


<p>COMMUNICATING THROUGH TEXT MESSAGES General Views on the Foundation of the Magazine 'Shejzat'</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Linguistics</p> <p>Keywords: magazine, publication, immigration, <i>Shejzat</i>, scholars.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>In this article, the author introduces some general views on <i>Shejzat</i>, a cultural, social and artistic magazine, which managed to establish an excellent relation among the most distinguished Albanian intellectuals in immigration, the Arbëresh (Albanian immigrants in Italy) and foreign Albanologists (scholars of the Albanian language). The author points out that <i>Shejzat</i> started and was run for 20 years on end by a number of writers and scholars in immigration, inspired by genuine national feelings, precisely at a time when academic freedom was under the direct tutelage of the party-state. Therefore, owing to the organizational skills and tireless efforts of its founder, Ernest Koliqi, <i>Shejzat</i> served as a tribune of the Albanian scientific thinking and a source of information for the scientific Albanologic activities in the world. In their chronicles, they recorded social events which served as future historical and cultural documentation for an approximately 20-year-period. The reason why Albanian sages called their publication <i>Shejzat</i> has also been mentioned. Furthermore, it has been pointed out the position the magazine <i>Shejzat</i> occupied in the Albanian studies, which were by then free from politics, mediocrity and frames in which the scholars of the Albanian sciences were unfairly and undeservingly positioned in their motherland..</p>		

The magazine *Shejzat* was launched as a cultural, social and artistic publication of the Albanian intellectuals in immigration, directed by Ernest Koliqi, under the recognized dictatorial conditions of Albanians' motherland, at a time when the best achievements of the Albanian writers and scholars of the tradition were being violated and eradicated. It served as a center where these scholars came together to give vent to the national and intellectual feelings of their spirit. Magazine foundation took place at a time when Albania and the Albanians needed these pens most as "the only ones which could keep the Albanian culture up with ever new creations inspired by pure national feelings".³ This is the way *Shejzat* thrived; it was put in circulation for 20 years in succession, from 1957 to 1978, by the writers and scholars in immigration who considered the foundation of an intellectual hearth of all those who cherished a sole intention, the liberation of Albania from the anti-Albanian and anti-value dictatorship, as a task of prime importance. They were genuine intellectuals who, aware of their task, exerted the profession of letters and served as the eye of the nation in one of the most difficult and hopeless moments of its life. They were conscious of the fact that without the "illuminating work of the genuine intellectuals, a nation is like a blind person walking on a dangerous route full of holes".

Besides, *Shejzat* was considered as a direct successor of the glorious Albanian periodicals *Hylli i Dritës*, *Leka*, *Illyria*, *Shkëndija* and so on. It was founded when the official Albania suffered intellectually from the lack of a genuine magazine, when writers, founders of the institutions of the Albanian studies were declared illegal, and when the academic freedom was under the direct tutelage and control of the party-state. *Shejzat* was launched when the Albanian younger generation of the official Albania lived in darkness as a result of disinformation, under the pressure of oppression, deportation, fear and terror. In the very first issue, the editors wrote that,

...the publication of this periodical aimed at accomplishing an intellectual task for their motherland, at a time when, in the frame of the history, the hands of the watch were pointing to a deadly danger. The Albanian world and the Albanian spirit were going through the darkest and the most daunting period of their existence... The Albanian feeling was being threatened by crushing slavery,

³ Karl Gurakuqi, a letter addressed to Camaj, on the occasion of the publication of the first issue of the magazine *Shejzat*. It can be found in the archives of Professor Karl Gurakuqi. Letter exchange in Immigration 1944-1958 (1)

*unpredictable till then, which deprived Albanians of their basic human rights, the ones which neither the early Pharaohs, nor the wildest black neglected their cohabitants: the right of the trust in God, and the right to bring their children up in line with the tradition of their forefathers.*⁴

In this way, thanks to the organizational skill and tireless efforts of its founder, Ernest Koliqi, *Shejzat* served as a tribune of the Albanian scientific thinking and a source of information for the scientific Albanologic activities in the world. In their chronicles, they recorded social events which served as future historical and cultural documentation for an approximately 20-year- period. This is the reason why nowadays, scholars consult this magazine intensely. At that time, information in the Albanian state was totally censured. Under the guidance of its founder, Ernest Koliqi, *Shejzat* kept on its activity by adapting the cultural traditions of the Renaissance and especially those between the two World Wars to the current time and place.⁵

In the first issue of the periodical, one can read:

*The publishers of this periodical would like to line up in the front row of war, armed with the weapon of culture. Through our humble attempts, but guided by constructing intentions, we would like to make use of this weapon to frankly negotiate and clarify the Albanian existing issues. We would like to make our contribution in the field of culture, as a single means by way of which the Albanian question could be happily settled... This periodical would be like a free round table of a candid assembly, held within the frames of cleverness and civility. Every Albanian who has a sound opinion to express and knows how to state it in a pure language, every intellectual who would like to argue about a rational issue or wants to introduce his/her literary production, will find space in the pages of this periodical, suffice to say that he is inspired by the illuminating publication *Shejzat*, an Albanian constellation of virtues.*⁶

Why did the Albanian sages call their publication *Shejzat*? The answer to this question was provided by the Albanian writer and linguist, the regular contributor to this magazine, the head of the Albanian Language Chair at the University of Palermo, Karl Gurakuqi. *Shejzat* (*The Pleiades*), poetically selected as the name of this periodical, bears significant sense for the time it was launched. Old Greek Mythology personified the seven stars of the Pleiades (*Shejzat*) with the number of the celestial and mountainous hours to implant faith in stars, faith symbolized fortune, star was a symbol of illumination and so on.

*"Have *Shejzat* become visible"? - is a question highlanders asked before they set to a special undertaking. So did Greek sailors do, they set off to voyages when the Pleiades illuminated in the sky. All-time writers like Euripides, Sophocles; famous composers like Strauss, notable prose writers and poets like Gabriel D'Annunzio and others eternalized rays of stars in their immortal works".*⁷

Therefore, the undertaking of a group of distinguished Albanian intellectual was led by *Shejzat* as a prodigy for a happy future of the Albanian nation.

Position of *Shejzat* in the Albanian Studies

Shejzat occupies a special liaison place between cultural and scientific publications whose main publishing objective was Albanian studies. At the same time, this publication filled a big gap opened by above mentioned political conditions to convey the Renaissance spirit from 1944 to the present. *Shejzat* established an excellent relation between the most distinguished intellectuals in immigration, the Arbëreshi scholars of Italy and the foreign Albanologists. Thanks to the extraordinary work carried out by the publishers and the cooperators of *Shejzat* magazine, the Albanian Studies had a free voice far from politics, mediocrity and rigid frames in which

⁴ Revista *Shejzat*, gusht 1959. Mbas udhëheqjes se Shejzave, fq 1-2

⁵ Martin Camaj *Shejzat*, 1978, fq 8

⁶ Revista *Shejzat*, gusht 1957. Mbas udhëheqjes së Shejzave. Fq 1-2

⁷ Karl Gurakuqi. Letër e hapur-botuesit. *Shejzat* nr. 2. 1957

the scholars of the Albanian sciences were unfairly and undeservingly positioned in their motherland. Thus, with respect to the range of the diverse problems it deals with, *Shejzat* served as a tribune of the Albanian scientific thinking and a source of information, and no doubt, an irreplaceable foundation of future historical and cultural documentation for scholars for a period of 20 years.

Founders and the intellectual groupings that cooperated with *Shejzat*

The objective of the founders of the magazine *Shejzat*, introduced in its program in the first issue, in 1957, that...they were undertaking that difficult task with the hope of attaining the support of the well-wishers, guided by the saying "Success has many friends"⁸ was realized. They made a lot of friends and cooperators, "the most well-known personalities in the field of letters in immigration"⁹, whose number constantly increased. Owing to the illustrious name of Koliqi it bore and the role it undertook to play, the magazine reputation continually improved. Many writers, scholars, exponents of the Albanian cultural life in immigration, Arbëreshi writers, writers from Kosovo, as well as many foreign writers from Italy, Austria, Germany and so on, supported the magazine or as Koliqi put it, "...friends all over the free world, formed a crown around it and did not leave it alone, each contributed as much as he could".¹⁰ Magazine cooperators were genuine intellectuals who were aware of their task. They were the eye of the nation, without their direct work a nation would be like a blind person on a dangerous route full of holes.

Thus, it was not accidental that the magazine founder and owner was Ernest Koliqi, a well-known writer, a distinguished scholar of the artistic, folk and cultural tradition of Albania, whose writing were almost always in *Shejzat*, frequently signed with the penname Hilushi (writings which were listed thematically).

It is not also accidental that the editor-in-chief was Martin Camaj, one of the industrious personalities of the Albanian letters, whose activity left qualitative imprints in the magazine. All-time cooperators were intellectuals like Karl Gurakuqi, (head of the Albanian language chair at the University of Palermo) who represented the periodical in Sicily, professor Zef Valentini, well-known for his valuable albanologic studies, Shpend Bardhi, the penname of Mustafa Merlika, an enthusiastic, strict, and impartial writer but above all a very good Albanian person, Gjin Duka, (the penname of the Albanian friar, Father Daniel Gjecaj) known in the cultural circles of the Albanians in immigration, Tahir Kolgjini (his penname is Kol Limthi) an Albanian writer from the northern highlands whose writings could be distinguished for the beautiful Albanian language without foreign influences, Ekrem Vlora, a scholar and researcher of the dark moments of the national history, Vasil D'Alarupi, an Albanian talented novelist, Nermin Vlora-Falaski and other cooperators who represented the Albanians in immigration.

Literary creations and study publications of the arbëreshi of Italy as well as those of the period of Renaissance represented by De Rada, Skiroi or the current cooperators like Vorreo Ujko, Lluka Perone, Giuseppe Gradilone, Angela Cirrincione and others are numerous.

Thus tens of great Albanian and foreign writers who contributed to the improvement of the quality of the magazine considerably and made it the mouthpiece of the Albanian literary creativity and significant studies in different areas of linguistics, sociology, archaeology, ethnology and so on can be listed.

⁸ Karl Gurakuqi. Neper vullajt e Shejzave: *Shejzat* nr 1996 fq 16

⁹ Idem

¹⁰ Idem

In conclusion, it can be stated that spiritually, in the 20 years of its life, the magazine *Shejzat* realized the philosophy that genuine Albania has no frontiers, it extends all over the world, in every place where an Albanian does not deny his autochthonous properties”.¹¹

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¹¹ Hilushi. Malli i Shtampës; *Shejzat* nr 12, 1996, fq 310.