

**Amina Šiljak Jesenković &  
Madžida Mašić**  
**“Sarajevski pjesnik Zekerija Sukerija:  
Književno-teorijska studija i izbor iz Divana”**  
[Sarajevo poet Zekerijja Sukkeri: A literary-  
theoretical study and a selection from Divan”].  
Sarajevo: Univerzitet u Sarajevu – Orijentalni  
institut, 2024, p: 189.

Reviewer: Omer Merzić

Through Bosnian oriental and literary studies of the past, the life and work of Zekerija Sukerija was mostly unexplored and concentrated in a few short articles. The study “Sarajevski pjesnik Zekerija Sukerija: književno-teorijska studija i izbor iz Divana” [Sarajevo poet Zekerijja Sukkeri: a literary-theoretical study and a selection from Divan”] represents a valuable contribution to contemporary oriental and literary study in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This book

“” Merzić, O. (2026). [Review of the book Sarajevski pjesnik Zekerija Sukerija: književno-teorijska studija i izbor iz Divana [Sarajevo poet Zekerijja Sukkeri: A literary-theoretical study and a selection from Divan], by A. Šiljak Jesenković & M. Mašić]. *Journal of Balkan Studies*, 6(1), 125-128

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📄 Balkan Studies Foundation  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51331/B23>  
*Journal of Balkan Studies*, 6 (1), 2026  
[balkanjournal.org](http://balkanjournal.org)

📅 Received: 30.11.2025  
Accepted: 14.01.2026



not only provides a revised understanding of his life by assembling previously scattered data and advancing new theories supported by this material, but it also examines Zekerija Sukerija as a poetic subject through an analysis of his own words and poetry.

The authors of this study are Amina Šiljak-Jesenković and Madžida Mašić, both senior researchers at the Oriental Institute at the University of Sarajevo, both of whom have extensive experience in Oriental studies especially in the area of Bosnian literature and poets from the Ottoman period. This is further emphasized in the “Foreword” of the study seeing that Šiljak-Jesenković started her research into Zekerija Sukeri more than three decades ago and this book represents a culmination of this work.

As far as the structure of the work is concerned, the book is divided into three separate chapters representing three distinct areas. The first chapter explores the biography of the poet Zekerija Sukeri, while the second chapter primarily focuses on the different aspects of his literary work. Finally, the third chapter is a selection of translations from the “Divan” of Zekerija Sukeri. By structuring the book in this manner, the authors construct a comprehensive narrative that traces the formation of Zekerija Sukerija as a poet in Sarajevo, his early engagement with poetry, his subsequent role as a scribe at the Ottoman court in Istanbul, and, ultimately, his literary expression and contribution through his Divan.

In the first chapter, the author’s primary objective is to reconstruct the biography of Zekerija Sukeri. They not only base their reconstruction on the writings of earlier authors such as Hazim Šabanović, Safvet-beg Bašagić, Smail Balić, Fehim Nametak, and most notably Erdoğan Erol, but also on the self-referentiality of Zekerija Sukeri in his poetry. The different passages, poems, and verses of Zekerija’s “Divan,” most notably his *tarihs*, a form of poetic record commemorating important events, are analyzed by them. The authors also ponder whether Zekerija Sukeri was a Sufi or not, a question which was not fully resolved. Based on the analysis of different passages, poems, and verses the authors tried to differentiate between metaphorical love or *aşk-ı mecazî* and Divine love or *aşk-ı*

*hakikî* in Zekerijas writings. After thorough analysis the author concluded that Zekerija Sukeri was a member of the Mevlevi Sufi order.

The second chapter is a thorough literary-theoretical analysis of his poetry, with an emphasis on form, poetics, and self-referentiality. By analysing the meter, rhyme, and stylistic structure of the “Divan” the authors reveal that Zekerija Sukeri was an exceptionally disciplined poet who mastered all classical forms: *ghazal*, *rubaiyat*, *sakinama*, *lugaz*, and *tarih*. Moreover, his use of *tarihs* to chronicle events in Bosnia and the Ottoman Empire indicates that he was one of the leading poets of the region and of his time. The authors express the notion that Zekerija Sukeri also affirms through his writings his identity as a poet from Sarajevo who came to Istanbul as a matured author and not a student of his compatriot Sulejman Mezaki, as was the notion in scholarly circles before. Another deviation from early scholars that occurs in the writings of Šiljak-Jesenković and Mašić is that they express their opinion that the surviving manuscript of the “Divan” by Sukeri is not a complete *divan* according to literary standards. This is evidenced by the fact that the only extant copy of the Divan lacks poetic forms traditionally considered essential components of any *divan* as the collected works of a poet... Thus, this goes against scholars such as Erdoğan Erol, who argued that the “Divan” of Zekerija Sukeri was in fact a complete *divan*.

Finally, the authors conclude their book with an important addition in the form of excerpts of the “Divan” by Sukeri translated into Bosnian and adapted to be accessible to a wider audience. While not giving a translation of the complete “Divan” the authors nevertheless give the most representative and important parts of Zekerija’s poetic opus from which the reader can make his own assessment of into the poet’s literary contribution.

As concluded by the authors: “ We may confidently assert that before us stands another author whose broader presentation will open a vast space for discerning the Bosniak cultural identity and who, after centuries of neglect, will assuredly attain his rightful place in the literary heritage of the Bosniaks.” One of the main points that the authors tried and succeeded to make is to showcase that

Zekerija Sukeri was not a peripheral Ottoman poet, but an important part of Bosniak literature heritage. These findings make this book an indispensable resource for all future researchers of Divan literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina.