Islam, as the hadith of the Prophet a.s. says, 'Love for one's country is a part of faith';*”²⁹²

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Imam San'ani says “this hadith is *mawdu'* (fabricated)”, whereas Imam al-Qari in *al-Maqasid* says: “*Lam aqif alayhi* (it is unknown to us) and

*therefore beware of treason, because treason against one's country can easily happen if a Muslim is not careful (may God protect us from this). For example, preferring imported things to those of your country is deemed treason to your state, and if the state is threatened, we are not allowed to keep silent or passive. Otherwise our behaviour is considered treason against the state.*²⁹³

The social-political doctrine in exegesis which is clearly seen in Vehbi Dibra's words was an embracing phenomenon among Albanian intellectuals of the time, who benefitted from religious sacred texts at the service of political and social interests.

Besides the social doctrine, the Sufi doctrine was also present in the commentaries of Albanian U'lama, as can be seen in Vehbi Dibra's long explication of the verse:

﴿ اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾ [الفاتحة : 6]

its meaning is true..." Imam San'ani says: "His words: *its meaning is true* are based on the Qur'anic verse where the believers say: *Why should we not fight in God's Way while we have been driven out of our homes* (al-Baqarah: 246), and from the context of the hadith it can be said that Watan can mean Paradise, or Mecca, as it was the center of the world." See the book *Kashf al-hafai wa Muzil al-Ilbas mimma ishtahara min al-ahadithi ala al-sinet al-nas* by Isma'il ibn Muhammad al-Ajluni al-Jarahi, ed.: Ahmad al-Kalash, vol. I, p. 414. In: *al-Maktabat al-Alfiyya lis-sunnah al-nabawiyah*, Electronic Library-Turath Company, (1999) Amman-Jordan.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, pp. 43-4.

“*Guide us on the straight path!*” (al-Fatiha: 6), in a Sufi vein, similar to that of al-Baydawi.²⁹⁴ When he would start his Sufi comments, he would ask those present to be patient and not be cast down. He would elaborate on the stations (*maqamat*) and unveiling (*kashf*), theophany, the relationship between the Shari‘ah, the Tariqah, and the Hakikah, and the visible and the invisible from a Sufi perspective, as a commentary to the verse:

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾ [الفاتحة : 5]

“*In Thee alone we seek help*”.²⁹⁵

This level of discourse points out to the existence of different approaches to *tafsir* in particular, and religious and intellectual issues in general. The Sufi method in the commentary of the verses proves that Sufism was very present in Albanian studies on the Qur’an.

In the end, Haxhi Vehbi Dibra explains that “*Islam is a the religion of the middle, between the two extremes, which rejects idolatry of any kind, a religion of pure monotheism guiding to God the Magnificent, who is One and without rival, in need of no son or daughter, being One without partner.*”²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ See: Dhahabi, *al-Tafsir wa al-mufasssirun*, *op. cit.*, 9th ed., vol. 1, pp. 211-16.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 104-5. On Sufism see: Irfan Abd al-Hamid’s Fattah’s *Nash’at al-falsafat al-sufiyya wa tatawwuruha*, pp. 175-249.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 120. For further details see his commentary of the Surah al-Fatiha.



Haxhi Vehbi Dibra Agolli
1867-1937

من الشخصيات الدينية الألبانية المعروفة
الشيخ المفسر الحاج وهي دبرا آغولي
صورة لغلاف تفسيره
لسورة الفاتحة



I shërgjevni i Zotit, Paqe e Allahut qoftë
me Të, ka thënë: Unë jam dërguar si mësuës.

• BIBLIOTEKA MUSLIMANE SHQIPTARE •
NR. 34

HAXHI VEHBI DIBRA
DIBRA

Ç' urdhënon Kur-ani

KUPTIMI I FATHAS ME SHPJEGJIME

BOTIMI PARË
- 1413-1993 -

ALBANIAN ISLAMIC CENTER
HARPER WOODS, MICH., U.S.A.

Ç' Urdhënon Kurani ?

Dise Nota q' kemi mundë me mbledhë nga
Vozë q' ka bërë në muzejt e Ramazanit
Fotë i Shërgjevshimi Z. Vehbi Dibra.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 لَقَدْ كُنَّا لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ الرَّحْمَنِ
 الرَّحِيمِ ۝ مَا لِكَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ۝
 إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ۝
 اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ۝
 صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۝ غَيْرِ
 الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ۝

Sample of Sheikh Haxhi Vehbi Dibra's Qur'anic Exegeses

A representative of another important group, namely the followers of the socio-political orientation who dealt with the philosophical and ideological challenges of modern thought, was Hafiz Ali Kraja.²⁹⁷ In his book²⁹⁸ *A duhet feja? A e pengon bashkimin kombëtar?*,²⁹⁹ he deals with philosophical and ethical issues, discussing different destructive ideologies of the time, and the human need for religion from the spiritual, ethical, legal and social aspect. He elaborated on a very important historical point, pertaining to Albanians's struggle with atheism: "*The history of mankind has never spoken about a people without religious feelings, be they divinely revealed or positive.*" In his view, "*the goal of Shari'ah is the protection and safety of people's concerns*

²⁹⁷ Hafiz Ali Kraja was born in 1900 and received his education in Shkodra, and in al-Az'har. Upon graduation he received the title of 'High ranking scholar'. In 1934 he published his book *A duhet feja? A e pengon bashkimin kombëtar?* In 1944 he delivered a sermon entitled: *What is Communism and its consequences for the Albanians?* when communist ideas had already appeared in Albania, and he vehemently criticized them. He had close ties with the politicians of the time, and was imprisoned by the communist regime in 1947, for 20 years. He died in 1974. See Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i Kulturës Islame*, op. cit., pp. 328-9.

²⁹⁸ This work was first published in Shkodër, in 1934, by the printing house "Ora", with a second edition in 1999 by Furkan Publishers in Skoplje, ed. Musa Gashi, which is the version we have.

²⁹⁹ It seems that our scholar did not intend to analyse the blessings of the Hereafter, but to reply to atheists, who claimed that there was no good in this world from Islam. His response is that Islam seeks the protection of individual and social rights, listing a number of these, as explained in the civil rights section of *usul al-fiqh*. One of the best books on the field is Said Ramadan al-Buti's: *Dawabit al-maslahat fi al-Shari'ah al-islamiyyah*.

in this world".³⁰⁰ Hafiz Ali Kraja also clarified that the basic foundation for the protection of human concerns in this life is morality, and that barbarians have no knowledge of morality, due to their lack of human and religious values.³⁰¹

A quick glance of the book contents and topics gives a good idea about the range of destructive ideologies the U'lama had to deal with in the first decades of the twentieth century. Beside the already mentioned issues, Hafiz Kraja has also elaborated on the truth of Islam, of religious bias and fanaticism, Islam's attitude towards atheism, and the just attitude of Islam towards Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, in the spirit of the Qur'anic verse:

﴿لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِيَسِينَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ﴾
[المائدة : 82]

"Verily, you will find the strongest among men in enmity to the believers (Muslims) the Jews and the polytheists and you will find the nearest in love to the believers those who say: "We are Christians."

It has also been related that the Prophet and his companions were saddened at the news of the byzantines' defeat against the Persians, and the following verse was revealed:

﴿غَلَبَتِ الرُّومُ فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ فِي بِضْعِ سِنِينَ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِن قَبْلُ وَمِن بَعْدُ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ [الروم : 1-4]

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 21-23.

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, pp. 24-25.

“Alif-Lâm-Mîm. The Romans have been defeated in the nearest land, and they, after their defeat, will be victorious within three to nine years.”³⁰²,

after which the heart of the Muslims became happy, and indeed the Byzantines defeated the Persians within a short time, as the verse had predicted.³⁰³

Our scholar also tackled the issue of the path mankind would take after the WW II. He also dealt with the relationship between Islam and secularism, and other philosophical discussions which preoccupied the intellectual elites.³⁰⁴

The greatest scholarly contribution to the study of the responses of the U'lama to the intellectual challenges they faced during that period, was made by the High Council of the Muslim Community in Shkodra, where a major international conference was held for the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the first issue of *Zani i Naltë*.

The researcher Muhidin Ahmeti³⁰⁵ provided us with one of his works on the efforts of this journal to expound on religious and philosophical topics, in keeping with its logo, which read: “*This journal investigates important intellectual and spiritual*

³⁰² al-Rum, 1- 4.

³⁰³ On the principles, goals, and methods of international activities of the Christian missionaries against Islam and Muslims refer to: McCarry, *The Gospel and Islam*, op. cit.

³⁰⁴ See the reference on footnote 99, pp. 21-77, where there is a wealth of information on the breadth of Hafiz Kraja's knowledge.

*issues and seeks the elevation of man to eternal values...*³⁰⁶ Mr. Ahmeti also points out that some of the most well-known clerics who published articles and debates in this journal were: Haxhi Vehbi Dibra, Hafiz Ali Korça, Qazim Efendi Hoxha,³⁰⁷ Haki Sharofi, Sali Vuçitërna, Hafiz Ismet Dibra, etj.³⁰⁸ The articles ranged from philosophy to religion, ethics, and Sufism.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ Professor Ahmeti was the first to help me with wealthy material for my research, as well as suggestions of books pertaining to my thesis. I am very indebted to him, may God reward him!

³⁰⁶ Islam Dizdari, “*Zani i Naltë - përmbledhje kumtesash*”; Vepimtari shkencore me rastin e 75-vjetorit të botimit të revistës “*Zani i Naltë*”, Shkodër: Rozafat 1999, p. 35.

³⁰⁷ See the compilation of Qazim Hoxha’s writings, “Ç’urdhëron Kur’ani?” in *Zani i Naltë*, 1937, pp. 369-384; Nr. 12 (1938), pp. 4-7, 11-29, 57-61 and other issues.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 36.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 38.

N. 6 KALLNUR 1927 Vit' i IV.

Zani i Nalte

REVISTA FETARE

MERRET EDHE ME FILOSOFI, MORAL,
LITERATURË KOMBTARE, SOCJOLOGJI.

DEL NJI HERË NË MUEJ.

Lënda :

1. Urim
2. Tefsiri i Suro-i Zil-
zilit
3. Mir-se edhe Han' e
uruar
4. Hana e Ramazanit
5. Të rinjt e sotshem si
mejtajnë dhe kujt i
mbesojnë ?
6. Program mbi detyrat
e myderriz-Vatave . .
per predikime qi do . .
te apim neper Faltore
7. Kandsi e martesës . .
8. Fluturimet e Shpirtit.
9. Deklarat

ADRESA:

Drejtor'i Revistes

H. ISA DOMNI

NË TIRANË



Shtypun në Xhemazil-ahar 1845

SHKODËR

Shtypshkroja „Ora e Shkodres“
1927

Albanian Islamic Journal- Albanian Muslim Community
(Courtesy of <http://zaninalte.al/zani-i-nalte-1923-1939/>)

In a period of increasing attacks against Islam throughout the Muslim world, Albanian intellectuals played a crucial role in the defense of religion.

Another Islamic journal from this period was: *Udha e së vërtetës*, whose publisher was the Albanian cleric, scholar, and jurist Kadri Hoxha from Prishtina. He was distinguished for his quick wits and serious studies, and he had a clear political vision. The articles focused on Islamic values and critiques of different worldviews, on the institution of marriage in Islam etc. They called for reform of some negative Albanian customs regarding forced marriage of daughters and minor girls, as well as advocating equality of spouses in standing, property, age, and knowledge in order for a more stable marriage. The lack of compatibility in these elements often led to severe problems within marriage and society.

In his articles Kadri Prishtina criticizes spying, treason, and conversion of Muslims to Christianity. In his view, since God has revealed the Qur'an which discerns between truth and falsehood, and man is capable of separating good from evil, and harm from benefit, then he must choose the best and there is no need to call to a new religion. He also wrote on religious pluralism and stated that Islam was a religion of freedom and equality.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ Qemajl Morina, *Hoxhë Kadri Prishtina*, op. cit., pp. 25-35, 37-48, 63-67. On some important intellectual and doctrinal issues, see "Bedi'uz-Zeman Se'id Nursi"; International Conference on Islamic Revival, Istanbul,



Shaikh Kadri Lutfullah Prishtina & Albanian Scholars and activists

It is thus clear that a great deal of discussion was going on regarding these fundamental topics in Albanian lands immediately before and after independence. They marked the period of the turn of the twentieth century.

This is the end of our presentation on the political, social, and religious situation in Albanian lands, as an introduction to the analysis of the works on exegesis that will follow. We believe that the history of Islam in Albania as well the scholarly efforts of Albanian U'lama cannot be fully understood without a proper understanding of these important elements. I do not claim to have exhausted the subject, but to have only touched upon the most

1992, tr. Orhan Muhamed Ali, pp. 55-83, 1st ed., 1997; Yeni Bosna,

relevant historical, political, social, and religious events for my thesis.

We will continue with concrete examples of the social reformist doctrines in the modern period, after the theoretical aspect dealt with in the previous chapter. We will start with the well-known scholar Hafiz Ali Korça.

CHAPTER TWO

SUNNI REFORMIST SOCIAL DOCTRINE IN EXEGESIS AS REFLECTED IN THE THOUGHT OF HAFIZ ALI KORÇA



INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS REFORMIST THOUGHT AMONG ALBANIANS

The reformist ideological doctrine among Albanian intellectuals was a widespread phenomenon. It originated during the Ottoman rule, and soon penetrated Albanian and Bosnian lands as shown by the commentaries, writings, and translations which dealt with contemporary issues, and the presence of the ideas of the leading thinkers of the reformist school, such as Shaykh Mustafa Maraghi, Muhammad Farid Wajdi, Jamal al-Din Afghani, Muhammad Abduhu, Rashid Rida, etc.³¹¹

The reason for the spread of this intellectual phenomenon among the Albanians-as we mentioned earlier- was the fact that a good number of them had studied in al-Az'har and in India,³¹² starting from the second half of the nineteenth century. Their contact with their former professors influenced them in the adoption of the latter's ideas.

The influence of the reformist school on Albanian thinkers was significant. A glance at the writings published in Albanian

³¹¹ Ismail Bardhi, *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu dhe ekzegjeza e tij kur'anore*, p. 92.

³¹² Roberto Maroco de la Roka, *Kombësia dhe fetë në Shqipëri 1920-1944*, p. 209.

journals of the time, including those of the High Council of Islamic Affairs will show that they revolve around issues which were prevalent at the time: *the need for religion and piety, the relationship between Islam and the West, the challenges of modernism, the new arguments of religion on theism, woman's emancipation, employment, and position, human rights, secularism, religious tolerance, solidarity among followers of the same religion, and the problem of ideologies like communism, socialism, capitalism etc.*³¹³

This is a clear indicator of the extent of the penetration of reformist ideas in the minds and hearts of Albanian scholars at the turn of the twentieth century. In this study we cannot deal with the activity of all these scholars, but we will consider a concrete example of the scholar who is considered the leading figure of the Albanian reformist school, as manifested in his sermons, speeches, articles, books and exegetic works, namely Hafiz Ali

³¹³ See the: *Kultura Islame* Journal, which the Islamic Community of Albania used to publish, no. 3-4 (Nëntor-dhjetor 1941), "*Islami është gjallë*" by the Albanian orientalist Vexhi Buharaja, who wrote on the Arab encyclopedist Muhammad Farid Wajdi, editor of the al-Azhar Journal. He also wrote the article "*Fuqia e Islamit në botë*", pp. 96-99. See issues 17-19 (1941); where the names of the reformist thinkers Jamal al-Din Afghani, Farid Wajdi are given. See also issue 10 (1944), pp. 272-6; issue 20 (Prill-Maj 1942) and the important article: "*Feja, kultura dhe shkenca*", pp. 226-9; issue 1-2 (1946), where in a long commentary on verse 28:88, the author expounds on concepts of modern physics, evolution, etc.

Korça.³¹⁴ His commentary is no longer extant, only a part of it has survived; other works have been burned during the communist regime in Albania.

Hafiz Ali Korça is well-known as a scholar of great learning, a poet, writer, scientist, exegete, and one of the leading Albanian U'lama of the first half of the twentieth century. He harmonized religious activities with politics, without distinguishing between religion, politics and state interests.

I: GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE SCHOLAR AND HIS TIMES

1. NAME AND BIRTHPLACE:

Hoxhë Hafiz Ali Iljaz Kadiu,³¹⁵ better known as Hafiz Ali Korça, a surname he acquired from his town of birth, was born in

³¹⁴ An important work has recently been published in Albanian by prof. Ismail Ahmedi, which deals with his literary, national and religious thought, as well as its influence in Albanian modern history. *Hafiz Ali Korça-Jeta dhe Vepra* also touches upon his commentary of a number of Qur'anic verses, without mentioning the author's doctrinal school. This study was very helpful due to its rich bibliography, and we based our section on Hafiz Ali Korça's life and works on this work as well as our own research of his works and manuscripts at the Albanian National Library.

³¹⁵ The title "*Hafiz*" is used among Albanians and Turks for a person who has memorised the Qur'an with *tajwid*, and is a honorific title even though the person may not speak Arabic. It is not used for the memorisers of

1873,³¹⁶ other sources say 1870,³¹⁷ in Korça, South-Eastern Albania. He hailed from a family of religious intellectuals who revered scholars and knowledge, and he was destined to continue on the footsteps of his predecessors in science and knowledge.³¹⁸

The town of Korça played an important role during the nineteenth century, in economy, education, and literature, due to its geographical position, which connects Albania to Greece and to the Eastern Balkans. The first school to operate with a Latin alphabet was opened in this very town, which became the center for political activists living in Rumania, Bulgaria, and other neighbouring countries.

Orthodox Greece considered Korça a center for the spread of missionaryism and colonialist attacks against Islamic culture in Albania. There were 126 Greek missionary schools in this town, as well as in Berat. It was God's will that this Muslim scholar be born in this town, and thwart their plots.³¹⁹

Hafiz Ali Korça lived at a time of general national awakening among Albanians. The literary movement was at its

the Prophetic Hadith in Albanian tradition. This title remains attached with the name of person until his death, like the title of "*Haji*" for the person who performed the Pilgrimage in Makkah.

³¹⁶ Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça-Jeta dhe Vepra*, pp. 8-9.

³¹⁷ During my research on his life and works, I came across the highly valuable study *Hafiz Ali Korça-Veprimtaria e tij në lëmin e Atdhetarisë dhe Arsim-kulturës arabe-osmane-persiane* by the contemporary historian Ibrahim Daut Hoxha, to whom I am indeed very indebted.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 1.

peak, but it became marginalized during the communist regime, which ignored its scholarly importance. He was one of the figures who produced literary studies in Albanian, Persian, Turkish, and Arabic while in migration. His intellectual biography is rich with important events, as he dedicated all his life to God and to the liberation of his homeland from colonialism. He called for the creation of an Islamic and national awareness, the re-acquisition of the lost rights, and for religious freedom besides political freedom and independence from the colonianists.³²⁰ The demand for religious freedom and independence as a central activity of Albanian Muslim clerics has been reflected in their writings and activities up to the present.

2. EDUCATION:

Hafiz Ali Korça received his first teaching during these political and religious developments. He memorized the Qur'an at the age of twelve. The sources do not mention his teacher. He completed his early education in his hometown, and his university studies in Istanbul, where he studied Islamic sciences, Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish and French. During this time, he also studied Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature and marvelled at

³¹⁹ Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça-Jeta dhe Vepra*, p. 12.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 6-7; Ibrahim Daut Hoxha, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15.

the thought of great philosophers and poets like as Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina, Rumi, Omar Khayyam, Sa'di etc.³²¹ He was greatly influenced by the scholarly ambience of Istanbul and the different thinkers living and writing there.³²²

³²¹ On Hafiz Ali Korça's and other scholars' contributions in the translation of Persian literature, see: Shefik Osmani, *Panteoni iranian dhe iranologët shqiptarë*, pp. 272-6.

³²² Ismail Ahmedi, "*Hafiz Ali Korça-Jeta dhe Vepra*"; 16-17; Ibrahim Daut Hoxha, "Veprimtaria e tij në lëmin e atdhetarisë dhe arsim-kulturës"; 11-17.

1927

ZANI I NALTË

REVISTA FETARE

Tefsiri i Sure-i Duhasë.

Kjo Sure ka zbritur në Meqge edhe përmban njëmbdhet Ajete.

Sikaku i zbritjes të kësaj Suresë, përdelhet a thuhet në venimin i Vahjit pak ditë. Pra zbritja e kësaj sure, H. Muhammed Mustafajt po i jep një ngushëllim math edhe po e shkruan se Zlot me madhësin e ka me i a plotësuar mirësitë me të mëdha tjerën tjetër. Ky venim i zbritjes së Vahjit ka qënë në muh e Profetësisë së Tij.

№. 2 1929
Tiranë

Zani i Naltë

REVISTA FETARE

Tefsiri i Sure-i Felek-ut.

Ka zbritur në Meqge dhe përmban pes ajete

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
قُلْ اِنّٰی بَرِیْءٌ مِّنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

Felek është mingjezi dhe Rabbi (Zoti) i të shtë Allahut që ka vënë rregullin e yjeve që të bëhet në toket që kanë e gjatë dhe me urrejtjen e saj të mbretërojë këtu, pastaj shen mingjezi që errësinë edhe çdukë.

Tefsiri i Suresë së Termetit.

Në formen tjetër folme përmbi tefsirin e Ajeteve:
اِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ زُلْزَالَهَا . . . وَاخْرَجَتْ الْاَرْضُ اَنْحَالَهَا .

Kishim thënë se, kur toka do të dridhet me një dridje të madhe, e do të tronditet me një tronditje të jashtëzakonshme, dhe ç'ka branda prej metaleve dhe të gjitha ato gjëra që ka gëlltitur do të çfryjë dhe do të nxjerrë jashtë, e kështu do të vish në krye krijimit.

Viti VIII. Kalinduer-Fruer 1933 Ramazan Shevval 1351 Nr. 4 5

ZANI I NALTË

RIVISTË FETARE
E BOTON
KOMUNITETI MUSLIMAN SHQIPTAR

DHANTI RAMAZANI



Ç' është

KUR-ANI?

Numër i Posaçëm Kushtue Nalësis së
KURANIT

Drejtor' i Përgjegjshëm: HAKI SHAROPI

SHKODER

Shtypsh' roja « Ora e Shkodës »
1933

Albanian Islamic Journal- Albanian Muslim Community
(Courtesy of <http://zaninalte.al/zani-i-nalte-1923-1939/>)

3. FAMILY AND DESCENDANTS:

Hafiz Ali Korça's family lived in the town of Shijak (Albania). He had five sons and two daughters. His elder son Majd al-Din and second son Bahr al-Din died in their youth in an accident, whereas his third son Ilias, who had graduated from the Madrasa of Tirana, was sentenced to 25 years in prison during the Enver Hoxha regime. He was released in 1968, after serving for 15 years, and he died in 1975. He was the true heir of Hafiz Ali Korça's knowledge, but it was God's will for him to die too young. The fourth son, Salah al-Din graduated from the Military Academy in Italy and worked as an officer instructor in the Albania Royal Court. After the WW II, he resigned from this position, and was condemned to death in 1944. After the fall of the communist regime, he was decorated with the medal of the Martyr of Democracy by the Albanian President. Salah al-Din had a son named Majd al-Din, who lives in the U.S.A. The fifth son, Ala al-Din, also graduated from the Military Academy of Rome, and he returned to Albania upon his father's call to serve his homeland and teach the military skills to his people, but he was also imprisoned by the Communist regime for 4 years. He died in

1982. One of the daughters of Hafiz Ali lives in Tirana, and the other lives in Durrës.³²³

4. ACADEMIC AND RELIGIOUS POSITIONS:

1. He was officially invited for the crowning ceremony of Prince Wied as the King of Albanians, in 1914. Hafiz Ali read the welcome address in French.

2. In 1916 he was appointed Head of Education of several bigger towns.

3. From 1918-1924 he was Head of the Islamic Supreme Council in Albania.

4. From 1924-1949 he taught Arabic, Exgesis (Tafsir), Logics, and other subjects at the madrasa of Tirana.

5. From 1924-1938 he worked on the Qur'an commentary for the Zani i Naltë Journal, and was considered as the only Albanian exegete of the period.

6. From 1949-1959 he was deported to Kavaja, where he continued to teach secretly.

7. He worked as an adviser to the Minister of Education.³²⁴

³²³ Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça - Jeta dhe vepra*, pp. 51-53.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 41, 42, 43, 44, 49, 56, 63.

5. CONSEQUENCES OF HIS PATRIOTIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES:

Scholar-Hoxhë Hafiz Ali Korça relates many incidents from his life, in some of which he was ill-treated. We will only relate one such account for brevity of space.

On Monday morning, December 18, 1910, a large crowd (according to one account, 12,000 people) had gathered in front of his house and started hurling stones, in opposition to his patriotic views against the Young Turks policies for the rekindling of Turkish nationalism. The latter claimed that every citizen of the Empire must be considered an Ottoman. This movement was started and supported by Zionism, in order to destroy the Ottoman Empire, and it was opposed by the Albanian elites.

Hafiz Ali Korça relates that besides his opponents there were also those who supported and helped him, some of whom even mounted him on a horse and started shouting: “*Long live Albanian language and the father of Albanian language!*” After several intellectuals held speeches, Hafiz Ali rose and spoke too, ending his speech with a prayer in three languages: Arabic, Turkish, and Albanian, thanking God for the blessings He had granted him and for having created different peoples who speak in different languages and dialects. He also said that this did not mean we are opposed to Arabic, because it is the language of the

Qur'an. Rather, as the new Turkish law of 1908 allowed the use of Albanian, the learning of the Albanian alphabet was eagerly awaited, and nothing could stop this.³²⁵

After this incident, some Ottoman authorities accused Hafiz Ali as a Westernized cleric who supported the Latinization of Albanian culture. Because of his views, he was threatened with execution and deportation. In his responses, he explained that each language had its peculiarities, and since Albanian is an Indo-European language, it too had its own characteristics, which had absolutely nothing to do with the collapse of the Caliphate, or Albanians' distancing from it. The letters of the alphabet are a means for writing, they are neither believers nor disbelievers, neither Muslim nor non-Muslim.³²⁶

The question of the Albanian alphabet acquired political, religious, and educational dimensions for all Albanians. The unification of Albanian language was of paramount importance for Muslim clerics as well as Christian Albanians living in exile in countries like Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, U.S.A., etc.³²⁷ The Albanian awakening of the period sought to unite the Albanians who had spread throughout the world, inviting them to return to their homeland in order to save Albania from further

³²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 30; Hafiz Ali Korça, *Shtatë ëndrrat e Shqipërisë*, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-60.

³²⁶ *Ibid*.

³²⁷ Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça - Jeta dhe Vepra*, pp. 28-29.

disintegration and occupation by neighbouring countries. The political situation of Albanians did not look promising in view of the powerful countries' ambitions.

According to most of the Albanian historians, this was the reason why the Muslim clergy accepted the use of the Latin alphabet. Otherwise they would have continued to use the Arabic script as was the norm in Albanian Sufi literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, due to its being very common. Western and Slavic colonialism urged the Albanian intelligentsia to accept the Latin alphabet as a first step towards the destruction of Islam and the distortion of the Qur'an, encouraging the use of dialects instead of a codified language, which can be seen in the earlier writings of certain orientalists.

Now, Hafiz Ali's attitude differed from those who sought to completely remove the Arabic script, by replacing it with the Latin script. He argued that the alphabet was not a factor in the progress of a nation. One cannot explain the economical development of Japan, China, Taiwan, South Korea and other countries who still use their traditional alphabets. Rather, other factors have a saying in the progress and development of a nation.

Kultura Islame

E PËRMUAJSHME

FETARE / LETRARE / DITUNORE / ARTISTIKE

ORGAN I
KOMUNITETIT
MUSLIMAN
SHQIPTAR

Drejtor përgjegjes: S. Bega / Redaktor: Sh. Putra

Drejtimi: KULTURA-ISLAME — TIRANE

VITI III - Kallnuer-Shkurt-Mars 1942-xx - Dhilixhe-Muharrem-Seter 1361 - N. 5 6-7

41

KULTURA ISLAME

FLETA E TEFSIRIT

Tefsiri i Kuranit

اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم . بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
من اجل ذلك كتبنا على بني اسرائيل انه من قتل نفساً بغير نفس او فسد في الارض
فكأنما قتل الناس جميعاً و من احياها فكأنما احيا الناس جميعاً و لقد جاءتهم رسالنا بالبينات
ثم ان كثيراً منهم بعد ذلك في الارض لمسرفون . ٥ : ٣٢

Për këtë arsye vendosëm për Bijt e Israilit t'ën një njeriut ka bërë një punë të mirë si kur
këtë dispozitë:
"Kushdo që vret një njeri pa pasë ndanji patën ardhë edhe Profitet me mrekulli, por

After banning of the magazine (*Zani i Nalte-Loud Voice*), the Albanian Muslim Community started its activities later with the new name of the Islamic magazine (*Kultura Islame-Islamic Culture*)

HIS RESPONSE TO THE ACCUSATION OF INCITING SEPARATION FROM THE OTTOMAN CALIPHATE:

Hoxhë Hafiz Ali Korça was accused for his national patriotic activities and the acceptance of the Latin alphabet, as allegedly seeking separation from the caliphate. However, these accusations were unfounded for the following reasons:

1. Sheikh Hafiz Ali Korça categorically rejected them. In his letter to the governor Talat Pasha, who had a similar opinion as the accusers, Hafiz Ali said: *“Albania has offered and sacrificed many brave men for the Ottoman Empire and it has never sought to separate from the latter”*

2. *“The Albanian people are immersed in ignorance and illiteracy, and in order to emerge from this state and acquire knowledge they must be allowed to use this alphabet.”* Talat Pasha’s response was: *“Albanians know Turkish and have no need for Albanian language”*; to which the Hafiz replied: *“How can a people progress and blossom who have no language, knowledge, industry, and wealth? Turkey has no use from a people which lives a wretched primitive life in the jungles of Africa. Through these letters, the teaching of the language and*

science people can progress and save themselves and the others”.³²⁸

There is another reason why the Hafiz was lead to accept this step, and this can be seen in his works. In his view, Albania is a multireligious and multiethnic country, and in order to avoid grudge and divisions among the different religious groups, and to preserve religious tolerance as opposed to the incitement of conflict, it is better for Albanians to have a single, unifying alphabet.

This attitude of Hafiz Ali Korça can be clearly seen in his dialogue with the Ottoman Minister of Education in Albania, governer Emrulla Bey. Historical sources mention that the Minister told him: *“You wish to abandon the Noble Qur’an through this request, and to move away from Turkish, leaving your children without a faith.”* Hafiz Ali replied: *“We will never ever abandon the Qur’an, or Turkish language, and if you wish to introduce this law in the new codex of the State Constitution, do so. If Albanian schools are opened in Albania you may supervise them and send inspectors therein, and if they find out that the Qur’an and Turkish are not being taught, close them at once.”*³²⁹

Hafiz Ali Korça goes on to mention that he has written a letter to Shakyh al-Islam, informing him about his dialogue with

³²⁸ Hafiz Ali Korça, *Shtatë ëndrrat e Shqipërisë*, p. 59.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 60-61.

the Minister of Education, and requesting him to convince the two governors Talat Pasha and Enver Pasha for this decision. Indeed, Shaykh al-Islam did convince Talat Pasha for the alphabet, whereas Enver Pasha was never convinced. Shaykh al-Islam had fully supported Hafiz Ali Korça, encouraging him to write articles in the Turkish newspapers, as he was impressed by the beauty of style of Hafiz Ali's writings.³³⁰

His attitude on the matter is conveyed in the following poetry:

Shkronjat ngjyrë feje s'kanë- vegla për të shkruar janë;

Letters have no religious colouring, rather they are writing tools

Gjuha me çdo shkronja shkruhet, kjo hallall kjo haram s'thuhet

Language is written in any script, and is not subject to legal norms

Kot e bëni vegël fenë- na turbulloni atdhenë..."

No use in making religion a tool in hand, for thus you only unsettle our homeland

From what has been said it is clear that Hafiz Ali Korça's intention was not cessation from Ottoman rule, or opposition to it, or abandonment of the Noble Qur'an. His intention was only the adoption of the Latin alphabet for Albanians.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

6. DEATH:

Shaykh Hafiz Ali Korça became ill in the town of Kavaja, where he was deported, and died on December 31, 1956. His funeral rites and prayer were lead by his student and future head of the Islamic Community of Albania, the late Haxhi Hafiz Sabri Koçi.³³¹

³³¹ Ismail Ahmedi, op. cit., pp. 5-51.

PART TWO

HAFIZ ALI KORÇA'S ACTIVITIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM

1. WORKS OF A POLITICAL NATURE:

1. “Bolshevizma³³² a Ç’katërimi i Njerëzimit”³³³
2. “Shtatë³³⁴ ëndrrat e Shqipërisë”³³⁵

His unpublished works:

1. “Filosofi e vjetër”;
2. “Filosofi mbi besimet myslimane”; dhe:
3. “Logjika”.³³⁶

³³² Hafiz Ali Korça had a keen perception of economic concepts and a clear vision of the harms of this system. He writes that the spread of this idea was very dangerous for Europe and Albania.

³³³ Printed by Mbrothësia Publishers; March 1925, Shkodër.

³³⁴ This *diwan* in poetry and prose was political in nature, and was published in 1924. It contains dreams Hafiz Ali Korça had seen and written down. He mentions the dangers threatening Albania from without and from within: Russian, Italian, and Greek colonialism from without; and immoral leaders and politicians from within. He distributed it privately and when the government found out about it, they dismissed him from his position as the Head of the Supreme Council of the Shari‘iah, but he continued to teach logics and Arabic at the madrasa until 1949.

³³⁵ Published by the state printing house, Tirana: 1944.

2. POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPERS AND HIS CORRESPONDENCES WITH MUSLIM KINGS AND LEADERS OF OTHER COUNTRIES

Some of the newspapers in which Hafiz Ali Korça's writing were published:

- **al-Sabah**; الصباح
- **Aksham**; أقشام
- **Siratun Mustaqim**; صراط مستقيم
- **Bayan al-Haqq**; بيان الحق
- **Aksu Sada-Anatol seneleri**; عكس صدا – أناضول سنلري
- **Al-al-laj**; الحلاج newspaper in Iran published his articles

in Persian.

- **Sl-sijase**; السياسة newspaper in Egypt published his articles in Arabic.³³⁷

³³⁶ Hafiz Ali Korça, *Bolshevizma a Çkatërim i njerëzimit*, p. 1.

³³⁷ Hafiz Ali Korça, *Shtatë ëndrrat e Shqipërisë*, pp. 22, 27, 31, 41, 48, 55, 61.

There are indications that Hafiz Ali's articles gained the sympathy of Shaykh al-Islam, who fully supported the continuation of his writings.³³⁸

The Hafiz also corresponded with the Rector of al-Az'har University, Shaykh Mustafa Maraghi. In a letter from 1939, Shaykh Maraghi wrote: "*Respected and honoured Professor Ali, Assalamu alaikum wa rahmat Allah! After these cordial greetings I would like to inform you that I read your last letter, which was written from the heart of a believing man...*"³³⁹

Hafiz Ali also corresponded with King Faruq of Egypt and the King of Hyderabad, Osman Nizami, both of whom he informed that: "*Albanians have ended up like orphans,³⁴⁰ without any help from anybody, the best and most fertile lands had been allotted to the neighbouring Greece and Yugoslavia, whereas the poor Albanians have been left with hills and unfertile rocks.*"³⁴¹

3. HIS METHODOLOGICAL WORKS AND ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOLS TEXTBOOKS

1. Children's primer;

2. Arabic alphabet;

³³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 61.

³³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 77.

³⁴⁰ Cf. my respected mentor Prof. Abd al-Qahhar Dawud al-Ani's remarks, (may Allah bless his soul).

³⁴¹ Ismail Ahmedi, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-49; Hafiz Ali Korça, *Shtatë ëndrrat e Shqipërisë*, pp. 75-77.

3. **Grammar-Syntax book Albanian-Arabic;**
4. **Ilmi Bejan-Retorika;**
5. **Myslimanija;**³⁴²
6. **Mevludi** ³⁴³ **a jetë e pastër e Pejgamberit;**³⁴⁴
7. **Treqind**³⁴⁵ **e tri fjalët e Imam Aliut;**³⁴⁶
8. **Gjylistani-Trendafilishta e Saadiut;** ³⁴⁷
9. **Rubaijati-Katrorët e Umer Hajjamit;**
10. **Jusufi me Zelihanë-a Ahsenul-Kasas; dhe:**
11. **Historia e shenjtë dhe të katër Halifetë.**

³⁴² One of the theological questions Hafiz Ali dealt with was the Divine Attributes according to the Maturidi school, which strips God from any of the attributes of His creatures, and the issue of belief: it neither increases nor decreases, rather it is either strengthened or weakened. He has also dealt with the question of what constitutes disbelief (*kufir*), in which he was very strict, forbidding the accusation of a Muslim who commits minor sins as *kafir*.

³⁴³ Third printing, November 1919, Nikaj, Shkodër.

³⁴⁴ Similar in style to Busayri's *Burdah*, and even borrowing some of its concepts. In this poem the author stresses the necessity of putting the Qur'an and Sunnah to practice as a *sine qua non* of bliss in both worlds. He writes that all people must respect monotheism, and claims that the Qur'an contains in itself all the sciences.

³⁴⁵ Korça Publishers, Korçë, 1910.

³⁴⁶ In view of prof. Ismail Ahmedi, this is a translation of some of the wise sayings from the *Nahj al-balagha* ("The Path of Eloquence") compiled by Sharif al-Radi, but this may not be true, because Hafiz Ali has not mentioned the source from which he quoted these sayings and advice of Imam Ali r.a. He only mentions that he gathered these sayings, which he translated for the Albanian readers. During the reading of Hafiz Ali's book, I came across certain hyperbolisations in some of the sayings, which are hard for the mind to accept, as they are doubtful and unacceptable. And God knows best.

4. A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE ENCYCLOPEDIA WORK POINTING CLEARLY TO HAFIZ ALI'S REFORMIST IDEAS

“**Historia e shenjtë islame dhe katër Hulefai-Rashidinët**”, is considered among his most voluminous works after the great commentary, and at the same time it constitutes a reference for his scholarly and religious ideas. In this book he dealt with major questions, which we shall analyse in detail, in order to clearly see his reformist thought.³⁴⁸

I. THE REASON FOR WRITING THE BOOK

The revered scholar pointed out that he had thought for thirty years about writing a sacred history of Islam as a textbook for his students, in a poetical form which could be easier for teaching and reading, in the way of the scholar's from other fields, such as literature, Hadith, Fara'id (*Science of Inheritance in Islam*) and Grammar.

At that time, Albanian poetry had reached its peak, and being a poet himself our scholar decided to try his abilities in this

³⁴⁷ Mbrothësia, “Kristo P. Luarasi”; Tiranë 1917.

³⁴⁸ Shtypshkronja “Shkodra”, Tiranë 1942.

book. In the introduction he mentions that he has written this work in accordance with the traditional principles of poetry, while at the same time challenging his contemporaries who boasted of nationalist feelings, and saying that they could not write poetry because they did not know Albanian well enough, and therefore they could not maintain the metrics. He also writes that poetry is not for every one, but that his verses came from his heart.³⁴⁹

His verses are fluid and fine as pearls, and he put a great deal of effort to perfect his style.³⁵⁰ He writes that this book has no fabrications and that the reader will get the impression that he is reading a Qur'anic commentary. In his treatment of the history of the prophets, he has sifted facts from legends taken from distorted versions of the Torah. The author mentions the references that have helped him in the compilation of this book, such as Rashid Rida's *Tafsir al-Manar* (تفسير المنار) Tabari's *Ta'rikh-History of Kings and Nations* (تاريخ الأمم والملوك للإمام الطبري) as well as many other works without giving their authors's names, such as *Ta'rikh rawdat al-ahbab* (تاريخ روضة الأحاب) (*Ta'rikh rawdat al-safa'*; (تاريخ روضة الصفاء) , *Ta'rikh al-islam*; (تاريخ الإسلام) , *Murad al-ibar*; (مراد العبر) *Ta'rikh al-anbiya'*; (تاريخ الأنبياء) , *Ta'rikh al-din al-islam*; (تاريخ الدين

³⁴⁹ It is known that the famous poets of the pre-Islamic period, such as Imru'u al-Qays, al Nabigha Dhubyani, and later Abu al-Ala' al-Ma'arri did not complicate their verses, because the latter issues forth from their soul. The same was the case with Hafiz Ali Korça.

(قصص الأنبياء), *Kisas al-anbiya'*; (الإسلامي), *Ta'rikh al-asr al-sa'adah* (تاريخ عصر السعادة) etc.³⁵¹

Then the author deals with the question of God's Unity using the deductive method of inferring His Being from existence. Hafiz Ali Korça was influenced by the scientific *tafsir*,³⁵² and he believed that the following verse was proof of the existence of living beings in other planets:

﴿ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ [الشورى: 29]

*And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and whatever living creatures He has dispersed in them both. And He is All-Potent over their assembling whenever He wills.*³⁵³

He believed that with the progress of science this thesis would be proved. He argued that the phrase *in them both* (فيهما) implies the existence of living beings on earth and in heaven, and that these creatures are called “moving beings” (دواب) that walk

³⁵⁰ Historia e shenjtë dhe të katër Halifetë, pp. 1-4.

³⁵¹ Ibid, p. 4-7.

³⁵² On the Qur'an and astronomy, see: Muhammad Abd al-Azim al-Zurkani, *Menahil al-irfan fi 'ulum al-Qur'an*, Dar Qutayba, 1st ed., vol. 2, pp. 406-12, where the author writes that five principles must be remembered when discussing this matter: i) *The Qur'an was revealed as a guide and guidance, and not a handbook of astronomical sciences, because these sciences are changing constantly*; ii) *the Qur'an invites to these sciences, as it calls for the study, investigation and use of the blessings of the universe*; iii) *the Qur'an refers to all the beings as submitting to God's will*; iv) *when the Qur'an mentions guidance in its verses, it includes astronomical knowledge, because it is the word of God*; v) *the method used in the Qur'anic verses is clear, succinct and convincing* (pp. 409-12).

on their feet or crawl.³⁵⁴ Then the author recommends the commentary of Fakhr al-Razi, to readers who wish to know more, because it contains scientific and religious details.³⁵⁵

Hafiz Ali also considers the creation of the world, and criticizes those Western philosophers who deny it, by pointing out to evidence from different scientific disciplines such as geology, in order to prove that matter is not a product of chance, but it has

³⁵³ Shura, 29.

³⁵⁴ On 26.12.2002, the Arabic TV channel ART in Kuala Lumpur-Malaysia, broadcasted a program on exegesis, in which a similar commentary was offered by the contemporary Egyptian scholar, Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazzali(*may Allah bless his soul*): "...*The existence of other living beings in other planets does not mean that they are in human form, and if God wills it, He can gather them in a planet. But the claim of modern science that water is the origin of life is logically untrue, e.g. the fish breathe in water, whereas man in air. If the fish were to be left in the air, they would die, just as human beings would drown if they were left in water...In any case, this is the meaning of the verse and this is what the exegetes have said...*". In our view, there may be other creatures in other planets, but it is impossible to have human being, both from the rational and Shari'ah aspect. The latter is implied in the verse: *Thereof (the earth) We created you, and into it We shall return you, and from it We shall bring you out once again.* (Taha, 55). Here, the pronoun (it) (منها) means the earth. In another verse God says: *Therein you shall live, and therein you shall die, and from it you shall be brought out.* (al-A'raf, 25). Here too the phrase *therein* (فيها) and pronoun (from it) (منها) means the earth in which we live, and where Adam and Eve a.s. descended. Based on these verses, life, death and resurrection took an will take place on earth. Whereas according to the logical aspect, God has sealed the heavenly messages with the last Prophet - Muhammed a.s., who was a man like all men who lived on earth. If there are human beings elsewhere, God would have to send messengers for them too. However this is impossible, Therefore, Shaykh Ghazzali's words may be only a possibility of life in another planets. The lecture of Shaikh al Ghazali came as coincidence during my analysis and elaboration on the same topic which Hafiz Ali Korca delt.

³⁵⁵ Hafiz Ali Korça, *Historia e shenjtë dhe të katër Halifetë*, pp. 10-11.

been created by God.³⁵⁶ God the Almighty created time and space, but He has no beginning or end, and everything perishes save God.³⁵⁷

He also rejects the Darwinian theory of evolution, and says that the mind does not accept the successivity of living beings or transformism, and that both hypothesis are baseless. God is the Mover of matter and He has given every being its form and then guided it aright.³⁵⁸ It seems that in this he referred to the verse:

﴿ قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى ﴾ [طه: 50]

*Our Lord is He Who gave to each thing its form and nature, then guided it aright,*³⁵⁹ as well as the verse:

﴿ سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى ﴾ [الأعلى: 1-3]

*Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High, Who has created (everything), and then proportioned it. And Who has measured; and then guided.*³⁶⁰

Hafiz Ali analysed the four principles of evolutionism: 1) adaptation to the living conditions; 2) the inheritance of acquired features; 3) the survival of the fittest; and 4) natural selection. He writes that they are merely unstable hypothesis, which we cannot rely upon.³⁶¹ In this great scientific encyclopedia,³⁶² Hafiz Ali

³⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 11.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 12-13.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 14-17.

³⁵⁹ Taha, 50.

³⁶⁰ Al a'ala, 1-3.

³⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 18-20.

deals with the question of faith, supporting the position that it neither increases or decreases,³⁶³ rather it strengthens or weakens.

In his treatise “Myslimanija” he writes: *“Belief in Islam: God protects religion from doubts, He perfects His light, even though the unbelievers may be averse, the miracle of the Qur’an is realized through the existence and spreading of this religion, because Islam has been revealed to save mankind. This Messenger of God sought neither power nor wealth, but he came*

³⁶² Unfortunately, many pages of this voluminous book were missing. The copy I found at the National Library in Tirana contained only pp. 1-31 and 232-288. Luckily, there is a somewhat more complete online version of this book.

³⁶³ The author of *al-Qasida al-baykuniya* says the following regarding the concept of faith (*iman*) in Shaykh Ibrahim Bayjuri’s *Jawharat al-tawhid*:

(وُرِجِحَتْ زِيَادَةُ الْإِيمَانِ - بِمَا تَزِيدُ طَاعَةَ الْإِنْسَانِ) (وَ نَقَصَتْهُ بِنَقْصِهَا وَ قَبِلَ لَا - وَ قَبِلَ ذَا خُلْفٍ كَذَا قَدْ نُقِلَا)

“The truth is that the increase in iman follows from increase in worship, and it decreases with the decrease of worship, and this has also been formulated in a different manner...”. I remember these verses from our days at al-Furqan secondary school in Damascus-Syria, in 1983. “ In this occasion, I would record some of my bad impressions regarding the ongoing war in Syria. Firstly, may the Almighty God help Syrian Liberation Army to liberate Syria from the hands of government army, and shower His mercy upon Syrian people and refugees in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon. May God protect the innocent people, children, elderly and women from daily genocide and massacres, bombings and shellings of Asads’ killing army. Secondly, shame on the international community for keeping silent in this deadly war which entered its 84th month, 2011-2018!? Thirdly, shame on the Nato alliance forces for allowing *“this sick man and his destructive army”* to exercise the killing, slaughtering in this modern democratic world in front of our eyes and tv screens!? Fourthly, shame on the Russian, Chinese, Iranian people and governments for supporting the Asad and his killing machine (*al Shab-biha-gangsters*). The history won’t forgive them; our children won’t forgive them. All of those who supported and still support the current Syrian regime are cursed in the side of the Almighty God and must be brought to Justice! (prof.Hajredin Hoxha, Doha-Qatar-01.11.2018)

to save humanity from idolatry and trinity, to bring them out of darkness into the light, so that they may believe in God, who is One and All-Powerful.”³⁶⁴ He also dealt with other issues, such as the glory of the Prophet Muhammed (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*), the four (Biblical) testaments,³⁶⁵ the orientalist views on the Islamic message etc. In his footnotes he often points out that he is quoting from the *Tafsir al-manar*.³⁶⁶

In conclusion, it can be said that this historical and religious commentary shows a number of dimensions of Hafiz Ali Korça’s method, as well as the doctrinal school he belonged to, namely the modern reformist school.

³⁶⁴ Hafiz Ali Korça, *Historia e shenjtë dhe të katër Halifetë*, pp. 26-7.

³⁶⁵ It would have been very preferable for Hafiz Ali Korça not to relate from the Bible, in order not to contradict his own claim that he did not relate anything from the israiliyyat. Unfortunately, in this he has followed in the footsteps of his teacher, Shaykh Rashid Rida, who did the same.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 236-9, 246-7.

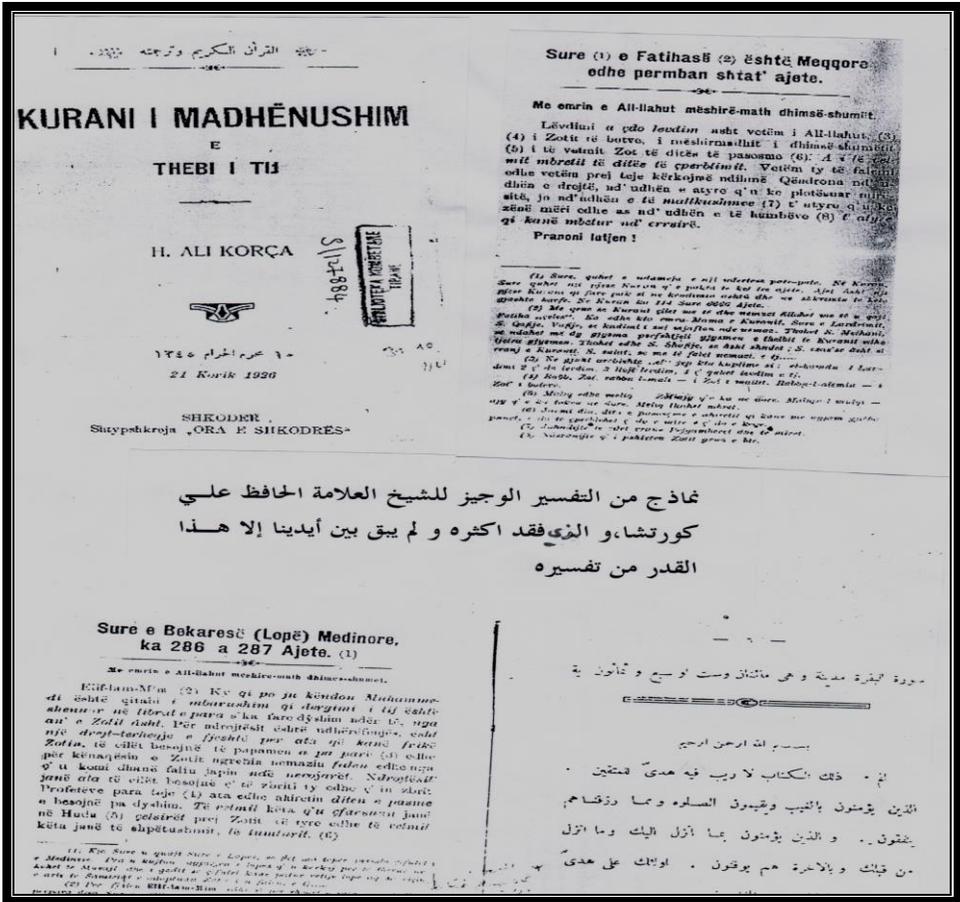
A BRIEF LOOK AT HAFIZ ALI KORÇA'S COMMENTARY

“KUR’ANI³⁶⁷ I MADHNUESHËM E THEBI I TIJ”³⁶⁸

1. THE MAIN FEATURES OF HAFIZ ALI KORÇA'S COMMENTARY

³⁶⁷ Shtypshkronja “Ora e Shkodrës”; Shkodër 1926.

³⁶⁸ This is an incomplete treatise too. The only extant copy is that from the National Library in Tirana and we will rely on it as well as the scattered commentaries of different verses in other books to show the author's reformist views.



First pages of the exegeses of Hfz.Ali Korca

The main characteristics of Hafiz Ali Korça's approach to commentary are:

- He opposed all forms of immorality and warned against the soul that incites to evil, and he enjoined the believers to rely on moral values;
- He warned against the danger from the Jewish plots in economy, politics, and morality, and their intentions to dominate the world;

- He analysed values that were peculiar to Islam, arguing that the message of Islam saved the Arabs and mankind from the darkness of ignorance, and from Roman as well as Persian colonialism;

- He focused on Qur'anic values as opposed to imported, Western values;

- He expounded on the virtues, qualities, and manners of the Prophet Muhamed (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) in dealing with people, especially the orphans, arguing that the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) represented the peak of humanism and democracy. He argued that the Rightly Guided Caliphs were democratic, albeit not in the modern sense of the word, and that the Prophet (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) was not a parasite who lived off others, as is the case with modern leaders. All people, be they princes or beggars, were equal in his eyes;

- He strongly affirms the peaceful spread of Islam as opposed to Christianity. Had Islam not been tolerant, Christianity would have disappeared from the areas where Islam spread, and had it used violence to convert people, there would be no Christians or Jews left in those parts of the world;

- He supported the idea of the universalisation and internationalization of the Islamic call³⁶⁹ and its perservation in this world;

- He underlined the rational and spiritual capacity of Islam to face the challenges of modernity;

- He explained that there are no holy persons (or kings) in Islam and that holyness belongs only to God, and that no soul shall bear the burden of another;

- He called for reforms in the method of teaching religion, focusing on the intellectual inheritage, the improvement of Arabic, the study of linguistics and stylistics from such traditional masters like Zamakhshari, Ibn Hajib, etc., and the scholarly writings of Fakhr al-Din Razi, Ibni Sina, Jalal al-Din Suyuti, Imam al-Ghazzali etc. He was against the imitation of Western methods in the education reform, but rather dreamed of basing the latter on the Abbasid models in Baghdad and the Umayyad models from Andalusia, combined with modern disciplines;³⁷⁰

- He argued for the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, the Prophethood of Muhammad, (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) and the universality of the message of Islam;

³⁶⁹ On Islam's universality see: el-Qardawi, *Shumul al-Islam fi dou'i sharh mufassal lil-Usul al-ishrin lil-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna*, Cairo, Maktaba al-Wahba, 2nd ed., 1995, pp. 35-120.

³⁷⁰ Dhahabi, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 408-420. Compare with Muhammad Abduh's method.

- He called for the spread of religious schools, because they played a very important role in the life of the ummah;
- He fought against idolatry and the idea of intercession of idols in prayer, be they alive or dead;³⁷¹
- He opposed non-Islamic customs, superstitions, and innovation, calling people to rely on the Noble Qur'an and the Prophetic *Sunnah*.

2. HAFIZ ALI KORA'S METHOD IN EXEGESIS

In his introduction to the brief commentary, Hafiz Ali Korça points out that he has written at length on the exegesis of the Book of God, and that he relied on many well-known works on the subject, but that unfortunately the financial circumstances did not allow for the publication of this voluminous commentary, which forced him to postpone it.

Despite the difficult financial situation, he had decided to publish the summarized version, in order to make it accessible to a wider audience. Unfortunately, the copy we possess is missing most of the pages. Some researchers say that Hafiz Ali's voluminous commentary was about 2000 pages long.³⁷² The

³⁷¹ *Zani i Naltë*, Nr. 3, March 1929, pp. 796-7, 799-800; Nr. 9, Qershor 1924, p. 270; Nr. 8, May, 1924, pp. 238-46.

³⁷² Ramiz Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i Kulturës Islame*, pp. 317-19; Ismail Bardhi, *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu*, p. 67; Shefik Osmani, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-6.

incomplete summarized version starts with Chapter al-Fatiha and ends with verse 38 of Chapter al-Baqarah.³⁷³ We therefore had to gather the comments on different verses scattered in his writings in Islamic journals, in order to have a general view of his ideas on exegesis.

Before turning to Hafiz Ali's method in exegesis, we must mention the sources in which he relied in the writing of his commentary as well as other works. He has relied on a considerable number of works, due to his knowledge of many Oriental and European languages, which greatly benefitted him in his work.

1. The following is a list of works on which Hafiz Ali relied in his writings:

- Literature on the Prophetic Sunnah; the biography of the Prophet and his Companions; exegesis works, starting from the commentary of Fakhr al-Din Razi, Rashid Rida's al-Manar; books on history, especially the History of al-Tabari; Arabic literature, namely grammar and rhetorics; Islamic and Western philosophy; general literature in different languages; Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Albanian literature; modern works on geography, astronomy, and biology; jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence; Qur'anic sciences; sacred history; apologetics; world politics;

³⁷³ al-Baqarah, 38.

Western orientalist literature, etc., which confirms his great learning.

2. From our research on his writings in exegesis, we concluded that his method of studying the Books of God consists of the following characteristics:

- He points out Meccan and Medinite verses, and their numbers;

- He elaborates on different terms and foreign terms in Albanian;

- Translates the chapter names and explains the reasons for their titles;

- He provides grammar analysis, e.g. the function of *al* in the verse:

“*al-Hamdulil-lahi Rab-bil-* [الفاتحة:2] ﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

Alamin”;

- He often succinctly refers to the readings (*qira'aat*) of the Qur'an;

- He points out the opinion of the commentators on the symbolical letters at the beginning of certain chapters, but rather briefly;³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ In the footnotes to the summarized commentary, the author says that he compiled a special book on these letters, which confirms his great interest on the field of exegesis. Unfortunately, this book is no longer extant.

- He elaborates on different communities living in the Arabic Peninsula: Jews, Christians, idolaters of stones and stars, materialists etc;³⁷⁵

- He provides the reason/s for the revelation of different verses;³⁷⁶

- He relies on the biography of the Prophet a.s.(*Alayhis Salam*) and of his Companions in order to clarify the meaning of a particular verse;

- He inclines towards the scientific commentary, as can be clearly seen in his exegesis of Chapter al-Zalzala, where he deals with different laws of physics regarding the destruction of the earth before the Day of Resurrection, volcanos, the shooting stars, the collapse of the heavens, and other eschatological events. In our view, the influence of scientific exegesis and his relying on the commentary of Fakhr al-Din Razi was so great, that he went as far as to write that there are animals and human beings in the other planets, based on the verse:

﴿ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ [الشورى: 29]

*And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and whatever moving creatures He has dispersed in them both. And He is All-Potent over their assembling whenever He wills.*³⁷⁷

- He often transmits the words of al Imam al Fakhur Razi without mentioning number of the page and volume³⁷⁸

³⁷⁵ *Kur'ani i Madhëruar e thelbi i Tij*, pp. 3-13.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 13.

³⁷⁷ *Al-Shura*, 29.

³⁷⁸ *Zani i Naltë*, Nr. 6, 1927, (162-167).

- He often elaborates on Sufi notions and terms, as in the commentary of Chapter al-Duha, in which he states that during the first encounter with Gabriel a.s., the Prophet a.s. was immersed in the Ocean of God's Light, and he was overwhelmed by the waves of this Ocean, from the Light of God the Glorious;³⁷⁹

- He often makes digressions from the subject; and then returns to the latter;

- At times he illustrates his arguments with his own poetry;³⁸⁰

- When pointing out Islamic values, he refers to the pre-Islamic period for comparison.³⁸¹

- Hafiz Ali Korça used beautiful poetical expressions throughout his commentary, reflecting his great poetical skills which had shown since his childhood days. He composed poetry on all Islamic disciplines, and he used terms with sublime meanings to illustrate his ideas;³⁸²

- He quoted words of wisdom from Western thinkers, philosophers, and historians, and elaborated on their positive impressions on the greatness of the message of Islam, and the lofty personality of the Prophet a.s., who exerted himself in the

³⁷⁹ *Zani i Naltë*, Nr. 8, mars, 1927, (227-228).

³⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 233.

³⁸¹ *Ibid*.

³⁸² *Ibid*, p. 236.

full realization of human potentials and divine goals. Hafiz Ali Korça responds to the doubts and allegations of hostile missionaries and orientalists, and criticizes Christian missionary methods in Africa, China, and India;³⁸³

- He provides a brief introduction before the commentary of each Chapter, e.g. in Surah al-Qadr, Surah al-Takathur, etc, and then elaborates on it;³⁸⁴

- In Hafiz Ali's view, the numbers mentioned in different verses, such as '1000 months' in Chapter al-Qadr do not mean specific numbers, but are used to convey the notion of great quantity, as is common in Arabic;³⁸⁵

- He quotes from the commentaries of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Rashid Rida, and others, without mentioning their names;³⁸⁶

- He points out the different lessons and admonitions of Qur'anic verses and strongly criticizes the rich who prefer a life of luxury, priding themselves with their wealth and children, and not contributing socially or religiously to their environment, e.g. by building schools, or helping the poor marry, etc. He often calls

³⁸³ *Zani i Naltë*, Nr. 1, nëntor, 1927, 383-388 dhe Nr. 3, prill, 1924, (203-217).

³⁸⁴ *Zani i Naltë*, Nr. 7, prill, 1924, (195-201).

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Zani i Naltë*, Nr. 6, 1926, (163-167).

upon them for an appropriate investment of their wealth and means;³⁸⁷

- Sometimes he ends his commentary on a verse with a summary, and at times he bases his argument on Hadith;

- He completely rejects the *israiliyyat* and we must point out that we have not come across any in his commentary. This is a characteristic of the reformist rationalist school which had a profound influence on him.³⁸⁸

- He relied on contemporary scientific discoveries; e.g. when speaking about the harms of alcohol and smoking, and for the benefits of fasting on health, he argued by referring to medical reports;³⁸⁹

- He avoided repetitions when elaborating on the meanings and of verses; he pointed out the rhetorical peculiarities of the Qur'an, in order to differentiate between its addressing the Prophet, and the Muslims;³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ See his commentary on Chapter al-Takathur, in *Zani i Naltë*, nr. 9, Qershor 1924, pp. 261-5.

³⁸⁸ See his commentary on the verse of fasting, in *Zani i Naltë*, nr. 6, Mars, 1924, p. 174.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 164. On the different kinds of accounts in the Qur'an, see: Abd al-Hamid Muhammad Nada Ja'rana, *al-Mad'hal il al-tafsir*, Maktabat al-Wahba, Caijro, 1st. ed., 1996, 405-24; Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *al-Tahbir fi 'ilm al-tafsir*, ed. Fat'hi Abd al-Qadir Farid, Darul-Manar, Cairo 1986, pp. 235-242.

- He used stylistic expressions inspired by the Qur'an, such as "*The shining of the sun of religion is approaching*" or "*From the ocean of divine love*" etc.³⁹¹

- He elaborates on Divine destiny (*qadar*), pointing out the error of Albanian customs, superstitions and misconceptions on different aspects of life;³⁹²

- He defended the Sunni doctrine with full conviction, calling for relying on the Noble Qur'an and the Sunnah. He also called for the translation of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Hadith into Albanian.³⁹³

³⁹¹ *Zani i Naltë*, nr. 6, 1924, p. 174.

³⁹² *Zani i Naltë*, nr. 2, Shkurt 1929, p. 776; nr. 3 Mars, 1929, p. 799.

³⁹³ *Zani i Naltë*, nr. 3, Mars 1929, p. 800.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF THE REFORMIST RATIONALIST SCHOOL ON HAFIZ ALI'S THOUGHT AND HIS REJECTION OF SAHIH HADITHS

One of the greatest arguments pointing out to his belonging to the reformist rationalist school was his attitude towards the incident of the *sihr* on the Prophet a.s. which has been related in hadiths which are regarded as authentic.³⁹⁴

In his commentary of Surah al-Falaq Hafiz Ali Korça writes:

“It has been related that Labid ibn al-A’asam, the Jew from Medina, performed sihr (black magic) against the Prophet in a well, and that the Prophet had hallucinations as if he did some things which in reality he did not, and as if he spoke certain things which in reality he did not, until God the Almighty informed him for the place of the magic ... and other claims. I say that these claims are absolutely false, because the prophets are not affected by magic, and therefore how can sihr affect the Prophet a.s.? Whoever claims this in fact only confirms the claim of the idolators who used to say:

³⁹⁴ This hadith is related by Imam al-Bukhari in his *Sahih*, Chapter of al-Sihr, no. 5430, vol. 5, p. 2174; and Imam Muslim, in his *Sahih*, Chapter of Sihr, no. 2189, vol. 4, p. 1719.

﴿ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ نَجْوَىٰ إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴾ [الإسراء: 47]

You follow none but a bewitched man (al-Isra, 47) and

﴿ وَقَالَ الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴾ [الفرقان: 8]

And the wrongdoers say: You follow none but a man bewitched. (al-Furqan, 8).

The term “bewtched” (مَسْحُورًا) refers to a man who cannot differentiate between things and who has delusions of having performed actions which he or she has not performed in reality, or a person who believes he or she has been inspired with something, but in reality that is not the case. Those who claim this (event as true) do not know the reality of prophethood, and shamelessly attribute these ridiculous allegations to the Prophet of God, believing that the Jew Labid ibn al-A’sam performed sihr on him. They have forgotten the Qur’an truth that the Prophet is protected and preserved. We are obligated to believe in what we must believe, and to reject what we must reject.

When rumors of the sihr spread, the Prophet a.s. himself denied these allegations, by saying: “I cannot be bewitched.” In any case, if there are such reports from the Prophet of God, they are single narrations (رواية الأحاد) which bear no weight whatsoever. We must believe that the Prophet a.s.is protected, pure and purified from any such thing that has been said against

him. They can speak whatever they want, but we are obligated to believe what the Qur'an orders us to believe. If such shallow minded accusations that the Prophet a.s. was bewitched were true, he would have informed his ummah on something which he has not been ordered or inspired by God. Sihr indeed exists,³⁹⁵ but it cannot affect a person who is protected by God the Glorious, whom He looks after and protects. We as Muslims believe in only what the Qur'an teaches us to believe, and not in what the idolaters believe. It is true that sihr exists, but it cannot be interpreted in the way of those who have strayed. Sihr means deviating something from the truth, and people use it in order to deceive through words and gestures, making one believe that the illusion is true. The Noble Qur'an says:

﴿ فَإِذَا جَبَّالَهُمْ وَعَصِيْبُهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى ﴾ [طه:66]

Then behold! their ropes and their sticks, by their magic, appeared to him as though they moved fast,³⁹⁶ it does not say: "It appeared to him as if the ropes and sticks moved by their magic", and we say in Albanian: "So and so took my mind away by

³⁹⁵ Thus, Hafiz Ali Korça confirms the existence of sihr, but denies the possibility of it affecting the Prophet a.s.. In his commentary of the verse *And from the evil of those who practise witchcraft when they blow in the knots* (Falaq, 4), he says that it refers to those who blow (*in the knots*). Upon comparing these words with those of Muhammad Abduh, I noticed that they are identical, which confirms their common idea and method. See Abduh's *Tafsir juz'i amma*, pp. 181-192, quoted by Dhahabi in his *al-Tafsir wa al-mufasssirun*, vol. 2, pp. 420-1.

³⁹⁶ Taha, 66.

throwing dust in my eyes” - to refer to a ruse or intrigue. The Prophet a.s. has said: (وَإِنْ مِنْ الْبَيَانِ لِسِحْرًا) “In words, too, there is ruse”.³⁹⁷ In modern politics, diplomats use this ruse in public discourse, through numerous conferences and pompous, empty sentences and long texts, full of unfulfilled promises. This is how they use their speech during elections, and in times of war.

The second argument that this narration is fabricated is the fact that Sura al-Falak was revealed in Mecca, whereas Labid ibb al-A'sam was from Medina. Therefore, how can one accept this claim?!

Be as it may, this is an absurd fabrication which is unacceptable by sound minded people, and we do not believe in it.”³⁹⁹

This is a clear and transparent attitude of the Hafiz towards this narration. He analysed from a logical and religious point of view the impossibility of such a thing having happened to the Prophet. This was his opinion and his method, but there is another

³⁹⁷ Tirmidhi related this hadith in his *Sunan*, no. 2028, vol. 4, p. 376.

³⁹⁸ The descent of the last two chapters (*al Falaq and al Nas*) is a disputable issue. Some scholars, like Imam ibn Kathir, vol. 7/701, al Suyuti, vol.1/47, etc, point out that the last two Suras are Medinite, whereas according to Ibn Shihab Zuhri in *Tanzil al-Qur'an* (vol. 1, p. 24), and Imam al Bagawi, vol.4/723, and Imam Ibn Atiyah, vol.15/607, chapter al-Falaq according to some narations was revealed in Mecca, and according to other narations it was revealed in Madina. Thus there are two differing opinions on this issue.

³⁹⁹ *Zani i Naltë*, Nr. 2, Shkurt 1929, pp. 777-9.

opinion on this issue. Before criticizing his opinion, it is worth quoteing the words of Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi on this matter: *“This hadith, which is rejected by the Imam (Abduh) has been related by al-Bukhari and other authors of reliable books, and has no bearing on the authenticity of prophethood. The sihr which seized the Prophet regarded the sickening of his body without affecting his mind, and it has been said that Labid ibn El-A’sami’s sihr against the Prophet may have been something pertaining to the blowing of knots by women, after which he imagined that he approached one of his wives without being able to do anything, whereas the sihr rejected by the Prophet regards the madman, and no doubt that such a person cannot become a prophet. In this sense he was accused (by the polythesists) who said:*

﴿ وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴾ [الحجر: 6]

*O you to whom the Dhikr has been sent down! Verily, you are a madman!*⁴⁰⁰

Regarding the hadith related by al-Bukhari and other authentic books, even though the Imam (Abduh) and his think alike do not differentiate between Bukhari’s narrations and others, and according to them it is not a sin to reject a narration found in al-Bukhari, which can be a single narration that cannot be accepted

with certainty, in our opinion (Dhahabis' opinion) this attitude destroys a good part of the Sunnah which is an explication and a guide to the Qur'an."⁴⁰¹

According to Dhahabi, the authentic *Sunnah* does not contradict the Qur'an, but it "*explicates or reinforces the Qur'an... No authentic hadith contradicts the Qur'an, and if such a thing happens, either the hadith is authentic but unclear, or it is clear but not authentic, and the latter cannot be accepted. And if it is clear, it must be explained in conformity with the Qur'an, since the Qur'an comes first, and the secondary cannot contradict that which has priority*".⁴⁰²

There is another important issue here, namely that the rejection of authentic hadith is similar to the acceptance of fabricated hadith, and this creates a bad impression on the ummah, the scholars and the imams who were the best of their generations. The rejection of authentic hadith amounts to abandoning the faith...⁴⁰³

In his chapter on the Sunnah in his book *al-Muwafaqat*, Imam Shatibi writes:

⁴⁰⁰ al-Hijr, 6.

⁴⁰¹ al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsir wa al-Mufasssirun*, vol. 2, p. 421-2.

⁴⁰² Yusuf al-Qardawi, *al-Marja'iyah al-ulya fil-islam lil-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah, Dawabit wa Mehadhiyr fil-fahmi wa al-tafsir*, Cairo: Maktab Wahba, p. 99.

⁴⁰³ al-Qardawi, *al-Mad'hal li dirasat al-Sunnah al-nabawiyya*, Cairo, 3rd ed., 1992, p. 103.

*“In its true meaning, the Sunnah is based on the Qur’an, it clarifies its meaning, explicates its topics and facilitates its understanding.”*⁴⁰⁴

Therefore, one must not reject the clear and authentic Sunnah, which can not in any way contradict any pillar of faith or a source of the Shari‘ah. The respected Hafiz should have been more careful and not judge these narrations as unauthentic or single reports. It is possible according to the majority of the scholars that the body of prophet Muhammed (*peace be upon him*) to be affected by the magic, but not his mind. Shaikh Hafiz Ali in this particular issue was holding the opinion of the Mu’tazilitis, who rejected completely the idea of affecting the body of prophet Muhammed (*peace be upon him*).

The discrediting of the two Sahihs (*al Bukhari and Muslim*) is a characteristic of the pro-Western Muslims, of the Orientalists, and the opponents of Islam both in the past and in the present. Exaggeration in the interpretation of the texts, especially the prophetic sayings, among the leaders of the reformist rationalist school and the Mu‘tazilite ideas in these matters, is one of the most negative aspects and gravest errors against the second source of the Shari‘ah, namely the pure prophetic Sunnah. This manner of interpretation must be annulled and replaced by a

⁴⁰⁴ Abu Is’haq al-Shatibi, *al-Muwafaqat fi al-Shari‘ah al-islamiyyah*, vol. 4, p. 396.

better one, namely a return to the method of the pious ancestors (*salaf al-salih*) and the Muslim scholars, in actions, words and beliefs, if we truly seek success and happiness.

No one dares to touch the authority of the two Sahihs by Imam Bukhari and Muslim, because the whole *ummah* is unanimous about their authenticity, otherwise they shall be discredited with the mark of Mu‘tazilism all their life, and they shall be also responsible for those who follow them until the Day of Judgement.

4. HAFIZ ALI KORÇA AND SYMBOLICAL EXEGESIS

(التفسير الإشاري في تفسير الشيخ الحافظ علي كورتشا)

Among the signs of the reformist influence in Hafiz Ali Korça's thought was the commentary of certain verses in a symbolical manner. In fact, this kind of commentary is a permitted Sufi exegesis and accepted by our Shari'ah, and it is known as (التوفيق بين المعنى الظاهر والمعنى الباطن) "harmonizing the outward (*dhahir*) meaning of the verse with the inward (*batin*) meaning", as "each verse has its inward as well as its outward meaning."

This issue has been dealt with by many scholars both in the past and present. Imam al-Ghazzali, Imam Abu Is'haq al-Shatibi etc., in the past, and Muhammad Husayn Dhahabi, Muhammad Abd al-Adhim Zurkani, Fahd ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Rumi and Yusuf al-Qardawi etc in the present.

The followers of this doctrine base the existence of this kind of exegesis on the hadith related by Imam al-Bukhari, according to which Ibn Abbasi r.a. said: "*Umar treated me as the Prophet's nearest of kin.*" Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf r.a. said to Umar r.a.: "*Do you treat him so, even though we have children*

too?” Umar r.a. replied: “*He is treated according to his knowledge*”, and than he asked me about the verse:

﴿ إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ ﴾ [النصر: 1]

*When there comes the Help of God and the conquest*⁴⁰⁵; and I (*Ibn Abbas*) replied with what I had heard from the Messenger of God a.s., and when I recited the Surah until the end, Umar said: “*By God, I do not know more than you do...*”⁴⁰⁶

Also, al-Tabari and other exegetes write that when this verse was revealed:

﴿ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمْ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾ [المائدة: 3]

*Today I completed your religion*⁴⁰⁷ during the Farewell Pilgrimage, Umar r.a. cried, and when the Prophet a.s. asked him why he was crying, he replied: “*Because until this day our religion was being perfected, and after its completion there is certainly something missing*”; to which the Prophet said: “*You are right!*”

There are other verses and hadith which are mentioned by the exegetes in confirmation of the inward meaning and the symbolical aspect of exegesis. The outward of the Qur’an is that through which God addresses His servants in the clear Arabic language, whose rules and principles enable us to understand it in a proper way. The inward meaning is related to God’s intention and the reason why He revealed the Qur’an, which we grasp through the understanding of the linguistic principles and rules, as

⁴⁰⁵ al-Nasr, 1.

⁴⁰⁶ Continuation of the hadith.

⁴⁰⁷ al-Ma’ida, 3.

well as Divine gifts, which according to Imam Suyuti is considered an important condition for the commentator, and which means the Light of the Glorious God that enlightens the heart of the scholar and gnostic of God, whose heart, mind and behaviour are healthy.

Some scholars set the knowledge of the esoteric meaning of Arabic as a condition for the knowledge of the inward meaning; that inward meaning must be in harmony with the outward meaning and the intentions of the Arabic language, as well as supported by textual evidence. So, the inward meaning is closely related to the outward meaning, otherwise we come across strange and odd commentaries of certain Sufis and their followers.⁴⁰⁸

Let us return to an example from the summarized commentary of Hafiz Ali Korçës. In his commentary of the verse:

﴿أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ﴾ [البقرة: 19]

*Or like a rainstorm from the sky, wherein is darkness, thunder, and lightning. They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap for fear of death. But God ever encompasses the disbelievers,*⁴⁰⁹ he writes: “The rainstorm and

⁴⁰⁸ On this sensitive issue, see: Abu Is’haq Shatibi, *al-Muwafaqat fi usul al-Shari’ah*, vol. 3, p. 346-59; Dhahabi, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 261-80; Fahd ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Rumi, *al-Tijahat al-tafsir fil-qarn al-rabi’ ashar*, vol 1, 407-412; Muhamed Abduladhim Zerkani, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 89-93; al-Qardawi, *al-Marja’iyyah al-ulya fi al-islam lil-Qur’an was al-Sunneeh*, p. 315.

⁴⁰⁹ al-Baqarah, 19.

the clouds mean iman and the Qur'an, darkness and thunder mean the weighty works, such as prayer, fasting, jihad against the unbelievers, abandoning old religions and status in this world, which is very difficult for them. When they would hear about such matters of the hereafter which resembled thunder and lightning, the unbelievers thrust their fingers in their ears in order not to listen."⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰ Hafiz Ali Korça, *Kur'ani i Madhnueshëm e Thelbi i Tij*, p. 11.

5. HAFIZ ALI KORÇA'S ATTITUDE TO THE ISRA'ILIAT

Among the important issues which are related to our thesis and more specifically Hafiz Ali Korça's reformist religious doctrine, is the question of the narrations from Jews and Christians, which are known as Isra'iliat in the Shari'ah and especially in exegesis. As it is known, according to the followers of the reformist school, one of the principal or necessary disciplines for the commentary of the Noble Qur'an is the categorial rejection of the Isra'iliat and the exclusive relying on the Book and the authentic Sunnah.⁴¹¹

In his analysis of the atheist, communist, or secularist thought of Albanian intellectual elites, Hafiz Ali Korça draws the Muslim reader's attention by saying that there are clerics, speakers, and preachers who had no idea what they were speaking about in their sermons, speeches, or lectures. He tells the story about a preacher (*khatib*) who had mounted the pulpit and starting shouting in a loud voice while speaking about Isra'iliat supersititions on the creation of Adam, the formation of the rivers in Paradise and other stories that have nothing to do with our religion.

No doubt, Hafiz Ali Korça was hurt by this naive behaviour, and in his encyclopedia “Historia e shenjtë..” he writes that it would have sufficed for a cleric like that to have elementary knowledge of geology on the layers of the earth and the creation of the rivers not to relate such absurd stories in his sermon. In this book the Hafiz calls for a distancing from such Judaeo-Christian tales, because they have destroyed the religion of Muslims.⁴¹²

6. HAFIZ ALI KORÇA’S IJTIHADI AND REFORMIST THOUGHT

Hafiz Ali Korça’s effort in preparing this methodological treatise on Islamic faith consists in adding to the five pillars of faith as related in the hadith of Gabriel, namely: testifying that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God; prayers; zakat; fasting in the Month of Ramadan; and the Pilgrimage (*al Hajj*) according to capacity⁴¹³, a sixth pillar, namely the exertion (*jihad-Holy war*) in the path of God.

⁴¹¹ On Abduh’s method in exegesis, see: Dhahabi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 410-11; Fahd ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Rumi, *Manhaj al-Madrasa al-‘aqiyya al-islahiyya fi al-tafsir*, p. 100-130.

⁴¹² Hafiz Ali Korça, *Historia e shenjtë dhe të katër Halifetë*, pp. 28-29,

⁴¹³ Related by Imam Muslim in his Sahih, no. 7, vol. 1, p. 37.

It seems that during his study of the political, social, and religious circumstances, and seeing the bitter reality of his time, the Hafiz tried hard to instill the love of the homeland, and the sacrifice in its defence, into the hearts of his fellow Albanians. This is a sensitive issue which needs further elaboration.

The idea that the five pillars of faith must be complemented by *jihad* as a sixth one needs a further study. The truth is that one must not add or subtract anything to what the scholars of the ummah were unanimous, but on the other hand the scholars must engage in *ijtihad*⁴¹⁴ in every time and place. The scholars must also follow the changes in the social and religious life and they must find alternatives or medicine from the Islamic pharmacy⁴¹⁵ for the treatment of the ills of the ummah, in order to face the challenges of time. The gate of *ijtihad* is open until the Day of Judgement.

We believe that the circumstances of the time influenced Hafiz Ali's soul and mind, and after noticing that, exhausted and tired of everything, people had started distancing themselves from

⁴¹⁴ *Al Ijtihad*, means, making an independent opinion or judgement on the religious, social case in the absence of explicit Qur'anic or prophetic texts, by comparison or analogy to the similar cases in Qur'an and Sunnah. A person who performs this action is called (*al Mujtahid*). Ijtihad can be done individually as well as collectively through institutions, based on certain strict qualifications and criteria. Not every person can perform this high duty. (Dr.H.Hoxha)

this obligation, he called for the return of this obligation and for its attachment to the five known pillars of faith. However, these circumstances do not justify Hafiz Ali Korça's *ijtihad* in this case, because he introduced something which the Prophet a.s. and his companions did not, despite their sufferings, persecutions, and difficult religious, political, and economical circumstances. Hafiz Ali Korça's *ijtihad* and opinion must be understood and interpreted as *jihad* of the pen (knowledge), *jihad* against one's passions, and with one's wealth, but not warfare, because this is what the Islamic principles from the Qur'an and the Sunnah dictate. It is not permissible to add something on the five pillars of Islam, for our descendants may thus add or annul principles of faith or of the Shari'ah according to the needs and challenges of the time. Jihad is a special topic that the Qur'an and the Sunah have dealt with in detail according to the conditions and circumstances, in every time and place. And God knows better the intentions of Hafiz Ali Korça.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ The pertinent expression "medicine from the Islamic pharmacy" was used by Dr. Yusuph al-Qardawi during his Friday sermon in the International Islamic University of Malaysia, during his visit in 1998.

⁴¹⁶ *Myslimania*, pp. 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17.

IV: HAFIZ ALI KORÇA AND THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE EXEGETE: ⁴¹⁷ COMMON POINTS BETWEEN HIS IDEAS AND THE REFORMIST SCHOOL

1. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE EXEGETE

And finally, we would like to address the following important question: “Did this Albanian scholar possess the qualifications of the exegete of the Book of God, and if yes, what was their level?”

After studying the thoughts and method of this religious scholar, we saw that he possessed the necessary wealth of knowledge to have the capacity and ability to comment upon the Book of God, and this knowledge was marked by the following dimensions:

- Memorisation, reading and tajwid of the Book of God, (*being Hafiz of the Qur'an*) which as we mentioned earlier was a very spread phenomenon among Albanians in the past;

- His extensive and deep knowledge of Arabic, namely its grammar, rhetoric, style, and prosody, because he was also a professor of literature;

- His knowledge of the Sunnah, and the Hadith;

⁴¹⁷ Compare these qualifications with those of Muhammad Abduh, as related by Muhammad Abd al-Adhim Zarkani, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 62-64.

- His extensive knowledge of the Qur'anic sciences, such as: the Meccan verses, Medinite verses, the reasons of the revelation, the *nasikh*, *mansukh*, *mutlaq*, *mukayyad*, *a'am*, and *khass* verses, the rhetoric styles of the Qur'an, the order of revelation, the *muhkam* and the *mutashabih* verses, etc.;

- His lofty morals and excellent manners did not permit him to use a trivial language or unethical vocabulary, except when criticizing the Jews and the Christians for their intrigues throughout human history up to the present.

All this great multidisciplinary learning that this outstanding Islamic scholar possessed enabled him to occupy himself with the exegesis of the Noble Qur'an, and to understand the Book of God correctly, and we believe that he fulfilled this mission successfully. This is a gift which God grants to whomever He wills; He Alone is Possessor of the Most Beautiful Names!

2. COMMON POINTS BETWEEN HAFIZ ALI KORÇA'S IDEAS AND THE PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMIST SCHOOL

Here I would like to summarize the meeting points between some of Hafiz Ali Korça's ideas with the principles of the reformist school:

- His call for the improvement and reform of the teaching and educational methods in general and the religious methods in particular, which coincided with the call of the reformist school for reforms in the teaching methods at Az'har;

- The teaching of natural sciences in addition to the religious subjects and the opening of special faculties for this purpose;

- The improvement of the methods for teaching Arabic, preferring the French method in learning languages;

- Inviting the clergy to acquire scientific knowledge, just like the followers of the classical and modern reformism did, namely Imam al-Ghazzali, Imam al-Junayd, Ibn Sina, Imam Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-Din Afghani, etc.;

- The categorical rejection of Isra'iliat and his continuous warning for caution in this matter;

- The categorical rejection of blind imitation (*al taqlid al A'ma*);

- His view on the sihr (*black magic*) incident of the Prophet and inacceptance of the hadith which is considered authentic (*sahih*);

- His focus on national and international political issues;

- His concern about the massacres, killings, and ill-treatment of Muslims during the rule of Mahatma Gandhi, his focus on the activities of Ahmad Abu Kalam (Sir Ahmad Khan);

- His lack of grief for the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and not looking out for means to save it from destruction. This attitude was prevalent among the leaders of the reformist school in the Az'har University, some of whom even declared the priority of the Arab caliphate! We seek shelter in God from this idea, which is a result of racial and nationalist fanaticism.

3. AN EXAMPLE OF THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS REFORMIST HORIZON IN HAFIZ ALI KORÇA'S THOUGHT

This truth can be seen in the special care he took to defend the principles of Islam in Albania and in his skill in defending himself from his opponents' intrigues. These characteristics come out clearly in an open letter he wrote to his fellow scholars and clerics in Albania, passages from which we quote below:

“Gentlemen, scholars, and clerics, if you wish to gain the respect of your own people as your predecessors did, you should train your children with the same weapon which your predecessors had, namely knowledge and learning, because this is our inheritance which we must pass on to our children ... The people can no longer hear fabrications, Isra'iliat, and worthless talk. It is a shame upon us to pride ourselves with our ancestors

when we are naked and possess nothing. What use has our country from those who study abroad?!

Brothers and gentleman, scholars and clerics!

If you have love and yearning for Muhammad a.s. do not sleep, but think about the future generations and beware of the following points:

1. Do not let the youth at the hands of the misionaries and those who want to convert them to Christianity;

2. Teach your male and female children to read and memorize the Qur'an;

3. Send every child above thirteen to a religious school;

4. Every cleric must have at least one child in a religious school, who shall inherit his knowledge;

5. Every Muslim must sacrifice all he or she has for the improvement of religious education, in order that religious schools achieve the required level;

6. Muslim scholars and clerics must travel to towns and villages to encorage people offer their support and help in this project;

7. The school budget must be strengthened, and we must provide specialized professors and clerics for every subject;

8. If this does not take place, the concern of the scholars and the clerics for the ummah shall be lost, which would be the main reason for the decline and the destruction of Islam. These

are our ills and this is the way of curing them at the present. At the time of the Abbasids, the scholars spoke six or seven languages, how many languages does each of us speak today?

These are sources to which we referred. Send your thirteen year old children to study with us, and I guarantee you that they in three years they shall speak Arabic, Persian, and French, besides learning on sciences and arts. We shall try not to disgrace ourselves before the Prophet on the Day of Judgement, and if you do not help us in this, you shall be responsible before God on that day.

How should we arm and train our children?

Besides the mother tongue and Arabic, everyone must learn an important foreign language and must arm themselves with the weapon of knowledge according to the needs of the present and the future. Otherwise we shall perish in all aspects."⁴¹⁸

May God have mercy upon Hafiz Ali Korça!

How great is the need of the ummah for such advice nowadays.

There is no power nor strength save with God, the Mighty and Sublime!

⁴¹⁸ *Zani i Naltë*, nr. 8, Maj, 1924, pp. 238-46.

4. SOME METHODOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS SLIPS OF HAFIZ ALI KORÇA

We shall conclude our meeting with this great scholar (may God have mercy upon his soul!), by mentioning some of his methodological and topical slips:

- In many cases he did not mention the volume/page wherefrom he quotes;

- The details on the references he used are missing, only titles are given;

- A limited reference to authentic Prophetic hadith in different arguments from his writings;

- His rejection of the authenticity of the *sühr* incident which has been related in the Sahih of Bukhari and Muslim, thereby downplaying the most authentic books after the Noble Qur'an, on whose authenticity the whole ummah is unanimous. This is the greatest methodological slip of Hafiz Ali Korça;

- The author does not mention the number of the verses he comments upon;

- In most cases he neglects the Arabic text of the verse, by giving only the translation and commentary in Albanian; whereas the norm in such cases is to offer the Arabic original of the verse;

- In many cases, a clear difference between the translation and the commentary is not made, thus making it difficult for the

lay reader to discern whether he is reading a particular verse or its commentary.⁴¹⁹

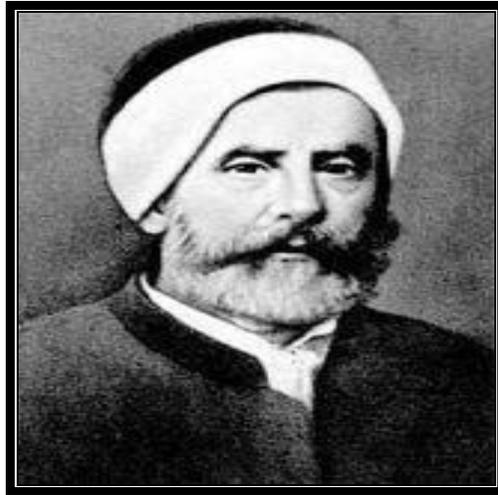
⁴¹⁹ Ismail Ahmedi, *Hafiz Ali Korça-Jea dhe Vepra*, pp. 209-221.

PART THREE

**THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND EMPIRICAL DOCTRINE IN
QUR'ANIC STUDIES AMONG ALBANIANS**

CHAPTER ONE

**THE PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINE IN RELATION TO
SOME QUR'ANIC QUESTIONS AS ILUSTRATED IN THE
VIEWS OF HOXHA HASAN TAHSINI**



(HOXHA HASAN TAHSINI) 1811-1880 - (1881)

CHAPTER ONE

THE PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINE IN RELATION TO SOME QUR'ANIC QUESTIONS IN HASAN TAHSIN EFENDI'S THOUGHT

I: INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THESE TWO DOCTRINES AMONG ALBANIAN SCHOLARS

The origin of this orientation among Albanians goes back to the second half of the nineteenth century, as can be seen in different writings on both of its branches: the philosophical rational, and the scientific empirical. There is as yet no work on this issue, because this orientation has not taken a fully developed shape. Thus, the only available literature on this issue are the different periodicals which were published and distributed by the

Supreme Council of the Shari‘ah in Albania,⁴²⁰ where such philosophical and scientific ideas were expounded.⁴²¹

This scientific approach to the Book of God, both from the point of view of understanding and commentary, is a consequence of the appearance of the rationalist reformist orientation, which was expounded in the previous chapter, and which had unfortunately influenced Albanian thinkers too. One may say that this scientific method is the other branch of religious reformist thought which appeared in Albanian literature until the second half of the twentieth century.⁴²²

Some of these articles were translations from foreign languages, but the great majority were original contributions from Albanian authors.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ *Kultura Islame*, no. 7-8, Mars-Prill 1944, pp. 173-9, which contains a commentary of the verse: *And indeed We created man out of an extract of clay. Thereafter We made him as a Nutfah in a safe lodging. Then We made the Nutfah into a clot, then We made the clot into a little lump of flesh, then We made out of that little lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, and then We brought it forth as another creation. So Blessed is Allâh, the Best of creators.* (al-Mu‘minun, 12-14)

⁴²¹ Refer to scientific articles in *Zani i Naltë*, reproduced in the compilation of papers (no. 10-46) presented in Shkodra for the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the journal’s first issue. It was published from 1924-1939, after which it was discontinued by the secular regime, only to be published under the new name *Kultura Islame*.

⁴²² This phenomenon can be also seen in the Islamic periodicals published in Kosova, such as *Edukata Islame*, Nr. 37-38, 1983 (pp. 12-18); Nr. 46-47, 1986 (pp. 3-8); Nr. 33-34, 1982 (pp. 15-21).

⁴²³ We have only included original contributions in this analysis, as befits the subject of the thesis. No doubt, the translated materials from this field are valuable contributions deserving appreciation and respect, and

Scholarly works that were being published in these Islamic periodicals sought to point out the wisdom and scientific miracle of the Qur'an, through the application of the obligations and the

below is a list of translated volumes which we have not included in our study:

- Imam Wahidi's *Asbab al-nuzul*, which belongs to the traditional doctrine in exegesis, as Fehd al-Rumi has mentioned in his *Ittijahat al-tafsir fi al-qarn al-rabi' ashar*, vol. 1, p. 45. The translation was done from Bosnian (tr. J. Ramic), *Shkaqet e shpalljes së Kur'ani Kerimit*, tr. Bahri Aliu, 1992 (Dar al-Alamiyya lil-Qitabil-Islami, Riyad).

- A translation of the Qur'an with commentary by a Pakistani author belonging to the deviated Qadiyania sect, which has been critically studied by Emin Behrami. Despite its scholarly relevance, this work cannot be included because it is by a non-Albanian author. Its full title is: Muhamad Zakaria Khan, *Kur'ani i Shenjtë, arabisht-shqip: përkthim dhe komentim*; 1990; Islam Publications LTD, Islamabad.

- A translation of the Qur'an from English, by Taki al-Din Hilali and Muhsin Khan, for the same reason as above. Its title is *Shpjegimi i kuptimeve të Kur'anit të Lartë në gjuhën shqipe*, summarized into one volume and translated by a group of translators attached to Dar al-Salam Publishers and Distributors, Riyad, 2000.

- Sayyid Qutb's *al-Tafsir al-fanni fi al-Qur'an al-Karim*, tr. by Omer Musa as *Ilustrimi artistik në Kur'an*, Logos-A, Shkup, 1996.

- *Al-Muntakhab fi tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*, ed. by the Ministry of Religious Endowments of Egypt, tr. Selim Stafa, *Përzgjedhje në komentimin e Kur'ani Kerimit*, Tiranë: KMSH, 1998.

- The commentary of Chapter Ya-Sin from Sayyid Qutb's *Fi Dhilal al-Qur'an*, tr. Muhamed Mustafa, *Jasini -përkthim dhe komentim*, Shkup: Logos-A, 1999.

- Malik ibn Nabi's al-Dhahirat al-Qur'aniyya, published as *Fenomeni Kuranor*, Mitrovicë 1997.

- Mustapha Mahmud's *al-Qur'an, Muhawalat li fahmin asriyyin*, published as *Kur'ani përpjekje për të kuptuarit bashkëkohor*, Mitrovicë 1997.

- Maurice Bucaille's *Qur'an and Science*, published as *Kur'ani dhe shkenca*, Prishtinë 1996;

- Muhammad Sha'rawi's *Mu'jizat al-Qur'an*, tr. Q. Morina, *Mrekullia kur'anore*, Prishtina: Dituria islame, 1996.

principles which God the All-Powerful revealed in the Noble Qur'an, enjoining people to perform them in the best way. Such studies focused on the commentary of verses dealing with subjects like the prohibition of wine, pork, and the harms of smoking, etc... They were then checked against the opinion of expert in the modern sciences, in order to approach the wisdom of the Divine injunctions.

Such writings also dealt with deep philosophical issues, and they presented the thought of great Islamic scholars on Sufism, logics, ontology, etc., such al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina and Imam al-Ghazali.

Here we must elaborate on these two scientific and philosophical methods, through works of Albanian thinkers and scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth century, in order to understand the historical circumstances leading to this phenomenon.

One of these Albanian scholars met with the leading figures of the reformist school in Islam, namely Jamal al-Din Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, and he lived at a time where the French Enlightenment was predominant in Europe. At this time, the reformist movement had already started spreading within the Az'har University. The study of the philosophical and scientific doctrine will help us understand the ideas of this reformist

Albanian scholar, who had outstripped his Ottoman contemporaries in different humanities.

II: LIFE, EDUCATION AND ACTIVITIES OF HASAN TAHSIN EFENDI⁴²⁴

Hasan Tahsin Efendi was born in 1811⁴²⁵ in the Ninat village of the Filat municipality of Yanina in south-eastern Albania, or what is known as Çamëria (present Greece). His father, a *qadi*, was his first teacher. He received his elementary education in his hometown, and his university degree in Istanbul, where he graduated with excellent grades.

⁴²⁴ Many Albanian, Turkish, and Western scholars have written encyclopedic entries on the life and works of this cleric who was influenced by the Enlightenment. An Albanian-Turkish cultural organisation bears his name. In collaboration with the president of AIITC Ramiz Zekaj, this organisation held an international conference on Hasan Tahsin's thought on 20.12.1997, with the participation of many religious figures, Muslim as well as non-Muslim. The papers presented in this conference were later gathered and published in a volume: Ibrahim Hoxha, *Hoxhë Hasan Tahsini-të tjerët për të*, Tiranë, 1998. Due to the lack of references on Hasan Tahsin's life and thought, we will elaborate on his personality based on the works presented in this Conference, which include some important papers translated from Turkish and other languages into Albanian. One such scholar is Shemsedin Sami Bej Frashëri, author of the well-known literary and scientific encyclopedia in Ottoman, *Qamus al-A'lam*. We will also refer to the extensive study of the Turkish scholar Ömer Faruk Akuni, published in the Turkish encyclopedia of religion, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, pp. 198-206.

The famous Albanian scholar Shemsedin Sami Bej Frashëri who was a towering figure of Ottoman letters was best informed on the life and knowledge of his teacher Hasan Tahsin,⁴²⁶ who dedicated all his life to the pursuit of science. Hasan Tahsin preferred the humanities, but did not like history. He had studied the different religious disciplines, such as exegesis, hadith and the Shari'ah sciences with his father, who was a scholar on his own right. It was extremely rare for Albanians and Turks to find scholars who were well-versed both in religious sciences and the modern humanities, and Hasan Tahsin Efendi was one of them.

He knew Arabic, Persian, Ottoman and Western literature, and had even written poetry in Turkish, as well as works on mathematics. He was interested in two areas: acquiring of science to reach the truth, and serving mankind, especially his own people. He would leave gatherings in which there was no talk of knowledge and science, and would say: *“What else would cheer the lover, if in meeting with his beloved, love is not pondered over?!”*

⁴²⁵ According to other sources, he was born in 1812, or 1813 (*Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, p. 198).

⁴²⁶ This great literary figure wrote many books and treatises on a variety of subjects, in Arabic, Ottoman, and French. His most famous treatise is *Himmatul al-humam fi nashr al-Islam*, translated into Albanian as: Sami Frashëri, *Sami Përpyjekja e heronjve në përhapjen e Islamit*, tr. Ismail Ahmedi; Logos-A, 2003, Prishtinë, pp. 41-43.

For him greater national concerns had priority over personal interest. Whenever he would earn any money, he would spend it on books, and he would often fall asleep reading. He ate only when he was very hungry, and his food was very simple. His room was full of books, engineering equipment, astronomical instruments, and different maps. He was rather concerned with the well-being of the ummah, and he often thought on the ways to bring about a unity among Muslims. Ten years before his death, he founded a special society which was called *The Geographical Society for the Unity of Muslim People*. Describing the goals of this society, he wrote: “*We are obligated to spread our religion and to work in this path. The Europeans have no right to obstruct us, because they themselves send missionaries throughout the world, and it is equally justifiable that we do the same.*”

In scientific gatherings, he would focus on the compatibility of the Shari‘ah with science, insisting that it was not against being civilized, by offering Qur’anic and Prophetic texts as evidence. His ideas were not accepted in the general religious circles, because certain clerics of the Ottoman state criticized and opposed him vehemently, to the effect that his reputation suffered seriously, and he was accused as a heretic and a disbeliever, similar to Ibn Arabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Socrates, etc.

However, he was not concerned with hearsay. In fact, how could someone who knew the Creator so well deny Him at the

same time? Often, people would leave his sermons and lectures, because he expounded and elaborated on difficult philosophical questions which they could not grasp by saying: “*We seek shelter in God against the straying of this cleric!*” He was an ascetic person and he loved knowledge.⁴²⁷

The Ottoman Minister of Education, Reshid Pasha, wished to send a group of gifted students to Europe to study humanities and spread their knowledge in Ottoman circles of learning since, according to him, the Ottoman Empire was in a state of civilizational and scientific backwardness, and this would serve as a first step in saving it from further decline.

A group of students applied for these studies, but only three were sent to Paris, and Hasan Tahsin Efendi was one of them. However, two of these students returned to Istanbul, as they did not wish to continue their studies, whereas Hasan Tahsin Efendi decided to stay and learn Western science and philosophy. He had good relations with the Turkish ambassador and was fortunate to be employed in the Embassy of the Ottoman State in Paris, serving as an imam for its employees and a teacher for their children, while studying at Sorbonne. He stayed in Paris for over sixteen years, and studied humanities as well as natural sciences

⁴²⁷ Ibid, see Shemsedin Sami Bej Frashëri’s article translated into Albanian from Turkish, pp. 65-73. See also pp. 81, 83, 88, 122-124, 161, as well as: *Türkiye Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt, 18, 1998-, Bağlar Bashë, kisikli caddesi, 7, Üsküdar, İstanbul, pp. 192, 200, 201, 202, 203, 205, 206.

such as physics, chemistry, geography, geology, astronomy, psychology etc.

When the Ottoman Prime Minister Fuad Pasha died in Paris, Hasan Tahsin Efendi was appointed to perform the ritual bath and lead the funeral prayers, and to supervise the transport of Fuad Pasha's body to Istanbul, wherefrom he would never go back to Paris.⁴²⁸

The Ottoman state had anticipated for a long time the opening of a university for humanities and after Hasan Tahsin's return to Istanbul, the Ottoman state appointed him the Dean of this University which was called (دار الفنون) "Darul-Funun" (*The House of Arts*), due to his reputation as a scholar on the field. Hasan Tahsin immediately started contacting different scholars of the Islamic world, inviting them to the University, for lectures.

Once he had invited Jamal al-Din al-Afghani to lecture on the necessity of breathing for every living being.⁴²⁹ To prove his point, Afghani performed an experiment, in which he locked a pigeon in a cage, which he sealed hermetically. A few moments later, the pigeon died. When the audience witnessed this strange

⁴²⁸ Ibid, a study by the Turkish scholar Ismail Habib, pp. 89-97.

⁴²⁹ On the influence of Enlightenment on Afghani and Abduh, see M. Amarah, *el-Islam bayn al-tanwir wa al-tazwir*, Cairo: Dar al-Shuruk, 1st ed., 1995, pp. 238-68; Nasir Hamid Abu Zayd, *Min al-mu'tazilati wa Ibn Rushd ila Muhammad Abduh*; Mahmud Hamdi Zakzuk, *Mafhum al-tanwir fi fikr Ibn Rushd*, Murad Wahbah, Mona Abu Sunnah, *Ibn Rushd wa al-tanwir*, Dar al-thakafat al-jadid, 1st ed., 1997, pp. 105-13, 129-48.

behaviour of Afghani, they reprimanded him sharply, by saying: “How can the university allow such a person to kill innocent animals?!” They opposed this kind of behaviour as incompatible with Islam, claiming that the reason for this was the fact that the Dean of the University had studied in France, where he had become a secularist, and an atheist, therefore calling for his resignation and replacement.

In another occasion, Hasan Tahsin Efendi asked Afghani to deliver a speech on the importance of industry, and to clarify his views in the treatise *al-Raddu al al-dahriyyin*. (*Response to the Atheists-Infidels*) At first, he had politely declined due to the lack of his command of Turkish, but then he had brought his speech text in Turkish and had presented it to the Minister of Education, who had approved it; thus, Afghani lectured in Turkish in front of the clerics and the scholars.

Among the audience was Shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman State, Hasan Fehmi Efendi. It is well-known that the Turkish ‘Ulama had a negative opinion about the reformist movement, and they opposed the views of Afghani, Abduh, and Hasan Tahsin. In his speech, Afghani said: “*the prophecy of what shall happen in the future is part of a specific art and profession.*” The audience misunderstood these words as claiming that prophecy is a kind of art or profession. However, there is a clear difference between prophecy (*al-tanbbu’a*) (التنبؤ) and prophethood (*al-*

nubuwwah) (النبوة) and because of the hostile environment, Afghani was forced to go to Cairo in 1288/1871. The incident of the pigeon and this remark of Afghani caused the firing of Hasan Tahsin Efendi from the position as Dean of the University, after a year in office.⁴³⁰

According to his biographers, Hasan Tahsin never married. He was an ascetic who was dedicated to the experimental sciences. For nearly half a century he taught at a private school, travelling from one place to another with a group of students of natural sciences. It is said that he became self-conceited to the extent that some of his gestures and thoughts went against the Shari‘ah, as a result of his amazement with the Western world.

He passed away in 1880 (or 1881) in Erenkoy near Istanbul, and was buried at the Sahrayi-Cedid Mezarligi graveyard. His tomb was unmarked and it is still unknown. May God have mercy upon his soul and forgive his errors!

HIS WORKS

The overwhelming majority of Hasan Tahsini’s works were written in Turkish and in Albanian, but most of them have

⁴³⁰ *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, p. 202.

been lost. The following is a list of his works which were mentioned in the conference, and quoted in other sources too:⁴³¹

- **Tarih-i Tekvin Yakut Hilkat** (History of Creation) - in Turkish;⁴³²

- **Esas-i ilm-i Hay'et** (Basics of Geometry) - in Turkish;⁴³³

- **Psiholoji Yakut ilm-i Ruh** (Psychology-science of the spirit)- in Turkish;⁴³⁴

- **Esrar-i Abu ve Hava** (Secrets of the Water and the Air) - in Turkish;⁴³⁵

- **Hej'etul-alem** (Shape of the World)⁴³⁶ - in Turkish;⁴³⁷

- **Mir'atus-sema'i** (Mirror of the Sky) in Turkish;

- **Ligjet natyore** - (**Laws of Nature**) treatise translated from French;

- **Aklamul-ekvam** – (**Pens of the Writers-Nations**) language in which it was written unknown;

- **Hulasatul-efkar** (**Summary of Thoughts**) – language unknown;

⁴³¹ Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi, and other references.

⁴³² Published in Istanbul in 1310 A.H.

⁴³³ Published in Istanbul in 1311 A.H.

⁴³⁴ Published in Istanbul in 1309 A.H.

⁴³⁵ Published in Istanbul in 1309 A.H.

⁴³⁶ This is the same as *Esasu ilmil-hej'eti*, but it has been printed with another title in 1297 A.H. as an article in the *Majmu'a al-'ulum*.

- **Usul-i Fenn-i Felahet-Kimyayi Ziraat** - (Foundations of agriculture)⁴³⁸;

- **Murabbi-i Et-fal (Children's Teacher)**⁴³⁹ co-authored.

- His articles have been published in the Islamic journal “**Mecmua-i Ulum**”,⁴⁴⁰ and also in newspapers in Istanbul, such as “**Hafta**” and other daily publications in Turkish.⁴⁴¹

Hasan Tahsin Efendi was a good astronomer. In one of his works on astronomy, he writes that he was the first to discover the movements of four stars. He writes that modern science has discovered the heliocentricity of the planetary system rather late, even though the Qur'an has spoken about such matters twelve centuries earlier in a decisive and amazing way:

﴿وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَرْنَا مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ﴾

[يس:38-40]

And the sun runs on its fixed course for a term. That is the Decree of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing. And the moon, We have measured for it mansions till it returns like the old dried

⁴³⁷ Ibid, a study by the Turkish scholar Mahmut Kemal Inal, p. 106, in which Hasan Tahsin Efendi is listed among the great Turkish poets, is entitled *al-Shu'ara al-atraq fil-qarn al-akhir*.

⁴³⁸ Published in Istanbul in 1291 A.H.

⁴³⁹ Published in Istanbul in 1289 A.H.

⁴⁴⁰ Published in Istanbul in 1297 A.H.

⁴⁴¹ For more details on his works and scientific ideas, see: Akun, op. cit., pp. 203-6.

curved date stalk. It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all float, each in an orbit.⁴⁴²

Yjet që nuk shuhen

SHIRTARI DVOR

HASAN TAHSINI FIGURË E NDRITUR E RILINDJES KOMBËTARE

الجلد الإسلامي والوطنية نشرة آراء الشيخ حسن تحسين

20

REVUE DE L'ISLAM, 1988

Shkruan: Dr. Ali VISHKO

Lidhur me shkrimin e gjuhës shqipe Hasan Tahsini në një mbledhje, mes tjerash pat konstatuar se sipas Kur'anit, të gjitha gjuhërat janë të barabartë dhe se çdo alfabet është një lloj i respektuar.

Hasan Tahsini si njeri me kulturë të lartë evropiane, vishej në formë elegante. Kur mbaronte ligjëratat, ky me të dalur nga Tempulli ose Xhanisa e Sheh Solle (Aja Solja), e hiqte calmën dhe e merite mantelin në dorë dhe, duke kaluar Urtën e Galatës, dilte në anën tjetër të Stambollit në kuadrin "B e j o g i i u" ku dhe jetonte.

Nërrëzi e errësira të përgëndruar në ato kohë në Stamboll, të cilët mëshiheshin nën vlerat e Islamit e të Kur'anit, të Hasan Tahsini e shkollonin armikun e tyre të madh, nëse nuk do të mosur të ropen në ditë kotësi, mashtrimet, gënjestirat e tyre.

Me të degjuar për burgosjen e Hasan Tahsini, një grup intelektualësh shqiptarë të përgëndruar në Stamboll në krye me Ismail Cemal Vlorën u angazhuan që të shpëtonin Vlorën nga burgjet e të nxjerrin Hasan Tahsinin nga burgu. Pas interesimit të reaguesit e angazhimit të miqve të Mirasit i Sigurimit Publik - Hyrri Pasha, njeri me pikëpamje progresive, Hasan Tahsini ishte lëshuar nga Burgu.

Pikëpamjet e të arriturat e tij filozofike Hasan Tahsini në atë kohë në pjesë të madhe i publikonte në "ULUM" - "REVISTA SHKËNCORE", themeluar e redaktuar prej këtu. Temat, artikujt e të tjerë nga lëmi i filozofisë të Hasan Tahsinin vend të caktoar, jo të vogël në këtë revistë.

Sipas mendimit unanimit në Burimet osmane e të tjera dhe, veçanërisht nga artikulli e Sami Frashërit, të botuara në të përkohshmen enciklopedike "KAMUS UL ALAM" ("Enciklopedike e Diturive") etj. Hasan Tahsini ishte njëri me i ditur i

Jubilee

Në Kongresin Musliman Shqiptar u miratua edhe statuti i Bashkësisë Islame të Shqipërisë dhe tërë organizimi dhe funksionimi i saj ishte menduar të mos jetë i varur nga asnjë qendër nga jashtë.

صورة للمسجد المركزي في تيرانا

عاصمة ألبانيا

کتابت نوح اچ محمدیان

تاریخ شکیپری

تاریخ

مؤلف: نوح محمدیان

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Hoxa Tahsin'in Tarih-i Tokcu'nun kapagi (Istanbul 1310)

Albanian articles about Hoxha Hasan Tahsini and his Scientific contributions

⁴⁴² Jasin, 38-40.

III: ANALYSIS OF HIS PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINE

*“If ‘philosophy’ means love of wisdom, than we love it, insofar as it seeks the truth, whereas if it deals with the straying of instincts through false efforts and destructive theories, we do not accept such knowledge, be it even from a Muslim who knows the Islamic worldview, since the acceptance or rejection of an idea must depend on its conformity with the Qur’anic revelation and that which the divinely inspired Prophet affirmed”.*⁴⁴³ I say this for the Albanian respected cleric, professor, and astronomer Hasan Tahsin Efendi, because unfortunately, many scholars who participated in the International Conference in Albania, confirmed that he was greatly influenced by the French philosophers’ ideas, distancing himself from the truth, until he became an expert⁴⁴⁴ on August Comte’s positivism,⁴⁴⁵ which is based on *empiricism* more than on *rationalism*.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Akun, op. cit., pp. 203-6; Neda Ja’ranah, Abd al-Hamid ibn Muhammad, *el-Mad’hal al-tafsir*, p. 303.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibrahim Daut Hoxha, *Hoxhë Hasan Tahsin Efendiu*, Nexhip P. Alpan’s article, p. 31.

⁴⁴⁵ *Kamusul-meuridil-vesit*, Munir Ba’lebekkij and Ruhi Ba’lebekkij, p. 455.

⁴⁴⁶ Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English, 5th edition, Oxford University press, 1995, p. 899.

He was also greatly influenced by *deism*, which is a theistic philosophy which accepts God's existence, but rejects the need for revelation and religion. "A *deist* believes in a Creator, but he believes that there is no need for revelation and that the intellect and reason suffice. This view corresponds to that of modern Indian Brahmins, who believe that every religious thought that does not conform to the intellect is rejected."⁴⁴⁷

The view of *deism* on the natural phenomena is that God the Almighty does not intervene at all, because nature has its own laws which preserve it, and that nature itself decided on its own course, hence being in no need of creation,⁴⁴⁸ whereas the motion and biological development of creatures are nature's responsibility!

This is indeed a dangerous idea, and therefore we must look closer and objectively at Hasan Tahsini's views. In my view, this philosophical doctrine has been studied very little by the commentators and scholars of the Qur'an. What follows is the definition of the Enlightenment, which is closely related to the issue at hand, especially with the views of Hasan Tahsin Efendi, who as we said was greatly influenced by *deism*.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. lectures of Dr. Irfan Abd al-Hamid Fattah at the International Islamic University-Malaysia.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibrahim Daut Hoxha, *Hoxhë Hasan Tahsin Efendiu*, Dritan Spahiu's article, p. 43.



Among contemporary Albanian scholars and thinkers who have shown great scientific respect and interest in the legacy of the Albanian thinker and scholar Hoxha Hasan Tahsini is: The Researcher Ibrahim Daut Hoxha (*second from the left*) and Dr. Ramiz Zekaj(*first from the right*)- I have visited them in their homes in Tirana-Albania in 2000. They welcomed my research and provided me with a lot of references and articles about my Ph.D, thesis. My deepest appreciation and thanks and most sincere prayers for both of them, God bless them.

Courtesy of the Albanian –Turkish Culturor Society
<http://hasantahsini.blogspot.com/2008/10/hoxh-tahsini-dijetar-gjenial.html>

1: THE NATURE OF ENLIGHTENMENT - A HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Some Arab dictionaries state that (التنوير) (“*Enlightenment*”) is a philosophical movement of the seventeenth century which is based on rationalism, and the idea that consciousness is the main factor for the development of societies, and that the negative qualities of a society result from ignorance of the human nature. This philosophy arose before the French revolution as a reaction to religious fanaticism, and feudalism. According to Kant, “*The Enlightenment liberates man from the inability of the functioning of the intellect without an external guide. This inability comes from the loss of courage and the claim of the intellect to function without a guide.*”⁴⁴⁹

The Russian Encyclopedia defines Enlightenment as: “*A political and social movement, whose followers tried to correct social conflicts, change morals, lifestyle and politics, through the spread of ideas on goodness, justice, and science. Essentially, the enlightenment means the principle that consciousness plays the decisive role in the development of a society, whereas social injustice comes from ignorance and lack of mutual trust. Also,*

the ignorant cannot understand the objective rules of society. The enlightened thinkers addresses all levels of society especially those in power. The enlightenment took place before the feudal revolution and greatly influenced in the weakening of the Church and feudalism. The enlightenment thinkers fought not only the Church, but also religious dogmas and the methods of dogmatic thought. At the present, the enlightenment has no influence in social thought except among Marxist intellectuals.”⁴⁵⁰

Some Western religious and political encyclopedias in English provide greater details on the goals and the most well-known figures of the Enlightenment, which we consider important: “*A historical period and a European intellectual movement which redefined the relationship between religion and politics. Enlightenment is an ambiguous term. Historians have studied its origins, places where it spread, its most well-known personalities, and main characteristics. The Enlightenment movement refers to the French Enlightenment, namely the period of rationalism. It appeared in eighteenth century France and ended with the French Revolution, after failing to realize the main goal of the 1789 revolution.*”

⁴⁴⁹ Murad Wahba, *al-Mu'jam al-falsafiy*, Dar al-thaqaf al-jadid, 3rd ed., 1979, p. 135.

⁴⁵⁰ A group of authors compiled an encyclopedia of philosophy edited by Rosenthal and Yudwin, Arabic tr. Sermi Kerem, ed. Sadiq Jalal, George Tarabishi, Beirut, Dar al-tulay'ati, 6th ed., 1987, pp. 145-6.

This is the narrow meaning of the term, whereas the wider meaning of this movement is related to its reformist nature, especially with respect to a return to ancient Greece as understood during the Renaissance. In a broader sense, the Enlightenment started in the seventeenth century, with John Locke's approaches to knowledge, politics, and religion. Its most well-known figures in Britain were: Joseph Priestly, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and Edward Gibbon. Among the French, the most well-known were Voltaire, Baron de Montesquieu, Denis Diderot, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In Germany: Christian Wolf, Moses Mendelssohn, Immanuel Kant etc.; and in North America: Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, etc.

2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Some religious and political encyclopedias' entries on Enlightenment say:

*“The political and religious system in pre-Enlightenment Europe was controlled by the Christian clergy, who had all the power and decision making. The kings took their legitimacy of rule from the clergy which was considered holy and having divine authority. The proponents of the enlightenment rejected this political and religious system in its totality, and considered reason as the fundamental source of human goodness. They focused on the importance of rational critique, natural law, objectivism, and universalism. They also concentrated on modern science, the rights of nature, freedom, equality and fraternity, non-fanaticism and religious tolerance, complete liberation from religious superstitions and irrationalism, and the non-reliability of a supernatural religious authority...”*⁴⁵¹

In defining the Enlightenment in a work from 1784, Kant invites people to rely on themselves, because they must exercise their own will to think about politics and religion, and to believe in themselves, instead of relying on others. People must use their

⁴⁵¹ Robert Wuthnow (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, Routledge, London 1998, pp. 233-4.

own minds in order to achieve true knowledge and to gain a better understanding of politics and religion.⁴⁵² The characteristics of this philosophy were: the liberation of reason from religious superstitions, irrationalism, and regressive methods, as well as the change from political tyranny to progress and improvement. With the development of these rational powers, people could progress to perfection.⁴⁵³ According to this view, religion and politics must be studied rationally and in view of human nature.

Nature has a special rational order, and it functions in accordance with universal physical laws. Natural phenomena as well as the political, religious, and moral issues must be studied rationally. The nature around as well as the complex human issues must be divided into their components, in order to discover the relationship between cause and effect.⁴⁵⁴

Based on the above, every dogmatic belief or superstition which cannot be analysed rationally must be uprooted, even if it pertains to the foundations of religion and politics. The philosophy of the enlightenment was based on the principle of tolerance and non-fanaticism, in order for people to have freedom of belief and speech. The religious and political fanaticism

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, p. 234.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁴⁵⁴ On cause and effect relationship, see Muhammed al-Iraqi, Muhamed Atif, *al-Naz'atul aqliyyeti fi falsafati Ibn Rushd*, Egypt, Darul-Ma'arif, n.d., pp. 163-7.

disabled people's rational faculty and prevented their development and true understanding.

It is obvious that the Enlightenment's main goal was separation of religion from politics. This gave rise to a group of atheistic thinkers who claimed that there is no benefit from religion or piety, and insisted on clearing politics from every religious influence. There was another group of thinkers among the proponents of the Enlightenment who were not atheists, but who wanted to rationalize religion and rejected the divine authority of the clergy. In their view, a religion which is based on reason must respect the natural principles as well as political rights of both believers and atheists.⁴⁵⁵

3: DEISTIC IDEAS IN HASAN TAHSIN'S THOUGHT

Deism was an offshoot of the Enlightenment. It reached its peak at the end of the nineteenth century. The followers of the Enlightenment believed in the philosophy of progress, which in its foundations denied tradition, i.e. the whole religious, cultural, and historical inheritance, as incongruent with the needs of time.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ See: Rober Wuthman, *The Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, Routledge, London 1998, 233-235; Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Macmillan Publishers, London 1967, pp. 519-525.

⁴⁵⁶ For more details, see: Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment-An Introduction*, Random House, New York, 1966.

According to *deism*, the true religion is *naturalism*. The great majority of the followers of *deism* denied revelation, which they considered as superstition and illusion. God wished happiness for His creatures, and therefore He created values as the means for the realization of bliss. The salvation of men cannot depend on any revelation. The true, correct religion is a free expression of one's will and reason in every time and place. The principles of Christianity and Islam are trivial and consist of political tyranny, deceit, trickery and cunning on the part of theologians, and they stand opposed to reason.⁴⁵⁷

Deism spread among many thinkers of seventeenth and eighteenth century in England, finally acquiring a new meaning: *the absence of God from nature*. God created the world and its laws, and then He detached Himself from nature, leaving it to its self-regulating power.⁴⁵⁸ This idea was an extrapolation of mechanistic interpretations of Newtonian physics, according to which the world resembles a coordinated mechanical engine.⁴⁵⁹ The proponents of this philosophy held reason to be superior to revelation, and claimed that religion makes people intolerant, fanatical, and closed to dialogue. They rejected the idea that the intellect is subject to chaos due to the sin of Adam. In the

⁴⁵⁷ Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, 188.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 188.

seventeenth century, many atheists opposed the permissibility of religious rites and worship, claiming that they were superstitions.⁴⁶⁰

After consulting some of our professors who are experts on religion and philosophy in the West,⁴⁶¹ and after a deep analysis, we decided to point out the following important metaphysical points on the functioning of the universe, which issue forth from the Qur'anic text:

1. The created order is subject to laws, in which there are no contradictions:

﴿ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَّا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِن تَفَاقُوتٍ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِن فُطُورٍ ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ ﴾ [الملك:3-4]

*Who has created the seven heavens one above another; you can see no fault in the creation of the Most Gracious. Then look again: "Can you see any rifts?" Then look again and yet again: your sight will return to you in a state of humiliation and worn out.*⁴⁶²

﴿ وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴾ [النمل:88]

And you will see the mountains and think them solid, but they shall pass away as the passing away of the clouds. The Work of

⁴⁵⁹ Merriam Websters's *Encyclopedia of World Religions*, Springfield, 1999, p. 284.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 284.

⁴⁶¹ Namely prof.Dr. Irfan Abd al-Hamid Fattah, in an interview from 15.01.2003(may God have mercy on him)

⁴⁶² al-Mulk, 3-4.

*Allâh, Who perfected all things, verily He is Well-Acquainted with what you do.*⁴⁶³

﴿ أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لَيْسَكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾
[النمل: 86]

*See they not that We have made the night for them to rest therein, and the day sight-giving? Verily, in this are signs for the people who believe.*⁴⁶⁴

﴿ إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ ﴾ [القمر: 49-50]
*Verily, We have created all things with Qadar. And Our Commandment is but one as the twinkling of an eye.*⁴⁶⁵

﴿ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴾ [الرعد: 8-9]

*Everything with Him is in (due) proportion. All-Knower of the Unseen and the seen, the Most Great, the Most High.*⁴⁶⁶

2. These harmonious and precise laws of nature are from God, not from nature.

3. Since only God is the Creator of both nature and its laws, only He can destroy it:

﴿ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ [الأعراف: 54]

*...Surely, His is the Creation and Commandment. Blessed is Allâh, the Lord of the worlds.*⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶³ al-Naml, 88.

⁴⁶⁴ al-Naml, 86.

⁴⁶⁵ al-Qamar, 49-50.

⁴⁶⁶ al-Ra'd, 8-9.

⁴⁶⁷ al-A'raf, 54.

﴿ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
وَالِيهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴾ [يس: 82-83]

*Verily, His Command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, "Be!" - and it is! So glorified be He and exalted above all that they associate with Him, and in Whose Hands is the dominion of all things: and to Him you shall be returned.*⁴⁶⁸

Even the tiniest particles in nature are from God the All-Powerful:

﴿ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهُ غَيْرَ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ
بِضِيَاءٍ أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهُ
غَيْرَ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴾ [القصص: 71-72]

*Say: "Tell me! If God made the night continuous for you till the Day of Resurrection, which god besides God could bring you light? Will you not then hear?" Say: "Tell me! If God made the day continuous for you till the Day of Resurrection, which god besides God could bring you night wherein you rest? Will you not then see?"*⁴⁶⁹

After this summarized introduction to this philosophical school and its goals, we can understand the essence of Hasan Tahsin Efendi's ideas, and the influence of Enlightenment and *deism* on his thought.⁴⁷⁰ Unfortunately, he was unconsciously a victim of this philosophy. We will illustrate this influence by referring to the papers presented in the Conference mentioned above, as well as in other written sources.

⁴⁶⁸ Yasin, 82-3.

⁴⁶⁹ al-Qasas, 71-72.

⁴⁷⁰ The Enlightenment has influenced many Albanian and Arab thinkers. For more details see Irfan Abd al-Hamid Fattah, *al-Fikr al-din fi muwajahati tahaddiyat al-hadatha*, IIUM; Research Center, 2001, pp. 29-37.

IV: THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THIS DOCTRINE ON THE THOUGHT OF HASAN TAHSIN EFENDI

i) His view on the spirit⁴⁷¹ and death

Contemporary Albanian historian Ibrahim Hoxha, mentions that Hasan Tahsin Efendi participated in a meeting with some clerics on the question of the spirit. The clerics held that the spirit is a material entity which leaves the body like a vapour, and then it rises to God, and is preserved until the Day of Judgement, when it returns to its master. Hasan Tahsin Efendi's reply was: *"Nay, the spirit is not something separate from the body. The cause of the body's death is the ceasing of the functioning and motion of the organs: if one does not breathe, one does not move, and this is death!"*

Everybody was astonished by this explanation of death by Hasan Tahsin Efendi,⁴⁷² as it differs from the explanation provided by the Islamic tradition, based on the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as the expositions of great Muslim scholars like

⁴⁷¹ Cf. the conference on Hasan Tahsin Efendi in Tirana. I have personally never come across such a text in his own writings, and will therefore rely on what has been quoted in the papers of that conference, regretting the lack of substantiation of such remarks from his own writings.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzi in his book *al-Ruh* (الروح) “*The Spirit*”. According to this tradition man is composed of a body and a spirit, and when he dies, the spirit leaves him and it goes to the Creator, in order to return to his grave during the questioning of the dead therein.

In the fourth section of his book, he writes: “*Does the spirit die, or only the body? People have different opinions on this question. A group believes that the spirit dies and that it tastes death because every thing shall taste death, whereas a second group believes that the spirits do not die, as they have ben created eternal, but it is the bodies that die. In this, they rely on some ahadith which speak about the punishment or bliss after the spirit’s separation from the body until God returns them to these bodies again, arguing that, if the spirits died, they would not experience punishment or reward. In this context, the Almighty God says, “Think not of those who are killed in the Way of God as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision. They rejoice in what God has bestowed upon them of His Bounty and rejoice for the sake of those who have not yet joined them, but are left behind (not yet martyred) that on them no fear shall come, nor shall they grieve.*”⁴⁷³

⁴⁷² *Ibid*, p. 131-154.

⁴⁷³ Ali Imran, 169-170.

It is more correct to say that death means the separation of the spirit from the body and its leaving the body, because in this case the spirit too tastes death. And if one says that the spirit perishes and disappears, this means that it does not die but that it lives in bliss or punishment.⁴⁷⁴ There are many hadith which prove that the spirit leaves the body upon death, and that they return to them in order to have them live in bliss or punishment in the grave. This has been researched by Ibn al-Qayyim⁴⁷⁵. Even the great philosopher Ibn Sina has pointed out the separation of the spirit from the body at death: “*Death is the separation of the spirit from the body.*”⁴⁷⁶ In fact, the spirit⁴⁷⁷ is an independent entity, but we do not know anything about its real nature. As the Qur’anic verse has pointed out decisively:

﴿ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴾ [الإسراء: 85]

*And they ask you concerning the Spirit; Say: "The Spirit is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you have been given only a little."*⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁴ Ibn Kayyim Al-Xheuzij, *al-Ruh*, ed. Sayyid Jamili, Dar al-kitab al-arabi, Beirut, 1st ed., 1994, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 97-98.

⁴⁷⁶ Ali Iljazi, *Kur’ani dhe shkenca bashkëkohore*, Gjakovë, 2000; 455.

⁴⁷⁷ On the issue of the spirit see: Ali Muhammad Shafi’i, *Hashiyat al-imam al-Bayjuri ala jawharat al-tawhid al-musamma tuhfat al-murid ala jawharat al-tawhid*, al-Azhar University, Dar al-Salam, 1st. ed., 2002, pp. 266-9.

⁴⁷⁸ al-Isra’a, 85.

ii) His view on the rain

In the same meeting with the clerics, the question of the rain formation and falling arose. Those present stated that it is God who sends down rain as a mercy for His servants. However, Hasan Tahsin Efendi replied that: *“The phenomenon of rain is the same as other natural phenomena, and it is a product of natural laws”*.⁴⁷⁹ Then he went on to explain the formation of rain, snow, hail, and dew. He argued his claims with a simple experiment in the room where the discussion took place. After heating an amount of water, and letting the vapours liquefy on the roof, wherefrom they fell on the heads of some of those present as water drops. At this, people started seeking protection and shelter from God, by saying: *“O God, protect us from the misguided Hasan Tahsin who misguides others too, and who is a murtad (apostate), may God curse him!”* Meanwhile Hasan Tahsini smiled with those who enjoyed the experiment.⁴⁸⁰

This claim and this theory of Hasan Tahsin disprove many clear verses of the Qur’an, where it is said that the falling of rain is from the Mercy of God the Exalted, who sends down rain when and where He wishes, on whomever He wishes:

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid*, the paper presented by Ibrahim Daut Hoxha, p. 131.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 132.

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنزِلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴾ [لقمان: 34]

*Verily God, with Him is the knowledge of the Hour, He sends down the rain, and knows that which is in the wombs. No person knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no person knows in what land he will die. Verily, God is All-Knower, All-Aware.*⁴⁸¹

The Qur'anic verses prove the very opposite of the remarks of Hasan Tahsin on rain, thunder, and lightning as natural phenomena:

﴿ وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْمِحَالِ ﴾ [الرعد: 13]

*And thunder glorifies and praises Him, and so do the angels because of His Awe. He sends the thunderbolts, and therewith He strikes whom He wills, yet they dispute about God. And He is Mighty in strength and Severe in punishment.*⁴⁸²

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا لِنُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلَدَةً مَيِّتًا وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَامًا وَأَنَاسِيَّ كَثِيرًا ﴾ [الفرقان: 48 – 49]

*And it is He who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy; and We send down pure water from the sky. That We may give life thereby to a dead land, and We give to drink thereof many of the cattle and men that We had created.*⁴⁸³

These verses prove the following points:

1. God, the Most Glorious, by his Power and Will manifests thunderbolts for us, and this is something which ultimately comes from Him.

⁴⁸¹ Luqman, 34.

⁴⁸² al-Ra'd, 13.

⁴⁸³ al-Furqan, 48-9.

2. God, the Most Exalted, and not nature, sends thunder by His Power and Majesty, because He specifically mentions this in the Qur'an.

3. Lightening strikes by the order of God, whomever He wills:

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُرْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهُ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ رُكَامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ وَيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيهَا مِنْ بَرَدٍ فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَصْرِفُهُ عَنِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقِهِ يَذْهَبُ بِالْأَبْصَارِ يُلْقِبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴾
[النور: 43-44]

See you not that God drives the clouds gently, then joins them together, then makes them into a heap of layers, and you see the rain comes forth from between them; and He sends down from the sky hail (like) mountains, and strikes therewith whom He wills, and averts it from whom He wills. The vivid flash of its (clouds) lightning nearly blinds the sight. God causes the night and the day to succeed each other. Truly, in this is indeed a lesson for those who have insight.⁴⁸⁴

4. God the Glorious is He who sends down rain, not nature as Hasan Tahsin Efendi and his like-minded people believed.

We believe that these verses prove very clearly the opposite of what Hasan Tahsin said on this issue and other similar ones, which go against the revealed sources of Islam.

iii) His view on the formation of thunder

⁴⁸⁴ al-Nur, 43-4.

One day Hasan Tahsin Efendi was present in an Albanian village, where suddenly a severe storm started, with heavy rain and thunder. The villagers started praying to God to remove this bad weather from them, out of fear that God was punishing them for their sins. They also seemed to think that thunder was a melting iron, or blazing stones falling from the sky, and when Hasan Tahsin Efendi saw them praying to God to remove the storm from them, he asked them: “*Why do you pray to God?*” They replied that God would remove that evil from them, at which Tahsin Efendi said: “*What will make God to do what you ask of Him?*” They said that no one could make Him, but that He would do it out of His mercy. At which, Hasan Efendi reiterated: “*God neither sends nor removes thunder from you!*” When they asked him who could remove it, beside God, he replied: “*The natural causes bring about thunder, and they are the source of it.*” They were very dismayed by these words, and told him: “*Woe unto you, O Hasan Efendi, what are ye saying?!*” Then he said: “*Today I will prove what I mean.*” There was a saddled donkey nearby, and pointing towards it, Hasan Efendi said: “*Do you see that donkey? Just watch how I will kill him with thunder.*” One of the villagers dared him to do that, and so Hasan Efendi tied a piece of metal against the saddle, and when the donkey was made to go out in the rain again thunder struck it, killing it on the spot. At that moment Hasan Efendi said, addressing the villagers: “*Are*

you convinced now that it is not God who sends the thunder?”
People left in shock from his behaviour, just as we are shocked by this account!⁴⁸⁵

iv) His view on the Arabic script

Hasan Tahsin Efendi vehemently opposed the use of Arabic script, just like he opposed the use of Latin alphabet. He had created a special alphabet for Albanian, which was deemed unsuitable for several reasons by his friends. The contemporary Albanian scholar of Orthodox Christian descent, Jani Vreto, writes that Hasan Tahsin argued his opposition to the adoption of the Arabic alphabet for Albanian in the following way:

“Our Prophet was an Arab who spoke in Arabic, and the Qur’an was revealed in Arabic. I learned Arabic and have studied Qur’an continuously, and here it is with me right now. It says that God the Magnificent sent every people a messenger who spoke in the language of that people,⁴⁸⁶ and it also says that God sent to every people a messenger from among themselves.⁴⁸⁷ The

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 132-3. This story is related by the historian Ibrahim Daut Hoxha from Hasan Efendi’s contemporaries.

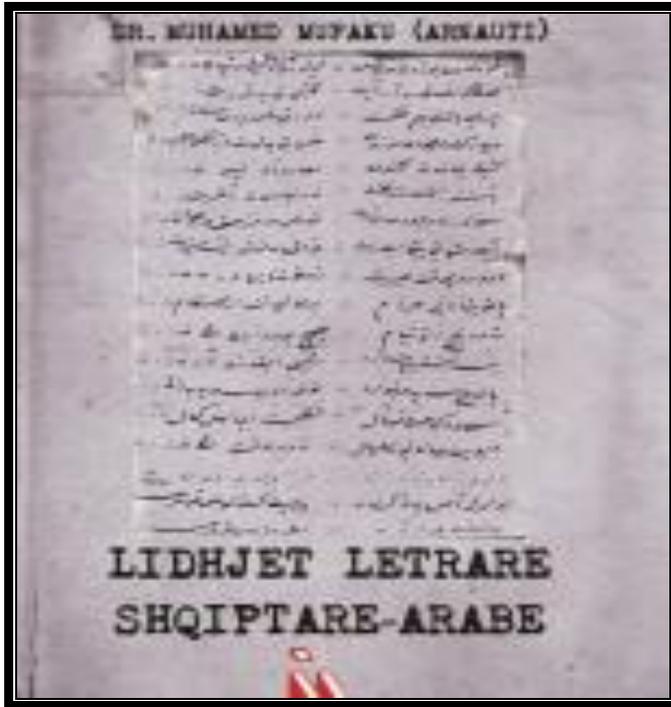
⁴⁸⁶ Probably a reference to the verse: *And We sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them...* (Ibrahim, 4).

⁴⁸⁷ Probably a reference to the verse: *Verily We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. And there never was a nation but a warner had passed among them.* (Fatir, 24).

Qur'an also says them among God's signs are the heavens, the earth, the different languages, and colours.⁴⁸⁸ Besides, the sacred books preceding the Noble Qur'an, such as the Old Testament, were written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. They are still venerated, appreciated, and considered sacred by people. Here is the Qur'an before you, and here are the verses and the chapters which speak about what I said, let whoever speaks Arabic verify the truth of my words. The Qur'an considers all languages as equal, and their alphabets are respected and appreciated. Muslims are obligated to learn Arabic in order to read the Noble Qur'an in its original language, and then they are obligated to translate it for those who do not speak or understand Arabic".⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ A reference to the verse: *And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. Verily, in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge.* (al-Rum, 22)

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 75-76.



Courtesy of prof.Dr.Muhamed Mufaku (Arnauti)

v) The author's opinion on this issue

We mentioned earlier that despite the great international colonialist political pressure for the substitution of the Arabic script with the Latin script, Albanian 'Ulama accepted the idea of a Latin alphabet based on Qur'anic verses, as in the case with Hasan Tahsin Efendi; and on rational arguments. Our opinion is that despite their views and attitudes on this issue, which was a very sensitive matter in their time, one must not lose sight of the fact that Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and of the Prophet

Muhammad a.s., and that it has a greater value than other languages and scripts in the world. This is not to deprecate any other language, because God has created languages as a means of communication and mutual knowing of peoples. The Arabic language enjoys authority, but this does not mean that the Arabs are worthier than others:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴾ [الحجرات: 13]

*O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with God is that who has piety. Verily, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.*⁴⁹⁰

“What makes [the Arabs] worthy, and God know best, is the fact that God gave them a language, morals, and good works. Besides, one’s worth is related to one’s knowledge and good deeds. Knowledge has priority, and it consists in the power of the intellect to understand and remember, whereas the power of logic consists in the ability to express oneself, and their language is the most perfect, and richest.

A good work is based on the good morals, i.e. the instincts created in the soul, and their instincts are more pious than those of the others.

They are closer to generosity, bounty, courage, and trustworthiness than others. Before the advent of Islam they were

lovers of goodness, but doers of evil, because they had no access to revealed knowledge or a Divine law, and they did not know any science, although there were people among them who had revealed books, words of prophets, but they strayed because of their weak hearts and base instincts. The knowledge of the Arabs,⁴⁹¹ consisted in superb poetry and speeches, knowledge of the past days, and the practical knowledge for their everyday needs and for their orientation by the stars, and fighting skills. When God sent the Prophet a.s. with guidance after a difficult path, He transformed them from the period of ignorance which had covered their hearts, with a new period of purity and guidance. Thus they were perfected with a perfection which was sent down by God the Glorious. He made the barren land fertile, after it had been filthy with hogs and wild animals. Thus the

⁴⁹⁰ Hujurat, 13.

⁴⁹¹ These are the words of Ibn Taymiyya on the merits of the Arabs and love towards them, such as: “Love the Arabs for three reasons: I am an Arab, the *Qur’an* is in Arabic, the people of Heaven shall speak in Arabic, which is the language of Paradise.” Imam Ajluni says that Imam al Tabarani, al Hakim, al Bayhaqi and others quote it from Ibn Abbas with an interrupted and weak chain of transmitters. Al Tabarani has also related from Aby Hurayra a *marfu’a* hadith: “I am an Arab, the *Qur’an* is in Arabic, and the language of the People of Paradise is Arabic”, which despite being a weak hadith, is stronger than Ibn Abbas’. Abu Shaykh relates with a weak chain (*marfu’u*) from Abu Hurayra: “Love the Arabs, their survival is light to Islam, and their disappearance is darkness to Islam.” Daraqutni transmits from Ibn Umar: “Love of the Arabs is faith, and their hatred is hypocrisy.” See al-Maktabat al-alfiyyah li al-sunneh al-nabawiyya, by Jamiyya ihya al-turath al-arabi, Aman; Muhammad Ajluni Jarahi, *Kashf al-hafai wa muzil al-*

Immigrants and the Helpers became the worthiest creatures after the Prophets a.s., and they are the best generation of all until the Day of Resurrection, both among the Arabs and non-Arabs. God knows best and praise belongs to Him. May God bless our Prophet and his Family!... ”⁴⁹²

These are the words of Ibn Taymiyya on the issue, and we must emphasize that judging people according to their nationality or language is not a part of Islam. The bounties and the merits of a people are determined by their level of practicing the Islamic Shari‘ah.

vi) A brief critical look on Hasan Tahsin Efendi’s thought

These were the main views of this Westernized cleric with Enlightenment ideas. In the analysis of some religious and scientific phenomena, we clearly saw his half-atheistic philosophical orientation and doctrine. This philosophical doctrine is rather dangerous, because it opposes Revelation to the

ilbasi amma ushtuhire minal-ahadith ala alsinet-nasi, Beirut, Muessesetu l-ri-salah, 4rth ed., 1405 A.H, vol. I, pp. 414-15.

⁴⁹² Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya, Abdulhalim Abu Abbas, *Jami al-Rasa’il*, ed. Muhammad Rashad Rafiq Salim, Egypt, n.d., vol. 1, p. 287; Mustafa Sabri, *Mukhtasar mawqif al-aql wa al-ilm wa al-alam min Rabbil-amin wa rusulih*; entitled: “Al-kaulul-faslu bayn al-ladhine yu’minune bil-ghaybi wa al-ladhine la yu’minun”, Dar al-Salam, Mektebetun-Nur, 1186 A.H., pp. 115, 117.

intellect and denies the Attributes of God, namely the Lordship (*rububiyyah*) of God, who creates and provides for His creatures.

This is the meaning of the fact that Allah is the Lord of all people, Who regulates their matters and improves their situation. When He created the creatures, God did not leave their fate at the hands of nature and its laws:

﴿ الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴾ [السجدة: 7]

*Who made everything He has created good and He began the creation of man from clay.*⁴⁹³

﴿ وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ ﴾ [الأعلى: 3]

*And Who has measured out; and then guided.*⁴⁹⁴

In the conversation between Moses and the Pharaoh, it is said:

﴿ قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَىٰ قَالَ عَلِمَهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْ نَّبَاتٍ شَتَّىٰ ﴾ [طه: 51-53]

*(Pharaoh) said: "What about the generations of old?" Moses said: "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord, in a Record. My Lord neither errs nor He forgets" Who has made earth for you like a bed; and has opened roads for you therein, and has sent down water from the sky. And We have brought forth with it various kinds of vegetation.*⁴⁹⁵

On the distribution of provision, God says in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾ [هود: 6]

⁴⁹³ al-Sajdah, 7.

⁴⁹⁴ al-A'la, 3.

⁴⁹⁵ Ta-Ha, 51-53.

*And no moving creature is there on earth but its provision is due from God. And He knows its dwelling place and its deposit. All is in a Clear Book (Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz.)*⁴⁹⁶

How can someone embrace a doctrine which says that God the Almighty is the Creator of every thing, and then cuts Him off from nature, in order for the nature to go on according to the special biological laws, when it is known that God says:

﴿ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أَصْغَرُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾ [السبأ: 3]

*...not even the weight of an atom or less than that or greater escapes His Knowledge in the heavens or in the earth but it is in a Clear Book.*⁴⁹⁷ God knows each thing, even the atom which is the smallest particle.

How can one say that nature has its own specific laws of development and motion outside of the Knowledge, the Power, and the Will of God? God says:

﴿ وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾ [الأنعام : 59]

*And He knows whatever there is in the land and in the sea; not a leaf falls, but he knows it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but is written in a Clear Record.*⁴⁹⁸

Who reveives the barren earth and the dry foliage with rain? Does it happen by itself? Do trees bear fruits without the intervention of any other factor, namely the power of God the

⁴⁹⁶ Hud, 6.

⁴⁹⁷ al-Saba'a, 3.

Almighty?! The answer to these and similar questions is found in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْتَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَّتْ إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتِ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ [فصلت: 39]

*And among His Signs is that you see the earth barren; but when We send down water to it, it is stirred to life and growth. Verily, He Who gives it life, surely, is Able to give life to the dead. Indeed He is Able to do all things.*⁴⁹⁹

﴿ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَّتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيحٍ ﴾ [الحج: 5]

*And you see the earth barren, but when We send down water on it, it is stirred, and it swells and puts forth every lovely kind.*⁵⁰⁰

﴿ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُتَجَاوِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزُرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَىٰ بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُقِضَلُ بَعْضُهَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الْأُكُلِ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴾ [الرعد: 4]

*And in the earth are neighbouring tracts, and gardens of vines, and green crops, and date-palms, growing into two or three from a single stem root, or otherwise, watered with the same water; yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat. Verily, in these things there are signs for those who understand.*⁵⁰¹

The claim that lifeless nature regulates itself is therefore totally absurd. We do not have space to quote other Qur'anic

⁴⁹⁸ al-An'am, 59.

⁴⁹⁹ Fussilat, 39.

⁵⁰⁰ al-Hajj, 5.

⁵⁰¹ al-Ra'd, 4.

verses here which disprove such deviated ideas. Our aim is only to present the thoughts of the main proponent of this doctrine among the Albanians, which is absolutely incompatible with the Qur'anic truths.

It is noteworthy to mention that there were other Albanian Muslim thinkers with a Western educational background, who did succumb to these ideas. One such personality is the well-known Albanian orientalist Haki Sharofi, who lived during the twentieth century. He wrote:

"The study of the natural sciences is not prohibited in the Qur'an, on the contrary, it is obligatory, because he who knows God through the signs and proofs existing in the universe is more worthy and respected than he who knows Him through imitation".⁵⁰²

The well-known Albanian orientalist⁵⁰³ Ferit Vokopola speaks about reformist ideas too, such as the emancipation of woman, but he never refers to deviated doctrines, and he was never under the spell of the Western civilization. For example, he writes: *"My belief in Islam is a source and promoter of*

⁵⁰² See the papers presented at the International Conference commemorating Haki Sharofi: *Haki Sharofi dhe veprat e tij: Kumtesa, shkrime origjinale dhe përkthime*, A.I.I.T.C., Tirana, 2000, p. 40.

⁵⁰³ We use the term "orientalism" or "Albanian orientalist" not in reference to the way of Western study of the Orient, rather to those Albanian scholars who study, translate and edit Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literary works. These studies have nothing in common with the "critical" study of the Qur'an and Sunnah by the way of Western scholars.

civilization, well-being, and bliss, a guide to mankind, e leader of progress and development, a supporter and encouraging element for seeking knowledge, a pillar of ethics and morals, a destroyer of ignorance and darkness!... We seek the improvement and the correct use of this world, just as we seek improvement of our deeds to achieve eternal bliss ".⁵⁰⁴

Such orientalist lived in the same period and were faced with the same dilemmas as Hasan Tahsin, but their thought was not marked by deviated Western philosophical ideas.

May the All Mighty God forgive him and us, and He knows the best.

⁵⁰⁴ *Haki Sharofi dhe Vepra e tij*, pp. 58-9.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EMPIRICAL DOCTRINE AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE STUDIES OF THE MEDICAL DOCTOR ALI FAHRI ILJAZI



(PRIM.DR.SCI.ALI FAHRI ILJAZI) 11.06.1949 -

CHAPTER TWO

THE EMPIRICAL DOCTRINE AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE STUDIES OF THE DOCTOR ALI FAHRI ILJAZI

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THIS ORIENTATION

This chapter investigates the rise of the empirical and scientific commentary of the Qur'an among Albanian scholars, which reached its peak in the later part of the twentieth century, with the appearance of the well-known Albanian cardiologist from Kosova, Prim. Dr. Sci Ali Iljazi.

Dr. Ali Iljazi has written many valuable works in this domain, and he is well known as a living scholar of great fame and authority. He has recently published his most important work, *Kur'ani dhe shkenca bashkëkohore*.(Qur'an and contemporary science)⁵⁰⁵

One may freely say that this book belongs to the corpus of summarized commentaries of the Qur'an in Albanian, and it contains an objective treatment of the verses dealing with the creation of man, and other natural phenomena. This is why we

⁵⁰⁵ Gjakovë, Kosova, 2000.

have included it in our study. We will take a close look at the passages of this book, in order to acquaint ourselves with the author's method of commenting upon verses which are related to contemporary scientific topics. This book complements the author's earlier work *Aspekte shkencore në Kur'an* which deals with the scientific aspects of the Qur'an.

I: DR. ALI ILJAZI'S LIFE AND WORKS

Ali Fahri Iljazi was born in the town of Gjakova (Kosova) on 11.06.1949, in a family of religious intellectuals which has produced more than twenty clerics, seen religious scholars and teachers, the last of whom was his father, Hafiz Fahri Iljaz Efendi.

He received his elementary and high school education in his hometown, with excellent results. He studied medicine at the University of Sarajevo, from which he graduated with excellent results, registering for post-graduate studies, which he successfully completed in 1979. Dr. Ali Fahri Iljazi received his master's and doctorate's degree from the University of Novi Sad, and was awarded the title Primarius from Kosovo's Ministry of Culture and Education. He has published over eighty scholarly articles and scientific papers,⁵⁰⁶ in various medical journals and

⁵⁰⁶ See the Islamic magazine *Frymëzimi*, issues 1-10, which is published by Dr. Ali Iljazi in Gjakova.

conferences held in former Yugoslavia. He has also written a well-know textbook on pulmonary diseases. His academic interests include the scientific commentary of the Qur'an, in which he has published over seventy articles in Kosovo and Macedonia. Some of his works are:

1. Agjërimi nga aspekti medicinal; (Fasting in the light of Medicine)

2. Aspekte shkencore në Kur'an; (Scientific views in the Qur'an)

3. Kur'ani dhe shkenca bashkëkohore; (Qur'an and contemporary Science)

4. Mrekullia dhe komentimi i Kur'anit në dritën e njohurive shkencore.⁵⁰⁷ (Inimitability and the interpretation of the Qur'an in the light if scientific discoveries)

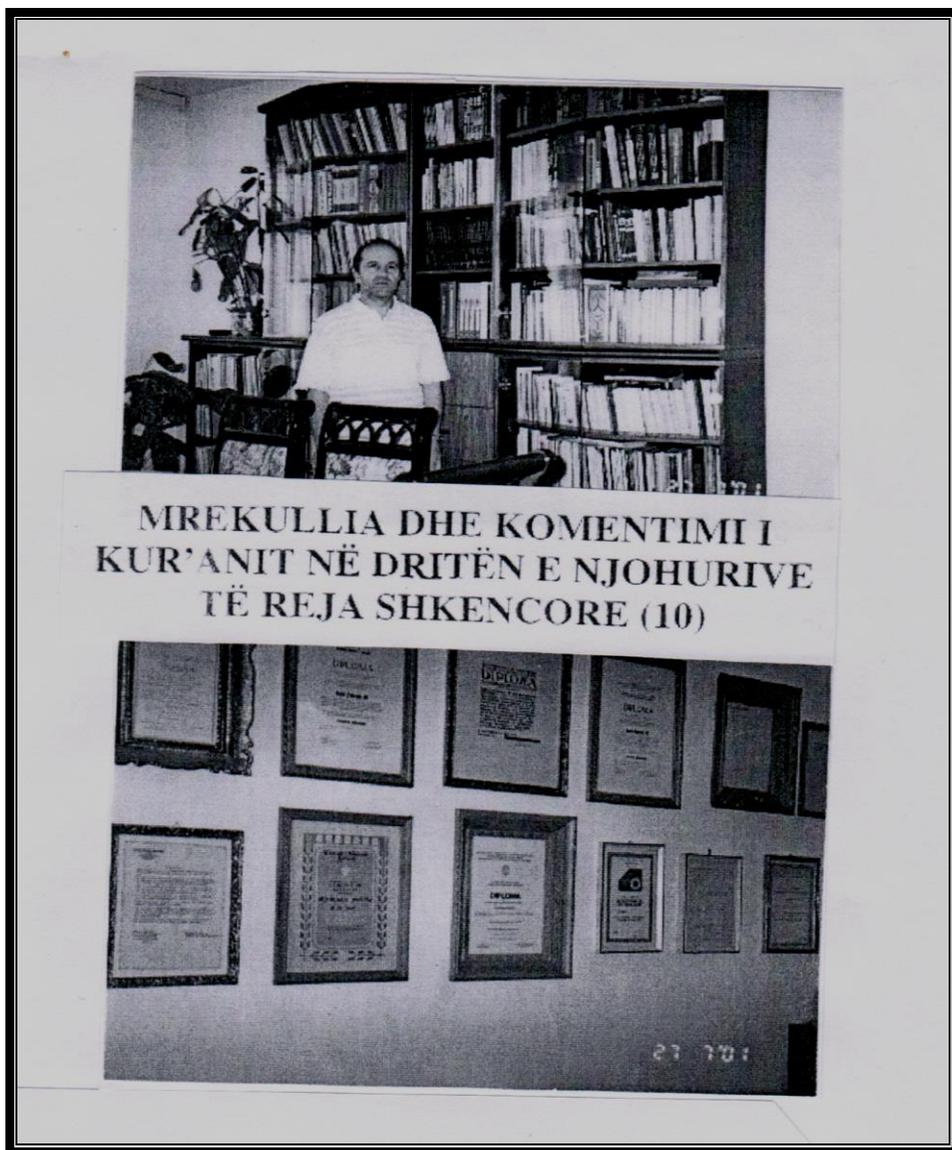
We will base our analysis mostly on his last book on the miracles of the Qur'an, as well as some religious and scientific lectures he delivered in various events held in different mosques, especially during the month of Ramadan. At the present Dr Iljazi is a voluntary preacher in Gjakova's central mosque, while simultaneously working as a specialized doctor in the State Hospital as well as his private clinic. His attractive method has gathered many young Muslim intellectuals from different fields.

Based on our conversations and interviews with Dr. Ali Iljazi, and his qualifications in cardiology and internal medicine, we can state that his scientific knowledge complements his knowledge of the Shari‘ah, as well as the commentary of the Noble Qur’an, which issue from his faith and sense of service towards the Book of God.

Perhaps this knowledge is a result of the religious training he received from his father. Dr. Ali Iljazi did not study in religious schools or universities in order to gain knowledge of the Islamic sciences, especially exegesis, in Arabic. The truth is that he needs to deepen his knowledge of Arabic, namely grammar, semantics, prosody, Hadith, Qur’anic sciences, principles of jurisprudence etc., although we could see that he possesses a great number of religious books and various commentaries of the Qur’an, Sufi literature, and books on Islamic ethics, which he had inherited from his father, Fahri Iljaz Efendi.

His interest in exegesis arose from his extensive reading of works by contemporary Western and Muslim scholars on the commentary of the Noble Qur’an. He possesses a basic knowledge of Arabic and Islamic jurisprudence, which served as a starting point for his work on the commentary of the Qur’an according to modern science.

⁵⁰⁷ Dr. Ali Iljazi wrote this biography himself during our visit to his home on 27.07.2001, during which he supplied us with some of his works



My personal visit to Medical Dr. Ali Iljazi's House in Gjakova in 2000

which are pertinent to our study.

II: PRINCIPLES OF ILJAZI'S SCIENTIFIC EXEGESIS

In the introduction to his book *Kur'ani dhe shkenca bashkëkohore* Iljazi points out the principles of his study, as well as the reliability and authenticity of the modern scientific method in understanding the Qur'anic verse dealing with natural phenomena.

He starts his work with the following Qur'anic verse:

﴿ سُرِّهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴾ [فصلت: 53]

*We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient in regard to your Lord that He is a Witness over all things?*⁵⁰⁸

Then he goes on with the exposition of his method: *"Whoever studies the Glorious Qur'an with sincerity and seriousness, free from prejudice and ideological bias, will discover treasures and reach the spiritual, cultural, and civilizational truth brought about by Islam. Firstly, I confirm that the Qur'an is not a scientific book which investigates the details of science. It is the Book of God the Magnificent, the Creator of every thing in this vast universe, this puzzling coherence on earth,*

⁵⁰⁸ Fussilat, 53.

in the oceans, and within man. God says in the Qur'an:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾، [آل عمران: 190]

*Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding.*⁵⁰⁹

Then he speaks about natural phenomena mentioned in the Qur'an such as the origin of the universe, the stars and the comets; the solar system, the earth, and the moon; the stages of man's development, and the variety of animals; the rotation of the earth around its axis as well as the sun; the principles of human and social ethics, etc.⁵¹⁰

The author maintains that the Noble Qur'an was not revealed in order to serve as a textbook on cosmology, geography, chemistry, medicine, etc, but as a Book of faith in God and a guide for mankind. In doing so, he upholds the opinion of those who have said that there are many scientific questions and miracles, on which the Qur'an has spoken long before modern science was able to perceive them.⁵¹¹ He says the following about the epistemology of science: *"Science is a verifiable form of knowledge, which starts from a hypothesis that is supported by empirical facts, and is confirmed or rejected through experiment.*

⁵⁰⁹ Dr. Ali Iljazi, *Kur'ani dhe shkenca bashkëkohore*, 7.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

Earlier hypothesis are often abandoned, and the experimental method is incapable of confirming anything".⁵¹²

Concerning the agreement between the Qur'an and modern science, the author affirms that they go hand in hand, like twins. Science has become the best aid for the understanding of the Qur'anic text, and since God is the Source of all knowledge, His Book must be able to meet the challenges of every epoch. The Qur'an is an eternal miracle, which challenges men, and Islam is a close and sincere friend of science and knowledge, as God says in the Qur'an:

﴿ شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾

[آل عمران : 18]

God bears witness that there is no god but He, and the angels, and those having knowledge; maintaining His creation in Justice. There is no god but He, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.⁵¹³ Also the Almighty God says:

﴿ يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾

[البقرة : 269]

He grants Wisdom to whom He pleases, and he, to whom Wisdom is granted, is indeed granted abundant good. But none remember except men of understanding.⁵¹⁴

The author is fully aware of the difficulties he will meet

⁵¹² *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁵¹³ Al-i Imran, 18.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 9.

during the commentary of the Qur'an, because the scientific exegesis is not an easy matter, and the exegete must have the necessary of knowledge to apply this art, as the French doctor M. Bucaille says: *"Whoever wishes to understand the Qur'an truly, must possess an encyclopaedic knowledge."*⁵¹⁵

Then the author continues with the historical development of this discipline from the time of the Prophet a.s. (*alayhis salam*) to the present. He points out that after the Prophet a.s. (*alayhis salam*) passed away, the leading authorities on exegesis were the four rightly guided caliphs, Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, Ubay ibn Ka'b, Zayd ibn Thabit, Ibn Abbas, etc. After the golden three hundred years, the science of exegesis developed and went through other stages, such as the traditional, rational, and scientific stage. During the scientific progress of the Abbasid period, there appeared some important figures in the commentary of the Noble Qur'an.

This period was followed by the appearance of a number of very knowledgeable figures in many fields of learning, such as Imam al-Ghazali, Shaykh Abu al-Fadl al-Mursi and later Imam al-Hafiz Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti.

In the modern period, we see figures like Jawhari Tantawi and Muhammad Abduh in exegesis, whereas other distinguished scholars include Nadim al-Jisr, Mustapha Mahmud, Maurice

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 10.

Bucaille, etj.⁵¹⁶ The author then defines scientific exegesis as *"The use of modern scientific terminology in the commentary of the Qur'an "*.⁵¹⁷ This orientation existed even before, among the scholars who asserted that the Qur'an contains in itself all the sciences, be they the sciences of their epoch, or sciences that would be discovered later. The leading figure of this group was Imam Al Ghazali, who quotes Ibn Mas'ud in his *Ihya'*: *"Whoever desires the knowledge of the ancestors and of the later generations let him ponder on the Qur'an."*⁵¹⁸

The author further speaks about Imam Ghazali's contribution in this field, and quotes the following passage from him: *"All the science is taken from the ocean of God's knowledge. This is an ocean without a shore, and if the sea were ink, it would dry up before the Words of God would be finished. From God is both sickness and cure as the story of Ibrahim confirms:*

﴿ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴾ [الشعراء: 80]

*And when I am ill, it is He who cures me.*⁵¹⁹ *This ocean is fathomed by those who understand medicine, because the latter knows about illness and its symptoms, its cures and effects.*⁵²⁰

"One of God's actions is the determination of the position

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁵¹⁷ This definition of the scientific exegesis is not acceptable, as we shall see later.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁵¹⁹ al-Shu'ara, 80.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 11-12. The author does not provide the exact reference from *Ihya*, and this is a methodological slip.

of the sun and the moon, and this can be known but by him who knows their special sciences, such as astronomy and astrology. Man can comprehend the following Qur’anic verse

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّبَكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ فَعَدَلَكَ فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ ﴾ [الإنفطار: 6-8]

O man! What has made you careless about your Lord, the Most Generous? Who created you, fashioned you perfectly, and gave you due proportion. In whatever form He willed, He put you together,⁵²¹ only if he knows anatomy and histology.”

The issue of the scientific commentary, or the assertion that the Qur’an contains the sciences of the first generation and of the last, was a concern of Suyuti too, who thought in a similar vein as al Imam al Ghazali. He starts his famous work *al-Itqan* with the verses:

﴿ وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴾ [الأنعام: 38]

We have neglected nothing in the Book⁵²², and:

﴿ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ ﴾ [النحل: 89]

And We have sent down to you the Book as an exposition of everything,⁵²³

as well as some hadith such as the following which is transmitted by Tirmidhi and others: *"There shall be fitnah"*, and when asked:

⁵²¹ al-Infitar, 6-8.

⁵²² al-An’am, 38.

⁵²³ al-Nahl, 89.

"What is the way out, O Messenger of God?" the Prophet a.s. replied: "The Book of God, wherein there is knowledge of those before you and after you, as well as judgment for you."⁵²⁴

Another hadith states: "If there was anything God did not know, He would not know the atoms, the hopper and the mosquito".⁵²⁵ Iljazi emphasizes the words of Suyuti and Al Ghazali in order to support his view on the matter. He further writes that among the later scholars who confirm the existence of scientific exegesis was Muhammad Abduh, who saw a description of electricity, telephone, and electric trains in the verse:⁵²⁶.

﴿أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ﴾ [البقرة: 19]

*Or like a rainstorm from the sky, wherein is darkness, thunder, and lightning. They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap for fear of death.*⁵²⁷

He then quotes Mustapha Mahmud: "There are many verses in the Noble Qur'an which prove that Islam is a religion of science, civilization, and progress. New scientific discoveries help us a great deal in the commentary of such verses. The verses that speak about astronomy and the universe are interpreted in light of these discoveries. The Qur'an is not only a Book of the Shari'ah

⁵²⁴ We could not find this hadith in Tirmidhi's *Sunan*. Hadith 2195 opens the Chapter "There Will Be *fitnah* Like the Dark Night" (ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shahin et. al.), Beirut, Dar Ihya Turath al-arab, vol. 4, p. 487.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 13. Also see *al-Ithun fi ulum al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, p. 136.

⁵²⁶ al-Baqarah, 19.

or of faith, nor is it a compilation of semantics, rhetorics, and grammar. The Noble Qur'an is a great scientific encyclopedia which summarizes the principles of morality, politics, sociology, history, medicine, philosophy, and biology.

I was attacked and rejected when I tried to interpret the Qur'an on the basis of reason and science, and I was asked my diploma from Az'har, as if the Qur'an was sent down to be commented upon only by them, as the others are not capable of it".⁵²⁸

We believe that Mahmud's words cannot be accepted in their entirety, because those who asked him for a diploma meant that an exegete was supposed to have studied with the traditional masters of the revered Az'har. It is the correct knowledge of the Shari'ah that helps the exegete to understand the Book of God, not the diploma or the turban.

After this important introduction, the author explains that there are other scientific aspects in the Qur'an, such as those pertaining to rhetorics, style, concepts, creativity, form, miracles, the Law, stories, the psyche, structure, consensus, methodology, music, aesthetics, and art.⁵²⁹

Even though the author focuses on the scientific aspect of

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 14, quoting Mustapha Mahmud's *al-Qur'an Muhawalat li fahmin asriyyin*, without the exact reference.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 15-19.

the Qur'an, he speaks with objectivity about other aspects. He writes that despite the continuous human efforts for the discovery of the treasures of the Book of God, the Qur'an remains the unexhaustible Word of God, because it is an eternal Attribute of His Majesty, a lasting message, free from any error.⁵³⁰

Due to the numerous scientific studies on the Qur'an and the author's extensive knowledge, we cannot analyse each one of his works, but with God's leave we will try to point out the most important ideas of Dr. Iljazi, through concrete examples from his method in exegesis, in order to confirm the empirical nature of his study of the Qur'an. We will start with his method in exegesis, and then proceed with our critical evaluation of it.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 20.

III: EXAMPLES FROM THE COMMENTARY OF SOME VERSES

1) NATURAL PHENOMENA POINTING TO THE POWER OF GOD

In his commentary of the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ ﴾ [الذاريات: 20]

*And on the earth are signs for those who have Faith with certainty,*⁵³¹

he writes: *"There are many verses in the Glorious Qur'an which prove that Islam is a true religion and that its majesty manifests itself in many scientific issues, and modern science is a concrete subject for the commentary of such issues. In the verses we mentioned earlier, God asks man to observe these truths, to study them on earth and within his inner self. It has been scientifically proved that there are more than one and a half million different animals on earth, and more than half a million different plants. The Glorious Qur'an encourages man to think and ponder, because according to some scientific data man uses only 10% of his brain's potential, and in order to use the remaining 90%, he must move and awaken his unused intellectual capacities."*⁵³²

2) THE HUMAN HEART

⁵³¹ al-Dhariyat, 20.

⁵³² *Ibid*, p. 24.

In his commentary of the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴾ [الذاريات: 21]

And also in your own selves, Will you not then see?"⁵³³ the author writes:

"This verse contains few words, but great meanings. God asks man to observe the signs and facts of the Majestic Creator. First of all, the Qur'an orders us to study and observe the facts of the universe, and if we are unable to do this, we must look within our own selves in order to see the facts and divine proofs. For example, let us take the heart. It is the most precisely designed thing in the world. Every 23 seconds it pumps out 23 litres of blood, and during a day 19,000 litres, and during 60 years 480,000,000 litres of blood. This interesting pump weighs 230g in women, and 280g in men. The velocity of the blood flow is 4.4 km/s. The divine miracle can be understood better in the following way: Red blood cells live 42 days on average, and the most resistant live 127 days, which means that our blood is renewed every two months, so that two hundred million red blood cells are created and destroyed every day in our body, which is why God asks human beings to note the majesty of His creation, by drawing their attention with these words: "Will you not see?"⁵³⁴

⁵³³ al-Dhariyat, 21.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 27-28.

3) THE HUMAN BRAIN

The human brain is the most precise computer in the world. It consists of more than one hundred billion cells, and it can be compared with more than ten thousand computer programs in continuous use. The surface needed for this computer is 250.000 km² which can be compared with half the surface of France. No other instrument can achieve this until the Day of Judgment. Science provides new facts about human beings, such as the latest discovery from the University of Michigan that the human skin and hair contains minerals like silver, lead, iron, aluminium, etc. The speed of the wind or hurricanes rarely exceeds 140 km/h, whereas the speed of the air and of the oxygen which is exhaled from human lungs is 390 km/h!⁵³⁵

He then continues: *“In reality, man is a wondrous electrical being, since there are sixty billion cells functioning in his body according to the laws of natural electricity that the Magnificent Creator has ordained. Science has proven that man contains negative electric charge inside and positive electric charge on the outside. Because of this, modern science can perform various cardiological examinations in order to determine the electrical activity between the brain and the heart. God says*

⁵³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 28.

in the Glorious Qur'an:

﴿ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴾ [الذاريات: 21]

*And also in your own selves, Will you not then see?*⁵³⁶

The author then writes that many people read this verse without further pondering on its meaning. When we study this verse, we notice that there are many signs within ourselves. Perhaps someone can say, “It is I who decides”, but this is not correct, because the human brain is the property of God the Majestic. Can one stop one’s heartbeats even for a moment?! If the heart stops, can one makes it beat again? How can one say such things about oneself? Even when we are asleep, the heart still goes on beating.

4) BREATHING AND THE CIRCULATION OF LEUCOCITES

Let us ask ourselves, do we breathe at our own will? The process of breathing is an instinctive action. We breathe 16 times per minute independently from our will, and when the divine order takes place, no one can reverse it. The same is true of the stomach and the process of digestion. Do all these actions take place at our own will? Never! The function of the intestines and the manner of food movement in them, the distribution of

nutrients throughout the body, the absorption of the needed nutrients, and the rejection of the unnecessary ones - all take place independently of our will. The same happens with the leucocytes, when they encounter harmful viruses within the human organism. Every second, thousands of processes take place within our body, without us being aware of them. They all function in accordance with God's will.

God's mercy in creating these organs for our benefit is great indeed. They are under His control all the time, otherwise man would not live, work, or play his role in the universe. For example, what would happen if all these processes depended on us? We would have to be awake all the time, to check the functioning of our hearts, thus being deprived of sleep. If the stomach was under our control, we would have to check the process of digestion after every meal. All these examples are known to men. God created man in this form in order for him to understand that there is no possibility for him to intervene in it, that everything is in His hands, and that it takes place according to His Will, Power, and Majesty.⁵³⁷

The author devotes a long section to this question, because many people are not aware of such truths regarding the creation of man by God the Magnificent. His aim is to correct their

⁵³⁶ a-Dhariyyat, 21.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 30-34.

misconceptions, and not just present the scientific facts.

5) HIS COMMENTARY OF THE VERSE:

﴿وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَى﴾ ، [النجم : 43]

*And that it is He Who makes laugh, and makes weep.*⁵³⁸

In his commentary of the verse above, the author writes:
"Most people read this verse without reflecting on its great meanings. If we think more deeply, we will realize that it contains great divine miracles.

*If we observe the different people of the world, we will notice that the phenomenon of laughter and crying is identical among them, regardless of their skin, language, and nationality. There is no English or African laughter, but only one type of laughter. Also, there is no Asian or Australian crying, but one common manner of crying. The reason is that there is a special centre in the human brain which controls the feelings and stimulates crying or laughter by the Will of God, which means that they happen by His Will and Grace. God the Almighty has bestowed this quality to all His servants, which also reflects His justice in treating them equally.*⁵³⁹ *All humans are equal in these*

⁵³⁸ al-Najm, 43.

⁵³⁹ Laughter and cry are specific to human beings, because no other living beings can smile or cry. See: Muhammad Adil Mahmud Abu al-Khayr, *Ijtihadat fi al-tafsir al-'ilmi fi al-Qur'an al-Karim*, Cairo, 1st. ed., 1988, pp. 38-42.

*divine blessings and gifts, because God is just. And yet there are those who boast: Man is just, powerful and able to decide his future, having control over everything!”*⁵⁴⁰

6) HIS COMMENTARY OF THE VERSE:

﴿ قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكِ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ [آل عمران: 26]

*Say: "O Allâh! Possessor of the kingdom, You give the kingdom to whom You will, and You take the kingdom from whom You will, and You endue with honour whom You will, and You humiliate whom You will. In Your Hand is the good. Verily, You are Able to do all things."*⁵⁴¹

Dr. Ali Iljazi writes: "My opinion on the verse:

﴿ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ ﴾

“..and You take the kingdom from whom You will..”

is that there is no person who comes to power, position, and wealth, or is stripped of it, out of his modesty or by itself, but it must be taken away from him. The Arabic word (النزْع) *al-naz'u* means: snatching, taking away, and this explains the many revolutions⁵⁴² and coups against those who thought they would rule forever, deeming themselves all-powerful. This verse contains proofs that none can attain power, position, or wealth, or

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁴¹ Al-i Imran, 26.

⁵⁴² The greatness and inimitability of this Divine Verse, the whole Muslim and non-Muslim societies around the globe have witnessed in the ongoing Arabic Spring Revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa, (*Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria*).(Dr.H.Hoxha).

save it only with God's leave, His Grace, Power and Decree. Man does not possess anything and he cannot postpone his *ajal* (moment of death) even for a second, regardless of the laboratoric analysis results. How often does it happen for us to see someone die in front of us by God's decree; people say that he had a heart attack, or brain hemorrhage, but these are all secondary causes, whereas the primary cause is what the following verse says:⁵⁴³

﴿وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ﴾ [الأعراف: 34]

*When their term comes, neither can they delay it nor can they advance it an hour.*⁵⁴⁴

The author then goes on to bring examples from cosmology, and he relies on Qur'anic verses for each. We shall now proceed with the evaluation of his method in exegesis.

⁵⁴³ al-A'raf, 34.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 37-39.

IV: THE AUTHOR'S METHOD IN DEALING WITH ISSUES INSPIRED FROM THE VERSES OF THE QURAN AND ITS ASSESMENT

After our study of Dr Iljazi's work on the Qur'an, we reached the following conclusions about his method:

- He rarely refers to the words of the great exegetes like Fakhr al-Din Razi, al-Qurtubi, al-Baydawi, Abi Hayyan etc. It would have been better to use them as support for his comments, and than continue with his own scientific commentary.

- Quite rarely, he gets involved in grammatical analysis in order to illustrate the wisdom behind the use of specific words in the Quran.⁵⁴⁵

- He interrelates various natural phenomena, such as earthquakes, volcano eruptions, and the movement of the mountains, with the approaching of the Last Day and its signs such as the collapse of the universe, the explosion of the sun, and the disappearance of the stars.⁵⁴⁶

- He relates every phenomenon to the Power of God, and clearly states that the Power and Will of God are the cause of every event. This is a positive element for him, unlike the method

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 129-130.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 115-130.

used by Hasan Tahsin Efendi.

- Addresses the human intellect directly when presenting the new scientific truths, which the Qur'an mentioned centuries ago, inviting man to think and reflect.

- Oftentimes he argues on religious and scientific issues by referring to Qur'anic verses, and from what we have seen, he does this rather successfully, even though the verses have sometimes been translated not fully well.⁵⁴⁷

- He quotes sayings of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, but without giving the exact references, except very rarely.

- His knowledge is vast and his bibliography extensive, to the point that the author harmonizes the famous Sufi sources, such as the works of Jalal al-Din Rumi, Imam al-Al Ghazali, Muhyi al-Din ibn Arabi, Abd al-Ghani Nablusi, Abd al-Qadir Gilani, Ibn Qayyim, Malik ibn Nabi, Seyyid Qutb, Muhammad Husayn Dhahabi, Muhammad Mutawali Sha'rawi, Mustapha Mahmud, Abd al-Majid Zendani and well-known doctors from several countries, with the commentary,⁵⁴⁸ which naturally

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 186-197.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid*. E.g. in his analysis on the true and the essence of the Seven Heavens mentioned in the Noble Qur'an, he mentions very strange ideas. Will all due respect to the author, these ideas are not true at all. *He writes that it has been discovered that light has seven colours; that this resembles the seven musical notes, the seven days of the week, the formation of the child in the womb during the seventh month. He says that sunlight has seven colours due to the fusion of hidrogen atoms, which reflect the seven orbits of*

enriches his method and elevates its scholarly value.

- At times he analyses the Qur'anic phrases based on the grammar rules in order to bring out the true meaning of the verse.⁵⁴⁹

- At times he does not keep the order of the topics, and makes long digressions⁵⁵⁰ as in the case of the creation, embryology and evolution, according to the Qur'an and modern science.⁵⁵¹

- The author has not acknowledged the references in which his ideas are based, and it is impossible that all the chapters are his own, because his bibliography is rather long. This makes the identification of his orientation rather difficult for us. The mentioning of the sources for one's ideas is a very important element in scholarly enterprises.

- The author does not mention the causes of revelation of the verses he discusses, or their readings, or principles of jurisprudence, except in rare cases,⁵⁵² or discussion of the style of the verse, or secondary issues. He has mainly focused on the scientific discoveries by researchers.

- We have not seen any reservation on the author's part

the electrons, corresponding to the seven heavens! See p. 175 for further details.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 159-168.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 173-180.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 159.

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 204.

towards the scientific issues which he refers to, as if they were confirmed truths, and not merely theories, despite the fact that a great number of scientific matters are still theories and hypothesis. Just as religious truths are in need of deep verification and confirmation from its true sources, so are scientific issues not to be accepted straight away, but after a necessary scientific verification and confirmation process. Whoever reads his book or articles gets the impression that the scientific ideas and discoveries mentioned therein are accepted truths and realities, which is not the case at all.

- The author has great esteem for the natural and social scientists, as shown in his commentary of the following verse:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ ﴾ [فاطر : 28]

*It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear God,*⁵⁵³ in which he says:

"The following question arises from this verse: Who are those that fear God? The answer is, those scholars who have specialized in the study of His creatures, be they human beings, animals or plants. The human intellect can know such sciences based on observation, investigation, and experiment, but it often happens that after experiments, man may understand certain issues which are not subjected to sensorial and empirical perception, such as the question of the primacy of the spirit over

matter.”⁵⁵⁴

The author’s limiting of those who fear God the most, to only the scholars of the human beings, animals, and plants, as a special group; is not a correct and precise conclusion. He should have not excluded the scholars who deal with Ethics and the Behaviour, with Aqa’id(beliefs), Fiqh(jurisprudence), Tafsir(exegses), Hadith(prophets’ sayings), Shari‘ah, and rhetorics from the meaning of this noble verse.

- The author has succinctly discussed the importance of water, honey, and various fruits from the Qur’anic and scientific aspect, without digressing into any other subject. He continues with the verse:⁵⁵⁵

﴿ أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ [الأنبياء : 30]

*Have not those who disbelieve known-(seen) that the heavens and the earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them? And We have made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?*⁵⁵⁶ Also,⁵⁵⁷ verses 68-69, Surah al-Nahl:

﴿ وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ثُمَّ كُلِي مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلًّا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾ [النحل : 68 - 69]

⁵⁵³ Fatir, 28.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 180.

⁵⁵⁵ al-Anbiya’, 30.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 188-196.

⁵⁵⁷ al-Nahl, 68-69

*And your Lord inspired the bees, saying: "Take you habitations in the mountains and in the trees and in what they erect. Then, eat of all fruits, and follow the ways of your Lord made easy (for you)." There comes forth from their bellies, a drink of varying colour wherein is healing for men. Verily, in this is indeed a sign for people who think.*⁵⁵⁸

In other instances, he refers to events from the life of the Prophet a.s.(*alayhis salam*), even though such events are not directly related to the text, such as in the discussion of the importance of milk, when the author says that in Islamic tradition, milk symbolizes knowledge, as the story from the Night of Ascension(*Laylatul Isra' va al Mi'raj*) shows, in which Gabriel brought three bowls to the Prophet, one of which contained water, the second contained milk, and the third wine, and he chose the bowl of milk.⁵⁵⁹

- The author often supports his arguments with Prophetic hadith.

- The author uses words of great Muslim and non-Muslim physicians, philosophers, and scholars, like Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Imam Al Ghazali, Palmer, Vivino, Tonkur, etc.⁵⁶⁰

- The author points out useful conclusions and lessons from his analysis of different Qur'anic and scientific issues. This is a sign of the faith that has captivated his heart and emotions. He

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 206-241.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 197.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 213-215.

invites the reader to take lesson from the innumerable blessings of God to man.

- After his precise discussion of the benefits of honey from the Qur'anic and scientific view, the author writes: *Just like the bee is precise in its choice of the food and the buiding of hives, in the defense of its fellow bees, and in the production of honey, so must be the state of the true believer. He must not eat unclean, forbidden food, but only pure, allowed food...*

﴿ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

There comes forth from their bellies, a drink of varying colour wherein is healing for men.

Dr.Ali says:

“...A Muslim must therefore speak words which are sweet like honey, which heal the hearts of people, and he must never offend others. As the Prophetic hadith says, the bee neither harms or damages the plant from which it takes its nectar, and the truly well-mannered Muslim must be likewise: with beautiful morals and good deeds, without harming or betraying others. We can thus learn lessons from bees for the improvement of our lives, in order to extract the healing nectar of our hearts from the Glorious Qur'an”.⁵⁶¹

- The author points out-rejects scientific ideas that contradict the Qur'anic text and Islamic principles, such as the

theory of the Swedish scientist Niels Olif Jacobson who claimed that, based on his measurements of human beings in the moments of death, the human spirit weighs 21 g. The author writes that these unfounded results, fabrications and distortions, because the decrease in weight comes from the air that leaves the lungs upon the last breath.⁵⁶²

- The author deals with spiritual matters from a Sufi perspective, such as the seven types of the soul: *the soul which incites to evil*, (al Nafsu al Emmaretu); *the self-blaming soul*, (al Nafsu al lawametu); *the inspired soul*, (al Nafsu al Mulhamatu); *the serene soul*, (al nafsu al Mutmain-natu); *the agreeable soul*, (al nafsu al Radiyetu); *the satisfied soul*; (al Nafsu al Mardiyatu); and *the perfect soul*, (al Nafsu al kamilatu) corresponding to the seven worlds mentined by the great Sufi Jalal al-Din Rumi, namely: *the pre-existential world, the divine world, the world of power, the world of concepts, the world of forms, and the world of nature*,⁵⁶³ followed by a discussion of the higher stations (*maqamat*) and extinction in God (*fana'*), etc.

To my opinion, *firstly*; the author shold not have entered in such difficult and disputable Sufi topics, which cannot be understood by many scholars and clerics who call to Islam, as well as laymen. The Prophet and the virtuous Companions did not enter such

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 216-217.

⁵⁶² *Ibid*, p. 456.

difficult questions. We must therefore follow their example in order to facilitate the matters of religion to people, without inserting metaphysical and philosophical questions which have not been related from the Prophet who was guarded from sinning, because Islam wants from its followers to make things easy and simple based on clear Qur'anic and prophetic teachings, for all people.

The understanding of religion cannot be limited to a particular group of people, such as the philosophers and the Sufis, who are masters of the spiritual stations and hermeneutics.⁵⁶⁴ We have been enjoined to facilitate, because God wishes ease for us, not hardship. The discussions presented by the author are difficult to comprehend. *Secondly*, these issues are secondary in the lives of Muslims, and therefore God will not question them on the stations or the seven worlds, but He shall question them about what is required in religion. The majority of people do not offer prayers properly. The majority of people do not understand the existence of God, the truth of pure monotheism, without innovations, as is the case in the majority of Islamic lands. *Thirdly*; most of the Muslims do not observe religious standards in their daily lives, and they are in need of being taught Islamic manners, and the basic principles of their faith. *Fourthly*, these

⁵⁶³ Ibid, p. 467-472.

issues go beyond the limits of the subject matter of the book presented by the author, namely the modern scientific, empirical doctrine in the Qur'an. We ask the following question to the author: *What have the seven worlds got to do with modern science? What has the spirit got to do with modern science? Did modern science discover anything pertaining to the questions he discusses?* The answer is naturally, no. The author has never mentioned anything in this regard, save a few definitions of believing Western philosophers who were interested in the spirit.⁵⁶⁵ *Fifthly*, elaborating on these issues is a result of not following the priorities of the Islamic call.

It is better not to elaborate on such philosophical and mystical issues which are dangerous and provoke doubts and disagreement, until the faith of Albanian as well as other Muslims becomes strengthened.⁵⁶⁶

These were some of the features of Dr. Ali Iljazi's method in his commentary of some verses of the Noble Qur'an. No doubt the revered doctor is considered a leading figure in this field

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. the comment of my respected Professor Muhammad Baha al-Din Husayn, may God have mercy on him!

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Also see his *Mada ma'rifatina li al-ruhi*, pp. 458-72.

⁵⁶⁶ Sufism has been very influential in the Balkans. There are many Sufi orders and lodges in Albanian territories. Some orders have only a few followers, others have larger memberships, many lodges and activities. On the history of Sufism and the sufi lodges in Albanian lands, see Jashar Rexhepagiq, *Dervishët, Rendet dhe Teqetë në Kosovë*, as well as our work *The Bektashi Sufi Order – Its Doctrines and Beliefs*.

among Albanians, and the first to have commented upon Qur'anic verses in a competent scientific way with such an encyclopedic knowledge.

However, Dr. Ali Iljazi, may God protect him, like every human being, sometimes misses the target. His book is very much needed at the present, especially for the Albanian Muslim preachers in order to argue that scientific issues discussed in the Qur'an do not contradict the truths of modern science. We may rely on this concise commentary keeping in view the criteria, rules and conditions we mentioned above. May God reward him with the best bounties for his work! We will now continue with the critical assessment of this doctrine in general.

V: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC DOCTRINE IN EXEGESIS IN VIEW OF SOME CLASSICAL AND MODERN EXEGETES

This important issue has preoccupied many scholars and commentators of the Qur'an, both in the past and present. We have noticed a certain confusion and complex regarding this issue in the words of many scholars, which have only added to the numerous ambiguities on the topic. Before we proceed with the discussion, we must make a brief summary of the doctrine of scientific exegesis. In my studies of the past as well as modern approaches to the subject, I noticed that there are conflicting opinions, which I shall briefly present here.

1. What is the meaning and the aim of “scientific exegesis”?

أولاً: ما مفهوم التفسير العلمي وما المقصود منه ؟

According to Abd al-Azim Zurqani, scientific exegesis includes the cosmological sciences, the knowledge of modern natural sciences and technology, such as: mathematics, astronomy, economics, sociology, chemistry, zoology, botanics,

geology, etc.⁵⁶⁷ This seems the most correct definition of the scientific commentary, which includes all these disciplines.

The exegete who uses this method aims to relate the meanings of some verses with established scientific *truths*, and not *with theories and hypothesis*, in order to point at the Majesty of the Creator and miraculous nature of the Qur'an, as the Book of God, the Wise and All-Knowing. Scientific exegesis implies the use of scientific and philosophical terminology in the Qur'anic verses, as has been pointed out by Amin al-Khul-li and Muhammad Husayn Dhahabi, who state that the scientific commentary is that one which refers to scientific terminology in order to understanding the Qur'an and infer sciences and philosophical ideas thereof.⁵⁶⁸

The exegete does not rely on scientific terminology to understand the Qur'anic text. Rather he relies on the knowledge gathered from sciences in order to clarify the inexhaustible meanings of the Book of God, which can be deduced from its verses.

2. The definition of scientific commentary: ثانياً: تعريف

التفسير العلمي

⁵⁶⁷ Muhammad Abd al-Adhim al-Zurqani, *Manahil al-irfan fi ulum al-Kur'an*, vol. 2, pp. 1-6.

⁵⁶⁸ Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsir wa al-mufasssirun*, vol. 3, p. 140.

Once we understand the aim of scientific tafsir, we can arrive at another definition which corresponds to its general goal. Perhaps the most appropriate definition is Ahmad Umar Abu Hajar's: *"It is the commentary in which the exegete tries to understand the Qur'anic texts on the basis of established scientific facts, and to discover the secrets of its miraculous nature, with the help of precise scientific data which were not available at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, in order to prove its divine origin."*⁵⁶⁹

3- Is there any contradiction between the clear verses and the established scientific truths?

ثالثاً: هل هناك تناقض بين الآيات القرآنية الصريحة والحقائق العلمية

الثابتة ؟

To put it briefly, the answer is no. Rather, the Noble Qur'an supports and confirms these scientific truths. Regarding this, Ibn Taymiyya said:

"There can be no contradiction between the authentic tradition and the intellect ..." which is a very clear statement that requires no further

⁵⁶⁹ Ahmad Umar Abu Hajar, *al-Tafsir al-ilmi lil-Qur'an fil-mizan*, Beirut, Dar Qutayba; 1st ed., 1991, p. 66.

elaboration.⁵⁷⁰

According to some scholars, if there is a contradiction between them, it may be clear but incorrect, or correct but unclear. We do not agree with Ahmad Abu Hajar's quote of Muhammad Abduh's following words on the opposition between the intellect and tradition without any critical thinking: "*The Muslim ummah is unanimous, with minor exceptions, that in case of conflict between the intellect and tradition, the intellect takes precedence. We have two options:*

1- *To accept the authenticity of tradition, acknowledging our weakness in understanding; and we rely on God;*

2- *To interpret the tradition by the accepted linguistic rules, until it becomes harmonized with the dictates of the intellect*".⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 83. On this important question, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'u tearudil aqli wa al-naqli wa muwafaqat sahih al-manqul li sarih al-ma'qul*, Riyad, Dar al-Qunuz al-adabiyya; 1391 H., ed. M. R. Salim, vol. 1, pp. 4-5.

4. A classification of the attitudes of the scholars towards the scientific commentary, past and present.

A. The classical supporters of scientific commentary

رابعاً: المؤيدون للتفسير العلمي من القدامى

* Imam Abu Hamid al-Al Ghazali (d. 505/1111), in his *Ihya*, and *Jawahir al-Qur'an*.

* Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1209), in his famous *Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb*.

* Ibn Abu al-Fadli al-Marsi (d. 655/1257), as mentioned by al-Suyuti in his *Itqan*.⁵⁷²

* Imam Badr al-Din Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Zarqashi, (d. 794/1382) in his *al-Burhan fi ulum al-Qur'an*.

* Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505) in his *al-Itqan fi ulum al-Qur'an*, and *Mu'tariq al-akran*.⁵⁷³

B. Extremist supporters of scientific commentary in the modern period:⁵⁷⁴

خامساً: المؤيدون المغالون للتفسير العلمي في العصر الحديث

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, p. 86, quoting Muhammad Abduh, *al-Islam wa al-nasraniyyat ma al-ilmi wa al-madaniyya*, 1320 H., p. 61.

⁵⁷² al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan fi ulum al-Qur'an*, vol. 2, pp. 126-8.

⁵⁷³ For more details, see: Ahmad Umar Abu Hajar, op. cit., pp. 145-165.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 169-216.

* Shaykh Muhammad Abduh (1848-1905) in his *Tafsir juz'u al-amma*.

* Shaykh Tantawi Jawhari, (1862-1940) in his *al-Jawahir fi tafsir al-Qur'an*.

* al-Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1854-1902) in his *Taba'i al-istibdadi wa masari' al-isti'badi*.

* Prof. Abd al-Razzaq Nawfal, in his book *al-Qur'an wa al-ilm al-hadith*.

C. Moderate supporters of scientific commentary:

المؤيدون المعتدلون للتفسير العلمي في العصر الحديث

* Shaykh Muhammad Bakhit al-Muti'i (1882-1935) in his *Tanbih al-uqul al-insaniyyah li ma fi ayat al-Qur'an minal-ulum al-kawniyyah wa al-imraniyya*.

* Shaykh Abd al-Hamid ibn Badis (d. 1940) in his *Tafsir ibn Badis*, and *Majalis al-tadhkir min kalam al-khabir*.

* Shaykh Mustafa al-Maraghi (1881-1945) in his *Tafsir al-Maraghi*.

* Shaykh Muhammad Abdullah Darraz, (d. 1947) in his *Madhal ilal-Qur'an al-Karim*.

* Shaykh Wahid al-Din Khan in his *al-Islam yatahadda*.

* The writer and author Mustapha Sadiq al-Rafi'i (d. 1938) in his *I'jaz al-Qur'an wa al-balaghat al-nabawiyya*.

* The chemist Muhammad Ahmad al-Ghamrawi.

* The astronomer Muhammad Jamal al-Din al-Fendi, in his *al-Qur'an wa al-ilm*.

* Muhammad Tahir ibn Ashur (d. 1973) in his *al-Tahrir wa al-tanwir min al-tafsir*.⁵⁷⁵

Some of the members of this group which are mentioned by Dr. Iljazi are:

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 219-270.

* Muhammad Farid Wajdi, in his notes to *al-Islam wa al-tibb al-hadith*.⁵⁷⁶

* Badi' al-Zaman Sayyid al-Nursi (d. 1960) in his commentary of Chapter al-Baqarah, *Isharat al-i'jaz fi madhān al-iyjaz*, as well as in his *Risale-i nur*.⁵⁷⁷

* Shejh Muhammad Mutawali Sha'rawi, in his *Mu'jizat al-Qur'an*.

* Dr. Mustapha Mahmud, in his *al-Qur'an muhawalat li fahmin asriyyin*.

* Mahmud Nadim Nasimi, in his *Ma' al-tibb fi al-Qur'an al-Karim*.

* Shaykh Abd al-Majid Zendani in many of his writings, such as *al-Mu'jizat al-ilm fi al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah*, a paper delivered at the International Conference on Islam and Science (Islamabad, 1987).⁵⁷⁸ This list is not exhaustive, and we hope to be able to complete it in the future. May God reward the mujtahids who had correct opinions with two rewards, and those who erred with one reward!

⁵⁷⁶ Sayyid Ghanim Karim, *al-Isharat al-ilmiya fi al-Qur'an al-karim bayn al-dirasat wa al-tatbiq*, Cairo, Dar al-fikr al-arabi, 1st ed., 1995, p. 130.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 121, 135-9. See also Su'ad Jëldërëm's paper in the Conference on the Scientific Miracles of the Qur'an and Sunnah, *Mustanadat al-tawfiq bayna nusūs al-Qur'an wa bayna nataij al-ilm al-sahih*, Islamabad, 1987.

⁵⁷⁸ Shaykh Abd al-Majid Zendani has another important treatise on the topic: *Min awjuh al-i'jaz al-ilm lil-Qur'an al-Karim fi 'alam al-bihar*, Makka Mukarramah, Rabitat al-Alam al-Islam, 1999.

5. Imam al-Shatibi's opinion:

In his very important dissertation, Ahmed Umar Abu Hajar discusses the scholars who have opposed the scientific commentary of the Qur'an both in the past and at the present, and he focuses on Imam al-Shatibi.

As a matter of fact, during our reading of Imam Shatibi's *al-Muwafaqat*, we could not confirm that he opposed the scientific commentary in general, or in particular cases, and therefore he cannot be grouped with its opponents, as was the case with Abu Hajar and his predecessors. Imam Shatibi discussed whether the Qur'an embraces the sciences of the first generations as well as the last. He criticized those who use this method in their commentaries, as he believes that they go out of the context of the verses.

Al-Shatibi deals with another issue in his *al-Muwafaqat*, namely the presence in the Qur'an of some sciences which were specific to the Arabs, so we should refer only to those sciences which Arabs used for a better understanding of Qur'an!⁵⁷⁹ He does not oppose such an idea, and therefore it cannot be claimed that al-Shatibi belongs to the group of the opponents of the

⁵⁷⁹ *al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 2, pp. 79-80.

scientific commentary in general, as most of the historians of exegesis think.⁵⁸⁰ However we can't agree with the view of al Imam al Shatibi in this particular issue.

We agree with Ahmed Umar's criticism of Imam Shatibi concerning the sciences that existed among the Arabs: "*Had he limited himself with the Arabs, he would not have been criticized, for people are not equal in science. Therefore the prohibition of the scientific commentary is not a correct position, and as it does not agree with the position of the early Muslims on this question.*"⁵⁸¹ *Scientific commentary cannot be prohibited in any generation, because the Qur'an was revealed for all the generations that will live on earth.*"⁵⁸²

A similar view had Shaykh Abdullah Darraz, who has been critical of the treatment of this issue in *al-Muwafaqat*.⁵⁸³ It would be appropriate here to quote an important passage by Imam al-Shatibi's *al-Muwafaqat*: "*The Arabs were interested in the sciences mastered by men, such as astrology, because this is how they guided themselves on earth and in the sea, and they knew about the change of seasons, which is mentioned many times in the Noble Qur'an:*

⁵⁸⁰ This is the view of Ahmad Umar Abu Hajar, *op. cit.*, p. 271; and before him Dhahabi, *op. cit.*

⁵⁸¹ *al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 2, p. 80.

⁵⁸² *Op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁵⁸³ A comment by Dr. Abd Allah Darraz, *al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 2, p. 73.

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ [الأنعام : 97]

*It is He Who has set the stars for you, so that you may guide your course with their help through the darkness of the land and the sea.*⁵⁸⁴

﴿ وَعَلَامَاتٍ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴾ [النحل : 16]
*And landmarks and by the stars, they guide themselves.*⁵⁸⁵

They also studied the rain, the formation of the clouds, and the strong winds:

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْمِحَالِ ﴾ [الرعد : 12-13]

*It is He Who shows you the lightning, as a fear and as a hope. And it is He Who brings up the clouds, heavy. And thunder glorifies and praises Him.*⁵⁸⁶

Also the Arabs knew about history and genealogies, and this is often mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The Qur'an informs them about stories which they had never heard before:

﴿ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلقُونَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴾ [آل عمران : 44]

This is a part of the news of the unseen, which We reveal to you. You were not with them, when they cast lots with their pens as to which of them should be charged with the care of Maryam; nor

⁵⁸⁴ al-En'am, 97.

⁵⁸⁵ al-Nahl, 16.

⁵⁸⁶ al-Ra'd, 12-13.

*were you with them when they disputed.*⁵⁸⁷

The Arabs also had experience in medicine, because they had learned and applied it for a long time. In this context, Imam Shatibi says that many people have exaggerated in their commentaries, superimposing on the Qur'an all the sciences of the first and the last generations, such as the natural sciences, pedagogy, logics, hermeneutics, etc. *As we(al Shatibi) said, this is not true.* The pious ancestors knew the Qur'an best, and there has not been transmitted anything from them on this issue. Had they possessed the knowledge of such topics, some of it would have been transmitted from them and we would have known the origin of this issue, but since there are no such reports, then this knowledge probably did not exist.

The lack of such transmissions proves that the Qur'an did not intend what they claimed it did. It is true that the Qur'an contains sciences of the *Arabs or what they knew from observation, but that is all.* It is not correct to add or take something from the Qur'an, but one must confine oneself to what pertains only to the Arabs".⁵⁸⁸

If one reads Shatibi's words carefully, one will conclude the opposite of what the opponents of the scientific exegesis say, because he has never completely rejected this method of commentary, but he has limited it to only what existed among the

⁵⁸⁷ Al-i Imran, 44.

Arabs. But even this opinion of Shatibi is not correct, because:

1. The capacity of the Arabs from that period was limited to the extent pointed out by Imam Shatibi himself. They understood the sciences of their time based on their scientific and human capacity. If the Arabs of the first generation lived today there is no doubt they would have studied the modern sciences, they would have used them for their own benefit, and would learn them just as they learned the sciences of their times.

2. Therefore, one must limit oneself only in what existed among the Arabs, when discussing the disciplines of Arabic language, semantics, rhetorics and literary style, because they were masters of semantics, rhetorics and Arabic language, and the Qur'an was revealed in the pure Arabic language. We cannot speak about Arab medicine or astronomy, because the human capacities of absorbing cosmological sciences from the Noble Qur'an differ. Also knowledge is the lost property of the believer, and he must acquire it wherever he finds it, regardless of religion or ethnicity.

ق. Contemporary scholars who reject the scientific commentary⁵⁸⁹ are:

العلماء المعاصرون الرافضون للتفسير العلمي:

⁵⁸⁸ Abu Is'haq Shatibi, *al-Muwafakat*, vol. 2, pp. 381-391.

* Shaykh Rashid Rida (1865-1935).

* Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut (1893-1964).

* Prof. Abbas Mahmud al-Akkad, (d. 1964), in his: *al-Falsafah al-Qur'aniyya*.

* Shaykh Muhammad Izzah Darvazah, (b. 1888) in his: *al-Tafsir al-hadith*.

* Shaykh Muhammad Abd al-Adhim al-Zurqani, in his: *Menahil al-irfan fi ulum al-Qur'an*.

* Prof. Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), does not reject completely, however he accepts the scientific exegesis with certain criteria and conditions. The reason of his concern of scientific exegesis relies upon the following:

1. The spiritual inferiority of some Muslims vis-a-vis modern science and their claim that science is of primary importance and the Qur'an follows its steps;

2. The misunderstanding of the nature of the Qur'an, its message and its function;

3. Commenting upon the Qur'an out of its context, in running after theories and hypothesis which are not lasting and stable.

Qutb writes: *"This does not mean that we must not use the benefits of scientific theories regarding the universe and human*

⁵⁸⁹ For more details on scientific exegesis, see: al-Sayyid Ghani Karim, op. cit., pp. 113-167, 255-283, 284-300.

life in order to understand the Qur'an fully...”⁵⁹⁰

* Abd al-Wahid Wafi and Isma'il Madh'har, believe that this type of commentary is an innovation (*bid'ah*) which will automatically cause conflict between religion and science.⁵⁹¹

* Muhammad Husayn Dhahabi, in his *al-Tafsir wa al-mufasssirun*, p. 178.

* The Islamic philosopher Atif al-Iraqi.

* Shaykh Abd al-Karim al-Khatib from al Iraq.

It can be said that this is the opinion of the great majority of the classical commentators, like Tabari, Qurtubi, Baydawi, Ibn Kathir, Ebus-Su'ud, etc., as no one has ever transmitted anything from them pointing to the contrary.

⁵⁹⁰ See *Fi dhilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, pp. 180-4; *al-Tafsir al-ilmi lil-Qur'an fil-mizan*, pp. 318-321. The present author (*Dr. Hajredin Hoxha*) has written some articles on the method of Qutb in exegesis, in which he shows that Qutb does not belong to the group who rejects scientific exegesis completely. The truth of this matter can be seen in the passage by Qutb quoted above, in which he states that there is no harm if the established scientific truths are used and benefitted from, and not theories or mere hypothesis.

⁵⁹¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 297-330. For more information in the scientific commentary of the Qur'an and the scholarship on this question, see the important references: Muhammad Adil Abu al-Khayr, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-82; Khalil Imaduddin, *Med'hal ila meukifil-Kur'anil Kerim minal-ilmi*, Beirut, Muassatur-risaleti, 1st ed., 1983, po. 9-14; al-Sayyid Ghunaym Karim, *op.cit.* pp. 121-2. Su'ad Jëldërim has pointed out the reasons for the opinions of Dhehebi in his paper fo the International Conference of Islamabad in 1987.

F. The scholars who harmonize the Qur’anic verses with cosmological sciences.

أصحاب التوفيق بين الآيات القرآنية والعلوم الكونية :

This group of exegetes believe that modern cosmological sciences can be harmonized with the Qur’anic verses related to such topics. Among them are a number of classical Islamic philosophers like *Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd*, who argued that this method was based on the harmonization of the Qur’an with philosophy. This orientation has its roots in classical Greek philosophy, and in the allegorical commentary of Greek mythology. Certain Muslim philosophers tried to harmonize Greek philosophy with Islamic thought. For example, al-Bayhaqi writes that the Islamic philosopher al-Kindi harmonized revelation with reason (*al Wahyu wa al Aqlu*). Al-Kindi based his commentary of the Qur’anic verses on rational principles, which he inferred from the study of philosophy. Also, the Muslim philosopher al-Farabi tried to harmonize philosophy with revelation, and in his commentary of the verse:

﴿ هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴾ [الحديد : 3]

“*He is the First and the Last, the Ourward and the Inward*”,⁵⁹²

Farabi says: “*there is no being more perfect than His being,*

⁵⁹² al-Hadid, 3.

which is without any imperfection; in His being He is manifest, but since He is too manifest, He veils Himself into inwardness. He is like the sun which makes everything intelligible, but which cannot be seen (directly).” Also Ibn Sina tried to harmonize religion and philosophy,⁵⁹³ as did many modern scholars who are not philosophers. The modern proponents of this orientation are generally writers, intellectuals, doctors, but not exegetes or scholars of the Qur’an. Such individuals contribute to the Qur’anic and scientific studies, by following the new scientific discoveries and comparing the Qur’anic verses with their findings.

Based on all the above, a moderate view on this important issue would be to neither accept it fully nor reject it fully. Rather, we rely on certain criteria, which have been pointed out by some exegetes in their works. If they are met, we accept such a commentary.

VI: RULES AND CRITERIA FOR THE SCIENTIFIC TAFSIR

شروط و ضوابط التفسير العلمي للقرآن الكريم :

The rules and criteria which must be met for such a

⁵⁹³ al-Sayyid al-Shehhat Zuglul, *al-Ittijahat al-fiqriyya fi al-tafsir*, Al-hay’atu al-misriyyetul-al-ammetu lil-Kitab, 2nd ed., 1977, pp. 299-318. On

commentary to be acceptable are:

- Such studies must not overshadow the main purpose of the Qur'an, guidance, and its miraculous nature.

- When applying such sciences to exegesis, we must be aware of the actual needs of people, because these approaches may be useful in intellectual circles, but they can cause *fitnah* and confusion among the ignorant ones.

- There is no harm if the exegete argues based on established scientific discoveries, not mere hypothesis, insofar as they enrich the meanings of the Qur'anic text, and if they agree with the spirit and the goals of the Shari'ah, confirming the majesty of the Qur'anic verse.

- The exegete must not go out of the context by bringing far-fetched meanings which are not related to the general meaning of the verses. In Muslim circles there are many such commentators who have filled their commentaries with theories and hypothesis, believing them to be true, and after a certain time they are abandoned as incorrect, reflecting the ever-changing nature of scientific discoveries.

- Muslims must not succumb spiritually vis-a-vis modern science and claim that every new discovery confirms the miracle of the Qur'an, so that they may believe in the Qur'an, as Sayid

al-Farabi see: Fawzi Atwi, al-Farabi, *Faylasuf al-madinat al-fadila*, ed. Subhi Salih, Dar al-kitab arabi, n.d., pp. 97-171.

Qutb says in his commentary *Fi dhilal al-Qur'an*. We are obligated to start from the religious truth of the Qur'an, and to proceed with the scientific or philosophical truth, and not vice versa, because the Qur'an contains absolute and fixed truths, whereas science contains varying truths. Absolute truth cannot be interpreted by the relative truth.⁵⁹⁴

- In the past all the scholars were unanimous that the highest aim and goal of the revelation of the Qur'an was the guidance of all mankind to the true faith, which is clear of deviations, pure from superstitions, vanities, and innovations. Human beings are thus guided to something superior and wholesome. The Qur'an was not revealed to serve as an encyclopedia of physics, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, geology, and other empirical sciences. It is true that certain verses contain signs and keys which allude to such sciences, and those who wish to deepen their knowledge must base themselves on the specialized literature.

We believe that it is precisely here that the miracle of the Qur'an lies, because it only alludes to those human sciences to show the path which leads to the treasury. No Muslim ever doubts that the Qur'an is replete with secrets and treasures until the Day of Judgement, because this befits lasting miracle and universal applicability in time and space. A poet says:

⁵⁹⁴ al-Zarqani, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 113.

*“Days and time will show what ye knew not,
And they shall tell you of what ye visited not!”*

- The belief and conviction that the Noble Qur'an has been revealed for reflection, pondering, and meditation on its verses, in order to be guided to the perfect faith in God the Magnificent. It has been revealed to bring us happiness in this world and in the next, and this is no doubt the essential aim of its revelation. This is even confirmed by the reformists, such as Shaykh Muhammad Abduh, Shaykh Rashid Rida, and others.

- Finally Shaykh Muhammad Abd al-Adhim Zarqani emphasizes certain benefits and privileges which are gained from the integration of the cosmological sciences in exegesis: *“The agreement of people’s thoughts and knowledge with the commentary of the Qur’an nourishes their needs for cosmological knowledge. It also protects Islam from the idea of hostility between science and religion, and draws the disbelievers’ attention about the truth of Islam through this scientific method, in which it is nowadays based. It insists on the use of the blessings from the universe.”* In his view, the soul is filled with faith in God and in His power, when man is able to interpret God’s words on

the precise creatures.⁵⁹⁵ We believe that this is the moderate and most wholesome view.⁵⁹⁶

This issue is no doubt part of greater questions, and the researchers need to expound and elaborate on their thoughts even further, due to the ever-increasing number of new discoveries. But one must be careful because some of the theories may be proven as true, while others which have been considered for a long time as established truths may turn out to be incorrect.

Praise and thanks belong to the Lord of the worlds!

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid, vol. 2, 112.

⁵⁹⁶ See: Abd al-Rahman Halid al-Aqq, *Usul al-tafsir wa qawa'iduhu*, Beirut: Dar al-nafais, 2nd ed., 1986, pp. 217-24; Fahd ibn Abdurahman al-Rumi, *Usul al-tafsir wa manahijuhu*, Riyad, Maktabat al-tawbah, 1413 A.H., p. 94; al-Qardawi, *Qayfa nata amal ma' al-Qur'an al-adhim*, Cairo, Dar al-shuruk, 1st. ed. 1999, p. 324-69; Sayyid Qutb, *Fi dhilal al-Qur'an*, Cairo, Dar al-shuruk, 11th ed., 1985, vol. 1, pp. 180-2; al-Shatibi, *al-Muwafakat*, vol. 2, p. 69; al-Dhahabi, op. cit., pp. 364-81; al-Al Ghazali, *Ihya*, tahqiq Abu Hafs ibn Sadiq, Cairo, Dar al-hadith, 1st ed., n.d., vol. 1, p. 289; al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, Beirut, Dar al-Fiqr, 1979, vol. 4, pp. 27-31; al-Dhahabi, *al-Ittijahat al-munharifat fi tafsir al-Qur'an*, Cairo, Maktabat Wahba, 3rd ed., 1986, pp. 83-91; al-Zarqani, op. cit. vol. 2, pp. 109-113; Iffat Muhammad al-Sharqawi, *al-Fikr al-dini fi muwajat al-asr, Dirasah tahliliyya li al-tijahat al-tafsir fi al-asr al-hadith*, p. 393-405; J.J.G. Jansen, *The interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, pp. 34-53.

PART FOUR

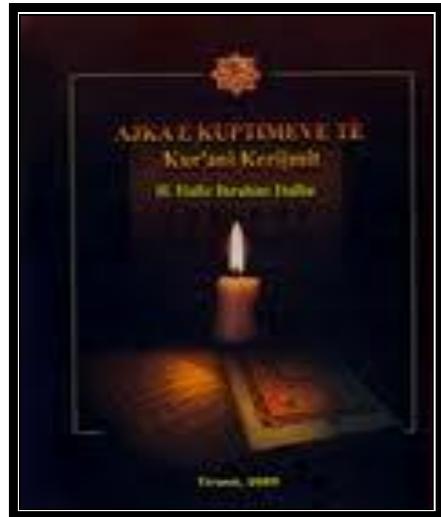
The Maturidi creed in Qur'anic studies as reflected in Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalli's thought

CHAPTER ONE

A Study of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalli's Commentary *The Essence of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an*.

CHAPTER TWO

Major creedal issues in the Commentary of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalli and a clarification of his views thereof



Hafiz Ibrahim Dalli 1878-1952 & his reprinted Exegeses

CHAPTER ONE

A study of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's thoughts in his Commentary *The Essence of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an*.

- The historical background of this doctrine among Albanians

During the early twentieth century a number of books were written on the Sunni-Maturidi doctrine in exegesis. There were Albanian scholars who have commented upon one third of the Qur'an in a scholarly way and an authentic method, such as the commentary written by Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, which constitutes the topic of this chapter.

There have also been commentaries upon specific verses and chapters of the Qur'an by other authors, such as the long commentary on the Sura al-Fatiha by Shaykh Haji Vehbi Agolli-Dibra, the brief commentary of several chapters and single verses by Shaykh Hafiz Ali Korça, as we saw earlier, the brief commentary⁵⁹⁷ of Shaykh Haji Sherif Ahmeti, as well as other commentaries which we mentioned before.

⁵⁹⁷ See Sherif Ahmeti's concise commentary: *Kur'ani - përkthim me komentim*, for his commentary on the Divine Attributes according to the

The Maturidi current in creed has long existed among Albanians, and it is still very present, therefore we decided to select an example of such commentators, due to the authority it enjoyed among Albanian Muslims, and its scholarly level.

In this chapter we shall deal with the personality, the method, and the commentary of Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, (**Ajka e Kuptimeve te Kur'ani Kerimit**) *The Essence of the Meanings of the Qur'an*, as well as his views on certain verses regarding important creedal matters, such as: *the Divine Names, the Divine Attributes, seeing God the Exalted*, etc.

The commentary of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu is one of the most voluminous and important ones during the modern period to have survived. Therefore, we shall refer mostly to this commentary in comparison with other personalities and examples.

1. On the author of this commentary

Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu was born in 1878 in Tirana. He hails from a religious and intellectual family. His birth coincided with the Albanian Renaissance movement, at a time when the first signs of separation from the Ottoman caliphate had appeared among Albanian intellectuals, as we pointed out in the

Maturidi school, pp. 32, 88, 260, 322, 452, 524, 589, 590, 603, 617, 663, 665.

first chapter. He received his early education at his home town, where he quickly learned the *hifz* of the Noble Qur'an. The memorising of the Qur'an was a widespread phenomenon among Albanians, to the extent that there was rarely a scholar of religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who did not know the Qur'an by heart.

Shaykh Dalliu pursued his higher studies in religion at the *Dar al-Ulum University* of Istanbul, which was a major center of different sciences and the study of Eastern cultures, and where courses were being taught in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. However, due to the difficult economical situation, he was forced to interrupt his studies, hoping to get back to them, but unfortunately he was never able to continue them. Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's personality was marked by a cosmopolitan culture, because he had extensive religious knowledge. There is evidence that his life was replete with continuous efforts for the defending of the Albanian national identity from extinction and assimilation into the Greek, Italian, and Serbian cultures.

This great figure remained anonymous for half a century. By God's will the satanic communist regime was finally destroyed and Hafiz Dalliu's learning came to the fore, as well as his valuable scholarly contributions which are worthy of research and analysis. During his years as an imam and preacher when religious law was observed in Albania Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim

Dalliu showed remarkable concern for the Albanian patriotic cause, reflecting his interest on contemporary issues. He established elementary schools in Albanian and published numerous books and treatises in order to educate his own people, despite the danger of such actions in the eyes of the Ottoman State, which considered education in Albanian as a crime which was severely punished!

The first school established by Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu was the school for girls, from which the first generation of Muslim lady-teachers emerged, and which played an important role in the cultural and Islamic history of Albania. In 1909, he was appointed a teacher of Albanian in the well-known Elbasan gymnasium, where he taught Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. The Shaykh was involved in the greater jihad with his soul, his tongue, and his pen. He was very eloquent, very precise in his speech, and he soon became well-known throughout Albanian territories for his beautiful sermons in mosques.

2. His sufferings due to his religious and patriotic stand⁵⁹⁸

Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu was tortured in Ottoman prisons during the last years of the Empire, and later he was also ill-treated and punished most cruelly in Albanian prisons. I believe strongly that, this is a divine law, because there has hardly been any Muslim scholar and thinker who was safe from this trial. We pray to God to make us firm in His religion and worship.

In many Muslim countries, prisons are filled with such scholars. We pray to God the Exalted for the release of those innocent prisoners wherever they are, and to protect us from all dictators and wrongdoers, Amen!

⁵⁹⁸ I would like to stress here that the concept of patriotism and the national question of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu and his fellow clerics was the same as that of Shaykh Hasan al-Banna', as expressed in many of his writings. In a treatise, Shahid Hasan al-Banna writes about people's sincere feelings and sacrifices for their homeland, and asks them to respect those who serve the country. He calls for kindness and respect towards people even if they belong to other creeds: *God does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, God loves those who deal with equity.* (al-Mumtahina, 8) He also enjoins justice and good manners towards non-Muslims in Islamic lands: "They deserve what is with us, and they experience what we experience. We do not incite racial divisions or sectarianism. The love for this land, the respect and love, as called for by the patriots is both part of the human soul, and an Islamic principle. We agree with their view that patriotism strengthens the bonds between the individuals of a country. We also agree that this strengthening must be used in their favor." See "*Ila al-shabab*" and "*Da'awatuna*" in: *Rasail al Imam al Shahid*

Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliù went through unspeakable punishments at the hands of the evildoers... Historical sources mention that his teeth were pulled out, and that he was made to go out in women's clothes. Shaykh Dalliù and his associates could not go out in public, because the *Young Turks* governors incited the naive people to throw stones at them, offend and abuse them, just like the children of Ta'if did with the Prophet Muhammed (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*). The state had isolated him completely, and Muslims could not pray behind them, speak to them, or even greet them. They were not invited in weddings, funeral prayers, and other religious rites. An isolation which was similar to that which the pagans created for the Prophet (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) and the early Muslims in Mecca.

He was sentenced to ten years in prison by the martial court, and then he was transferred to another prison. The last prison he was imprisoned in and which was a very bitter experience for him was *Yedi Kule in Thesaloniki*, Greece, to which the Shaykh refers as the seven hells, due to the tortures he experienced therein. Nevertheless, he was not subdued, but on the contrary he called for the elimination of illiteracy and ignorance which prevailed among Albanians, as well as the threat of

Hasan al Banna, Dar al-tawzi wa al-nashr al-islam, Maydan al-Sayyidah Zainab, 1992, pp. 180-1, 19-20.

division of Albanian lands among the neighbouring countries, a matter which did not preoccupy the Ottomans in the least.

The Ottoman police pressured him often to force him give up the teaching of Albanian language. The *Young Turks* hypocritically spread lies and calumnies against the Albanians, inciting the Ottoman Empire against the latter, by claiming that learning Albanian with the Latin alphabet would turn them into disbelievers, removing them from Islam and the Qur'an, encouraging them to destroy mosques and shrines! The Young Turks themselves were against the Islamic element of the Ottoman Empire, and they sought to create a national state.

Under such circumstances, Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu remarked in a public speech that: *“Ignorance does not disappear with tanks and artillery, but rather with people who work in spreading knowledge”*

Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu remained steadfast in his ideas until the coming to power of the King Zogu. He was also ill-treated and imprisoned during the Italian occupation, as well as the establishment of the communist regime. He remained strong and steadfast in front of all these social and political turmoils, until he passed away in Tirana, in 1952. He was indeed a Shaykh, a scholar, a cleric, and a mujahid. May God have mercy upon his soul!

3. His work and scholarly activities

As we mentioned, Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu was a scholar of wide academic interests, which are reflected in his activity. His work focused on four main aspects: *the religious, the social, the literary, and the political*. Unfortunately, most of his writings were destroyed by the communist regime, and only a very small part of his opus has remained.

The testimony of his contemporary Imam Vehbi Ismaili⁵⁹⁹ confirms the large number of his writings. According to some scholars, he has been quoted as saying that Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu wrote thousands of pages. If this be true, it would place him in a unique position among Albanian Muslim scholars. This is not surprising at all, because he possessed the keys to the knowledge of different cultures, and many of their languages. It is a gift which God bestows to whomever He wants; He is the Glorious, the Exalted.

The following is a list of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's works:

1. **“Ajka e kuptimeve të Kur’ani Qerimit” - The Essence of the meaning of the Noble Qur’an.**

⁵⁹⁹ Imam Vehbi Ismaili is an Albanian from Shkodra. He studied at al-Az’har during the WW II, never to return to Albania again. He served as an imam, preacher and head of Albanian Muslim Communities in North America. He has written a large number of articles, books and has translated from Arabic and English into Albanian. He passed away in 2008, may God have mercy upon his soul!

This is his most voluminous work to have survived, in spite of the communist inquisition and terror in Albania. It is an incomplete commentary of the Noble Qur'an. He has commented up to the beginning of Chapter al-Tawbah, in three volumes.

In his “**Libri i së falmes**”, Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu writes: “*The book “Ajka e kuptimeve të Kur’ani Qerimit” has been translated by myself and published by the Muslim Community. There are also three unpublished volumes thereof...*”⁶⁰⁰

Although it is incomplete, I thank God that this Albanian scholar has produced a fully methodological commentary, and I only wish he had finished it, but it was God’s will that the author pass away without completing this noble task.

I pray to Almighty God to choose sincere and devoted Albanian scholars who will continue this great, unfinished project, because the need is felt for such a work. There have been cases when several scholars could not complete their commentaries, but their sincere disciples finished them, such as: the Tafsir of Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, which was resumed after his death by Sheikh Rashid Rida, and Sheikh Rashid Rida reached with his interpretation until verse no: 101 Surat Yusuf. The same happened to the commentary of Sheikh Muhammad al-Amin Shankiti, which was continued by his devoted student Sheikh

⁶⁰⁰ Feti Mehdiu, *Përkthimet e Kur’anit në gjuhën shqipe*, p. 48.

Muhammad Atiyah Salim, or with Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi's commentary, which was continued by his disciples on the same methodology. The Jalalayn which was written by Imam Jalaluddin Al Muhal-la (d-864) but he did not complete, and was continued by Imam Jalaluddin Al Suyuti (d-911)etc.

Another important point on this commentary is the question of authorship, which has been doubted by some with the reasoning that Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's name does not appear in the cover. Rather, it contains the title of the commentary, the place and year of publication: **“Ajka e kuptimeve të Kur’ani Qerimit”**,⁶⁰¹ the High Council of the Sharia Publications and below it says: **“Read, scrutinized and approved by the High Council of the Shari‘ah”**.

A Response to this objection

A. It is common that for political reasons one may not write his name on the book, but use another name, or he authorizes an Islamic authority or institution to publish his work. At the time of the publication of this book, the political, social, and religious circumstances in Albania were very disfavoured. The vehement attacks against religion were a bitter truth.

B. The researcher Dr. Ismail Bardhi confirms the authorship of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, in his study of the

⁶⁰¹ “Ora e Shkodrës” Publishers, Shkodër, 1929.

latter's method. Dr Bardhi supports his claim by an oral report from an Albanian scholar who was a contemporary of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, namely Imam Vehbi Ismaili, who confirmed beyond any doubt the authenticity of this work.⁶⁰²

C. I believe that these proofs solve the question of authorship in a definitive way. Also Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu himself writes in his book **Libri i se falmes** that he wrote the commentary and that the Muslim Community of Albania had published two out of the five volumes he had prepared.⁶⁰³

Ç. I also believe that the strongest argument for the authenticity of this commentary is the methodological unity, the unity of form and style, the language used, the manner of analysing the verses, and dealing with the topics. His commentary is marked by a distinct methodological uniformity, which is clear to any reader. And God knows best.

Praise be to God, I was able to find two volumes in the library of my colleague Dr. Ramiz Zekaj, head of the Albanian Institute for the Islamic Civilization, and I am grateful to him.

Other works by Sheikh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu are:

- **“E lemja⁶⁰⁴ dhe jeta e të madhit Muhammad alejhisselam”**.⁶⁰⁵ (*The life of the great Muhammad*)

⁶⁰² Ismail Bardhi, *Ibrahim Dalliu dhe egzegjeza e tij kur'anore*, p. 101.

⁶⁰³ Feti Mehdiu, *Përktimet e Kur'anit në gjuhën shqipe*, p. 48.

⁶⁰⁴ “Shkodra” Publishers, Tiranë, 1934.

- **“Dhuntie Ramazani”**.⁶⁰⁶ (*Blessings of Ramadan*) In this work, the Sheikh comments upon the verse of fasting based on the exegesis of Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and then goes on to talk about the religious, moral, and health benefits, as well as the economical aspects, and legal rules.

- **“Degët e imanit”**.⁶⁰⁷ (*Branches of Believe*)According to the author, this booklet is a translation of the commentary of the hadith from Bukhari, written by Mahmud Badr al-Din al-Ayni al-Hanafi.

- **“Besimi i Muslimanëve”**.⁶⁰⁸ (*The Believe of Muslims*)In this work the author points out some proofs for the existence of God, praising His Glory, stressing the virtues of the Prophet a.s., of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi.

- **“Ç’ashtë Islamizma?”**⁶⁰⁹(*What's Islam*) in which the author deals with certain features of *islam* and *iman*, according to the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah*.

- **“Libri i së falmes”**. (*The book of prayer*). Here the author explains the principles of obligatory prayer, ritual purity,

⁶⁰⁵ I secured a photocopy of this book from the National Library in Tirana, Albania. It has 228 pages, written in a simple, attractive and fluent prose.

⁶⁰⁶ “Tirana” Publishers, Tiranë 1935.

⁶⁰⁷ “Tirana” Publishers, Tiranë 1943.

⁶⁰⁸ “Tirana” Publishers, Tiranë 1942.

⁶⁰⁹ Qendra Islamike Amerikane Press, Detroit, 1992.

and their benefits. He has also translated and commented upon a few brief suras which are read by the praying person.

- **“Patriotizma⁶¹⁰ në Tiranë”**.⁶¹¹ (*Patriots in Tirana*)

Some of his translations are:

1). Imam Baghawi’s (d. 981 H.) *al-Tarikah al-Muhammadiyya*,⁶¹² translated as **“Udha Muhammadane”**;⁶¹³ (*The Muhammedan way*)

2). Umar Nassuh’s: **“Mësimë teorike dhe praktike të moralit Islam”**;⁶¹⁴ (*Practical lessons about Islamic Ethics*)

3). Imam Nawawi’s Forty traditions: **“Hadithi Arbain”**;⁶¹⁵ (*Fourty Hadiths of Nawawi*)

4). **“Tajwid al-Qur’an”**, (*The Tajweed of Al Qur’an*).⁶¹⁵

5). A long list of works in prose, on literary and political critique.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁰ “Imazh” Publishers, Tiranë 1995.

⁶¹¹ It was compiled during the period 1908-1915 in which the names of 150 patriots and Islamic figures, who experienced great tortures and ill-treatment by the Young Turks, were given, including his name. Sheikh Dalliu points out that the reason for their torturing was their insistence on the necessity of education in Albanian.

⁶¹² Vol. 1, “Tirana” Publishers, Tiranë 1936.

⁶¹³ This book has been re-published in 2000 by the AIITC in Tirana. Essentially, it deals with the beliefs of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah*, on the Qur’an, monotheism, innovation in religion, different sciences, the great sins and the ills of the heart. This book had a great impact, filling a wide gap in Islamic literature in Albanian.

⁶¹⁴ “Tirana” Publishers, Tiranë 1935.

⁶¹⁵ “Sanxhakçia” Publishers, Tiranë 1921.

⁶¹⁶ For more information on the life, works and thought of Sheikh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu see the following references: Ismail Bardhi, *Hafiz Ibrahim*

Dalliu dhe egzegjeza e tij kur'anore, pp. 75-100; Zekaj, *Zhvillimi i kulturës islame ndër shqiptarët gjatë shek. XX*, pp. 309-312; “Feja, kultura dhe tradita islame ndër shqiptarët” by: Hysni Myzyri, “*Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu për mësimin shqip në etapën e fundit të Rilindjes*”, pp. 405-410; Feti Mehdiu, *Përkthimet e Kur'anit në gjuhën shqipe*, Shkup: Logos-A, 1996, pp. 21-30; Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, *Patriotizma në Tiranë*, op. cit., pp. 37-48; *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Bağlarbashi, Kisikli caddesi, 7, Üsküdar - İstanbul 1997, vol. 15, p. 92; Faik A. Kasollja, *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, jeta e vepra*; Sinan Tafaj, *Jeta e Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu*; Rezarta Delisula, *Tiranasi që përktheu Kur'anin* (online); Ibrahim Hasanaj, Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, *Vepra letrare*, “*Dokrra hini*”; “*Grenxat e kuqe të Tiranës*”; Petrit Kuse, *Një ëndërr e ime*, Botimet enciklopedike, Tiranë 2000, pp. 91-95.



Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu
1878-1952



سورة البقرة مدنية
SUREJA E BEKARES

Sureja e Bekares është nga ata sure që kanë zbritur në Medine të ndritshme, përveç këtyre ajeteve:

« وَأَنذَرْنَا يُوسُفَ إِذْ جَاءَ بِرَبِّهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُ مَا فِي رُؤْيَاةِ رَبِّهِ فَخَلَسَ وَهُوَ أُولُو الْعَيْنِ »

Se ky ajet, ka thanë Abdullahu i biri i Abihamit, ka zbritur në Meqpe të ndritshme ditën e Bajramit në hashatit Vedit.

Ata sure që kanë zbritur mbas shpërnguljes [pashtrërit] të pelgumbeut në Medine, sikur edhe të kënd zbritur jashtë Medines, quhen si sure pasë zbritur në Medine.

Kjo sure = madhanshime përfshinë dyqind e tetëdhjetë e shtatë ajete.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
Me emnin e All-habut mëshurë ushë e fort përdalimtarë këndoj këtë sure:

« أَلَمْ نَكْنِشْ لَكَ آيَاتِنَا مِن قَبْلُ »
Një ky Kurani [i përpilicua] me këso llojë shkrimesh si Ebf, Lam, Mijmi; bërt një libër i plotë që nuk ka fare dyshim mbi të. S' ka dyshim fare në të qenitit e atij i zbritur kah nder e Perëndisë.



سورة آل عمران مدنية
SUREJA E AHI IMRANIT është Medinore.

Kjo sure e mëdhanshime që ka zbritur në Medinë të ndritshme përfshinë dyqind ajete.

« يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ »

Me emnin e All-habut mëshurë ushë, fort përdalimtarë.

Pë llojë përkthimit e kësaj Sureje.

« يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ »
Ejo Sure, ajet sureja e Ebf Lam-Mijmit.

Spjegime
Për shkrimet që gjelen në fillim të dia sureve, me qënd në e tishë spjegime të mjaftueshme në të parët të Sure Bekare, këso sureja [i përpilicua] prap këtu.

Zbritur e kësaj Sureje, dritë në të tishëtishtë ajete e kanë shkrime të degjimit kriktën [tërditun prej Meskhanit] të

(1) Meskhanit, këso një dritë vëre dëgjimit, vendim e të tishëtishtë këso këso libër të kriktës.

نموذج من تفسير العلامة الحافظ إبراهيم داليو

Sample of the original Exegesis of the Sheikh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu

4. Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's exegetical method

Muslims of the Balkans were faced with numerous social, political, religious and ideological problems, and Albanian scholars were among the first to suffer the consequences of these challenges. In this context, Dr. Ismail Bardhi says: *“The Muslims of our region, such as the Albanians, Bosnians, etc., found themselves in a very difficult situation, and they experienced an intellectual crisis as well as a crisis of historical truth, and the shaking of the values of the modern civilization; many problems remained untackled or dealt with in outdated ways. However, their faith, their love for Islam and its brotherhood forced them to start occupying themselves with the Qur’anic commentary, among other things.”*⁶¹⁷

It is true that at that time the influence of the West and love for the East were present both in the introduction of the idea of God, and the idea of man, the world, nature, freedom, woman, etc. At this time, the commentary of the Qur’an appeared along with its translation. This was done by Albanians as well as Bosnians. It is interesting to note the almost simultaneous appearance of similar methods of Qur’anic commentary with

⁶¹⁷ On the crisis of Islamic thought, see Abu Sulayman Abd al-Hamid, *Azimat al-‘aql al-muslimi*, Dar al-alamiyya lil-Kitab al-islami, 2nd ed., 1992.

small methodological differences. The first commentary among Albanians was published in 1929, by Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, whereas among Bosnians we see the commentary of Shukrija Alagic,⁶¹⁸ published in 1931, which was a translation of Rashid Rida's Tafsir''.

Regarding the method used in this commentary, we can say the following:

* Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu starts his commentary without an introduction, or a foreword, and this does not fit with the method of the great commentators from the pious ancestors and the later scholars. The Shaykh does not clarify the method he has used in this commentary, and this is an important slip. He does not follow the example of Imam Qurtubi in the introduction of his commentary,⁶¹⁹ or Imam Ibn Jarir al-Tabari,⁶²⁰ Imam Ibn Kathir,⁶²¹ Imam Abu Hayyan⁶²² and many others. Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu was familiar with these commentaries, and he had no reason to neglect this aspect. The introduction and foreword of the work are greatly important, because the author explains his

⁶¹⁸ Ismail Bardhi, *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu dhe egzegjeza e tij kur'anore*, p. 160.

⁶¹⁹ See his *al-Jami' li-ahkam al-Qur'an*, Cairo, Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyye, 1962, vol. 1, p. 20.

⁶²⁰ See his *Jami al-bayan an ta'wil ayat al-Qur'an*, pp. 224-310, ed. Salah Abd al-Fatah al-Halidi, hadith indexing by Ibrahim Muhammad al-Ali, Dar al-kalam, Damascus, 1st ed., 1997, vol. 1, p. 1-3.

⁶²¹ See his *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-adhim*, Beirut, Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1st ed., 1406 AH, vol. 1, pp. 1-5.

method, approach, focus, and limitations, just like Imam Qurtubi or Sayyid Qutb in his *Fi dhilal al-Qur'an* etj.⁶²³

* He starts with the commentary and interpretation of the Sura, underlining the Bismillah in Arabic, and pointing out the place of the revelation of the Chapter.

* He points out the importance of the Sura according to narrations, and then gives the different names of that Surah, explaining their meanings.⁶²⁴ The word “purpose” has been used by the Shaykh in the commentary of Chapter al-Fatiha, which has a section called “*The Lofty Purposes of the Qur'an*”. This Chapter embraces all of the purposes, as it includes praise of God, sincere worship, and other important purposes.

* After the explication of the Bismillah he writes: *Commentary*, and then he continues with the detailed interpretation of the verses. In the interpretation of the *Bismillah* he points out something which has been mentioned by the majority of the commentators, and which regards the missing words: “*Yes, (or) in the Name of God I read or write*”.

⁶²² See his *al-Bahr al-Muhit*, Egypt, Matba'at as-sa'adat, 1st ed., 1328 AH, vol. 1, pp. 6-9.

⁶²³ Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Dhilal al-Qur'an*, Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 11th ed., 1985, vol. 1, pp. 38-39.

⁶²⁴ On the purpose and importance of this science, see Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi's *al-Muwafaqat fi usul al-tashri al-islam*, ed. Shaykh Ibrahim Ramadan, as well the commentary by Shaykh Abdullah Derraz, vol. 2, pp. 323-662; see also Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, *Dawabit al-maslahat fi al-Shari'a al-Islam*.

* Then he comments on the Supreme Name *Allah*, and says that it is one of God's Beautiful Names, (*al Asma' al Husna*) and that only God is called by this Name. He (exalted is He above any imperfection) is the Necessary Being, and when we hear this term we immediately think about God the Exalted, who is qualified with perfect attributes which belong only to God.⁶²⁵

* In his commentary of the verses, he uses the terms *Rule*, *Definition*, just like Imam Ibn Kathir did in his commentary. Through them, the Shaykh clarifies some scholarly matters related to the meanings of the Beautiful Names of God the Exalted.

* He deals with some sensitive issues regarding the meanings of Divine Names and Attributes, (*al Asma' wa al Sifat*) excluding every thing that can be imagined by the human mind concerning the Being of God the Exalted.

* Nothing is like Him, He is pure from the imperfect attributes, and He hears and sees everything, and He is called with all the perfect Names, which belong only to Him.⁶²⁶

* He criticizes those who approach the Qur'an through logic, as well as those influenced by them, such as the deviated sects and innovators: *the Mu'tazilah*, *the Jahmiyah*, and others,

⁶²⁵ See Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's *Ajka e kuptimeve të Kur'ani Qerimit*, vol. 1, p. 305.

who sought to understand metaphysical and religious questions through logical or philosophical rules, and thus they strayed themselves and others. Despite their sincere intentions in order to elevate God above human qualities, they precipitated in the error of *ta'til* (negation) of the Divine attributes.⁶²⁷ His treatment of logic is sufficient indicator that the Shaykh was thoroughly familiar with Aristotelian logic.

* Through his commentary, he tried to rectify mistaken opinions existing among Albanian Muslimss, who were under the pressure of ideologies such as communism and its vicious attack on religion, especially during the second and third decade of the twentieth century.⁶²⁸ The Shaykh was forced to deal with such issues and to show the truth, which shows that he was conscious about the reality of his time and the challenges it raised.

* He deals with linguistic questions, especially concerning syntax, as in the commetnary of the word *Rabb-un* " رَبُّ " . He would not stop at the primary meaning of the word, but he would

⁶²⁶ He explains carefully what is meant by tanzil (*God's Descent*) and deals with the verses of the Divine attributes in the Maturidi approach, as we shall see in the second chapter.

⁶²⁷ On deviated currents in religion and commentary, see Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi, *al-Ittijahat al-munharifati fi tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*, Maktab Wahba, Cairo, 1996, pp. 47-62; Zaghlul al-Shahat, *al-Ittijahat al-fikr fi al-tafsir*, Alexandria, Al-hay'at al-misriyya al-ammah lil-kitab, 2nd ed., 1977, pp. 186-216.

⁶²⁸ On the religious and historical characteristics of Albanian territories, see the study by the Italian orientalist Roberto Maroko Dela Roka, *Kombësia dhe feja në Shqipëri*, pp. 117-142.

delve deeply in order to discover other meanings. For example, he states that among the meanings of the word *Rabb* are: Creator, Sustainer, Regulator, and Possessor of power. Indeed when God created the world He did not leave His creatures to wander in confusion, rather He made order in their religious and worldly affairs.⁶²⁹

Also, in his commentary of the word: al-alamin "العالمين" ("the worlds") he writes: *"This word is used in plural and it applies to all the names - with the exception of Allah - both for microbeings and macrobeings. All beings point to His Being and they cannot exist without His care and design, which is why the "al" is used, in order to show generality and continuity. They must all offer praises to Him as is due. All creatures are in need of His supervision, protection, and care. The commentary of the verse "Rabbil-alamin – Lord of the worlds" "رب العالمين" – is thus also God is the Creator and Master of all the worlds"*.⁶³⁰

* Occasionally he points out the secrets hidden in the verses, such as in the verse: "إياك نعبد" "Iyyake na'budu – Thee alone we worship!"; where he writes: *"Although the reader of this verse is singular, it does not say "The alone I worship" the verse is in plural, because there are other brothers and servants of God, lovers of God (awliya') and angels, and it is greatly*

⁶²⁹ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, pp. 8-9.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

hoped that God will accept this prayer. This is the reason why the congregational prayer has been ordained, because a good work is worthier and more acceptable to God when it is performed in congregation ..."⁶³¹

* At times, the author points that to possible traces of israiliat in interpretation, without mentioning their sources.⁶³² According to Muslim scholars, the Israiliat either agree or disagree with the Shari'ah. In the latter case, they are rejected and it is even forbidden to relate them. In the former case, they are mentioned not as proofs but as encouraging.⁶³³ This is the opinion of Ibn Taymiyya.⁶³⁴ In case they neither agree nor disagree with the Shari'ah, we should be neutral; not believing, neither believing. They must not be read by a beginner in religion, in order to avoid *fitna* in his faith and thought. If a person is a scholar of Islamic sciences, there is no fear and harm in reading them.

* Occasionally he raises questions, to which he answers himself, such as in the commentary of the verse: **صراط الذين** " **أنعمت عليهم** " *The Way of those on whom Thou have bestowed*

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶³³ Our honored mentor prof. Dr. Abd al-Qahhar al-Ani from Iraq (*may God mercy his soul*) in a Friday seminar held at the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur, called for a complete rejection of israiliat, quoting Ibn Taymiyya's saying: "*The Israiliat are replete with lies and fabrications.*"

⁶³⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Usul al-tafsir*, ed. Feriyal Ulwan, Beirut, Dar al-fikr al-Lubnani, 1989, pp. 110-111.

Thine Grace” in which he asks: “*Whom does God the Exalted refer to in this noble verse as having bestowed His grace upon them?*” The Shaykh himself replies: “*The overwhelming majority says that this verse refers to the messengers, the prophets, the lovers of God, the martyrs and the pious servants of God*”.⁶³⁵ To my opinion the Shaykh could have also replied by quoting the following verse of the Chapter al-Nisa’, in which God the Exalted says:

﴿ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا ﴾ [النساء: 69]

“*And whoso obey God and the Messenger, they will be in the company of those on whom God has bestowed His Grace, of the Prophets, the Siddiqun, the martyrs, and the righteous. What excellent companions!*”⁶³⁶ It would have been better to interpret the Qur’an through the Qur’an, which is the preferred method among the pious ancestors and the later scholars.⁶³⁷

* He points out the causes for the revelation (*asbab al Nuzul*) of a particular verse or chapter, and in this case, he writes: “*It has been related that al-Fatiha is among the first revealed Suras whereas the first revealed verses are the five verses of al-Alaq*”.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁵ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 19.

⁶³⁶ al-Nisa’, 69.

⁶³⁷ See: Ibn Taymiyya, *Usul al-tafsir*, pp. 60-61.

⁶³⁸ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, pp. 19-20.

It is clear from Shaykh Dalliu's words that he had complete knowledge on the distinction between the first verses and the first chapters to have been revealed. This has also been emphasized by Shaykh Manna'a al-Qattan who quotes Imam Zaraqashi.⁶³⁹

* Shaykh Dalliu mentions different opinions on an issue and then chooses the best. In the commentary of the verse:

﴿ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴾ [الفاتحة: 7]

“not of those who earned Thine Anger nor of those who went astray!”, he says: *“Some scholars say that those who earned God's anger are the Jews, and those who went astray are the Christians. The preferred view for the majority (Jumhur al 'Ulama) is that those who earned God's anger refer to the sinners and wrongdoers of every nation, whereas those who went astray are those who do not know how to reach the true God, and prefer to remain in darkness... ”*⁶⁴⁰

One wonders why did the Shaykh prefer this explanation? He did not mention the source for such an opinion, except if we suppose that he relied on the rules of *usul al-fiqh* (foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence)

⁶³⁹ Mebahith fi ulum al-Qur'an, Beirut, Muessasat al-risalah, 23rd ed., 1998, pp. 66-68.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 20-21.

" العبرة بعموم اللفظ لا بخصوص السبب " that: the lessons and benefits from the Qur'anic and prophetic texts must be deduced from the general meaning and structure of the phrase, and not the specific reason for the revelation of those texts, and therefore the Shaykh refers to the essential meaning of the verse for which it was revealed, and he is very precise in this and fully right.

* He calls for learning lessons from the people of the past and the study of history, as can be clearly seen in his commentary of Chapter al-Fatiha, where he points out the benefits and lessons to be learned from the people of the past and their historical events.⁶⁴¹

* The great eagerness for clarity made the Shaykh use specific expressions, such as "*the essence of commentary*", (Ajka e tefsirit) or "*elaboration*", (Shkoqitje), or "*explication*" (Spjegime).⁶⁴² In certain places he uses the term "*Essence of the Qur'an*", (Thalbi i Kur'anit) and when he finishes his ⁶⁴³comentary, he writes: "*The end ! (Fund)*"⁶⁴⁴

* Occasionally he traces the narrations to the great Companions, such as Ibn Abbas and Ibn Mas'ud r.a.⁶⁴⁵

* He points out the lessons and allegorical and stylistic peculiarities of the verses, as well as the hidden meanings of the

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 42-84,89.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 53-57.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 699.

single letters at the beginning of the Chapters. At times he deals with morphological issues, as well as discussions on prosody.⁶⁴⁶

* Sometimes he prefers a certain meaning of the verse among many opinions. In his commentary of the verse:

﴿ ذَلِكِ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾ [البقرة: 2]

a guidance to the devout ones, when he speaks about the meaning of the devout ones, he says that there are three meanings and stages of devoutness:

1) Fear from associating partners to God, as the polytheist deserves eternal damnation;

2) Fear from evil deeds, evil morals, and forbidden actions;

3) Purity of heart from every other thing but God the Exalted, concentrating on Him fully and addressing Him exclusively. This is the station of the *awliya'* and those brought near, and the verse regards the last two groups...⁶⁴⁷

* The author does not mention the readings of the Qur'an (*al qiraat al qur'aniya*) (القراءات القرآنية) at any point in his commentary.⁶⁴⁸

* He is clear and understandable both in writing and translation. In order to facilitate reading, he clarifies definitions of terms and their differences, such as (التأويل والتفسير والمحكم والمتشابه)

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 25.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, pp. 31-32.

(*ta'wil* and *tafsir*,⁶⁴⁹ *muhkam* and *mutashabih*, etj. If there is a change during the commentary, he informs the reader about it.⁶⁵⁰ When the author notices a typo, or an error, he writes: *Correction*, (*Korizhim*) ‘ and provides the volume, page and line for the correction.⁶⁵¹

* Sometime does not prefer any given opinion, and there are cases in which he offers several interpretations of a verse without preferring any, such as in the case of the verse:

﴿ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّمَّنْ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴾ [البقرة: 23]
*and call your witnesses besides God, if you are truthful.*⁶⁵²

He lays out five different meanings without preferring any of them. It would have been better if he provided the Albanian reader with a choice in order to avoid confusion for the latter.⁶⁵³

* Occasionally he points out the opinions of commentators, and then quotes opinions from American and European scholars on Islam.⁶⁵⁴

* At times he offers two translations of the text in order to facilitate understanding for the reader.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁴⁸ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 2, pp. 986-9.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 458.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 449-450.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 336.

⁶⁵² al-Baqara, 23.

⁶⁵³ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 68-69.

* He relies on the exoterical meaning of the text (ظاهر)
 النص (dhahirun-nas) without inclining to allegories or metaphors
 (المجاز) (al-majaz)⁶⁵⁶ and in his commentary of the verse:

﴿ قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرِّ مِّنْ ذَلِكَ مَنُوبَةً عِندَ اللَّهِ مَن لَّعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَعَظِمَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمْ
 الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتِ أُولَئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ عَن سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ ﴾ [المائدة :

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*Say: "Shall I inform you of something worse than that, regarding
 the recompense from God: those who incurred the Curse of God
 and His Wrath, and those of whom He transformed into monkeys
 and swines, and those who worshipped taghut.*⁶⁵⁷

He relates the words of some commentators that some Jews were indeed transformed into monkeys and swines and that the phrase is not allegorical. After our research on the matter, we believe that the majority of the commentators from the pious ancestors think the same, because God indeed turned some young Jews into monkeys and some elderly Jews into swines, and this is not just an imagery but a reality. This punishment came about due to their ill-treatments, treachery and killing of the prophets. That is why God has transformed them into monkeys and swines both in form and behaviour. The behaviour of some Zionist Jews today is worse and more brutal than that of the wild beasts.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 560, 580.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 544-5, 558.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 986-9.

⁶⁵⁷ al-Ma'ide, 60.

So, in view of God's power, we may say that God the Exalted has turned their form into animals for a specific historical period. God is Almighty and has the power to create man without parents, in the same way as He created Adam. He can also create man only from a mother, as He did with Isa(*Jesus*) a.s.. God can also transform human faces and preserve them. Glory be to the Lord of the worlds!⁶⁵⁸

* The Shaykh has not pointed out the source for his data. It would have been more in keeping with the Islamic tradition to show the references, in order to avoid confusion.

* Occasionally he provides elaborations on important religious matters, as in the verse:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴾ [البقرة: 4

[

Who believe in what has been revealed to you, he says that each Muslim must believe in the earlier revealed books, namely the Torah of Moses a.s., the Injil of Jesus a.s. and in the Psalms of David a.s. in general, and that one must not believe in details

⁶⁵⁸ For more information on this issue, see al-Tabari, *Jami'u al-bayan*, vol. 6, p. 293; al-Baghawi, *Ma'alim al-tanzil*, ed. Halid al-Aqq, Marwan Sewwar, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 2nd ed., 1987, vol. 1, p. 37; al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-manthur*, Beirut, Darul-fikri, 1993, vol. 3, pp. 109-110; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Zad al-masir*, Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islam, 3rd ed., 1404 AH. vol. 2, pp. 387-8; al-Wahidi, *al-Wajiz fi tafsir al-kitab al-aziz*, ed. Safwan Adnan, Beirut, Dar al-sham, 1st ed., 1415 AH, vol. 1, p. 326; Abu al-Su'ud, *Irshad al-aql al-salim*

thereof. Whereas in the case of the Qur'an, a Muslim must believe in it both in general and in particulars, because it contains Islamic principles in which he must believe fully. The detailed knowledge of the verses' meanings is a general obligation (*fard kifaya*), not an individual one (*fard ayn*)."⁶⁵⁹

* He treats some questions in greater detail, due to their importance, such as: the principles of ablutions, prayer, and pilgrimage. He was a Hanafi and never goes outside the teachings of the Hanafi School in the roots and branches of religion.⁶⁶⁰

* At times, he relates the sayings of the great Imams of the Successors, during his clarifications of the principles deduced from a particular verse, such as the following:

﴿ لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَّدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ ﴾ [المائدة: 89]
God will not punish you for what is unintentional in your oaths...
(al-Ma'ida, 89). In his commentary, he relates eight opinions from great commentators of the *tabi'un*.⁶⁶¹

* When dealing with legal issues, Shaykh Dalliū confines the discussion to his own knowledge on the matter, without quoting other scholars' opinions. This is perhaps due to his extensive knowledge in the field. However, in questions of

illa mezay al-Qur'an al-Karim, Beirut, Daru Ihya-turath al-arabi, n.d., vol. 3, p. 155.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 40.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 337.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 337.

exegesis he relates from others who are more knowledgeable,⁶⁶² from fear of erring on the interpretation of God's word.

* He pays attention to the lessons and admonitions contained in the Qur'anic verses.⁶⁶³

* He uses the comparative method in evaluating the reports and opinions, which he lists for the reader, and then chooses the most preferable one.⁶⁶⁴

* He criticizes the Followers of the Book, (*Ahlul Kitab*) especially the Jews, for not accepting abrogation and for ascribing ignorance to God the Exalted, for God knows fully well the state of people at the time of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, peace be upon them all!⁶⁶⁵

Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalli quotes from the Torah and the New Testament to criticize the Jews and the Christians, in order to prove the abrogation of previous Divine Legislations. Abrogation in the Qur'an is not an innovation or an unknown element as the Jews believed. His critique is well-founded and precise.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 986-9.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 142.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 148-9.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 169.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 170-171. For a more detailed treatment of this question, see al-Shatibi's *al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 3, pp. 95-111, as well al-Qattani's *Mabahith fi ulum al-Qur'an*, pp. 231-244.

* He criticizes the portrayal of God as lacking in knowledge in the story of the Genesis: “*And God saw that everything He had made was good*” - *as if God later understands that everything was made good.*⁶⁶⁷

* At the end of his commentary of the verses dealing with a particular topic, he says: “*This is the end of the verses speaking about the Bani Israil and we shall continue with verses which have been revealed for such and such topic*”.⁶⁶⁸ This method is very similar to Sayyid Qutb’s method in his *Fi dhilal al-Qur’an*.

* He is very precise in relating from the commentaries of al Fakhr al Razi and Baydawi, and he never quotes something without analysing it. He is very careful in choosing the relevant meanings, and refrains from relating secondary issues, and this is worth of every praise.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁷ Zaghlul al-Shahhat, *al-Ittijahat al-fikr fi al-tefsir*, p. 292; Abu Ja‘far al-Nahas, *al-Nasikh wa al-mansukh*, see the edition by Dr. Muhammad Abd al-Salam Muhammad, Kuwait: Maktab al-falah, 1st ed., 1408 AH, vol. 1, pp. 40-46, 62-63. This work contains valuable information on the distinction between (*Abrogation-al Naskhu*) and (*Apparent, Manifest-al Beda’*). Abrogation is permitted and is recognized by the Shari’ah, it is not an apparent as the Jews claimed. See the edition by Dr. Muhammad Abd al-Salam Muhammad, Kuwait: Maktab al-falah, 1st ed., 1408 AH, vol. 1, pp. 40-46, 62-63.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 191

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

* Sometimes he makes a *Thematic Commentary* (al Tafsir al Mawdui) in his exegeses and states a lot of Qur'anic verses regarding the selected topic. This is done very rarely.⁶⁷⁰

* As regards the scientific exegesis, Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalli was known for his intellectual skill, illuminated and open-minded ideas. He had outstripped all his contemporaries in Albania due to his extensive knowledge. In the commentary of the verse:

﴿ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً ... ﴾ [البقرة: 22]

*Who has made the earth a resting place for you, and the sky as a canopy*⁶⁷¹,

he says that it refers to the spherical shape of the earth, which has also been proven by scientific facts. In the beginning the earth was a bright burning mass of gas like a star in the sky, and after a long period of time the fire cooled down to an intermediate state which is neither solid, nor liquid, until it became suitable for life ...⁶⁷². We have dealt with scientific exegesis and its rules in the third chapter.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-90.

⁶⁷¹ al-Baqarah, 22.

⁶⁷² *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 66-82.

⁶⁷³ For more details see: Halid Abd al-Rahman al-Aqq, *Usul al-tafsir wa qawa'iduhu*, Beirut: Dar al-Nafais, 2nd ed., 1986, pp. 217-224; al-Rumi, *Usul al-tafsir wa manahijuhu*, Riyad, Maktabah al-tawbah, 1413 AH, p. 94; al-Qardawi, *Kayfa Nata'amal ma' al-Qur'an al-adhim*, Cairo: Dar al-shuruk, 1st ed., 1999, pp. 324-369; Sayyid Qutb, *Fi dhilal al-Qur'an*, Dar al-shuruk, Cairo, 11th ed., 1985, vol. 1, pp. 180-181; al-Shatibi, *al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 2, p. 69; al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsir wa al-mufasssirun*, pp. 364-381; al-Ghazzali, *Ihya'*,

This was a description of his method in commentary, as expounded in the material that was available to us. It is no doubt a strong, scientific, objective, precise method, away from passions and inclinations, which only prove Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliut level of knowledge and competence, may God have mercy upon his soul!

5. Examples of political vision in the Commentary of Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliut

As we mentioned, Shaykh Dalliut had an extensive knowledge in religious, social, economical,⁶⁷⁴ political, and even military and security issues. In his commentary of the verse:

﴿ وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا... ﴾ [البقرة: 247]

*And their Prophet (Samuel) said to them, "Indeed God has appointed Talut (Saul) as a king over you,"*⁶⁷⁵ the Shaykh says that the appointing of Saul as the king of Bani Israil shows that the ruler has a crucial role in a state, and in protecting the interest of

op. cit., vol. 1, p. 289; al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan fi ulum al-Qur'an*; Beirut: Dar al-fikr, 1979, vol. 4, pp. 27-31.

⁶⁷⁴ Such as the prohibition of usury, which he deems as a cause of economical, cultural and industrial damage. The application of usury destroys these goods, which are necessary for a people's development and blossoming (*Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 428).

⁶⁷⁵ al-Baqarah, 247.

his people. He must be religious, courageous, who knows internal and external affairs. Such rulers must be obeyed as long as they do not contradict the constitution, in which case they must depose him.

The soldiers must also respect the orders of their commanders in battlefield, and opposing them is forbidden, because the believers must unite in jihad in God's way...⁶⁷⁶

The lessons learned from the Qur'anic verses are valuable also in political and security domains, in which the author applies the Principles of Jurisprudence (قواعد أصول الفقه) and the Qur'anic Sciences (قواعد علوم القرآن) to deduce conclusions on political or economical issues:

(العبرة بعموم اللفظ لا بخصوص السبب) “The conclusion must be drawn based on the general meaning and not the context-reason of revelation.” In his commentary to the verse:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ﴾ [النساء: 58]

*Verily! God commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice*⁶⁷⁷,

⁶⁷⁶ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, pp. 373-9, 380-1, 613.

⁶⁷⁷ En-Nisaë, 58.

the Shaykh addresses his call to the leaders and rulers of different countries, in order for them to work accordingly, in which case they will be strengthening the foundations of their state, otherwise the state will collapse. In his view, regardless of the cause of the revelation of this verse, it has universal applicability, and safety refers to both this world and the next.⁶⁷⁸ Here, again we can see his precision in the clarification of political, state and security issues.

6. The sources of Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's thoughts

The primary literature used by the Shaykh is extensive and multifaceted, which points to his knowledge and authority in the field. He makes a synthesis of traditional literature with the new works, of religious literature with scientific literature. He has relied in different exegetical works written by both classical and contemporary commentators. Some of the classical commentaries he used are Tafsir Tabari,⁶⁷⁹ Tafsir Nisaburi,⁶⁸⁰ Tafsir Ibn

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 806-7. On the question of the Shari'ah and human rights, see: al-Qadi Burhan al-Din Ibrahim ibn Ali al-Ya'muri (Ibn Farhun), *Tabsirat al-hukkam fi usul al-aqd wa manahij al-ahkam*, Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-ilm, n.d.; Ibn Taymiya, *al-Siyasah al-shar'iyah fi islahi al-ra'i wa al-ra'iyah*, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, pp. 30-72.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, pp. 559, 566, 608, 666, 684 and vol. 2, pp. 739, 894, 926, etj.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 407, 982.

Abbas⁶⁸¹ and narrations from great Companions Umar, Ali, Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn Umar, Zejd ibn Thabit r.a.⁶⁸²

He quotes in general from all Arab commentators,⁶⁸³ aslo from a Turkish commentator who was his contemporary, called Muhammad Vehbi from Konia.⁶⁸⁴ His exegeses Tafsir is called)
(خلاصة البيان *Khulasat al-bayan*. The commentaries of al Fakhr al Razi, al Baydawi and al Khazin are pillars of Shaykh Dalliu's commentary, and in each page of the later at least one of them is mentioned. One may even say that his commentary is a summary of these three tafsirs, because he relies on them in every verse.

Another reference is:

(الفواتح الإلهية والمفاتيح الغيبية الموضحات للكلم القرآنية والحكم الفرقانية)
al-Fewatih al-Ilahiyah wa'l-mafatih al-ghaybiyya al-mudihat lil-kelim al-Qur'aniyah wa'l-hikam al-furkaniyah by Shaykh Baba Ni'matullah ibn Muhammad al-Najawani al-Efendi. I have not come across a biography of this commentator, even though Shaykh Dalliu quotes him often.⁶⁸⁵ Dr. Ismail Bardhi mentions his name and commentary in his study on Hafiz Dalliu.⁶⁸⁶ Shaykh

⁶⁸¹ He relates from him with sarcasm, and writes: "Related by Ibn Abbas or from him", vol. 1, p. 434.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 340.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 272.

⁶⁸⁴ Bardhi, *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu dhe ekzegjeza e tij kur'anore*, p. 1.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 2, p. 734.

⁶⁸⁶ Bardhi, *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu dhe ekzegjeza e tij kur'anore*, p. 162.

Dalliu has also quoted from Tafsir Abu Su'ud,⁶⁸⁷ Tafsir al Nasafi, and Tafsir al Mujahid.⁶⁸⁸

From secondary literature, the Shaykh has used the Books of *Ahl al Kitab*, such as the Torah, the New Testament⁶⁸⁹ and even the Psalms.⁶⁹⁰ He also relates from Islamic literature, from the Sirah, from books of military campaigns, research on medicine, books on fiqh and usul al-fiqh, the reasons of revelation(*asbab al Nuzul*), the sciences of the Qur'an, books on wa'adh wa al-irshad, Prophetic stories, as well as his personal books of language, grammar, statistics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, geography, morals and ethics, such as Imam Ghazzali's *Ihya 'ulum al-din*, general books of other religions, Western authors etc. This only shows his extensive knowledge in different sciences.⁶⁹¹

7. Shaykh Dalliu's method in transmitting from books of tafsir

The following is an analysis of the original sources in which Shaykh Dalliu was based, in order to verify the exactness

⁶⁸⁷ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, pp. 128, 133, 688, 689, 901.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1. pp. 170-171.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 262.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 262.

⁶⁹¹ For more details, see his commentary, vol. 1, pp. 97, 114-115, 132, 170-171, 247, 259, 262, 408, 508, etc.

and method of transmission thereof, as well as his manner of relying on their thoughts as arguments.

A. We will start with Fakhr al-Din Razi, because his commentary is a pillar for the Shaykh Dalliu's tafsir. Hafiz Dalliu does not quote literally from the tafsir of al Razi and he does not provide the masanid (*chain of narrators*) like Razi does. Shaykh Dalliu only mentions the general meaning and a summary of al Razi's words.⁶⁹² It would have been more appropriate if Hafiz Dalliu wrote: "al Fakhr al-Razi says the following, in our summary" – in order for the reader to understand that these are not the exact words of al Razi, but only their meaning. There are other instances which we have mentioned in the comparison between the two commentaries.⁶⁹³

B. When choosing an opinion from Imam al Razi, Hafiz Dalliu does not mention that al Razi provides several meanings as well as secondary issues, and that he is choosing only one of those, referring the reader to the commentary. This creates the impression that al Razi has mentioned only this opinion for the reader, which is not true.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹² See Razi's *Tafsir al-Kabir*, vol. 2, p. 10, eighth issue, regarding the tree from which Eve and Adam ate, and compare with Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's own commentary on vol. 1, p. 95.

⁶⁹³ Compare Razi's words in vol. 2 (pt. 3), pp. 75-76 on verse 2:47 and Hafiz Dalliu's words in vol. 1, p. 117.

⁶⁹⁴ Compare Razi's words in vol. 2 (pt. 3), p. 178, on the verse 2:74, and Hafiz Dalliu's words in vol. 1, p. 139.

C. In the case of the commentary of Imam al Nasafi, Hafiz Dalliu transmits only his opinion. After checking with the Tafsir al Nasafi, we found the quotes to be correct, but Shaykh Dalliu has not provided their references.⁶⁹⁵ This is a serious methodological slip.

In quoting from these commentators, Shaykh Dalliu sometimes writes: “*al Fakhr al-Razi says in his commentary of this verse*”,⁶⁹⁶ and sometimes speaks for all of them: “*As Qadi al Baydawi, al Khazin, al Nasafi say*”.⁶⁹⁷ Sometimes he does not mention their names, but says: “*The commentators confirm this event as true.*”⁶⁹⁸

Ç. What has been said regarding his quoting from Imam al Razi’s and al Nasafi’s commentaries is also valid for the quotes from al Tabari’s tafsir and al Khazin’s Tafsir, with minor differences and explications. He conveys the summary of their words in a clear way, and there is nothing in it which can create a misconception.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁵ Compare Nasafi’s words in his *Tafsir*, vol. 1, pp. 52-53 with Hafiz Dalliu’s commentary, vol. 1, p. 132.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 159.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 132.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 133.

⁶⁹⁹ *Tafsir* Tabari, vol. 3, p. 67, *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 2, p. 926, and *Tafsir* Khazin, vol. 1, p. 124.

D. As for Qadi Baydawi's *Tafsir*, he relates his words both literally⁷⁰⁰ and partially.⁷⁰¹

Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's commentary had a positive echo among Albanian readers, who received it with great interest, as can be seen from the fact that the Muslim Community of Albania published and distributed this book in 1929.⁷⁰²

The commentaries that Shaykh Dalliu used can be divided in the following categories:

I – Traditional commentaries; (*masadir al tafsir bi al ma'thur*), such as the Tafsir al Tabari, Tafsir Mujahid (rarely), Tafsir Ibn Abbas (more often). It is not clear if Shaykh Dalliu has quoted directly from the commentaries of Ibn Abbas and Mujahid, or via other authors.

II – Rational commentaries (*masadir al Tafsir bi al r'ayi al jaiz*) (he has relied extensively on them), such as: Tafsir al-Razi, Tafsir al Baydawi, Tafsir al Khazin, Tafsir al Nasafi, Tafsir Abu Su'ud, Tafsir al Nisaburi, etc.

III – Contemporary commentaries such as Muhammad Wahbi's *Khulasat al-bayan*.

⁷⁰⁰ Compare Tafsir Baydawi, vol. 2, p. 303 with Shaykh Dalliu's commentary on vol. 1, p. 9.

⁷⁰¹ Shiko tefsirin e Bejdaviut në ajetin kur'anor: "E ata që mohuan dhe përgënjeshtroan argumentet Tona, ata janë banues të xhehennemit" (Al-Maide, 10), vol. 2, p. 303 dhe tefsirin e Shaykh Dalliu, vol. 2, p. 993.

⁷⁰² Ismail Bardhi, *Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu*, p. 161.

This is our treatment of the method, references, and ideas of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu's commentary. We wish he had been able to complete this commentary, but it was God's decree that he passed away before finishing this major project. Perhaps God will enable one of His sincere servants among Albanian scholars to continue this important and completed task.

CHAPTER TWO

Major creedal issues in the Commentary of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalli and a clarification of his views thereof⁷⁰³

I – The interpreters and the problem of interpretation (*al-muawwilun wa al-ta'wil*)

(المؤولون وإشكالية التأويل)

* Historical background:

Before we deal with this sensitive creedal matter and before clarifying Shaykh Hafiz Dalli's view on this issue through concrete examples from his own commentary, which are in agreement with the Maturidi doctrine, we believe it is necessary to rely in God's word and in the Sunnah of the Prophet a.s., as well as in the sayings of the great scholars in order to understand the truth of this matter and to take our stand with which we evaluate the schools of the creed elaborated by Shaykh Dalli in his commentary. One of the most important questions in

⁷⁰³ The researcher Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Mighrawi has studied in detail the opinions of the most well-known classical and modern commentators on the question of Divine Attributes in his work *al-Mufasssirun bayn al-ta'wil wa al-ithbat fi ayat al-sifat*, Riyad, Dar Tayyibe, 1985. He starts with Tabari and ends with Shaykh Muhammad Ali Sabuni. This is a very important study, in which the author has documented the fact

exegesis is the interpretation of the Qur'anic and Prophetic texts on the Divine Names and Attributes

(تأويل الأسماء والصفات) (ta'wil al-asma' wa al- sifat) which look like anthropomorphic qualities at first sight.

Very few commentators and scholars from the past and the present were able to avoid this issue. The interpretation of the verses dealing with the Divine Attributes was a general phenomenon among commentators, who saw it as a necessity of exegesis! However, this is not so, as we shall see from the proofs of the Shari'ah and the intellect.

We will not enter into elaborations on the etymology and usage of the term *ta'wil* in Arabic, because we wish to tackle the essence of the matter.

Many Islamic scholars have exerted themselves in explicating this issue, as well as the danger inherent in it. We strongly believe that the best approach is to rely on the words of the Prophet a.s., who speaks to us about God the Exalted, as well as on the biographies of the noble Companions, who witnessed the revelation. This is due to the fact that the question of interpretation of the Divine Attributes is one of the major and most sensitive problems of metaphysics and creed, which are not the object of human senses, but are part of the discussion on the

that many commentators practiced *both permissible and impermissible ta'wil*.

Exalted and Holy Being. Also, this is the best approach in order to protect our faith from contradictions, deviations, and doubts. The Prophet a.s. and his Companions did not perform ta'wil in the question of the Divine Attributes, but they have believed in them as their formal aspect implies, maintaining that their true meaning is known only to God the Exalted. The scholars of the past and the present have scrutinized this issue in detail, and some of them have succeeded, others not. I pray to God to reward those who succeeded with two rewards, and those who have not with one, as they all strived to find the truth.

I also wish to stress my strong opposition to the offending and attacking of the scholars of the *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'ah* who had a different opinion on this issue, such as the Ash'arites, and the Maturidis, who are considered as innovators by these extremists. We firmly believe that they belong to the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, and it is absolutely impermissible to exclude them from this group, as some authors have done.⁷⁰⁴

My approach to this issue will differ from that of the majority and it will not be harsh against the scholars of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, who did not agree with the Salaf scholars in certain points of this issue. I shall be polite in speech and

⁷⁰⁴ al-Mighrawi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 45-46. This respected researcher has excluded Maturidis and Ash'arites from the fold of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-jama'ah*.

objective in clarifying the mistakes and deviations in order to show the truth on this matter as I believe it.

Among the scholars who have written on this issue successfully, leaving the heart and the mind satisfied are: the respected Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and Imam Ibn Taymiyya. I decided to record their sayings here, so that they may serve as foundations to our discourse on the opinions of Shaykh Dalliu and the others. The words I shall say below are based on what God the Exalted says on this important metaphysics issue; I am fully convinced in their truth, and I disagree with Albanian or other scholars who think otherwise on this matter, despite my great respect for their scientific endeavours.

A. Abu Hanifa's view on the Divine Names and Attributes

Imam Abu Hanifa r.a. writes: *“God the Exalted is not described by the qualities of His creatures; His wrath and His good pleasure are two of His attributes without asking how. This is the view of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah. He becomes angry and relents, and it is not said that His anger means punishment, or that His relenting implies His reward. We describe Him as He describes Himself. He is One, Allah is He to*

*Whom every creature turns for every need, He neither begets nor is He begotten, and none is His equal, He is living, powerful, able, He hears and sees everything, His hand is above their hands, it is not like the hand of the creatures and it is not a limb, because He is the Creator of hands; His Face is not like the face of the creatures, because He is the creator of faces; His Spirit is not like the spirit of creatures, because He is its Creator. Nothing is like unto Him, and He sees everything and hears everything.*⁷⁰⁵

He also says: *“All His attributes differ from those of the creatures. He knows, but not in the same way as we do, He is powerful, but not like we are, He sees but not like our sight. He speaks but not as we speak. He hears, but not as we do. We speak with means and letters, whereas God speaks without means and letters. The letters are created, whereas God’s Word is uncreated. He is a thing (shay), but not like other things... He has a hand, a face, and a Spirit as God the Exalted declares in the Qur’an. The attributes which God the Exalted mentions in the Qur’an, such as the face, the hand, the spirit etc are unknown. It is not said that His hand means His power or His bounty, for in this way the attribute is cancelled. This is the view of the Qadariyya and the*

⁷⁰⁵ Abu Hanifa, *al-Sharh al muyassar alal-fiqhayn al-absat wa al-akbar al-mansu bayn li Abi Hanifa*, Pt. 2: *Riwajat Abu l-Balkhi an Abi Hanifa*, ed. Muhammad Khamis, Ajman, Maktabah al-furqan, 1st ed., 1999, p. 159.

Mu'tazilah. His hand is an attribute of God, but the mode is unknown ..."⁷⁰⁶

Thus, the words of Imam Abu Hanifa r.a. on this issue are as clear as the sunlight.

B. Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi's view on the Divine Names and Attributes

After presenting the different views on the definition and meaning of *al Arsh* and *al Istiwa'*, Imam al-Maturidi openly rejects the interpretation of the Divine Names and Attributes, and he relies on the opinion of the pious ancestors r.a. The clear opinion of Imam al-Maturidi and of the other Hanafi imams rejects the claims of those who accuse them of interpreting the Divine Names and Attributes and who exclude them from belonging to the Ahl al-Sunnah. This is the view of some young researchers who take an emotive attitude, removed from the objectivity of our pious ancestors.

Imam al-Maturidi says: *“Essentially, we maintain what God the Exalted says: “No thing is like unto Him”; which excludes any similarity with His creatures. We clarified that He is*

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Pt. 2, *Riwayat Hammad ibn Abi Hanifa an abihi*, pp. 24-27.

unique in His works and attributes. The verse “The All-Merciful stood on the Arsh”,⁷⁰⁷ must be accepted as it is and as the mind accepts it, without commenting upon it, otherwise the meaning will be altered, or there can be a meaning different from what we mention and which does not bear similarities with creatures. We believe in what God desires. Also, we must not compare what has been revealed about sight and other matters and we must believe in them as God wants us to, without accepting one thing and rejecting another...⁷⁰⁸

One of the researchers who has identical opinions with the Hanafi imams on the impermissibility of interpreting the Divine Attributes, is Shaykh Qadi-zadah, who says: *“The Hanafi imams, such as fakhr al-Islam al-Bazdewi and the sun of the imams, al-Sarahsi say that the hand, face and Throne of God are known in their essence, but unknown in their description, and the cancelling of the essence when the attribute cannot be understood is prohibited.”⁷⁰⁹* It is therefore clear that the Hanafi dignitaries have not interpreted the Divine Attributes, but they have accepted them as they are revealed, without comparison, without negation, and without anthropomorphism.

⁷⁰⁷ Ta-ha, 5.

⁷⁰⁸ Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, *al-Tawhid*, p. 74.

C. Ibn Taymiyya’s opinion on the Divine Names and Attributes:

Ibn Taymiyya’s opinion on this issue is similar to that of Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam al-Maturidi. In (مجموع الفتاوى لشيخ) (Majmu’ al-fatawa) it is said: “*Ibn Taymiyya was asked about the opinion of the madhhab of the salaf on faith, and the opinion of the later madhahib, which one is correct and which one did he embrace?*”

Ibn Taymiyya’s answer: “Praise be to God. The elaboration of these issues requires volumes, but we shall focus on what is most important. God the Exalted says:

﴿وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا﴾ [النساء: 115]

*And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers’ way, We shall keep him in the path he has chosen, and burn him in Hell - what an evil destination!*⁷¹⁰

Here God bears witness about the Companions of the Prophet, and for those who follow them with good deeds and faith. God the Exalted says:

⁷⁰⁹ Belqasim al-Ghali, *Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, hayatuhu wa ara’uhu al-aqa’idiyya*, p. 179, quoting Shaykh Zade, *Nudhm al-fara’id wa jam’ul-fawa’id*, faridah 14, pp. 22-23.

⁷¹⁰ al-Nisa’, 115.

﴿ وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴾ [التوبة: 100]

*And the foremost to embrace Islam of the Muhajirun and the Ansar and also those who followed them exactly, God is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success.*⁷¹¹

God the Magnificent also says:

﴿ لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا ﴾ [الفتح: 18]

*Indeed, Allâh was pleased with the believers when they gave the pledge to you under the tree: He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down al-Sakinah (calmness and tranquillity) upon them, and He rewarded them with a near victory.*⁷¹²

Here it is clear that whoever follows another path from theirs, God will punish them in Hellfire. Their way is that of: “Belief in the Divine Names and Attributes Which He has described Himself with in His Book, or through the tongue of the Prophet without adding or omitting anything, without exceeding their meaning or interpreting them. It is not allowed to interpret them beyond their apparent meaning; they are not like the qualities of creatures or the characteristics thereof. They accept

⁷¹¹ al-Tawbah, 100.

*them as they were revealed, acknowledging their knowledge to their Speaker in the meaning intended by Him... ”*⁷¹³

Ibn Taymiyya proves the truth of the madhhab of the salaf in non interpretig Divine Names and Attributes, by arguing that he has not seen any argument that the salaf have engaged in interpretation. They have been said to have shunned such discussions and those who engaged in them. Ibn Taymiyya says: *“The Messenger of God conveys by confirming the verses and believing in them, he accepts them without doubting the truthfulness of their Speaker, he does not interpret the verses related to the Divine Attributes, he does not explain them or compare them with the qualities of the creatures. Were he to do so, it would have been related from him and it would have not been possible to hide it. The hiding of the transmited knowledge is not permissible, and what has been transmitted is a great silence on this matter. When someone asked them on unclear matters, they would either reprimand him harshly, or beat him, or react severely in order to show their disapproval of such debates.”*

When Imam Malik was asked: *“O Abu Abdullah! The All-Merciful sat on the Throne, how did He sit?”* Imam Malik became angry, he started sweating, and lifting his head towards the questioner he said: (الاستواء معلوم و الكيف مجهول و الإيمان به واجب و

⁷¹² al-Fat’h, 18.

⁷¹³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmu’ al-fatawa*, vol. 4, pp. 1-2.

(السؤال عنه بدعة) *“Istiwa is not unknown, its mode cannot be grasped, belief in it is obligatory, asking about it is innovation, and I consider you a fasiq”*; and he ordered for the man to be expelled.”⁷¹⁴

Ibn Taymiyya also emphasizes another important matter which has escaped the majority of scholars, and that is the applicability of Imam Malik’s statement about *al Istiwa* to other Attributes, such as: God’s hand, face, descending, coming, etc. This is a sound and logical argument, as all these Attributes belong to God the Exalted. He says: *“Whoever interprets (al Istiwa’) as (al Istiyla)’ – that is, occupation and usurpation; (الاستواء: بمعنى الإستيلاء) gives an answer which is different from Malik’s and treads another path. Malik’s reply on al Istiwa’ is valid for all the attributes, such as: descending, coming, hand, face etc. Concerning the “descending” of God, it is said: Descent is known, its mode is unknown, belief in it is obligatory and asking about it is innovation.”* The same is said for other Attributes which are of the level of *Al istiwa’* and which are mentioned in the Qur’an and *Sunnah*.

It is related that Imam Abu Hanifa’s student Muhammad ibn Hasan said: *“The jurists of the East and the West are unanimous on the belief in the Noble Qur’an and the traditions which have been related from the Prophet by faithful transmitters*

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 1-3.

on the issue of Divine Attributes without interpretation, description and comparison... If someone interprets them he goes out of (the circle of) the Prophet and the congregation. They have not qualified or interpreted, but they have believed in what is found in the Qur'an and Sunnah and then they remained silent. Whoever speaks like Jahm⁷¹⁵ leaves the fold of the congregation... ”⁷¹⁶

It is related that Rabi'a ibn Sulayman said: *“I asked al-Shafi'i r.a. on the Divine Qualities, and he said: 'It is forbidden for the intellect to compare God the Glorious, for illusions to define Him, for minds to imagine Him, for feelings to dwell upon Him, for imagination to grasp Him, and for the mind to ponder over Him, except through what He has described Himself or with what the Prophet a.s. has described him.’”*

Ibn Taymiyya then mentions another convincing rational argument. The discussion on the Attributes is a part of the discussion on the Holy Being (*Existence of Allah*), and our belief in this Holy Being implies belief in His existence, but not tell us how is He. We believe in Him (*exalted is He above defects*), He is living, powerful, sustainer, willing, hearing, seeing, as well as other Attributes without knowing their mode or the Essence of

⁷¹⁵ Jahm ibn Safwan believed that *Al istiwa'* meant *Al istila'* (occupation), an idea he took from Ja'd ibn Darham, together with other ideas such as the negation of the Divine Attributes, the createdness of the Qur'an and other innovations. See al-Mighrawi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 76-77.

His Being or His Attributes. He says: “*The madhhab of the salaf (r.a.) affirms the Attributes as they are stated, but negates their modality, because the discussion of the Attributes is part of the discussion of Divine Being. Affirming Being means affirming existence, not modality. This is the affirmaton of the Attributes which the salaf adopted. If we delve deeper into the matter and state what has been said by the salaf we will digress from our intention in this reply. What we have stated suffices for the seeker of the truth, whereas those who like hearsay and debate go astray.*”⁷¹⁷

II – The permissible and the impermissible interpretation

(التأويل الجائز و غير الجائز)

Although we do not incline to the school of interpretation of the Attributes, this does not mean that we completely negate interpretation (*ta’wil*), or that we deny a suitable and intelligible meaning to it. Ibn Qayyim, a student of Ibn Taymiyya gives a good elaboration of this issue in his *al-Sawa’iq al-mursalat alal al-jahmiyya wa al-mu’at-tilah*, where he speaks of two kinds of interpretation (*ta’wil*): Interpretation in the sense of *tafsir*, which is intelligible and acceptable, and false interpretation which is not accepted. The second kind of interpretation which implies fabrication, straying, and distortion is similar to what the Jews did with the Torah, and they were the precursors of this kind of deviated interpretation in history. Some Islamic fractions like the

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmu’ al-fatawa*, vol. 4, pp. 1-6.

Mu'tazilah, the Jahmiyya, and the Qadriyya, as well as some others supported the deviated interpretation. In this context, Ibn al-Qayyim r.a. says: *“Ta'wil has two aspects: as tafsir (commentary) and as tahrif (distortion). The first is authentic, whereas the second is invalid, because it consists in a kind of abandoning religion and distortion of the texts from their true meaning, or forgery of the truth. The same is the case with disbelief in God’s Names, which sometimes rejects their meanings and truths, and sometimes it denies the Named, and sometimes they associate partners unto Him. The corrupt interpretation (tahrif) is atheism and deviation, even if its followers call it verification, knowledge or interpretation. One example of such Jahmite interpretation is that of the verse:*

﴿ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا ﴾ [النساء: 164]

*“and to Moses God spoke directly”.*⁷¹⁸ Here the declamation of the phrase (*wa kalama Allaha*) is changed to mean Moses spoke to God directly – which is even worse than the distortion by the Jews. When the Jahmiya distorted the meaning of the text, the *mutakallimun* asked: What do you say about the verse:

﴿ وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ ... ﴾ [الأعراف: 143]

And when Moses came at the time and place appointed by Us, (God) and his Lord spoke to him?⁷¹⁹ – then the distortors were perplexed and confused. Likewise, the interpretation of the Qadriya distorts the meaning of the texts on Divine decree, by placing them out of context and their true meaning. The Jahmia interpret the texts on the Divine Attributes and place them out of the context, denying the perfect Attributes of God. We do not deny

⁷¹⁸ al-Nisa', 164.

interpretation, but we only accept the commentary which is based on scientific and religious truth, and those who are deeply versed in knowledge and religion are capable of interpretation, but which of the two? We are called more to tafsir and are satisfied with it, whereas the others who have made distorted interpretation (tahrif) are wretched. Only God knows the truth...!’⁷²⁰

Then Ibn Qayyim points out the harms and the causes of this invalid interpretation, which he labels as *tawaghit-idols* (pl. of *taghut*): “1-Their claim that the Word of God and the word of the Prophet are verbal proofs is not based on any knowledge, and do not lead to any certainty, 2-just as their saying that the verses and the traditions dealing with the Divine Attributes are allegorical have no truth in them, 3-or their claim that the authentic narrations from the Prophet a.s. which have been related from the most righteous persons of the ummah do not offer knowledge and are only suppositions, 4-and their claim that if there is a contradiction between reason and the revealed texts, we follow reason and not Revelation. These are four taghuts which have greatly harmed Islam, by eliminating its principles, obliterating its teachings, and destroying its rules, treading the

⁷¹⁹ al-A’raf, 143.

⁷²⁰ Ibn Qayyim, *al-Sawa’iq al-mursalat alal al-jahmiyya wa al-mu’atilah*, ed. Ali ibn Muhammad Dahil Allah, Riyad, Dar al-Alemiyya, 3rd ed., 1998, vol. 1, pp. 217-219.

path of sarcasm for every disbeliever, and each of them relied in one of these taghuts, taking this path and straying from the path of God. God the Exalted with His Power and Glory has destroyed these taghuts through the descendants of His prophets and the inheritors of His messengers. The followers of God and His Prophet continuously offer counterarguments from Revelation and reason. We too reject their words one by one...’’⁷²¹

This much should suffice for the clarification of the view of some salaf scholars on this issue. We incline towards this opinion and accept it because we believe it is true and precise *insha Allah*. Also, we accept the interpretation which is commentary and clarification and not distorting, forging and fabricating. I wish this introduction to be the measure of weighing Shaykh Dalliu’s words, so that during the elaboration and analysis of his opinion on matters of creed we will not need to enter into debates for every issue we deal with, if it does not agree with what was said above. This introduction is crucial for this chapter.

As for Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu’s view on interpretation (*ta’wil*), at times he inclines towards the deviated and changed interpretation, and at times he engages in interpretation in the sense of commentary (*tafsir*) and clarification. He interprets some verses in which there is seemingly something of the attributes of creatures, but he clears

⁷²¹ Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 632-633.

God the Exalted from similarity with created beings, and seeks for a meaning which is compatible with the Qur'an and with God's majesty. We shall start with some concrete examples.

A. The commentary of the qualities of shame, hand, and face:

(تأويل صفة الحياء واليد والوجه)

1) In the case of "shame" the interpretation is in the meaning of *tafsir* and clarification.

In his commentary of the verse:

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا) [البقرة: 26]

*Verily, God is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller) than it*⁷²².

He says that God does not hesitate, does not feel unease to set forth any parable⁷²³ which is the meaning we must deduce from this verse, and not something which resembles human qualities, as we said in the commentary of the verse *al-Rahman al-Rahim*) (الرحمن الرحيم). Here we must not understand the shame we all know, which manifests itself with the reddening or yellowing of

⁷²² al-Baqarah, 26.

⁷²³ The same has been stated by Ibn Kathir in his commentary of this verse, vol. 1, p. 64 of his *Tafsir*, as quoted by al-Mighrawi, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 190.

one's face, which is a human quality.⁷²⁴ Thus, it is clearly understood from Shaykh Hafiz Dalliū's words that the intention of his interpretation regards the clearing of the Majestic Creator from any imperfection, and this interpretation is preferable, because it is neither negation nor anthropomorphism.

2) The interpretation of the quality of "hand" as power:

(تأويل صفة اليد ب: القدرة والقوة)

He interprets the Attribute of God's "hand" as the Power of God the Glorious in bestowing and sustaining, based on the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ ﴾ [المائدة: 64]

*The Jews say: God's Hand is tied up*⁷²⁵ He argues his interpretation with the rest of the verse, about which Shaykh Hafiz Dalliū says: ***"The rest of the verse is:***

﴿ بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ ﴾ [المائدة: 64]

*Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched. He spends (of His Bounty) as He wills.*⁷²⁶ These are lies and fabrications of the Jews,

⁷²⁴ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 77.

⁷²⁵ al-Ma'idah, 64.

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

and God's Power to bestow is vast, He sustains and spends as He wishes."⁷²⁷

Although this interpretation by Shaykh Hafiz Dalliū may seem intelligible and plausible, it is unacceptable as it does not agree with other clear verses which confirm both hands of God the Magnificent, such as:

﴿ قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِإَيْدِي ۖ أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ ﴾ [ص: 65]

(God) said: "O Iblis! What prevents you from prostrating yourself to one whom I have created with both My hands. Are you too proud or are you one of the high exalted?"⁷²⁸

﴿ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ ﴾ [الفتح: 10]

*The Hand of God is over their hands.*⁷²⁹

﴿ بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ ﴾ [المائدة: 64]

*Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched.*⁷³⁰

How that interpretation can be compatible with the last verse, can one say: "Two widely outstretched?!" What obstacle is there in Arabic for the Qur'an to say: "*God's Power is above their*

⁷²⁷ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 2, pp. 1075-1076. If one refers to Baydawi's *Tafsir* for comparison, one will notice that the two interpretations are identical. According to some scholars, Baydawi's *Tafsir* is a summary of Razi's and Zamakhshari's commentaries. See al-Mighrawi, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 95-105.

⁷²⁸ Sad, 75.

⁷²⁹ al-Fat'h, 10.

⁷³⁰ al-Ma'ida, 64.

power?” There is none, neither linguistical nor legal. Why then must we interpret “hand” as “power”?!

3) The interpretation of “face” as “direction”, “God’s being”, or “God’s pleasure”:

تأويل صفة (الوجه)، (ب: الجهة، وب: ذات الله، وب: رضا الله)

The Shaykh also interprets the Attribute of face, which is found in many verses, like:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾ [البقرة: 115]

*And to God belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn there is the Face of God.*⁷³¹

His commentary of this and similar verses is the following:

*“Wherever they may turn there is the face of God, or the side of worshipping and the pleasure of God. God the Glorious is all-embracing and all-knowing, merciful and forgiving. The turning of the one who prays towards the direction of God is impossible, because God the Exalted does not have directions. Here the face of God means the Being of God. Whoever prays concentrates on God’s Being on the physical and psychological level. It may also include God’s pleasure.”*⁷³²

⁷³¹ al-Baqarah, 115.

4) The interpretation of “nearness” as “knowledge”:

(تَأْوِيلُ صِفَةِ : الْقُرْبِ بِ: الْعِلْمِ)

In his commentary of the Qur’anic verse:

﴿ وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ﴾ [البقرة: 186]

*I am indeed near...*⁷³³, he interprets “near” as knowledge, in the sense that God’s knowledge is near His servants. He argues through the words of Baydawi, who thinks the same, and denies that this verse shows that God’s Being is near them, because God has no place and is not in need of place, therefore His nearness is impossible and absurd.⁷³⁴

III – The use of the Qur’anic text according to the madhhab for guidance to belief in God the Exalted

توظيف النص وفق المذهب للاستدلال العقلي للاهتداء إلى الإيمان بالله

Here we intend to clarify Shaykh Dalliu’s method and his orientation in commentary as it is evident that he uses the Qur’anic text to support his creed and his madhhab.

In his commentary of the verse:

⁷³² *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 183-4.

⁷³³ al-Baqarah, 186.

⁷³⁴ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 272. On the history of commentary, interpretation, and other issues related to exegesis see: Salim Ibrahim ibn Hasan, *Qadiyyat al-ta’wil fi al-Qur’an al-karim bayn al-ghulat wa al-mu’tedilin*; Beirut, Dar Qutayba, 1st ed., 1993.

﴿ الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ ﴾ [البقرة: 27]

*Those who break God's Covenant after ratifying it,*⁷³⁵ he says:

“Here God's covenant is the pact which is established between God and them, and this covenant is the intellect,⁷³⁶ which He gave them to recognize God the Exalted, to prove His existence and confirm the message of Muhammad a.s., because when God created the light of thought and gnosis in the human intellect, this was a kind of covenant that they will believe in Him, accepting His Unity, and believing in the message of the Prophet a.s. The intellect suffices to understand and confirm the arguments of monotheism and prophethood.”⁷³⁷

Shaykh Hafiz Dalliu repeats the same idea in his commentary of the verse:

﴿ فَاِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى ﴾ [البقرة : 38]

*whenever there comes to you Guidance from Me,*⁷³⁸ in which he says:

“The categorical formulation of the verse regarding the sending of the messengers seems to be saying: *“If there comes a prophet*

⁷³⁵ al-Baqarah, 27.

⁷³⁶ Imam Nasafi points out the opinion of several commentators on the meaning of this verse, one of which is the meaning presented by Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu. See the *Tafsir* of Nasafi, vol. 1, p. 78.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 78.

⁷³⁸ al-Baqarah, 38.

unto you, well and fine, otherwise it is not an obligation for Me to send a prophet unto you. If there comes a messenger, this is a favor from God for His servants, and if not, you have the intellect which offers proofs for belief in God dhe His Unity, through your reading of the signs of the universe.”⁷³⁹

This statement has been heavily influenced by the ideas of Imam al-Maturidi. In his commentary of the verse:

﴿ الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ ﴾ [البقرة: 27]

*Those who break God’s Covenant after ratifying it,*⁷⁴⁰ Imam al-Maturidi says that recognition of God means the pledge given to God in two forms: the pledge of the creatures (*a’hdu khilkatin* عهد خلقه) that (their creation-their existence) will testify to the Unity of God the Glorious, as in the Qur’anic verse:

﴿ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴾ [الذاريات: 21]

And in your own selves, will you not see?”⁷⁴¹

The second form concerns the pledge regarding the message (*a’hdu risaletin* عهد رسالة) brought by the prophets and the messengers, as in the verse:

﴿ وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ ﴾ [

المائدة: 12]

⁷³⁹ Ajka e kuptimeve..., vol. 1, p. 98.

⁷⁴⁰ al-Baqarah, 27.

⁷⁴¹ al-Dhariat, 21.

I am with you if you perform prayer and give alms and believe in My Messengers; honour and assist them... ”⁷⁴²

﴿ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ ﴾ [آل عمران: 187]

(And remember) when God took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it... ”⁷⁴³

Thus, according to the Maturidis, the recognition of God, despite its being evident and deductive, has been ingrained in the soul before thought.⁷⁴⁴ Belief in God is an instinct which God has placed into existence, which testifies to His Being and feels this truth.⁷⁴⁵

As for the obligatory knowledge of God and the paths leading to it, this has been dealt with by many *mutakallimun*, both in the past and present. The different strands that have appeared in the Islamic world regarding this issue have been summarized in a recent thesis by a scholar who points out that there existed a group who claimed that the knowledge of God is *deducivistidlali*; according to another group, knowing God is *obligatory-*

⁷⁴² al-Ma'ida, 12.

⁷⁴³ al Samarkandi al Maturidi, Abu Mansur Muhammed ibn Muhammed, *Ta'wilat al Qur'an*, Edited by: Ahmad Wanli Oglu & prof. Bekr Topal Oglu, Al Mizan Printing House, Itanbul, 2005, vol, 1, pg:66. Also refer to: Bil-Qasim al-Ghali, *Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, Hayatuh wa ara'uh al-aqadiyya*, p. 98, quoting from Abu Mansur al-Maturidi's *Ta'wilat al-Sunnah*, vol. 1, p. 80.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98-99.

daruri while according to others it comes from *inspirations-il'hami*, and still others say that it comes from the Imam, as the followers of the deviated Isma'ili al Batini sect believe.

In addition to these strands, there are also the following orientations:

1) The oldest school of this strand is the rationalist – *al aqli*, Mu'tazilite school, according to which God is known through reason, studying, analyzing, and logic, i.e. rationally (*bi al-nadhari*). This kind of thinking which seeks to arrive at the reality of things, must be the first obligation, as the Mu'tazilite Imam al-Qadi Abd al-Jabbar says in reply to the question as to what is man's first obligation: "The analysis or scrutiny of the scientific proofs and the proofs from the created order which lead to the knowledge of God the Exalted". One of their imams exaggerates so much as to say that whoever does not know God through proofs is an unbeliever, because the opposite of knowledge is ignorance and ignorance is disbelief (kufr)! This extremism is no doubt a straying from the straight path.

2) The traditional school, i.e. the school of the pious ancestors r.a, because, according to them, the knowledge of God belongs to the unseen and it cannot be perceived by the intellect, and therefore one must rely on what has been related by the Companions from the Prophet a.s.

⁷⁴⁵ Sayyid Qutb, *Fi dhilal al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, p. 668.

3) The synthesis between the traditional and the rational schools. This is the way of the Ash‘arites, for whom knowledge of God is established through the Shari‘ah, through reasoning, and intellection. It is the Shari‘ah which orders intellection and meditation through the Qur’anic texts, the Sunnah, and consensus (*ijma’*). The Qur’an praises the role of the intellect in discerning truth from falsehood. This school is seen in the words of the great Ash‘arite Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali r.a., who elates the intellect and appreciates it highly. He says that the *intellect* and *revelation* are complementary: the Shari‘ah is the outer intellect, and the intellect is the inner Shari‘ah. Intellect is like the foundation, whereas Revelation is the building; the foundation without a building is useless, and no building can stand without a foundation.⁷⁴⁶

4) The intuitive or deductive (*al ittijah al fitri/al istidlali*) school of Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, which is based on the spirit and intuition. It can be clarified in accordance with the following points:

⁷⁴⁶ al-Ghali, op. cit. pp. 90-94; Hoxha Hajredin, *Takumulul al-wahy wa al-aql wa al-hawass fi islamiyat al-ma’rifah* (unpublished work, written under the mentorship of prof. Ibrahim Rajab, International Islamic University of Malaysia, 1998. Some Islamic philosophers like al-Kindi and Ibn Rushd try to establish the harmony between revelation and reason, but we believe that they failed. See: Ibn Rushd, *Kitab fasl al-maqal wa taqdir ma bayn al-Shari‘ah wa al-hikmah min al-ittisal*, ed. George Hourani, Leiden: Brill Publishers, 1954; Muhammad Amara, *al-Madi wa al-mithali fi falsafah ibn Rushd*, Cairo: Dar al-Ma’arif, 2nd ed.

The necessity of intellection

Man can know God through the intellect, because He has ordered us to think, meditate and take lessons, as in the following Qur'anic verse:

﴿ قُلْ انظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ﴾ [يونس: 101]

Say: "Behold all that is in the heavens and the earth," ...⁷⁴⁷

﴿ سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴾ [فصلت : 53]

We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that it is the truth...⁷⁴⁸

Although Imam al-Maturidi speaks about the necessity of *intellection* and *ratocination* as well as the great value of the intellect, he also speaks about the necessity of prophethood and revelation, since the intellect alone cannot know the truth because of passions, contentions, and conflicts, which prevent it from reaching the truth. The way of intellection and ratocination is not an easy one, as he explains in his work *al-Tawhid*: "There are reasons why the intellect needs revelation. The first reason is the existence of contention among creatures as to which group is right, and there is no one to judge among them, in order to show them that in which their hearts and words unite. It is well-known that dissent is the source of every destruction and an introduction

⁷⁴⁷ Yunus, 101.

⁷⁴⁸ Fussilat, 53.

of cessation, all and all this; is an evil in the intellect. No one knows this better than the Creator and the Formgiver, hence the need for a prophet from Him. In addition, it is known that the intellect is often seized by foolishness, sadness, and different human problems. Also, different kinds of pain and numerous worries preoccupy the intellect and hinder it from knowing the truth clearly in every aspect. Also, different emotions and pleasures preoccupy the intellect, hence the need for a messenger from God to show them the truth in moments of doubt. God alone is powerful. Praise be to God, I clarified the need of the intellect for prophethood and guidance, as well as its incapacity to grasp everything...!”⁷⁴⁹

As far as the argument of the Maturidis on the necessity of intellection and ratiocination, one of their great imams⁷⁵⁰ argues about the necessity of rational argument through the words of God on the people of the Cave, who said:

﴿وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَن نَّدْعُو مِن دُونِهِ
إِلَٰهًا﴾ [الكهف: 14]

*Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the Earth, never shall we call upon any god other than Him*⁷⁵¹.

⁷⁴⁹ *al-Tawhid*, ed. Fet’h Allah Khulaif, Alexandria, Dar al-jami’ah al-misriyya, 1970, pp. 182-3.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96, quoting from Abu al-Mu’min al-Nasafi, *Bahr al-kalam*, p. 6.

⁷⁵¹ *al-Kahf*, 14.

He also relies on the verse of the prophet Abraham seeking God in the stars, the sun, and the moon, until he found the truth:

﴿ فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا ۖ قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ ﴾ [الأنعام: 76]

*When the night covered him over with darkness he saw a star. He said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "I like not those that set."*⁷⁵²

Precisely at this point the Maturidis join the Mu'tazilites in the glorification of the intellect's role, and in its priority in argumentation. The difference between the Mu'tazilites and the Maturidis is that the Ahl al-sunnah among the Maturidis and Ash'arites believe in the necessity of the existence of the principles of the Shari'ah as an bridge/instrument which comes from God. According to the Mu'tazilites⁷⁵³ this instrument is the intellect and not the Shari'ah revealed by God. According to the Mu'tazilites good and evil are two entities. Deeds are good or evil in themselves: evil and goodness are inherent. The intellect is capable of discerning the evil or goodness of a deed before the Shari'ah says anything about it..⁷⁵⁴

In the chapter on Shariah in his Muwafaqat, Imam Shatibi says: *"As for the mu'tazilite doctrine, they declare the evil or goodness of something based on the intellect, which is the general*

⁷⁵² al-An'am, 76.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁷⁵⁴ Irfan Abd al-Hamid Fattah, *Dirasat fi al-fikr al-arabi al-islami...*, p. 213.

way of discerning good from evil in the world. According to them, the Shari'ah reveals what the intellect says, neither less nor more... ”⁷⁵⁵

Imam al Zamakhsheri, also proves this truth in his commentary, by defending his Mu'tazilism and trying to free himself from the exoterical aspect of these texts:

﴿رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ﴾ [النساء: 165]
*Messengers as bearers of good news as well as of warning in order that mankind should have no plea against God after the Messengers. And God is Ever All-Powerful, All-Wise.*⁷⁵⁶

﴿وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا﴾ [الإسراء: 15]

*And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger.*⁷⁵⁷

Imam al Zamakhshari raises the following question: “How can people have a claim after the prophets have been sent, when the latter are replete with proofs from God, through which gnosis is reached. The prophets themselves reached this gnosis based on intellection of these proofs, and they did not know that they had been chosen as prophets until their analysis of these proofs? We-al Zamakhshari- say: The prophets must pay attention to awaken people from slumber and incorrect vision. Likewise, the proponents of Divine Justice and Unity-scholars among

⁷⁵⁵ *al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 2, p. 357.

⁷⁵⁶ *al-Nisa'*, 165.

⁷⁵⁷ *Isra'*, 15.

Mu'tazilis-, *who have spoken at length about religious matters, clarifying the issues of obligation of learning the Shari'ah, say: the prophets are sent to eliminate the excuses and to perfect the proof (of God over His creatures), so that they will not say: "If Thou did send prophets to awaken us from slumber and warn us about what we must pay attention to..."*⁷⁵⁸

From all of the above, it can be seen that Shaykh Hafiz Dalli points out the role of the intellect as sufficient to achieve knowledge of God's Unity and His existence through the proofs in the created order. This is a Mut'azilite influence on his thought.⁷⁵⁹

In Zamakhshari's view, the role of prophets is the awakening of the intellect from slumber and heedlessness, and in order to pay attention to what it must pay attention!

This idea however is not correct, because many Qur'anic verses clearly show that the Prophet did not know what the Qur'an or true faith was before the Revelation. Also, people did not know about values and high human morals, as the following verse implies:

⁷⁵⁸ *al-Kashshaf*, vol. 1, p. 389

⁷⁵⁹ On Maturidi creed see: Nur al-Din al-Sabuni's (d. 580 AH) *al-Bidayah fi usul al-din*, with critical comments on the margins by Bekir Topaloglu, Ankara, Islamic Community of Turkey, 5th ed., 1995, pp. 16-31; Nureddin Es-Sabuni, "*Maturidiyye akaidi*"; - Arastirma ve notlar ilavesiyle tercume edem prof. dr. Bekir Topaloglu, Marmara Universitesi, Ilahiyat fakultesi, Kelam Ilmi Öğretim Uyesi, Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi Yayinlari, Ankara, 5. Baski, 1995, 71-74.

﴿ وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا وَإِنَّكَ لَمَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾ [الشورى: 52-53]

*And thus We have sent to you Ruh of Our Command. You knew not what is the Book, nor what is Faith. But We have made it a light wherewith We guide whosoever of Our slaves We will. And verily, you are indeed guiding to the Straight Path. The Path of God to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. Verily, all matters at the end go to God.*⁷⁶⁰

﴿ وَإِن تُطِعْ أَكْثَرَ مَن فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴾ [الأنعام: 116]

*And if you obey most of those on the earth, they will mislead you far away from God's Path. They follow nothing but conjectures, and they do nothing but lie.*⁷⁶¹

﴿ وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِن سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴾ [النحل: 58 - 59]

And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief! He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he has been informed. Shall he keep her

⁷⁶⁰ al-Shura, 52-53.

⁷⁶¹ al-An'am, 116.

*with dishonour or bury her in the earth? Certainly, evil is their decision.*⁷⁶²

There are many verses on this issue, but there is no space here for all of them.

Left to itself, the intellect will be lost amidst the deviated and destructive thoughts and currents, which will eventually lead only to perdition, loss, and destruction. In order for the intellect not to stray in the dark corners of heedlessness and forgetfulness, God the Glorious promises that He will continuously send messengers as guides, after which the intellect may believe or disbelieve, as there is no reason left for misguidance. If the intellect is offered all kinds of pleasures and amusement of this world, it will certainly like them all, considering none of them as evil, such as prostitution, theft, robbery, murder, etc. So, intellect alone is not a correct measure which is protected against obstacles in discerning the truth from falsehood, good from evil. If there is a disagreement between the rational and the traditional, the latter is preferred over the former, and not vice versa, as pointed out by the analysts.

Without support from Divine inspiration, the light of the intellect is weak and pale, and the case of the philosophers and the rationalists, who have strayed through history, is not far from us!

⁷⁶² al-Nahl, 58-59.

Shaykh Muhammad Nasib Rifa'i mentions some beautiful words at the margins of the summary of Tafsir Ibn Kathir on the following verse:

﴿ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا ﴾ [الإسراء: 15]

And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger. He says: “Until we have sent a Messenger (*rasul*), and He did not say: (Until We sent a prophet - *Nabi*), because a messenger (*rasul*) may not be a prophet (*nabi*)- however it could be something else.” If they receive a book, it clarifies matters for them and this is their messenger; or if they hear the radio on Islam and faith, this too is their messenger. So, you are a messenger, the Qur'an is a messenger, the voice of the radio is a messenger in the sense of conveying a message. The Shaykh expands on the meaning of the word *rasul*, which is mentioned in the verse above. He also believes that intellect in itself cannot reach knowledge independently, without a book, a radio, or something similar. In his commentary of this verse Ibn Kathir says that God does not punish anyone before there coming unto them a proof through a messenger, because God is just.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶³ *Taysir al-ali al-qadir li ikhtisar tafsir Ibn Kathir* (Maktaba al-Ma'arif, Riyad, 1989, vol. 3, p. 16.)

IV – His view on seeing God in the Day of Resurrection, on the great sinner, and the increase in faith:

موقفه من مسألة رؤية الله تعالى يوم القيامة، مرتكب الكبيرة ومسألة زيادة الإيمان

* Seeing God the Glorious: رؤية الله تعالى يوم القيامة

Shaykh Hafiz Dalliu elaborates on another issue in tafsir, which is confirmed by the Ahl al-Sunnah and denied by the Mu'tazilah. In his commentary of the verse:

(لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ) [الأنعام : 103]

*No vision can grasp Him, but He grasps all vision. He is al-Latif, Well-Acquainted with all things*⁷⁶⁴, he deals with this issue which has been debated upon by the Ahl al-Sunnah and the Mu'tazilah, by analysing he arguments of both groups in a summarized way, and then rejects the opinion of the Mu'tazilah that God cannot be seen, inclining towards the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah which believes that such a thing is possible.⁷⁶⁵

According to the school of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, and a great Maturidi scholar, Imam Nur al-Din al-Sabuni al-

⁷⁶⁴ al-An'am, 103.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 2, pp. 1259-1260. See also the discussion of the great sins from a Mu'tazilite and Kharijite point of view, in which he criticizes convincingly both views, based on the verse: *God does not forgive that a partner be associated to Him, and He forgives every other sin...*; vol. 2, pp. 794-795, 1044-1045.

Maturidi, “The followers of the truth say that seeing God the Magnificent with one’s eyes in the Day of Resurrection is possible with the mind and obligatory with hearing. Contrary to them, the Mu’tazilites, the Najaris, the Kharijites, the Zaydis, and Rafidis think differently. The followers of the truth use as a proof the question Moses to God, mentioned in the verse:

﴿ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ ﴾ [الأعراف : 143]

*O my Lord! Show me (Thyself), that I may look upon Thee.*⁷⁶⁶

Also, in other verses it is said:

﴿ وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاصِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ ﴾ [القيامة : 22-23]

*Some faces that Day shall be radiant. Looking at their Lord.*⁷⁶⁷

﴿ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ ﴾ [الكهف : 110]

*So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord.*⁷⁶⁸

﴿ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ ﴾ [يونس : 26]

*For those who have done good is the best and even more.*⁷⁶⁹

Based on a narration from the Prophet a.s., most of the commentators believe that the meaning: *even more*; means seeing

⁷⁶⁶ al-A’raf, 143.

⁷⁶⁷ al-Qiyama, 22-23.

⁷⁶⁸ al-Kahf, 110.

God. Many traditions have been related on this issue, such as: “*You shall indeed see God just as you see the full moon and you are not harmed in seeing it!*” which has been transmitted by twenty one Companions and great scholars r.a., and it cannot be denied.”⁷⁷⁰

This is the truth on the question of seeing God from both the rational and Sharia aspect. God the Glorious will be seen on the Day of Resurrection by the people of Paradise, but not in the same way as they see each other in this life. If the intellect is pure, it does not refuse such a thing,⁷⁷¹ since it cannot be imagined that the believers be deprived from the pleasure of seeing God the Exalted in the Day of Resurrection.

We are deprived of seeing Him in this world, because Moses asked God to see Him, but He did not fulfill his wish, and we too accept this Divine decree and we are patient in hope that we shall meet and see God in the eternal life of the Hereafter, otherwise there would be no difference among us and the disbelievers, on whom God says:

﴿ كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَّحْجُوبُونَ ﴾ [المطففين: 15]

⁷⁶⁹ Yunus, 26.

⁷⁷⁰ al-Sabuni, *al-Bidayah fi usul al-din*, pp. 34-41.

⁷⁷¹ al-Akhisari Hasan Kafi (al-Bosnawi), *Rawdat al-jannat fi usul al-i'tiqad*, ed. Fikret Karcic, Ibrahim Muhammad Zayn, International Islamic University, Malaysia, 2002, p. 38.

*Nay! Surely they will be veiled from seeing their Lord that Day.*⁷⁷²

From the Shari'ite view, there are many verses and traditions which prove and confirm the seeing of God by the believers on the day of Resurrection *insha Allah*.⁷⁷³

The great sinner: صاحب الكبيرة

The defense of the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah and Jama'ah by Shaykh Dalliu can be clearly seen in many other questions of faith, which we cannot elaborate in details here, and we shall content ourselves with only a few of them:

In the commentary of the verse:

﴿ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴾ [البقرة:5]

*...they are the successful.*⁷⁷⁴ In a summarized way, he says that Muslim sinners will be brought out of the Hellfire after they receive their deserved punishment and this is contrary to the Mu'tazilite view,⁷⁷⁵ because according to them the great sinner will be in an intermediate position, having left belief but entered disbelief. So he is neither a believer nor a disbeliever, and if he dies without repenting, he will be in Hellfire forever.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷² al-Mutaffifin, 15.

⁷⁷³ Abu Ja'far al-Tah-hawi, *Sharh al-aqida al tahawiyya*, Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islam, 4th ed., 1991, p. 203.

⁷⁷⁴ al-Baqarah, 5.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 42.

⁷⁷⁶ al-Sabuni, op. cit., p. 80; Nasafi, *Sharh al-aqidah al-tah-hawiyya*, pp. 365-367, 416-417.

Shaykh Hafiz Dalli deals with questions of kalam and creed according to Ash‘arites,⁷⁷⁷ Maturidis⁷⁷⁸, Traditionalists (*al Muhad-dithine*), Mu‘tezilites, ad Kharijites, such as the increase of faith, whether forbidden earnings are part of sustenance or not, etc. This support of the view of Ahl al-sunna can be seen in the commentary of the verse:

﴿ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ ﴾ [البقرة: 3]

*Who believe in the unseen.*⁷⁷⁹

In dealing with the definition, parts, and conditions of faith (*iman*) according to these doctrines, he points out the question whether belief with the heart (*tasdiq*) sufficient to escape punishment and earn eternal bliss. The Shaykh points out that according to the Ash‘arites this suffices for salvation,⁷⁸⁰ whereas Hanafis deem it

⁷⁷⁷ We have written two papers (*still unpublished -1999 – International Islamic University Malaysia*) on Imam Abu Hasan al-Ash‘ari, a study on his *al-Ibanah an usul al-diyanti*, and the treatise *Istihhsan al-khawd fi ‘ilm al-kalam*, under the supervision of Prof. Irfan Abd al-Hamid Fattah.

⁷⁷⁸ Some creedal issues according to al Maturidis and al Ash‘aris have been elaborated also by some Albaninan contemporary scholars, see: Vehbi Sulejman Al-Gavoqi, “*Mesail fi ilmit-teuhijd*”; edit. 1, 1991, p. 19-32, 43-74.

⁷⁷⁹ Al-Baqarah, 3.

⁷⁸⁰ This is probably the view of the followers of al-Ash‘ari like al-Baqil-lani, who writes in his *Bab al-qawl fi ma’na al-iman*: “If someone says: Inform us what do you mean by faith, tell them ‘We mean the belief in God the Exalted. Knowledge and faith are in the heart.’ If they ask: “What is your proof?”, tell them: “All linguists are unanimous that etymologically *iman* means faith even before the revelation of the Qur’an and the sending of the Prophet, and there is no other *iman* in Arabic, as the following verse proves: *...but you will never believe us even when we speak the truth* (Yusuf, 17). Likewise the expression, “so and so believes in intercession” or “so and so

insufficient, as there must be a testimony by the tongue after belief with the heart, except in situations of fear from an enemy.⁷⁸¹ Shaykh Dalliu continues: “*This is the preferred view on this issue, because God reproaches those who know the truth, but do not testify to it with words.*” He does not mention the verse he alludes to, which is probably the following *ayah*:

﴿ يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ تُمْ يُنْكِرُونَهَا ﴾ [النحل : 83]

does not believe in the punishment in the grave” (*Tamhid al-awa'il wa talkhis al-dala'il*, ed. Imamuddin Ibn Haydar, Beirut, Muassasah-thaqaf, 1st ed., 1987, p. 389. Al Imam Al-Ash'ari does not mention this in his summary of the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah in *al-Ibanah 'an usul al-diyana*, Matba'ah Dar al-Ansar, pp. 20-23. However, some Maturidi dignitaries such as al-Sabuni, say: “*Our fellow scholars say that faith is belief in the heart and the testimony is a condition for the application of the rules in this world.*” Imam Abu Hanifa says the same in his *al-Alim wa al-muta'alim*, and this is the choice of Imam al Maturidi and Husayn ibn al Fadl al-Bajali, and the most correct of the two narrations of Imam al-Ash'ari, *al-Bidaya fi usul al-din*, pp. 87-88. What Shaykh Dalliu quotes is from the later Ash'arites, who believed that faith is belief, which suffices to make one a believer and save him from chastisement on the Day of Resurrection. This is one of the two narrations. However, there is another opinion related by al-Ash'ari, which is considered the more precise of the two, namely that belief does not suffice; one must have belief in the heart and witness by the tongue in order to have responsibility in this world. We incline toward the second opinion, because through words, confession; doubts, accusations, and suppositions about the silent believer are removed.

⁷⁸¹ The rules of this world, such as ritual bath, burial, the funeral prayer, and inheritance are some of the principles which depend from the declaration of the two testimonies or belief with words, otherwise one believe in God in the Hereafter, and a disbeliever in the herebelow, because according to the Bosnian scholar of the seventeenth century Shaykh Hasan Kafi al-Akhisari, in his book *Rawdat al-jannaat fi usul al-i'tiqad*, p. 30, “*Testimony is a sign and condition to apply Islamic norms on him*”.

*They recognise the Grace of God, yet they deny it.*⁷⁸² And only God knows the truth!⁷⁸³

V – His view on the clear verses and unclear verses

(موقفه من المحكم والمتشابه)

The purpose of this discussion

Shaykh Hafiz Dalli has not abandoned the method of *Ahl al-Sunah and the Jama'ah* in the matter of clear and unclear verses. I will not enter this discussion, which has been dealt with by scholars. Here I wish to consider the origin of this matter, which has been debated extensively, as well as to find out whether it is possible that the deeply rooted in knowledge (*al-rasikhun fi'l-'ilm*) (الراسخون في العلم) know the truth and exact meaning of unclear verses. Why do they differ on this? The main cause is the permissibility or lack thereof of pausing during the reading of the verse:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿﴾

[آل عمران: 7]

⁷⁸² al-Nahl, 83.

⁷⁸³ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, pp. 33-36, 38.

*“ He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:" and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding. ”*⁷⁸⁴

In his commentary of this verse Shaykh Hafiz Dalliū quotes Fakhr al-Din Razi, who says that the school of salaf permit the pause in the verse *none knows its hidden meanings save God* and starting with: *And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it."* Imam Razi clarifies that the school of the Khalaf (*late generations*) accept the pause at ‘knowledge’: *none knows its hidden meanings save God and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. They say: "We believe in it; the whole of it are from our Lord."*⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸⁴ Al-i Imran, 7.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1. See Imam Shatibi’s *al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 3, pp. 79-92, where the issue of clear verses and unclear verses is discussed. See also al-Qardawi, *Kayfa nata’ amal ma’ al-Qur’an al-adhim*, pp. 270-283. What I believe to be correct in this matter is that we should not incline towards unusual readings of this verse. Some say that the pause at: *none knows its hidden meanings save God*; is more correct and preferred in reading. This cannot be overruled by the exception and the possibility of deeply rooted scholars knowing

However, Shaykh Hafiz Dalliu does not enter into further details, and it would have been perhaps been better if he did so, as with the other issues he elaborated upon.

Imam Shatibi says in his *al-Muwafaqat* that there are two opinions of commentators on the verse 3:7, and that this is a matter of *ijtihad*, but the truth is with the salaf's view.⁷⁸⁶

These are some of the major creedal issues that Shaykh Hafiz Dalliu has mentioned in his exegesis, that we discussed, criticized, clarified and analysed in his commentary, pointing out their truth.⁷⁸⁷

meaning of the unclear verses of the Qur'an, from what God has taught us with His mercy. This is the opinion of the majority of scholars. Secondly, the main rule in the issue of reading with pause at the beginning is the narration (*riwayah*) (الرواية) and the transmission of the well-known readers and trusted huf-faz, who have transmitted this miraculous Book with utmost precision without adding or omitting anything with a chain of the well-known readers (*al-ijazah bi al-sanad al-muttasil* الإجازة بالسند المتصل going back to the Prophet Muhammed (*peace and blessing of Allah be upon him*)). The weak and modest slave (*the author of this book, Dr.Hafiz.Hajredin Hoxha*) writing these lines reads the verse in this way, with the permission of his Shaykh with *al Ijazah*, the illustrious reader of al Madina al Munawarah, my lecturer and a founding member of the Faculty of al Qur'an and Islamic Studies-Islamic University in al Madina al Munawarah, al Shaikh, al Hafiz Mahmud Abd al-Khaliq Jadu r.a., with the Hafs *riwayah* from Asim ibn Ebi Nujud r.a. through the transmission of al Imam Shatibi. The reading of the Qur'an is based on oral transmission from the Hafiz and his *riwayah*, face to face reading.

⁷⁸⁶ Vol. 3, p. 91.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 7-14. See: al-Zarkashi, *al-Burhan fi ulum al-Qur'an*; ed. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim, Beirut, Darul-Ma'rife, 1391 AH, vol. 1, pp. 347-8.

VI – Some observations on Shaykh Hafiz Dalli's Commentary

a) Positive aspects:

* His distance from the use of reprehensible and trivial vocabulary against others, except his opposition and specific method towards the Bani Israil. He is severe against them and criticizes their inhuman behaviour against their prophets throughout history.

* His commentary is very readable in terms of language, method, and clarity.

* In many cases he offers two translations of a verse, in order to clarify the exact literal meanings, using different terms with pure meanings which testifies to his linguistic ability. His words can be understood by everyone, and he makes a synthesis of the originality and rules of Arabic, and the new terminology he uses.

* There is a strong harmony, thematic unity, and inter-relatedness between the meanings of the verses commented upon. As we said he has not dealt with secondary issues, because his main goal was to clarify the direct meaning of the Qur'an, this has increased the value of this commentary, which is marked by objectivity and a correct methodology.

* He was not influenced by the ideas and principles of the reformist rationalist school in commentary, from which he differed substantially and fundamentally.

* From what I have read, it does not seem that the Shaykh has called for rapprochement with other religions, namely Judaism, Christianity or some other faith. On the contrary, I have noticed his great hatred towards the Jews,⁷⁸⁸ due to their distortion of the words of God from their true meanings, their fitna on earth, both in the past and in present. This is an important aspect which characterizes him, and makes him worthy of praise, because they deserved it.

* I have not come across any isolated thought or a borrowed idea from someone else...

* He had a great ability in deducing legal rulings. I especially liked his well-organized presentation on the necessity of consultation (*shura*), and the principle of jurisprudence that one must accept personal loss to avoid general harm, as in the verse:

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ﴾ [البقرة: 30]

⁷⁸⁸ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 150, 191, 202, 203; Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Islam and other faiths*, ed. Ataullah Siddiqi, The International Institute of Islamic Thought, Markfield, pp. 72-91, 161-194.

And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place a vicegerent on earth." ⁷⁸⁹ I have never heard such words before by anyone else.⁷⁹⁰

* His correct understanding of Arabic as well as his knowledge of the use of its terms. I like the precise meanings he gives to the verses, and I have no objections in this aspect. I believe this is the main reason which encouraged him to write a commentary of the Qur'an.

b) Negative aspects:

* The Shaykh neglected an important aspect in his commentary, namely the lack of references for his quotations, to the extent of even not mentioning the titles, especially of works in exegesis. His commentary also lacks the numbering of the verses.

* The Shaykh also neglected providing the sources of the narrations he used, and he did not assess the traditions from the Prophet and the sayings of his Companions, which leaves the reader confused as to whether he accepts them or not...

* There are typos and also repetitions of some meanings for the same verse.

⁷⁸⁹ al-Baqarah, 30.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ajka e kuptimeve*, vol. 1, p. 86-88.

* It is hard to determine where do the quotations start and where do they end, since there are no quotation marks, which makes it difficult for the general reader to discern the author's words from the quoted texts, except in one place where he uses quotation marks.⁷⁹¹

c) General thematic considerations:

* In many instances, the Shaykh merely translates from Arabic into Albanian, relating the words of well-known commentators, as if his role was only to translate and relate. A commentary needs additional proofs and facts, which are in fact present to a certain extent in his work, because Shaykh Dalliu often specifies that he is a "*translator*" or "*this idea is a translation*" or "*I start with the commentary of the Sura*" and "*when we translate the Sura*".⁷⁹²

I believe he should have started with the words: "I begin with the commentary" or "with its explanation", or "the following are some ideas and thoughts from the meanings of this Sura", or "this is what the destitute slave has understood from the words of the exegetes on this verse", etc. However, I want to emphasize

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 1088-1089.

⁷⁹² See: vol. 1, pp. 94, 198, 262, 377, 560 and vol. 2, p. 1156.

that his personality as an exegete comes out clearly in many places of his commentary (may God have mercy on him!).

d) General assessment of the commentator and his commentary:

I wish to construct this section in the form of question and answer.

I ask: “Did this exegete fulfill the necessary conditions to write a commentary of the Qur’an mentioned by the scholars?” From what I have seen in his commentary, he is an outstanding knower of Arabic, which is a pre-requisite for any exegete. He has mastered the etymology of words, as well as syntax and morphology. His precise knowledge of Arabic and Albanian enabled him to offer precise translations of the terms he commented upon. His Arabic is marked by an elegant style and advanced level, and he is worthy of praise.

He also possessed other conditions that a commentator must have, such as the knowledge of *Meccan* and *Medinan* (المكي والمدني) verses, the knowledge of the causes of revelation *asbab al-nuzul* (أسباب النزول) , the knowledge of general and specific verses *al-a'm wa al-khas*, (العام و الخاص) the absolute and limited verses *al-mutlaq wa al-muqayad-* (المطلق و المقيد), the ambiguous *al-mujmal*, (المجمال) and clear *al-mufassar* (المفسر), the knowledge

of the methods and speech of the pre-Islamic Arabs, Islamic ethics, objectivity and lack of fanaticism.

As for the discussions of legal, theological, and ijihad issues, Shayh Dalliu did not deal with them in his commentary, because Albanian thought was not interested in such matters.

As for the personality of the author in exegesis, I can say that he was a precise exegete and conveyer of the thoughts of the great classical and contemporary commentators. He selected their ideas and conveyed them precisely, and he also chose their preferred opinions on different issues. This does not mean that he had no personal opinion, because he has chosen from numerous opinions, which is not an easy task. Whoever chooses the best opinion must have knowledge and strong arguments, and he must not act according to conjecture. This has been the norm since ancient times. Whoever brought something new, based his opinion on the efforts and principles of earlier scholars. Shaykh Hafiz Dalliu conveyed and translated the ideas of scholars and based on them formed his own opinions.

With regards to the nature of Shaykh Hafiz Dalliu's commentary, we can say that it belongs to the group of the rational and traditional exegesis (التفسير بالرأي الجائز وبالمأثور) (*al-tafsir bi al-ra'y al-jaiz wa bil ma'thur*), because he synthesized between rational exegesis which is based on permissible exegesis and authentic science, as well as the traditional narrations from

the hadith and the sayings of the Companions and their Followers. His recourse to rationalism is greater than his relying on traditionism, and this is clearly seen throughout his commentary. The narrations are not traced back to their sources, and it is surprising that the Shaykh did not mention anything about his method in exegesis?

To the question whether there are traces or deviated currents in his commentary, such as the Sufi, symbolical, atheistic, philosophical, apologetical strands ... etc., I can say that praise be to God I have not found such deviated and strayed currents in the commentary of Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu. Perhaps he has read the saying of al Imam al Ghazali; *“I experienced the methods of the apologetics and the philosophical ways, and I did not find them able to cure the sick or guide the perplexed, and I saw that the best way is that of the Qur’an.”*

Also, I did not notice any doctrinal or ideological fanaticism in him whatsoever; he stayed aloof from all qualities which weaken one’s humanistic and Muslim character. The Maturidi school which is noticeable in his commentary is a Sunni doctrine which is based on the method and teachings of Imam al Maturidi. In legal matters, he belonged to the Hanafi school which is dominant in the Balkans.

What sets this tafsir apart from other commentaries by Albanian exegetes is the fact that it is the first methodological

comentary in the early twentieth century, and hence it enjoys a greatly honoured position among Albanian Muslims.

This commentary is easy to digest and pleasant to read, it is attractive for every reader. The exegete has combined his originality, the traditional, and the modern approach in his analysis of the topics. Another characteristic of this commentary is that it does not contain unnecessary words which are not directly related with the topics.

May God have mercy upon the honourable Shaykh and exegete Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, with His great mercy! May He make us his peers, and may He include us with him in the blessed gardens! Amin!

Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!

Conclusion and the results of the study

Praise be to God, who guided us into this, because we would have not been guided, if it was not for His grace! I bear witness that our master and prophet Muhammad is His slave, His beloved, His chosen one from among the creatures, and His Messenger. May God's blessings be upon him and his Family, his pure Companions and their Followers until the Day of Judgement! Praise be to God for having enabled me to complete

this thesis! From this study I reached the following important conclusions.

The history of Albanian Muslims is a distorted and fabricated. The dark, hidden hand of communism helped in the compilation of its texts. The primary goal of this communist historiography was fighting and distorting Islam and the Muslims. This study revealed the opposite of what has been stated in these sources. It was a great blessing from God for Albanians to accept Islam, because it saved them from the abyss of disbelief, idolatry, atheism, destruction, assimilation and extinction into the light of faith, vigilance, guidance and stability. The other important issue is the peaceful spread of Islam in this area, and not through violence or “the sword”, as the official Albanian historiography has claimed for so long. People embraced the new faith voluntarily, and this calls for an objective rewriting of the interaction of Islam with Albanian history.

This study revealed the hatred and great Western-European colonialist intrigues against Islam and Muslims in this difficult period of modern history. These powers used all their strength to destroy the Ottoman caliphate. With the decline of the Ottoman state, many economical, political, and geographical interests of Muslims in general and Albanians in particular were lost, because their history was closely related with the Ottomans for centuries...

Albanians defended the Ottoman Empire with their bravery, strength, faithfulness, and their ideas. All these qualities of Albanian Muslim leaders were used to the benefit of the Ottoman Empire.

The study pointed out a number of inner and outer factors which caused the decline of the Caliphate. The main factor was the administrative and military reforms in the Tanzimat law, which were plots of the enemies of Islam that served as the first step in the destruction of the Caliphate. The decline of the Ottoman Empire was a great catastrophe for Muslims, especially those living in the Balkans.

The study also revealed the cause of the revolt of Albanians and their allies against the Ottomans through the inciting of nationalist feelings, in reaction to what went on in the neighbouring Slavic countries. Albanians lost their biggest helper and supporter, and their interests began to be threatened by the territorial ambitions of Western countries and Slavic neighbors. This Albanians' revolt played a great role in the shaking and gradual destruction of the Ottoman state, because they declared independence from the Ottoman state as well as the Shaykh al-Islam, declaring war at them.

The study also revealed the reasons for the migration and deportation of Muslims from the Balkans in far away lands. The

ethnic cleansing by the Serbs, who were aided by Russians, was a step towards the uprooting of Islam from the Balkans.

Muslims showed a great interest in religious matters, which can be seen in several phenomena such as their interest in learning the Hifz of the Qur'an and teaching it to their children, their interest in building mosques, in sending their children to study in Islamic countries etc. With the passing of time, their intellectual level rose to the extent that they started analysing some major religious and social issues, such as the emancipation of Albanian Muslim woman, the adoption of the Latin alphabet, etc.

During the study I noticed that the polemics between Albanian intellectuals were at a very high level. We also saw that among Albanian thinkers and clerics who defended religious principles there were those who had categorical views against anti-Islamic ideas, such as: Hafiz Ismet Dibra, Haxhi Vehbi Dibra etc. On the other hand we saw a current which inclined towards modernism, represented by the Albanian politician Mehdi Frashëri etc. From this dialogue and ideological and religious conflict in Albanian society, we see the role and importance of the only Islamic Journal in Albania, **Zani i Naltë**, published from 1923 to 1938 by the High Council of Islamic Matters.

The study revealed the great harms Albanian Muslims suffered after the abolishment of religious principles in Albania,

such as the official declaration of atheism in Albania, the ban of the Islamic veil, the closing of a great number of mosques, the change of civil law regarding marriage, and the replacement of the Shari‘ah with common Western law.

This study confirms the efforts and works of great figures of learning in Albania, and their great resistance against the secular and communist challenges in the first half of the twentieth century. I chose the most typical example of such scholars, the Islamic thinker and reformer Hafiz Ali Korça (may God have mercy upon him!).

In this historical study of the religious, social, and political situation in Albanian territories, I came to learn about the most important ideological and religious currents which have appeared in the writings of Albanian scholars in Qur’anic studies, especially in exegesis, and as a result of this situation both in their lands and in the Arab world, there appeared a reformist social current, whose leader was Hafiz Ali Korça. The study confirmed that he was under the great influence of the ideas of the leading figures of the rationalist reformist school, such as Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, etc. I confirmed his inclination to this strand of thought based on his view on sihr, as related in the hadith from al-Bukhari, which he rejects as disagreeing with reason and revelation. I clarified the baselessness of this claim.

The study also revealed the existence of another doctrinal current in the study of the Qur'an among Albanian scholars, namely the Maturidi School, whose leader was Shaykh Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu. Based on the study of his ideas on issues of creed, I saw that at times he applies the method of interpreting the verses dealing with Divine Qualities and at times he applies the method of the salaf in other matters. In other issues, he was under the influence of the Mu'tezilites, as was the case with some earlier Maturidi Imams, whom he followed in the question of the rational verification of good and evil. We provided examples for this and later clarified the truth about this matter, stating that the most correct view is that of the pious ancestors, including Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Abu Mansur al Maturidi and Ibn Taymiyya (may God have mercy on them all!), who said that these Attributes had to be confirmed as they were revealed without comparison, privation, or personification, because only God knows their true meaning.

I also discovered two other currents:

1) The philosophical, half-atheistic current. The reason for the formation of this current was that Hasan Tahsini was under the influence of the Enlightenment, which started spreading in Europe during the seventeenth century. The main principle of this philosophy was the distancing of reason from revelation, claiming the need for a religion of reason and the abandonment of religious

superstition, as well as deism. I noticed these half-atheistic ideas in his commentary of some verses dealing with natural phenomena. This study rejected that current of thought, showing its effects and its incompatibility with many Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions.

2) The scientific current in exegesis in the modern period which was accepted in scientific circles. I saw that the scholars are divided on this issue, and some of them completely reject the scientific exegesis! The leader of this current among contemporary Albanians is Dr. Ali Fahri Iljazi. I clarified the authenticity of this current in understanding the Book of God, but with the conditions, rules, and principles laid out by the scholars, opting for the moderate opinion on this matter.

The study revealed the high intellectual level of Albanians, their scientific strength in the modern period, their deductive capacity in dealing with the verses of the Qur'an, and the elaboration of various scientific topics. They were not just transmitters and translators from other languages, but they also had their personal opinions, which history has recorded. They interacted with the Qur'anic texts in order to reach the much sought truth. They were knights in these scientific, exegetical, and literary battlefields.

This study confirmed the love of Albanian scholars for the Noble Qur'an, their appreciation and relying therein during the

most difficult periods of their history such as secularism, communism, atheism, dictatorship, imprisonments, torture, etc. They also had great interest in studying, analysing, and learning the Noble Qur'an by heart from their earliest contacts with Islam.

Among other important results is the fact that institutional work for restoring the original form of Islam in the minds and souls of Albanians must increase, because this study pointed out the great hatred towards Islam among Albanian thinkers, due to the still-persisting communist influences and distortions of religious truths, seeking to drive people away from religion. I also recommend the researchers to study and investigate on more such scholars, because they played other numerous roles besides the ones I studied. They wait for the objective researchers to remove the dust from their works, and to speak up about their scientific and patriotic activities.

These were some of the scientific results which I reached during this long study and research which lasted four years. I do not claim to have exhausted the subject of my study, but this was an individual effort within my intellectual limits to give some selected examples from Albanian scholars of the modern period, and clarify their views on some important Qur'anic issues, and their capacities to implement the Qur'anic texts in their intellectual life. This study is the only one of its kind in the Balkans, dealing with the historical, political, intellectual,

religious and exegetical aspect from an Islamic point of view. I spent years to achieve these results and only God knows my fatigue, because the research materials were spread in a large number of works, and the nature of work necessitated the translation and quotation of so many thoughts spread in different sources, which were often hard to find. I also faced tiredness and personal financial expences, because I had no financial help from scientific and university institutions to find the original sources. Apart from God's help, I relied on my personal expenses, and thanks to His help I surpassed all the hardships in this difficult road!

In the end, I pray to God the Almighty that I have offered the Islamic library in Arabic in general and the Albanian, English and Turkish readers in particular a valuable scientific work. If I was right, it is from God, and if I was wrong it is from my self and the devil (far he be from us!).

Just as in the beginning, I thank God the Elevated in the end! May the benedictions of God be forever upon our master and Prophet Muhammad, and his Family and noble Companions!

My last prayer is: **“Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!”**

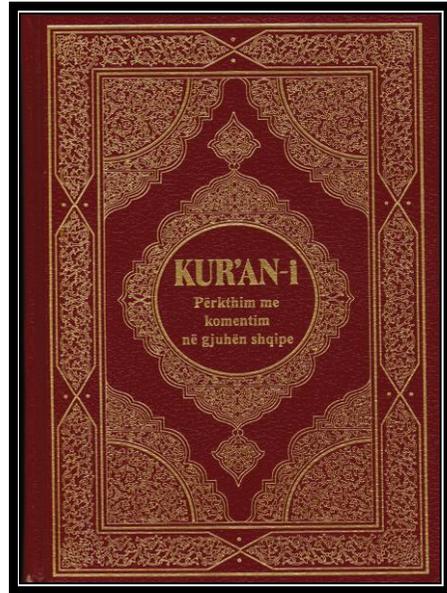
Selangor-Darul Ihsan

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 23 March 2003.

PART FIVE

SOCIAL DOCTRINE IN THE COMMENTARIES OF CONTEMPORARY ALBANIAN SCHOLARS⁷⁹³

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE METHOD OF HAXHI SHERIF AHMETI IN HIS QUR'AN TRANSLATION INTO ALBANIAN WITH COMMENTS



1920-1998

⁷⁹³ This part, originally is a scientific paper which was presented at the International Conference on Qur'anic and Prophetic commentaries at the Faculty of the Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences - International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur – Malaysia, 2006. It is not part of my Ph.D. However, due to its relation and importance to my previous

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THIS CONCISE COMMENTARY

1: Biographical information on the author:

The well-known cleric and thinker Haxhi Sherif Ahmeti was born in 1920 in the village of Gumnasellë (Lipjan municipality) of Kosova. He received his elementary education in the village of Banullë. He studied with the cleric Ahmed Menduhi at the Pirinaz school of Prishtina for ten years. He graduated from the Alaudin Madrasa in 1944, where he was appointed as a teacher in 1965.

In 1970 he became headmaster of the Madrasa, until 1984. In 1985 he was appointed General Mufti of Kosova, a position he held until 1990, when he retired. With the opening of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Prishtina in 1992, he was involved as a

studies and monographies in the field of Exegeses; I decided to attach it in this book for the benefit of readers. (*Dr.H.Hoxha*)

lecturer there. He became well-known due to his continuous presence in scientific meetings and activities.

This respected cleric (may God have mercy on his soul!) did not study in Arab countries and he had no Arab teachers. Nonetheless he succeeded in learning Arabic from his study circles, where he studied with Albanian scholars and clerics. God widened his chest enabling him to gain knowledge from Islamic sciences and Arabic language, and this knowledge enabled him to start the major project of translating the Noble Qur'an into Albanian.

WORKS:

In 1968, Sherif Ahmeti translated the Islamic textbook *Ilmihal*⁷⁹⁴ from Bosnian and became the editor in chief of the *Edukata Islame* (*Islamic education*) journal, in which he also started publishing his own articles. He held this position until 1983. During this time he also translated the Chapter Ya-Sin into Albanian, and in 1987 he submitted the complete translation of the Qur'an with a concise commentary. This translation has been printed in fifteen thousand copies in Libya, thirty thousand copies

⁷⁹⁴ This book lays out a teaching methodology in Islamic ethics, because it contains general Islamic principles. The new generations of children started learning Islam from this book which has become well-known and instrumental for Albanians, Bosnians, and Turks.

in Cairo and later in one million copies in al Madina al Munawarah.

HIS DEATH AND EPITAPHS:

The scholar and commentator Haxhi Sherif Ahmeti (may God have mercy upon his soul!) died in 1998. His funeral was attended by scholars, clerics, and students from all over Kosova and beyond. A great number of people attended his funeral prayers, in the Grand Mosque of Prishtina, including high level delegations from Macedonia, Sandzak, and public schools headmasters. All of them paid tribute to his life and work, expressing their gratitude and appreciation for his scientific activity. The late scholar was known for his religious and national stand against the communist system and the Serbian regime. He was also known for his great role in the defense of the Albanian Islamic identity and Albanian national identity from different plots of the Serbian communist regime.

Many persons have witnessed his persistent stand against the migration of Albanian Muslims to Turkey, which meant leaving their land to the Serbian nationalists.⁷⁹⁵ May God have mercy upon his soul and turn his grave into a garden of Paradise!

⁷⁹⁵ This fact has been conveyed in a book published by his former students, in which they collected some of his works, articles and opinions. He wished that his complete opus be published. We hope his students will eventually do so. This book was published in 1995

2. His Qur'an translation and commentary:

His Qur'an translation and concise commentary has 767 pages of medium format, 13.5 x 21.5. The commentary starts with an introduction in Arabic by the World Islamic League in collaboration with the Academy of the Publication of Mus'hafs. After the *Bismilah*, the following verses are quoted:

﴿كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ﴾، [ص 29]

(This is) a Book which We have sent down to you, full of blessings, that they may ponder over its verses, and that men of understanding may remember (Sa'd, 29);

﴿أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا﴾ [النساء:

[٨٢]

Do they not then consider the Qur'an carefully? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein many a contradiction (al Nisa, 82).

After these two verses the author has quoted the following tradition of the Prophet (God's peace and blessing be upon him!):

(خيركم من تعلم القرآن وعلمه)⁷⁹⁶

under the title *Komente dhe mendime islame*. See the *Dituria islame* and the *Përperjekja jonë* journals, 1995, pp. 199-204.

⁷⁹⁶ Sahih al-Imam al-Bukhari, *al-Jami al-musned al-mukhtasar min umuri-Resulil-lahi wa sunenihi wa ayyamihi*, ed. Muhammad Nazar Tamim and Haytham Nazar Tamim, Shariketun Darul-arqam ibn el-arqan, Beirut, hadith no. 5027, p. 1108.

“The best among you is he who learns the Qur’an and teaches it to the others.”

The League affirms the importance and the pressing need for the translation, commentary, and application of the Noble Qur’an in all the languages of the world, including Albanian.

Absolute perfection belongs only to God the Glorious, and we can say that this translation and its concise commentary have been made in accordance with the possibilities and scientific capabilities of the author. However; exact translation may be, it can never fully grasp the precise meanings and lofty intentions of the Qur’anic text.

3. The method of the commentator:

IMPORTANT INTRODUCTION TO THE NOBLE QUR’AN

The commentator Sherif Ahmeti (may God have mercy upon his soul!) makes clear in the introduction his views on several important issues regarding the Qur’an, pertaining to his method in commentary. These include a number of matters related to the Qur’anic sciences in general. His introduction, *A Glance on the Qur’an* deals with the following questions:

A. THE CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF REVELATION

The commentator writes that the Noble Qur'an is the Word of the Lord of the worlds with which the last Prophet (God's peace and blessings be upon him) was inspired through the Archangel Gabriel. It is written in a *mus'haf* and it is transmitted to us successively; its reading is considered a form of worship. It starts with the Chapter al-Fatiha and ends with the Chapter al-Nas.

Then, the author points out some characteristics of the Noble Qur'an, such as the fact that it is not a product of the human mind, but the Word of the Glorious God revealed in the clear Arabic language. In this context, he mentions the verses:

﴿وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ﴾ [الشورى: 192-196]

And truly, this (the Qur'an) is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds, which the trustworthy Spirit (Gabriel) has brought down upon your heart (O Muhammad) that you may be (one) of the warners. In the plain Arabic language (Shu'ara, 192-196).

﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَتَلْقَى الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ﴾، [النمل: ٦]

And verily, you (O Muhammad) are being taught the Qur'an from One, All-Wise, All-Knowing. (al-Naml, 6)

Then the author criticizes the assumptions of certain orientalist, who claim that Gabriel a.s. brought to the Prophet (God's peace and blessings be with him) only the meaning of the

Qur'an, not the text, and that Muhammad a.s. expressed it in his own words. The author confronts these allegations with the Qur'anic truth as well as sayings of the Prophet, pointing to the fact that had the Qur'an consisted of the words of Gabriel a.s. or of the Prophet a.s., it would be deprived of its miraculous nature, both from the point of view of meaning and form.

God says in the Qur'an:

﴿وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ...﴾ [التوبة: ٦]

And if anyone of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the Word of Allâh. (al Tauba, 6), and this, according to the author, is a proof that the words and meanings of the Qur'an are from God.

The author then turns to the phenomenon of revelation, its definition, kinds, and forms, basing himself on the verse:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكَلِمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بآذُنِهِ
مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾ [الشورى: ٥١]

It is not given to any human being that God should speak to him unless (it be) by Revelation, or from behind a veil, or (that) He sends a Messenger to reveal what He wills by His Leave. Verily, He is Most High, Most Wise. (Shura, 51)

He then continues by mentioning the hardships of the Prophet a.s. during the receiving of the revelation, as well as the manner in which it was revealed to him.

Another issue in his introduction is that of the second source of Islamic legislation, namely the pure Prophetic Sunnah, to which he refers as “*revelation by inspiration*”. The Sunnah too is a revelation from God, as the following verse proves:

﴿وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۖ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ﴾ [النجم: ٣]

“*Nor does he speak of (his own) desire. It is only a Revelation revealed.*” (al-Najm, 3-4).

The Divine sayings (*ahadith qudsi*) are of this standing too, but they do not contain legal injunctions.⁷⁹⁷

B. THE CONTENT OF THE QUR’AN

In speaking about the content of the Noble Qur’an, Sherif Ahmeti says that the Qur’an is an everlasting religious and educational book, as well as a book of guidance and a mercy for both individuals and society. It encourages the spirit of peace among people and stimulates them to spiritual elevation. It is characterized by the universality of its principles and rules, and it seeks social reform.

From the religious point of view, the Noble Qur’an contains the belief in *Monotheism, the pure faith in the One God,*

in His angels, His books, and in the Day of Judgement. From the aspect of knowledge, it invites mankind to the study and pondering on the creatures and beings created by God in the universe, in order to reach their depths which contain proofs of the Glory of God and His power. From the historical point of view, the Noble Qur'an tells the stories of the ancient people, so that men may learn lessons and be inspired by them. When it speaks about the wisdom of previous books and God-given laws, it explains that they were revealed in order to prepare and convince mankind to know God and to accept the final Book which has been revealed for all the times⁷⁹⁸ and places.

C. THE MIRACLE OF THE QUR'AN

The commentator states that the Qur'an is certainly an everlasting and eternal miracle, because it is the Word of God, and since Speech is one of God's Attributes, it must be an eternal one.

Every prophet or messenger had different miracles and their revealed books illustrated their practical method, whereas the miracle of our Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him!) is at the same time a method and a miracle; and in order for his

⁷⁹⁷ See the commentary of Sherif Ahmeti, pp. 12-13.

miracle to fully take place, it must be learned by heart faithfully and truthfully. And God has guaranteed that He shall protect it from fabrication, alteration and human interference.

In this context, the respected commentator deals with two very important issues: the practical application of the Qur'an, and its protection from alteration. One of his deep statements is that with the passage of time its application is weakened and its learning by heart is strengthened. If we applied the Noble Qur'an in our everyday life as it should be applied, its protection would be a most normal thing, but our distance from its guidance and teachings makes us to understand that the Qur'an is under God's control and supervision.

Another strong argument that God Himself protects His Book is the fact that there are Muslims who write the whole Qur'anic text in beautiful small calligraphy, and there is competition between them for the most beautiful and artistic presentation of the Qur'an. This shows that it is God the Almighty who protects His Book, and not those who practice it in their lives.⁷⁹⁹

D. ASPECTS OF THE MIRACULOUS NATURE OF THE QUR'AN

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 13-14

Sherif Ahmeti points out that there are different aspects from various domains which confirm the miraculous nature of the Noble Qur'an, but he focuses in three of them: the linguistic, the scientific, and the psychological aspect.

I – THE LINGUISTIC MIRACLE OF THE QUR'AN

Our commentator points out that the Qur'an was revealed in the language of the Arabs, who had reached the peak of eloquence and rhetoric. Qur'an challenged them in this aspect, but they were unable to compose something similar or even imitate it, and when they were unable to do so, they started declaring that this Qur'an was a kind of magic and that the Prophet was a magician. The commentator replies that had this been true, they would have been spellbound, since the magician hypnotizes the spellbound person, and controls his will and freedom. But the truth of the matter is completely different.

The eloquent Arabs who opposed the Prophet did not believe in him, and they accused him of being a magician who put a spell on them. But how can one who is spellbound oppose the will of the magician and ignore his admonition?!⁸⁰⁰

II – SCIENTIFIC MIRACLE OF THE QUR'AN

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Another miraculous aspect of the Noble Qur'an is that it constitutes a scientific miracle. Numerous researchers have lately discovered many scientific secrets in the Qur'an. From the first moments of its revelation, the Noble Qur'an has mentioned in passing several scientific issues which have been discovered recently, but which were inaccessible to the people of that time, and who could therefore not understand its precise scientific truths.

The Noble Qur'an also alludes to other hidden truths, regardless of the human ability to perceive them, as if it tells us: "When I inform you of something, seek no proof for it, because it is the proof itself." If someone does not believe in these words and prefers to base himself on his senses, God will enable him to see His signs in the created order and in his inner being, until he sees that it is the truth:

﴿سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ﴾ [فصلت: ٥٣]

We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient in regard to your Lord that He is a Witness over all things? (Fussilat, 53)

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

The Noble Qur'an goes beyond the boundaries of time and space, and the reader clearly sees these horizons of time and space during his reading of the Qur'an. The hidden truths of the Qur'an are renovated in every generation, and thanks to the wide scope of its concepts and meanings, it goes hand in hand with time and answers the needs of our lives, which proves its scientific miracle.⁸⁰¹

III – THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MIRACLE OF THE QUR'AN

Ahmeti's comments on this topic are a summary of the fact that God has revealed the Qur'an as a mercy and light for mankind. Certainly, the revelation of the Noble Qur'an was a powerful blow against those spirits who were nourished by idol worship.

The Qur'an invited people to abandon such idol worship which they had inherited from their ancestors, but they still refused. This new Qur'anic call was a great challenge for them and it slowly included them within its grasp.

The spiritual and psychological miracle of the Qur'an influenced their hearts gradually, until they were finally convinced in its truth. Yet they reacted unconsciously saying that

⁸⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 14-16. In two articles, published in his book *Komente dhe mendime islame (Comments and Islamic Thoughts)*, Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës, Prishtinë 1996, 1st ed., pp. 300-306, 307-317, Ahmeti has dealt with the linguistic and objective miracle of the Qur'an.

it was magic, as was the case of the eloquent Arab from the tribe of the Quraish, Walid ibn Mughirah.

D. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE QUR'AN

A – Its being learned by heart:

The commentator says that the Qur'an was revealed to a people who were predominantly illiterate, as the following verse alludes:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ [الجمعة: ٢]

He it is Who sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom. And verily, they had been before in manifest error (al-Jumu'ah, 2).

The Arabs were distinguished from other people by a remarkable memory and ability to learn by heart, and they could memorise hundreds of poems, as well as speeches and names of their transmitters. After the revelation of the Qur'an and their embracing of Islam, they abandoned learning poetry and focused on the memorising of the Qur'an, which they would then teach to others. The learning of the Qur'an by heart is a characteristic of the community of Muhammad a.s. and it is a gift bestowed upon

them by God. He has made the memorising of the Qur'an easy for them:

﴿وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ﴾، [القمر: ١٧]

And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember; then is there any one who will remember? (al-Qamar, 17)

B – The writing down of the Qur'an:

This is the second characteristic of the community of Muhammad (peace be upon him!). A book was revealed to him, and the people around him had no means of writing, and not even paper, except for that which was produced by the Persians and the Romans, and which was insufficient. Therefore they used to write the Qur'an on flat stones, camel skin, and palm leaves, as well as other objects.⁸⁰²

Then the author states that after the passing away of the Prophet, many of the memorizers of the Qur'an were killed at the Battle of Yamamah, during the caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq r.a., Umar ibn al-Khattab r.a. suggested to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq r.a. to gather the Qur'an in parchments or in a *mus'haf*, fearing that

with the death of the *hufadh*, the Qur'an would be lost. At first Abu Bakr r.a. was hesitant, but then he agreed with Umar ibn al-Khattab's suggestion.

As regards the writing and the gathering of the Noble Qur'an at the time of Uthman bin Affan r.a., when the caliphate expanded and Islam spread outside of the Arabic peninsula to Armenia and Azarbaijan, the Companion Hudhayfa ibn al-Yemani r.a. noticed a difference in reading and pronunciation of the Qur'an among non-Arab Muslims, and he urged Uthman with the following words: "Hurry, before this ummah is divided on the Book, just like the Jews and the Christians were divided!" At that, Uthman r.a. gathered the companions and sought their advise on this matter, and after their agreement, he ordered the making of several copies which were to be distributed to different corners of the caliphate. Therefore Abu Bakr's motivation for the compilation of the Qur'anic text was different from that of Uthman bin Affan, since the former feared the loss of the Qur'an, whereas the latter gathered it due to reading differences.⁸⁰³

Ç – THE QUESTION OF COMMENTARY AND TRANSLATION:

⁸⁰² See Sherif Ahmeti's concise commentary, pp. 19-20.

⁸⁰³ Ibid, pp. 21-22.

At the end of his introduction, our commentator deals with the importance of Qur'anic commentaries: "The explication or commentary of that which Allah seeks and desires from creatures through His Word, is best achieved when a part of the Qur'an is explained through another part of the Qur'an (*tafsir al-Qur'an bil-Qur'an*), or by the Prophet himself (*tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Sunnah*), or by the Companions of the Prophet (*tafsir al-Qur'an bi kalam al-sahabah*), as well as explications based on individual opinion and logic (*tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-ra'y al-ja'iz*). The translation of the meanings of the Qur'an is necessary and desirable, because it informs the believers about its lofty instructions. The literal translation of the Qur'an to any language is not permissible, because it is impossible to preserve and convey its artistic style. God forgives the undeliberate mistakes."⁸⁰⁴

D – READING THE VISIBLE BOOK AND THE WRITTEN BOOK:

It is a blessing from God for man to read two books and benefit from them and be guided to his Lord: the first Book is the visible book, (الكتاب المنظور) namely the universe around us, which God created in order for man to ponder, to study and to reflect on its natural phenomena. This book does not speak and has no

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 22.

language, but its words are the creatures, minerals, plants and animals. Those who study this book are those who fear God the most:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ﴾، [فاطر: ٢٨]

It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear God. Verily, God is All-Mighty, Oft-Forgiving (Fatir, 28).

The second, speaking book is this written Book (الكتاب) (المسطور), namely the Noble Qur'an which is with us. Sherif Ahmeti points out the necessity to harmonize both readings, because the Noble Qur'an contains fresh meanings for the generations to come, which is what is meant by the scientific and objective miracle of the Qur'an.

E – HIS INTENDED COMMENTARY FOR THE READERS:

Then the respected commentator continues in clarifying his method in this concise commentary, by painting the translation and the commentary in the colours of faith, ethics, Islamic law and lofty goals.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 743-750.

Edhe unë, i shtyrë nga përshtypjet e domethënieve, të cilat i kuptova aq sa munda duke lexuar Kur'anin, iu përvesha një pune shumë delikate, përkthimit dhe shpjegimit të domethënieve të tij, por i mbështetur në ndihmën e Zotit, e cila nuk mungon nëse qëllimi është i sinqertë dhe i bindur se mëshira e Tij është më e madhe se çfarëdo gabimi në punë.

Dëshiroj që lexuesve të ndershëm në fillim t'ua bëj me dije se ky përkthim nuk mund të konsiderohet si ndonjë përmbledhje, e cila ka përfshirë kuptimin e tij plotësisht dhe as që mund ta parashtrojë qëllimin e tij ashtu si është në origjinal. Kjo nga arsyeja e Kur'anit, fjalës së Zotit, e cila mposhti të gjitha konkurrencat, kur përkthehet në ndonjë gjuhë tjetër, është e pamundur t'i ruhet estetika gjuhësore e kuptimore, sepse përkthimi ia humb të shumtën e rasteve stolinë e mjeshtrisë dhe të bukurisë së trajtës.

Jam përpjekur t'i përmbahem saktësisht origjinalit në gjuhën arabe, si në përkthimin e Kur'anit, ashtu edhe në komentime dhe që të jemë sa më besnik ndaj realitetit. Jam i vetëdijshëm se kam përgjegjësi para Zotit dhe para lexuesve, por dëshiroj që edhe lexuesit e gjuhës shqipe ta kenë pranë vete një përkthim me komentime në gjuhën tonë, mbizotëroi frikën e përgjegjësisë, andaj me qëllim që masës besimtare t'ia ofroj një dritë së paku sa të qirrit për rrugën e tyre të lumtur, bëra një përkthim me një koment të shkurtër, ashtu që lexuesit të mund ta kuptojnë sa më lehtë, sepse njerëzit i ka detyruar kjo jetë e kësaj bote që të përpiqen e të angazhohen ditë e natë për sigurimin e mjeteve për gjallërim e për jetë, duke mos pasur kohë të thellohen në studime të gjera të Kur'anit.

Duke i ikur ndonjë komentimi më të gjërë e më voluminoz, jam përpjekur që pjesën e përkthyer ta përmbledh me përmbajtjen e saj më të rëndësishme në pika të shkurtra, megjithatë një komentim më i gjërë do të ishte i mirëseardhur për shumë lexues, të cilët nuk kanë mundësi të lexojnë komente të gjera në gjuhën arabe. Ekziston shpresa se një punë të tillë do ta bëjë gjenerata e re.

Në fillim të çdo sureje në titull kam shënuar emrin e saj origjinal, mandej numrin rendor dhe rendin e saj sipas shpalljes.

Para fillimit të përkthimit të çdo sureje kam shënuar një përmbledhje rreth përmbajtjes së saj, e në fund të asaj pasqyre arsyetimin e emërimit të saj me atë emër.

Kohë pas kohe, e sipas tematikës së një numri të ajeteve kam shënuar një koment jo aq të gjërë, por sipas burimeve më të besueshme e tradicionale, e posaçërisht kur është fjala për shkakun dhe motivin e shpalljes së ndonjë pjese të Kur'anit (sebehi nuzulë).

Komentin e përshkon më tepër fryma e besimit, po aty këtu ka shënime nga lëmi i sheriatit islam (ligjshmëri islame), nga lëmi i historisë islame, e etikës, por të gjitha këto janë dhënë në pika të shkurtra.

Para fillimit të përkthimit kam dhënë një "Vështrim rreth Kur'anit dhe në fund një "Shënime historik", në mënyrë që lexuesit të njihen deri diku se ç'kanë para vete për të lexuar.

FJALA E PËRKTHYESIT

Me emrin e Allahut, Mëshiruesit të përgjithshëm, Mëshirëbërësit!

Falënderoj Zotin e Madhëruar, i cili robin e vet Muhammedin, birin e Abdullahut e zgjodhi dhe e caktoi të dërguar për mbarë botën dhe për tërë kohën derisa të ekzistojë jeta në planetin tonë, e Kur'anin ia shpalli udhërrëfyes e dritë për njerëzit!

O Zot! Dhuroja mëshirën tënde Muhammedit, familjes së tij të pastër e të ndershme, shokëve të tij as-habëve dhe të gjithë atyre pas, të cilët u përpoqën dhe përpiqen të udhëzojnë njerëzit në rrugën e drejtë, në rrugën e lumturisë e të shpëtimit!

Njeriut, krijesës së pajsur me të menduar, i madhi Zot i ndihmoi ta gjejë rrugën e vërtetë, duke ia lënë në dispozicion dy libra të hapura: gjithësinë, ekzistencën me të gjitha dukuritë dhe fenomenet e saj, e cila edhe pse nuk i flet, ia tërheq vëmendjen për kundrim dhe, për studiuesit në hollësi të krijesave të Zotit, duke filluar prej mineraleve, bimëve, gjallesave e deri te njeriu, Zoti xh. sh. ka thënë se ata dijetarë ia njohin fuqinë dhe mjeshtrërinë e Tij të përsosur, andaj vetëm ata me vetëdije i përlen Allahut (Fatir: 27-28); ndërsa libri i dytë është ai që i flet dhe e udhëzon, pra është fjala e Zotit, është Kur'ani.

Për hollësitë e domethënieve të fjalës së Zotit të shprehur në shpallje, Ai na udhëzoi t'u drejtohem dijetarëve, studiuesve të tyre e na tha: "Nëse nuk dini, pyetni njohësit e shpalljes!" (Nahl: 43).

Duke ditur se shpallja e Zotit, Kur'ani me përmbajtjen e domethënieve është det i mbushur me xhevahirë, dijetarët më të famshëm u zhytën në thellësitë e tij dhe u përpoqën të nxjerrin stoli të çmuara, të nxjerrin ato kuptime të arta, të cilat gjenden në thellësinë e tij, të zbulojnë ato mrekulli të fshehura dhe të përfitojnë njohuri të reja, andaj edhe shkruan e botuan komente (tefsire) shumë të gjera rreth domethënieve të tij. Mirëpo, edhe pas përpjekjeve të tyre, u vërtetua se Kur'ani mbeti me plot dituri e njohuri të pazbuluara, pse kohë pas kohe, e fal të arriturave mendore, ai prezenton aso mrekulli dhe aso kuptime të reja, të cilat përveç që habisin mendjet e njerëzve, ato edhe vërtetojnë se Kur'ani është thesar kuptimesh shumë të çmuara dhe kurrë të pashfrytëzuara deri në fund.

Kjo begati e pashterur e domethënieve të Kur'anit, tërhoqi vëmendjen e dijetarëve, të cilët vazhdimisht u thelluan në studimin e tyre, por gjithnjë duke u ruajtur që të mos fundosën e të përmblyen, pse, kush është ai që me aftësinë e vet të mund të arrijë t'i kuptojë në tërësi thënie të Zotit, të njohë hollësitë dhe mrekullitë e tyre, e të mendojë se ka arritur ndonjë shkallë të lartë në njohuri!?

CHAPTER TWO

I. A STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF SHERIF AHMETI'S COMMENTARY

Haxhi Sherif Ahmeti (may God have mercy on him!) has listed the literature he consulted for the topics of the Suras and the meanings of the verses:

1. *Safwat al-tafasir* صفوة التفاسير by the famous commentator Muhammad Ali Sabuni;
2. *Fat'h al-bayan fi maqasid al-Qur'an*, فتح البيان في مقاصد القرآن by Muhammad Hasan Khan;
3. *Al-Mus'haf al-mufassar*, المصحف المفسر by the scholar Farid Wajdi; and
4. *Qamus Qur'aniy*, قاموس قرآني by Hasan Muhammad Musa.

He has occasionally referred to Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi's great *tafsir Mafatih al-ghayb*, مفاتيح الغيب and Imam Ibn Kathir's *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-adhim*, تفسير القرآن العظيم. He also used other references, which he has nevertheless not mentioned.⁸⁰⁶

According to our commentator, he referred to these works because they were written by contemporary authors who focused

on the discovery of social, ethical and economical concepts and teachings, as well as the exposition on the contemporary issues from the point of view of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

Sherif Ahmeti used the same method in his commentary, and that is why we consider him a leading figure in social exegesis among Albanians.

Here I would like to point out an important methodological and critical element regarding our scholar's claim that he had used other literature besides what he mentioned in his introduction. However, after scrutinizing the matter, we clearly realize that the commentator has not quoted anything directly from the sources he has mentioned in the introduction, but rather, indirectly. Besides, he has never given any reference (volume and page number) for his consulted materials.

It would have been better, in keeping with the scientific methodology and norms if, he had given references for the sources he consulted directly, as well as those he consulted indirectly. The reader may have the impression that he had based himself on these sources, but in reality he has not consulted them at all, e.g. the commentaries of *al Zamakhshari*, *al Qurtubi*, *Ebu Su'ud*, *al Tabari*, *Sayyid Qutb*, and *Tafsir al-Bahr al-muhit*,⁸⁰⁷ and authentic Prophetic Hadith, the six books of Hadith *الكتب الستة*

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 750.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 153, 172, 222, 257, 385, 408, 419, 558, 570, 584.

the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad ⁸⁰⁸ مسند الإمام أحمد, the books on Qur'anic sciences ⁸⁰⁹ كتب علوم القرآن, on abrogation and the abrogated ⁸¹⁰ كتب قصص الأنبياء, the books on the stories of the Prophets ⁸¹¹ كتب السيرة النبوية, the biography of the Prophet as well as the books of *usul al fiqh* ⁸¹² كتب أصول الفقه, literature on contemporary science ⁸¹³ كتب الأدب والعلوم المعاصرة, the words and deeds of the Companions r.a. ⁸¹⁴ كتب مناقب و شمائل الصحابة والأئمة الأربعة, and the great Imams.⁸¹⁵

II. SHERIF AHMETI'S METHOD IN TAFSIR

After careful study of this concise commentary of the Qur'an, I came to the conclusion that the author has used the following method:

- Pointing out the verses and chapters revealed in Mecca and Madina.
- Explaining the titles and topics of the chapters, as in the commentary of al-Fatiha.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 440.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 115.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 184, 212.

⁸¹¹ Ibid, pp. 559.

⁸¹² Ibid, pp. 26.

- Explaining the general meaning of the verses, without stopping at every single verse, but only giving the translation at the top of the page.⁸¹³

- Mentioning the importance of each chapter, based on the Books of the Sunnah and the two Sahih collections.⁸¹⁴

- Offering suitable introduction to each chapter and summarizing its subjects, but not according to their order in the chapter itself.⁸¹⁵

- Clarifying and commenting upon certain Qur'anic terms bearing multiple meanings, and explaining the differences between similar words such as *al-hamdu*, *al-shukru*, and *al-mad'hu* الحمد والشكر والمدح , by referring to the etymological and terminological meanings, as well as explaining the intended or preferred meaning of a verse.⁸¹⁶

- Pointing out in detail the meanings of the words and the sources of different grammatical terms; emphasizing similar meanings, based on similar verses from other chapters, without mentioning them with name and number. He also confirms multiple meanings of different words.⁸¹⁷

⁸¹³ Ibid, pp. 10, 40.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid pp. 26.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 29.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 27, 31.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 27, 28.

- Pointing out the morphological and syntax aspects of a verse.⁸¹⁸

- At times pointing out matters of creed, selecting those which are closer to the Sunni school.⁸¹⁹

- Occasionally the author does not mention the verses, but only their numbers,⁸²⁰ but as he says in the Introduction, this is not done throughout the text.

- He mentions the opinions of different commentators on a particular point, such as Zamakhshari's, Ibn Taymiyya's and Ibn Kathir's views on the single letters at the beginning of some chapters,⁸²¹ without however providing references.

- Explaining the meaning of several religious terms, which may be unclear to the reader, such as *sajda*, *Iblis*, *Jannah*, *Bani Isra'il*, *bid'ah*, etc.⁸²²

- Briefly mentioning the *isra'iliat* in his commentary, e.g. the Pharaoh's dream that a child born from among the Bani Isra'il would destroy him. He also mentions the names of children of Noah a.s. and his wife, who were drowned.⁸²³

-Occasionally comparing the Islamic Law with the previously revealed Laws, showing their points of agreement and difference, as in the story of the killer from Bani Isra'il, when

⁸¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 265-549.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 28, 272.

⁸²⁰ Ibid, pp. 28, 210, 236, 262.

⁸²¹ Ibid, pp. 31, 59.

⁸²² Ibid, pp. 38, 48, 265.

Moses ordered the slaying of a cow and the punishment of the killer. In this case the killer is deprived of the right of inheritance, which is a rule shared by the Shari‘ah and the Judaic Law.⁸²⁴

- Pointing out the causes of revelation, at times using the language of exegesis, and at times his language, without providing references.⁸²⁵

- Pointing out in a summary fashion the question of abrogation.⁸²⁶

- Offering arguments from *Hadith qudsi* and *Hadith nabawi* found in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, as well as in other collections,⁸²⁷ without however practicing the same method in the transmission of *Hadith*, whose references are sometimes missing.⁸²⁸

- Arguing with the materialists and the naturalists, criticising their views on resurrection.⁸²⁹

- Criticising the Jews who brought upon themselves the wrath of God, as well as the strayed Christians, saying that it would have been better for them if they followed Islam, which

⁸²³ Ibid, pp. 38, 265, 378.

⁸²⁴ Ibid, pp. 41, 43.

⁸²⁵ Ibid, pp. 45, 79.

⁸²⁶ Ibid, pp. 47.

⁸²⁷ Ibid, pp. 48, 440

⁸²⁸ Ibid, pp. 54, 79, 106, 128, 130, 132

⁸²⁹ Ibid, pp. 48

was revealed by God to his servants, and not applying water or oil to their body.⁸³⁰

- Correcting mistaken views of certain people and presenting the truth about them, speaking about Paradise as true, describing its blessings, and saying that the truth of Paradise is known only to God the Magnificent. He also mentions the life of the martyrs, and says that they are alive with their Lord and sustained by Him, without entering into details. According to him, it is a mistake to think that their bodies do not decompose, because God says: *Alive with their Lord*, not “Alive with you as you understand it”.⁸³¹

- In his commentary he bases himself in taking heed and advice, as well as in the deduction of the general legal and ethical principles. He also points out the social and religious aspects of the verse, as in the verse of retaliation (*al-qisas*)⁸³² where he writes: “*Many people thought that this measure is too severe for our civilized times. This opinion is wrong and such a blind philosophy has made economic crimes soar, and punishment by imprisonment has filled the prisons with thieves, robbers, abductors, violators, etc. One cutting of a hand saves a town.*”⁸³³

- The author does not point out the legal aspects contained in the verse, but is content with guiding the reader to legal sources

⁸³⁰ Ibid, pp. 51.

⁸³¹ Ibid, pp. 53, 295.

⁸³² Ibid, pp. 58, 59, 60, 62

dealing with this issue, as if to imply that juridical principles are part of the science of jurisprudence, not of exegesis. This is clearly seen in the case of the verses of: *al hajj* and *al u'mrah*.⁸³⁴

- He applies the rules of *usul al fiqh –Islamic jurisprudence principles* in his commentary and explains the verses accordingly.⁸³⁵

- He points out the general characteristics of Islam, its beauty and majesty, and then the fact that Islam does not coerce people to religion and a principled life. He also says that Islam is an integral religion, and it cannot be divided in parts.⁸³⁶

- He never mentions the different readings (*qira'at*) of the Qur'an.⁸³⁷

- He points out to the ills of society and their cure with the Noble Qur'an. He also affirms that the Qur'an focuses on the creation of a healthy society, based on legal marital relationships, and that the happiness of the married couple depends on their

⁸³³ Ibid, pp. 148

⁸³⁴ Ibid, pp. 59, 60, 61, 81

⁸³⁵ Ibid, pp. 63.

⁸³⁶ Ibid, pp. 63, 64.

⁸³⁷ It seems that Albanians have not been very interested in this art which is part of the Qur'anic sciences, as there have been no scholars or experts from this field. Divine wisdom has decreed that this Qur'anic discipline appears in Albanian scholarly circles only very lately, namely after the graduation of the following two students from Kosova at the Faculty of the Noble Qur'an of the Islamic University of Madina, in 1994 and 1995:

1. The weak and needy slave of God, *Prof.Dr.Hafiz Hajredin Hoxha*, author of this work, who graduated in the reading (*qira'at*) of the Qur'an with an uninterrupted chain going back to the Prophet, according to the transmission of Imam Hafs from Imam Asim, in the method of Imam Shatibi.

2. The respected brother, *Professor Hafiz Safet Hoxha*, who teaches *qira'at* at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Prishtina, as well as in the Alaudin Madrasa of Prizren.

having the same religion, otherwise their relationship would be unstable.⁸³⁸

- He points out the purpose of the principles of the Shari‘ah-*maqasid al shari‘ah*; مقاصد الشريعة e.g. the purpose of marriage is protection from prostitution and preservation of humankind; etc.⁸³⁹

- Comparing different views and preferring the most prevalent one, as in the story of Adam and Eve a.s., when he conveys what has been related in the Qur’an: mankind’s origin is from Adam, and Eve was created from the same origin.⁸⁴⁰

- He does not analyse the creeds of different sects, and does not elaborate on different issues of dispute in beliefs.⁸⁴¹

- At times he refers to metaphors, as in the commentary of the verse:

﴿قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَتُغْلَبُونَ وَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَيُنْسَىٰ الْمُهْتَادُ﴾ [آل عمران: ١٢]

Say to those who disbelieve: You will be defeated and gathered together to Hell, and worst indeed is that place to rest (lit. “cradle”) (Al Imran, 12).

Regarding this verse, the commentator says: “*Their place in Hell has been portrayed as a cradle, implying that the boastful*

⁸³⁸ Ibid, pp. 66, 70, 73.

⁸³⁹ Ibid, pp. 66

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 109.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.

*rejecters will be as weak and helpless as to look like powerless infants, who stay wherever they are placed by others.*⁸⁴²

- In the commentary of Sura al-Qadr, when explaining the words of God:

﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ﴾ [القدر: ١]

*Verily, We have sent it (the Qur'an) down in the night of al-Qadr, he says that: "this is an allegory (majaz al-mursal), as descent is a property of physical bodies, and the Qur'an is not such, but its carrying from al-lawh al-mahfudh to the heaven of this world resembles the fall of a physical body."*⁸⁴³

- At the end of each chapter's commentary he summarizes his own words in half a page, by pointing out the topics of that chapter and clarifying the purpose of the Qur'an, namely the inclination of the hearts of the servants towards the recognition of the Creator based on the observation of the created beings. The Qur'an asks men to read the written text and then reflect upon this visible Book, namely the universe, which they will find in perfect harmony with each-other.⁸⁴⁴

- The cure of social ills based on admonition and lessons from the verses. He also considers the question of the exposure of

⁸⁴² Ibid, pp. 82.

⁸⁴³ Ibid, pp. 724.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 107.

the body for both genders, and says that it is a deceit of Satan and not a sign of civilization or progress.⁸⁴⁵

- He does not base himself on abnormal opinions and concepts, and never juts out from the opinion of the majority of scholars. Rather, he accepts their views and for this he deserves praise.⁸⁴⁶

- Sometimes he harmonizes the meaning of a verse with verses which seem to contradict it, in order to remove any ambiguity or contradiction.⁸⁴⁷

- Paying attention to admonition and lessons from Qur'anic stories.⁸⁴⁸

- Establishing occasional connection between the hidden aspect of verses and new discoveries, in order to convince man of God's power, as in the verse:

﴿وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ [النحل: ٨]

And (He has created) horses, mules and donkeys, for you to ride and as an adornment. And He creates (other) things of which you have no knowledge (an-Nahl, 8).

Regarding this, he says: “*He creates things of which you know not is how the Qur'an addresses the people of that time, in order to*

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 189.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 211.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 221, 222

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 272, 277, 279

*hint to the minds that there will be other riding means, as we know see in transportation, so that no one may say: My ancestors used horses, donkeys, mules instead.”*⁸⁴⁹

- Points out the secrets of verses containing words such as: (they) “*think*”, “*understand*”, “*remember*”, namely that without deep reflection on natural phenomena one cannot reach the desirable results.⁸⁵⁰

- He does not comment upon the verses from a scientific aspect; and if such an example presents itself, he bases his words on the opinion of the experts, as in the case of the hills and the mountains. He criticises those who comment upon the Qur’an based on their caprice and ambition, and not on proven scientific data.⁸⁵¹

- He uses rational and scientific examples to confirm resurrection in the commentary of verses relating to plants, animals and human beings.⁸⁵²

- He criticises those who negate the use of the *al Sunnah*, *al ijma’* and *al qiyas* as arguments, based on the verse:

﴿وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾،

[الحشر: ٧]

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 312.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 313.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid, 618-619

⁸⁵² Ibid, pp. 319

And whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it). And fear God; verily, God is Severe in punishment (al-Hashr, 7) for the case of the Sunnah.

He proves the validity of *al ijma'* through the verse:

﴿وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا﴾، [النساء: ١١٥]

And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers' way (an-Nisa, 115).

He proves the validity of *al qiyas* through the verse:

﴿فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْأَبْصَارِ﴾ [الحشر: ٢]

*Then take admonition, O you with eyes (to see)! (al-Hashr, 2)*⁸⁵³

- When he speaks about the separate letters at the beginning of some chapters, he says that they are symbols, which is also the opinion of other scholars. However, he mentions that there are other opinions too.⁸⁵⁴

- His method in exegesis (*tafsir*) and hermeneutics (*ta'wil*) of the verses dealing with the Names and Attributes of God (*al-asma' wa al-sifat*) varies; at times he confirms (*ithbat*) them as they are in the Qur'an, and at times he explains them out (*ta'wil*), but sometimes he refrains from either (*la ithbat wa la ta'wil*).

⁸⁵³ Ibid, pp. 322.

We can understand his method on this important matter of the Islamic creed from the exposition of the following examples, which is not exhaustive, but rather illustrative.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 361.

prej Xhibrilit? Mandej, si mund t'i mvshet Allahut si fjalë e Tij, kur ai nuk është i Tij?! E në Kur'an qartë thuhet: „Deri sa të dëgjojë fjalët e Allahut..” (Tevbe: 6).

Kur'ani fjalë e Allahut, leximi i të cilit është ibadet, Muhammedit iu shpall kur ishte në moshën dyzetvjeçare dhe për herë të parë u njoftua se Zoti e kishte zgjedhur dhe e kishte caktuar pejgamber. Prej atij momenti e deri kur kaloi në fqinjësi të Allahut, ajo periudhë e jetës quhet periudha e vahjit, shpalljes, revelatës (risales), e cila zgjati gati njëzet e tre vjet.

Vahji dhe mënyra e pranimit:

Shprehja “Vahj” e gjuhës arabe ka disa kuptime. Në disa raste ka kuptimin: frymëzim me anën e të cilit njeriu frymëzohet për ndonjë punë ose për ndonjë veprim. Mund të ketë edhe kuptimin: ngacmim, kur njeriu nga ndonjë faktor i jashtëm ngacmohet në zemër. Në disa raste përdoret edhe në kuptimin e instinktit, siç është fjala për bletën ose diçka tjetër.

Njerëzit janë frymëzuar dhe frymëzohen për diçka, por shpallja e Kur'anit nuk i takon kësaj mënyre të frymëzimit, mënyra e shpalljes së Kur'anit është e veçantë.

Në Kur'an është thënë qartë: “Nuk ka asnjë njeri që Allahu t'i ketë folur ndryshe përveç mënyrës së frymëzimit, ose pas ndonjë perdeje, ose t'i dërgojë të dërguar (melek), e ai me lejen e Tij t'i shpallë atë që Ai dëshiron”. (Shura: 51).

Allahu në Kur'an theksoi atë që e dëshiron dhe që e kërkon prej krijesave të veta, por kush do të pranojë prej Allahut atë që e tha? Njeriu nuk ka mundësi, sepse ai është edhe qenie organike, përgatitja e tij e bën atë të paaftë që të pranojë fjalët drejtpërdrejt prej Allahut.

Madhëria e Allahut është fuqi aq e lartë sa që prej krijesave askush nuk është në gjendje të dijë të përshkruaj. Për lartësinë dhe fuqinë e Tij, mësojmë vetëm nëpërmjet fjalës së Tij, me të cilën Ai e përshkruan veten.

Njeriu, si fuqi e dobët, nuk është në gjendje të vërë kontakt me atë fuqi aq të lartë të Zotit, ai nuk mund t'i afrohet fuqisë së lartë edhe të pranojë atë që Ajo e shpreh. Nëse i afrohet fuqisë së lartë, e dobëta do të shkatërrohej. Zoti e di atë, prandaj në fjalën e vet thotë se njeriu nuk mund t'i pranojë prej Tij fjalët vetëm në mënyrat e theksuara.

E kush mund t'i pranojë fjalët prej Allahut?

Njeriu nuk mundet, sepse është krijesë e dobët, është edhe qenie materiale. Për t'i pranuar fjalët prej Allahut, nevojitet të jetë qenie më e lartë se njeriu, qenie që nuk është materiale. Ja pra, Zoti e caktoi melekun Xhibril, krijesë e lartë dhe jo materiale. Ajo krijesë mund t'i pranojë fjalët prej Allahut dhe ato fjalë t'ia kumtojë njeriut, në këtë rast Muhammedit, njeriut të zgjedhur dhe të caktuar për të dërguar të Zotit. Por, edhe ashtu takohen dy qenie me përbërje të ndryshme, njëra e llojit të lartë, melek, e tjetra njeri. Mirëpo, edhe takimi ose kontaktimi i atyre dy qenieve të dy llojeve, nëse nuk bëhet ndonjë ndryshim në ato qenie, është i pamundshëm. Do të duhej: ose qenia e lartë të jetë e shndërruar dhe e personifikuar në formën e njeriut duke iu përshatuar atij, që ai të mbetet ashtu siç është njeri, kurse i larti t'i flasë e i uli të pranojë prej tij; ose lloji i ulët të bëjë ndryshime, të ngritet në një shkallë më të lartë që të jetë në gjendje të pranojë prej të lartit. Njërin prej këtyre dy veprimeve duhet bërë domosdo.

VËSHTRIM RRETH KUR'ANIT

Kur'ani është fjalë e pakoncurrencë e Allahut. Ai, nëpërmjet të besueshmit Xhibril, i është shpallur vulës së pejgamberëve, është shkruar në Mus-hafe, i transmetuar në mënyrën më të besueshme (tevaturen) deri te ne, leximi i tij është ibadet, fillon me suren “El Fatiha” dhe përfundon me suren “En Nas”.

Burim i Kur'anit është Allahu. Muhammedi ishte transmetues i fjalës së Allahut. Shpallja-vahji ishte mjet bisede ndërmjet Allahut dhe të dërguarit të Tij, Muhammedit. Në çështjen e shpalljes nuk merr pjesë mendja e njeriut, por si kusht për ta pranuar atë, ajo nuk mbetet manash, asaj i mbetet për detyrë që më vonë ta përpunojë ligjshmërinë e shpalljes.

Feja islame prej fillimit themelohet me vahjin e Zotit xh.sh., të cilin ia shpalli të dërguarit të vet, e ai, me urdhërin e Zotit ua kumtoi njerëzve. Derisa themelimi i fesë islame vjen thjesht prej Zotit dhe mendja e njeriut nuk ka të përzier në te, e as fjala e ndonjë forumi njerëzish, përpilimi i ligjshmërisë së saj nuk ka kurrfarë të mete e as kurrnjë gabim.

Mendja e individit dhe e bashkësisë si kusht për vërtetimin e besimit të vet dhe si veprim produktiv për lartësimin e moralit, është e obliguar të veprojë sipas udhëzimeve të shpalljes.

Veçori e Kur'anit është:

- nuk është vepër e përpiluar prej mendjes së njeriut,
- është i shqiptuar me fjalë,
- është i shprehur në gjuhën arabe,
- i është shpallur vulës së pejgamberëve, dhe
- në mënyrën më të besueshme është i përcjellur deri te ne.

Muhammedi e pranoi Kur'anin me ndërmjetësimin e engjëllit Xhibril, të cilin Zoti e quan në fjalën e vet “Emine” - besnik i vahjit e thotë: “Atë (Kur'anin) e sollti në zemrën tënde shpirti besnik për të qenë ti nga pejgamberët (Shuara: 193-194).

Meleku Xhibril Kur'anin e pranoi prej Zotit dhe fjalët e Zotit ia lexoi Muhammedit, i cili ia mësoi ymëtit të vet. Xhibrilit pra, nuk i takoi tjetër vetëm se transmetimi dhe kumtimi i fjalës së Allahut tek Muhammedi.

Për sa i përket faktit se vetë teksti i fjalës së Kur'anit është fjalë e Allahut dhe se ai e shpalli, flet edhe ky ajet: “S'ka dyshim se ti je duke pranuar Kur'anin nga vetë i Urti, i Djishmi”. (En Neml: 6)

Mendimi i atyre, të cilët interpretuan thashethemet kinse Xhibrili ia sollti Muhammedit vetëm kuptimin e Kur'anit, e Muhammedi e shprehu me gjuhën e vet arabe, është i gabuar ashtu siç është i gabuar edhe mendimi tjetër sipas të cilit, Allahu e frymëzoi Xhibrilit vetëm me kuptimet e Kur'anit, kurse shprehja me fjalë është e Xhibrilit. Mendimet e tilla nuk kanë mbështetje në kurrfarë fakti, ngase janë në kundërshtim me Kur'anin, me synnetin dhe me ixhmain, nuk kanë ndonjë vlerë e as ndonjë peshë. Mendimet e tilla më tepër janë grackë e futur në literaturën e myslimanëve, përndryshe si do të mund të jetë Kur'ani mrekulli kur shqiptimi i tij të jetë prej Muhammedit ose

ONE: EXAMPLES OF CONFIRMATION (Ithbat):

* In the commentary of the verse:

﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ...﴾، [المائدة: ٦٤]

The Jews say: "Allâh's Hand is tied up (i.e. He does not give and spend of His Bounty)." Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched (al-Ma'idah, 64), we notice that in the translation of this verse, the commentator confirms the Quality of the Two Hands of God, as they are stated in the verse, without any interpretation,⁸⁵⁵ change or intervention.

* In the translation and commentary of the verse:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ...﴾ [الفتح: ١٠]

Verily, those who give Bai'ah (pledge) to you they are giving Bai'ah (pledge) to Allah. The Hand of Allah is over their hands (al-Fat'h, 10); he confirms the quality of "Hand" in his translation and commentary into Albanian.⁸⁵⁶

* In the commentary of the verse:

﴿وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ﴾ [الذاريات: ٤٧]

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid, pp. 151; See the Tafsir of *al-Tabari*, vol. 4, p. 639, where several opinions on this verse's commentary are given, some of which confirm the quality of hand or two hands of God the Glorious, whereas according to others, the word "hand" means: *power, blessing, bestowal*, etc.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 589. According to Imam *al-Tabari* (vol. 3, p. 338), there are two opinions on this issue: the confirmation of the Quality of Hand of God the Magnificent without commentary, and explaining the word as referring to "power" and "strength".

With power did We construct the heaven. Verily, We are Able to extend the vastness of space thereof (al-Dhariat, 47), which he translates literally as shown.⁸⁵⁷

Even though this verse contains the word (أَيْدٍ) (*hands*), the plural of the word (يَدٍ) (*hand*), the most exact meaning, according to the exegetes, both early and contemporary, in this instance means The Power and Strength of God, and the word (أَيْدٍ) (*hands*) has been translated very accurately from our commentator, in keeping with the great exegetes, both from the past and the present.

* In his commentary of the verses that deal with the vision of God the Exalted in the Day of Qiyamah, he says that the exegetes have different views on this matter, and that the most accurate one is that believers shall see God the Exalted, which is the opinion of the Sunni scholars.⁸⁵⁸

* In the commentary and explanation of the verse:

﴿وَلْتَصْنَعْ عَلَيَّ عَيْنِي﴾ [طه: ٣٩]

It is written: *in order that you may be brought up under My Supervision* (Taha, 39), i.e. the word عَيْنِي (My Eye), has been

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 603-4. In the commentary (vol. 4, p. 303) of this verse, Ibn Kathir says that it means “with Our power”, which is also the opinion of Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Qatade, al-Thawri, and others. Al-Tabari (vol. 11, p. 472) too says: “We say what the others say, such as Ibn Abbas when speaking about the verse “والسمااء بنيناها بأيدٍ و إنا لموسعون” He says: “with power”. According to Imam Baghawi (vol. 1, p. 379) this verse means “with power and strength”.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 175, 204, 684.

translated and explained as: *attention, care, supervision* etc. This is another accurate translation and explanation. The great exegetes of the Qur'an, both the early and contemporary ones, have commented upon it in the same way as our commentator (may God have mercy on him!).⁸⁵⁹

* In the commentary of the verse:

﴿يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ...﴾ [القلم: ٤٢]

The Day when the Shin shall be laid bare (al-Kalam, 42), the author translates the word (الساق) shin, as great severing (which constitutes an Attribute of God the Most High). In this case too, our author has accurately translated and commented upon the verse, in the same way as the early and contemporary exegetes.⁸⁶⁰

* In the translation and commentary of the verse:

﴿وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي﴾ [طه: ٤١]

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 362; In his commentary of *و لَتَصْنَعُ عَلَى عَيْنِي* and Imam Muhammad ibn Ali Shawkani says: “*to be brought up under My supervision*” (Tafsir, vol. 3, p. 521). According to Ibn Kathir, the verse *و لَتَصْنَعُ عَلَى عَيْنِي* was explained by Abu Umran al-Juwayni as: “*brought up by the help of God*”, whereas Qatadah says it means: “*brought up by My help*”, and Muammar ibn Muthanna, the verse *و لَتَصْنَعُ عَلَى عَيْنِي* means: “*My supervision and care*”; see *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 3, p. 199.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 663, 665. Ibn Kathir says that the verse “*يوم يكشف عن ساق*” means: “*The Day of Qiyamah and the changes, earthquakes, problems, trials and big events.*” I’qrima relates that Ibn Abbas has said that it means: “*The Day of Qiyamah, trials and punishment*” (Ibn Jarir). From Ibn Abi Nujayh and Mujahid it has been related that “*يوم يكشف عن ساق*” means “*worsening of the situation*”; whereas according to Ibn Abbas it refers to the first moment of the Qiyamah. Ibn Jarir has related from Mujahid that it means “*severing and worsening of the situation in the Day of Resurrection.*” See *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 4, p. 525.

And I have chosen you for Myself. (Taha, 41), he renders it as “*And I have chosen you for My revelation.*” This verse mentions an Attribute of God the Exalted, which is the phrase نفسي (for Me, for My Self), and our commentator has translated it in keeping with the classical exegetes.⁸⁶¹

* In the commentary and translation of the verse:

﴿...كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ...﴾، [القصص: 88]

Everything will perish save His Face. His is the Decision, and to Him you (all) shall be returned (al Qasas, 88), our commentator explains that every thing shall perish except God the Exalted, because He is Everlasting and Eternal. This verse too mentions a Divine Attribute, namely الوجه , and this is another occasion in which the translation and commentary is very accurate, in accordance with the early as well as contemporary exegetes.⁸⁶²

* Regarding the commentary of the term *istewa'* استوى , he sometimes refers to interpretation and sometimes not. In the case of the Qur'anic verse:

⁸⁶¹ Ibid, p. 362. Ibn Kathir (vol. 3, p. 207) says that “واصطنعتك لنفسي” means “*I have chosen you for My revelation and you shall move about according to My will*”, vol. 1, p. 274.

⁸⁶² Ibid, p. 452. Ibn Kathir says: “*His word هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ هَالِكٌ، shows that He is Everlasting, Eternal, Alive, Powerful, Deathgiver, who never dies, which is the meaning of “كل من عليها” فان و يبقى وجه ربك ذو الجلال و الإكرام، where God speaks of Himself.*” Abu Salama relates from Abu Hurayra from the Prophet: “*The truest word has been spoken by the poet Labid: (ألا كل) شيء ما خلا الله باطل- كل نعيم لا محال زائل) “Everything save God is unreal...and every bliss is temporary and transitory”*, save the bliss of Paradise, Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. III, p. 533.

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...﴾ [الأعراف: ٥٤]

Indeed your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days, and then He rose over (Istawa) the Throne (A'raf, 54), he mentions literally istewa', without interpretation, change or alteration.⁸⁶³ In this context, he says: “The sitting of God on the Throne must be believed in without any interpretation.”⁸⁶⁴

Therefore, in this case he confirms this Attribute of God the Exalted, without any change or alteration, as has been commented upon by the pious ancestors (*al-Salaf al-Salih*), which means that this must be the belief of every Muslim, as it constitutes an important point of creed. He is very clear on this point at this particular verse, without interpreting or altering it.⁸⁶⁵

* In his commentary of the verse of istiwa', in Chapter Yunus, 3, he says:

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...﴾ [يونس: ٣]

“He has never been and shall never be in need of space, but after creating the universe He rose above the Throne. Before the creation of the universe He was not in need of place, and after

⁸⁶³ Ibid, pp. 192.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 193.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibrahim Salim ibn Hasan, *Qadiyatu al-ta'wil fi al-Qur'an al-Karim bayn al-ghulat wa'l-mu'tadilin*, Beirut, Dar al-Qutayba, 1st ed. 1, pp. 1993.

*its creation too He was not in need of it. Why then did He say: Rose above the Arsh? This is His affair and no one else's.*⁸⁶⁶

TWO: EXAMPLES OF INTERPRETATION OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES, AND UNEXPLICABLE INSTANCES

In the following instances we shall see that our late commentator interprets the phrase (استوى) as “*domination*” which in fact corresponds to the Arabic phrase (استولى), an interpretation which is not accepted by the scholars of the early period, and which is far from the truth. The method and tradition of the pious ancestors (*al-Salah al-Salih*) for the verses which deal with Divine Qualities has been not to interpret them and not to attribute specific meanings to them, but rather believe in them as they were revealed, accepting that their true meaning is known only to God the Exalted, because He alone knows what he meant with that particular verse: *istewa*

استوى . It has been related that, when asked about this issue, Imam Malik replied: “*al Istiwa*’ is an established matter, but its reality is unknown, and inquiring about it is innovation (bi’dah)

(الاستواء معلوم والكيف مجهول والسؤال عنه بدعة)

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 245-246.

Sheikh Haji Ahmeti has not followed a specific methodology in this delicate issue, and he did not have a clearcut position. At times he has interpreted *istiwa*’ as “domination”) (استولى , and at times he has followed the method of the pious ancestors, whereas in some instances he has made no comments whatsoever on the issues of *al Arsh* and *al istiwa*, as can be seen in the following instances:

* In the commentary of *istiwa*’ in Chapter Ra’d, verse 2, he writes:

﴿...نُتِمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...﴾، [الرعد: 2]

“*He dominated the Arsh.*” The author has abandoned commenting on the word *istiwa*’ in this verse. He did not translate it or explain it.⁸⁶⁷

* He has also overlooked translating and interpreting the term in the verse:

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى﴾ [طه: 5]

The Most Gracious rose over (Istawa) the Throne. (Ta-Ha, 5) which he has rendered as: “(And He is) the All-Merciful Who created the earth and the high heavens” without mentioning *istiwa*’. In the commentary of this verse, he writes: “Who created

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 289-290.

everything and Who presides over everything from His Throne.”⁸⁶⁸

It is therefore clear that the term *al-istiwa* is not clearly explained, despite being an important issue in our creed.

* He translates *al-istiwa* in Chapter Furqan, verse 59, as:

﴿...ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...﴾، [الفرقان: 59]

“*And then he dominated the Throne*” without elaborating on the term, but on the contrary giving a different meaning.⁸⁶⁹

* Also, in Chapter Sajda, verse 4,

﴿...ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...﴾، [السجدة: 4]

The term *istiwa*’ has been rendered in the same way, i.e. as “dominated the Arsh”, which he then again interprets as, “*Who dominated the universe*”.⁸⁷⁰

* He uses the same phrase in the translation of verse 4 of Sura Hadid:

﴿...ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...﴾، [الحديد: 4]

“*Then He dominated the Arsh, namely He dominated the Arsh after He created the earth and the heavens.*” In the commentary, he does not interpret the term *al-istiwa* at all.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 359, 369.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 417-418.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 475-476.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 625.

This complicated issue of creed has preoccupied the mind of many scholars both in the past and in the present. If we try to verify the study of this metaphysical issue, we shall see that the heart inclines more to the doctrine of the pious ancestors, (*al Salaf al Salih*) which does not interpret such verses but rather accepts them as they were revealed, based on its strong arguments.⁸⁷²

⁸⁷² For more details on this issue, see pp. 268-293 of our thesis. See Abu Hanifa, *al-Sharh al-muyassar ala al-fiqhayn al-absat wa al-akbar al mansubayni li Abi Hanifah*, part II: "Riwayat Abi Muti'e al-Belkhi an Abi Hanife", ed. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Khamis, Ajman, Maktabat al-Furqan, 1st. ed., 1999, p. 159.

Bel-qasim al-Ghali, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, *Hayatuhu wa ara'uhu al-aqdiyya*, p. 179, related from Shaykh Zadeh, *Nudhum al-Fara'id wa jam' al-fawa'id*, Farida 14, pp. 22-23; Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, *al-Tawhid*, p. 74; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majma' al-fatawa'*, vol. 4, pp. 1-2.

Në rrugën për të cilën i thërriste Kur'ani dukeshin pengesa të pakapërcyeshme, vështirësi të papërballueshme, por mrekullia e tij manifestohej thellë në zemrat dhe shpirtërat e tyre dhe dalëngadalë i përveçosen dhe shumë prej tyre i bënë i thartë të denjë të mësimave të tij. Ajo mrekulli e Kur'anit, e cila tërhoqi edhe shpirtërat e tyre, i habiti edhe vetë ata, prandaj me vetëdije të humbur e të tronditur, dikush prej tyre e quajti sehir, magji etj. Edhe idhujtarit më i aftë dhe më autoritativ, Velid bin Mugire u gjunjëzua para mrekullisë së tij. Idhujtarët e kishin dërguar të Muhammedi që t'ia tërhoqë vërejtjen dhe të mos publikojë ato mësim të Kur'anit, të cilat fyenin besimin e tyre, mirëpo, kur e dëgjoji Muhammedin duke lexuar Kur'an, ai u habit dhe kur u kthye te idhujtarët, ua përshkroi mrekullinë e asaj pjese të Kur'anit që e kishte dërguar dhe me fjalët e veta i vlerësoi cilësitë e larta të tij duke thënë: 'Ai (Kur'ani) ka një ëmbëlsirë të papërshkruar, është tërhoqës e ngacmues, është aq i këndshëm sa që fund e krye është plot fruta, atë nuk mund ta thotë njeriu!'

Është gjë e natyrshme që Kur'ani të jetë i tillë kur dihet se për të thuhet: "Thuaj: atë e zbriti Ai që i di fshehtësitë në qiej e në tokë!" (Furkan: 6).

Emrat e Kur'anit

Kur'ani i famshëm ka shumë emra që të gjithë japin të kuptosh rëndësinë dhe pozitën e lartë të tij dhe që në përgjithësi është libri më i famshëm qiellor dhe Zoti xh.sh. në fjalën e vet e ka quajtur: El Kur'an, El Furkanu, Et Tenzilu, Edh Dhikru, El Kitab u etj.

Po ashtu Allahu e ka cilësuar me attribute të bukura e të shumta. Po thuaj nuk ka sure që në të mos përmendet ndonjë atribut i tij i këndshëm si: Nurun, Hudun, Rahmetun, Shifaun, Mevidhatun, Azizun, Mubarekun, Beshirun, Nedhirun etj.

Ndarja e Kur'anit

Kur'ani, sipas urdhërit Hyjnor, është i ndarë në sure që gjithsej janë 114. Suret janë të përbëra prej shumë ose pak ajetesh. Më e gjata është sureja El Bekaretu me 286 ajete, e më të shkurtrat kanë nga tri ajete.

"Suretun"¹ - do të thotë vend, pozitë e lartë. Një grumbull ajetesh që kanë fillim dhe mbarim quhet "suretun" për hir të famës dhe të lartësisë së saj ashtu sikurse quhet, beden pjesa më e lartë në një mur. Ose Kur'ani është si një kopsht nacional i ndarë në reparte, e secila njësi e tij është e rrethuar me mur të lartë si të ishte ndonjë këstjellë. Sureja e Kur'anit është si një kopsht i tij i rrethuar me mur që mbron besimin dhe bazat e tij.

"Ajet"² - quhet një ose më shumë fjalë. Nuk është kusht i domosdoshëm që ajeti të ketë kuptim të pavarur si: **ha**, **mimë**, kur përbëhet prej shkronjave ose si: **Mudhammetan**, kur përbëhet prej një fjale. Ajeti zakonisht është një fjali e thjeshtë ose një fjali e zgjeruar apo edhe periudhë. Fjala ajet përmendet shumë herë në Kur'an që ka për qëllim mrekulli, argument etj.

Për sa i përket çështjes së ndarjes së Kur'anit në sure dhe radhitjes së sureve në Mus-haf, kjo nuk ishte rezultat i mendjes së njeriut, por ajo ishte çështje e diktuar prej të madhit Zot.

Ndarja e Kur'anit sipas vendit ka të bëjë me pjesët e tij të shpallura sa ishte Pejgamberi në Meke dhe me pjesët që u shpallën pasiqë u shpërngul dhe u vendos në Medinë. Suret e shpallura sa ishte në Meke u quajtën **mekase**, ndërsa të tjerat **medinase**. Dijetarët janë unikë në bindje se në Meke u shpallën shtatëdhjetë sure,

është e vërtetë e saktë dhe s'ka nevojë të kërkohet prej Meje fakt. Fakti jam Unë. Nëse disa mendjeve nuk u mjafton thënia Ime si fakt, por duan t'u besojnë shqisave dhe mendjeve të veta, Unë ata i lë të lirë të përpiqen dhe ua bëjë të mundshme t'i shohin faktet e Mia dhe të vërtetojnë se atë që kam thënë Unë është e vërtetë e saktë, por është dashur t'u mjaftojë thënia Ime, pse mjafton Allahu të jetë vërtetues. Në suren "Fussilet", Ajeti 53 thuhet: "Ne do t'u bëjmë atyre të mundshme t'i shohin argumentet tona në gjithësi dhe në veten e tyre deri që t'u bëhet e qartë se ai (Kur'ani) është i vërtetë. A nuk mjafton që Zoti yt të jetë dëshmuar për çdo gjë?".

Kur'ani atëherë kur shpallje theksoi të vërteta, ato është dashur të besohen si thënie të Zotit edhe para se t'i kuptojë mendja, sepse shumë çështje të vërteta, të cilat i ka cekur Kur'ani, dija ka arritur t'i kuptojë shumë më vonë, pra ato kanë qenë të vërteta edhe para se t'i zbulojë dija. Kur'ani p.sh. ka cekur rolin e erërave në mbarësinim e bimëve e ka thënë: "Ne i lëshuam erërat frytënuese.." (Hixhër: 22). Ka dhënë shenjë për rrotullimin e tokës në një mënyrë shumë perfide e ka thënë: "... dhe i sheh kodrat e mendon (të duken) se ato janë të palëvizshme, ndërsa ato ecin sikur ecin retë.." (En'Nemlu: 88). Krahasimi i ecjes së kodrave me atë të reve, jep me kuptua për rrotullimin e tokës, sepse lëvizja e reve nuk bëhet vetvetiu, por me anën e erërave, pra edhe lëvizja e kodrave me anën e dikuj tjetër, në këtë rast me anën e tokës. Këtë thënie të Kur'anit, mendja ka arritur ta kuptojë vonë.

Për etapat e zhvillimit të fetusit e embrionit Kur'ani ka thënë: "Për Allahun, Ne e krijuam njeriun prej një lëngu të kulluar prej balte, pastaj atë e shndërruam në pikë uji (farë) në një vend të sigurt, mandej atë pikë uji e bëmë copë gjaku, atë gjak e bëmë copë mishi të dhëmbëzuar, e atë copë mishi e shndërruam në eshtra, e eshtrat i veshëm me mish, pastaj atë e bëmë krijesë tjetër (i dhënë shpirtin). I lartë është Allahu, më i miri Krijues!" (Muminunë: 12-14). Për këto etapa të zhvillimit, për tri errësirat në të cilat ndodhet fetusit, dija arriti të dijë për të shumë vonë, e ndoshta vetëm në shekullin tonë.

Kur'ani i shkeu të gjitha perdet e kohës, të vendit dhe depërtoi e zbuloi edhe ato fshehtësi që fshihen në zemër apo në mendjen e njeriut. Këta shembuj janë të theksuar në Kur'an dhe lexuesi do t'i kuptojë gjatë leximit.

Edhe në shekullin tonë, i cili konsiderohet shekull i arsimit mendor, fjala e Kur'anit duket se zgjerohet dhe jep kuptim të ri. Saherë që dija me përpjekjet e veta bën evolucion në zhvillimin e jetës, ajo gjen mbështetje në thënie të Kur'anit dhe thënie të tij duket se përtërihen gjatë shekujve për çdo gjeneratë, e kështu dokumentohet se mësimi i tij është i ri për çdo kohë dhe se ai mësim kurr nuk vjetërohet, sepse duke gjeruar terrenin e kuptimeve shkon paralelisht me zhvillimin e jetës, prandaj është mrekulli mendore.

Mrekullia e Kur'anit nga ana e çështjes shpirtërore

Zoti xh.sh. këtë libër e shpalli mëshirë dhe dritë për njëzë, por për ato zemra idhujtare, të cilave u kishte hyrë në gjak adhurimi i idhujve, ishte një goditje e fortë në shpirtin e tyre. Arabët që ishin idhujtarë shumë kokëfortë e idhnakë të mëdhenj e të papërkulur, Kur'ani thërriste ta braktisin atë me të cilin ishin të mësuar edhe prej prindërve të vet, i thërriste të largohen prej adhurimit të shumë zotërave dhe të kthehen në adhurim të një të vetmit Zot, të Allahut fuqplotë, i thërriste të heqin dorë prej atyre zakoneve plot mëkate e krime.

THREE: EXAMPLES OF ULTIMATE-RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF SHERIF AHMETI'S COMMENTARY

* THE WISDOM BEHIND THE REPLACEMENT OF SKIN OF THE DWELLERS OF HELL:

In his commentary of the verse:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِمْ نَارًا كَلَّمًا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَلْنَاهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا﴾ [النساء: ٥٦]

Those who disbelieved in Our signs, We shall burn them in Fire. As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for other skins that they may taste the punishment. Truly, God is Ever Most Powerful, All-Wise (Nisa, 56), he says: “The skin of the dwellers of Jahannam will be recovered after every burning, which implies that God has the power to punish the evildoer for every transgression. Men cannot do this, because for hundreds of crimes committed by a person they can only kill that person only once. The burning of the skin is mentioned because therein pain is felt more.”⁸⁷³

* THE WISDOM OF JIHAD:

⁸⁷³ See the concise commentary of Sherif Ahmeti, p. 120.

“Each time slaying is mentioned in the Qur’an, the phrase ‘in the way of God’ is mentioned too, which implies that fighting is not done for occupying a territory, or its booty, but for freedom of religion, and the free observance of God’s word ... Fighting in the way of God is not a loss, because the ones who are killed therein are martyrs, whereas the ones who survive have helped in spreading justice, and will therefore have a mighty recompense.”⁸⁷⁴

*** HIS VIEW ON THE APPLICATION OF PUNISHMENT:**

“Some people thought that this measure is too severe for our civilized times. This opinion is wrong and such a blind philosophy has made economic crimes soar, and punishment by imprisonment has filled the prisons with thieves, robbers, abductors, violators, etc. One cutting of a hand saves a town.”⁸⁷⁵

*** HIS VIEW ON TEMPORARY MARRIAGE (NIKAH AL-MUT’A):**

“Also, temporary marriage for an amount of material means, because marriage does not seek only the satisfaction of

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid, pp. 60 dhe 123.

the physical aspect, but also the sincere human and conjugal aspect, which will be the source of a healthy education of the future generation.”⁸⁷⁶

“The goal of marriage is to create a healthy, positive continuation, and to establish love between the two parties, and not just the satisfaction of passions. Also, temporary marriage for a material gain is prohibited.”⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 148.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 115.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 115.

*** HIS VIEW ON USURY:**

“This practice is strictly forbidden in Islam, because the rich are obligated to help the needy in the improvement of their difficult situation, and not to oppress them and worsen their situation ever further.”⁸⁷⁸ “Gaining property without having worked for it, such as by stealing, fraud, plunder, usury etc., is prohibited.”⁸⁷⁹

*** HIS VIEW ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF SINS:**

“The classification of sins in big sins or small sins is based on their consequences.”⁸⁸⁰ “God does not like the boastful ones, because they do not respect any human principle, such as: worship of God, good manners towards the parents, the family, the orphans, etc. He also does not like the formal performace of works for the sake of self-praise.”⁸⁸¹ “The wrongdoers shall perish, just as the idolators of Mecca perished. Every wrongdoing nation shall perish.”⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 78, 98.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 116.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 116.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 117.

⁸⁸² Ibid, pp. 167.

* HIS VIEW ON THE “SCIENTIFIC” COMMENTARY:

His view on the “*scientific*” commentary of the Qur’an, *al tafsir al I’lmi lil Qur’an* التفسير العلمي للقرآن is made clear in his articles, which have been published in Islamic journals printed by the Islamic Community of Kosova.⁸⁸³ His opinion on this matter can be summarized in the following way: “*We must be careful and precise in this matter, because science is ever-changing. We are not allowed to comment upon the Qur’an according to modern science, or to force the scholars to prove scientific discoveries through Qur’anic verses. Our foremost duty is to verify whether those theories are established truths or only hypothesis; secondly, the Noble Qur’an is not a book of geography, chemistry or medicine, but a Book of guidance and*

⁸⁸³ The scholars have established a number of rules that must be observed in this type of exegesis:

1. These studies should not collide with the principal goal of the Qur’an which regards guidance and miracle;
2. It is not a mistake if the commentator argues with true scientific discoveries in order to further enrich the meaning of the Qur’anic text, provided that such discoveries be within the spirit of the text and the goals of the Shari’ah;
3. These discoveries should be used to further demonstrate the greatness of the verse;
4. We must not develop any inferiority complex and spiritual weakness, and state that every new discovery confirms the Qur’an, in order to have people believe in the Qur’an; and:
5. The Qur’an was revealed for us to fulfill happiness on this life and the next.

For more details refer to our thesis in Arabic, pp. 221-236; Muhammad Adil Abu al-Khair, *Ijtihadat fi al-tafsir al-ilmi fi al-Qur’an al-Qarim*, Cairo, 1988; Merku Delta lit-tiba’i, 1st ed., 1991, Ahmad Umar Abu Hajar, *al-Tafsir al-ilmi lil-Qur’an fi al-mizan*, Beirut, 1991, Dar al-Qutayba, 1st. ed.

faith, which encompasses in itself certain signs from contemporary sciences.”⁸⁸⁴

*** HIS VIEW ON MAGIC:**

His view on magic can be inferred from his words: “*Magic has no affect whatsoever, unless God wills, and as such one must not believe in its effect. Magic is not a real entity, or an existential truth, but only a deceiving trick.*”⁸⁸⁵

*** HIS VIEW ON ABROGATION:**

His view on abrogation can be deduced from the paragraph: “*The majority of Islamic scholars believe that there is abrogation of rulings and quotations in the Qur’an. Others do not accept the possibility of the suspension of a ruling or a text, and say that abrogation regards the [legal] rulings of previous revelations.*”⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸⁴ See the *Edukata Islame* Journal, published by the Council of the Islamic Community of Kosova, no. 46-47 (1986), pp. 3-8. Our commentator Sherif Ahmeti has made several comments in issues 33-34 (1982), pp. 3-8, and 30-32, entitled “*Burimi i besimit, Islamit dhe marrëdhënieve njerëzore*”; 37-38 (1984), pp. 3-8; 37-44 Commentary of the verse: “*In the Messenger of God you have a goodly example*”, 41-42 (1985), pp. 60-68, Verses 2:201-286 and 3:156-200.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 46.

*** HIS VIEW ON INNOVATION (BID'AH):**

His views on innovation can be seen in the following quotation: *“Every innovation in religion or in worship which has no basis in the Shari‘ah is accursed and reprehensible; but if it is based on the Shari‘ah it is accepted and praised.”*⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 47. The best contemporary work we have seen on the subject, is Jamal Abu Farqa al-Huseini’s *al-Nabi al-Khatam hal wujudah wa man jaqunu?* Cairo, 1st ed. , pp. 203, 91-100.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 47.

*** HIS VIEW ON TAKFIR (ACCUSING MUSLIMS OF DISBELIEF):**

Regarding this issue our commentator says: *“All Muslims have a single qibla, towards which they turn for their prayers, wherever they may be. Insofar as they face a common point and qibla, it is strictly forbidden to brand a person of the qibla as infidel (kafir).”*⁸⁸⁸

*** HIS VIEW O BLIND IMITATION (TAQLID):**

*“Blind imitation of one’s ancestors’ customs is a great mistake, when they are harmful. This is what the idolators did. They did not accept the clear facts, or the good advice, but followed in the footsteps of the Satan, who misguides man. Inheriting one’s ancestors’ useful customs must be preserved and respected.”*⁸⁸⁹

*** HIS VIEW ON THE APPLICATION OF THE SUNNAH:**

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 53.

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 56.

*“God’s love is reached only by obeying and respecting His messengers, because they have been chosen and distinguished, and they enjoy great standing with God...”*⁸⁹⁰

*** HIS VIEW ON THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN:**

In an article entitled *Islam and the Education of Woman*, our commentator writes: *“Islam does not prohibit the emancipation and education of women, quite the opposite, education revives the Sunnah of the Prophet and his respected companions, because it fights ignorance and erases illiteracy, Islam’s biggest enemy. Islam enjoins its followers to specialize in all branches of learning, be they religious or scientific, without differentiating between men and women, and for this reason God taught Muhammad a.s. to seek more knowledge: And say: O God, increase me in knowledge! (Taha, 114). There is no distinction between the sacred and the profane, as Christians hold. Every science serves religion or the world, materially or spiritually; it delivers a people to freedom, progress and frees them from the clutches of colonizers, which is what the Qur’an seeks. Science has neither citizenship nor nationality, it does not belong to a*

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid, pp. 86.

special group or elite of people, but it is a common property of humanity, both men and women."⁸⁹¹

⁸⁹¹ For more details, refer to the book *Komente dhe mendime islame*, pp. 351-354.

195. Zoti i tyre ju përgjegj lutjes së tyre (e tha): Unë nuk ia humbë mundin asnjërit prej jush, maskull qoftë apo femër. Ju jeni njëri nga tjetri por ata që u dëbuan prej shtëpive të tyre dhe emigruan, u munduan vetëm pse ishin në rrugën Time, luftuan dhe u vranë, atyre pa tjetër do t'ua shlyej mëkatet e tyre dhe do t'i vejë në xhennete në të cilët burojnë lumenj. Ai është shpërblim nga ana e Allahut, se më i miri i shpërblimeve është tek Allahu.

196. Të mos mashtroni brehdja nëpër qytete e atyre që nuk besuan.

197. Ajo është një kënaqësi e pakët, e pastaj vendi i tyre është xheneimi që është vend mirerimi.

198. Por ata që ia patën frikën Zotit të tyre, ata i kanë xhennetet nëpër të cilat rrjedhin lumenj dhe aty janë përgjithmonë. Ajo është prirje nga ana e Allahut, e për të mirët më e dobishmja është ajo që është tek Allahu.

199. Po edhe nga ithtarët e librit ka që e besojnë Allahun, e besojnë atë që u është shpallur juve, e besojnë atë që u është shpallur atyre, janë të bindur ndaj Allahut, dhe argumentet e Allahut në shpallje nuk i shesin për pak send të kësaj jete, të tillët kanë shpërblimin e vet tek Zoti i tyre, e Allahu është që llogarinë e bën shpejt.

200. O ju besimtarë, bëni durim,



bëhuni të qëndrueshëm kundër armikut, rrii të përgatitur dhe, që të shpëtoni, ruajuni dënimin të Allahut.*

* Në fillim të kësaj kapitule u sollën argumentet për njësinë e Zotit, për pozitën e rëndësishme të Pejgamberit, e edhe në fund të saj sillen fakte për Zotin një, për fuqinë e Tij në krijimin e çdo qenieje s sendi, ashtu që përmes këtyre faktëve, njeriu mund të ftojë bindje të plotë se Ai ka fuqi të ringjallë, t'i tubojë të gjithë para Vete, t'i shpërblejë ata që besuan dhe bënë vepra të mira dhe t'i ndëshkojë kokëfortit dhe zullumqarët.

Qëllimi i Kur'anit si në kapitullin tjetër, ashtu edhe në këtë, është: që tërheqjen e zemrave dhe të shpirtërave ta sjellë në njëkohje e Krijesit për veshtrimin të krijuarës në përgjithësi, prandaj këto ajete të fundit të kësaj surjeje, erdhën të atillë që orientojnë veshtrimin e njeriut kah gjithësinë në mënyrë që atij t'ia forcojnë edhe më shumë bindjen për fuqinë e pakufishme të Krijesit.

Kur'an i thotë njerëzve leoni librin e shkruar, të rreshtuar të Allahut (Kur'anin), e pastaj leonit dhe veshtroni librin praktik të Allahut, gjithësinë, ekzistencën, sepse në rreshtat e Kur'anit gjeni plot shprehje që u thërresin t'i futni në shërbimin e vet shpirtit dhe ta angazhoni e ta thelloni mendjen në të menduar deri sa ta gjeni dhe ta njohni të vërtetën.

Allahu na mëson se si duhet lutur Atij, por kur e jep përgjigjen nuk thotë se i pranoi të gjitha ato, por thotë se mundin e askujt nuk ia humbë nga dallim gjinie. Me këtë na bën të kuptojmë se nevojitet përpjekja së bashku me lutje, e jo vetëm boshë.

Përfjetimet e kësaj bote janë krejtë pak gjësend në krahasim me ato të botës tjetër, të cilat janë të përjetshme, të amshueshme dhe shumë më të mira, prandaj nuk duhet mashtruar pas kënaqësi të kësaj bote, e lenë rrugën e Zotit. Ata, të cilët e kanë veten në dorë, do të gëzojnë prirje madhështore tek Allahu mëshirues, e të mashtruarit, duke e lenë pas dore porosinë e Allahut, pas kënaqësi të kësaj bote, do të përjetojnë mirim të madh.

Në fund besimtarët porositin: të jenë të durueshëm në çështjet e veta personale, të jenë të durueshëm e të qëndrueshëm në çështjet që kanë të bëjnë me rethin, botën e jashtme, të jenë gjithnjë të përgatitur kundër armikut fizikisht e edhe shpirtërisht dhe të jenë respektues të urdhërave të Allahut, nëse duan të korin sukses në të dy jetërat.

Me ndihmën e Zotit përfundoi përkthimin dhe komentimin i shkurtër i kapitullit Ali Imran; falënderoj Allahun e Madhëruar!

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187. Dhe kur Allahu mori zotimin nga ata që u pat dhënë libri: që gjithqysh t'ua publikoni atë njerëzve, e të mos e fshehni, por ata e lanë pas dore atë për pak send të kësaj jete; pra, bëne punë të keqe.

188. Mos mendo se janë të shpëtuar

* Kur që shpallur ajeti i Kur'anit: ... kush i huazon Allahut një hua të mirë..., njëfarë prijësi fetar i Jehudive, Fenhas Azuru i paska thënë Ebu Bekrit: Zoti qenka i varfër pasi po kërkon hua. Ebu Bekri i mëshon grusht në fytyrë dhe i thotë: sikur të mos ishte në fuqi marrëveshja për paqë ndërjet nesh e jush, kisha për ta dredhur qafën. Jehudiu shkoi te Pejgamberi dhe u ankua kundër Ebu Bekrit. Pejgamberi e pyeti Ebu Bekrin për sjelljen, e tij. Ebu Bekri i tregoi se çka tha ai, por Jehudiu e mohoi thënieën, atëherë u shpall ky ajete: Allahu dëgjoi thënieën... dhe u vërteta drejtësia e Ebu Bekrit.

Jehuditë bënë shpifje edhe ndaj Zotit, duke thënë se Ai u ka thënë: të mos besojnë pejgamber tjetër pas Musait, as Isanë, as Muhammedin dhe ashtu të vërtetën që e kishin në Tevrat e fshehen, madje edhe mburreshin për atë sukses të tradhtisë që e bënë ndaj librit të tyre.

Myslimanët porositin të jenë të qëndrueshëm, të matur me rastin e sprovimit me çështje të ndryshme të kësaj jete, sepse matura dhe durimi në zgjedhjen e çështjeve është kulmi i karakterit njerëzor.

ata që gëzohen për atë që bëjnë (e fshehën çështjen tënde) dhe dëshirojnë të jenë të lavdëruar për atë që nuk e punuan mos llogarit shpëtim për ta (nuk e thanë të vërtetën), ata kanë një dënim të dhëmbshëm.

189. Vetëm Allahut i takon sundimi i qiejve e i tokës dhe Allahu është i gjithfuqishëm për çdo send.*

190. Në krijimin e qiejve e të tokës, në ndryshimin e natës dhe të ditës, ka argumente të qarta për ta që kanë arsyë dhe intelekt.

191. Për ata që Allahun e përmendin me përkujtim kur janë në këmbë, kur janë ulur, kur janë të shtrirë dhe thellohen në mendime rreth krijimit të qiejve e të tokës (duke thënë): Zoti ynë, këtë nuk e krijove kot, i lartësuar qofsh, ruana prej dënimin të zjarrit!

192. Zoti ynë, atë që Ti e fute në zjarr, atë e po koshiturar; për mizorët nuk ka ndihmëtarë!

193. Zoti ynë, në dëgjuan një thirrës që ftonte për besim (e që thonte): Të besoni Zotin tuaj! E ne besuam! Zoti ynë, na i falë mëkatet tona, na i mbulo të metat tona dhe pas vdekjes na bashko me të mirët!

194. Zoti ynë, jepna atë që nëpërmjet të dërguarëve Tu, na e premtove dhe në ditën e kijametit mos na turpëro; vërtet Ti je Ai që nuk e shkel premtimin!"

الدروس للمعلمين
١- العلم الراسخ
٢- الثبات في عمل المشاغل

FOUR: CERTAIN METHODOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE COMMENTARY, SUGGESTIONS, WORDS OF THANKS, CONCLUSION

Scientific objectivity and truthfulness oblige us to present certain objections and observations, which we reached during the study of his valuable commentary:

A. METHODOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS

1. The reader cannot concentrate or differentiate between the meanings of the translated verses, and the verses which are commented upon in a general and concise manner at the bottom of the page, as there is a discontinuation between the translated verses and their meanings. The comments and meanings of the verses start at the beginning of each page, without continuing on the same page, whereas the continuation of the commentary is given a page and half after that. This is a typesetting error, which our esteemed commentator had nothing to do with.

2. Another scholarly issue which deserves a special study and analysis is the slips of our author, only two of which have been pointed out in our study. We have come across cases in which parts of a verse's translation are missing, and there has been a completely inaccurate or even opposite translation by our

commentator. For example, the verse 25 of Chapter al-Nisa' (page 114 of the commentary), in which he has completely ignored the meaning of the phrase [النساء:25] ﴿...وَلَا مُتَّخِذَاتٍ أَخْدَانٍ...﴾ transforming the translation into something else, namely “*neither known nor hidden prostitutes*”, whereas the verse speaks about girls which have been caught or who have illegal lovers, boyfriends, and vice versa.

3. Chapter al-Ma'idah, verse 5, page 140,

[المائدة:5] ﴿...وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ...﴾

the word “خَدْنٌ” has been translated very accurately, when he writes “*And not immorality and not as illicit lovers.*”

B. CONCLUSION, ADVICE, AND WORDS OF APPRECIATION

I thank God the Glorious, with whose bounties the blessings are completed and the goals achieved! Benedictions and peace be upon the worthiest of creation, our master and Prophet, Muhammad, on his Family, his righteous Companions and their pure spouses, may they all be saved.

Praise be to God who enabled me to study this concise commentary and to expose the method of its author. This commentary is distinguished by its readable approach, and its fluid language, easy to understand. Its author has clearly expounded the different useful teachings and the clarification of the verses, as well as the explanation of the intended meanings of the Noble Qur'an.

No doubt, in this he has made use of his long teaching experience in Albanian, which has enabled him to gain a remarkable knowledge both in Albanian and Arabic. He is rather eloquent and discreet with words, which makes his text attractive and easy to read. Our scholar had lofty manners and excellent ethics in his correspondence with those having opposite views,

and he remained aloof from fanaticism, passion and emotions, because he followed only the truth and accurate proofs.⁸⁹²

I benefitted a great deal by studying this commentary, which enabled me to know the authors views at first hand, because in general he was a follower of the Sunni school, except for certain creedal issues such as: magic, and interpretation of certain verses concerning *istiwa*, namely those which state “... *then He rose above the Arsh.*” There is no doubt that this shortcoming is a part of man’s qualities, whereas absolute perfection belongs to God alone. The reason for these views might lie in the fact that in the principles of religion, the Muslims in the Balkans belong to the Maturidi School, whereas in the branches of religion they belong to the Hanafi School of Islamic Jurisprudence.

Certainly, these objections do not diminish the scholarly value of our honoured commentator Hajji Sherif Ahmeti. He has also written a dozen articles on exegesis, published in different journals of the Islamic Community of Kosova.⁸⁹³

I pray to Almighty God to send down His mercy on him, to make him enter Paradise, and to recompense him fully for his contribution to Islam and the Muslims, since only God the Magnificent can reward in this way!

⁸⁹² Refer to his commentary.

⁸⁹³ See the yearly journal *Takvim-kalendar*, a publication of the Islamic Community in Prishtina, 1984, pp. 36-47; 103-111; 1986, pp. 55-67; 1987, pp. 50-60. Also refer to his book *Komente dhe mendime islame*, 1st ed., 1995, Prishtinë, pp. 82-90, 340-344, 351-354.

I am unable to find words to praise God the Exalted for having enabled me to complete this study. Words are lacking and can never express the gratitude due!

This study would have not had this form had it not been for the valuable linguistic and topical suggestions by the respected scholars, my distinguished professors and colleagues, especially Prof. Dr. Hikmet Beshir Jasin, professor of the science of exegesis at the Faculty of the Noble Qur'an (Islamic University of Medina); Prof. Dr. Muhammad Baja'man, professor of Hadithi and Aqa'id at the University of Taibah in Medina; Prof. Dr. Muhammad Abd al-Qadir Hennadi, professor of Arabic at the same university; Prof. Dr. Jamal Husayn Abu Farha, Professor of *Aqa'id* and world religions at the same university; Prof. Dr. Ayman Sayyid al Sayyad, professor of Arabic at the same university. I sincerely thank them all for their effort and help, may God reward them with his endless bounties!

In the end, I invite my scholar friends and Albanian researchers, thinkers and defenders of the creed of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, who are well-intentioned, to seriously try and spread the message of the Qur'an among all the people.

I also invite the seekers of God's mercy, the experts on the religious, social, and political reality of Albanians, throughout Albanian lands and abroad, to start a greater and lasting scientific project, and to compile a wider and deeper commentary in

Albanian language. This project can only be realized through collective effort, which ensures the avoiding mistakes and slips.

May the benedictions of God the Magnificent be on our master and Prophet Muhammad and his Family! Our last prayer is: *Praise belongs to God, Lord of the Worlds!*

Al Madina Al Munawarah-Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2006

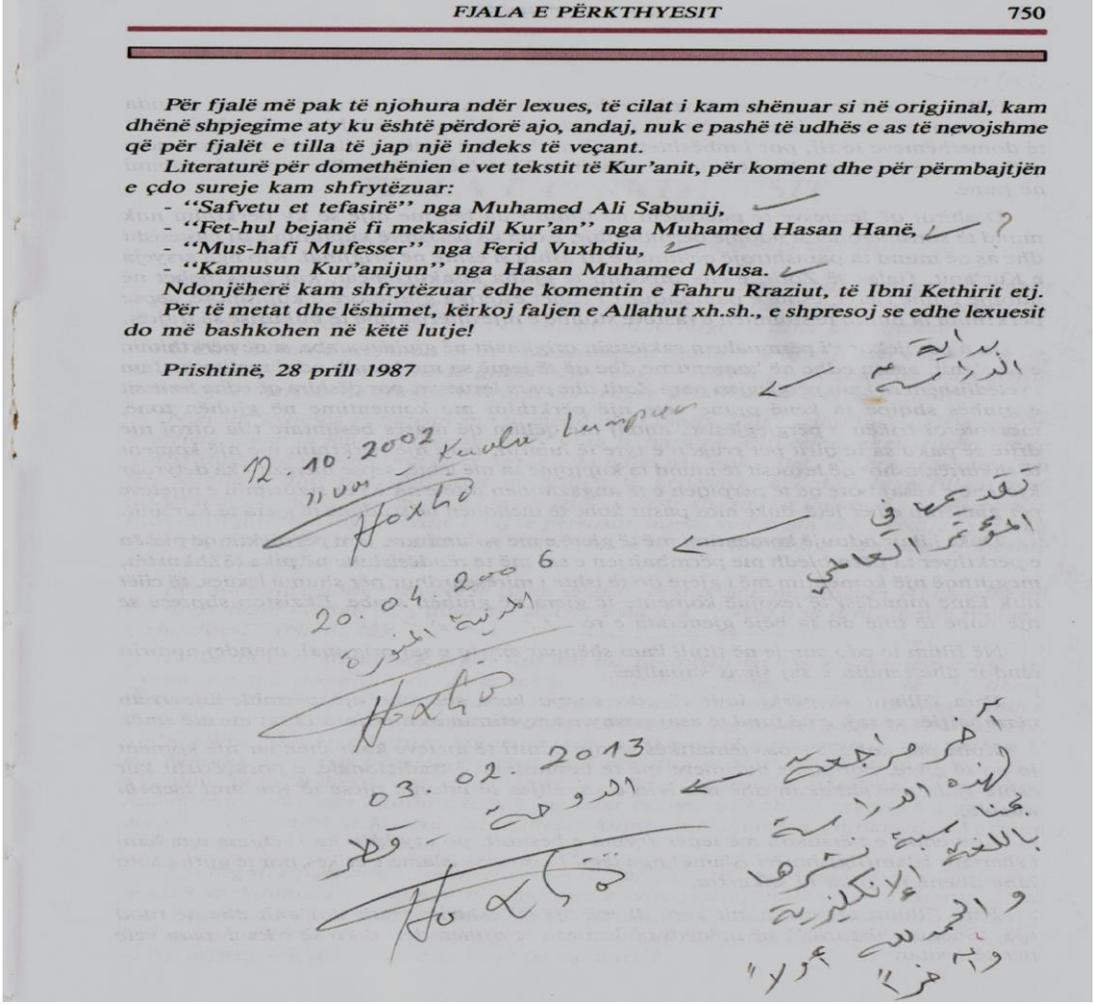
Për fjalë më pak të njohura ndër lexues, të cilat i kam shënuar si në origjinal, kam dhënë shpjegime aty ku është përdorë ajo, andaj, nuk e pashë të udhës e as të nevojshme që për fjalët e tilla të jap një indeks të veçant.

Literaturë për domethënien e vet tekstit të Kur'anit, për koment dhe për përmbajtjen e çdo sureje kam shfrytëzuar:

- "Safvetu et tefasirë" nga Muhamed Ali Sabunij,
- "Fet-hul bejanë fi mekasidil Kur'an" nga Muhamed Hasan Hanë,
- "Mus-hafi Mufesser" nga Ferid Vuxhdiu,
- "Kamusun Kur'anijun" nga Hasan Muhamed Musa.

Ndonjëherë kam shfrytëzuar edhe komentin e Fahru Rraziut, të Ibni Kethirit etj. Për të metat dhe lëshimet, kërkoj faljen e Allahut xh.sh., e shpresoj se edhe lexuesit do më bashkohen në këtë lutje!

Prishtinë, 28 prill 1987



The beginning of this study was in 2002 in Kuala Lumpur-Malaysi., In 2006 was completed in al Madina in Arabic and presented in the International Konferenc in Malaysia in the same year. In 2013 it was translated into Albanian and English, and in 2013, I edited again in Doha –Qatar and was published in a refereed Journal in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, my sincere thanks to the Almighty Allah

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