

## Some Theses on the Presence of the Sea and Maritime Culture in the Historical and Collective Memory in Albanian Popular Culture and Authorial Writing



### Cultural Studies

**Keywords:** maritime culture, memory of the community, concept of continuity, opposition sea-mountain, new myths / re-mythologize.

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### Abstract

Do we still treat the sea as a break, as a barrier or an opportunity relating to the culture of tradition and the modern present culture? In the present article, I argue the significance of the sea's existence, try to show on which kind of texts we rely on to construct the concept of continuity of the maritime culture in Albanian no written oral tradition literature and on the literary artistic work of literature with an author. Although we inherit a rich ethnological culture, associated with the visual perception and opposition between the sea, the seascape and inner landscape or mountains, the presence of the theme and sea itself in Albanian written culture has left behind a certain set of cultural myths, among them, lack of marine memory in Albanians culture. What further scientific myths were and are still persistent enough to survive on this topic? Through this article I am not inquiring to seek out a path to replace the early myths of the past with new myths or to re-mythologize a latest relationship of modern Albanian literature to the sea. Speaking about continuity I try to show that this relationship continues as historical memory of the community, as well as it survived in the ethnos culture and enriches with the literary works of the modern authors of today.

The sea and its paradigm have left their imprints and marks in the psyche, prehistoric and historic memory of the Albanians. *The memory of the community* has managed to record, conserve and transmit examples, witnesses and proofs of coexistence between Albanians and sea, as well as witnesses of their “anger” toward it.

Just as history does, the folklore and especially the language craft memory and collective inheritance. But such common memory, for better and more, was preserved and inherited in its most expressive and articulated form as folklore.

There exist a considerable number of scholars that have made research on the sea traces on the memory of the Albanians. Thanks to these studies it has been able to collect, to classify, to interpret the presence of sea in the cycle of Brave Knights, to trace traditions, rites and crafts, fairytales, legends, oral traditions and facts upon sailors, pirates and distinguished captains of the sea, as well as other transversal data about the presence of a sea related culture such as, olives, salt, fishing, the crafts and other special abilities that relate with the sailing and the relationship of sailors with the coast, in the Albanian tradition.

Throughout almost a century of the existence of Albanology science, the question regarding the presence and preservation of marine memory in Albanians has been transformed into one of key problematic that was related and it is related directly with the theses of Albanian's lineage, autochthony and ethno genesis.

This theme has sourced strong arguing among well known scholars and Albanologists. One of the theses that has raised controversies regarding the so-formulated “*lack of marine memory in Albanians*”, mainly formulated upon the autochthon/alokthon controversy, has been working as a thesis that relies on the linguistic argumentation and the inclusion of the historic memory in relation with the language, especially with the specific marine language.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of the paper published under the title “ARE ALBANIANS DESCENDENTS OF ILLYRIANS OR THRACIANS?”, (From volume III of Dr. G. Wegiandt's Balkan-Archive), the Austrian scholar lists opinions, evaluates and concludes that: “*The marine and fishing terms are of a foreign source, Greek, Venetian, Slavic or Turkish, or they are entirely new*”.

In the same paper, right after the title: “*What proves that Albanians come from Thracians and what proves that they don’t come from Illyrians?*” Dr. Gustav Weigandt offers this conclusion-these: “*The marine and fishing terminology has foreign roots*”.

Theses of Dr. Weigandt regarding the natives and settlers, on which “*All the marine words are Greek, Venetian, Slavic or Turkish and in general are very young*”<sup>1</sup>, it is further expanded when he expresses that: “*The marine words such as boat, ship, barge, scull, sail, wheel, mast, etc..., are foreign to Albanian language*”<sup>2</sup>.

To further explore this author we quote: “If Albanians were the descendants of Illyrians and if they were to live in Illyricum forever, even if they were to be rooted from the coast by Romans or Greeks, certainly that some of the most usual words of marine and fishes would prove their own initial Indo-Germanic root, which at present is not possible by all means”. Even the common word “fish” is of a Latin root”<sup>3</sup>.

Further, making comparisons also with the other cultures with which Albanians and Albanian language have had contacts, he remarks: “It is a known fact that Illyrians were seaman and numerous harbors that were located deep into their lands made the fishing activity easy to exercise. The ancient venetians, who, according to the convincing arguments of Carl Paulis, were Illyrians, must have arrived there (In Venice) by land, while the Japigeans and Messapians of the lower part of Italy, also Illyrians in their origin, must have arrived there from the sea. Due to all this, it becomes certain that they had a enriched terminology of sailing and fishing, a terminology that, at least partially, was to be found also in the Albanian language and Albanian people if they were to be their descendants. All the words that relate with the sailing are Greek, Venetian, Slavic or Turkish, and in general, recent.

When I stayed for some time in Durrës, in 1910, I heard that the Turkish authorities had brought in some fisherman from Anatolia, so they might teach Albanians the fishing, because the natives didn’t know how to, this being a proof that they (the natives) should have come from the inner territories. One should know that Durrës has been a harbor since early times. Even to this day one might recognize in the hooks that still hang in the city walls, where once the vessels were tied. But, as centuries went by, the earth elevated and the harbor was taken by the sand.

In Elbasan, that is found near the river Shkumbin, that is full of fish, I have been asking around about the fish names, but in vain, because all names were of foreign origin; I heard only one native name, but this name was recent. The marine terms such as boat, ship, barge, scull, sail, wheel, mast, are foreign and not Albanian. Also the Romanians, being a non marine people, have not preserved almost anything from the Latin terminology. Most of marine terms that they use are Slavic and Turkish and recently plenty of other foreign words were introduced as well; the names of the fish often are Russian. Albanians that live in the watery parts of Greece, who had to work as fisherman, use a terminology that is composed of Greek and Neo Italic words. If Albanians were the descendants of Illyrians and if they were to live in Illyricum forever, even if they were to be rooted from the coast by Romans or Greeks, certainly that some of the most usual words of marine and fishes would prove their own initial Indo-Germanic root, which at present is not possible by all means”. Even the common word “fish” is of a Latin root”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Weigandt, G. (1995) *A janë shqiptarët pasardhës të ilirëve apo trakasve* (Are Albanians Descendents of Illyrians or Thracians?). Përprjekja, No 3, pg. 80-88.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Xhuvani, Aleksandër. (1928). *Volumi i III-të i Balkan-Archiv-it të Dr. G. Weigand-it*. Diturija, No. 7 & 8, respectively in pp. 260, pp. 291-295.

Professor Eqrem Çabej, whose point of view joins with those of other scholars and Albanologists such as N. Yokl, S. Mladenov, W. Cimochofsky, who have been critical toward the approach of Wegand, presents his own scientific arguments toward the theses of Dr. Gustav Weigand.

It is a widely accepted fact that the lexicon of Albanian language has a lack of word-roots which connect it directly with the marine lexicon, that there exist borrowings from the Italian, Slavic or Turkish source when referring to the fields of sailing and navy, as i.e.:

- From Italian: *barkë* (boat), *baticë* (tide-influx), *zbaticë* (tide-reflux), *bunacë* (doldrums), *furtunë* (storm), *gale*, *marinar* (sailor), *rem* (oar), *timon* (wheel), *vapor* (ship), *vel* (sail), *mjastrall* \*il vento maestrale\*, *shirok* \*il vento scirocco\*, as well as some fish names;
- From Slavic source: *vozt* (paddle), *lopatë* (scull), *grezhë*, *kosh*, *vllak*, *pestrovë*, *krap*, *belvicë* (fish names)<sup>5</sup>.

Other basic words can be added to above mentioned words despite their uncertain etymology, words such as *rërë* (sand), that is to be found in Albanian probably by the Latin arena and Turkish kum (Turkish-kum-sand).

In advancing his argumentation regarding the inheritance of Albanian in the marine field, Prof. Eqrem Çabej remarks: “concentrating on some of his arguments we will say that first of all, the marine and sailing terminology is not entirely of foreign origin, as Weigand pretends. Only the technical vocabulary of this field is foreign: the names of marine vehicles, of boats and vessels, the names of the fishing equipment and most of the fish’s names. But, there exists a number of words of general character that belong to the autochthon fund, such as *det* (sea), *pellg* (pond), *va-u* (ford), *mal* “*buzë lumi a deti*” (mountain near sea or river), ships that relate with the words *side*, *vessel*, in *Ulqin*, the little vessels and large vessels, meaning, “the little or large sailing vehicles”.<sup>6</sup>

For the approach of this paper, despite scientific argumentation, the categorization, classification and most especially the explanation that Prof. Çabej offers are of a primary importance when referring to the question of borrowings in the marine technical vocabulary. Such borrowings/cultural import makes an open and known fact for all those languages and cultures where along with the imported object, the appropriate marking word that refers to such object is borrowed.

Our approach, despite the investigation of arguments on lexicon, aims to offer more testimonies of the Albanian’s attention and memory toward the sea. We are inclined to strongly remark the presence of the sea in the life of the Albanians, in their pre literary creativity as well as literary creativity, counting these testimonies to be as much important as the lexicon testimonies. This, due to the fact that this memory and creativity has to do and it is connected with the psyche, the formation of the features of identity, culture and ethnos, and approached as an anthropology of the distinctive basic values of a nation which creates, acknowledges and shares the same, yet distinctive, culture from the others.

In this spite, the tracing of psyche, of vertical memory, of the darkest deeps of memories, common emotions, collective empathy, source or authorial creativity, customs, traditions, codified habits or free rituals, as a most important part of experiences, gains supportive value for our theses in relation with the displacement of the sea and marine culture away from the attention of the Albanians and in those cases when the marine basic

<sup>5</sup> Çabej, Eqrem. (1976). Studime Gjuhësore, Vol. 3, Prishtina, Kosovo: Rilindja.

<sup>6</sup> Çabej, Eqrem. (1976). Studime Gjuhësore, Vol. 3, Prishtina, Kosovo: Rilindja.

dictionary, the one of the sailing or other designations that relate with the sea derives from those languages with which the Albanian has been in communication.

There exists a distinction between experience and memory as a multitude of experiences. The experience often consists in reality, while memory is “the soul’s writer”, if we refer to Aristotle. From this point, we approach a referential point everything we mentioned above in the previous paragraph and along with it the poetical creativity as well.

Within the Albanian poetry, not only the rhapsodic one but the authorial one as well, beginning at least from the National Renaissance period, has a larger presence of references, views and mountaineer behaviors in comparison with the marine ones.

The most essential part of Brave Knights Epos, it refers to and evokes the mountains or alpine world and the sea memory or the marine elements appears faintly or even becomes visible when the danger or evils comes from the sea. It is the setting of an energetic world, full of vigor, rigid in confrontation with a world that is characterized by the Latin as “*dolce di far’ niente*”.

Also, even though Naim Frashëri and Gjergj Fishta, marked as national poets, have the sea as a part of their lexicon and intent, they embodied the mountain almost as a claiming muse. Naim, in his reference to Mount Tomorri and its appearance in the first verse of his famous poem *Bagëti e Bujqësi*, while in Fishta, almost all over his work.

The reasons for such sensitivity of the Albanians toward the mountain certainly that have historic roots and basis and the imprint of the mountain-protector on dangerous times might connect not only with the permanent habitat of the Albanians, but with the use of these mountains as safe settlements, as a natural stronghold where the continuity of life and tribe was guaranteed.

This circumstance might have brought, consequently, the glorification of the mountain toward the demonization of the sea, the late considered as the place from which the invasions and calamities sprang in greater number than its goods, such as commerce, exchanges or culture. In his short prose entitled “*Husarët n’ Adriatik*”, Migjeni, in a few lines, expresses such prosperous, disastrous and war and peace kind of relationship<sup>7</sup>, that often has determined not just the behavior, but much more than that.

The remarked imprints of the role of the mountain and the use of the mountain as a constant reference are numerously preserved in the phraseology system of the Albanian language, as i.e., the beatitude “*Rrofsh sa malet*” (*May you live as long as the mountains*), the curse “*Marrsh malet*” (*May you be exiled in the mountains*), “*Duron si mali borën*” (*Patient as the mountain is to the snow*), “*Sheh edhe prapa malit*” (*Sees even beyond the mountain*), “*M’u bë zemra mal*” (*My heart became a mountain out of joy*), “*S’i bihet malit me kokë*” (*Can’t hit the mountain with your head*), “*Duron si mali*” (*Patient as mountain*), “*Urtësi malesh*” (*Wisdom of the mount*), etc.

Meanwhile, as a counterargument we might refer to the fact that even the sea or marine culture, though not with the same attention, are present since early in the written Albanian. As an example, we might refer to the heritage of Arnolf von Harf, where 26 words of his *Fjalës (Dictionary)* made out of 46 lexicon units, two of

<sup>7</sup> Migjeni. (2002). *Vepra. Husarët n’ Adriatik*. Tirana, Albania: Cetus.

*them are directly connected to the seas* and belong to the marine culture fond collected in 1497, in the city of Durrës: specifically, the words *fish* (*pyske* – unit 9), and *salt* (*krup* – unit 10)<sup>8</sup>.

Also, it should be kept in mind that the world *sea* (det) along with the other words that relate with it were not absent in the texts of ancient Albanian literature where, certainly, the most complete text in its lexicon, also due to its character and unconditional thematic, appears to be the *Latin-Albanian dictionary* of Frang Bardhi.

In this vocabulary, apart from the word *sea* (det) we see other words that are directly connected with the sea, such as:

- Detuer-Sailor
- Valë-Wave
- Ranë-Sand
- Pupë-Stern
- Peshk-Fish
- Peshkëtar-Fisherman
- Peshkari-Fishing
- Peshkuem-Fished
- Not-Swim
- Barkë-Boat
- Barkëzë-Vessel
- Angurrë – Ankorë – Spirancë- Anchor
- Marinar–Mariner

.... as well as other words that relate with the marine culture, such as:

- Kusar – kusëri – kusari-Highwayman or sea brigands
- Kusërisht – kusarisht -Thievery
- Kusëruem – kusarohem – Become a brigand
- Rrush- Grape
- Vozit - Paddle
- (Të) Vozitunë- To paddle
- Ulli-Olive
- Ullishtë- Olive Garden
- Timue-timon - Wheel
- Riet-rrjetë- Net
- Rietzë-rrjetëz – Tiny net
- Kryp-kripë - Salt
- Nkrypunë-i kripur - Salted
- Lojlek-lejlek - Crane
- Dallëndyshe – Swallow etc...<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Elsie, Robert. (1997). *Histori e Letërsisë Shqipe*. Peja, Kosovo: Dukagjini.

<sup>9</sup> Bardhi, Frang. (2008). *Dictionarvm Latino Epiroticvm*. Shkodër, Albania: Botime Françeskane.

Also, in the same work of Frang Bardhi there are two more indicators that require one's attention. Firstly, in the chapter *Toponime & hidronime*<sup>10</sup> (*Toponyms & hydronyms*) it is to be noticed that none of the names of Albanian cities that are known to relate with the sea and had ports or harbors such as Durrëc, Himerë, Lesh, Antivari, Ulgjin, Vulona, are not absent in the list of nominations. Secondly, in the chapter *Names of people, gods and (half) mythological beings*<sup>11</sup>, the only mythological name that is mentioned by author, among many other names, mainly historical, is the one that belongs to Circe (7irkw), a creature of island and daughter of the Oceanid Perseida.

Perhaps, the two above mentioned data might seem a little enforced in order to thoroughly argument the attention of the author for a greater attentiveness toward the sea and marine culture.

The presence of these words in the dictionary of Frang Bardhi justifies/attests as well the presence of users and interested ones who used them. On the other hand, the quoted words indirectly witness the presence of Albanian cities whose habitant's life and work was related with the sea, meaning, they knew the sea related professions.

It is not a coincidence that these were exactly the cities that organized and canonized their living through the Adriatic coast line statutes, contrary to the "mountain canon law" culture, thus representing another example of the clashes that existed between *thalasokratia* and *telurokratia*.

In the field of dictionaries, there exists another important data, which in itself seem to be almost different from what we exposed above.

In the *Dictionary* of Pano Tase, containing words and expressions originating and used in South Albania, *the word sea is absent*, but there exists the word *wave* (perhaps, in referral to rivers) along with the repetitive adverbial expression "valë-valë" (*wave-wave*) and the proverb "If the sea would turn into yogurt, I would still not have a spoon", and most surprisingly, in the chapter "Various activities", accompanied with the editorial note in the manuscript, there exist the words *Anijesi* "Sailor" and *Detari* "Seaman".

We would like to think that this "absence of the subject or of the primary source matter" – the sea, as well as its outcomes might relate with the attention of the author toward the object, might have been limited by the experience of the contributors or by work's criteria or purpose, but, we don't think that such absence is indeed a devaluation of the sea that aims to praise the mountain, and we also do not think that the presence of this *Dictionary* can serve as an illustration or source matter for the theses that is presented by Dr. Weigandt regarding the absence of the sea and the presence of the mountain for Albanians.

The insisting attention toward mountain, the adoration and reference to him must not be absolutist and nor should it be approached as a unique feature that is encountered in the Albanians alone. *The divination of mountain doesn't make an exclusive typicality of the Albanians* as in the same spite even the absence of the sea, thou wide and dominant it is, doesn't make some exclusive typicality, as we will see further in this paper.

The place, the importance and the role of the mountain in different cultures<sup>12</sup>, "the exalted mountain", we often see it mentioned in the traditions of other people, with or without direct contact and relations with our culture.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pp. 786.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 787.

<sup>12</sup> Ferber, Michael. (1999). *A Dictionary of Literal Symbols*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Mountain as a myth and cult appears since the beginning of civilizations. The architecture of Ziggurat in the Sumerians, the Tower of Babel, the numerous mountains that are mentioned in the Bible, King James Version (regarding to the mountain in Genesis 8:1-5; Exodus 19:16-19; Psalms 125:2; Psalms 11:1; Psalms 90:2; Jeremiah 4:23-36; Isaiah 54:10; Chronicles 10:1-12; Samuel 1:4-12) as a trend toward the imposing verticality, has been long since not only in the mentality of the Albanians but in the conscience of other people as well. This fact would “*relief*” somehow Albanians and their culture from the “*burden*” of their unilateral attention, inadequate toward the sea, while the focus toward the mountain as a culture appears very well spoken and complete.

The religious traditions of the humanity present at us a long chain of mountains in which tops were found the sanctuaries and temples of the early divinities. The mountains were the chosen places of the heroes, mythological creatures and pagan gods when in polytheism but of the monotheist god as well. In the cultures that were later to influence the European civilization we are to face mountains at all times, as it happens with mount Ida, known as the mountain of the Goddesses, mount Athos, mount Otris of the titans, mount Olympus, known as the mountain where Zeus reigned, and mountains Sinai, Paran, Gerizim, Ebal, Hermon, Mizar, Halak, Hor, Gilboa, etc..., mentioned in the sacred scriptures.

Thus, the creation of the mythological/worship settings by the Albanians doesn't constitute any exclusion. Such cult and myth has been nurtured by the secular believes and from the nutritive sources of the great Mediterranean cultures. But in the creation and most especially in the preservation of the “myth of the mountain”, a great role has been played by the literature too.

If we were to refer to some of the authors and representative works that approach to the mountain as if to a cult, at first we would undisputedly put the names of Tomorri mountain, of which Naim Frashëri wrote that: “*The ancient Albanians believed in the God, and His sanctuary was found on Mount Tomorri, and it was called Dodonë*”, and the fantastic creatures that Gjergj Fishta mentions in his large collection of works, such as the mountain Fairies, the mountain hawks, the mountain leaders.

This mountain-cult, or this cult of the mountain tops, found its wider presence in the romantic literature of the National Renaissance period, thus transforming into a poetical cult. At this point we refer to Konstandin Kristoforidhi and his *Gjahu i malësorëve* (Mountaineers' Hunt), Naim Frashëri, Faik Konica, Çajupi, with his work *Baba Tomorri* (Father Tomorri), Asdreni, Hilë Mosi, Midhat Frashëri, Ndre Mjeda and many more, up to present day poets as Xhevahir Spahiu and many more.

But, simultaneously with this poetic cult, raised by Albanian poets, stand other world poets who have singed praises to the same cult, referring to Robert Burns “Yon Wild Mossy Mountain”, Walt Whitman “Bivouac On A Mountain Side”, Li Bo “Green Mountain”, D. H. Lawrence “Meeting Among Mountains”, W. Wordsworth “On Her First Ascent to Helvellyn”, Robert Frost “The Mountain”. Such worship is present in all the cultures, eastern or western they might be.

Let us remember, for instance, some of the cultures that do that, from the most distant ones up to those with which the Albanian culture created a relationship.

In India, for instance, despite the fact that most of the majestic temples are build in the vicinity of rivers or near ocean shores, in the sacred writings we see how mount Meru is deified: “... *a divine beam that serves as an axis, so the sky might not fall upon the earth.*”, as it is written in *Vedas*, were mountain is metaphorically painted with remarked cosmologic colors as the axis were existence rests.

Also, according to Hindu mythology, the divinity Shiva build his home in the mountains together with his wife, goddess Parvati whose name, translated literally, means “mountain woman”, “the resident” and “the mountain’s divinity”.

The same approach applies to Japan where the mountains are considered as the dwelling place of *kami*, the gods; from the mountain tops gods bring down the water that is necessary for the cultivation of rice.

The spirits of the ancestors, mainly those of the emperors, after going through the spiritual purification rituals, ascended into mountains thus being transformed into divine beings. Because of this, climbing some holy mountains, such as Fuji-yama, concurs with some mystic processions that are necessarily preceded by numerous spiritual purification rituals, which are still performed in Japan in our days<sup>13</sup>.

For Taoist mystics of China mount K’un-lun was the paradise and the centre of immortality; at this mountain’s top, the Lord of Skies, Tzan Tao-ling, discovered two magical swords that gave him the victory against evil spirits and from there, after he took the elixir of immortality, he was raised into heaven riding a five colored dragon<sup>14</sup>.

It is interesting to note that Lao Tzen, who is known as the founder of Taoism, when he felt the death approaching went in the Himalayas<sup>15</sup>.

For the Arabs, to whom the earth surface was a flat disk, *Kaf* was the mountain that surrounded the entire horizon, thus creating the border between the visible and the unseen; in order to discover the endless expansion and the endless miracles of the skies, Arab mystics had to climb up to the highest top of the emerald mountain.

Again, according to the Arab mythology, in the top of the emerald mountain, since the beginning of times, there lived Simurg, the mythic bird, the source of knowledge, happiness and power.

In Egypt, the pyramids symbolized exactly the holy mountain, Zikuratu, which was known as the dwelling place of the gods; when Pharaoh died, the sun beams were congealed so that his spirit, now purified through mystery rituals, might tread over them and ascend into heaven, just as it would climb a mountain.

A similarity of such image we find it clearly narrated in the architectonic of the “staircase” in the Jacob’s dream, in the book of *Genesis* 28;12. Also, in referral to Hebrews, we recall Mount Sinai, “*the holy ground*”, God’s “*dwelling place*”, where Moses was commanded to take off his sandals before stepping in the mountain ground, where he was to meet God. The interesting thing here appears the decisive force of the certain reality’s selected quality that is transformed into a metaphor; in the case of “mountain” - which was a selected “part” of an extended reality, namely, “the earth” – we note that the “height” is the decisive element of the metaphor mechanism; at this point it is worth to note that despite the holy mountains such as Ararat, the “mountain” where Noa’s ark stood, or Moria, the “mountain” of Abraham’s sacrifice, or even Sinai and Zion, we are presented through the Bible with “the cursed mountains” as well (1 Kings 11:7); in distinction from the first, the later, “the cursed mountains” are noted for their lower height; due to this reason, the term *bamôt* (mountain), is often translated as “hillside”.

<sup>13</sup> Piggot, Juliet. (1998). *Japanese Mythology*, New York, NY: Hamlyn Editions.

<sup>14</sup> Castellani, Alberto. (1978). *La regola celeste di Lao-Tse*. Firenze, Italy: Sansoni editore.

<sup>15</sup> Osho. (1993). *Discorsi su Tao-Te-Ching*. Milano, Italy: Edizioni Mediterranee.



According to this symbolic value, we find the metaphor of the mountain in many later authors such as Bunyan, Milton, Spencer, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Goethe, Heine, etc., keeping in mind at the same time its symbolic appearance in the iconographic arts as well, with Leonardo Da Vinci's *Madonna of the Rocks* as a classic example.

Through these eastern sources, such highlights and metaphors of the mountain were introduced in the West, initially to ancient Greeks. We all recall mount Parnassus and mount Olympus.

Also, through the Hebraic spirit that Christianity carries within, the symbolic of the mountain is visible according to the same architectonic, this expressed by the early church fathers, where a good example would be *Johanus Climaxus* or *John of the Cross*, who chooses the mountain's metaphor according to the same typology in his well known work entitled *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

In referral, one's mind immediately goes to the high mountain of Dante's *Purgatory*. While Hell is presented as a upside down mountain, the Purgatory is presented to the readers as a higher mountain made of seven Ptolemaic heavens, with earthly heaven standing at its top, "beyond waters and fire", that continued to preserve the previous traits, that of danger and evil, the divine punishment, thus being the opposite of the mountain with the "mountain" where believer's salvation would come from, as we clearly read in the Bible, *Psalms* 121: "I raise my eyes from the mountains, where does my help comes from? – My salvation comes from the Lord, maker of heavens and creator of the earth". At this point it is of special interest to note that "sea" is not seen as a direct benefit of the creation; the only action that God did in referral to the sea was "to withdraw" it, which means to "withdraw" the chaos so that the "order" might step in.

According to those symbolic values, we find the metaphor of the mountain in many later authors such as Bunyan, Milton, Spencer, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Goethe, Heine, etc., keeping in mind at the same time its symbolic appearance in the iconographic arts as well, with Leonardo Da Vinci's *Madonna of the Rocks* as a classic example

But, if in the literature of other countries the awareness toward alpine culture walks side by side with the awareness toward the sea and marine culture, and not only in the oral but also in the authorial traditions, in the Albanian written art there can be felt the absence of the sea and marine culture, most especially in the authorial sense.

Here we are not referring only to the poetry that is dedicated to the sea as an aesthetic approach as such, but also to the culture that comes from the sea, as for instance *the sailing, sea winds, sea related professions, olives, coasts, hill residing sea lights*, etc.... At this point, the rebuke of Prof. Dr. Shaban Sinani seems reasonable when he says that: "*Albanian poetry owes to the Albanian culture the return of the sea, not as a presence in the scientific debates, but because Albanians indeed have the sea, although slightly unnoticed, within their spiritual inner world*"<sup>16</sup>.

Since after the WW II and throughout all that period that is known as "*the socialist realism*" one, the mountain became newly a central vocation of the poetical post war environment, dressed with new symbolic and ideology.

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<sup>16</sup> Sinani, Shaban. (2010). *On the Albanian Literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Xhevahir Spahiu: *The poet that opened a closed door*. Tirana, Albania: Naimi.

Although exceptions exist, as everywhere, the Albanian poetry yet doesn't appear as and salted desert that faces the sea. In it one finds poets, among which we would like to mention especially De Rada, Gavril Dara, Serembe, Ndre Mjeda, Asdreni, Fatos Arapi, Xhevahir Spahiu, Moikom Zeqo, who have written verses that are entirely dedicated to the sea, as well as there are poets like Arian Leka who, according to the scholars, not only writes about but he is also identified with the sea,<sup>17</sup> and the sea in his literary work covers a significant part of it<sup>18</sup> – poetry, short stories, essays, and also a novel dedicated to a father-sailor and the relations among seamen, as well as it is identified as “*poet of the sea*”<sup>19</sup> just as Lasgush Poradeci is identified with *lake* and as “*the poet of the lake*”.

It is important to note that in this author's works one finds not only the concrete and metaphysical appraisal but also the critical approach regarding the relation of the Albanian reality toward the sea. Numerous examples of such remarks are to be found in the volume “*Sea Book*”, conceived as a cyclic poem, and most especially in the poem entitled “*The Backside of the Sea*”, from the poetic work “*Strabismus*”:

*My Man Turned Their Back to the Sea*  
*And I*  
*Abide the same weakness*  
*I sink ships,*  
*Make a hole in their ribs and leave astray*  
*Where the clouds remind me the fish*  
*Every sepulture*  
*Is an flugw with its issued sail*  
*There each tree hides trees in the womb*  
*And ships*  
*The memory hides crafts, professions, gifts.*  
*My man turned their back to the sea*  
*Throw up*  
*By the sweet bread of earth alone*  
*And by drinks<sup>20</sup>,*

And yet what *appears* to be an absence of the sea presence in the Albanian cultivated poetry should be searched in the *folklore*, right there where the imprints of the historic memory are preserved within the historical space of the Albanians, in the archaeological sites, in the roots or the wreckage of the words, expressions, etc.... In this sense one is attentive to the existence of the local god's names as an appendix of the general catalogue of the names of Olympic gods, as in the case of Redon and Poseidon, Dualos and Dionysus, etc.... Also, it is important to note the fact that in the pantheon of gods, from this two local gods (Redon and Dualos), one of them is the god of sea, and the other one represents an important marine culture, such as the winery and wine and also being patron of the arts.

Also, it is interesting for one to note the offering ritual of throwing in the sea the clay statues of earth Goddess, *Dhemetra*, as it is proven by the numerous findings and the finding of an clay workshop dedicated to the production of these statues, in the coast of Kallm, near the Durrës bay.

<sup>17</sup> Aliu, Ali. (2009). *Shtegtim Metafore (Critical Writings on Albanian Poetry)*, Tirana, Albania: Toena.

<sup>18</sup> Aliu, Ali: (2010, May, 9-th) *Arian Leka: Libër Deti*, Milosao, pp.10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Kristo, Erion. (2006). *Afresk Kritik*. Tirana, Albania: Ideart.

<sup>20</sup> Leka, Arian. (2005). *Strabizëm*. Tirana, Albania: Ideart.

These findings cast light on the presence of such relationship which reveals a binary profile: as a creation of a relationship, as “a flattering of the sea” and often as a controversial attitude toward it, that takes place since mythological times.

To these findings we would add another fact, which is slowly mentioned in our studies, but that it is presented as of a primary importance.

It is about the naming tendency of the Albanians, their trend to mystify the natural presences and phenomena and on the other side labeling them in accordance with human forms.

For example, we are impressed by these linguistic facts: for the mountain we meet word formations such as “mountain neck”, “mountain throat”, “mountain feet”, while on the other hand we meet word formations such as “sea torso”, etc.

Such imagination level and such visualization manner takes us in the far past and leads us to believe that the time of the genesis of such visualization derives indeed from the time when Earth-Gea was approached as Alma Matter.

At first sight, from the *earth to the sea*, it seem that this torso it isn't but a visualization of the motherly breast, the nutritive body part that is extended from the earth to the sea and not vice versa. But if the range of the look is positioned from the sea to the earth (Tera, or Tericum, as it is used to distinct the ground from the planet), we have another type of view. The viewing plans are dislocated and it seems that the sea is the one that nurtures the earth, the ground. This visualization urges us into another cosmogony, with the ground being conceived by the sea and not the contrary.

Apart from everything we mentioned above, there are many other cases that witness the relation that Albanians have with the sea. I am referring to those traces that are found in the Albanian epic, inherited as part of collective memory, especially in the “*Eposin e Kreshnikëve*” (Brave Knights Epic).

Let us refer, among many other examples, to the moment when Halil requests the intermediation of the sea (the sea as an ally) in the relation with his lover Tanusha and the act of her abduction. Also, let us remember that in the rhapsody of *Gjergj Elez Alia*, where “*a dark warlord (bajloz, bail=ambassador) has come out of the sea*”, the sea is pictured as an adversary. Let us also remember the *Kanunin e Maleve (Mountain's Canon)* of Lekë Dukagjini, collected by Shtjefën Gjeçovi, which specifies also the obligation of the bride, which, in her wedding day, was obliged to send to her husband's family, exactly: “in the fasting religious days, she must bring 8 okë (*measuring unit equal to 1.250 Kg.*) of dried fish<sup>21</sup>”.

In the above mentioned chapter we note a presence of several elements that relate with the marine culture, such as: “*wine 8 okë; raki 2 okë*”<sup>22</sup>.

In the canon, in its 75<sup>th</sup> chapter, entitled “*Regarding the Fishing*”, although in a far distance from the sea, rivers and brooks, we find the rules of fishing (*in the mountain*) codified and the presence of such rules proves an relation and knowledge about the techniques that relate with the culture of sailing and fishing, which, regardless of some specific distinctions, remains the same.

<sup>21</sup> Gjeçovi, Shtjefën. (2010). *Canon Law of Lekë Dukagjini*. Shkodër, Albania: Botime Françeskane. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

In this part of canon we find identical fishing terms and instruments, identical fishing techniques, designations about the caught fish that are used despite the location of the fishing activity, in the sweet waters or in the sea. In the same chapter, verse 429, it is written: “*The fishing, like hunting, is not restricted. In any session of the year, the fishing is allowed*<sup>23</sup>”.

An interesting element is also the manner of sharing the fish, especially the tendency for fellowship and equality through the process, between the fisherman, the owner of the land where fish is caught, and the friend who happens to be there when fishing activity takes place, in which case: “*If someone appears – a friend or anyone from the village – during the fishing, he will receive a share of the fish caught. It is unlawful to let the friend or the guest leave without a share*<sup>24</sup>”. Meanwhile: “*The fish that is caught by the fisherman will be split in units according to the number of the fisherman present, and than it should be waged, and distributed according to the chance, to every one equally*<sup>25</sup>”. Or in some cases: “*When the fish is killed with chemicals, those who killed it might receive it back, without restrictions, even when the fish might have been taken away by the stream beyond the village borders*<sup>26</sup>”.

The *Kanun* (Canon Law), second volume, chapter two, entitled The Raise of the Family, verse nine, appoints as exclusive the right that the lord or the lady of the house has to land money or materials, even some of those elements that are part of the marine culture such as the wine, the raki or the salt.

In the chapter *Lord of the Household Has the Right*, we see that he alone might “buy, sell or land wine or raki”. Meanwhile, in the chapter *Lady of the Household Has the Right*, we see the importance that a sea product as salt had and which could be lend only by the Lady of the Household.

Strangely, the evaluation of these products that according to the canon law could be land to others by the Lord and Lady of the household alone remains unclear.

In the 79<sup>th</sup> chapter, *Canon Prices*, we note that their price, in comparison to other products, is cheap. Accordingly, “One Oka of Wine ... 1”, “One Oka of grape raki ... 5” (prices are in the unit *Grosh* (cents), while other product of the same marine origin or that are connected to it like i.e. “the good olives” cost one hundred *Grosh* (cents), coffee costs nine, and so on...

The importance of the marine culture represented by trees or fruits in the *Canon Law* is to be found in the protection that it offers to these cultures but also in the estimation it shows for them as life giving. “*If olive trees, fig trees or any other useful fruit trees are to be planted, they shall be planted in an at least 5 feet within the village border, and if that is not possible, than the trees must be planted 10 feet within*<sup>27</sup>”.

In the same chapter we find some other specific cases regarding the treat of the vineyards, mainly in those cases when the vineyard or trees are damaged<sup>28</sup>. But, the coexistence with the marine culture can be recognized meanwhile even in the phraseology of welcome rituals, such as: *The guest shall be honored: “Bread, salt and a wishful heart*<sup>29</sup>”.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Gjeçovi, Shtjefën. (2010). *Canon Law of Lekë Dukagjini*. Shkodër, Albania: Botime Françeskane. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Apart from these codes and rules there are many legends, fairy tales and characters as i.e. *Groundgazer*, mentioned by Prof. Eqrem Çabej, the mythological being whose existence is believed in Mirdita and who is partly man and partly animal and that during the spring nights lays to the ground so to listen if anyone comes from far distances (from the sea?) and listens if the underground water streams sound – *Groundgazer* wanders riding his mare, *Dhamsuta*, that treads over mountains and seas.

Also, in the legends one meets sea pirates, like the Parga ones, which are depicted in the poems of George Gordon Byron as “friends of sea”. They are present in oral traditions, tales, stories, words and folk phraseology (The sea is known by its waves and man by their words”, curses (May no one brings him out of the sea; Might the sea keep him inside; May his soul leave him on the sea; May the spar sprout on your forefront), blessings (Boat and sea are never to be ill spoken), lullabies (the sea, the sea, master of his own/bad dreams by it might be gone), and names of imaginary creatures that relate with the sea and waters such as the *Beauty of the Seas*, *The Sea Fairy*, *monsters*, etc...

In the numerous marine and fishing traditions, folk songs like “I took the sea into my eyes” or “A castle near the sea”, and many dances from the living areas near the coast, the scholars find also legends like the legend of *Haxhi Ali* and all stories that were supposed to have been narrated by the main character himself, as i.e.: “*The sea was my home – Haxhi Ali said. The doorstep of this house is the earth itself. The sea waves are my pillow and they will be my grave stone*<sup>30</sup>”.

But there is interest also in the ethno linguistic approaches, proverbs, aphorisms, sentences, gnomes, different expressions or sea related idioms, of which understanding we receive data and precious assistance from the *phraseology* and *paremiology*, which study this part of creativity. Some very interesting examples, especially due to their geographic expansion from Northern Albania up to the coastal South, would be:

- If you can't pull the sculls, than don't climb in the boat.
- Two generals sink the ship.
- When grape matures, the sea darkens.
- Do the good deed and throw it in the sea. If the fish can't see it, God will.
- Near the sea, near the King.
- There is storm in every port.
- The sea is approaching furiously.
- The big fish eats the smaller one.
- There is anything in the sea.
- Even if the sea turns into milk, there will be no spoon for the poor.
- The swimming is learned into the sea, not in the ground.
- The household works, numerous as the sea's water.
- Better one fish in the frying pan, than 100 in the sea.

Or prayers like:

- O great sea let our sailing go smooth.
- Please o Father Sea, let there be no storm in you.
- Sea, Lord, Almighty, who gives us life and soul<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Gjeçovi, Shtjefën. (2010). *Canon Law of Lekë Dukagjini*. Shkodër, Albania: Botime Françeskane. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

<sup>31</sup> Gjoni, Irena. (2008). *Marrëdhëniet e miteve dhe kulteve të bregdetit jonian me ato ndërkuftare*. Sarandë, Albania: Milosao.

But these proverbs are not used only in the coastal areas or in the settlements near it. We find them even in the deep mountainous Albanian districts and in numerous northern settlements. Here is a list of places that show their expansion:

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| • Can the sea ever be filling by rivers?                       | Devoll   |
| • There is plenty of water at sea, but it can't be drunk.      | Kosovë   |
| • The fish at sea, frying pan in the fire.                     | South    |
| • Fish at sea, salt on earth, but they meet in the frying pan. | Korçë    |
| • The wave suits the sea, the word suits the man.              | Vlorë    |
| • Move ye sea, so the river might pass.                        | South    |
| • The sea is known by its waves, the man by his words.         | Sarandë  |
| • Even the sea doesn't hold the will but it brings it out.     | Dukagjin |
| • Ask the sea how many rivers flow into it.                    | Kolonjë  |

All we presented, and many other elements that might be taken into consideration further and more deeply, testify mainly for a “*lack of presence*” rather than a “*lack of attention*” that Albanians show toward the sea. The justification for this is advocated from the historic circumstances unto which Albanians have been through, to whom the sea has often shown its worse side. That is why they have seen the sea as “*demon*”, “*darkknight*”, “*boogie*”, etc.

Regarding the designation “Black Sea”, which we find it in the epic, we think that this term might have also a geographical use, in the case when the colors define the horizon lines, but it can also have an emotional charge in referral to a historicity that is deeply rooted and transformed in centuries within the historic consciousness.

In the sea, Albanians have found mostly “*the danger that appears and comes from it*”, rather than a approachable object, aesthetical exotic curiosity and psychological wander.

The same factors – the historic poetical heritage of “*the mystified and glorified mountain*” and the historic folkloric heritage of the “*cursed, damned sea*” on the other hand—are those that influenced that the sea might not be a theme of primary importance or a special theme in the Albanian authorial poetry, into which it is quite impossible for us to easily, satisfyingly and visibly find the proper elements which would allow us to qualify it as a poetry that is inclined to put the sea at its centre.