

Father Gjergj Fishta - A Personality, Who Engraved in Golden Letters his Name in the History of Albanian Culture

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Abstract

Father Gjergj Fishta was a Franciscan friar, a national ideologue, poet, patriot, lyricist, playwright, satirist, politician, pedagogue, psychologist, painter, conciliator, Albanian language reformer, pacifist, student, participant and the determining and decisive factor of the national cause. He wrote and worked according to the binomial Religion and Homeland, leaving as legacy to generations the monument of Albanian literature or as his masterpiece is known, "The Highland Lute". He lived in very turbulent times for the country and the nation, but he gave more than all other Albanians. Father Gjergj Fishta was the first Albanian to establish official diplomatic relations with the United States. He was a promoter of Albanian history and culture in the great western world. Friar in style of dressing, but with a high demeanor and preparation from European culture, he defended through his speech the Albanian language. We remember his participation in the Congress of Manastir and the role he played for Albania and Albanians. His collaboration with Abat Doçi, Ernest Koliqi and Martin Camaj, who for about 18 years promoted the Albanian history and culture in emigration.

Keywords: Religion, Homeland, Lute, Fairy, Language, Albania, Flag.

Introduction

According to the scholar Rudolf Marku, Father Gjergj Fishta (his real name was Zef, Zef Ndok Simon Ndoc Paci), while he chose the name Gjergji later when he was included in the Franciscan order). Father Fishta was born on October 23, 1871 in the village of Fishta in Zadrima in Lezha, in a family that came from Mirdita, and died on December 30, 1940 in the city of Shkodra (Mark, 1996).

According to the scholar Marku, we can say that when you mention Father Gjergj Fishta and his work "Jerina" you have mentioned: Mirdita, the Albanian ethnocultural tradition, you mentioned the cult of the ancients, the Albanian language, history, education, literature, knowledge, Munella mountain, fairies and Albanian nymphs, the famous Gurgjon of Domgjoni, the only one in the Balkans for its natural resources, the lute, *çiftelia*, Albanian leather shoes, traditional Albanian trousers (tirqit), veils, banners, because after all Father Gjergj Fishta was, is and will remain an ENCYCLOPEDIA, which knew the beginning but never the end. Throughout the work of Father Gjergj Fishta, one can feel the hospitality of the mountains and the longing for the land of origin.

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Father Gjergj Fishta himself, in his speech at the Peace Conference in 1911, would say: these people are exactly the one small Albanian people, as old as the fossils, as the stalactites of the echoing caves of its gigantic mountains and born to say from the very old roots, it is today the indisputable autochthonous master of its own lands”.

To study Fishta means to grow up in a rich environment of traditional treasures, where typical Albanian values and virtues are the alpha and omega not only of his writing and lecturing, but also the basis of Fishta's creation over the years. To study Father Gjergj Fishta means to get acquainted systematically with the words and expressions of popular wisdom, with fairy tales and legends, with various myths and rites that lived within the people, between beliefs and canonical norms, with habits and practices of regional organizations according to the Albanian tradition. In Fishta's work we find expressions of popular wisdom, complementation and curses, characteristic of Mirdita, Malësia e Madhe, Dukagjini, the magnificent mountain of Munella or the Ancient Fountain of Domgjon.

Literature is in a way an artistic reflection of history and society. The complex analysis of historical events and flows, sometimes violent and sometimes slow, but never stationary, helps us to understand the depth of a writer like Father Gjergj Fishta, who brought in his writings a certain historical-social reality.

Readers who know Fishta have it clear from many circumstances and factors that he does not belong to the race of writers who write locked in cabinets. His work was inspired and brought with a thousand colors the living life of ordinary people, of the rocking nation, falling and rising again to move forward. He has been rightly praised as a wise man who, thanks to his life profession, has known in detail the human soul, has managed to wisely enter the core of Albanian social psychology (Group of authors, 2008).

In 1893 the young Fishta returned to the Homeland. On February 25, 1894, he first sailed to Troshan, exactly where he had taken his first steps towards a turbulent world called the world of letters and knowledge (Gàzulli, 2016).

Fishta was born and raised in an environment where oral epics, but also other types of our oral poetry, lived an intense life in different strata of the population, enjoyed prestige and were experienced as a great art. Convinced of the values of folk art, but also aware that most of his contemporaries could not read or write, Fishta wrote his work relying extensively on oral poetry: on the figurative system of expressive folklore, on patterns of traditional rhetoric, in the direct emotional message that emerges from their verses (Vata, 2013).

Father Gjergj Fishta had determined the source of his inspiration. True, the “fountain” of inspiration was classic. That was his potential. Precisely here is the inspiration, which slowly makes its way into his unconscious, and which totally focuses on the moment of creation. It is this path that has no perceptible signs. Fishta said: ... “I read Moliere completely ... and he waits or feels in the way of the effect. I read Shakespeare and reread it and ... I have been studying drama for three years now, especially Shakespeare”.

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Father Gjergj Fishta gets from somewhere an impulse for everything he wrote. He used a code of communication, especially the popular one synthesized with the classical one, as he expresses himself in his letter of April 6 regarding the beginning of his work "The Highland Lute".

Academician Shaban Sinani is of the opinion that the so-called post-romantic literature contains within itself one of the most distinctive schools of romanticism, the school of Gheg romantic writers, with the literature of Gjergj Fishta as the main sign (Sinani, 2015).

In his masterpiece "The Highland Lute" the literary leaven of Father Gjergj Fishta we can not understand the mythological world, without knowing the mythical beings that give birth, grow and enliven all Fishta's work. From this mythical world which builds the whole framework of "The Highland Lute" itself, because in this way we finally understand the aesthetic and literary values that this work of his carries and transmits between generations.

In his work "The Highland Lute" Father Gjergj Fishta summarized a broad and systematic culture acquired over the years by him, this work is read in three perspectives, as an epic, as a simple literary text and as a historical document. According to the latter, it is exactly the Albanian League of Prizren, which becomes the object of Fishta's work, with ideas, themes and historical characters. Father Gjergj Fishta grew up and lived in an environment where mythical beings lived, among them he wrote to the Albanian nymphs, personalizing them according to the provinces.

Father Gjergj Fishta, not without purpose, had taken the Albanian nymph of Mirdita and not only, to compliment his poetic "Jerina". The function of the nymphs in this work of Father Gjergj Fishta is his message and legacy, for the preservation of the lands of the ancients.

The nymph is human protection. According to mythological beliefs, every man has his Protective nymph, his companion. In accordance to the power of his nymph, man is lucky or unlucky. Nymphs are shapeless and invisible, but in folk poems and tales they are presented as a snake or as a beautiful girl. In the case of Jerina, Fishta displays the nymphs as beautiful girls, who refresh themselves with the water of the Ancient Fountain of Domgjon. Among the strongest curses in Northern Albania are the ones such as: *Ligtu Ora !, Dektu Ora! Të lëshoftë Ora (Let the nymphlet go of you!)*, etc.

Every nation has its own myths and every myth has its roots in the history of civilizations, it may happen that myths merge into a single history, but it is important that each of them preserve the message they convey. Likewise, the nymphs appear in this work of Fishta according to the names of the tribes and the crafts according to the names of the mountains, as in the cases:

The Fairy of Inspiration-Trojan Nymph,

The Fairy of Haramia-Nymph of Mountains,

The Great Fairy-Nymph of Turks,

The Fairy of the Highland-Nymph of Karadak,

The Fairy of Miliskaut-Nymph of Dukagjin,

The Fairy of Albania (Shqipërisë)-Nymph of Mirdita,
The Fairy of Albania (Shqipnisë)-Nymph of Montenegro,
The Fairy of Velecik-Nymph of Shala,
The Visitor Fairy-Nymph of Dormitor.

The nymph is a spirit of the forest, the spirit of a terrain or rock, the spirits of nature. Great Nymphs, this is the Greek name of Albanian nymphs; the Greeks took them from the Albanians. The spirit of the forest is thought to exist in various forests all over the world, where its voice is heard in the rustling of leaves. Usually it lives in a tree, especially if it is old and bumpy. In many northern European countries an old Pine is thought to be its favorite place. Among those mountains, the nymph had preserved the nation and sold it with morals, with tongues, with knights, to keep it Albanian to release it around the world, as soon as the time of national revival arrived. To Father Gjergj Fishta, the nymph handed over this treasure to his hand, and then he begun listening again to the valiant songs of the Oso Kuka, of Marash Uca and Tringa. Whereas the fairies, we do not find these mythical beings of our Albanian mythology only in Fishta, they are just being repeated here. We have encountered the fairies crafts since the cycle of Valiants and we also know the role and function that they attain in the work. In Fishta's "The Highland Lute" the fairies are given as protection and warning of fighters.

In the XXIV song of Fishta's Lute, he calls it Fairy and calls it gives it the title "The Fairy of Visitor". The poet attributes these qualities to this Fairy, as the good, the beauty of this earth, the beautiful sylph, the white Fairy, and one of the nymphs he discusses with the Fairy of the Visitor describes Tringa in the same way as Tanusha is described in the epic of the valiants.

“With the stature, as a seedling,
with those seedling eyebrows,
with those cherry eyes,
with teeth like pebbles,
when a bride she will become
the friend will not appear anywhere
neither in Highland, nor in Shllak, nor in Shala ”.

The fairy is a kind of ethnic Albanian deity, which follows and determines the fate of our nation and its history. The fairy of Gjergj Fishta's work extends her activity only within the Albanian ethnicity. The fairy is present when important events occur for the fate of the tribe, of the ethnicity. Fairies seem like indifferent deities to human events, but, in fact, they embody the destiny that predetermines their course, so they mostly observe what is happening. The poet places the fairy on the side of the Albanians. She rejoices and sings about their victories; of course she is also sad about the misfortunes and defeats that Albanians suffer in various wars. The author addresses the fairy,

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asking her to tell him how the events would unfold, what would happen to the characters of the poem with these expressions:

“My Fairy, a demand I have for you
do you have the knowledge to tell me,
what it's like to feel thundered,
thence towards Rumelia.”

The fairy has extraordinary communication skills. It conveyed messages, communicating with forests, with waters, animals, mountains, trees.

“Drunken, my Fairy, tell me a word”, “Oh, my Fairy, do you know what they said to me”. The image of the deity Fairy is embedded in the polytheistic concept of pagan beliefs because it operates alongside numerous other different deities.

In addition to the Great Fairy (with more universal powers), there are other fairies, who appear as separate deities of a tribe, an area or a province. Thus we have the Fairy of the Highland, of Mirdita, the poet considers the settlements of the fairies to be holy, calling them the Arena of the Fairies, the etc., they have to do with local toponyms, fields, mountains, gorges, groves, etc.

In these places, “Arena of Fairies”, fierce battles and clashes take place between antagonistic forces: there also appears the intervention of fairies in the course of events, in the fate of people, heroes and their antagonists. Father Gjergj Fishta, wears the fairy with the function of an oracle, which warns of the future course of events. The conflict between Albanians and Montenegrins has also clashed between fairies. The Albanian Fairy of the Visitor defeats the Montenegrin Fairy of Durmitor and Gjergj Fishta utters the words of the Albanian Fairy in that conflict with the emotions, with the irony and with the Albanian pride. Father Gjergj Fishta has managed to bring his masterpiece, through The Highland Lute and to build a mythological world, which includes mythical beings, which are part of the lives of the heroes of Fishta's work.

Instead of some conclusions

Father Gjergj Fishta, a personality who wrote the history of Albanian culture with works and not only, does not have the deserved place even today, therefore the promotion of his image and work should be in the focus of every researcher.

So looking at the issue of promoting the image and work of Father Gjergj Fishta, as a pyramid upside down, we will begin our argument, chronologically, through three factors:

- a) Today Father Gjergj Fishta is without a museum (2021 onwards);
- b) Father Gjergj Fishta is not included, as much as he deserves, in the pantheon of Albanian studies, along the breeze and free wind of Democratic Albania (Years 1990-2021);
- c) Fishta out of the system (Years 1945-1990);

Each generation rereads the inherited literature of its country, in the form offered to it by the studies left on paper.

Father Gjergj Fishta was read differently at the time he was banned. The Archive of the Albanian State offers many documents which regarding many authors who have been banned, thrown on cardboard, or their work has been taken out of circulation, just because the name of Father Gjergj Fishta had been used. And today, at the time of the re-evaluation of the writings, we have another re-reading and consequently another perception and re-evaluation of the image and work of Father Gjergj Fishta.

What is very important and very true, is the fact that the image and work of Father Gjergj Fishta, promoted the Albanian national identity, as a historical, linguistic and ethnic identity.

But today who “forces” us to remain silent about the Fishtian massacre? To do right for the “Albanian Homer”? To a people as ancient as history itself, to our ancient traces?

And who better than Father Gjergj Fishta, would carve these Albanian traces in the granite rocks of Albanian national literature, history and culture, no one, no one better than Father Gjergj Fishta himself.

Albanian historiography, the history of Albanian literature, art and culture today, more than ever, must be protected from alienation from the self. A nation should not cover its heroes with the dust of oblivion, denial, carelessness and denigration.

The revival of the image and work of Father Gjergj Fishta, must be finalized with the construction of the FISHTIAN MUSEUM, in his native lands.

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