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A Few Remarks on the Name Rozafa of the Castle of Shkodra and Its Connection with the Topic of Immured Woman

If…

If a traveller were to visit the north-Albanian town of Shkodra[1] nowadays, at a certain point they would come across the name "Rofaza". This imagined traveller might stay at Hotel Rozafa, until recently the main hotel in town, which since its opening in 1971 has dominated the panorama over Migjeni Square. The visitor would learn that the café in the hotel's hall continues to be

[1] In Albanian language all nouns have two forms, articulated and non-articulated. For the sake of uniformity with the name "Rozafa", which is articulated, I will use all the Albanian nouns in articulated forms. Hence Shkodra, and not Shkodër.

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a meeting point especially for the older inhabitants of the town, who tend to look with a mixture of disdain and resentment at the "newcomers" who have settled in Shkodra in the last three decades, leaving behind their villages up in the mountains. And if the day of this visit were to be a given Saturday during summer, the traveller's stay would most likely coincide with a wedding, because by all means holding a wedding reception at Hotel Rozafa is still a matter of prestige in Shkodra. But if this were a regular day, the traveller might end up dining in one of the local restaurants, which offer live music from the rich singing tradition of the town; moreover, if fish were to be ordered, it would definitely have been provided by Rozafa sh.p.k, the biggest fishing and fish distribution company in Albania. Naturally, the traveller would visit the National Museum of Photography "Marubi", which holds around 500,000 negatives of pictures taken by three generations of the well-known Marubi family: the founder Pietro Marubi (1834–1903), his alumni and soon-to-be-adopted son Kolë Kodheli (1870–1940), who continued his master's tradition by changing his family name to Marubi, and finally Kel's son, Gegë Marubi (1907–1984). But, if our traveller were to look for more art, they would definitely visit the small but sophisticated gallery *Oda*, run by the well-known poet, artist and photographer Rozafa Shpuza. If the time of this trip to Shkodra were autumn, then this traveller would be able to attend the "Anifest Rozafa", the International Children's Animation Film Festival, which since 2010 has been held in Shkodra, and few times parallelly in Gjirokastra, either in September or in October. Finally, notwithstanding, if this traveller were a sole adventurer in search of the meaning of life, or a mere participant in one of the one-day tourist excursions that usually flock to the town on hot summer days and experience the world through the lens of a camera, they would visit the so-called Castle of Rozafa (alb. Kështjella e Rozafës). Situated south-west of the town, on the top of the hill that dominatingly overlooks the flow of River Buna from the Lake of Shkodër, the castle certainly is the main symbol of modern Shkodra and, indeed, is one of the most recognisable places in Albania. After passing through the first gate – either because of their previously acquired knowledge, or simply by listening to the random tourist guide leading the group – the traveller would stop near a niche situated just at the right of the second gate and try to distinguish several lines in the whiteness of the wall. According to the legend, these lines are the remains of the tears of the young mother who was immured in the foundations of the castle. As tourist guides repeat relentlessly, the locals believe that the water running down the niche has magic powers and

can cure infertility. Therefore, candles often burn there to remind passers-by that a powerful force lies hidden in the niche, or that perhaps they should pay respect to the immured.

It is this legend – or, to be precise, the song that tells this tale – that lies at the origin of the process that saw the name Rozafa transforming into a topos, an often-used artistic motive, a key word for the tourism industry in Shkodra, a constant point of reference socially, culturally and even politically, indeed into a cultural symbol central both to local traditions, as well as to the cannon of Albanian culture. The aim of this paper is to elaborate on the origin of this name and to reveal some lesser-known aspects of the long life of the name Rozafa.

The starting point: the song, which is not about Rozafa

In her analysis of several of Ismail Kadare's novels written during the most productive period of his literary work, namely the second half of the 70s and the early 80s, Rebecca Gould (2012) writes also about the short novel *The Three-Arched Bridge* (published first in 1978). She follows the usual line of interpretation by putting this novel alongside the perhaps better-known *The Bridge over Drina* by Ivo Andrić, obviously on the basis that both novels make use of the legend of immurement of a human being in the foundations of a bridge. Gould analyses the act of human sacrifice through the perspective of Rene Girard's conceptualisation of sacrifice as a condition for controlling human violence and leading to social order (Girard, 1972). In fact, Gould in general builds her study in the form of a dialogue, albeit not a real interplay, between Kadare's literary allegories and Girard's concept of the scapegoat mechanism. While the latter, argues Gould, identifies this mechanism as central to the very existence of human societies and at the same time appeals for its annulment, the former demonstrates "the fundamental equivalences between sacral and political forms of scapegoating" (Gould, 2012, p. 227), hence the ontological inevitability of scapegoating generally in political life, and even more so in the conditions of a totalitarian state. As a means for contextualising Kadare's work, Gould sketches the Albanian ballad of immurement, which, quite wrongly by the way, she calls "the Albanian counterpart to the Serbian foundation sacrifice" (Gould, 2012, p. 211). Clearly, she refers to the canonical version about

the building of the castle of Shkodra; however, interestingly enough, Gould says that Rozafa is the wife of the third of three brothers-builders and eventually ends up being immured in the castle's fundaments. Since then, writes Gould, the castle has been called Rozafa Castle.

Well, Gould commits an error here. In almost all songs about immurement that were collected among Albanians living in the Balkans since the late 19th century, the walled-up wife remains nameless. Only in few variants does the sacrificed woman appear under the name Gjelina, but scholars agree that this is a fairly recent addition. In the canonical version about the building of the castle of Shkodra, which was published by Bernadin Palaj and Donat Kurti in the second volume of the folklore series *Visaret e Kombit* (Nation's Treasures) in 1937 under the title *Rozafat*, not only the wife but all the heroes remain nameless (Palaj & Kurti, 1937). By this, and also by few other details, it is easy to conclude that Gould did not consult the original text of the song, but only secondary sources, including an essay on narratives and myths in Albanian culture by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (2002, p. 6), and an article by Robin May Schott on the links between sexual violence, violence, and narratives of political origins (Schott, 2010). In fact, Gould quotes Schott's interpretation of the final will of the immured woman, who asks the builders to leave out of the wall one eye, arm, breast and leg, so she could look at, soothe, and feed her son, and sway his cradle. Rather than seeing this enumeration as a whole – which, by replicating a few basic activities of the everyday life of a young mother in pre-modern peasant communities, adds a very strong lyrical note to the tragic end of the song – Schott focuses only on the breast. The young mother would remain half immured and half exposed in a sort of agreement, with one breast left to this world and the other offered to nonhuman powers, Schott claims. Gould relies on this feminist perspective, emphasising that "Women, with their reproductive capacity, belong at once to civilisation and to nature. A woman's liminality as a mortal giver of life makes her the perfect candidate for the foundation sacrifice" (Gould, 2012, p. 212). Such an interpretation, although presented as an assumption, could be easily dismissed by archaeological data, from both Europe and elsewhere, which prove that men and children were also immured. Yet, Gould's text was brought here for an entirely different reason, namely as an example of the incorrect use of the name Rozafa. Clearly, somewhere down the line of referencing, one of the above-mentioned scholars did not consult the original text and, hence, got lost in translation, or – to put it more appropriately – lost in quotation. It should be added that

the list of scholars who have committed the same error goes far beyond the two above-mentioned ones.

Gould has a point though in naming the fortress Rozafa Castle, and there is no doubt that this name became popular in the second half of the 20th century. However, until the late 19th century the dominant form in historical sources and written accounts was *Rosafa*. The change from 's' to 'z' represents a common phenomenon in modern Albanian, namely the voicing of consonants. Yet, it is impossible to determine when this change took place, and when *Rosafa* became *Rozafa*. The earliest source we know in which the name *Rosaf* appears is the biography of Stefan Nemanja written by his son and the first Serbian king, Stefan Nemanjić Prvovenčani, in 1215, where in reference to Shkodra the sentence "Rosaf grad rekomyi Skdr" is used (Ćorović, 1939, p. 31). The term continued to be used and appears in many subsequent written sources. However, it should be noted that the ancient name *Scodra*, used first by the Illyrian tribe of Labeatae when they founded the first settlement around 4th century BCE, most likely originates from Albanian *kodra* (hill), from which derive all the names used for this town (alb. Shkodra, lat. Scodra, slav. Skadar, it. Scutari, ott. İşkodra) and which eventually prevailed as the designation of this town. In light of that, the continuity of the use of name *Rosafa* leads one to believe that the majority of these authors who used it were men of letters, who would describe reality more on the basis of what they had read rather than by referring to the habits and toponymy used by local population.

Yet, in the 15th century the name *Rosafa* was connected to a legend. This is testified to by the Albanian writer Marinus Barletius (It. Marino Barlezzio, Alb. Marin Barleti) in his book *De obsidione scodrensi*, published in 1504 in Venice, in which he described the second siege of Shkodra by the Ottomans in 1479, which eventually led to the capturing of the town. While discussing the origin of the castle, Barletius mentions that he came across some old writings, defined by him as "more fragments than real annals", where a legend was mentioned about its building. According to these writings, as the castle was founded by a brother named Rosa and his sister Fa, who lived and reigned happily, the castle was henceforth named Rosafa (Barleti, 1982, p. 38). Four and a half centuries later, this legend was still alive in Shkodra. Thus, in his account about northern Albania, Hyacinthe Hecquard, the French consul in this town in the mid-19th century, mentioned the existence of an Albanian song that told the story of Rosa and Fa. Interestingly, while describing the fortress the French consul wrote that the "Serbian castle Rosapha rises at

the extremities of the hills Tepé and Tarabos" (Hecquard, 1858, p. 17), but he classified the legend as "Albanian" and presented it in prose and not as a song. Rosa was building the castle in order to prevent ships entering the lake, but the works were not proceeding well because everything that was built during the day would fall apart at night. An old and wise man advised the builders that the only way for the walls to stand would be to sacrifice a woman in the foundations. The next day, Fa, who was a young mother still breastfeeding her boy, visited the construction site to cheer the builders up and inspect the ongoing works. While she was there, they decided to immure her alive in the foundations of the castle. As her last wish, Fa asked to be able to nourish her child one last time through a small hole in the wall, to which they agreed. By the way of a miracle, however, the milk did not stop running until Fa's son had grown enough not to need it any longer. Thereafter, a spring gushed at the footsteps of the castle, and now the wall never loses its whiteness, as such it is shown to visitors (Hecquard, 1858, pp. 17–18).

One small remark should be added here. There is no doubt that while preparing and editing his book, Hecquard used the assistance of his translator, Zef Jubani (1818–1880), a merchant born in Shkodra and supporter of the Albanian national idea. In 1871, Jubani published in Trieste a collection in Italian of Albanian folk songs, tales and literary works entitled *Raccolta di canti e rapsodie di poemi albanesi* (Collection of Songs and Rhapsodies of Albanian Poems). In the preface to the volume, Jubani mentioned that he had begun noting down folk songs and tales in the 1850s but had lost most of his manuscripts during the flood that devastated Shkodra in 1866 (Shuteriqi, 1972, p. 38). However, Jubani neither mentioned nor published the legend brought by Hecquard in his book. As a matter of fact, the first fragment from an Albanian song of immurement was published by Thimi Mitko (1820–1890) in his collection of Albanian folklore entitled in Greek and Albanian *Albaniki melissa/ Belietta sskiypetare (The Albanian bee) and published in 1878*.

Many other foreign travellers and scholars, such as Amie Boue, Joseph Müller, Johan Georg von Hahn, but also some who never visited Shkodra, such as Spiridon Gopčević, took the legend of Rosa and Fa as the source for the name of the castle (Hoxha, 1995, p. 111). Other foreign travellers did not refer to it at all. For instance, Alexandre Degrand, also a French consul in Shkodra, mentioned only the Montenegrin/Serbian song *Zidanje Skadra* as the main legend that explains the building of the castle of Shkodra (Degrand, 1901, pp. 72–74).

The beginning of the 20th century corresponds with the growth of the use of the name Rozafat in Albanian sources. The castle had been sketched and photographed previously, but it was Kel Kodheli/Marubi's photography that became a landmark. I have not been able to identify the exact date of this photography, but in 1915 it was printed by Studio Marubi (Dritëshkonja Marubi) and sold adorned with the sentence: "A Souvenir from Shkodra. Castle Rozafat". In 1918, a few artists from Shkodra decided to launch a cultural organisation, which they named Rozafat. Until its closure by the fascist authorities in October 1939, this association operated very successfully in the field of music and theatre and by all means was the main cultural secular institution in the town. The first cinema opened in Shkodra in 1926 and carried the name Kinema-Theatër Rozafat. The same picture of the castle taken and published by Kel Marubi, but this time only with the name Rozafat, was published in 1923 by the Albanian Post as a postal stamp with an equivalent value of 500 cents.

As was mentioned above, Bernardin Palaj and Donat Kurti entitled *Rozafat* their destined-to-be-canonical version of the Albanian ballad of immurement. The term 'canonical' is entirely correct in this case because there is no doubt that the authors of the whole series *Visaret e Kombit* intended it to become the landmark, or indeed the cannon, of the main Albanian folklore traditions. Unfortunately, neither Palaj nor Kurti explained the circumstances in which they noted down their variant of the ballad, nor who was the performer. It can be assumed, however, that it was a well-known song in the town. Regardless of whether the ballad was recorded entirely from one person or was the result of compiling and editing the work of the two editors, the fact that they named it *Rozafat* is clear proof of the consolidation of the tradition of using this name in Shkodra. Moreover, the introduction of this song to almost all textbooks of folklore and literature after WWII enlarged the range of use of this name from a local to a national context: every pupil came to know that the name of the castle in Shkodra is Rozafat. No wonder, therefore, that in 1950 the castle appeared once again on a postage stamp, this time equivalent to the value of 1 lek. First in 1964 and again in 1976, a drawing of the castle was presented on the new paper 1 lek banknote, and in 1950 the local factory in Shkodra initiated the production of 'Rozafat' unfiltered cigarettes.

However, another change took place which is perhaps as important as the shift from Rosafa/Rosapha to Rozafat, namely the modification from Rozafat to Rozafa. The 't' at the end of the name is not as meaningless as it might at first look. As stressed above, it is impossible to determine when the name Rozafat

became common in Shkodra. The case of Hecquard is very symptomatic in this regard as he was familiar with social life in Shkodra, nevertheless he described the legend of Rosafa, not of Rozafat. The determination with which the builders decide to immure Fa despite her high social status and the fact that she was both the sister of Rosa and a young mother is indeed striking. However, it is precisely this drive and the inevitability of accepting one's fate that aligns this legend alongside other versions of the ballad of immurement in the Balkans. Hecquard, however, did not venture at all into this matter, presenting instead the legend as a sort of foundational tale and an effort to explain the origin of the name of the castle. Notably, though, he used the name Rosafa, which could allow us to assume that he did not come across the name Rozafat. And yet, the aforementioned early 20th century sources clearly demonstrate the rather common use of the name Rozafat for the castle. Somewhere in the 1960s, this name went through a further process of change that resulted in the dropping of the letter 't' in the end. Thus, in 1960 a documentary film was made, entitled *The Song of Rozafa* (alb. Kënga e Rozafës), based on an Albanian–Bulgarian cooperation. The directors of the film were Juri Arnaudov and Ilo Pando; the screenplay was written by Cvetan Borisov; the cameraman was Vasil Vasiljev, and the music was written by the main Albanian composer in those years, Avdulla Grimci. Taking as the starting point the legend of immurement, the film transformed the castle into a metaphor of Albania fearlessly building socialism. Later, in the early 1970s, the brand of cigarettes was rebranded as "Rozafa", and Shkodra got its biggest and most modern hotel with that very name. Thereafter, the name Rozafa entered Albanian popular culture and alongside that process an important semantic change took place: while the name Rozafat clearly referred to the castle, Rozafa began to be associated primarily with the wife of the third brother-builder, the young mother immured for the castle to stand. It is hard to determine the interplay between the dropping of the letter 't' at the end of the name *Rozafat* and the semantic transformation that resulted from this process. Most likely, the two processes progressed parallelly, but what is important in this context is that the song/ballad/legend/tale began to no longer to be associated with the building of the castle but, above all, voiced the tragic fate and brave attitude of the immured woman. Thus, despite the fact that the heroine never bears the name Rozafa, "castle Rozafat" transformed into the "castle *of* Rozafa".

Discussing the origin of the name Rozafa

Alongside the reappearance of Albanians as a political factor in the Balkans in the second half of the 19th century, interest in their past also grew. Shrouded in an aura of mystery, they gradually began to be discovered by the intellectual European circles of the era. As elsewhere, this process of knowledge production went through three phases: first, various travellers produced rather rudimentary accounts about Albanians' past and the present state of their affairs; then, consuls and other governmental envoys produced reports and quasi-scientific books; finally, scholars began publishing more systematic historical, geographic and ethnographic studies. Thus, a major body of knowledge grew slowly, but steadily. As was the case with other modern Balkans nations, these scholars consulted primarily Roman, Byzantine, Slavic and – with time – also modern sources. In this context, though definitely of minor importance, the question of the etymology of the name Rosafa/Rozafat/Rozafa also arose.

As noted above, Hecquard explained the origin of this name with the legend of immurement, and this idea dominated for a long time. However, even in the mid-1930s the answer to this question was unclear, if not unresolvable, for many scholars and writers. For instance, when discussing the song *Zidanje Skadra* and its links with other similar variants in the Balkans and simultaneously trying to present the Albanian song *Rozafat* as a copy of the Serbian one, Svetislav Stefanović concluded that the origin of the name Rosafa was unidentifiable and had no historical sources (Stefanović, 1933, p. 312). Clearly, Stefanović did not search properly because, in 1914, Kostandin Jireček, the well-known Czech scholar and since 1893 professor of Slavic philology at the University of Vienna, presented a hypothesis regarding the origin of this name. In a series of lectures about the geography of the Balkan countries, Jireček devoted closer attention to the town of Shkodra and its surroundings. This lecture was first published by the Serbian Geographical Association as an article in the journal Glasnik Srpskog Geografskog Društva (Jireček, 1914), and then in German in the first volume of the collection *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, edited by Ludwig von Thallóczy (1916, pp. 94–124).

The Czech scholar began his line of argument by pointing out the presence of the name Rosaf in the biography of Stefan Nemanja by Stefan Nemanjić

Prvovenčani in 1215 (Thallóczy, 1916, p. 105; also Skëndi, 1954, p. 51). The name appeared next in Barletius's book, and thereafter in various other sources. However, Jireček rejected the explanation that the origin of the name Rosafa was a result of the legend about Rosa and Fa. Instead, he connected this name with the town of Resafa, today situated in central modern Syria in the region of al Raqqa, about 35 km south of Lake Al Assad and Euphrates. In fact, Jireček admits that it was Ilarion Ruvarac (1881) who first pointed out the connection between the name Rosafa and the church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, situated near the village Shirgj, 13 km south of Shkodra on the left bank of Buna River (Thallóczy, 1916, p. 105). Jireček elaborated this idea further and built a hypothesis according to which such a transition could have happened (Hoxha, 1995, pp. 111–112; Jireček, 1897, pp. 48–54). For him, the key element was the development of the cult of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus in Shkodra and its surroundings, of which the still-visible ruins in Shirgj are clear proof. In order to honour the memory of the two martyr saints and commemorate the place of their martyrdom, the hill on which the castle already stood was called Rosafa (Thallóczy, 1916, p. 105).

Jireček's hypothesis gained popularity, although mostly among travellers and scholars who either came from the German-speaking world or were more familiar with the scholarly tradition in German language. Thus, Theodore Ippen, who in 1897–1904 was the Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkodra, visited what was left of the church of Shirgj and described it in detail in his study *Alte Kirchen und Kirchenruinen in Albanien*, which was published in 1900. Ippen returned to this topic in a second study, entitled *Skutari und die nordalbanische Küstenebene*, published in Sarajevo in 1907, and in this text he referred to Jireček's hypothesis. However, it is interesting that as well as connecting the church of Shirgj with Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, Ippen also reported that the local population identified it with Shna Prenna, i.e., Saint Venera (or Veneranda, Veneria, Venerina or Parasceve) (Ippen, 1907, p. 10; see also Ippen, 2002). However, Degrand, the above-mentioned French consul in Shkodra in the same years as Ippen, who also visited this church and described in detail its history and its deplorable state at the time, did not mention Jireček's hypothesis at all (Degrand, 1901, pp. 93–98).

Jireček's article was translated into Albanian and published only in 2011 (Jireček, 2011), therefore it is only in recent years that his idea has been gaining ground in Albanian academia. However, this matter has attracted less attention from Albanian scholars than the issue of the church of Sts. Sergius and

Bacchus in Shirgj and its place in the history of Albanian–Serbian/Montenegrin relations. For instance, the Albanian archaeologist Gëzim Hoxha referred to Jireček's hypothesis in order to show that the church of Shirgj was founded long before the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans and is proof of the presence of the early Christianisation of the Illyrian and, hence, proto-Albanian population of the area (see Hoxha, 1995). Due to the space limit here, I will devote a separate study to this topic, but I will suffice here by stressing not only the scientific but also the political implications that issues related to the song of immurement – and, hence, also the hypothesis of the Czech scholar – can trigger or be associated with in Balkan academia.

Due to scarcity of written sources, it is impossible to test the validity of Ruvarac's idea and Jireček's hypothesis, but both seem plausible. Such a transposition may have happened due to the popularity of the cult of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus in the early mediaeval period in the south-western littoral of the Adriatic. Churches devoted to them existed also in Himara and Kotor, whereas the hill upon which Ragusa/Dubrovnik was founded was also devoted to St. Sergius. On the other hand, the name Rosafa/Rusafa, clearly due to its Arabic origin in the word *Ruṣāfa*, meaning garden in Arabic, is found in various places in the Mediterranean and Middle East. For instance, districts of Valencia and Baghdad are named this way. Yet, in the case of the Shkodra, the name Rosafa/Rozafa has evolved to signify no longer a place but a person – a woman who is the central hero of a well-known folk ballad. This semantic transposition deserves to be highlighted and to me seems to be a much more interesting issue than the divagations and often speculations about the origin of this name. For, in this context, one can see how the song of immurement undergoes various transformations and transpositions, how it penetrates into various spheres of cultural and social life and changes but also evokes change and further inspirations.

And the story goes on…

Both Rozafa (feminine) and Rozafat (masculine) are used nowadays as personal names in Albania and Kosovo. Yet, the process of cultural and semantic transposition sketched in this paper is far from being over. Thus, in June of 2023, the National Puppet Theatre in Tirana staged a new play entitled *Roza dhe Fati*, meaning Rose and (her) Fate. Obviously, the play was intended for children and took as a basis the song and the legend of immurement. Erion

Kame wrote the text, whereas Medi Gurra directed the play. After a round of shows in Tirana, the theatre also presented the play in other parts of Albania, where it met with great success. The performance follows the line of events in the song but gives it a rather modern touch which relates more to contemporary children and their needs or viewpoints. In parallel to this, the game of words that Kame and Gurra have introduced here is also interesting: they break the name *Rozafat* into two words, *Roza* and *fat*, hence once again transforming the heroine of the old legend from Rozafa to Roza, whereas the legend becomes a story about her fate. This feminising approach follows a general trend in contemporary interpretations of songs of immurement in the Albanian public sphere, which draw attention primarily to the pain of the walled-up young woman and mother, making her the very subject of the song. Thus, another stage of cultural transposition is taking place in which it is no longer the *besa* or the castle that are the most important semantic components, but the people and their fate, their strength, power, pain and spiritual fulfilment. In other words, the mythisation of the song is being slowly but steadily replaced by its humanization. It remains to be seen what the outcome of this process will be.

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Kilka uwag na temat nazwy zamku w Szkodrze – Rozafa i jej związku z toposem wmurowanej kobiety

W artykule została omówiona kwestia pochodzenia nazwy Rozafa, stosowanej przede wszystkim na określenie twierdzy w Szkodrze, ale która funkcjonuje również jako nazwa własna obiektów i osób w Albanii, Kosowie oraz wśród albańskiej diaspory. Autor pokazuje różne punkty zwrotne w zmianach tej nazwy na przestrzeni wieków, zwraca uwagę na różnicę między dyskursem pisanym a przekazem ustnym i pokazuje, jak nazwa ta funkcjonuje dziś w kulturze albańskiej. Nie dochodząc do ostatecznych wniosków, otwiera pole do dalszej refleksji na ten temat.

Słowa kluczowe: Rozafa; Shkodra; ballady; wmurowanie; oralność; piśmienność

Few remarks on the name Rozafa of the Castle of Shkodra and its connection with the topos of the immured women

The article discusses the question of the origin of the name Rozafa, which is used primarily to name the fortress in Shkodra but also functions as an object name and proper name in Albania, Kosovo and the Albanian diaspora elsewhere. The article shows the different turns of the transformation of this name over the centuries; it draws attention to the difference between

written discourse and oral transmission and shows how this name functions in Albanian culture today. Without arriving at a conclusive conclusion, the article opens up room for further reflection on the subject.

Keywords: Rozafa; Shkodra; ballads; immurement; orality; literacy

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