

<p><b>THE ILIAD BY HOMER AND ALBANIAN POET NAIM FRASHËRI</b></p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Literature</b></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Iliad, Homer, greek literature, translation, Naim.</p>
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**Abstract**

The Albanian poet Naim Frasheri, showed his admiration and love for the history, culture, Greek literature and mythology even through translating one of the great Homeric epopee, "The Iliad". In 1896 he translates and publishes the first song of The Iliad by Homer, while in 1886 he tried to translate and publish it in Turkish. Translation of "The Iliad" by Homer was accompanied by an introduction and a postscript, in the form of a file printed in the printing house association of Bucharest. This is also confirmed by the Albanian scholar Dhimitër Shuteriqi who says, "Naim was passionate about Homer, whom he will imitate and adapt later into Albanian". A fact that stands also for one of his most important works "History of Skanderbeg" which, for its epic character is similar to the Homeric epopee, Iliad and Odyssey. The writer Naim Frasheri was among those Albanian poets who knew and valued deeply the Greek poet Homer, appreciated the high artistic values of his works, which due to the mythological character and the message they evoke, remain as the cornerstone of European and world literature. They became a source of inspiration and encouragement for the creativity of our poet. The linguistic, cultural and literary knowledge Naim had for the Greek antiquity, encouraged him to try himself in translation. With the translation of "The Iliad" by Homer he wanted to show to Albanians the heroism, bravery and sacrifices of the Greek people through the centuries, with the sole aim to strengthen his people's conscience to fight for their freedom and independence. In this article we will see the importance of translation in the establishment of intercommunication bridges with different cultures and literatures, by conveying us at any time messages with universal values.

**Introduction**

In the history of its development Albanian literature, just like other world literatures, has been open to connections with other literary systems. It borrowed from these systems models, themes, literary figures as well as various types of poetry, by making them part of it, but always maintaining its original identity. This phenomenon is evidenced even nowadays, where the literatures are in a continuous interferential relationship, exchanging various literary experiences. Both the history of world literature and the Albanian literature have given us many examples of such a phenomenon. The well-known Israeli scholar, Itamar Zohar, speaks of the interference that, according to him, "literatures are always in an interferential relationship, and that interference will mean a relationship between literatures, through which Literature A (source literature) can become a source of direct or indirect borrowings for another Literature B (target literature),(I.Zohar, Polysystem Studiues,pg.54).<sup>1</sup> But as its inseparable part, is also the literary translation, which plays an important role in the development of literature in general. It has always served as a bridge of communication between different cultures and civilizations. Many writers, not only in Albanian literature, but also in other more developed literatures, have left traces of translations, enabling them to enrich their respective language and literature. According to the Albanian scholar, Erjona Tartari, "one can rarely understand an author, a literary phenomenon, genre, without understanding the influence, formation, and cultural and intellectual grafting of languages, structures of thought, and civilizations other than the one to which it belongs, the translator- she says,- performs a social act, since he offers to its society a way of thinking, a culture, a mentality

that belongs to another society which is defined as different in function of history, the development of souls, customs and moral norms, of civilizations that are not and don't have to be universal. Even in the literary case he carries out a cultural act trying to recover or translate along with the text "the storytelling legacy" that characterizes the text ( E. Tartari, Qasje epistemologjike mbi përkthimin në letërsinë shqipe, Studime letrare në process: Teza, ide dhe projekte, pg 35, 37, 38) .<sup>2</sup> For this reason we see it closely related to the culture of a country. In this way, "translation involves shifting views expressed in a language by a social group into their acquisition by another group, causing the process of decoding, recoding and encoding( A Monireh, The role of culture in translation, pg 14).<sup>3</sup> But, meanwhile, "translation is a communication process, the purpose of which is to provide the foreign reader with knowledge of the original ( J. Levy, Translation as a decision process "The translation studies reader" pg 148).<sup>4</sup> So every good translation is an exchange of languages, cultures and different worldviews, enrichment for mutual societies. The significance of literary translation is also influenced by various literary theorists. Pol Valery, says that without it, "we would not have literatures that fall in love with each other." While Eliot Weinberger and George Steiner say that "translation is the one that keeps the literature alive"( Th Jaques, Translating theory pg. 154)<sup>5</sup> and "only the poet can translate poetry( Ibidem pg. 155).<sup>6</sup> Or what Bahaan Hasan says, "literary translation assists different nations to get rich in universal culture.( B. Hassan, Literary Translation; Aspects of Pragmatic Meaning, pg 1).<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the role of translation in literature is very important, recalling here also what Zohar says" about his role in the crystallization of national cultures (I. Zohar, Polysystem Studies, pg 192).<sup>8</sup> Also Zohar mentions the fact that literary contacts also occur through two channels; when the source literature (more developed) is known directly from its own language, and the second case when it is known through translation (I.Zohar Papers in Historical Poetics, pg 47).<sup>9</sup> Therefore the role of translation in the history of literary development is irreplaceable.

## **2.The Iliad by Homer and the Albanian Poet Naim Frashëri**

The Albanian poet Naim Frashëri, showed his admiration and love for his history, culture, mythology and Greek literature, among other things, also through the translation of one of the great Homeric epics, "The Iliad". In 1896 he translated and published the first song of Homer's Iliad, while in 1886 he tried to translate and publish it in Turkish. A fact also affirmed by the scholar Dhimiter Shuteriqi in the biography of Naim, "in 1896," Naimi published the Albanian translation of the first song of "Iliad", after having published it 10 years ago in Turkish - he was the first one to try translating something in Turkish from Homer. And to make Albanians enjoy the Greek culture - and not only Albanians but also Turks, - he made Albanian and Turkish versions of the first song of Iliad from the antiquity poet ( Dh.Shuteriqi, Naim Frashëri:Jeta dhe Vepra, pg 98, 165).<sup>10</sup> So a century ago, says- the scholar Aristotel Miçi - Naim Frashëri made Homer speak clearly in Albania ( A. Miçi, Adhruimi i Naim Frashërit për homerin, 2011).<sup>11</sup> Even Engjell Sejdaçaj says, " Naim's study on Homer and his songs appear to us in two versions: Albanian and Turkish. It was published in Turkish together with the translation of the first song of Iliad 10 years before the Albanian edition( E.Sejdaçaj, Homeri në letërsinë dhe kulturën shqiptare pg 283).<sup>12</sup> Through him he attempted to bring to the Albanian reader another culture and civilization, that of ancient

Greece, as well as to show himself in the translation practice. It was precisely the linguistic, cultural and literary knowledge that Naim had about Greek antiquity, received during his studies at "Zosimaia" high school in Ioannina, which prompted him to translate Iliad. The translation of "Iliad of Omiri", as he calls it is accompanied by a preface and postscript, in the form of a fascicle and printed in the printing press of the Bucharest society. Although written as the preface and the postscript of Iliad's first song - writes Rexhep Qose - these writings show in general lines, Naim Frashëri's curiosity and interest for literature, in general, and especially for the literature of the great historical epochs, and for the literature of the great creators of mankind. Although the majority of writing is devoted to it, Iliad "here, is a reason for him to take a stroll through literature; from ancient Greco-Roman literature to Albanian literature. Qose goes even further when he says, "Even in the preface and the postscript of the translation of Iliad's first song, Naim Frashëri uses them to influence the national conscience with the historical discourse (R.Qosja, Porosia e madhe, pg 113-114).<sup>13</sup> It is so true that, by showing to Albanians, the heroism, the bravery and sacrifice of the Greek people over centuries, he sought to strengthen their conscience to fight for the freedom and independence of the country. Thus, translation also plays an important role in establishing bridges of intercommunication with different cultures and literatures to convey at any time messages of universal value. This is also confirmed by the Albanian scholar, Dhimitër Shuteriqi, who says, "Naim was passionate about Homer, whom he will imitate and adapt later in Albanian" (Historia e letërsisë shqiptare për shkollat e mesme, KSAK, pg 1938).<sup>14</sup> The fact that stands also for one of his important works, "Scanderbeg's History" which by its epic character resembles Homer's epics, Iliad and Oddysey. However, according to another scholar of Naim's work, Engjell Sejdaç says that "although it is not about imitation or about any adaptation of such Homeric songs, from Dh. Shuteriqi's assertion, we will understand a close relation that Naim had with Homer or even with the Roman poet Virgil. There are also cases when the scholars of this Albanian poet refer to the great affiliation that he had with Homer, especially in the great work "Skanderbeg's History (E.Sejdaç, Homeri në letërsinë dhe culture shqiptare, pg 268).<sup>15</sup> But another fact to be mentioned is that Naim with Iliada opened the way of translations from Artistic literature, despite the fact that Albanian literature had many before him, but mostly of religious character. There is also interest in this translation as Naim was one of the only Renaissance writers who tried to translate one of the great poets of the times as it was Homer. This idea is reinforced even more when we consider the scholar Shuteriqi who says, "He had deep admiration for the old culture of our neighbors, which had brought incomparable services to the European culture ( Dh.Shuteriqi, Naim Frashëri: Jeta dhe vepra, pg 164).<sup>16</sup> In this point of view we see an effort of this writer to get closer to this literature and to make it well-known to his comrades. As we said above, the translation has a preface and postscript, in which the poet gives us extensive information about Homer as well as about the content of Homeric songs. Scholar Rexhep Qose writes "as in all other writings even in these ones, Naim starts off from a simple purpose: to bring the reader, who according to his beliefs has limited historical-literary knowledge, some basic data on one hand, for Homer's epopees, and, on the other hand, about poetry and the world's greatest poets (Qose speaks of the preface and the postscript of Iliad's translation).<sup>17</sup> Or his tendency to give estimates of a historical, literary and aesthetic character to Homeric songs, by comparing

them with the world's most famous poets (E.Sejdaj, *Homeri në letërsinë dhe kulturën shqipe*, pg 277).<sup>18</sup> If we carefully pay attention in Iliad's preface apart from some of the thesis he speaks about the Homeric issue, he also gives estimates about poetry. In this case Naim's thought takes another turn, in which one can see his tendency to make a critical assessment of it. Naim sees the value of poetry precisely in the wealth of thought and in the way it is artistically constructed (aesthetic value). For him there is no value in its applicability (practicability) rather than the wealth of thought and the universal message that follows it. He writes, "*Asia's poem has great beauty, a great taste, good tone, nice measure, chosen words and different ornaments. The Europe's poem has the highest sentiment, so all have value on their own*( *Iliadhë e Omirit, Kënga e parë*, Bukurest 1896, pg 11).<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, Qose says, "the preface and postscript of the translation of the First Song of Iliad became the first historical- literary critical writings, and their author, Naim Frashëri, one of the founders of critics, namely of the literary trials, in Albanian literature (R. Qose, *Porosia e madhe*, pg 114).<sup>20</sup> Since the beginning of the preface, we see Naim's appraisal to Homer, by calling him the *Father of Poetry* who stands above all the other poets, and does not even hesitate to put him above Hesiod even though he was older than Homer. Naim says, "*Omir is called te Father of poetry, because he is indeed the first of all the known poets. They say that before Omir, in the old Greeks, was Hesiod. But Hesiod could not win the title (name) that Omir won* ( *Iliadhë e Omirit, Kënga e parë e Iliadës*, pg 1) .<sup>21</sup> Our poet's interest in Homer is very obvious, given the importance he has in Greek literature and culture. The Homeric world for centuries has been a source of inspiration for all European writers and not only. Therefore Naim puts Homer even before Oriental, Chinese, and Indian poets, though he writes that, "in Indian and Chinese languages there are older poems than those of Omir. But after him, says Naim, have been many other important poets like Pindar, Euripides, Sophocles and others, where among the Roman poets he values Virgil, whom he calls the second Homer. After mentioning all of these, Naim says that "these came after the traces of Omir (Homer) and Virgil." This is also stated by Shuteriq when he says, "Naim is interested in Homer, first of all from the aspect of his position and the importance he has in Greek and world literature and then he is interested in the Homeric world, which to this day are not removed from the agenda of many scholars of Albanology ( <sup>Dh.Shuteriqi, Naim Frashëri:</sup> *Jeta dhe Vepra*, pg 279).<sup>22</sup> Also in the preface he speaks of Homer's two most important epopees such as *Iliad* and *Odysseus*, which he calls poems, and shows that the first work, Iliad is about the war of Troy and the cause of this war. He speaks of the figure of Achilles or **Aqilehti** as he calls him, whom he values very much, as the bravest and the most capable of the other fighters. Not only him, but Hector as well, who fought to the end to put in place the honor of Trojans. Among other things, Naim also mentions the Greek gods, which played an important role during the Troy war. They were the ones *that* determined the fate of its heroes. He also indicates their gender, they were divided into male and female, each of them had their favorite hero, and were divided into camps. The gods mentioned here are; the goddess of beauty Aphrodite, that of wisdom Athena and other gods, Poseidon and Apollo. Ancient Greeks believed in the gods of Olympus, they even built Sanctuaries them, they even made stone pillars and worshiped them. As we are told in this preface, Sanctuaries were bare and people sacrificed animals, and the aroma of their meat went to the gods. Naim tells us that there were also half-gods and half-people like

Achilles, Heracles, Odysseus and others. He says in the preface that " by singing (reading) Omir (Homer) that humans believed in it. At that time people believed in many gods, the greatest was Divine, created peace and justice. Apollo was the sun, Poseidon was the sea. For the gods they had the sanctuaries to serve and worship them, made statues of stone etc ( Iliadhë e Omirit, Kënga e parë, pg 7-8).<sup>23</sup> What draws our attention in this preface is the fact that Naim interrupts his recital of the war of Troy and oversteps to the other Homer's work, Odysseus although he does not give details about it, but suffices to say that " Omir's second poem is the Odysseus who confesses to Odysseus' sorrow, after his return from Troy to his homeland ( Ibidem, pg 9).<sup>24</sup> Naim will talk in more detail about Odysseus in the postscript of the first song of Iliad. Another fact noted in Iliad's preface is that it appears fragmented, in which we see a poet's tendency to go from telling the events of Iliad and Odysseus in the submission of some Homeric-related issues, or even with other issues. He speaks of the faith of the old Greeks who believed that there was an afterlife that the soul did not die, but first went to hell where they took responsibility for the sins done in the hereafter, then went to Paradise, which he describes a thriving flourished land. Then he also speaks of their belief in the immortality of the soul, which has to do with the concept of metempsychosis, a belief we will see present in other works of Naim, especially those of a philosophical character. *"When the soul wants to return in this life, it drinks the water of a river forgetting all of its past, and starts a new life* ( Ibidem pg 9).<sup>25</sup> Another thesis presented here is that of Homer's origin from Smyrna. As seen from the preface, Naim repeats what others have said about him and that his positioning regarding this thesis in the narrow sense of the word is not very clear. He writes that, *"Even the homeland of Omir (Homer) is not known for sure, but they say that he is from Smyrna* ( Ibidem, pf 10).<sup>26</sup> It is obvious that Naim asserts what others have said before about Homer. We also see this in other things related to the Homeric issue. As are the facts related to the authorship of two works of Iliad and Odysseus which were not written by him, *"Homer was not real, because all these songs were in the mouths of people (told by people), afterwards they were gathered and formed by a poet named Omir (and they called him Homer).* But according to Naim there are also those who believe in Homer existence, and that the works carry his authorship. Therefore, the Homeric case and the related theses, are presented from Naim in an informative, summarized way, which according to Shuteriq we have that, "Naim appears to us as a good connoisseur of world literature and not Homerology (Dh.Shuteriqi, Naim Frashëri:Jeta dhe vepra, pg 277).<sup>27</sup> However, in the preface Naim speaks of the structure of two works, which are divided into 24 chapters (or pieces as he calls them) which have only proses and not lines. According to him, there was no lines at all, and many poets of Europe wrote in proses rather than lines. He asserts, among other things, that the Arabs were the ones who invented the line, *"they say that the line was invented by Arabs"* has been (invented) Arabs ( Iliadhë e Omirit Kënga e parë e Iliadës, pg 11).<sup>28</sup> Therefore the poet in the translation made to the first song of Iliad in Albanian has respected its structure, asserted by himself when he says that *"even in this piece (chapter) that we turned into Albanian we made it in prose and no lies to not migrate (leave) its roots (origin).* At the end of the preface Naim praises the great poet of Roman literature Virgil who wrote the great work "Aeneid". After him - he says - come Horace, Petrarch, Dante who wrote " Inferno and Paradise ", Tarkuato Tasi, who wrote about the wars of Jerusalem. He also lists

other writers who have given a lot to the world literature such as the poet of "Lost Paradise" Milton, or Lamartine, not to mention even the famous Arab and Persian poets to whom Naim is fond of and has been influenced in some way. He writes that *"the Arabs have taken many wars (things) known by the Greeks, but in the poems they kept their own special way. There are many Arab poets but the best of them are the poets of Persia, and the best and greatest of them is Ferdowsi who made Shahnameh. Ferdows is a friend of Omir and Virgil."* He mentions other Persian poets whom appreciates very much; Enveriu, Saadi, Nizami, Attar, Hafiz etc. But a more special assessment he has for Firdeus, Enveri and Sadi (Saadin), who he says writers of all times, Europeans or Eastern, he will estimate more Homer and Virgil, who stand in the pedestal of world literature. I found it reasonable in this article to focus more on Iliad's have descended from Heaven. Although at the end of the preface are mentioned the greatest preface than the postscript, which in a nutshell and concisely and summarized manner gives the content of two Homer's works. It refers more to Odyssey and his return from the Troy war after 7 years. He recounts his many efforts or sufferings before returning to his homeland and meet after so many years his loyal wife and grown son, whom he left very young when departing to Troy. Among other things he gives an estimate of the two works, of which Naim likes the Iliad, because "Odysseus has no taste and value as Iliad". The purpose of this paper is not to analyze the method Naim used to translate Iliad. We only know that he was faithful to the original when he translated it, and so we immediately realize that he used literal translation (word by word). He translated the first Song of Iliad to make famous not only to Homer, this great poet of Greek antiquity, but that this work also influenced and strengthened the conscience of his Albanian people at a time when his country was occupied by the Turks.

### **Conclusion**

The writer Naim Frasherri was among those Albanian poets who knew and valued deeply the Greek poet Homer, appreciated the high artistic values of his works, which due to the mythological character and the message they evoke, remain as the cornerstone of European and world literature. They became a source of inspiration and encouragement for the creativity of our poet. The linguistic, cultural and literary knowledge Naim had for the Greek antiquity, encouraged him to try himself in translation. With the translation of "The Iliad" by Homer he wanted to show to Albanians the heroism, bravery and sacrifices of the Greek people through the centuries, with the sole aim to strengthen his people's conscience to fight for their freedom and independence. In this article we saw the importance of translation in the establishment of intercommunication bridges with different cultures and literatures, by conveying us at any time messages with universal values. But also he translated the first Song of Iliad to make famous not only to Homer, this great poet of Greek antiquity, but that this work also influenced and strengthened the conscience of his Albanian people at a time when his country was occupied by the Turks.

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