

Mythological Figures in Albanian Fairy Tales: Symbolism, Narrative Functions and Cultural Significance

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Abstract

Albanian fairy tales constitute one of the richest components of the country's oral tradition, preserving an extensive corpus of mythological beliefs, symbolic representations and cultural values transmitted across generations. Mythological figures occupy a central place within these narratives, functioning not only as fantastic beings but also as symbolic expressions of the Albanian worldview, collective memory, and traditional cosmology.

This study examines the representation, narrative functions, and cultural significance of mythological figures in Albanian fairy tales through a qualitative and interpretative approach. The research is based on the analysis of representative folklore texts drawn from the principal collections of Albanian fairy tales, complemented by the theoretical contributions of leading Albanian and international scholars of folklore and mythology. The analysis combines descriptive, comparative, and myth-critical perspectives to investigate the symbolic roles of figures such as: Kuçedra, Dragoi, Ora, Zana, Shtriga, Lugati, Vitore, Xhindet (mythological figures in Albanian fairy tales and other supernatural beings).

The findings demonstrate that these mythological characters perform multiple narrative and symbolic functions. They embody the opposition between constructive and destructive forces, mediate relationships between the human and supernatural worlds, and preserve ancient beliefs concerning protection, destiny, fertility, justice, and moral order. Although Albanian fairy tales share numerous mythological motifs with other Balkan and European traditions, they also preserve distinctive cultural characteristics that reflect the historical development of Albanian society and its unique mythological imagination.

The study argues that mythological figures should be understood not merely as fantastic literary elements but as fundamental components of Albania's intangible cultural heritage. By integrating folkloristic, literary, and mythological perspectives, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the symbolic universe of Albanian fairy tales and highlights their significance within the wider context of European folklore studies.

Keywords: Albanian fairy tales; mythological figures; folklore; cultural identity; symbolism.

Introduction

Albanian fairy tales constitute one of the richest components of the country's intangible cultural heritage, preserving ancient beliefs, symbolic systems, and collective representations that have been transmitted through generations of oral tradition. Beyond their narrative and aesthetic value, fairy tales offer valuable insights into the mythological imagination of the Albanian people and reflect a complex interaction between mythology, folklore, religion, and cultural identity.

Among the most distinctive features of Albanian fairy tales is the remarkable presence of mythological beings. Characters such as Kuçedra¹, Dragoi, Ora, Zana, Shtriga, Lugati, Vitore, Xhindet and many others perform diverse narrative functions while simultaneously embodying symbolic meanings deeply rooted in ancient Albanian beliefs. These figures do not merely represent supernatural creatures; rather, they function as cultural symbols through which communities have historically interpreted natural phenomena, moral values, social relations, and the eternal conflict between good and evil.

The study of Albanian mythological figures has attracted the attention of numerous Albanian and international scholars. The pioneering works of Maximilian Lambertz provided one of the earliest systematic analyses of Albanian fairy tales and their mythological universe. Subsequently, scholars such as: Çabej Eqrem, Sako Zihni, Berisha Nikë Anton, Uç Alfred, Tirta Mark, Gaçe Bardhosh, Mehmeti Enver², who have contributed significantly to understanding the relationship between mythology, oral literature, and Albanian cultural identity. Their studies demonstrate that Albanian fairy tales preserve archaic mythological structures while simultaneously reflecting historical, social, and cultural transformations.

Despite the substantial body of scholarship devoted to Albanian folklore, relatively few studies have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the narrative functions, symbolic meanings, and cultural significance of a broad range of mythological figures within

¹ Symbolized as a mythical creature in Albanian folklore, imagined as a giant serpent with two to thirteen heads; e.g., "the monster devoured him".

² Among the most influential scholars of Albanian mythology, folklore, and ethnography are: Çabej Eqrem, Zihni Sako, Anton Nikë Berisha, Uç Alfred, Tirta Mark, Gaçe Bardhosh and Enver Mehmeti, who their works have significantly contributed to the study and preservation of Albanian mythological traditions, folk beliefs, oral literature, and cultural heritage.

the fairy tale tradition. Existing research has frequently concentrated on individual characters—particularly the Kuçedra³, Zana⁴ or Ora⁵—while less

attention has been paid to the wider mythological system in which these beings interact and acquire meaning.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining a representative corpus of Albanian fairy tales in order to analyse the principal mythological figures, their narrative roles, their symbolic dimensions, and their contribution to the preservation of Albanian mythological thought. Particular attention is devoted to the ways in which these

supernatural beings' express ancient cosmological concepts, moral values, collective memory, and traditional conceptions of the relationship between humans and the supernatural world.

The research combines qualitative textual analysis with comparative and interpretative approaches derived from folklore studies, mythology, and literary criticism. By examining both classical folklore collections and contemporary scholarly interpretations, the study aims to demonstrate that Albanian fairy tales preserve an exceptionally rich mythological system whose symbolic structures continue to represent an essential component of Albanian cultural heritage.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, as it seeks to examine the symbolic, cultural, and narrative dimensions of mythological figures in Albanian fairy tales. Since the research focuses on the interpretation of folklore texts rather than on quantitative measurement, a qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate for investigating the functions and meanings of mythological characters within the Albanian oral tradition.

The study combines descriptive, comparative and interpretative methods in order to analyse the representation of mythological beings and their role in shaping the narrative structure of Albanian fairy tales.

³ The mythical creatures mentioned before in the paragraph.

⁴ A mythical female figure in Albanian folklore, depicted as an extraordinarily beautiful maiden who dwells in the mountains and forests. She is the protector and helper of brave heroes, but also has supernatural powers to punish those who offend or wrong others, often by casting spells or curses.

⁵ A mythical figure in Albanian folklore, believed to be a guardian spirit or protective female supernatural being assigned to each person from birth. The Watch (in Albanian named as Ora) over an individual's fate, offering protection and guidance, but may also bring misfortune or punishment if offended or neglected.

Research Corpus

The research is based on a corpus of published Albanian fairy tales preserved in the principal collections of Albanian folklore, particularly the volumes of Albanian Folklore: Popular Prose, together with archival materials and published studies on Albanian mythology and oral literature.

The corpus includes fairy tales in which mythological beings constitute essential narrative elements, including figures such as Kuçedra, Dragoi, Ora, Zana, Shtriga⁶, Lugati⁷, Gjarpri⁸, Xhindet⁹, Suta¹⁰, Katallani¹¹ are all supernatural beings that occupy a central position in Albanian mythological imagination.

The selected narratives originate from different Albanian regions, including northern and southern Albania, Kosovo, Labëria¹², Himara¹³, Prespa¹⁴, Çamëria¹⁵ and other ethnographic areas. This geographical diversity allows the study to identify both common mythological patterns and regional variations in the representation of supernatural figures.

Data Sources

The primary sources consist of published collections of Albanian fairy tales and folklore compiled by Albanian folklorists and researchers. The secondary sources include theoretical and critical studies by: Lamberts Maximilian, Çabej Eqrem, Sako Zihni, Berisha Nikë Anton, Uç Alfred, Tirta Mark, Gaçe Bardhosh, Mehmeti Enver,¹⁶ and other scholars whose work has significantly contributed to the study of Albanian mythology, folklore, and oral literature.

⁶ A witch-like mythical figure in Albanian folklore, believed to possess supernatural powers and to bring illness, misfortune, and harm through magic.

⁷ A vampire-like revenant in Albanian mythology, believed to rise from the dead and haunt or harm the living.

⁸ A sacred or supernatural serpent in Albanian mythology, traditionally regarded as the guardian of the household, family, and ancestral lineage, symbolizing protection, wisdom, and fertility.

⁹ Jinn- Supernatural spirits in Albanian folklore and Islamic tradition, believed to exist in an invisible realm and capable of interacting with humans for good or ill.

¹⁰ A supernatural female figure in Albanian folklore, depicted either as a witch-like being or, in some regional traditions, as Zana (fairy tales figure) -like spirit of the mountains and wilderness.

¹¹ A mythical giant in Albanian folklore, portrayed as an enormous, fearsome, and immensely powerful being. In folk tales, it is typically depicted as a man-eating monster who terrorizes people until he is defeated by a brave hero through strength, courage, or cunning.

¹² A historical and ethnographic region in southwestern Albania, renowned for its rich cultural heritage, distinctive polyphonic singing, traditional customs, and folklore.

¹³ A historic coastal town in southwestern Albania, situated on the Albanian Riviera and known for its cultural heritage, folklore, and historical significance.

¹⁴ A transboundary historical and geographical region in the Balkans, encompassing the Prespa Lakes and renowned for its biodiversity, cultural heritage, and folklore.

¹⁵ A historical and ethnographic region in the southern Balkans, associated with the cultural heritage and traditions of the Cham Albanians.

¹⁶ Among the most influential scholars of Albanian mythology, folklore, and ethnography, whose works have significantly contributed to the study and preservation of Albanian mythological traditions, folk beliefs, oral literature, and cultural heritage.

These sources provide the theoretical framework through which the symbolic, cultural, and literary significance of mythological figures is interpreted.

Methods of Analysis

The study employs several complementary analytical methods.

Firstly, our article is based on descriptive analysis. The descriptive method is used to identify and classify the principal mythological figures according to their physical characteristics, supernatural attributes, symbolic meanings, and narrative functions. Particular attention is given to the way these beings are portrayed within the fairy tale tradition and to the recurring motifs associated with each figure.

Comparative Analysis The comparative method enables the examination of similarities and differences between Albanian mythological beings and analogous figures found in the folklore traditions of the Balkans and other European cultures. This comparison highlights both universal mythological archetypes and distinctive features that characterize Albanian oral tradition.

Secondly, interpretative literary analysis which focuses on the symbolic significance of mythological characters within the narrative structure of fairy tales. Rather than treating these beings merely as fantastic creatures, the study examines their cultural, ethical, and anthropological meanings. Special attention is devoted to concepts such as metamorphosis, heroism, protection, fertility, supernatural power, and the opposition between constructive and destructive forces.

Thirdly, myth-critical approach also draws on the research upon myth criticism by examining mythological figures as symbolic expressions of collective memory and cultural identity. This approach makes it possible to explore the persistence of ancient beliefs within Albanian oral literature and to analyses the transformation of myth into literary narrative.

Also analytical Framework. The analysis is guided by three principal research questions:

1. How are mythological figures represented in Albanian fairy tales?
2. What narrative and symbolic functions do these figures perform?
3. How do these mythological characters contribute to the preservation of Albanian cultural identity and collective memory?

Each mythological figure is analyzed according to four principal criteria:

- narrative function;
- symbolic meaning;
- relationship with the protagonist;
- cultural and mythological significance within Albanian folklore.

This analytical framework enables a systematic comparison among the different mythological beings discussed throughout the article.

Research Limitations This study is limited to published collections of Albanian fairy tales and selected scholarly sources. It does not attempt to provide an exhaustive catalogue of all mythological beings found in Albanian oral tradition. Instead, it focuses on representative figures that illustrate the richness, diversity, and symbolic complexity of Albanian mythological thought.

Furthermore, due to oral traditions exist in multiple regional variants, the analysis emphasizes recurring motifs and shared symbolic structures rather than attempting to establish a single definitive interpretation of each mythological character.

Mythological figures as fairy tale characters have long attracted the attention of not only European researchers, but also Albanian researchers. After the distinguished scholar Maximilian Lamberts (Vienna 1922) in his collection "Albanian fairy tales and other texts of Albanian folklore", where in the German translation his study carries a wide treatment of the mythical figures of fairy tales and popular beliefs.

Among the central figures that he takes into analysis are: E Bukura e Dheut, Kuçedra, Dragoi, Lugati, Shtriga, Hija, Vitoret, Ora, Zana, Divi;¹⁷ where our attention is drawn to the wealth of literature that the scholar has used for Albanian fairy tales written in several European countries. This serious approach also lacks the study of prof. Çabej.

"On the genesis of Albanian literature" in 1936, in which he makes many assessments and deductions about the poetic world of the Albanian fairy tale, where he also brings to light its ethnos genesis. In this perspective, our outstanding researcher underlines: "In the fairy tale, there are generally human elements along with the specific national spirit, foreign influence supporting the country, timeless motifs next to historically related motifs.

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¹⁷ They form part of the traditional Albanian mythological system and embody the beliefs, values, fears, and cultural imagination of the Albanian people. These beings represent a wide range of roles, including protectors, heroes, guardians, spirits, monsters, witches, and other supernatural entities that inhabit the mythical world of Albanian oral tradition.

¹⁸ Maximilian Lamberts (1882–1963) was an Austrian linguist that has studied Albanian linguist, also made significant contributions to the study of the Albanian language, literature, folklore, and mythology. He is regarded as one of the most influential foreign scholars of Albanian studies.

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Confronting the world of the Albanian fairy tale and especially the interweaving of events and the role of the characters, prof. Sako in his work "Studime për Folklorin"²¹ brings to light another feature; the deep optimization of people, which shines with a special faith in spiritual and physical forces, with the courage and abilities to fight in life, with a view of their future²².

But in this background of the development of the typology of our fairy tale, some authors such as Panajoti J., Xhagolli A., Mustafa M.²³ also provide the link between the epic and the fairy tale, where the common elements of these two genres appear, which we find mainly in a series of elements such as; the thematic and motive world, details, subjects, characters, but also aids where time and space stand out.

Supporting the philological opinion of Civjan Tatjana²⁴, analyzing the characters of the fairy tales and their spatial elements through the characters, the spatial semantic vocabulary is also highlighted, where the cosmological fields, the spatial ones and the characters themselves create universal visions and worldviews. Continuing this

¹⁹ Çabej, Eqrem. On the Genesis of Albanian Literature, Pristina: "Rilindja", in 1970. (Originally published as *për "gjenezën e literaturës shqipe"* in 1936).

²⁰ Prof.Çabej V: 119

²¹ Prof.Sako; Studies on Folklore. Tirana: Academy of Sciences of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, Institute of Folk Culture, 1984.

²² Prof.Sako, in 1984, pg 51-52.

²³ Within the broader context of the development of the typology of Albanian fairy tales, scholars such as Panajoti, Xhagolli, Mustafa have played an important role in advancing research in this field.

²⁴ Supporting the philological approach of Civjan Tatjana, an analysis of fairy-tale characters and their spatial dimensions also reveals a rich spatial-semantic vocabulary, in which cosmological and spatial fields, together with the characters themselves, construct universal visions and worldviews in 1982; pg.86.

opinion, Berisha Nikë Anton in his work "The fairy tale and its formative, meaningful and poetic world" in an analytical way, he breaks down and argues the relationship between the fairy tale and the myth, between the myth and the dream where three elements are pointed out author Berisha²⁵.

Meaning and structure:

- a) Structuring the poetic language and the artistic message
- b) Specific communication that expresses the meaning of its world

Among the Albanian authors, Shaplllo Dalan²⁶ with his paper "About the ethics and fantasy of the fairy tale" states that, among others, the fairy tale was born as a need for the aesthetic expression of the human world, where a spiritual balance with nature and animals is created, therefore often through the characters and the fantastic environment created, the motives for the afterlife and the relationship with death. This concept prof. Uç²⁷ deals with many issues related to mythical figures and mythical tools as components of the structure of the tale, where a special place is occupied by the role of the main hero or the hero of the tale.

It is the aesthetic consciousness that in fairy tales is quite different from the mythological thought, but which also makes the difference between man and other natural and imaginary mythological beings. Oftentimes, the narrative conflict arises when the heroes cross the border of the human world, thus building a special seat of mythological beings, i.e., non-human beings.

However, the formation of the heroes of our fairy tale is strongly based on a pure material inherited from ancient primitive mythology. Here, the actions of the protagonists, who are similar to those of the heroes of ancient mythology, are ignored and generalized. According to him, among these figures, the rebels often personify the hostile forces that confront a person. This is where the transition of themes and motifs from fairy tales to some of the legendary narrative songs and ballads begins.

Prof. Enver Mehmeti, reflecting this phenomenon, the transformation of the tales of the Snake Boy into ballads or the tales of the Warrior Girl as well as the tales of the Woman's Betrayal in the legendary songs have their source there. It is in the fairy tales and legends that have nourished the legendary songs, making a fair determination that: "Mythical tales of the heroic type have connections and relations with the legendary epic song, while many other meeting points of the fairy tales reawaken and nourish the ballads of the legendary type"²⁸.

²⁵ Introduction to the poetics of the "Albanian fairy tale"

²⁶ Prof. Shaplllo, in 1989, pg. 96.

²⁷ Prof. Uç, in 1982: pg. 72.

²⁸ Prof. Mehmeti, in 1996; pg. 151.

Concretizing this issue in the unpublished fairy tales of the Prespa area by researcher Leontina Gega Musa, those collected by Rebi Alikaj that are in the archive of the Institute of Culture in Tirana and those collected by prof. Gaçe in Himara and Labëria, in their texts it is found that many songs of the legendary epic communicate with the mythical tale of the heroic type, these phenomena are noticed both in motifs, details, but also in the actions of the characters. In some cases, many themes and motifs make transitions from fairy tales to ballads, such as the ballad of Ura e Bogdani, the Song of Dhoqina, the ballad of Muri in the Castle of Ceria²⁹.

Relying on the opinion of foreign and Albanian researchers, Albanian fairy tales are viewed with a rich wealth of mythical beings, where the actions of the characters take on the functions of the mythical unreal world as clearly defined by the authors Lamberts M.; Haxhihasani Q.; Sako Z.; Mustafa M.; Panajoti J.³⁰, etc.

In their artistic and aesthetic radiation, with their mythical abilities, the transformation from one form to another occurs, where the main character, but also the other characters, often metamorphose. These beings sometimes oppose the hero of the tale, but other times they serve as helpers or collaborators to overcome the conflict.

A broad field of study is the transfer of the features of mythical beings, but also mythical tools and their functions, which bring to light the transformation, that is, the metamorphosis of the characters. One of the main mythical beings in fairy tales appears *Kuçedra*, who in Albanian fairy tales always wants to stop the water, so it has the property of a water demon, and sometimes also of a storm, carrying negative properties.

It happens that in some fairy tale, it appears in her opposite, in the form of a woman in front of her husband and children, pitying the resistance. This is also the case with the Earthly Beauty, who, in addition to her unusual beauty, often opposes the main character, but her interaction with the other characters is not lacking, realizing at the same time her metamorphosis.

In this way, we would like to emphasize that: just like *Kuçedra*, *E Bukura e Dheut*³¹ and other mythical figures such as: *Orët*³², *Zanat*, *Suta*, *Shota*³³, *Gërshetëza*³⁴, *Perritë*³⁵,

²⁹ Prof.Gaçe, in 1982.

³⁰ In their poetic and subjective world of Albanian fairy tales, mythical beings are present in the terrestrial, subterranean, cosmic world to which the human fantasy has given giant dimensions and images, but sometimes also as invisible beings.

³¹ the Beauty of the Earth translated in English, is a central female figure in Albanian folklore and fairy tales. She is portrayed as an extraordinarily beautiful, supernatural maiden who often lives in an enchanted or inaccessible realm and serves as the object of the hero's quest. She symbolizes ideal beauty, purity, wisdom, and the triumph of virtue.

³² Plural name of Ora, the "Watch" in Albanian fairy tales as mentioned before.

³³ A species of duck, larger than the common duck; wild ducks.

³⁴ Literally, "the Braided Maiden" — an Albanian water nymph.

³⁵ "Fairies", are supernatural female beings in Albanian folk belief, comparable to fairies in European folklore, though they possess distinctive characteristics rooted in Albanian mythology.

Shtriga, Katallani, Mena³⁶, Floçka³⁷, Xhindet always in the Albanian fairy tale have various functions, which testifies to the richness of the mythological wealth, but also notices the traces of pagan and religious beliefs, in this way the characteristics and mythical properties of these mythical beings. They often take on a symbolic character, giving the narratives or stories a special poetic and spiritual world.

In the folkloristic literature and in many other contemporary studies, it is rightly pointed out that extraordinary elements in fairy tales are a must-have that are equated with the fantastic element. But delving further, we can admit that the extraordinary in fairy tales should not and can be evaluated with the fantastic.

The criticism here lies in the fact that in some cases, the fantastic has been combined by different researchers with mythological, magical, religious elements, etc. but in the Albanian fairy tale itself there are such layers, but the fantastic cannot be equated with them. Here we agree with Uç's opinion that: "In Albanian fairy tales, the mythological wealth, looking in folklore, has been transformed into real aesthetic subjects, which means that the subjects and mythological figures in fairy tales and folklore have turned into artistic figures"³⁸

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³⁶ It is a female character in Albanian folklore and fairy tales, where she appears as a heroine whose intelligence, courage, and perseverance help advance the narrative. Depending on the tale, she may be portrayed as a princess, a young maiden, or the central female protagonist.

³⁷ It's a female character in Albanian folklore, appearing in traditional fairy tales as a young maiden or heroine. Depending on the narrative, she is portrayed as kind, courageous, intelligent, and resilient, often overcoming trials and adversity through her virtue and determination.

³⁸ Prof. Uç; in 1982; pg.85.

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In this way, we would like to emphasize that: just like Kuçedra, the Earthly Beauty and other mythical figures such as: Orët, Zanat, Suta, Shota, Gërshetëza, Perritë, Witch, Katallani, Mena, Flocka, Jinds always in the Albanian fairy tale have various functions, which testifies to the richness of the mythological wealth, but also notices the traces of pagan and religious beliefs, in this way the characteristics and mythical properties of these mythical beings. They often take on a symbolic character, giving the narratives or stories a special poetic and spiritual world.

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Dragon

The dragon is one of the most important beings in our mythology. It was considered that dragons are the main enemies of Kuçedra, therefore, the purpose of their life and existence is to oppose the destructive of it, which appears when the weather breaks, when strong winds are caused that damage the crops, trees and vegetables. The dragon can be people, but also different animals.

The human dragon, according to popular belief, is born with a shirt and wings.

³⁹ Uç's opinion "In Albanian fairy tales", in 1982; pg. 85.

The dragon can be both humans and animals. Human dragons are born shirtless, wear a small fez on their heads, and have two or, according to one version, four wings under their armpits⁴⁰

Even today in Kosovo, the existence of the Dragon is believed. They say the dragon can be the man born with wings, then the ram, the ox and the rooster. It is also believed that the dragons fight the Kuçedra so that it does not harm during the coercion. When the agricultural work is done, in the villages they say, you should not leave the plow outside because it harms the dragons.

While in folklore the Dragon is known as Kuçedra main opponent and always confronts him, in fairy tales we rarely encounter the Dragon confronting it. A confrontation between Kuçedra and the Dragon boy can be found in the tale "The Dragon Boy and the "Kuçedra" ⁴¹.

This fairy tale belongs to the type of fairy tales where it withholds the water and as a reward for releasing the water asks to be killed by a girl. Since the dragon boy had heard about it stopping the water, he said: "I'm going to go and hit such and such a place, because they told me that there is a big clashed there. I set off and fell there. I'm sitting in the shepherd's house like in such and such a big clashed. The water and the pieces of the kahuna have leaked, someone with grain should have taken them to me in the days of You were water to me".⁴²

The brave faces Kuçedra and in the fight they cannot defeat each other since their power was almost equal. However, according to the immanent laws of the tale, the hero as a representative of the constructive powers, regardless of the strength of the opponent, must necessarily be defeated, and this also happens in this tale.

In other fairy tales, dragons are beings that are at war with humans or other beings (divas, for example). They usually live together, have a beautiful sister or mother.

In the fairy tale "Beauty of the Earth" ⁴³the three dragons are brothers of the Beauty of the Earth, they live in a palace so far away that to get there, the hero had to walk: "as far as his eyes could see and as far as his feet could reach" (Prose IV: 22.). The brother dragons of the Earthly Beauty also have their mother an "old woman" with whom the hero makes contact, and she acts as a counselor. The boy meets him:

- What do you want, my son, why did you come here? (...)
- Aunt, I was told that somewhere (around) here is the Earthly Beauty and I came to get it, as fate wanted me to.

⁴⁰ (Lamberts, 1980: pg.183-186).

⁴¹ (Prose II: pg. 520-521).

⁴² (Prose II: 520)

⁴³ (Prose IV: 7-32)

- Oh, my dear, you are asking for something big! - the old woman said - Many people searched for my daughter, but they all lost her! If you are happy, live and be! We will make three bets, even if you find it, you will win it, otherwise you will disappear like everyone else!

- What do you want, my son, why did you come here? (...)

- Aunt, I was told that somewhere (around) here is the Earthly Beauty and I came to get it, nor fate wanted with it.

- Oh, my dear, you are asking for something big! - the old woman said - Many people searched for my daughter, but they all lost her! If you are happy, live and be! We will make three bets, even if you find it, you will win it, otherwise you will disappear like everyone else!

After the brave passes the first test, the mother of dragons and the Earthly Beauty takes him and leads him to her palace. In the meantime, you can hear the noise that the dragons were making. Earthly Beauty with two slaps to the face transforms it into an apple and puts it on the shelf. From the reactions of the dragons, it can be seen that they are at enmity with man.

- The first dragon said:

- I smell soft (I smell like a man)!

- Me too - said the second.

- Me too - said the third.

They even started to get wild. They stood up, began to search everywhere, but saw nothing...⁴⁴

Although at the beginning they appear as opponents, later they perform the function of collaborators and as a sign of friendship they give the brave a ring, which will later be a tool related to the performance of the tasks that condition the acquisition of the Beauty of the Earth. This will be done by the mother of dragons and the Earthly Beauty:

- Mother, boy, the ring, which the boys gave at dinner yesterday!

The boy took out the ring and gave it to the old woman. She took him in her hand, gave him one, pushed him into the river and said:

- If you find the ring and put it back on your finger until dinner, when the boys come, you will win the second bet.

⁴⁴ (Prose IV: 25)

In the fairy tale “E Bukura e Dheu e Shtriga” (The Earthly Beauty and the Which)⁴⁵, the dragon is not in an active function, but its blood is in the function of a mythical tool only for resurrection. From the conversation of the characters of the tale, we learn about its mythical properties. According to the advice of the Hour, which here is in the function of helper and gift giver, they use the Dragon’s blood to resurrect the dead brave. In addition, in this tale the Dragon is described as the Dragon known in mythology:

- The two brothers were put on the road, look at those blood dragons!
- Hard - said the woman - I had dragon blood.
- He is strong himself - answered the other - why is he caught even with a Kuçedra, when this through the slushy and sprat do with desolate doe Barak; it happens that he is buried, the blood was not washed away by the rain, but he gets up, as if he is the leader of the people for life (...) Moran wanted dragon blood, they rubbed it on scales and mixed it with water, it came and turned red like human blood, they gave it to him and drank it. After drinking a little of the blood, he begged his wife⁴⁶.

In the fairy tale “Arap exhengija”⁴⁷ we see the dragons in constant war with the divas and they cannot be defeated until the hero of the tale (the king’s son) goes to help the divas.

In the fairy tale “Arap exhengija”⁴⁸ we see the dragons in constant war with the divas and they cannot be defeated until the hero of the tale (the king’s son) goes to help the divas.

In the fairy tale “Gastarja e Mina e Skana”⁴⁹ the dragons live on land together, beyond the sea and are in the function of causing harm, because they had taken the mythical tool, which the hero then went out to look for.

It can be said that the role and function of dragons in the fairy tale depends on the structuring of matter itself. They are not a priori negative or positive beings. What properties they will have depends on their function and the actions they perform in the story. They can be destructive beings and opponents of the hero of the story, they can also be encountered as his collaborators, that is, as helpers or helpers who help him overcome various obstacles or perform difficult tasks.

⁴⁵ (Kurt 2: pg.89-97)

⁴⁶ (Kurt 2: pg.93)

⁴⁷ A legendary Black warrior and heroic figure in Albanian folklore, adapted from the Turkish epic tradition in (Prose III: pg. 509).

⁴⁸ (Prose III: 509)

⁴⁹ In the fairy tale “Gastarja e Mina e Skana” (Prose, Vol. III, pp. 486–491), seven dragons dwell together in a land beyond the sea. They serve as antagonists, having stolen a mythical object that the hero must retrieve.

The witch

Among the central mythological figures of the Albanian fairy tales is the Witch, who is found in all the fairy tales collected in the Albanian lands. This mythological being that is carried in the aesthetic concept of Albanians has many parallels and meeting points with the Witch found in the popular culture of the Mediterranean and Europe. In the Albanian pagan world, the Witch was explained as a terrible bird that flies at night or through the fog and eats the hearts of people and mostly children.

With their magic, they had the ability to transform themselves and people into different superhuman beings. But often times in the Albanian fairy tale the Witch appears as an evil old woman taking the meaning of the antithesis of the idealized figure of the woman or as the researchers say, she often appears as a caricature of the Fairy. Even in Labëria and in the Hoti's mountains, Albanians believed that the cause of sleep disturbances at night comes from witches, in this case the spirit of the Witches appears as anxiety. She has taken this meaning in many fairy tales in Europe and in the East, and this spirit always appears with the features of animals, with some heads, with deformed bodies and limbs.

Among the elements that complete the background of the tale are some details of their victims (people), such as strands of hair, cut nails or valuables that they have. In some tales of Labëria and Mallakstra collected by Haxhihasani Qemal, Alikaj Rebi and Muho Musa in the Archives of the Institute of Popular Culture in Tirana Muho's file⁵⁰ the power of the witch is destructive in the form of storms and storms on crops, on rivers and especially in the transformation of humans into animals.

In the fairy tale collected by him the "Circle of the Old Woman" collected in Brataj, Vlora, in 1962, the Witch - the Old Woman flies on a stick, enters the chimney, dances on the lawns of the village. Her portrait is very dry, with disheveled hair, very long legs. Traveling through Brat's meadows, he touches birds, snakes and cattle with his stick and they turn to stone.

In the tracing that we have done to some tales of Labëria and Çameria, we have noticed that the Witches as characters wear some animal features, e.g., they have the back of a goat, or when they appear with three heads, they resemble rams with horns. Troponins such as Shkëmbi Bridash⁵¹, Sofra e Strigave⁵² (Kudhës), Proroi i Strigave⁵³ (Progonat), Sofra e Strigave (Palasa, Himara), prove that the Witches constantly had meetings with the Devil, where their decisions are described full of evil about plans, they draw up for damages and misfortunes.

⁵⁰ Tirana, in 1962, pg. 382.

⁵¹ Mali Çika- named in albanian as Çika's mountain.

⁵² The Witches' Feast translated in English.

⁵³ The Witches' Ravine in English.

In popular memory, details, events and incidents are often given that talk about the persecution of witches or their burning. One of the ritual elements that is used in the Drosh of Miredita and in Mesaplik (a village located in Vlora) is that before the new year, the villagers made a scarecrow and burned it, personifying the burning of the Witch. In the swearing words of the villagers, it was said: "You burned and sick", making her name a euphemism.

Among the characters that appear in Albanian fairy tales, Plakat (elderly women) and Shtriga (the witch) often have no family, their husbands or sons have died in tragedies and they live isolated away from people. In a complete cycle of Albanian fairy tales, they act by raising human flesh and blood, mainly the heart, and feed on it. Their prey always happens at night in the dark, they enter and leave the houses not through the door or window, but through the chimney, cattie and other holes. They not only eat other people, but also their children. The spirit of Old Women - Witches in our fairy tales appears buzzing like a bee.

This phenomenon in Albanian life has had its own effects; at the beginning of the 20th century, old women without children were called witches, and those who were lonely were often called the cause of misfortunes in the family, so it happened not infrequently that, according to legends, they killed or drowned them.

It is important to note that in Albanian fairy tales, the character of the Witch always appears as a dangerous being for human life, especially for small children. As in the fairy tales of Europe and the Mediterranean countries among us, the Witch is an evil old woman, both spiritually and physically, but rather her spirit appears as a butterfly flying at night on some bird. He is always in a meeting with the devil.

Karma Gjon gives us such a detail as early as 1940 in his publication. It is said there: "Between the mountains and the countryside, if a man's mind is filled with hunger, they go and take his heart and eat it. I will tell him how and when he will die." All the Witches are old women, they have appointed times when they meet and choose those who will eat them. Witches are so black that even their own children arrive with hangar. Before he leaves the house, they take him and smear him with an herb that they secretly keep under the threshold of the house at night, and then they leave him lying down without breathing, and the soul emerges as a butterfly and goes wherever it wants"

And the character of the Witch with the new economic, cultural and technical conditions and other socio-social changes have already haunted their original meaning, they are found in certain individuals and certain ethno-cultural environments ⁵⁴

⁵⁴ (Karma 1940: 121)

The Ghost; The Elf

The Ghost or The Elf is one of the other mythological figures in Albanian fairy tales, as well as in the fairy tales of the peoples of the Balkans and Europe. This is expressed in the popular mind as Lugati, unlike the Witch, comes from a mysterious world, fed by an extraordinary human fantasy in prejudices and beliefs. In some villages of Himara and Lunxhëria, they still believe that appears every day in villages and forests, in the backyard or in cattle stables. While the witch is sneaky, Lugati whistles and often appears suffocating baguettes. Even though he is invisible, this character in our tales is a noisemaker, so he also causes fear in people because whenever he comes out of the grave at night, he goes back into the grave.

Albanian collectors of folklore in their ethnos cultural tracings see Lugat as the spirit of an evil, dead man who rises from the grave and disturbs people's dreams and sleep. In our country at the beginning of the 9th-20th century, people believed that the Lutherans came from their native countries (Turkey and Persia), but also from other Balkan countries. They have simple relations with the devils, they are the ones who go to the graves, bring out the bad ones from there, putting them to work in the surroundings of the town, their houses and stables.

One of the elements that appear in is that a chicken, cat or dog always appears next to them (that is, in the graves). Another element of the raising of Lugat from the grave is the practice of fiddles from the Devils. It is characteristic that gets up from the noise he makes, but he cannot be seen with the eyes, only the Vampire can see him because he is his killer.

A series of superstitions is associated with Lugat, which mainly knocks as a guest on the door of the house. Some figures with lights appear to the villagers of this province at night in the cemeteries⁵⁵ In one of these reports it is said: "Thus, the Devil has lied to them in the past until now. The whole village gathers, they go to church and say that the dead are eating the living and that they are Lugetër. They take the coffins, take the dead out of the grave up to nineteen. they disfigure them with axes, cut off their heads and put them between their legs. They say that when they take the dead out of the grave, they are red, their mouths are full of grass or with rube on their heads, their eyes are open and other wrong beliefs.

They don't even spare small children, but cut them all without distinction. This work was done this year in four villages without any fear, neither from God nor from church interference. They learned this great cruelty from the Turkish".⁵⁶

⁵⁵ As Krasniqi M. points out as early as 1650 in the relations of the Kurbin friars sent to the Pope of Rome (March 27, 1638),

⁵⁶ (Zamputi 1965: 131).

One of the characteristics in our tales is that sometimes Lugati appears going to his wife. In these conditions, the other people of the house call the other village (Borsh, Bolënë, Tatzat, Shën Vasi, Kallmet, Ungrej⁵⁷). It also appears in the hills as a small yellow flame, and when the vampire cannot kill him, he returns to his hearth and becomes an ordinary human. Sometimes he walks through the countryside or appears as a shepherd through the cattle.

As a whole, the Lugati, among Albanians, is believed to be the man who has committed many sins, murders or rapes with his life. These qualities of his are carried even when he rises and comes out of the grave and walks through the plains and the countryside scaring people, but rather his evils happen by drowning the cattle. It is the continuation of his wickedness; in fact, it is his soul that wanders among the human world. For this reason, in some regions of Albania, as narrated in some tales, people go and open his grave, take out his corpse and burn it.

Even the Vampire is nothing but Lugati's son. There are many fairy tales in which Lugati goes at night and sleeps with his wife and from this relationship the Vampire is born. In this way, the Vampire is known, who stays day and night near the herd of cattle, or near the family hearth to protect them. Folk mentality, experiencing fairy tales, often at night in the dark, villagers shoot guns in the air saying: "Leave Lugati and Elf".

Fairies

Among the mythological figures that populate Albanian fairy tales are the Fairies in the North of the country and the Voices in the South of the country. They appear with their special features until our modern times. Usually, they live in the water spring and the man where they bathe and dance and are imagined as girls with a rare beauty "with long hair, dressed in white".

It is characteristic that, just like in the popular mentality and in the world of fairy tales, they operate at night and are described as flying birds. The researcher Krasniqi in his study "Mythological aspects, beliefs and superstitions"⁵⁸ calls them positive demons, in the sense that if they do not disturb who in their lives, they show nobility. On the contrary, if they are insulted by words or actions, they show danger.

Among the mythological figures that populate Albanian fairy tales are the Fairies in the North of the country and the Voices in the South of the country. They appear with their special features until our modern times. Usually, they live in fountains and the man where they bathe and dance and are imagined as girls with a rare beauty "with long hair, dressed in white".

⁵⁷ These are all villages or localities in southern and northern Albania, known in ethnographic and folklore studies as places where traditions, legends, and beliefs about mythological beings have been documented.

⁵⁸ (Krasniqi, in 1997: pg. 246)

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On the contrary, if they are insulted by words or actions, they show danger. Fairies are often not named, that's why even in fairy tales they appear with the name "Shpirtbardha⁶⁰", "Blessings of the mountain", "Blessed ones", "Beauties of the earth", "Holy ones" because they often do magic and cause mental illnesses ⁶¹

As in the northern highlands, which is evidenced in the manuscripts of Shtjefën Gjecovi, in Labëria and Himara it is believed that each tribe has its own Fairy (its own fate) and often returning from the ridges of the mountains (Çika, Çipina, Vetëtima, Bogonica, Shendëllia) they are addressed with prayers and blessings: "Let them be white" and they also have trees that have been blessed in their honor "Lisi of Fairies" (Tërbac), "Rapi i Nave" (Pilur), "Tale of Voices" (Ramica), "Valley of Voices" (Vranisht), "Cave of Voices" (Kuç).

In this aspect, in the tales collected by Alikaj Rebi and Muhaj Musa at the Institute of Folk Culture ⁶² the Sutas that are practiced in Labëria appear as synonyms of fairies, while in the area of Kelmendi and Vermoshi they are depicted as Shota and are depicted with the same features that fairies have. The special thing is that the Sutas are the Fairy who drank milk from the Briarta goats and she becomes the determiner of the fate of the house, while Shota rather in our fairy tales, but also in other stories and legends, in addition to her beauty, expresses her great anger.

Just like Voices, Sutas also appear in fairy tales where an impossible love is given, in the sense of a dream for a girl to approach the boy she loves. In this regard, there are many spells and rituals that help resolve these conflicts, giving us magical, fantastic tales. Usually the Fairies, Sutas, Shotat and Voices come down from the mountain tops in the evening and hang out in the courtyards of the house and when the women or girls go out at night in the courtyard they say: "Kofte Zana e ambël", "Kofte Zëra e fatit".

As in the tales of the Arbëresh people of Italy and in the tales of Himara and Labëria, the Fairies and Orë are the guardians of cattle, horses, roosters, pigeons, oxen and wild goats. In addition, they are also determinants of the child's fate, that is why in

⁵⁹ (Krasniqi, in 1997: pg.246)

⁶⁰ "The White-Spirited One" – a benevolent supernatural female being in Albanian folklore, associated with purity, goodness, and protection.

⁶¹ (Krasniqi, in 1997: pg. 246)

⁶² (Archive, File Alikaj Rebi 105, Muhaj Musa, 1938)

some fairy tales when the dinner of the child's name is served, a portion is assigned to the Fairies and is called the "Fairy's Feast".

1.4 The Clock

Even the hour as a mythological being and an imagined being and with its supernatural properties acquires extraordinary power. Sometimes it does good and sometimes it does bad. Man has the Clock with him (fate) since he is born. But her attitude also depends on a person's behavior and actions. Just as in the popular mentality, in the world of fairy tales, there are many blessings, curses and other elements of rituals that break down the psychological and material world of man. In many fairy tales, such greetings are found: "To the priests, Good Hour" (north), "Good Hour Thigh", "To the Good Hour", etc.

Of rare aesthetic and artistic value are also the experiences of the curses "To sell the Hour", "To the Hour" (north), "To the Hour" (south), "To the Hour", "To the Hour", which prove that the ancient demons have penetrated deeply into the spiritual life and consciousness of Albanians.

In addition to the similarities between the Fairy and the Clock, the appearances of these figures also show their peculiarities. As the Fairies become protectors of nature; of forests, springs, their animals, Ora is the protector of the tribe, the family, the province and takes the form of a deity. In the descriptions and many other details of the fairy tales, the Clock gives man power, luck, happiness and they often appear invisibly. So, they become air, fog, breath.

Few fairy tales admit that in the figurative representation they appear as a snake or as a beautiful and amazing little girl. Among her other features is her appearance nursing other characters with her breast of milk, a pattern that we think may have been created from earlier mythical elements.

In the entirety of the mythical figures that populate our fairy tales, their pantheon also includes many others such as: Mountain Brides, Të Mirat⁶³, Shtojzovallë⁶⁴, Syqeni⁶⁵, Vampiri, Te Lumët e Natas, Cuca e Liqeni, Gërshetëza, Suta or Dhamsuta, which take their full name from the plateaus and mountains where they operate. These mythical characters appear in a series of features and characteristics, deities and miracles, but above all also their metamorphosis, bringing prosperity or misfortune.

⁶³ The Benevolent Spirits are mythological beings in Albanian folklore, conceived as benevolent supernatural forces that protect people, bring prosperity, and assist those who are righteous and virtuous. In traditional folk beliefs, they represent the opposite of malevolent beings such as Witches (Shtrigat), Revenants (Lugati), and the Kuçedra.

⁶⁴ Among the most enchanting supernatural beings in Albanian mythology and folklore, they are generally portrayed as beautiful female fairy-like spirits who inhabit mountains, forests, meadows, springs, and other secluded natural places.

⁶⁵ A dog-eyed monstrous being in Albanian folklore, is a malevolent supernatural creature that inhabits remote places and frequently appears as an adversary of the hero in Albanian folktales.

1.6 The snake

In the mythological world of Albanian fairy tales, among the special deities of the mythology of our Illyrian ancestors, the Snake appears, strongly connected to the life of the household, family and prosperity, being a permanent guardian. In today's popular aesthetic concept, the Cult of the Serpent reveals a deep world as a demon of popular proportions that has slowly transformed into a mythical household creature and is often called "House Bell", "House Clock", "House Victory" (House Fate).

Coming from the Illyrian world as a totem animal, it carries the meaning of the symbol of wisdom, fertility, health and sometimes it turns into the personification of the human soul. In general, in our tales as well as in many archaeological discoveries in Butrin, Bylis and Dimal (Berat), the cult of the Snake is the protector of the hearth of the house and is expressed with many archaeological objects such as carvings on the walls, frescoes.

This belief, widespread since Illyrian times, even though it has faded in recent times, comes to us in the sense of the covenant with the snake, as it happened in many parts of our country. Toxic (the one who flees to earth), Snake, in Myzeqe, Zadrimë and Vurg of Delvina, personifies and symbolizes fertility. In this respect, it happens that next to the woman's bed or when the child is surrounded, the skin of the Snake is tied. It also has another meaning; the skin of the Snake is sewn into the clothes of children or women to ward off diseases or wives to ward off the evil eye.

On the other hand, in Labëria, in the tale of the Old Woman and the Snake, placing the Snake's skin on the belt of the bride's dress takes on the meaning of fertility, readiness for childbirth. This is imposed on women who do not give birth for some time. On the other hand, in fairy tales we find the head of the Snake, but in these cases, it expresses the meaning of magic and folk mentality through which extraordinary feats and elements take place.

In the fairy tales collected in Labëria, Lunxëria, Mallakastër by the authors Q. Haxhihasani, Alikaj R.; Sako Z.; the snake is found with the name Vitore, which brings luck to the house and it usually stays in the beams of the house and in the hall of the house where the Zaire is kept. Because of the usefulness, but also the beauty that the Snake of the house carries and the good fortune that it evokes, many girls have been named Vitore.

Often times, the Serpent in the Albanian fairy tale is personified with Stihine, Ezhderhanë, in the sense of a monster that brings evil to people. Oral traditions and fairy tales have absorbed this meaning of the Snake, especially from monotheistic beliefs.

In its opposite, the Snake takes on the features of a protective deity of people, so it becomes a full-fledged personification of the fertility of the earth, that is why in the tale "Snake Boy" which is found in different forms in different parts of Albania, its subject appears both in prose and verse. In the variant of Bregu t Mati, in Lezhë, collected by Haxhihasani Q., the one collected in Çameri by Merorapaj Fatos, or the one found in Labëri collected by Alikaj Rebi ⁶⁶; a woman after nine years of marriage gives birth to a Snake child.

It is important to note that when a somewhat strange child grows up, he asks to marry the king's daughter. The hyperonization of the king's demands that the Snake-Boy's parents pave a seven-hour-long road for him with gold gives a special dynamism to the narrative. The metamorphosis of the Snake, which shed its skin at night and turned into a very beautiful boy, amazed the king's daughter. In addition to this metamorphosis, magical elements such as the burning of the snake's skin and death also appear in the narration of this tale. This motif of the transformation from Snake to man and vice versa to the bridegroom, is also found in many totemic phenomena of other Balkan peoples where a lot of mothering appears.

As in this case and in some other tales where the Snake appears with the name Bollë, a name that is often given to women, it has a lot to do with features of the Earth Cult.

So, the Bull of the house is represented with those features that also appear in the Vitorja of the House and both of these personify the addition of the men of the house. Like the clock and the dragon that symbolize the protection of the family hearth, the Snake also means the protection and continuity of the tribe.

In some variations of the "Boy-Snake" tale, when the Snake of the house drowns, misfortune is also carried, the father, son or grandson dies. Most of the time, the Snake comes out as the soul of the hearth, in the sense of always bringing the end. He is not only the protector of the house, but also of the land around it, being clothed with some divine features.

This divine being of the hearth in any case, also guards the treasures of the house, the jars of gold or another secret and when people go to discover them, he is presented as a demonic being, so his return to Kuçedër in the symbol of destruction, is about metamorphosis, to face the evildoers.

As in the popular mentality and in many fairy tales, the Cult of the Serpent should be viewed as part of the ethno-cultural heritage of the Albanians. In this cultural complex, the internal evolution is also noticed, but also the relations with the cultures of the neighboring peoples.

⁶⁶ (Tirta Mark, *Mythology between the Albanians*, Tirana 2004, pg. 165)

1.7 Jinns (Creatures that inhabit a world invisible to humans)

Among the popular beliefs that populate Albanian fairy tales are the Djindas, which appear both in the male and female genders. In such fairy tales as “Djali i Plaka and Abaz Xhindi” or “Xindja and Djali i Bukur” or “Xinde’s House” clearly prove that just like Dragojtë, Zanat, Orët, Shtojzovalle, Sutat, etc. mythological beings, these also in the popular concept deal with events and feats, which have left their mark on popular fantasy and popular inspiration. The residence of Jinns, like that of the Voices, is mainly in groves, streams, oaks, valuing and turnips.

From the studies carried out as well as from the expedition that we undertook during the months of February - April 2013, in the area of Kurvelesh and in the province of Himara, for the purposes of this study, we recorded many toponyms such as:

The Djinn’s Rock (Vranisht); The House of the Djinn (a small cave on Mount Shëndëlli, Borsh); The Spring of the Djinn (Tërbaç); The Spring of the Djinn (Dukat); The Plane Tree of the Djinn (Palasë), The Djinn’s Stream (Palasë) or The Stream of the Djinn (Palasë); The Rock of the Djinn (Kuç); The Cross of the Djinn (Progonat); The Oaks of the Djinn (Gusmar) ⁶⁷

In many fairy tales, the marriages of Djinn with a girl or with a boy appear, but again they are invisible. It is important that marriages take place at the time of threshing the threshing floor, which is why some threshing floors are called Djinn or The Djinn’s Well. Below we present the material collected by Çipa Andrea (2 March, 2013 in the village of Pilur in Himara):

Narrative I: “The jinns were beautiful brides who danced through the fields and lawns. At The Great Rock every lunch their drums could be heard as a muffled and hoarse voice.

The boy named Nikola had danced with jinns several times. But one day he unwittingly snatched the handkerchief from his hand. She followed him all the way to Pala and that’s how Nikola married jinns. This is called the Bride of Bilal. He gave birth to four beautiful children of the god, but they were the beauties of Jinns. But one day he begged to have another daughter and quarreled with her. Five years, five months, five days, five minutes had passed since the wedding day and she ran away from the fight and never came back. According to local tradition, when the rains come to the meadows of Pascoe, the drums of the Djinn can be heard, and old Nikolla is said to listen to them. He disappeared for seventy-five days without a trace.

Confession II (in The Obscenity of Kumanoverica) collected on 25 March 2013 by ⁶⁸“In Dhiker (Dhërmi) worked two kunears and harvested barley. He got the big

⁶⁷ (Expeditions carried out on 25/2/2013 – 20/4/2013).

⁶⁸ According to The Billa (1916),...

stone-cracking heat. From the The Spring of the Plane Trees came a voice like dance, like music.

Nikola says to Vasili, "Is this a party or wedding in the creek?" They're going to see if they stole their barley. When he came there, on a stone plate, 12 Genie and jinns danced. The genie, dressed in white, met some words like the waves of the sea, but Vasili became curious and approaching the rocks a stone fell near the Genie.

In the blink of an eye, the Genie flew from The Top of the Çulka. What happened? Vassili and Nikola did not work three days, three nights, three hours, they did not work their feet and hands."

Another element that has attracted the attention of scholars is that the Genie when angry (the tale "The Wrath of the Jinns") magnify three palms and three fracks and become in the form of a dry rod like fog.

Their ness is shown by shooting fire in the house, losing your livestock on the mountain, blinding your wife or daughter, but also in some case forgetting your house. The characters of the Genie are found in several tales, mouths and confessions not only in Labëria, Kurvelesh, but also in Zagori, Kolonjë, Çamëri.

In the fairy tale "The Unfaithful Mother"⁶⁹ where he talks about the relationship of the mother with her three sons. She advises her sons to face the misfortunes and surprises that may happen to them on their journeys of life. These misfortunes usually mean the action of the jinn with the drying of the house trees, the embers, etc. As an illustration, we bring: "The boy went to the jinn's grapes, but without filling the basket properly, the jinn saw him and attacked him from behind. The boy quickly filled the basket full of grapes and, as he was riding a horse, he ran away. The horse, from the run it had, seemed to be flying. This time too, the boy escaped. He approached the house.

The boy and the tree began to put out new leaves to quickly leave, because the boy was coming and he himself fell on the plate as if he was sick. The boy went inside and brought the grapes - mother, I brought the grapes from the Jinn's tree, - eat them, mother. The grapes were very sweet, but for me they were bitter. Mother saw the boy and was surprised and said to herself: "In such a great danger, how can someone who has the Jinn's tree survive? And she promised the boy one thing to do, we also have honey, - she said. - I don't like these grapes, - his mother said, - it's not good. If you give me some honey from the Jinn, mother will recover. - Okay mother, - the boy said, - for your sake I will risk it again this time."

⁶⁹ Prose VI: pg.264-271

The boy took a bowl, mounted his horse, and went and opened the honey jars of the Jinn. When he had filled the bowl with honey, a Jinn who was a guard saw the boy stealing the honey and raised the alarm. All the Jinn gathered and attacked the boy. The boy mounted his horse at once and set off faster, as if he were flying above the clouds. But this time the boy could not escape because the king of the Jinn approached him on the horse's wings, and the horse did not remember the ring he had. The horse jumped from its speed, and the Jinn also jumped. The horse jumped from its speed, and the Jinn also jumped. The Jinn grabbed the horse by the bridle and said to the boy.

-Get off the horse, -I did not jump, -he said bravely. Finally, the Jinn slapped him and the boy fell off the horse and died. The genie took him and stoned him. The horse also swore at him, killed by the genie, and stoned him. The boy swore his father had been dead for a week. The mother wandered about the house, because the boy she had sworn had died. The mother went to the window and looked at the tree. The tree no longer bore fresh leaves. Because the three sons of the house were drunk. One day, the cousin wanted to see the mother. There he found some men who were married, because she had her lovers.

As in the folk tales of the genie, in the tales of Çamëria and Laberia, the metamorphosis of the awakening of the boy, horse or other characters occurs with the magic potion or the placement of the ring on the hand. The same happens with the Shadow which freezes and turns into stone, as it is the cause of misfortunes. In the popular mind, the characters of the genie in the tales have nurtured a fairly widespread ethnocultural tradition in the use of the surname Djinn (tribal), but also in the placement of women's names. In this aspect, the dexterity, resourcefulness, but also the misfortune that they bring to the lives of the Djinn are often taken into account.

In the fairy tale "The Unfaithful Mother" ⁷⁰ where he talks about the relationship of the mother with her three sons. She advises her sons to face the misfortunes and surprises that may happen to them on their journeys of life. These misfortunes usually mean the action of the jinn with the drying of the house trees, the embers, etc. As an illustration, we bring: "The boy went to the jinn's grapes, but without filling the basket properly, the jinn saw him and attacked him from behind. The boy quickly filled the basket full of grapes and, as he was riding a horse, he ran away.

The horse, from the run it had, seemed to be flying. This time too, the boy escaped. He approached the house.

The boy and the tree began to put out new leaves to quickly leave, because the boy was coming and he himself fell on the plate as if he was sick. The boy went inside and brought the grapes - mother, I brought the grapes from the Jinn's tree, - eat them, mother. The grapes were very sweet, but for me they were bitter. Mother saw the boy

⁷⁰ (Prose VI: pg.264-271)

and was surprised and said to herself: "In such a great danger, how can someone who has the Jinn's tree survive? And she promised the boy one thing to do, we also have honey, - she said. - I don't like these grapes, - his mother said, - it's not good. If you give me some honey from the Jinn, mother will recover. - Okay mother, - the boy said, - for your sake I will risk it again this time."

The boy took a bowl, mounted his horse, and went and opened the honey jars of the Jinn. When he had filled the bowl with honey, a Jinn who was a guard saw the boy stealing the honey and raised the alarm. All the Jinn gathered and attacked the boy. The boy mounted his horse at once and set off faster, as if he were flying above the clouds. But this time the boy could not escape because the king of the Jinn approached him on the horse's wings, and the horse did not remember the ring he had. The horse jumped from its speed, and the Jinn also jumped. The horse jumped from its speed, and the Jinn also jumped. The Jinn grabbed the horse by the bridle and said to the boy. -Get off the horse, -I did not jump, -he said bravely. Finally, the Jinn slapped him and the boy fell off the horse and died. The genie took him and stoned him. The horse also swore at him, killed by the genie, and stoned him. The boy swore his father had been dead for a week. The mother wandered about the house, because the boy she had sworn had died. The mother went to the window and looked at the tree. The tree no longer bore fresh leaves. Because the three sons of the house were drunk. One day, the cousin wanted to see the mother. There he found some men who were married, because she had her lovers.

As in the folk tales of the genie, in the tales of Çamëria and Labëria, the metamorphosis of the awakening of the boy, horse or other characters occurs with the magic potion or the placement of the ring on the hand. The same happens with the Shadow which freezes and turns into stone, as it is the cause of misfortunes. In the popular mind, the characters of the genie in the tales have nurtured a fairly widespread ethnocultural tradition in the use of the surname jinn (tribal), but also in the placement of women's names. In this aspect, the dexterity, resourcefulness, but also the misfortune that they bring to the lives of the Djinn are often taken into account.

Among the Albanian authors, Shaplllo Dalan ⁷¹with his paper "About the ethics and fantasy of the fairy tale" states that, among others, the fairy tale was born as a need for the aesthetic expression of the human world, where a spiritual balance with nature and animals is created, therefore often through the characters and the fantastic environment created, the motives for the afterlife and the relationship with death.

This concept prof. Uç ⁷²deals with many issues related to mythical figures and mythical tools as components of the structure of the tale, where a special place is occupied by the role of the main hero or the hero of the tale.

⁷¹ (Shaplllo; in 1989: pg.96).

⁷² (Uç 1982: pg. 72).

It is the aesthetic consciousness that in fairy tales is quite different from the mythological thought, but which also makes the difference between man and other natural and imaginary mythological beings. Oftentimes, the narrative conflict arises when the heroes cross the border of the human world, thus building a special seat of mythological beings, i.e., non-human beings.

However, the formation of the heroes of our fairy tale is strongly based on a pure material inherited from ancient primitive mythology. Here, the actions of the protagonists, who are similar to those of the heroes of ancient mythology, are ignored and generalized. According to him, among these figures, the rebels often personify the hostile forces that confront a person. This is where the transition of themes and motifs from fairy tales to some of the legendary narrative songs and ballads begins.

Prof. Mehmeti, reflecting this phenomenon, the transformation of the tales of the Snake Boy into ballads or the tales of the Warrior Girl as well as the tales of the Woman's Betrayal in the legendary songs have their source there. It is in the fairy tales and legends that have nourished the legendary songs, making a fair determination that: "Mythical tales of the heroic type have connections and relations with the legendary epic song, while many other meeting points of the fairy tales reawaken and nourish the ballads of the legendary type".⁷³

Concretizing this issue in the unpublished fairy tales of the Prespa's area by researcher Musa Gega Leontina, those collected by Alikaj Rebi that are in the archive of the Institute of Culture in Tirana and those collected by prof. Gaçe in Himara and Labëria, in their texts it is found that many songs of the legendary epic communicate with the mythical tale of the heroic type, these phenomena are noticed both in motifs, details, but also in the actions of the characters. In some cases, many themes and motifs make transitions from fairy tales to ballads, such as the ballad of "Ura e Bogdanit" ("Bogdan's bridge"); Kënga e "Dhoqinës" (the Song of "Dhoqina"); the ballad of Wall in the Castle of Ceria (Gaçe 1982).

Relying on the opinion of foreign and Albanian researchers, Albanian fairy tales are viewed with a rich wealth of mythical beings, where the actions of the characters take on the functions of the mythical unreal world. As clearly defined by the authors Lambertz, Haxhihasani, Sako, Mustafa, Panajoti, etc., in the poetic and subjective world of Albanian fairy tales, mythical beings are present in the terrestrial, subterranean, cosmic world to which the human fantasy has given giant dimensions and images, but sometimes also as invisible beings.

In their artistic and aesthetic radiation, with their mythical abilities, the transformation from one form to another occurs, where the main character, but also the other

⁷³ (Mehmeti 1996: pg. 151).

characters, often metamorphose. These beings sometimes oppose the hero of the tale, but other times they serve as helpers or collaborators to overcome the conflict.

A broad field of study is the transfer of the features of mythical beings, but also mythical tools and their functions, which bring to light the transformation, that is, the metamorphosis of the characters. One of the main mythical beings in fairy tales appears Kuçedra⁷⁴, who in Albanian fairy tales always wants to stop the water, so it has the property of a water demon, and sometimes also of a storm, carrying negative properties.

It happens that in some fairy tale, Kuçedra (The Dragon), appears in her opposite, in the form of a woman in front of her husband and children, pitying the resistance. This is also the case with the Earthly Beauty, who, in addition to her unusual beauty, often opposes the main character, but her interaction with the other characters is not lacking, realizing at the same time her metamorphosis.

In this way, we would like to emphasize that: just like The Dragon, the Earthly Beauty and other mythical figures such as: Orët, Zanat, Suta, Shota, Gërshetëza, Perritë, Shtriga, Katallani, Mena, Flocka, Xhindet (Women, snakes; Fairies, Doe, Duck, a beautiful girl with long hair, a very beautiful girl, the witch, cyclops, braid evil spirit that comes out at night and has supernatural power over people and things, always in the Albanian fairy tale have various functions, which testifies to the richness of the mythological wealth, but also notices the traces of pagan and religious beliefs, in this way the characteristics and mythical properties of these mythical beings. They often take on a symbolic character, giving the narratives or stories a special poetic and spiritual world.

In the folkloristic literature and in many other contemporary studies, it is rightly pointed out that extraordinary elements in fairy tales are a must-have that are equated with the fantastic element. But delving further, we can admit that the extraordinary in fairy tales should not and can be evaluated with the fantastic.

The criticism here lies in the fact that in some cases, the fantastic has been combined by different researchers with mythological, magical, religious elements, etc. but in the Albanian fairy tale itself there are such layers, but the fantastic cannot be equated with them. Here we agree with Alfred Uç's opinion that: "In Albanian fairy tales, the mythological wealth, looking in folklore, has been transformed into real aesthetic subjects, which means that the subjects and mythological figures in fairy tales and folklore have turned into artistic figures"⁷⁵

⁷⁴ (The Dragon)

⁷⁵ (Uç; in 1982: pg.85).

Discussion

The analysis of Albanian fairy tales demonstrates that mythological figures perform functions that extend far beyond the creation of fantastic narratives. Rather than serving merely as supernatural characters, they represent complex symbolic structures through which Albanian society has preserved collective memory, ethical values, and traditional conceptions of the relationship between humans, nature, and the supernatural world.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the diversity of functions performed by mythological beings. While some figures, such as **Kuçedra**, embody destructive forces associated with chaos, drought, and danger, others, including **Dragoi**, **Ora**, and **Zana**, function as protectors, guides, or benefactors. This opposition reflects one of the fundamental structural principles of Albanian mythology: the perpetual struggle between constructive and destructive forces, a motif widely preserved throughout Albanian oral tradition.

The analysis further reveals that Albanian fairy tales preserve an exceptionally rich system of symbolic representations inherited from pre-Christian beliefs and later reshaped through historical, religious, and cultural transformations.

Many mythological beings retain characteristics that may be traced to ancient Balkan and Illyrian traditions, while simultaneously incorporating elements derived from later cultural contacts. Consequently, Albanian fairy tales should be understood not as static narratives but as dynamic cultural texts reflecting centuries of interaction between indigenous beliefs and external influences.

Another important aspect emerging from the study concerns the remarkable adaptability of mythological figures. Characters such as **Shtriga**, **Lugati**, **Vitore**, and **Xhindet** frequently undergo symbolic transformations depending on the narrative context. Their functions vary from protectors to adversaries, from mediators between worlds to embodiments of fear or moral transgression. Such flexibility demonstrates the vitality of Albanian oral literature and its capacity to reinterpret inherited mythological material according to changing social and cultural realities.

The comparative perspective also indicates that Albanian mythology shares numerous motifs with the folklore traditions of neighboring Balkan peoples and wider European mythology. Nevertheless, Albanian fairy tales preserve distinctive features that contribute to their originality. Figures such as Ora and Vitore, for example, possess symbolic meanings closely connected with family protection, destiny, and the household, while Dragoi⁷⁶ is represented primarily as a defender of the community rather than as a destructive monster, distinguishing him from many Western European dragon traditions.

⁷⁶ A dragon-like heroic being in Albanian mythology, is a supernatural protector endowed with immense strength who fights the Kuçedra and safeguards people, livestock, and the natural world.

From a literary perspective, mythological figures contribute significantly to the artistic structure of Albanian fairy tales. They generate narrative conflict, determine the hero's journey, facilitate metamorphosis, and reinforce moral and symbolic messages. Their presence enriches the poetic imagination of the tales while simultaneously preserving fundamental aspects of Albanian cultural identity.

Finally, this study confirms that Albanian fairy tales continue to represent an invaluable source for interdisciplinary research involving folklore studies, mythology, literary criticism, anthropology, and cultural history. The symbolic complexity of their mythological figures demonstrates that oral literature remains one of the most important repositories of Albania's intangible cultural heritage.

Conclusion

This study has examined the representation and functions of mythological figures in Albanian fairy tales through a qualitative and interpretative analysis of representative folklore texts and scholarly literature. The findings demonstrate that mythological beings occupy a central position within the narrative structure of Albanian fairy tales. Their significance extends beyond their fantastic appearance, as they embody cultural values, ethical principles, cosmological beliefs, and collective historical memory. Figures such as **Kuçedra**, **Dragoi**, **Ora**, **Zana**, **Shtriga**, **Lugati**, **Vitore**, and **Xhindet**⁷⁷ illustrate the richness of Albanian mythological thought and its remarkable continuity throughout centuries of oral transmission.

The study also highlights the coexistence of universal mythological archetypes and specifically Albanian cultural characteristics. Although many motifs reveal connections with Balkan and European folklore traditions, Albanian fairy tales preserve distinctive symbolic meanings that reflect the historical development of Albanian society and its unique cultural identity.

From a broader perspective, the research demonstrates that Albanian fairy tales should be regarded not only as literary narratives but also as cultural documents that preserve ancient systems of belief and collective experience. Their mythological figures continue to function as powerful symbols through which communities' express concepts of justice, protection, fertility, courage, destiny, and the relationship between the human and supernatural worlds.

The contribution of this study lies in offering a comprehensive interpretation of a wide range of mythological figures within a single analytical framework, thereby

⁷⁷ Albanian mythology comprises a rich pantheon of supernatural beings that embody the relationship between humans, nature, and the spiritual world. These figures perform diverse roles as protectors, guardians, adversaries, and embodiments of fate, reflecting centuries of oral tradition and cultural belief. Among the most prominent are the Kuçedra, Dragoi, Ora, Zana, Shtriga, Lugati, Vitore, and Xhindet, each possessing distinct characteristics and symbolic functions within Albanian folklore.

emphasizing their literary, cultural, and anthropological significance. By integrating folkloristic, mythological, and literary approaches, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of Albanian oral tradition and its place within the broader context of European folklore studies.

Future research may expand this analysis through comparative studies involving other Balkan traditions, interdisciplinary approaches combining folklore with anthropology and religious studies, or investigations into the contemporary reception and transformation of mythological figures in modern Albanian literature and popular culture.

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DP13193-DP13194 28-2010 Academicus International Scientific Journal
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Mythological Figures in Albanian Fairy Tales: Symbolism, Narrative Functions and Cultural Significance
by Edlira Çerkezi, Ana Çano
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Presented: June 2026

Included for Publishing: July 2026

Published: July 2026, Volume 17, Issue 34 Academicus International Scientific Journal