

## THE VIEWS OF SCHOLAR MAXIMILIAN LAMBERTZ ON LANGUAGE, FOLKLORE AND LITERATURE

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this work is to present the scientific contribution of the Austrian-German researcher Maximilian Lambertz to the field of Albanology and its culture in general. His scholarly perspectives are broad and multifaceted, highlighting the Albanian language and oral literature as crucial subjects of study, particularly in relation to Balkan cultures and the role of the Albanian language within the larger Indo-European language group. In addition to his studies of the languages and cultures of Europe, Lambertz's research included the study of Albanian culture, language, literature and religious beliefs, which had been relatively unknown to scholars. His sensitive treatment of such creations made them important not only for the field of Albanology but also for broader scientific contexts. Therefore, our paper analyses Lambertz's monographs and other writings dealing specifically with linguistic and literary issues, starting with his well-known monograph "Midis Drinit dhe Vjosë" (Between the Drin and Vjosa) and another equally important study, "Posta e Shypnisë" (The Post of Albania). These works represent the foundations of the cultural internationalization of Albanian language and literature, as many of his articles were published in the prestigious German-language journals of the time. Against this background, it is no coincidence that Lambertz's studies, although his first contact with the Albanian language and oral literature was accidental, are still relevant today among young researchers. This is because no one else, like him, has clarified and scientifically established the meaning of these literary works, making them significant not only within Albanian-speaking cultural circles but also beyond.

**KEYWORDS:** Maximilian Lambertz, publication history, creativity, language, comparison, literature, folklore, culture

### 1. Introduction

Maximilian Lambertz, a renowned Austrian-German scholar, has left a profound mark in the field of Albanology. As an expert in comparative linguistics and classical philology, Lambertz dedicated a significant portion of his life to studying the Albanian language, folklore, and literature. His contributions did not emerge in isolation; they were supported by a broad network of German and Austrian scholars, such as Georg von Hahn, Gustav Weigand, and Gustav Meyer, who also helped advance knowledge of Albanian culture. According to the scholar Baliu (2020, p. 111), Lambertz occupies a unique place in the history of Albanology due to his clear and scientific approach. He was a product of a scientific tradition that shaped many significant scholars during the 19th and 20th centuries. His contributions span three main areas: linguistics, folklore, and educational texts. Lambertz published various materials, including scholarly studies and notable literature, reflecting a deep commitment to Albanian culture. Cultural reforms led by Martin Luther with the translation of the Bible into German contributed to the establishment of an important tradition in German studies, which extended to other cultures, including the nascent Albanian one. The Albanian language belongs to the Indo-European family, which includes languages such as Greek, Romance languages, Slavic languages, and German. It represents a distinct branch within this family and has no direct connections to any other known language. Just as Lambertz (2011b, p. 56) states in his monograph 'Posta e Shqypnis,' the unique character of the Albanian language has been validated through comparative linguistic studies dating back to the mid-19th century. The Albanian language is considered indigenous and has affinities with other Indo-European languages, such as Hindi and Latin. One of the most renowned scholars in this field, Franz Bopp, confirmed the classification of the Albanian language within the Indo-European family. In his 1854 work, "Über das Albanesische in seinen verwandtschaftlichen Beziehungen," he examined the history of the Albanian language, emphasizing its limited connections to

other languages (Bopp, 2016, p. 90). Some scholars suggest that Greek might serve as a reference point for Albanian, but Bopp (2016, p. 89) argues that Albanian shares more similarities with Sanskrit. As a dialectologist, Lambertz played a significant role in the study of the Albanian language, gathering linguistic materials in Italy, particularly in the Arbëresh communities of Calabria and Sicily during 1913-1914. These communities represent a crucial segment of the Albanian population that migrated after the death of Skanderbeg in the 15th century. During this period, he collected rich dialectological and folkloric materials, publishing his first work, "Albanische Mundarten in Italien" (1915), which included a map of Arbëresh settlements. Lambertz's profound knowledge of Arbëresh publications is noteworthy. Lefe (1982, p. 178) concludes that the origins of the Arbëresh in Molise can be traced back to Central and Southern Albania. These migrants formed a shared linguistic discourse that explains the similarities in the vocabulary of their villages. The Arbëresh community in Italy is unique in its cultural and historical dimensions, having preserved an archaic language distinct from the standard Albanian established at the 1972 Congress of Orthography in Tirana. Lambertz provided a historical overview of Arbëresh settlements and emphasized the importance of studying the dialects of these areas for understanding the history of the Albanian language.

In his analysis, Shkurtaj (2006, p. 123) states that Lambertz had a deep understanding of the Arbëresh region, particularly in Molise and Puglia, where the linguistic culture of the Albanians has diligently survived for centuries. This positioned him as one of the foremost experts on Arbër dialects in Italy. In 1915, he identified 49 Arbëresh localities distributed throughout southern Italy and Sicily. Lambertz's extensive knowledge of the Arbëresh region has positioned him as a recognized authority on the Arbëresh dialect. His contributions are also acknowledged by Çabej, a noted philologist, who praised Lambertz's work in a series of articles, beginning with "Maximilian Lambertz - on the 75th anniversary of his birth" (Çabej, 1957, p. 173).

## **2. Research Methodology**

This study analyzes research methods grounded in historical and cultural approaches within specific time frames. The selection of these periods often serves as a distinguishing factor, allowing for varied perspectives. However, in scientific fields, particularly in the social sciences, these boundaries can sometimes be insufficient due to challenges related to the clarity of documents and their preservation over time. Nonetheless, the examination of Lambertz's studies is straightforward, given his reputation as a careful and accurate scientist in every aspect of research. Drawing on the methodological rigor and temporal precision evident in his 60 writings on the Albanian language and literature, we have attempted to adopt a similar chronological approach in this paper. Our methodology combines historical and cultural methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

## **3. Lambertz in the History of Publications on Albanian Folklore**

In the history of publications on Albanian oral creativity, a significant number of Albanian, Arbëresh, and foreign researchers have engaged in collecting and publishing the treasures of this folklore. These scholars have explored this creativity from various perspectives, providing a broad and deep overview. Lambertz's contribution to Albanian culture is substantial, as noted by Xhuvani (2022, p. 11), whose works served as a bridge to other researchers of his time. Albanian folk poetry, in particular, holds an important place in Lambertz's scientific activities. Demiraj (1990, p. 193) notes that he is regarded as one of the most distinguished figures in this field. His first publication, "The Folk Poetry of Albanians: An Introductory Study," was initially published in the newspaper "Posta e Shqipërisë" and later released as a separate book. In this study, Lambertz categorized Albanian folk poetry into various types, such as heroic songs, love songs, wedding songs, children's songs, speeches (doke), laments, fairy tales, and oral legends. A key focus of his research was the analysis of the metrics of songs and their performance methods. Lambertz's scholarly activity centers around publications on folklore, especially on folk poetry. His writings represent the culmination of a long commitment and passion for this subject. The monograph "The Folk Poetry of Albanians: An Introductory Study" (Lambertz, 2011, pp. 54-86) offers a thorough exploration of different types of songs and oral traditions. Another significant work by Lambertz is "Albanian Fairy Tales

and Other Texts of Albanian Folklore" (1922, p. 34). This work aimed to introduce Albanian fairy tales to the scientific community. Lambertz examined various aspects of these fairy tales, including characters, motives, themes, and linguistic aspects. These studies, as emphasized by Çabej (1960, p. 21), hold importance beyond Albanian interests, providing lasting value for the research of fairy tales across the Balkans. Lambertz's contributions to the study of Albanian oral creativity are also evident in his publications in German, such as "Between Drini and Vjosa, a Tale from Albania" (1922), "From the Horn of Gold: Medieval Greek Tales" (1922), "Winged Sister and the Darkness of Earth" (1952), and "Albania Speaks" (1956). These works highlight his valuable role in recognizing and studying Albanian oral creativity within scientific circles. Lambertz documented a considerable number of oral legends, analyzing their distribution in Albania and the variations found among Arbëresh communities in the Albanian colonies. While appreciating his significant studies in this field, Çabej (1962, p. 9) notes that Georg von Hahn, a German researcher who preceded him, also conducted comparative studies on Albanian fairy tales and legends in works such as "Greek and Albanian Fairy Tales" and "Studies on Legends Related to the Philosophical and Religious Beliefs of Humanity at That Time." In addition to their artistic function, folk songs serve as means to convey the stories and traditions of a nation.

Lambertz (2011, p. 9) points out that "folk poetry is the spiritual reflection of a broad segment of the population." This indicates that those who are unfamiliar with a nation's folk creativity do not truly know that people. He continues: "Here, I will present evidence from various genres of Albanian folk poetry, spanning the stages of human life, from birth and childhood to love and marriage, and ultimately, old age and death." As an expert in this field, Lambertz included folk legends in all his writings on oral creativity, having followed a considerable number of them from a historical perspective, especially regarding their transformation and dissemination in various regions of Albania and among the Arbëresh in the Albanian colonies.

#### **4. The Analytical Contribution of Maximilian Lambertz to Albanian Literature**

Maximilian Lambertz has played an important role in the study of Albanian literature, particularly in the field of oral creativity. He examines the complex relationships between Albanian heroic songs and the cultural contexts of the Balkans, a theme that has also been addressed by scholars such as Father Bernardin Palaj and Father Donat Kurti. In their work "Treasures of the Nation" (1966), they suggest that a cycle of songs centered around the ruins of Troy has survived through the Slavic invasions, preserving the memories of the Illyrian past. Focusing on the connections between Albanian heroic songs and Muslim ones, Mehmeti (1996) offers a critical analysis of various perspectives. He counters the idea put forth by Vinçenc Prenushi based on Truhelka's claims that Albanian heroic songs are merely translations of Slavic originals, emphasizing that this view is insufficient and fails to consider the broader cultural context. Mehmeti stresses that the creators and performers of these songs are not just urban artisans, but a diverse group, including bilingual individuals who are deeply rooted in local traditions. He also critiques the notion that Albanian epics primarily derive from the Muslim (Bosnian) tradition, arguing that such interpretations often overlook the complexity of Albanian heroic narratives. Mehmeti identifies three cultural layers in Albanian epic: the first is predominantly Muslim, the second is a blend of Muslim and Albanian elements, and the third is entirely Albanian. This structure reflects a complex interplay of cultural influences, especially in the roles of women in narratives like that of Muji and Halil, which he argues deviate from traditional Albanian perspectives. Lambertz, in his 1960 study "Albanian Popular Epic," contributes to this discourse by integrating linguistic, folkloric, and literary historical knowledge. Berisha (1987) praises Lambertz for his ability to combine these disciplines, providing a deep understanding of Albanian heroic songs, particularly those featuring prominent figures like Muji and Halil. His perspective helps clarify the migration of motifs and characters across Balkan cultures, a phenomenon that has often led to misguided conclusions. Çabej (1975) also highlights the growing interest in epic songs, noting their widespread resonance across the western Balkan Peninsula, connecting North Albanians with South Slavs in Montenegro, Bosnia, and Croatia. This regional connection underscores the importance of Lambertz's work in understanding the richness of Balkan oral traditions.

In conclusion, Lambertz's analytical contributions illuminate the essence of Albanian literature and its connections to broader cultural narratives in the Balkans, encouraging a deeper exploration of these dynamic interactions. According to Palaj and Kurti (1966, p. 11), it is unnecessary to delve deeply into the opinions of scholars regarding the similarities between Albanian heroic songs and those of other Balkan peoples. However, it is important to highlight the views expressed by the authors of "Treasures of the Nation." Notably, heroic songs are primarily sung by Bosniaks from Herzegovina, Montenegrins historically linked to Albanians and Northern Albanians, a fact that is particularly significant. In his analysis of the connections between Albanian heroic songs and Muslim traditions, Mehmeti (1996, pp. 38-52) provides a comprehensive overview of various perspectives, incorporating his critiques and reflections. He emphasizes the importance of mountainous communities residing in remote areas where the cultural environment closely aligns with the themes of heroic songs. Mehmeti argues that in Albanian epic poetry, there are no instances where the creators and performers of these songs are merely "artisans," as suggested by Murko (1951, p. 22), who critiques the comparative approaches of other authors.

Lambertz (2011b, p.57) summarizes that the origin of these songs holds little significance in contemporary discussions. He underscores that language is a dynamic system that adapts to cultural needs and that songs evolve, sometimes fragmenting into new forms within each nation, including the mountain-dwelling Albanians. Contrasting this view, Mehmeti asserts that the role of women in Albanian epic poetry is multidimensional and essential. Women appear as key figures, not only as mothers, sisters, and wives but also as representatives of traditional Albanian values. In crucial situations, the heroes Muji and Halil seek advice from the "old mother," symbolizing familial authority, and they follow her counsel (Mehmeti, 1996, p. 53). Çabej (1975) notes that Lambertz identifies several important themes in heroic songs, such as the motif of rebirth, expressions of pain and atrocities, as well as dialogues between lovers before significant actions. The songs also address conflicts between brothers who do not recognize each other, tensions between fathers and sons, and issues of betrayal and loyalty among women.

Regarding the description of feminine beauty, Lambertz (2011b, p.58) emphasizes influences from the broader tradition of Balkan folk lyricism, which often has Oriental roots. He also identifies distinct Albanian elements in these descriptions. For those who doubt that the Albanian concept of love for a woman differs from that of other peoples, the numerous and diverse love songs of the mountain dwellers provide strong evidence. The findings of Maximilian Lambertz in his studies of the Albanian language and oral literature highlight the significance of this language within the European linguistic landscape. He acknowledges the rich historical background of Albanian and shows a particular interest in its dialectal variations, suggesting that these differences offer valuable insights into linguistic and cultural frameworks. Furthermore, Lambertz underscores the importance of Albanian oral literature as an essential means of preserving cultural identity, considering it a vital resource for historical and sociological research. He describes the Balkans as a unique center for exploring diverse cultures, where oral traditions intersect and develop. By applying comparative linguistic models in his analyses, Lambertz deepens the understanding of the distinct characteristics of the Albanian language and literature, clarifying the connections and differences with other regional and European languages. These observations encourage a more nuanced appreciation of the Albanian language and literature within broader cultural and scientific contexts.

## 5. Discussion

Through his research, Maximilian Lambertz reaches definitive scientific conclusions, establishing the Albanian language as a crucial element of the European linguistic framework, with a significance comparable to that of other historical languages. He contends that Albanian not only has a rich heritage but also features a unique grammatical and lexical structure that distinguishes it within the European context. Additionally, Lambertz emphasizes the vital role of Albanian oral literature, which has been instrumental in preserving national and cultural identity over the centuries. He compares it to other Balkan literatures, presenting it as a cultural treasure that provides a unique perspective on the history and traditions of the Albanian people. This oral tradition, enriched with mythology, legends, and historical narratives, exemplifies the resilience and creativity of Albanians, significantly enhancing the overall richness of the Balkan culture.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper presents a thorough analysis of the contributions of Maximilian Lambertz, a German-Austrian scholar known for his significant involvement with the Albanian language. His strong commitment to this language emerged under unique historical conditions, stemming from his initial encounter during a research expedition in the Balkans in 1906. From 1913 to 1914, and until his death in 1963, Lambertz conducted extensive research, actively promoting the language and oral literature within academic circles. His initial focus on the dialects of Albanian led him to further explore and deepen his understanding of its literary culture. Ultimately, Lambertz's dedication to the Albanian language and oral literature serves as an important model for future scholars, illustrating the value of internationalization in the study of diverse cultures. His work demonstrates how a scholar from a different background can enhance the recognition and appreciation of other cultures, thereby contributing to the preservation of their cultural and historical identity.

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