

**Literary Heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina
in the Ottoman Turkish Language:
A Pragmatic Dimension**

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Introduction

Classical Ottoman literature is a term for an elite, mainly poetical tradition that was cultivated in the Ottoman Empire in the period between 14th and 19th century, in the Ottoman Turkish language. Turkish literary historians of the 20th century also called it the *diwan* literature (*Divan Edebiyatı*), for poets collected and recorded their poetry in meticulously edited collections of poetry - *diwans*. The name *diwan literature* is thus a relatively new term, and is derived from the word *diwan*, which, in a literary context, means *an anthology, a collection of poems* (Macit 2002:47). Classical *diwans* were characterised by a very strict form, so as to contain poetical forms classified in accordance with the traditionally-determined order. Turkic peoples had developed a literary expression influenced by the Arabic and Persian literatures, which is seen in the content, rhyme, metre and form (ghazal, qasida, rubaiyat, mathnawi, kit'a (epigram), etc.). A diwan poet had to be highly educated and, aside from the Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian languages, he had to be familiar with the Islamic civilisation, especially with the Islamic mysticism, as well as with the traditions of the great Asian civilisations: Chinese, Indian, and, especially, Iranian. Poets of the diwan dedicated their poems to dignitaries (sultans, viziers, beys) and would thus find patrons to ensure their existence. The most important poets of the diwan in the Ottoman period were Baki, Hayali, Taslicali Yahya, Sheikh Galip, Ahmed Pasha, as well as the Ottoman sultans themselves. It is important to emphasise that the most voluminous diwan in the Ottoman Turkish language is that of Suleiman the Magnificent.

A number of people who originated from Bosnia and Herzegovina served in the institutions of the Ottoman Empire. Being fluent in the

Ottoman Turkish language was not the only precondition for employment in the civil service; requirements also included the knowledge of Islamic and natural sciences, and, frequently, of Arabic and Persian. Numerous texts of different registers and genres bear witness to that. In almost five centuries of the Ottoman rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a considerable number of the educated local population attempted to write the diwan literature. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the diwan literature was mainly written in the Ottoman Turkish language, and then in Persian and Arabic, since those were the languages of a high culture, that is, of the educated. Some poets wrote in the Bosnian language, meaning that they were poets of the Aljamiado literature. Still, some poets from Bosnia and Herzegovina gained popularity in centres of the Ottoman Empire. The first complete diwan in our area was written by Hasan Ziyai Mostari, in the 16th century. Other poets from Bosnia and Herzegovina are Sabit Bosnevi, Mezaki from Čajniče, Dervish Pasha Bajezidagic, Ahmed Hatem Bjelopoljak, Osman Shehdi, Fadil Pasha Serifovic, Fevzi Mostari, etc.

Today, due to the change in the sociocultural environment, one can speak of the issue of the perception of the diwan literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which can be observed in two aspects. Namely, not only does one face the difficulty in understanding the foreign and archaic language, but also a special system of symbols, motifs, allusions and reminiscences. Of course, that issue is not only something inherent to the perception of texts of the authors from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Ottoman Turkish language, but it can also be observed in a wider context, as an issue of today's perception and understanding of the diwan literature in general. The perception of the classical Ottoman literature is fairly limited in the modern Turkish society as well, since the old poetry had its own distinctive characteristics, familiar only to the reader of the time, and, as the context got lost in time, the game of words and meaning has become incomprehensible to the modern reader.

However, in the Ottoman Empire, the perception of the classical Ottoman literature was conditioned by the approval of a certain

literary work at the court of the Ottoman sultan, or, at the princes' courts, mansions of the grand viziers, shaykhs al-Islam, defterdars, pashas and beys (Durmuş 2009: 16). Namely, the relationship between the Ottoman Empire towards art was patrimonial, and many literary works bear witness to that, for they frequently refer to the poet's desire and striving to present his poetry to a dignitary, who would become his protector, patron. Since the establishment in 1299, the Ottoman Court in all dynasties, such as Seljuk, Karahan, Mamluk, etc., nurtured the tradition of assembling and supporting famous artists and learned men, thus encouraging new creative endeavours. Especially after 1453, when Sultan Mehmed II conquered Constantinople and decided to make the city a cultural capital of the world, many gifted artists had become protégés of the Ottoman Court. It is owing to that patrimonial system of the Ottoman Empire that numerous works in the field of construction, calligraphy, literature, music and science in the broadest sense were created, all of which contributed to the reinforcement of the reputation and the political power of sultans as their patrons.

Halil İnalçık, one of the leading researchers of the Ottoman history, defined in his work *Şair ve Patron* [The Poet and the Patron] the Ottoman Empire as a patrimonial state in which all material goods belonged to the sultan as an absolute ruler, while a layer of rich dignitaries consisted of the people who earned his sympathy. For that reason, the order in the Ottoman Empire was based on the ruler-subject relationship (2003: 10). Yet, on the other hand, the sultan, who was also called "The Shadow of God on Earth", was obliged to be just and to protect his subjects. The western perception of an oriental despot treating his subjects as slaves is wrong, for, the sultan, as a god-fearing believer, was / should have been, in fact, a protector of the people, like a father and a head of the family, just and ethical (Kurz 2012).

Analogous to the absolutist power of the sultan as a statesman, in art, he imposed himself as the ultimate patron, which not only meant financial patronage, but also authority in aesthetically

evaluating a work of art. In that sense, the Ottoman sultans dictated the criteria and the taste in poetry and music, which were forms of art they were well acquainted with owing to the classical education they had obtained at the court as princes (İnalçık, 2003: 15). Such an artistic environment and education influenced the Ottoman princes, and, later, sultans, to start writing poetry themselves. The skill of writing poetry was a matter of prestige for the Ottoman rulers, so the majority of them, more or less successfully, left behind vast collections of poetry - *diwans*.

Researching the perception of the classical Ottoman poetry is not possible without an insight into the relationship between a certain poet and the Ottoman court, or other, lower ranking dignitaries and institutions of the Ottoman Empire. The effects of the classical Ottoman literature are mostly seen in the status and awards the poets would acquire both at the centre of the empire and in the Ottoman provinces, for example, Bosnia at the time.

Since certain diwan verses were directly dedicated to potential patrons, in order to analyse them, as well as to shed light on the poet-patron relationship, we will use pragmatics as a theoretical framework, since it is a linguistic discipline analysing the use of language, that is, the relationship between signs and their users. Namely, pragmatics observes language as means of action towards the collocutor, changing thus the extralinguistic reality. In the verses of classical Ottoman literature, one can observe performatives, i.e. speech acts by which the poet is trying to influence the addressee, in this case, most frequently, a dignitary as a potential patron. Their relationship can be observed through the way in which the poet addresses a dignitary, as well as the very position and status of the author. Such speech acts are present in poetic forms, such as qasidas, müzeyyel ghazals, chronograms, kit'as, as well as in introductory and closing sections of the mathnawis, where pleas, complaints, praise, compliments and good wishes are observed. Although the aforementioned poetry is preserved today in the written form of the, it should be emphasised that they used to be recited in the elite circles of the

Ottoman society, hence they can be observed as manifestations of a certain communication and analysed from the pragmatic aspect as well.