SOFIA UNIVERSITY ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI

Faculty of Slavic Studies
Department of General, Indo-European and Balkan Linguistics

Artistic and scholarly contribution of writer Thoma Kacori to the Bulgarian-Albanian literary contacts

ABSTRACT

of a dissertation thesis for awarding the scientific and educational degree "Doctor"

PhD Candidate: Liliana Srebren Beyleri
Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Nikolova Tarpomanova

Professional Field: 2.1. Philology
Scientific Specialty: Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Australia (Albanian Literature)

SOFIA, 2025

The dissertation thesis was discussed and directed for public defense by the Department of General, Indo-European and Balkan Linguistics at the Faculty of Slavic Studies of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski on 28.01.2025
The public defense will take place on 04.06.2025, 10.00 h in the Hall 1 – Rectorate, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", according to the Regulations for the terms and conditions for the acquisition of scientific degrees and academic positions at Sofia University, before a Scientific Jury, appointed by Rector's order RD 38–131/23.02.2025, and composed of:

Chairman:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fotini Yanis Hristakoudi-Konstantinidou, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Members:

Prof. Dr. Sc. Raya Yordanova Zaimova, IBSCT, BAS
Prof. Dr. Sc. Aleksandr Yurievich Rusakov, Albanian Academy of Science
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Antoaneta Borislavova Balcheva, IBSCT, BAS
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maya Petkova Aleksandrova, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Reviewers:
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fotini Yanis Hristakoudi-Konstantinidou
Prof. Dr. Sc. Aleksandr Yurievich Rusakov

TABLE OF CONTENTS

General description of the thesis

FIRST CHAPTER
INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHY

1.1. Scientific-methodological introduction
  1.1.1. Object and subject of the dissertation
  1.1.2. Goal of the thesis
  1.1.3. Relevance of the thesis
  1.1.4. Research tasks
  1.1.5. Scientific methods
  1.1.6. Major assertions of the thesis
  1.1.7. The usage of some terms
1.2. Thoma Kacori's biography – family, activity in the colony, translations, ethical stands and opinions

SECOND CHAPTER
THE INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY IN SCIENCE

2.1. Collective memory in science
2.2. The academic memory in Bulgaria
2.3. A forthcoming Albanian academic project
2.4. The team work in science
2.5. An exploration bridge to each other
2.6. In a quest of rare scientific finds

CHAPTER THREE
IN DARKNESS AND LIGHT – A METAPHOR FOR THE SHORT GENRES

3.1. Transition from journalism to literature in the collection *De Rada's Candle Lamp*
3.2. Travelogues and reports
3.3. Diversity of the Albanian village in the short-stories collection *Generations*
3.4. *Ancient Stories* inspired by Paleo-Balkan Studies

CHAPTER FOUR
NATIONAL MYTHOLOGY IN THOMA KACORI'S PRISM. LONG PROSE

4.1. The novel *The Bravest Warrior of Albania Skanderbeg*
4.2. *Besa* as an Albanian realia in the novel *The Great Besa*

CHAPTER FIVE
SIGNIFICANT INTERTEXTUAL THEMATIC MOTIFS

5.1. The Albanians and the weapons
5.2. Money and manners
5.3. Saints, beliefs and sacred places
5.4. Bulgaria in the author's work

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS
SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS
LILIANA BEYLERI'S SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS
REFERENCES

General description of the thesis

The full text of the PhD thesis consists of 431,000 characters or 240 standard pages without the appendices. It is organized in five chapters; findings and conclusions; scientific contributions, Thoma Kacori's complete bibliography – 163 units; other references – 132; references in total 296; and two appendices.

CHAPTER ONE of the dissertation is divided into two parts – an introductory scientific-methodical part and Thoma Kacori's biography, the late emphasizes family, activity in the diaspora, translations, personal views and opinions.

1.1. Introduction

The Bulgarian community is in debt to many 20th century scholars and artists, who contributed in their time to the intellectual development of the nation, to heated cultural issues of their time and place, as well as to bilateral and multilateral contacts in the Balkans. Data about them can be found only in the old periodicals – often regional – and in the private archives, which unfortunately sink into oblivion or are lost through the generations. The attempt to reconstruct their life path, their spiritual biography and their literary heritage in manuscript, sometimes proves to be a difficult task. After I became acquainted with the monograph *The Living History or on the Memory of a Thessaloniki Family*[1], I thought that expressions such as *living history*, *family memory* and *institutional heritage* would be appropriate for a subtitle of the dissertation because they implicitly depict the object, the tasks and the scholarly contribution of what was carried out during the doctoral studies.

1.1.1. Object and subject of the study

The object of the study is the personality of the Albanian writer in Bulgaria Thoma Kacori. He arrived in Bulgaria at the age of 18 in 1940, settled in Sofia, created a family, worked and lived here until his death in 2008.

The subject of the study is author's life, activities, scientific and teaching work and his creative legacy. The individual aspects are united and interconnected through the framework of the Bulgarian-Albanian literary and cultural contacts in the second half of the twentieth century.

1.1.2. Goal of the thesis

The major goal of the project is to honor the personality and work of Thoma Kacori – an inspiring promotor of Bulgarian-Albanian literary contacts in the 20th century, on the occasion of his 100th anniversary in 2022.

[1] Заимова, Рая. *Живата история или за паметта на една солунска фамилия*. София: ИБТЦ, 2019, 127 с.

The project consists of two parts. The first part was published in 2022 in Albanian language co-authored with Rusana Beyleri. It is a biographical book which makes public a lot of facts, some works, manuscripts, interviews and correspondence in order to inform the Albanian-speaking audience and to foster further studies. It was co-authored in pursuit of comprehensiveness and institutional prestige of the book in Albanian at the time of Kacori's 100th anniversary. The authorship in the book is clearly stated by chapters. Liliana Beyleri is the author of the first chapter – "An essay on Thoma Kacori's biography", the third chapter – "The Writer's Artistic Inspiration", the fourth chapter – "The Short Prose of Thoma Kacori and the Important Ethnopsychological Phenomena", the fifth chapter – "The Long Prose of Thoma Kacori and the Impetuous History of the Albanians", the full bibliography of the writer and the English summary. Rusana Beyleri is the author of the second chapter – "Thoma Kacori and the First Steps of Albanology in Bulgaria at the Faculty of Slavic Studies of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", the sixth chapter – "The Poetic Work of Thoma Kacori in Rhymed Verses" and the seventh chapter – "Thoma Kacori and the Albanians in the Balkans". The book is available with open access on the website of the University Library, as will be the present dissertation, too. The second part of the project is the current doctoral thesis in Bulgarian, which consists of extra analytical work on the archive materials and the literary heritage of the author.

1.1.3. Scholarly argumentation of the study

- Thoma Kacori is a respected writer of the Albanian diaspora and his name, with brief biographical notes and bibliography, is invariably present in specialized texts on Albanian literature, in references about Bulgaria, and also in the curriculum of some universities where Albanian literature is studied. Yet, apart from the general data until the beginning of the present project in 2020, only several articles by Russana Beyleri[2] and part of a master's thesis under her supervision by Ivalena Taneva[3] were available to readers.

- Albanian literature and culture are currently in the process of consolidation by encompassing the creative work in the compact Albanian communities outside the borders of the Republic of Albania and those of the migrants after 1940-s. Thoma Kacori represents the Albanian diaspora in Bulgaria precisely during this period. He deserves to be fully included and duly positioned in the cultural framework to which he belongs *per se*. His interaction with Bulgarian literary models is part of topical comparative literary studies on migration practices.

- The significance of the institutional memory in science. The Department of General and Comparative Linguistics, now General, Indo-European and Balkan Linguistics, is to be credited for the inclusion of Albanian in Bulgarian science, yet department heads relied for that on Thoma Kacori during his active period. This dissertation analyzes his work and unfolds the

[2] Бейлери, Русана. Тома Кацори в България – последният албански възрожденец. *Албанската литература като огледало на народната душевност*. София: Балкани, 2009, с. 214–219 – It contains mainly biographic facts, a bilingual poetry of the Kosovar Albanian poet Agim Vinca dedicated to Thoma Kacori is published on p. 219; Bejleri, Rusana. Thoma Kacori dhe problemi i adaptimit të shkrimtarit shqiptar jashtë atdheut. *Studime albanologjike*, v. 2, Skopje, 2010, f. 117–132 – Soma issues of the Balkan migration practices are included, the article is part of Chapter 7 of the book; Bejleri, Rusana. Poezi të pabotuara të Thoma Kacorit në "Romancë dashurie dhe brenge". *Seminari XXX Ndërkombëtar për Gjuhën, Letërsinë dhe Kulturën Shqiptare*, Issue 30/2, Prishtinë, 2011, f. 503–509. This article is incorporated in Chapter 6 of the book.

[3] Танева, Ивалена. *Ролята на емигрантската албанска литература и на Тома Кацори за развитието и съхраняването на националната култура и символика*. София, 2008, с. 37-68. Supervisor Russana Beyleri. Manuscript. Available online at publications/literature of www.albanianbg.com Last seen 20.01.2025.

scholar-teacher-writer symbiosis.

1.1.4. Research Tasks

- Specifying the facts of Thoma Kacori's biography through documents and materials. Constructing his spiritual biography through relevant memories of family members and colleagues.
- Tracing Thoma Kacori's social activity for the Albanian community in Bulgaria and his contribution to the popularization of their cultural achievements.
- Clarifying Kacori 's position and contribution on the important issues of linguistics, literature and culture in the Balkans.
- Analyzing the writer's creative method through the different stages and genres of his literary legacy and positioning him in the course of the Albanian literary history.
- Literary analysis of the author's literary work against the background of the relevant phenomena and processes in Albanian literature, and also through his interaction with Bulgarian culture.
- Thematic intertextual analysis of his literary works in view of their reception potential for the Bulgarian reader.
- Tracing down and compilation of a complete bibliography of the author's heritage.

1.1.5. Scientific Methods

- Empirical method. Interviews with family and co-workers.
- Historical method. The method has been applied in relation to the linguistic contribution and in processing his personal archive. Access to the author's personal archive was granted to the PhD candidate in 2020 by the writer's wife, Violeta Kacori. The archive is currently kept by his son, Kristian Katzori.
- Literary-historical method. The author's literary works are examined in the context of the Albanian literary history. Floresha Dado's arguments, expounded in *Theoretical Challenges of Literary Historiography*[4] have been followed as well as the framework of her book on the life and work of the Albanian classic writer Andon Zako Çajupi[5] who had similar personal history and professional development to that of Thoma Kacori, as well as Rexep Qosja's monograph on Asdreni[6].
- Literary analysis of fiction.
- Comparative literary science. The title of the thesis alone prompts this method, as well as the migration motifs, the focus on thematology and on reception. Roumyana L. Stantcheva's monograph on Comparative Literature and Balkan Studies[7] serves as underlying theoretical

[4] Dado, Floresha. *Sfida teorike të historiografisë letrare.* Tiranë: Bota shqiptare, 2009.
[5] Dado, Floresha. *Andon Zako Çajupi. Jeta politike dhe vepra letrare*. Tiranë: Bota shqiptare, 2012.
[6] Qosja, Rexhep. *Asdreni: Jeta dhe vepra e tij*. Vepra, v. II. Prishtinë, Instituti Albanologjik, 2010.
[7] Станчева, Р. Л. *Среща в прочита. Сравнително литературознание и Балканистика*. София: Балкани, 2011.

basis. The two major projects led by her on what Comparative Literary Studies compares, Sofia, 2010 and on *Migrating Cultures and Social Practices*, Sofia, 2013 outline the extensive potential of this method in terms of interdisciplinarity and models. Although the triangular model of literary communication – a Western model through a specific Balkan literature in another Balkan literature – is not applicable to the specific author, the concept of a model is validated on the basis of another R. L. Stancheva's thesis – about Ivan Vazov's novel "Under the Yoke" as a model[8].

Albanian studies as philological field are a complex discipline. An observation on the practice of scholars abroad shows that there is no sharp distinction between linguistics and literary studies in their scientific activity. The same applies to the methodology of teaching Albanian as a foreign language, which includes elements of Albanian literature. This makes the present study multifaceted but not multidisciplinary.

1.1.6. Major assertions of the thesis

- Thoma Kacori exhibits the duality characteristic of Albanian emigrants of all generations – he has a good realization and incorporation in the host country, but still remains a non-emigrant in spirit.
- Thoma Kacori works individually and in a team on important problems of Albanian studies and contributes to the discussion on them, to the formation of future Bulgarian scholars and to the good spirit of understanding and knowing between the two peoples.
- As a writer, he demonstrates a distinct continuity with Albanian literature in Albania and maintains contact points with it consistently, in his own original way.
- The author's work is post-romantic, containing elements of revival romanticism, realism and sentimentalism.
- Thoma Kacori's fiction works have positive reception potential both in Albanian and Bulgarian languages. Publication of his complete works in Albanian is imperative for the consolidation of Albanian literature.

1.1.7. Some concepts

- The term *Albanian literature* is used for Albanian-language literature and for works by Albanian authors that are not in the Albanian language.
- The term *the book in Albanian* refers to the first part of the present project in order to avoid unnecessary self-citation. The page is duly noted in parentheses.
- The phrase *Albanian Colony* without any other definition means "the Albanian colony in Bulgaria".

[8] Станчева, Р. Л. Балканските литератури и Западният модел. В: *Голямото вписване. Какво сравнява сравнителното литературознание*. София: Издателство на СУ „Св. Кл. Охридски“, 2010, с. 97.

- The concepts of *national identity*, *national mythology* and *secondary national mythology* are used in the theoretical context developed by Nikolay Aretov 's article *National Mythology and National Literature*[9].

[9] Аретов, Николай. *Национална митология и национална литература.* https://liternet.bg/publish8/naretov/nacionalna.htm Last seen 05.06.2024.

1.2. Thoma Kacori's Biography (1922–2008)

Thoma Kacori did not leave behind an autobiographical literary text. In his personal archive there is a standard CV of 2 pages in Bulgarian for administrative purposes. His spiritual biography streams from his books. However, as time passes, it will become more difficult for the future readers who are not part of the environment and do not remember the events and people of the past, to perceive it. In the book in Albanian, I am the sole author of the biographical chapter (pp. 13–63). Parts of interviews, manuscripts, documents and personal correspondence are published there, which alone are of great interest to the Albanian public. In this dissertation, the biography of Toma Katsori is a targeted introduction to his entire activity and intellectual heritage in terms of spiritual portrait, ethics, socio-political views, etc. This analysis is absent in the book.

The writer's wife, Violeta Kacori, kept every memory in the personal archive, meticulously cut and inscribed. The separate articles about Thoma Kacori, as well as his interviews and reports from Sofia, put together colorful parts of the mosaic of his life. The current thesis includes mainly facts and some elements of the author's spiritual biography.

Family and Personal Data

Thoma Kacori was born on March 22, 1922 in Shtika village, Kolonja District, Albania. He completed primary education in his native village, and in 1932 was enrolled in the Korça Lyceum. It was one of the most prestigious schools in Albania at the time with a junior high and high school cycles and teaching in French. The writer and his mother reunified with her family in Bulgaria in 1940. Kacori 's maternal grandfather, Petro Kiriazi (c. 1864–1932), had come to Bulgaria around 1890 and had built a three-story house at 5 Totleben Blvd. The building exists and is still in use.

After completing his secondary education, Thoma Kacori studied economics at Sofia University. But he never felt like an economist at heart. Quite quickly the young man made a bold and atypical decision for his time to continue as a freelance translator and writer. In 1955, he married Violetka Kacori (1937–2020). His wife's entire career was spent in the *Svetoslav Obretenov Choir Chapel* as a soprano. Violeta was a direct participant in her husband's art – a critical editor and typist of Bulgarian works. The couple has a number of common projects – songs written by Thoma Kacori and music by the Albanian composer Josif Minga, performed by her. Their joint work and the interviews of Violeta Kacori are described in the book in Albanian language, while in the present dissertation we consider them a significant part of author's spiritual biography.

Thoma Kacori has two children – Lindita (1956) and Christian (1960).

The big changes in 1944 brought about changes in the life of the big Kiriazi family, although fortunately the house at Totleben Blvd. was not nationalized, apart from the shops on the ground floor. There were difficulties in the vicissitudes of the new reality, because it was not easy to remain a foreigner in socialism, even more so when Albania's relations with the socialist camp froze. However, Thoma Kacori remained an Albanian subject only.

Thoma Kacori was awarded the order *Nderi i Kombit* (Pride of the Nation) in 2008 by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Thoma Kacori had been involved in the activities of the Albanian community in Sofia since his

arrival in 1940. In that period, two Albanian societies existed – the original one from 1893, *Dëshira*, and the one that separated from it in the 1920s – *Gjergji Kastrioti*. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Albanian Independence in 1962, Thoma Kacori was sent to Albania for the celebrations as one of the two delegates from Bulgaria. It was in 1962 that Thoma Kacori started actively publishing about the Colony and its activities in the journals *Nëndori* and *Studime Albanistike*. These publications presented new data on the Albanian colony in Sofia. Leoni Grabotska's manuscript *Historia e Shoqërisë Dëshira* (History of *Dëshira* Society) in Albanian language has been widely used in all the studies of the following decades, with the most extensive work on the subject by Boyka Sokolova, Rositsa Tsvetkova, Elena Atanasova from the Institute of Balkan Studies of the BAS.

After 1990, Thoma Kacori restored the Albanian association. It was represented by Thoma Kacori – chairman and Dimitar Mole – secretary. Thoma Kacori maintained contacts with the members of the other Albanian communities abroad. They often turned to him on various issues, as evidenced by the correspondence in his personal archive.

This part pays attention to the author's contributions in the study of the Albanian presence in Bulgaria in general and the Albanian colony during the National Revival in particular. Fan Noli (Theofan Stilian Noli, 1882–1965) and his politics played a significant role in the political orientation of Albanian societies in Bulgaria. Thoma Kacori cherished sympathy for Fan Noli's political line, for his public activity, and also for his literary works.

The author's translations are an indisputable contribution to Bulgarian-Albanian cultural contacts. The film translations were made in the 1950s and early 1960s, when Albanian cinematography did not have an independent capacity for this. The films came through Bulgaria during the period of intense bilateral contacts within the socialist camp. The literary translations of long prose by the Albanian writers Dimitar Shuteriqi and Stereo Spase, the latter from the Bulgarian minority in Albania, also date from this period. After the freezing of bilateral relations in the mid-1960s, this part of Thoma Kacori 's work significantly decreased.

Ethical Stands and Opinions on Socio-Political Issues

Thoma Kacori's stands and attitudes as a person can be derived from three main sources. Firstly, these are interviews and articles for the printed media. Secondly, his fables. Thirdly - the poems in manuscript, some of which were published posthumously, deserve consideration as poetic diaries.

Thoma Kacori 's activity in Bulgarian media consists of journalistic and informative articles in the newspapers on various topics of Bulgarian-Albanian cultural contacts, promoting materials related to specific Albanian anniversaries. Some of his own short-stories in the early period were published in newspapers, too. The materials for the Albanian section of the Bulgarian National Radio reflect his scholarly pursuits and interests or are related to interesting events and meetings of a memoirist nature. Usually, they represent a summary of up to 3–4 pages.

The interviews for the Albanian press and the articles about the writer have a detectable pattern. They usually begin with introductions and episodes of his early biography, in which the main facts are metaphorically enriched and supported by memorable parables. The second part of the materials concerns the issues of the Albanian community in Bulgaria or is dedicated to one of the author's works. The third part is related to current events concerning Albania and the Albanian communities in the Balkans. Thoma Kacori was extremely careful, moderate and encouraging in his statements, both about his compatriots or on the occasion of serious conflict

situations in the Balkans. The key concepts traceable in all the articles are tolerance, dialogue, democracy and patience, whilst regarding Kosovo – peace, reconciliation, civilization[10].

Thoma Kacori's fables should be vied both as art and as a personality projection, an opportunity for the author to express in rhymed poetry moral and social views that concern him, and also to state his stance on certain life occurrences. No separate literary or linguistic analysis of the fables has been included in the thesis, in order to avoid any confusion about the authorship with the book in Albanian, in which the fables are widely discussed by my co-author. This part contains my own reflections only on how some specific individual concepts from the fables demonstrate the author's personal qualities and views. It is curious e.g. that Toma Kacori embodied in poetic form his attitude to academic procedure, ethics and integrity. In several of his poems and fables, he shows admiration for specific life and social habits in Sweden.

The poems published after his death play a special place in understanding the mentality and views of Thoma Kacori[11]. The poems were not aimed at any potential readers; therefore, we could conditionally assume that they were a kind of diary and reflected his views on various issues more emotionally than interviews. The poetry is not subject to literary analysis in the thesis. Particular poems have been selected as appropriate for this subsection focused on the spiritual biography of the author as well as when related to the literary analysis of his fiction in the next chapters. Original conclusions have been drawn on their extraliterary messages as well as on the correlation lyric protagonist-author.

[10] Chapter 7 *Thoma Kacori and the Albanians in the Balkans*, p. 238–251, in the book in Albanian, which arrives at this conclusion, is written by Rusana Beyleri.
[11] Kacori, Thoma. *Romancë dashurie dhe brenge.* Tiranë: Argeta – LMG, 2011, 160 f.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY IN SCIENCE

Thoma Kacori worked actively in several Albanological fields. His scholarly activity has demonstrated that Albanology abroad is a complex science and includes achievements in all humanitarian fields – language, literature, culture, history, archeology, etc. Kacori showed special interest in all topical issues of his time. The materials used as scientific arguments were scholarly contributions by default. The presence of an Albanian expert in the Bulgarian Balkan Studies, one who could give practical advice on specific language issues, was also important, especially in the period after Albania self-isolated from the socialist camp.

The analysis of Thoma Kacori 's scientific contributions in the dissertation is according to their importance for the Bulgarian-Albanian cultural transfer. Most of the contributions are listed by Rusana Beyleri in our co-authored book on Thoma Kacori, but her analysis is focused on their particular importance for the Albanian studies. The originality of this thesis is guaranteed by expressive clarification of the similarities and differences with the book after every title.

Kacori's scholarly contribution can be divided into linguistic, methodological and cultural-historical.

2.1. Collective memory in science

Thoma Kacori was the leading figure in the compiling and the editing the Bulgarian-Albanian dictionary, published in 1959[12]. For this reason the popular name of the dictionary in Bulgaria and abroad is “Kacori’s dictionary”. Without underrating the services of the rest of the participants, this name illustrates the role and the impact of collective memory in science.

2.2. Academic memory in Bulgaria

In 1994, with the incessant efforts of Prof. Petya Asenova[13], the Balkan Studies profile was founded at the Faculty of Slavic Studies of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, in which the Albanian language and the Albanian literature became mandatory subjects with a high number of hours in the curriculum. Thoma Kacori was entrusted to lecture the first graduating class of specialists.

The first step of the long way to that day was the Albanian language initiated at the Department of General and Comparative Linguistics in 1962, by its head Prof. Vladimir Georgiev. Thoma Kacori was elected as the first teacher. The archives of the Department of General and Comparative Linguistics from 1960–1983 contain minutes in which details are mentioned specifically about the work of the course and the teacher. This subsection of the chapter is based on them as well as on Thoma Kacori’s article in Albanian[14], which was not to be found in

[12] *Bulgarian-Albanian dictionary*. T. Kacori , T. Tartari , L. Dusha, S. Pasko, L. Grabotska, editors Vl. Georgiev and R. Mutafchiev. BAS edition. Sofia, 1959, 888 p.

[13] Shortly after publication the fundamental monograph on Balkan Linguistics: Асенова, Петя. *Балканско езикознание. Основни проблеми на балканския езиков съюз*. София: Наука и изкуство, 1989.

[14] Kacori, Thoma. Historia dhe aktiviteti i lektoratit të gjuhës shqipe në Universitetin e Sofjes deri më 1982. Në:

Bulgarian, but is important for the revival of the Bulgarian academic memory.

The role of the author's personal contacts with Bulgarian and Albanian scholars, intellectuals and writers is underlined as well. Excerpts from the private and professional correspondence with Albanian writers and linguists, among which Eqrem Çabej, were selected by me and made public in the first chapter of the book in Albanian (c. 50-57) because they are an essential element of the Albanian institutional memory.

2.3. A forthcoming Albanian academic project

In the preface to the book on Thoma Kacori in Albanian, Shaban Sinani of the Albanian Academy of Sciences specifically points out that an upcoming task of Albanian studies is to search and analyze all textbooks in Albanian for foreigners published around the world[15]. Thoma Kacori designed such a textbook which enjoyed three editions[16].

The Handbook of Albanian was first published in 1972 for Bulgarian learners, with explanations and translations in Bulgarian. It was translated into English in 1979 in order to serve a wider circle of those interested. Thoma Kacori 's textbook was the first textbook for foreigners published after the standardization of the literary Albanian language in 1972. The textbook is described in the thesis based on the last edition of 2002.

3 pages of feedbacks on the textbook and correspondence are dedicated in the book in Albanian by Russana Beyleri (69 – 71). 10 pages of original linguistic and methodological analysis of the textbook are available in this subsection of the tesis led by the aspiration to promptly prepare the Bulgarian participation in the abovementioned project.

2.4. The team work in science

The present subsection aims to bring to light Thoma Kacori's pronounced talent for team work, something that has always been considered a great merit in science.

The most widely cited linguistic works of Thoma Kacori are his articles in collaboration with Petya Asenova and Ute Dukova. The team worked for more than a decade in excellent synchronicity, as Petya Asenova remembers. This topic is covered shortly in the book in Albanian by me (p. 62–63), while the thesis unfolds it linguistically.

The first article is from 1979 and it is dedicated to some words of Albanian origin in the Bulgarian language[17]. The second article, 1980, traces the etymology, variants and distribution of the variant words *vandak, fandak, bandak* and *zerma, cirma, serma, sirma, zerma*[18]. The

Ndriçime. Shkup, 2000, f. 142–144.

[15] Sinani, Shaban. *Preface to "Shkrimtari shqiptar Thoma Kacori në Bulgari. Jeta dhe vepra*." Sofia, 2022, p. 8.

[16] Тома Кацори. *Учебник по албански език*. София: Софийски университет „Кл. Охридски", 1972, 258 с.; Thoma Kacori. *A Handbook of Albanian.* Sofia: Sofia University Kliment Ohridski, 1979, 292 p.; Thoma Kacori. *A Handbook of Albanian*. Sofia: Zharava, 2002, 240 p.

[17] Кацори, Тома, Петя Асенова, Уте дукова. Някои думи от албански произход в български език. *Български език*, 1979, кн. 1, с. 67–70.

[18] Kacori, Toma, Ute Dukova, Petja Asenova. Zwei Bulgarische Dialektwörter aus den Nachbarsprachen. *Linguistique Balkanique*, XXIII, 1980, 2, p. 33–38.

article *About the characteristics of secret sociolects in Bulgaria*[19], 1984, is the longest and most comprehensive. The last article is from 1990 and dwells on reduplication as grammatical means for superlative and adverbial formation in Balkan languages[20].

2.5. An exploration bridge to each other

The major Albanological work of Thoma Kacori in Bulgarian is the treatise *Albania*. *Close and Unknown*, 1998, published in co-authorship with Bobi Bobev. The first part of the book is dedicated to the history of Albania by Bobi Bobev. The second part is cultural-historical and was prepared by Thoma Kacori. In this book, the writer published the results of many of his individual scientific researches, lectures, review articles and materials on specific issues, about personalities, authors, Albanian activity in Bulgaria, as well as archival facts. Some topics were covered in more detail, while others were mentioned as an end result or in a summary. For the purposes of Bulgarian-Albanian contacts, data about the country and its inhabitants were included.

This collective monograph is mentioned in one paragraph in the book in Albanian (p. 97) as a major Albanological initiative. In the thesis the book is often cited and referred to as credible scientific source. As such it serves as a starting point for the observations on the author's three-phase transition from science through media publicism to fiction in the interpretation of topics, data and events in his overall literary heritage. Kacori's views on certain linguistic, ethnographic and historic facts have been shadowed for the purpose of scholarly comparison with their reflection in the writer's fiction.

2.6. In the quest of rare scientific finds

Thoma Kacori was an avid collector of antiquarian books. His hobby was entirely dedicated to the quest for discovery. Thoma Kacori's individual works include one material for the first Bulgarian-Albanian dictionary from 1864[21]. He also analyzed two Latin documents in which, according to him, the words burrë *and* pari *-parësi* are contained[22]. Thoma Kacori officially launched the theory of the origin of the Albanian ethnonym *shqiptar* from the Italian word *schioppo*, meaning 'riffle'[23]. Prof. Petya Assenova stated her full support for this hypotheses in her speech at the opening of the author's 100th anniversary at Sofia University on May 23, 2022.

Thoma Kacori published and analyzed several letters from the Dubrovnik archive (Medieval

[19] Кацори Тома, Дукова Уте, Асенова Петя. Към характеристиката на тайните говори в България. *Съпоставително езикознание*, 1984, кн. 1, с. 29–43.

[20] Кацори, Тома, Уте Дукова, Петя Асенова. Повторението – вид конверсия в балканските езици. *Съпоставително езикознание*, XV, 1990, кн. 4–5, с.102–105.

[21] Kacori, Thoma. Un dictionnare Bulgaro-Albanais et quelques des religieux datant de 1864 découverts au monastère de Hilendar. *Linguistique Balkanique*, № 4, 1984, p. 35–53.

[22] Kacori, Thoma. Shënime për dy fjalë shqipe të dëshmuara para Formulës së Pagëzimit. *Ndriçime*. Shkup, 2000, f. 97–100.

[23] Kacori, Thoma. Shpjegime të reja për etnonimin shqiptar, shqiptarë, Shqipëri (toskërisht) dhe shqyptar, shqyptarë, Shqypni (gegërisht). *Ndriçime*. Shkup: 2000, f. 11–19. The study was presented for the first time at the XV Seminar on Albanian Language, Literature and Culture in Tirana in 1995.

Ragusa) from George Kastrioti Skanderbeg’s time, as well as folklore materials about him.

Thoma Kacori threw light on the legendary Ismail Qemali, who proclaimed the country's independence in Vlora in 1912, regarding his journalistic and administrative activities, related to the *Danube* newspaper (1866–1877). These data were less accessible at the time and concerned the period 1866–1872, in which Ismail Qemali was in an Ottoman state office in Bulgaria. In his literary works, like all Albanian writers, Thoma Kacori maintained the cult of Ismail Qemali

From the cultural-historical publications of the author, the most natural transition can be made to his journalistic articles and from there to his fiction works. It is natural: the facts surrounding historical figures received the halo of collective myth in the media, further they were subject to secondary mythologization in the author's fiction works. Some of his linguistic interests were also reflected in fiction, while Albanian language classes were the focal point of his diverse interests and knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

IN DARKNESS AND LIGHT – A METAPHOR FOR THE SHORT GENRES

3.1. From Journalism to Literature in the Short-Stories Collection *De Rada's Candle Lamp*

Thoma Kacori weaved his stories around a well-known or legendary fact about famous Albanians. Only one specific event takes place in these short stories as a rule. The real-life episode is covered with fiction while only the main character or the context preserves connection to reality. Albanian writer Fan Noli, for comparison, narrated his autobiography in a similar way. Fan Noli, the respected politician and historian of Skanderbeg, was among Thoma Kacori's idols. Fan Noli is included in two short-stories dedicated to meaningful "incidents" from his visit in Sofia. The visit is a historical fact. The narrator's imagination created a patriotic aura around his characters – Abdyl Frasheri was the elder brother of Naim Frasheri; Petro Nini Luarasi was Kristo Luarasi's brother – publisher of *Kalendari Kombiar* ("The National Calendar") and owner of the Albanian printing house in Sofia. Shahin Kolonja was the publisher of *Drita* newspaper, the organ of the Albanian colony in Bulgaria. Jeronim de Rada was the first representative of European romanticism in the Italo-Albanian literature at the beginning of the 19th century. Almost all stories of this type were collected in the *De Rada's Candle Lamp*[24], which was published in 1996, but some had been published in Albanian and Bulgarian periodicals before that, as the author's general bibliography shows. The title of the collection was no doubt inspired by Thoma Kacori's journey to the Italo-Albanian settlements in Italy and to Jeronim De Rada's village.

Two stories by Thoma Kacori are dedicated to emancipated women of their time. In the short story *De Rada's Candle Lamp*, the oppressed state of girls in families causes a poetic outburst of indignation in the character, Jeronim De Rada, based on the fate of his cousin, Katerina. In the next story, the brave girl Sevasti Kiriazi is a main character alongside the patriot Koto Hoxhi. She has a special place in Albanian history and is known as the first Albanian teacher. Thoma Kacori explained that she was not one of his family, but distant kin on his mother's side. Mother Teresa's brave and independent spirit is even more vivid in the story of her youth, which is the author's last written short-story.

Thoma Kacori took a step from a scientist to a writer and turned some well-known historical episodes into his own literary plots and literary portraits. Similar transitions are characteristic of Albanian literature and are observed around significant historical figures and events. It is on this natural smooth transition from history to literature that the present chapter emphasizes, positioning Thoma Kacori in the major stream of Albanian intellectuals and scientists abroad, who are humanists by conviction, patriots by inner impulse and artistic writers by vocation.

3.2. Travelogues

Thoma Kacori has published several reports on his travels back to his homeland. They were published in the printed media of the period, while some excerpts from the travelogues can be

[24] Kacori, Thoma. *Kandili i De Radës*. Tiranë, 1996.

traced interwoven into the author's fiction. The travelogues have common features that characterize Thoma Kacori's style later in his fiction: Meetings with people of different professions and characters, of different ages, who impress with the writer's desire to understand them best, to penetrate into their inner world and communicate insightfully in the short time in which they were brought together by chance; Recreating events that are a worthy plot for a short story or have such potential; Sincere and deep feelings of the author, which appeal with their unaffected manner and rich imagination; The author's impressions do not reshape reality in a romantic way, on the contrary – they radiate authenticity and realism, and are nevertheless a fascinating read.

Thoma Kacori's travelogues from Italy, Albania and Romania show the sources of his creative inspiration and are a bridge to his own literary works. It can be stated that the real impressions of the places he visited and shared serve as a key to understanding the important highlights in the poet's poetry and prose.

3.3. The Diversity of the Albanian Village

Thoma Kacori continues the exile and emigration themes introduced by Andon Zako Çajupi, Ndre Mieda and other classic authors. The short-stories about the emigrants from the village set up a consistent chronological line in Thoma Kacori's fiction. They were published in Albanian in both Albania and Kosovo, and in Bulgarian – both as collections, and separately in periodicals. It is an indisputable fact that in the 1950s, Thoma Kacori was considered an innovator in literature through the multifaceted introduction of this theme, and this was reflected not so much by critics as by readers reception. Ten of Thoma Kacori's short stories cover a variety of motifs and scenarios for his rural characters – both those who leave abroad and those who remain at home.

Thoma Kacori was familiar with the village customs and lifestyle in the Korça region by experience. Ethnographic knowledge is revealed in small details of everyday life and logically complements the typical events of the time he describes – the first half of the 20th century. The events reflected in Thoma Kacori 's stories have a marked social element and sympathy for the plight of the poorer peasants – plots that the Bulgarian reader knows from Elin Pelin's stories.

The stories with the most memorable impact and message to readers are related to his childhood memories and experiences. Thoma Kacori had not met his father for a long period as he emigrated to the USA before his birth. This fact explains why the feeling of inferiority and abandonment accompanied the writer in his early years. In his interviews he mentioned that some episodes were autobiographical and an indelible part of his childhood life.

Kacori 's stories revolve around specific incidents from village life. Their beginnings are simple, the narrative is about ordinary human things, but often at the end they leave the reader immersed in a much deeper insight than a simple everyday plot would expect. The writer makes virtuosic descriptions of domestic animals with love and care, and the position of the narrator is never neutral. The places where villagers gather and the objects they use come to life and live their own lives and destinies in the stories. The choice of names by Thoma Kacori is not accidental, regardless of whether the characters are from his native region in Kolonja, Southern Albania or Northern Albania, but always corresponds in a symbolic way with the traditions of the respective region.

Life in the village was bubbling with the emotions of different ages. The anxieties of the main periods – childhood, youth and old age – are laid down in three realistic stories – *Boyhood*

Anxieties, *Spring Anxieties* and *Old Age Anxieties*, in which a collective portrait of the respective age gropu is revealed.

Thoma Kacori described some of the changes in rural life after 1944 – with a barely perceptible sadness he noted the separation of people from domestic animals during the collectivization and did not dwell in any of his works on the life in cooperatives. He focused on objectively positive transformations, and not on those of ideological nature – e.g., the electrification of his native Kolonja region and the women emancipation. The later can be traced in an evolution from work to work. Currently, this thematic niche is exploited in all its modern manifestations – from freedom, to migration and modern slavery. Despite the changes in material life and technology, however, we observe that human relations have not changed much, so Thoma Kacori's short-stories from the collection *Generations*, 1962, are still relevant and enjoyable for the readers in both countries.

3.4. *Ancient Stories* inspired by the Paleo-Balkan Studies

The collection *Ancient Tales*[25] according to its stylistic and thematic features belongs to the period of the early 1980s, when the Paleo-Balkan studies in linguistics and archeology were at their peak in Bulgaria. What could not be fully proven by science found a wonderful ground in fiction after skillful literary processing. The plots of the stories in the collection take us back to the time of the Illyrians, the Thracians and the ancient Greeks, the blending of cultures is presented in a comparative and informative way. Special attention is paid to ancient customs and legends that nowadays we consider autochthonous Bulgarian (the *kukers*, the monster from Karkaria, etc.). Stylistically, Thoma Kacori can be associated with the storytellers in Bulgaria and Albania of the 1940s to the 1960s.

In 2004, a group of authors under the supervision of the leading specialist in comparative literature in Bulgaria, Roumyana L. Stantcheva, published the volume *Dance in Balkan Literatures*.[26], The role of ritual dance in antiquity is presented in the part dedicated to Albanian literature. Thoma Kacori can be complementary to the study with his *Ancient Tales* because he makes a link between the ancient functions of the dance and its evidential character as of substratum lineage in the Balkan Peninsula, at least in a literary context.

The collection was prepared in Bulgarian by the author himself, but remained unpublished. The publication of the short-stories in an electronic version is one of the practical tasks of the current PhD project.

[25] Kacori, Thoma. *Tregime të moçme*. Tetovë: Ars media klub, 2005.

[26] *Танцът в балканските литератури. Студии*. Колектив. София: Балкани, 2004. ред. Румяна Л. Станчева и Нешка Туртанска. Rusana Beyleri is the author of the Albanian part of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

NATIONAL MYTHOLOGY THROUGH THOMA KACORI'S PRISM. LONG PROSE

4.1. The Novel *The Bravest Warrior of Albania Skanderbeg*

The novel *The Bravest Warrior of Albania Skanderbeg* (Kryetrimi i Arbërisë Skënderbeu) was published in Tetovo (North Macedonia) in 2005 and its release was dedicated to the 600th anniversary of the birth of the Albanian national hero Georgi Kastrioti Skanderbeg. The novel exists in manuscript in Bulgarian, translated by the author himself, and I hope it can be published through the current project[27].

Albanian authors throughout Albanian literary history have always felt an inner drive to dedicate at least one artistic works to their national hero Skanderbeg[28]. In this sense, the presented novel and its author represent intrinsically the leading trends of the national cultural stream. The present study asserts that Thoma Kacori demonstrated obvious consistency to Albanian literature and kept contact points with it in all aspects of his creative and scholarly activity. The novel *The Bravest Hero of Albania Skanderbeg* describes in fiction text real events and personalities within the framework of what is known about them from the historical sources. The national hero Skanderbeg from the very beginning has stood on the border between literature and history, which undoubtedly has been a convenience for literature and a complication for history in a narrow scientific sense.

The works that have had the greatest influence on this subject in Albanian literature are those of Marin Barleti (Marinus Barletius, c. 1450 – c. 1512) from the European Renaissance, Naim Frashëri from the National Revival, and Fan Noli from the Independence period. Same goes to the present novel.

The novel consists of 59 chapters. The text in them is evenly distributed in 3–5 pages each, except for the final part, which is 10 pages. At first glance the novel leaves the impression of a drama that also can be intuitively defined as "film script" or "film book". Some of the chapters can be extracted as individual stories or miniatures with an independent plot. Certain chapters easily give rise to intertextual references to other works on the same subject or associative links to thematic elements characteristic of Albanian literature in general.

The main character is the Albanian national hero Georgi Kastrioti Skanderbeg. The second main character is George Arianiti Comnenus. The Canadian scholar Robert Elsie once mentioned that this historical figure remained in Skanderbeg's shadow, despite his repeated victories on against the Ottoman invasion. Thoma Kacori compensated for this historical injustice with a certain equality of images in the novel, with a detailed human face and inner world, giving George Arianiti the right to a monologue and dialogues with an artistic function.

Marriage as a social category provides scope for liberal exploitation in fiction. Thoma Kacori did not take advantage of the immense potential of family ties and almost consciously, even spartanly, refrained from making the novel fictionally attractive, but constructed it firmly within

---

[27] Kacori, Thoma. *Kryetrimi i Arbërisë Skënderbeu*. Tetovë: Ars media klub, 2005, 280 p. The Bulgarian manuscript is available in the author's personal archive.

[28] Beyleri , Russana. Myth and reality in Albanian literature. *Albania and Albanian Identities*. Sofia, IMIR, 2000, p. 147–197. (English version)

the limits of the historical epic.

Thoma Kacori shed light on Byzantium-Rome contacts, on the role of Hungary, Poland and Serbia through the famous military campaign of János Hunyadi and Władysław, who died in the Battle of Varna; on the Venetian claims and the war between the Albanians and Venice for the control of the Adriatic ports. However, Thoma Kacori did not touch the great betrayals against Skanderbeg – it was not by chance that Thoma Kacori was called *a late Albanian revivalist*, who even at the beginning of the 21st century was ashamed of the betrayal of his own people, covered it with silence, and viewed loyalty as a supreme virtue.

The synopsis of the novel in the dissertation appendix aims at acquainting the readers with how Thoma Kacori perceived historical events and in what way he processed them into a literary plot. The synopsis illustrates and partially proves the initial hypothesis of the present dissertation that the novel displays obvious dramaturgical features. The elements of the urban environment of four cultures serve as a decor – Ottoman, Byzantine, Albanian and Venetian, followed by the functional presence of the military everyday life among Ottomans and Albanians, and in the third place are ethnographic features of the life of the Albanians. The gradation in the decor descriptions demonstrates the superiority of the dynamic over the static without opposing the four cultures in terms of absolute architectural and urban value. On the contrary, what is characteristic of each of them is brought to the fore from the point of view of the aesthete, of the connoisseur of the beautiful and the noble – style, home, metal, behavior.

With regard to the national hero, the present novel follows the black-and-white range typical of Marin Barleti and Naim Frasheri. The visual sensorium prevails throughout the novel, which creates synchronicity and gives a tangible advantage to light, shine and openness. The opposition black and white is also present in everyday situations and is associated with the phraseology *faqebardhë,* 'white-faced', meaning morally intact and dignified.

Some modern historical studies on Skanderbeg have underlined the human side of the hero. Bulgarian specialists have been among the first to express such a dualistic view of the Albanian national hero.[29] Thoma Kacori portrays a number of everyday life events and some episodes of private nature, which is only to be expected from a novel.

From today's point of view, there is no reason for a novel with so many merits, not to recommended for publication in 1967. Moreover, after its first part, focused on George Arianiti, had already been published in 1962 in the Albanian literary magazine *Nëndori*. Unfortunately, the first original fiction novel on the national hero Skanderbeg and his era was not published in its due time. Thus, it lost its innovative position among Albanian historical novels and readers. The rejection was motivated entirely extra-literary – the overall political situation in Albania. Externally, Albania had already severed its relations with the former socialist camp, including Bulgaria. Internally, the literary critic's review preceded by one month the notorious Decree No. 4337 of 11/13/1967, which banned all religious communities in Albania. The review of the responsible literary critic, while enumerating in detail the positive features of the work, contained in the very first paragraph the answer to the question why the novel could not be published[30]: *In the work there is ... a visible dissonance with regard to the Marxist-Leninist view on that period. This can be noticed especially in the representation of Skanderbeg as a defender of Christianity.*

[29] Първев, Иван. *„Другият" Георги Кастриоти-Скендербег (1405–1468). Другият в историята. Сборник от материалите на научната конференция 7–9 май 1992 г.*, гр. Кюстендил, 1996, с. 8–22.

[30] Gurakuqi, Mark. *Reçension për romanin "Shpata e Kastriotëve ose Skënderbeu" të Thoma Kacorrit*, 22 p. Машинописен текст в личния архив на автора.

Thoma Kacori made no further attempts to publish the novel in Albania. However, he did not make a moral compromise with his work in the aspects that he objectively considered non-literary. In the absence of the original manuscript, critic Mark Gurakuqi's lengthy and detailed review allows us to trace how the novel was edited and what remained forever outside the audience's lens. This is indicative of the creative process and the role of literary criticism in it. Following the reviewer's comments in comparison with the published text, we must note the seriousness and respect with which Thoma Kacori accepted the critical remarks of his artistic colleague.

In his short stories and novels, Thoma Kacori reveals himself as an enjoyable storyteller who describes the individual life and fate on the background of significant historical events, social transformations or natural cataclysms. In the Skanderbeg novel, the focus is on epic and historicism. Thus, for the first time in his fiction works, the author exits the home, the friendly environment, his village, Korça town, and reaches farther at a comprehensive temporal and geographical view of Albania.

4.2. *Besa* as an Albanian Reality in the novel *The Great Besa*

Besa is Albanian realia that can be translated as 'given word', 'sacred oath' and the myth of its inviolability makes it a national symbol of the highest rank. *Besa* is a special moral-ethical category in Thoma Kacori's imagological palette, through which he built and maintained the image of the Albanian on a pedestal. *Besa* is a benchmark of the positive stereotype of his nation, which he presented and defended with dignity in his works in Bulgarian. The mission of cultural ambassador naturally applies to both his journalistic and literary works. However, Thoma Kacori wrote until the end of his life in Albanian, and *besa* was part of the communication code with the homeland, his way of asserting from a distance the best in his countrymen, of manifesting them without idealization, in the most positive light. This stance has been successful in both directions, as evidenced by the positive reception and feedback both among Bulgarian and Albanian readers. For the Bulgarian readers, however, this concept is presented in the ethnographic context of customary law, where the ethical-moral semantics of the word derive from. Thoma Kacori's short-stories present the blood feud as an utmost punishment by the customary code, as well the other moral categories of customary law – honor and hospitality.

The given promise, *besa*, is present in Thoma Kacori's work mainly in an extended patriotic sense – as a national moral category. Thoma Kacori remained emblematic in the Albanian society with his novel *Për mëmëdhenë* (For the Motherland). However, its Bulgarian version was entitled *The Great Besa*[31]. This name drew more attention because the original title was quite clichéd in people's minds. The second reason was that it was focused on guerilla movements in the Korça region – the rebels had their own ideals and unwritten rules, and *besa* or secret alliance was part of them. In an interview Kacori stated that the novel was written after personal meetings with the Independence heroes while still alive, absorbing every bit of their information from the vivid stories told at the evening gatherings.

The novel in Albanian consists of two parts. Volume one is 371 pages and volume two is 262 pages. The novel in Bulgarian finishes with the end of the first volume of the Albanian version, and the events of the second volume are synthesized in a 3-page epilogue. The first volume

[31] Кацори, Тома. *Великата беса*. София: Народна култура, 1960.
Kacori, Thoma. *Për mëmëdhenë*. Vëllimi I, Tiranë, 1961.

consists of three parts: *Slavery*, *Awakening* and *Struggle*. It ends with a death and a wedding. In the treatise, a detailed parallel analysis is made along the lines of the epic Bulgarian novel by Ivan Vazov *Under the Yoke*, which was translated into Albanian in the 1950-s.

Kacori's novel resounds precisely with the Albanian national psychology, and that is why it was well received in his homeland, especially among the young generation. It did not become a chrestomathy work, but the character of the historical epic obviously appealed to the Albanian readers in the 60s of the 20th century.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAJOR INTERTEXTUAL THEMATIC MOTIFS

5.1. The Albanians and the Weapons

One of the already mentioned scientific contributions of Thoma Kacori is that he launched his own hypothesis of the origin of the Albanian ethnonym *shqiptar* from the Italian word *schioppo,* meaning 'riffle'. For illustration and support, he also drew quotes from literary works that indirectly confirmed such a theory. This fact offers a good reason to analyze to what extent the stereotyped couple of the Albanian and the weapon has a sustainable presence in the artistic concepts and ideological quests of the scientist in his writing role. For this purpose, we went back through his works to the key historical periods for the Albanians: the independence of Albania, of Skanderbeg time and the substratum inhabitants of the Balkans.

The second part of the novel *The Great Besa* (Albanian title *Për mëmëdhenë)*, which has not been translated into Bulgarian, provides suitable artistic material on this topic. The second volume begins on the eve of declaration of Albanian independence. This was the last stage of the Revival and the novel was centered on the image of the guerilla-rebel. Like the works of the Bulgarian Renaissance, one of the main attributes of the freedom fighter was his weapon.[32] It symbolized the determination to change, the irreversibility of the uprising and the readiness for self-sacrifice. The second part of the novel transforms specifically the attitude to the weapon. This is marked on a meta level in the names of the chapters: *A new house is being built in Xhufka; Blood, fire and riots; War with the treacherous*. Albanians are shown as merciful to their enemies when they do not cause them atrocities and if they are not in a position to injure them. This is in the spirit of the imagological stereotyped opposition *own-foreign* focused only on self-defense and non-aggression.

The spear was the weapon which Thoma Kacori demonstrated a special appreciation to, through Georgi Kastrioti and Georgi Arianiti in the novel about Skanderbeg. The description of the spear is very professional with the terms of a connoisseur and with familiarity to handling them. In *Ancient Tales* the autochthonous Balkan inhabitants of different tribes were placed side by side and interacted in the plots. They used household objects, the names of which have reached to us through the stone inscriptions. The narratives of antiquity abound with the metal weapons of the time, while their stylistic value was even higher. Thoma Kacori paid attention not to the everyday, but to the heroic traits in the characters. A meaningful quote expresses in two phrases the major historical spiritual heritage of the Balkans, which Thoma Kacori wove into all his stories and novels: *He was one of the worthiest fighters in the Daronite tribe and it was an honor to him to carry a weapon... He sat upright on the horse like a true god*[33].

5.2. The second thematic analysis is entitled *Money and Manners*. Thoma Kacori had a fine sense of human attitude to money and to the invisible transformations of the soul in the infinity of situations that life could offer.

The financial field is part of the Skanderbeg myth. In the novel, it consists of several episodes that draw attention to the inevitable role of money in politics in a way that shows both national

[32] Алексиева, Анна. Възрожденският бунтовник в културната памет на българите – изобретяване и митологизиране. *Хуманизација Универзитета*, Ниш, 2012, с. 131-141.
[33] Kacori, Thoma. Tregime të moçme. Tetovë, 2005, f. 151.

heroes in their best light and builds an antithesis with the rest of the nations.

The ethical stance of the characters towards the national mission was artistically measured by Thoma Kacori through the metaphorical motif of the color of money in the other historical novel *The Great Besa*. Thoma Kacori is revealed a realistic writer with regard to material life in his long prose. The more important conclusion is that he managed to include naturally money and financial resources as a background stylistic element and also as a metaphorical framework.

5.3. Beliefs, Holy Places and Saints

At a time when atheism was on the rise in Albania, Thoma Kacori was noticeably averse to such a trend. In the work of Thoma Kacori, a rich palette of folk beliefs and domestic religious traditions, specific to his native region or to the chronotope, is to be found. The preferred way of interweaving them is through the speech of the characters and less often through the narrator as a direct observer of the actions, the events, the incident. A whole story e.g., is dedicated to the *Butterfly* ritual, an ancient rain rite practiced all over the Balkans. Many other rites and traditions are mentioned, too.

The priests in *Ancient Tales* were an integral part of the social organization of the tribes in the ancient Balkans. The role of the ancient priests with their social functions, the psychological superiority given to them by the collective as well as their human nature and weaknesses are most tangible in *Wedding in Basanitsa*. The sacred Albanian mountain of Tomor has a special and sacred presence in *Ancient Tales*. In the spirit of the Revivalist traditions, the author included the same sacred mountains millennia later in his novel about Skanderbeg – in the battle of Georgi Arianiti against the Turkish troops.

A special part is devoted to the Christian traditions, which are present in the Skanderbeg novel through subtle details of the characters' mentality, the everyday life of the peasantry, too, is clustered with Christian gestures and traditions. The intensive presence of St. Joan Vladimir in the novel is interesting from the point of view of the modern researches of the 21st century conducted by Bulgarian historians in Albania, which show that St. Joan Vladimir is among the most revered saints in the present territory of the country[34].

The intertextual thematic analysis of Thoma Kacori 's work reveals a rich spiritual world to which mysticism is no stranger. It is not, however, an end in itself, but in each case is placed within the rational constraints of time and place in order to achieve a realistic impact, and is also subtly subordinated to the national mythology.

5.4. Bulgaria in the Author's Works

In biographical terms, Thoma Kacori maintained friendly contacts with his colleagues in Bulgaria and was often sought after by them on various occasions.

Thoma Kacori's literary works are almost entirely based on Albanian topos. Bulgarian toponymy is very rare, and Bulgarian characters are even rarer.

The stories dedicated to the Albanian colony and its actors naturally take place in Bulgaria,

[34] Lozanova, R. The Slavic Saints in the Churches in Moschopolis and Vitkuqi /Albania /. *The Slavic Saints in the History of Christian Church, Annuaire l'Universite de Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski". Cenre de recherches Slavo-Byzantines "Ivan Duychev"*, 92 (XI), Sofia, 2002, p. 177-189.

more specifically in Sofia, but this is only their coordinate system, their external positioning. The "outside-inside" opposition is clearly traceable in all such narratives. The moment the plot moves to a closed environment, a completely Albanian atmosphere and spirit is revealed to the reader.

In *Ancient Tales* several stories take place in sacred places located in modern Bulgaria. A favorite topos of Thoma Kacori is the area of Yambol, where archaeologists have discovered tombs and sacred Thracian sanctuaries. The Karkaria area in Bulgaria is very interesting. The story of the same name was selected and published in Albanian *in Short Prose by Authors from Korça*[35]. It is possible that the compilers did not understand where exactly the name *Karkaria* came from, because in Albanian there is a similar word meaning 'bad, barren, stony and dry land'[36].

The novella *Love*, published in 1960 in the literary magazine *Nëndori*[37], is the only work in which the characters, topos and events are entirely Bulgarian. It is about 45 standard pages long and remained outside the critical eye when it was issued, although it reflected curious and innovative trends. The main characters are Dragan Stoyanov, Ivan and Rumyana, who is presented as the main character of a story within the story. The monologue of the narrator, Ivan, and of the main character, Dragan, are built in a way that would have enabled a monodrama from a modern dramaturgical perspective.

One of the most remarkable and famous tours of Thoma Kacori as a guide for his numerous Albanian guests from all Balkan countries was entitled *Albanian Relics in Sofia*. Many of the visitors he accompanied went on to publish their own travelogues and memoirs based on this unforgettable foray into the maze of the old city. The main text was published in Albanian and Bulgarian by the author himself[38]. The most quoted phrase from this presentation is an apt expression: "Sofia is not a Mecca for Albanians, but nevertheless there are many relics in the city that are dear to every Albanian." Thoma Kacori more than once mentioned St. Nicodemus of Elbasan (St. Nicodemus Albanian). We must objectively emphasize that St. Nicodemus is neither considered an Albanian saint in Albania nor is he called "Albanian". However, the fact that he is called *Albanian* in our country inspires and fascinates the Albanian guests. St. Nicodemus was metaphorically related to Thoma Kacori's hospitality and had become his halo, part of the secondary literary myth[39]. Such an example is the poem by the Kosovar Albanian poet Agim Vinca, dedicated to Thoma Kacori, which begins with a direct comparison in the first stanza (pp. 237 in the book in Albanian): *As Saint Nicodemus, the Albanian Saint (Si shenjti shqiptar Shën Nikodimi...)*

[35] Kacori, Thoma. Karkaria. *Album. Me prozë të shkurtë nga shkrimtarë të Qarkut Korçë*. Tiranë: Toena, 2008. http://toena.com.al/toena/Botimet_e_reja/Album.html

[36] *Albanian explanatory dictionary*. Dictionary electronic shpjegues .

[37] Kacori, Thoma. Dashuria. *Nëndori*, Nr. 10, 1960, f. 41–71. Translated into Bulgarian by Rumyana Patronska and Russana Beyleri in 2022.

[38] Kacori, Thoma. Relikte shqiptare në qytetin e Sofjes. *Ndriçime*. Shkup, 2000, f. 128–133.

[39] Аретов, Николай. *Национална митология и национална литература.* https://liternet.bg/publish8/naretov/nacionalna.htm

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

1. Thoma Kacori brings a personal element to the study of the members of the Albanian colony in Bulgaria and of their cultural activity. He relied on the documentary-known, but sought to incorporate their families, heirs, written archives and correspondence, too.

2. Thoma Kacori is an example of the Bulgarian-Albanian literary relations in a broader Balkan context. He maintained contacts with authors from North Macedonia and Kosovo. He published works in North Macedonia. He cooperated with other Albanian intellectuals abroad on issues of the Albanian colony and settlements.

3. Thoma Kacori carefully avoided politics and non-scientific debates in journalism. He used the symbols of religion in his works, even during the times of atheism in Albania and the restriction of religious practice in general in the socialist camp. He appreciated Fan Noli's public views. In journalism, he was characterized by a soft intellectual approach.

4. Thoma Kacori worked on important topics for the Albanian language and contributed to the discussion on them. He was an excellent team-worker which enabled some important and resounding linguistic articles to be written and published.

5. Kacori's handbook of Albanian was innovative for its time, but at present it is not used any more by the students at the Balkan Studies Department, since new textbooks have been published based on the European framework of language acquisition levels. Thoma Kacori established a teaching model based on conversational practice and the simulation of a foreign language environment, which gives quick communicative results and is a recommended methodology. He demonstrated how important the teacher's personality was as a champion and conductor of the foreign culture values, and also as a complex humanitarian and philologist.

6. The articles in scientific journals and the chapter *Albanians in Bulgaria*[40] in the book *Albania* in Bulgarian can be defined as a scientific contribution in a high academic style. Articles and books in the Albanian language also contribute to the history of Albanian communities abroad and to the history of Albanian literature. Parts of them were reprinted and used in Albanian periodicals.

7. Thoma Kacori had deep appreciation of Albanian folk culture and folklore. In his work, a distinct aptitude to the traditions of his native region, close to the city of Korça, Albania, is demonstrated.

8. Thoma Kacori stands close to Stereo Spase from the Albanian side and Ivan Vazov from the Bulgarian side in the concept of the epic novel in *Për mëmëdhenë*, follows the model and historicism of Fan Noli in the novel *Skanderbeg*; preserves the spirit of the legend in *Ancient Tales* like Mitrush Kuteli; Elin Pelin is closest to him in the description of rural life, and Çajupi – in the fables.

9. Autobiographic elements can be traced in Thoma Kacori's work. The short-stories in the collection *Generations,* his poetry and fables allow us to gain insight of the author's personality.

10. Thoma Kacori's poetry, like the Revivalist trend set by Naim Frashëri, is melodious, rhymed, easy to remember, recite, and make songs of.

[40] Бобев, Боби, Тома Кацори. *Албания.* София, 1998, с. 207-213.

11. The epithet *Late Revivalist*[41] for the personality and work of Thoma Kacori is not entirely metaphorical. He remains a post-romantic author typical for Albania proper, through realism and certain aspects of sentimentalism. No elements of modernism and postmodernism in his work have been found.

CONCLUSION

The method of comparative literary studies best allows for analyzing and presenting Thoma Kacori's overall contribution to the Bulgarian-Albanian literary contacts. Like most Albanian émigré intellectuals, he was a complex personality with a good individual realization in the host country, where he unfolded his potential in more than one area. Cultural transfer is obvious through the themes, the language and the national realia. The identity tension is perceived directly through the exile theme and indirectly through the romantic-idealistic notion of the homeland and the aptitude to national mythology. Thoma Kacori was an ardent promoter of the Bulgarian-Albanian cultural relations in the second half of the 20th century, not only bilaterally, but in the wider Balkan context.

[41] E.g. *The Albanian Revivalist of our time* by Latifi, Skënder. Kosova është ndërgjegjja jonë. Rilindësi shqiptar i kohës sonë: Thoma Kacori. *Gazeta "Zëri"*, Prishtinë, 25.12.2005, f. 37;
The last Albanian Revivalist by Бейлери, Русана. Тома Кацори в България – последният албански възрожденец. *Албанската литература като огледало на народната душевност*. София: Балкани, 2009, с. 214, etc.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PhD THESIS

1. Tracking down and compilation of a complete bibliography of Thoma Kacory's literary heritage.

2. Description, analysis and publication of materials of a personal, scientific and artistic nature from the author's personal archive.

3. Multifaceted approach to issues of institutional memory in science through the writer's scholarly contribution in several fields of Bulgarian-Albanian cultural contacts

4. A detailed original literary and comparative-literary analysis of the author's works of art.

5. Timely preparation of the writer's inclusion in some large scholarly innitiatives announced by the leading theoreticians in Albania for full history of the Albanian literature, both chronological and comparative; as well as in the project dedicated to the textbooks of Albanian as foreign language published abroad.

6. Thematic intertextual analysis of Kacori's fiction in the light of its potential reception by the Bulgarian audience.

7. Fostering of Albanian-language publications about Thoma Kacori based on the published monograph in Albanian. Fortunately, there are already such examples: the book *Ndriçime for Thoma Kacorin* by Mimosa Hasani-Plana from Kosovo, a chapter from Brikena Ceraja-Beka's dissertation from Kosovo, dedicated to Skanderbeg in literature; as well as a chapter from Kosovare Krasniqi's dissertation from Kosovo about the national myths and symbols in the Albanian poetry.

LILIANA BEYLERI'S SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

1. Bejleri, Liljana. Sprovë për biografi të Thoma Kacorit; Frymëzimi artistik i shkrimtarit; Proza e shkurtër e Thoma Kacorit; Proza e gjatë e Thoma Kacorit. In: *Bejleri, Rusana, Liljana Bejleri, Shkrimtari shqiptar Thoma Kacori ne Bullgari. Jeta dhe vepra (1922–2008).* Faculty of Slavic Studies. Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski, Sofia, 2022, 280 p. ISBN: 978-619-7433-55-5; 978-619-7433-56-2 (pdf).
Albanian Writer Thoma Kacori in Bulgaria. Life and Work.
Free access at: http://unilib-dspace.nasledstvo.bg/xmlui/handle/nls/35733
Liliana Beyleri is the author of Chapters 1,3,4,5, the full bibliography of Thoma Kacori and the English abstract.

2. Бейлери Лиляна. Рецензия за A. Spiro. Nyjat ne gjuhën shqipe. Diakronia dhe sinkronia e një evolucioni tiplologjik: Prokliza binare dhe enkliza shqyese. Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 2021. *Съпоставително езикознание*, 2022, 4, с. 105–106.

3. Бейлери, Лиляна. Палеобалканската тематика в разказите на албанския писател в България Тома Кацори (1922–2008). *XVIII национални филологически четения за студенти и докторанти*. *Благоевград, ЮЗУ „Неофит Рилски“, 10 май 2024 г. Сборник с доклади.* Благоевград, ИК „Неофит Рилски“, 2024, с. 86-94. ISSN 2535-0625
First Prize Winner in the Literary Section.

4. Лиляна Бейлери. Декор и драматургичност в романа „Скендербег“ на албанския писател в България Тома Кацори. *Международна конференция „Балкански паралели“*. София, СУ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 17–18 октомври 2024 г, с. 279-285. ISBN 978-619-7785-11-1 (pdf) https://www.ceeol.com/search/book-detail?id=1306644

REFERENCES

1. *Albanian explanatory dictionary*. Fjalori elektronik shpjegues.
2. Bejleri, Rusana, Liljana Bejleri, *Shkrimtari shqiptar Thoma Kacori ne Bullgari. Jeta dhe vepra (1922–2008)*. Sofia, 2022.
3. Bejleri, Rusana. Fabulat për fëmijë dhe të rritur. In: Rusana Bejleri, Liljana Bejleri, *Shkrimtari shqiptar Thoma Kacori ne Bullgari. Jeta dhe vepra (1922–2008)*. Sofia, 2022. p. 211–221.
4. Dado, Floresha. *Sfida teorike të historiografisë letrare.* Tiranë: Bota shqiptare, 2009.
5. Dado, Floresha. *Andon Zako Çajupi. Jeta politike dhe vepra letrare*. Tiranë: Bota shqiptare, 2012.
6. Gurakuqi, Mark. *Reçension për romanin "Shpata e Kastriotëve ose Skënderbeu" të Thoma Kacorrit*. 22 p. Машинописен текст в личния архив на автора.
7. Kacori, Thoma. Dashuria. Novelë. *Nëndori,* Nr. 10, 1960, 41–71.
8. Kacori, Thoma. *Për mëmëdhenë*. Vëllimi I, Tiranë, 1961.
9. Kacori, Thoma. Liaisons onomastiques albano-bulgares en Arbanasi. *БЕ*, 1977, 1–2, 161–165.
10. Kacori, Thoma. Rreth disa gjurmë ngulmimesh shqiptare në Bullgari e llagapesh të tyre. *Studime filologjike*, 1967, Nr. 3.
11. Kacori, Thoma. Noms propres et noms de familie d'origine albanaise dans la ville de Ljaskovec (Bulgarie du Nord). *Actes du XI congres international des sciences onomastiques, Sofia, 28.6–4.5.1972*. Sofia, 1974, 449–452.
12. Kacori, Thoma. *Kandili i De Radës.* Tiranë: Eurorilindja, 1996.
13. Kacori, Thoma. Relikte shqiptare në qytetin e Sofjes. *Ndriçime*. Shkup, 2000, f. 128–133.
14. Kacori, Thoma. Karkaria. Në: *Album. Me prozë të shkurtë nga shkrimtarë të Qarkut Korçë*: Tiranë:Toena, 2008. http://toena.com.al/toena/Botimet_e_reja/Album.html
15. Kacori, Thoma. *Kryetrimi i Arbërisë Skënderbeu*. Tetovë: Ars media klub, 2005.
16. Kacori, Thoma. *Tregime të moçme*. Tetovë: Ars media klub, 2005.
17. Kacori, Thoma. Një fjalor bullgarisht-shqip dhe disa tekste fetare të vitit 1864 në Manastirin e Hilendarit. *Ndriçime*. Shkup, 2000, f. 134–141.
18. Kacori, Thoma. *Romancë dashurie dhe brenge.* Tiranë: Argeta – LMG, 2011.
19. Kacori, Thoma. Shënime për dy fjalë shqipe të dëshmuara para Formulës së Pagëzimit. *Ndriçime*. Shkup, 2000, f. 97–100.
20. Kacori, Thoma. Shpjegime të reja për etnonimin shqiptar, shqiptarë, Shqipëri (toskërisht) dhe shqyptar, shqyptarë, Shqypni (gegërisht). *Ndriçime*. Shkup: 2000, f. 11–19.
21. Kacori, Thoma. *Tregime të moçme*. Tetovë, 2005.
22. Kacori, Toma, Ute Dukova, Petja Asenova. Zwei Bulgarische Dialektwörter aus den Nachbarsprachen. *Linguistique Balkanique*, XXIII, 1980, 2, p. 33–38.
23. Lozanova, R. The Slavic Saints in the Churches in Moschopolis and Vitkuqi /Albania/. *The Slavic Saints in the History of Christian Church, Annuaire l'Universite de Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski". Cenre de recherches Slavo-Byzantines "Ivan Dujcev"*, 92 (XI), 2002, 177–189.
24. Qosja, Rexhep. *Asdreni: Jeta dhe vepra e tij*. Vepra, v. II. Prishtinë, Instituti Albanologjik, 2010.
25. Selmani, Ahmet. Takimi me Thoma Kacorin. *Gazeta shqiptaro-maqedone "Flaka",* 22.01.1998, f. 13.
26. Sinani, Shaban. *Preface to Shkrimtari shqiptar Thoma Kacori në Bullgari. Jeta dhe vepra*. Sofia, 2022.
27. Алексиева, Анна. Възрожденският бунтовник в културната памет на българите – изобретяване и митологизиране. *Хуманизација Универзитета*. Ниш, 2012, 131–141.
28. Аретов, Николай. *Национална митология и национална литература.* https://liternet.bg/publish8/naretov/nacionalna.htm
29. Бейлери, Русана. Мит и реалност в албанската литература. *Албания и албанските идентичности*. София: ИМИР, 2000, с. 159–209.
30. Бобев, Боби, Тома Кацори. *Албания.* София, 1998.
31. *Българско-албански речник*. Т. Кацори, Т. Тартари, Л. Душа, С. Паско, Л. Грабоцка, под редакцията на акад. Вл. Георгиев и Р. Мутафчиев. Издание на БАН. София, 1959.
32. Заимова, Рая. *Живата история или за паметта на една солунска фамилия*. София: ИБТЦ, 2019.
33. Кацори, Тома. *Великата беса*. София: Народна култура, 1960.
34. Кацори, Тома. *Поколения*. София: Народна култура, 1962.
35. Кацори Тома, Дукова Уте, Асенова Петя. Към характеристиката на тайните говори в България. *Съпоставително езикознание*, 1984, кн. 1, 29–43.
36. Кацори, Тома, Петя Асенова, Уте Дукова. Някои думи от албански произход в български език. *Български език*, 1979, кн. 1, 67–70.
37. Кацори, Тома, Уте Дукова, Петя Асенова. Повторението – вид конверсия в балканските езици. *Съпоставително езикознание*, 1990, кн. 4–5, 102–105.
38. Кацори, Тома. *Най-смелият войн на Албания Скендербег*. Ръкопис в личния архив на автора.
39. Първев, Иван. „Другият" Георги Кастриоти-Скендербег (1405–1468). *Другият в историята*. *Сборник от материалите на научната конференция 7–9 май 1992 г.* Кюстендил, 1996, с. 8–22.

40. Станчева, Р. Л., Н. Туртанска (ред.) *Танцът в балканските литератури.* София: Балкани, 2004.
41. Станчева, Р. Л. *Среща в прочита. Сравнително литературознание и Балканистика*. София: Балкани, 2011.