

# “The Highland Lute” - A Monumental Work in Albanian Literature: An Overview

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*Abstract: The aim of this study is to safeguard and advance the spiritual legacy of a nation. “The Highland Lute” is a significant contribution to the field of Albanian literature. It encompasses the comprehensive exploration, cultivation, analysis, study, and promotion of the spiritual legacy of Albania, all of which are intricately intertwined with the multifaceted character of Gjergj Fishta. The objective of this research on Gjergj Fishta is to determine how important historical memory is to the instructions he penned for his literary masterwork “The Highland Lute”. This study presents a synthesis of several techniques and a critical examination of multiple methodologies, including hermeneutic, semiotic, sociological, and anthropological methods. Collectively, these approaches will form the methodology employed in this study. Upon revisiting “The Highland Lute”, it became evident that the author lacked proficiency in playing the lute as a musical instrument and singing like a rhapsody of the mountains. However, the author possessed a profound understanding of the psyche and thinking of the residents of North Highland. The songs depicted in “The Highland Lute” serve as a reflection of the historical events within the context of the traditions, customs, and mindsets prevalent in the northern Albanian regions. Through a thorough examination, several recommendations can be derived. “The Highland Lute” is undeniably a significant piece of Albanian literature that profoundly connects with the historical recollection and spiritual legacy of the Albanian populace. Despite being examined by linguists, writers, folklore trackers, jurists, and others, it is recommended that this work be endorsed as a valuable possession of the Albanian museum's spiritual legacy. If feasible, it should be transcribed into the contemporary Albanian language to ensure maximum accessibility for all generations, as well as for local and international researchers interested in studying the spiritual and cultural heritage of Albania.*

*Keywords: Lute, Highland, rhapsody, tradition, song.*

## INTRODUCTION

Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940) emerged as a very influential figure in Albanian literature and national culture, exhibiting notable qualities as a publicist, nationalist, diplomat, and clergyman while also possessing exceptional spiritual and intellectual attributes. He epitomized the preeminent and influential personality in Albanian literature during the initial half of the twentieth century, surpassing all other writers in artistically articulating the inquisitive essence of the nascent autonomous Albanian nation.

“He inherited the renowned idealistic values of freedom, independence, ethnic unity, and language from the Renaissance and revivalists. Additionally, throughout the period of Independence, he was motivated by the pursuit of national unity.” (Qosja: 2005, p.149)

His writings, which encompass epic, lyrical, dramatic, satirical, and journalistic elements, together with the humanist, classic, romantic, realist, and modern genres, “offer a unique and unparalleled journey in Albanian literature.” (Marashi: 1996, p.212)

Gjergj Fishta, widely regarded as a highly knowledgeable authority on both written and unwritten cultural legacy, has significantly influenced the development of Albanian national identity over the course of several decades. Fishta’s publications on the topic of heritage revolve upon his “exceptional understanding and appreciation of the country’s customs and traditions.” (Çabej: 1990, p.1450). The Albanian linguist Eqrem Çabej brought attention to this argument.

He was born and raised in a cultural milieu where oral epics, along with various forms of oral poetry, held significant prominence across diverse strata of society. These literary forms were highly regarded and viewed as having spiritual and artistic merit. The researcher Shaban Sinani argued that, “the relationship between Fishta and the oral epic is mostly based on ethno-distinctive qualities that are connected to the community's genotype and national tradition.” (Sinani: 2018, p.104)

Within this context, specifically pertaining to a comprehensive understanding of the customs and traditions of the nation and their manifestation in the societal dynamics of a specific Albanian community, the artistic prowess of Gjergj Fishta is also evident. This is exemplified through his renowned masterpiece, “The Highland Lute”.

According to Mallory and Adams, they state that “Peoples are defined by their shared customs, language, beliefs, origins, traditions, and familial connections. Various social groups are differentiated based on factors such as language, geography, and ethnicity. The demographic divides of the provinces are primarily influenced by the interplay between geography and history.” (1782, p.210)

“The Highland Lute” is organized into 30 units or songs, as the author calls them, in 17,000 verses, is the result of over thirty years of work, the beginnings of which date back to 1905, within the framework of several publications assessed as “Foundation stones of the National Epic.” (Gjeçaj: 2007, p. 44), to take a final form in 1937, since the audience of researchers has been described as an “epic poem with Albanian Homeric values.” (Kulli: 2022, p.102)

It is important to acknowledge that “The Highland Lute” serves as a testament to Fishta’s lifelong artistic endeavors, thereby establishing his enduring significance within the annals of national history.

This work embodies the author’s life and creative experiences, influenced by the customs, traditions, values, myths, and canon of the Northern Highlands. It aims to honor and preserve the essence of the world through artistic means while also reflecting the Albanian spirit throughout history. (Berisha: 1996, p.91)

Fishta authored “The Highland Lute” with the aim of disseminating its lines as melodious tunes within the collective consciousness of individuals. Recognizing the significance of folk art, Fishta composed his work by heavily relying on oral poetry. He incorporated the folkloric expressive figurative system, traditional rhetoric models, and the direct emotional message conveyed through his verses, although many of his peers lacked literacy skills. (Vata: 2013, pp.62-63)

#### **The Historical, Literary and Ethnocultural Background of “The Highland Lute”**

Gjergj Fishta’s work “*The Highland Lute*” focuses on the Northern Highlands of Albania, exploring the traditions, customs, myths, virtues, worldviews, and social life of the Albanian population residing in these regions.

All of these components, particularly manifested in units that he referred to as songs, are connected to the lute, not only as a musical instrument but also as a synonymous representation of traditional narrative. The lute is a musical instrument that has been extensively utilized by the residents of northern Albania. They have sung about significant events that have had a lasting impact on the history of the Albanian people, particularly through epic ballads.

The lute has historically been linked to the spiritual encounters of the highlanders, *where it has been revered as both a sacred and cultural artifact.* (Pirro: 1987, pp.26-29)

To put it otherwise, this significant piece of literature encapsulates the fundamental aspects of the Albanian nation, including the name Albania, the Albanian language, and our long-standing traditions and customs.

Gjergj Fishta’s “*The Highland Lute*” depicts conflicts spanning two generations, with notable events being recounted through the songs of the lute. “*The Highland Lute*” is an epic poem that deviates from the conventional structure of having a primary action or hero, which is typical of great epics. Instead, Fishta presents a multitude of heroes in this poem, such as Oso Kuka, Dedë Gjo Luli, Marash Ucit, Tringa, Abdyl Frashëri, and Ali Pashë Gucia.

The work commences by celebrating the valor of Albanians in defending their territories against Montenegrin assaults, primarily in northern Albania. However, it is carefully chosen to encompass specific Albanian events and characteristics. The work begins by examining a certain province and then expands to encompass the entire Albanian ethnic group. It initially explores the characteristics of a particular area, focusing on masculinity, and ultimately develops the concept of the nation. (Hamit: 2009, p.18). Gjergj Fishta delved into the profound depths of the mountaineer’s innermost being, extracting from it the rich tapestry of traditions, customs, beliefs, mythology, superstitions, rituals, aspirations, curses, songs, and essence to capture the true ethnic identity, unwavering courage, warrior spirit, and deep-rooted national pride that have endured in Albanian culture to this day.

“Not for true men cane and prison,  
Better for them noose or sabre.  
A gross act when perpetrated

Only sure to breed more evil,  
Flowing brooks become a torrent.” (Fishta: 1991, p.119).

“Without a lute, an Albanian has no national epic, and without an Albanian, a lute has no subject. A lute is a gold mine where scholars, lawyers, folklorists, historians, writers, and ethnologists may all find a place to study and gather important materials for the creation of the entity known as the Albanian nation.”(Duka-Gjini: 1996, p.88).

“Albanian culture lacks a national epic if it does not include the lute and the lute loses its significance if it is not associated with Albanian culture.”The lute is a useful resource for ethnologists, lawyers, historians, writers, and folklorists to study and find valuable material for the development of Albanian countries. (Ibid, p.88).

“*The Highland Lute*” depicts events that primarily occurred inside limited geographical boundaries, where the poem's creative landscape is conveyed, as exemplified by this verse:

“It’s the land of our forefathers,  
Yes, of Scanderbeg the birthplace,  
Yes, the land of Mois Golemi,  
Homeland of Lekë Dukagjini.  
Kuka and Muzaku  
And of Streza, Arianiti,  
who all with the Turks did battle.  
Thus, there’s no one, king or sultan,  
Who can cede or sell our home as  
Long’s Albanians are still present  
On the earth to cast a shadow.  
Thus, they ended the epistle,  
finished the writing and did fold it.  
On its way they sent said letter,  
Gave it to Berlin where gathered  
All the Seven Kings and sultan,  
passing judgment on the planet.” (Fishta: 1991, p.113).

The significance of Gjergj Fishta’s work “*The Highland Lute*” lies in its relationship to three key elements: the author, the reader, and the shared code that connects them.

“This communication process connects what is special (the author and the meaning of his work) with what is universal (the code of the language or of the special literary language).” (Dado: 2003, p.16)

“With them, I think you’ll disarm those  
Turkish soldiers up in Rapsha,  
Marash Uci said to Dedë, “so  
I will tell Kastrati, Shkreli,  
Send words also to Kelmendi  
That they hide their herds and kinfolk,  
That their men guard well the passes,  
Let’s be off, lands!” (Fishta: 1991, p.474)

The artwork depicts actual people and characters from various eras of the country's history. Fishta himself has actually left us to witness the opening of the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini, where it states that, “Folklore is the inexhaustible source of the language and literature of the country; it is the sharp mirror of the psyche of the community; it is a marble slab, on which history carves out the wanderings and health of peoples.”(Fishta: 1933, XXI)

Fishta’s work deeply appreciated Albanian traditions. He constructed this piece in a manner that would prevent it from being forgotten over time, ensuring its transmission by oral tradition from one generation to the next. Albanians view their national culture as having spiritual worth and consider it a spiritual inheritance. They see it as their job to preserve this culture.

“And you’ll hear that water weeping,  
Even now the Drin’s lamenting  
At George Castriota’s grave side,

*He who branded once his sabre,  
Flashed it at Albania's foemen,  
Like a bolt from the Almighty.  
Here, too, dwelled once King Bardylis  
Who the landscape drenched with foe blood?  
Gere, too, reigned once Queen Teuta,  
Falcon-heart, Illyrian maiden  
who knew not of fear the meaning.  
Like a horn-beaked mountain eagle,  
Did she rush upon the Romans,  
Turned blood-red the Adriatic.  
Here lived Cline and Pleuratus,  
Hila, Agron and poor Genthius,  
Who were raised here and did flourish.  
In good luck and in misfortune". (Fishta: 1991, pp.450-451)*

The researcher Martin Camaj exemplifies this aim by emphasizing the effects that time can have. He states, "*The lute remains in the tree, while the minx has perished, the weather changes, and the grandchildren are uncertain about how to handle it.*" (Camaj: 2010, p.71)

The rhapsodists from the North recited Fishta's verses on the lute and passed them down as a spiritual inheritance to their relatives. The people diligently safeguarded Fishta's work, transmitting it orally across successive generations and rendering it aesthetically pleasing not only to its admirers but also to its adversaries. As a result, Fishta gained a reputation as *the voice and heart of the people*. (Pipa: 1941, p.120).

*"When the moon appears at night,  
Do the oras, zanas gather?  
Holding hands they stand assembled,  
Holding hands as white as snowflakes,  
Let their gentle voices sing out,  
See them swaying and intoning  
Battles fought by our forethfathers,  
By those old Illyrian heroes,  
As they mourn the bitter fate of  
Our wretched land, Albania,  
Wrapped in mourning robes  
When the Turks invaded, they seized it,  
On the death of Castriota  
Scourge of God, those Turkish fighters,  
And the mountains, canyons echo  
To the droning and the dancing.  
If you, nonetheless, are weary,  
Bored of listening to my singing,  
(Though without you, oh, my zana,  
I would hardly get a word out,  
Not a word that's worth remembering). (Fishta: 1991, 451)*

Certain aspects of Fishta's epic are similar to those of the Kreshnik's epic, including: lute, descriptions, exaggerations, oaths, horrors, warning dreams, magical formulas addressed to clocks and fairies, correspondence exchanges, the role and characteristics of fairies, the number system, 30, 300, oaths, wishes, and curses.

"...Textual formulations are mostly dependent on the text's emphasized phraseology. She can be seen in front of those that have been" added by the author in *The highland Lute*. However, allusions in literature are rephrased from the author's, formations, and temporal perspectives." (Shala: 2004, p.13)

Hence, it can be asserted that "*The Highland Lute*" is a grandiose poetic composition that mirrors the conflicts, ideologies, and mentality of a society during its early stages of nation-building, ultimately leading to its autonomy. Fishta's perspective aligns closely with that of the people. "He is the descendant of an ancient lineage in the Mediterranean with a rich history spanning thousands of years. He resides and engages in a dynamic pursuit, similar to only a handful of other writers at that era, within

*the midst of his own community, precisely at a time when that community was striving to establish its identity.” (Çobani, Tonin & Balalbani, Ndue: 2020, pp.62-63).*

*“Therefore, men, I think it best to  
Our discussions are as follows:  
And be seated, write a letter,  
Scribe a letter, as is custom,  
To Berlin, the Seven Kings there,  
Saying under shkajs we’ll not live  
‘Toward the Drin, Shkumbin and Buna  
Rivers, all three here have dried up.  
Thus, Pasha of Gucia  
Spoke and chieftains of Albania  
Laid out paper, penned a letter,  
Word for word considered wisely:  
“You in Stamboul who are sultan,  
Greetings form Albania’s chieftains.  
On the judgment you awarded,  
Giving to the shkajs our homeland,  
Please consider well the matter.  
Doom is likely to befall us,  
For to no one we’ll be servants,  
We’ll pay no one tithes and taxes,  
This our homeland, fair Albania,  
God himself bestowed upon us,  
Not a gift from the Italians,  
From the French it was not filched or  
From the English, from the Teutons,  
From the Slavs for sure not stolen,  
Who but lately seized the Balkans.  
Who knows where they hang their hats now?  
Here today and gone tomorrow,  
Moving like a cloud of locusts?” (Fishta: 1991, pp.112-113)*

Gjergj Fishta, through his songs, emphasized the importance of language and ethnology in promoting national identity. In his work, Fishta argued that the reflection of a people can be traced back to its laws, canons, popular poetry, documents, and the sentiments it holds toward religion, manhood, and honor.

Language is a crucial component of a nation’s identity, and Fishta remained loyal to the same words, idioms, and other phraseological units he had heard from the speech of the people living in the Northern Highlands. He transcribed them without any changes.

*“Fishta’s work can be considered the most monumental endeavor by Albanians to explore their own world, as it draws heavily from the expressive forms of art originating from Malsori.” (Koliqi: 1941, p.54)*

He passionately conserved the speech of the residents of the Northern Highlands, serving as a defender of the rich language of our folklore with a clear aim. *“Fishta, deeply connected to the traditions and culture of his people, had a strong desire to acquire knowledge of the language spoken by the men and women residing in the mountainous regions of Albania.”* He has skillfully removed the curses and wishes from them. (Baraliu: 2017, p.64).

Fishta’s labor spanned 37 years, during which real and mythological figures peacefully coexisted, uniting in their shared objective of triumphing against the invaders of Albanian territories. In his poem, Fishta portrays several historical figures that resemble romantic heroes and, at times, even heroic ones in their descriptions and analogies.

“Fishta’s epic literary work, *“The Highland Lute”*, has numerous myths about supernatural beings and legendary creatures. These myths are accompanied by mythological creatures like “Kuçedra” or “Lugati”. (Leka: 2022, p.48)

The key themes of *“The Highland Lute”* encompass the entirety of the work, which also align with the titles of the songs within the work, such as: Canto 1: “The Bandits”, Canto 2: “Oso Kuka”, Canto 3: “The Booty”, Canto 4: “The Vranina”, Canto 5: “Death”, Canto 6: “Dervish Pasha”, Canto 7: “The Congress of Berlin”, Canto 8: “Ali Pasha of Gucia”, Canto 9: “The League of Prizren”, Canto 10:

“Mehmet Ali Pasha”, Canto 11: “The Vampire”, Canto 12: “Marash Uci”, Canto 13: “At the Church of St. John’s”, Canto 14: “At the Bridge of Rrzhanica”, Canto 15: “The Herald”, Canto 16: “The Kulshedra”, Canto 17: “At the Grapevine Pass”, Canto 18: “At Sutjeska Bridge”, Canto 19: “Father Gjon”, Canto 20: “The Sons of Lekë Dukagjini”, Canto 21: “Mediation”, Canto 22: “Tringa”, Canto 23: “At the Farmhouse of Curr Ula”, Canto 24: “The Zana of Mount Visitor”, Canto 25: “Blood Vengeance Exacted”, Canto 26: “The New Age”, Canto 27: “The Committee”, Canto 28: “Dedë Gjo’Luli”, Canto 29: “The Balkan War”, Canto 30: “The Conference of London”.

The central figure of *The Lute* is the Albanian populace, represented at different eras by characters like as Marash Uci, Oso Kuka, Ali Pashë Guci, Patër Gjoni, or Tringa. The Albanian populace, yearning for liberation, expresses their desire for autonomy by asserting their individual freedom: “*I exercise my personal autonomy as I see fit.*” (Koliqi: 1999, p.220)

*“Headed by Nikë Gjelosh Luli,  
Ear to ear did stretch his whiskers,  
Sprang on Turkish troops in Deçiq,  
Had you seen him right before you,  
You’d be seized with fright and terror,  
Second to him was Mark Gjeka,  
Pjeter Nikë Daku, famous hero,  
Maça Grizhi, Lulash Zeka,  
Blood flowed everywhere they turned up”.* (Fishta: 1991, p.480)

From this, it is seen that Fishta sought with his literary work to free from the shackles of multi-century captivity his country, the lands of the first, the bloody, the trunk, the genus and the root of the Illyrian. “*The Highland Lute*” is the title of a poetic masterpiece that is also known as its title which is why it always comes as they say the epic poem of the Albanian slave. *Malcijsa* is the birthplace of this people that has preserved its place through the centuries of the past. *Lahuta*, the esteemed symbol of *Malcijsa* honor (*Malcijsa e Madhe, Dukagjin, Nikaj e Mertúr*), is the sole cherished musical instrument through which the soul of the people articulates its profound sentiments of the subterranean depths.” (Cordignano: 1913, p.550)

Historical figures appear in binomial with mythological figures, and this is done deliberately by the author. With respect to characters, themes and historical events, the Andes not only dealt with them artistically in the historical song “*The League of Prizren*” but also in some other songs of the epos of Albanian literature. The content of the work expands to include many historical facts and events, not only of *The League of Prizren* period but also of other previous periods.

The IX song of “*The Highland Lute*” bears the title: “*The League of Prizren*”, where Abdyl Frashëri, a central figure of the Assembly of the League, is perpetuated in this work with all the special features of a popular tribune. “*The lyrics of his speech in Fishta’s song have been followed with historical truth.*” (Shema: 1996, p.28). Gjergj Fishta described the figure of Abdyl Frashëri in his work “*The Highland Lute*”, as follows:

*“He’s Frashëri Bey, the hero,  
Who wherever he has wandered  
The fame of Toskëria  
And the pride of all Albania.  
After him another leader,  
Prek Bibë Doda, noble lad he,  
Who though young in age is noted  
Sagacity in counseling.  
If you search for wisdom spoken,  
He’s the one, a captain, zana,  
He is the Captain of Mirdita,  
Far and wide, his words are quoted.”* (Fishta: 1991, p.103)

The poet expresses the extent of the cult of bravery through a large number of braves and distinguished warriors, such as Oso Kuka, Marash Uci, Dede Gjo’Luli, Ali Pashë Gucia, Çun Mula, Patër Gjoni, Mican Leka, Sadri Cuni, Bec Patani, Rrushman Hasani, Smail Arifi, and Nikë Daka. Fishta identifies and delineates the events, settings, and qualities of the fighters. Within the overarching framework of depicting unwavering courage, Fishta presents a distinct perspective on the situation and traits of the characters. Despite appearing as a Catholic clergyman following the Franciscan tradition,

Fishta maintained a neutral stance regarding religious affiliation, consistently prioritizing the Albanian national identity.

*“Share your thoughts and tell me, zana,  
Will I ever see my people?  
All united under oath and  
Out to fight and save their homeland?  
Will they ever join their forces?  
Ghegs and Tosks from Highlands, Lowlands,  
Linked beneath our red–black banners,  
Here to spend blood for their birthplace?”* (Fishta: 1991, 70)

This deep connoisseur of the psychology and nature of the Albanians guided them to overcome any regional and religious divisions, supporting all without distinction the national feeling, pride and self-confidence. Prior to becoming a writer, Fishta served as a cleric and expressed his ideas through the lens of morality, using the language of the community to which he belonged. Fishta skillfully intertwined different beliefs, asserting that although there are two religions, they are united under one nation.

*“However, they’ll not renounce their ethos,  
Not forsake their ways and customs,  
Both Christians and Muslims  
Ghegs and Tosks throughout Albania,  
Call themselves Albanians only”.* (Fishta: 1991, p.460).

The actual protagonists of the national history were aided in their endeavors by figures from the legendary realm, individuals and entities that Fishta “*appropriated*” from Albanian folklore, like the Clocks, Fairies, Dragons, and Kuçedras.

*“When the drangles of Albania,  
In the Highlands and the lowlands,  
Saw and heard the lightning flashing,  
Heard the roaring of thunder  
Echoing o’er Dukagjini  
From the Drin to Qafa e Diellit,  
Well they understood that somewhere  
Up there’d come out a kulshedra,  
Planning to destroy some mountain.”* (Fishta: 1991, p.176)

*“The relationships of Fishta’s work with mythology and folklore are multiple, and they encompass several functions at once. In addition to the mythical elements in the work “The Highland Lute”, you find elements of our cycles, such as from the legends of Muji, Halili and Gjergj Elez Alia.”* (Hoxha: 1997, pp.27-28)

#### **Auditory Perception of “The Highland Lute” in Western Languages**

The portrayal of a genuine Albanian reality captured the interest of international scholars. The Highland Lute has been translated into various foreign languages. The English translation was performed by Robert Elsie, while the German translation was carried out by Maximilian Lambetz, a German albanologist. In 1913, Lambetz referred to Gjergj Fishta as a “*Dichtergenius*” (Genius Poet) and described “*The Highland Lute*” as a “*masterpiece*”.

The translation of “*The Highland Lute*” has been accomplished multiple times in the Italian language, notably by Monsignor Jul Bonati and writer Ernest Koliqi. In 2019, the Albanian-French researcher, historian, and sociologist Abidin Krasniqi translated it into French. The French translation of this work stands out for its meticulous preservation of certain elements, lending it a unique quality within its genre. Krasniqi has deliberately remained loyal to the original, effectively conveying the history, mentality, traditions, customs, rituals, anthropology, and psychology of the people residing in northern Albania through Fishta’s work.

The French reader is acquainted not only with Fishta, the author of an epic but also with a work that may be approached from three different angles: as a historical document, as an epic, and as a straightforward literary piece. “*The Highland Lute*” holds the utmost significance in Albanian literature

and warrants, through its translation into many languages, to “*establish its presence in global literature.*” (Çobani, Tonin & Ballabani, Ndue: 2021, p.14).

The French reader engages with a highly modern Fishta since the “*The Highland Lute*” in the French language seamlessly combines mythology and history in a meticulous manner.

“*Examining the temporal dimension, the compositions of “The Lute” encapsulate significant periods, individual days, and notable expeditions that have transpired throughout history. The author examines, interprets, clarifies, and recounts the time that is often deeply imprinted in people’s memories. Originating from previous eras, conveyed by remarkable individuals and actions, history emerges as a vague fragment of the past and gradually reveals itself through distinct occurrences and notable personalities. When events that intersect this boundary are expounded upon, they are recounted mostly as occurrences that have already transpired.*” (Rusi: 2022, p.82)

Gjergj Fishta advocated for the Albanian culture to gain recognition among other sophisticated European and Western nations. He highlighted the fact that our people are well versed in the world’s most renowned ancient epics, including “The Epic of Gilgamesh” and other notable works such as “Mahabharata,” “Romajona,” “Iliad,” “Odyssey,” “Digenis Akritas,” “Song of Roland,” and “Song of the Nibelungs.”

In the translations of “*The Highland Lute*” into European languages, a nonnative reader is presented with a valuable chance to acknowledge the significant role of Gjergj Fishta in collecting, preserving, and studying the invaluable spiritual and cultural heritage of the ancient Illyrian-Arberian-Albanian lineage.

Foreign readers, by reading Fishta’s work in their own language, acknowledge Gjergj Fishta as a national poet. They perceive his epic work as the personification of our national literature and consider it to be the quintessential piece of Albanian literature.

Even in its most accomplished translations, the lute of Fishta has fanatically preserved its original sounds and musicality, where “*...the signs displayed by a text are related to the ingrained customs of a certain people or culture.*” (Eco: 2000, p.85).

Gjergj Fishta is a person who has established and continues to establish a connection between the past, present, and future through his writings.

“*Fishta’s literary accomplishments surpass those of any other writer of his day in terms of literary expression, language and style, sentence precision, and the profound creative structure that effectively conveys the essence of the Albanian people through his words.*” (Islamaj: 2012, p.237).

His work has exerted and will continue to exert a significant influence on the evolution of literature, encompassing several genres and a wide range of expressive techniques, by virtue of its authoritative and authentic creative language.

“*Discussing Fishta is synonymous with discussing the matters pertaining to Albania, including its historical events, recent events, and present events.*” (Çapaliku: 1997, p.9).

Gjergj Fishta’s masterpiece embodies the essence of people’s spirit, a written legacy intended to preserve it for future generations and to be discovered by scholars of European civilizations.

Fishta possesses a deep understanding of the essence, cognitive processes, legal records, and mindset of Albanians. The phrase “*Fishta and the Lute, the Lute and Albanian*” (Duka-Gjini: 1996, p.76) is a representation of the fundamental nature of the Illyrian-Arbër-Albanian national spirit. “*The Highland Lute*” is alternatively referred to as The Lute of Northern Leks, specifically in regions where the Lekë Dukagjini’s *Canon* has been implemented.

When analyzing Fishta’s work, I am deeply moved by the feelings it elicits, as it generates a distinct professional sentiment that has long fuelled my admiration for the esteemed Gjergj Fishta’s work.

## CONCLUSIONS

His masterpiece, *The Highland Lute*, is regarded as the Albanian people’s Bible and has been called a national memorial, a classic monument of the Illyrian race, and a spiritual lighthouse and guide for Albanian culture.

With his literary work *The Highland Lute*, Gjergj Fishta left his country with messages pertaining to the trinomial of language, faith, and homeland, written in an elegant literary manner. Through his writings, Gjergj Fishta left Albanians with a legacy of the highest national virtues and values, including honor, bravery, manliness, wisdom, faith, hospitality, and charity.

The characters that represented these priceless qualities for the Albanian people were living examples of the messages that Gjergj Fishta left behind in his art. Gjergj Fishta included the Albanian unit of the Albanian people in his work about the ethnicity issue, in addition to the terrestrial unit.

Thus, the topics of Gjergj Fishta’s work include geography, ethnography, and national artistic psychology. These subjects promote various Albanian cults, including the cult of the Albanian language,



the ancestors, the earth, the fire and sun, the mountain, the moon, the stone, the snake, and the frequent use of oaths, wishes, and curses as a kind of oral literature.

So *The Highland Lute*, described by local and foreign researchers as the “*Albanian Iliad*”, where the presentation of historical facts, fantastic creations, the description of the Albanian world, the beautiful and wild nature of Northern Highlands, where everything is built on a heroic pathos leaning towards romantic currents and periods.

Works such as the case of the study of *The Highland Lute*, which we are not exaggerating if we say that they are spiritual food for the soul and mind of Albanians, are the inspiration, muse, dedication and will of the author for several years, with the sole purpose of leaving such a unique and irreplaceable epic, where it can be considered as a monumental work in Albanian literature, which identifies Albanians with the same features known to history, defenders of their language, their ethnicity and genuine qualities Illyrian-Arberian-Albanian.

Fishta’s greatest work is *The Highland Lute (1937)*, despite having been written and revised extensively before it was released. A work of epic poetry that chronicles the history of the Albanian people from approximately 1858 to the country’s *Declaration of Independence* in 1912.

By leaving *The Highland Lute*, his life’s masterpiece in which written and oral literature coexist as if a child developing within his mother’s womb, Gjergj Fishta was able to leave the

There are approximately thirty thousand non-current Albanian words in Gjergj Fishta’s *The Highland Lute*. Keeping true to the expression as he had heard it among the highlanders, Fishta thus passionately preserved the speech of North Highland, the authentic *Gheg* speech, becoming a custodian of the values of the rich language of our folklore. After all, language is the fundamental component of a nation’s identity.

Fishta is credited with creating the Albanian language; it is important to remember that this was his life’s work and that it took him 40 years to complete. Because of this, Fishta is eternal. He lived among his people and stood alongside them throughout all aspects of daily life, including rites, documents, customs, and the application of canonical articles.

Based on this study, it can be concluded that Gjergj Fishta’s epic work “*The Highland Lute*” effectively communicates Albanian historical and ethnocultural spiritual values, as well as universal messages. These elements are of great significance to the academic world and scientific research, encompassing the entire process of collection, preservation, study, communication, and artistic influence. Furthermore, this work contributes to the advancement of the history of Albanian literature.

Gjergj Fishta’s renowned work “*The Highland Lute*” can be analyzed for its contribution to various aspects of literary art, including the mindset, ethics, morals, spirituality, history, geography, psychology, society, ethnic customs, philosophy, economy, and religion of the people living in the Northern Highlands.

In this work, Fishta aimed to underscore a crucial facet for Albanians – their identity. Fishta scrutinizes their communal epic identity, which serves as the enduring identifying characteristic of his work. Within its confines, it amalgamates the realm of myth and legend with the realm of history and ethno culture.

Using literary techniques, Gjergj Fishta depicted the mountaineer, together with their mindset and lifestyle, traditions, customs, rituals, desires, pledges, curses, songs, and perfumes.

Gjergj Fishta is a figure who has established a connection between the past, present, and future through his writings. His work has gained global recognition, being translated into several widely spoken European languages, including English, German, Italian, and French. The French reader is fortunate to be acquainted with both Gjergj Fishta, the author of an epic, and “*The Highland Lute*”, a work that can be approached from three distinct perspectives: as a historical document, as an epic, and as a straightforward literary piece.

This work embodies the essence of Albanians, who have a deep-rooted connection to the geographical landscape of their country, as well as to their native language, ethnology, history, oral literature, ethnography, and many other aspects that are distinctly Illyrian-Arberian-Albanian.

“*The Highland Lute*” is undeniably a colossal masterpiece in Albanian literature, as Gjergj Fishta has immortalized the profound essence of human language in a lasting form.

Today, Fishta should be studied to acknowledge and become familiar once more with one of the most eminent authors that Albania has produced throughout the centuries.

Gjergj Fishta’s literary masterpiece “*The Highland Lute*” holds such immense significance for the Albanian people, who it may be considered a revered national institution, making Fishta a revered spiritual figure for all Albanians throughout the ages.

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