

FROM 'AHENG' TO 'POPULAR SONG' – SIMILAR TRENDS, CONFLICTING AIMS IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF SHKODRA TRADITIONAL SONG IN XX CENTURY

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Abstract

This paper aims to outline the processes that led to the transformation of Shkodra's traditional 'aheng' repertory into a broader phenomenon called 'popular song', as a part of the endeavours at 'nationalizing' Albanian culture and society begun since the National Renaissance period. The perspective adopted is basically historical. But, while tracing the changes in form, content and performance practice of the repertory during this process, from its earliest manifestations (late XIX century) to its first flowering (in the 1950-es) up to the early 1990-es when the socialist system collapsed, it is sought to correlate them to the social, cultural and ideological changes occurred during that period. It is sought also to highlight the contributions of some prominent personalities of the catholic clergy and the important network of institutions they founded in this direction, somewhat overshadowed by their immense achievements in other domains. It is maintained that even after World War II, the basic lines of development in this process of transformation were those outlined in these circles of the catholic clergy, despite the totally different political agenda and institutional framework of the socialist regime, and despite the persecution policy it pursued towards the clergy in general. It is suggested that this constitutes only a portion of the important continuities at work hidden by the socialist discourse of revolutionary abolishment of the 'old' and construction of a totally 'new era'.

Key words: *traditional song, nationalization, cultural policy, ideology.*