

## Kosovo education development in Albanian language during the years 1878-1918

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### Abstract

Albania has one of the most specific histories, among all European Nations. Albanians have found themselves under the pressure of different wars for centuries, but it did not prevent them to create a rich tradition, in all aspects of life, especially in culture and education. During the National Renaissance, patriots and pedagogues considered education and culture as important factors for the nation's progress, but also as a means for its unity and the preservation of national unity in the struggle under the constant efforts of neighboring chauvinists to disintegrate it. After the partially – realized aspirations for a free and independent Albania, only two paths were left for Albania in London Conference of 1913: continuation of the armed struggle and cultivation of the Albanian language at schools, which would undoubtedly lead to the rise of national conscience, under the idea that "... the light of the knowledge will take us ahead ...". It was the lack of a common alphabet. For this reason, on the initiative of the Manastiri Club, the Congress of Manastiri was convened, which opened new paths. In Kosovo, the challenges of learning the Albanian language and the continuation of resistance during the years 1878-1912 were oriented towards the preservation of their being and national identity; the pursuit of liberation efforts and the path towards independence and national unity.

The fates of school, education and Albanian language in Kosovo during 1912-1915 changed dramatically. The state of education in Albania, in the areas administered by Austro-Hungarians was much better compared to the occupied Bulgarian areas. Meanwhile, during 1918, the Albanian book was the privilege of only those who went to school across the Kingdom of SCS (SKS). At that time, all measures were taken so that no Albanian book could penetrate this land. Pashiq's agents were engaged for this issue and they considered the ABC-book as something that "Kept the gunpowder dry" ...! An unseen genocide was exercised over the Albanians, which denied the use of their mother tongue, freedom and education in their language, etc.

**Keywords:** Education, Albanian school, The Albanian League of Prizren, Independence of Albania, Education in Kosovo.

### Introduction

To achieve the very important program goals of the Albanian League of Prizren, Albanian intelligence focused its activity in two directions: in the field of opening national schools and the Albanian language learning curriculum was provided. This was a period when a rich activity was developed in the Vilayet of Kosovo, which turned into an all-Albanian movement, known in the history of Albanian schools

as the Movement for Albanian School and Education. This powerful national movement managed to successfully finalize the most important national goals "the printing of the alphabet school book" (Roshi, 1992, 97). In all Albanian lands, especially in Kosovo, precisely during the years 1883, 1909, 1910, 1911, when the issue of schools and Albanian education<sup>1</sup> was forcibly put forward, according to archival documentation of this period, the activity developed in this field is evidenced, which, for the circumstances of Vilayet of Kosovo had their own specific characteristics, where a high national consciousness was created. The ideas of Renaissance on these areas were embraced along with the messages that emerged from the League of Prizren. It is documented that during this period, the stone houses, shrines, vakafs and mosques were the first to spread the learning of Albanian language. This activity was complemented by the song and the lute and double-stringed folk lute of the rhapsodes, which have made a valuable contribution to the education of the Albanian population in Kosovo. Here is how our popular genius describes the phase of efforts for the creation of the Albanian state: "Hoti and Gruda have sworn in/They've come to Shkoder to share the care/Not to leave the mountains without blood/We are committed to become a nation..." (Belegu, 1939, 100). Renaissance leaders had projected to put the native language in the foundation of the content of learning, which was the basic requirement of this movement. A central part of the National Renaissance program was learning and cultivation of mother tongue and efforts to enrich and clear it from foreign and unnecessary words. The importance of mother tongue learning was related to the fact that it provided for Albanians: Preserving national being and identity; National Union for Liberation and Progress towards Independence; entering the path of progress.

These were the reasons why our Renaissance patriots, without exception, devoted themselves directly to the great and vital issue of time: writing and learning of Albanian language, opening Albanian schools and organizing Albanian national education. Realistically, the Albanian language was taught well before March 7, 1887 in foreign language schools and other illegal forms in Kosovo as well. Moreover, the Albanian League of Prizren (1878-1881) gave a great impetus to the movement for the national school. The national program of the League required official recognition of the Albanian language, its use in the administration and the schools of Albania, and the use of part of the country's income for the development of education.<sup>2</sup> Sami Frashëri addressed himself to all Albanians with a series of questions: "How is the nationality of a nation preserved? It is preserved previously, with you-speaking your mother tongue. The language is the first and the greatest sign of a nation. How is the language preserved? It is preserved with its letters. An unwritten "language" cannot stay too long undestroyed... The Albanian nation is not a nation to be ashamed of: being a man of such a brave and ingenious nation is not a shame, it's a great honor. If our nation has not prospered, it is not its fault, it is our fault; Our Albanian Language has remained unwritten, not because it is a bad language, but only because we did

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<sup>1</sup> National Archive of Tirana (NAT), Fund, Ministry of Education, materials and documents, what the others said for the Albanian League of Prizren.

<sup>2</sup> Uploaded on 27.9.2016, in: <http://www.home.no/dukagjin/Lidhja%20Prizrenit%20II.html>.

not care to write it down. It's not the fault of the language, the fault is ours".<sup>3</sup> This is a reflection of the importance of the Albanian school and learning of the native language, which is related to the preservation of the national identity and the unity for liberation and the path towards independence. The Renaissance patriots were devoted to the writing of the Albanian language education, undivided in all the territories where the Albanian language was spoken. The heavy burden of the spread of Albanian language and national liberation was taken by these ideologues, by drafting school books, scientific and literary works, with the intention to increase, through their work, the love for the homeland.

During the National Renaissance, several variants of alphabets were created, a single common alphabet was created, ABC-books and singing books, as well as various textbooks were created, and schools were opened, where also the Renaissance patriots were involved in teaching.

In this period, the people of Kosovo's territory were also mobilized in the issue of spreading Albanian language education. "Peoples, even when they do not have a national consciousness founded on culture, the impulse of life makes them move at the time of great danger" (Belegu, 1939, 10). This activity can be divided in three phases: learning the Albanian language through individual forms, then introducing with the utmost efforts of Albanian in the foreign schools operating in Kosovo, and, thirdly, the opening of Albanian schools, totally independent of foreign schools.

The national school in the area of Kosovo was also assisted by Albanian clubs, operating in Albania, and in the Diaspora. This activity was focused on providing material assistance to finding and assisting Albanian teachers, organizing courses for native language learning and providing necessary books. Archival documents prove that most of these clubs were turned into school centers. According to the writings, found as evidence in Sofia's "National Calendar" magazine, it is well-known that in Prizren, Peja, Gjakova and Shkupi, Albanian schools for boys have been opened since 1848. While in the province of Zym, near Prizren, recognized by historians of Albanian education, as an education promoting area, the Albanian school was opened in 1864, which seems to have been working since long ago (Kerhanaj, 2013).. The Catholic Christian population, under the great influence of the Vatican's educational culture, sometimes sent priests, mainly from Shkodra, to arrange lessons with the children of this area. Among the special contributors, in the territory of Kosovo, as teachers of the Albanian language are the great patriots, Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi, Father Lekë Filaj and others. Although these schools were oriented to teaching of religion, having in mind that the students and teachers (priests) were mostly Albanians, and thus helped spread and cultivate the Albanian language and the educational culture. The ABC-book of Zymi comes from this time, in of 1900. This ABC-book was preserved in the Central Archives of the State in Tirana. It has no author's name, but by its content, it

<sup>3</sup> The encyclopaedist, Sami Frashëri, a remarkable ideologist and patriot for liberation and national unification of the Albanian people. He was among the key organizers of the "Central Committee for protection of Albanian nationality" and, following the establishment of "Shoqërisë së të shtypurit shkronja shqip" (Society for publication of Albanian letters (1879), was elected as its president. He directed the first magazines in Albanian language and drafted some textbooks. The Book "Albania, what it was, what it is and what it will be", 1899, became the manifesto of the National Renaissance.

resembles the work of Lazer Lumezi, while methodically, the work of Mati Logoreci, among the first authors at that time for preparation of school books in Kosovo.<sup>4</sup> The Albanian newspaper "Albania" of Bucharest had written about it as well.<sup>5</sup>

"Letters come from all over Albania, which show the blaze and love of the people to illuminate the fate of the homeland. But the bad thing is that we do not have a center, a common path, as a whole, we do not know which way to go. We want to do well for the country, but we don't know how to work, to achieve this goal, we do not have a government that will guide and illuminate our mind" (Hoxha, Berzeshta, 1988, 55). However, with the contribution and coordination of the activities of these clubs, in 1908, in Manastiri, the elite of all Albanian clubs gathered, and the Congress of Alphabet was prepared. It is the period of great opportunities and decisions because "... now, among these clubs, is a more organized, a more dense and productive activity is noticed." Patriots and prominent fighters for the Albanian national school, such as Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga, Bajram Curri and others from Kosovo, opened new clubs, like in Pristina, Peja, Gjakova, Prizren, Mitrovica, Gilian and their branches in Ferizaj, Kaçanik, Podujeva, Drenica etc.

After the first ABC-books of this time emerged, they soon found themselves in Kosovo. The path of the first Albanian letters from these ABC-books was taught by Albanian clerics, of Muslim and Catholic religions. Thus, they fulfill a sacred duty to their homeland.<sup>6</sup> As a response to the work that was being done in opening of Albanian schools in Kosovo, permissions arrived from the government of Ottoman Empire, for opening of Serbian schools Kosovo, this created a lot of difficulties in relation to the Albanian cause, because those Serbian schools changed their mission and turned into the center of the slavic propaganda in Kosovo.<sup>7</sup> These issues will be put forward by the Convention convened by Haxhi Zeka, where different problems were discussed, mainly of educational nature. Firstly "...the decision to introduce the Albanian Language in the existing schools was taken, and the schools to be managed by Albanians. But none of these objectives were realized, because the Government of the Ottoman Empire suppressed the League of Peja, that's why, learning of Albanian Language went back again to illegal forms" (Rrahimi, 1969, 44). Archival sources of this period document that more than 5000 children and 13.000 men of different ages

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Gjedia: Education in Albania in the years 1925-1939, (Doctoral Thesis, defended in QSA (Centre of Albanian Studies-CAS) in Tirana, in 2012, unpublished). (The extraordinary work of the 'Shqipërisë shqiptare' (Albanian Association) of Bucharest, the one of Sofje, the club "Bashkimi" of Manastiri as well as the club "Arsimi" (Education) of Shkupi. The newspaper "Kombi" (The Nation) of the 1 January 1909, wrote about the work organized by these clubs that "...in all Albanian schools of the Albanian Government, preparations are being made for the teachers to come and teach boys their native language").

<sup>5</sup> Newspaper "Shqipëria" (Albania) of Bucharest had written about it, on 30 August 1897.

<sup>6</sup> See more about it: National Archive of Tirana (NAT) AKT, Personalities of the Albanian National Renaissance. (Today, in this archive, 130 dossiers for political, journalistic, cultural and education activities of Jashar Erebara are preserved.)

<sup>7</sup> This atmosphere was reflected in the Pro memoria of May 1896. As this Pro memoria did not bring what was expected, the president of the Albanian League of Peja, Mulla Haxhi Zeka, on April 1899, convened the General Assembly "where a common way of action, in the interest of the homeland was defined".

were included in the Vilayet of Kosovo.<sup>8</sup>

In all these courses, the teaching was applied according to a specific curriculum, which was also in use in other areas of Albania. Besides initial writing and reading, the history of Albania was taught there. Minwhile, in the children's courses, besides these subjects, reciting of patriotic poems was taught, then reading of different texts, drafted in the form of dialogues and, lastly, the song and gymnastics was taught. All these courses were carried out according to the concept of the teacher Logoreci, who had drafted "Instructions ..." as well for all of them who worked in these courses. A special contribution in this aspect was given by patriots, who had initially attended foreign schools, but who, in the meantime, had managed to learn the writing and reading of Albanian Language. They, then, taught this language to the others. It is worth mentioning that in all the schools, which were under the patronage of Austro-Hungaria, such as in Prizren, Janjevë, Pejë, Gjakovë, Mitrovicë, Letnicë, Stubëll and elsewhere, where the teaching process was partially carried out in Albanian Language, efforts were made that those schools be changed again into completely national schools.<sup>9</sup>

### **Fate of Albanian schools, education and Albanian Language in Kosovo during 1912-1915**

For all Albanians, the declaration of independence was the greatest historical event of the 20-th century.<sup>10</sup> But, setting the borders violently between Albanians as well as remaining a lot of territories out of Albania of the time of London Conference, reprisals, pressure to the level of genocide were exercised over Kosovo and other Albanian territories remained out of the border. The school in Albanian Language was prohibited by laws in these areas. Whereas, it should not be denied that, rays of scholarship were coming from Albania for the parts of Albanian population, that remained occupied by Greek, Serbia and Montenegro. A lot of teachers from Kosovo contributed to the illegal distribution network of ABC-books and books in Albanian in Kosovo, who worked in different parts of Albania, such as: Ibrahim Fehmiu, Ibrahim Kolçi, Niman Ferizi, Ferid Imami, Man Shaqiri, Jusuf Puka, Murat Muhaxhiri, Ahmet Gashi, Qamil Bala, etc. (Vokri, Kolci, 1993, 32).

Even after declaration of independence, a number of new challenges in Kosovo emerged in Kosovo, related to the fate of Albanian Language and the freedom of the country. The erudite Sami Frashëri was the program maker, strategist and ideologist of the patriotic movement of Albanian Renaissance, as well as his book "What Albania was, what it is and what it will be".<sup>11</sup> In the territories remained out of the

<sup>8</sup> NAT (National Archive of Tirana) A.K.T. Materials and documents for organizing the courses in Kosovo after the Albanian League of Prizren.

<sup>9</sup> Thus, the foreign schools of this period in Kosovo were used as a place to open ways of Albanian learning. Albanian patriots at this period focussed their attention on Turkish schools, for two reasons: firstly, because they were widely spread out in this Vilayet and, secondly, because of the fact of introduction of Albanian Language in these schools, would create chances to act similarly also with other foreign schools in these areas.

<sup>10</sup> Institute of Pedagogical Studies (IPS), History of Albanian Education I, Tirana, 1990, page.201.

<sup>11</sup> Kosovo and other ethnic territories, as parts of Albania, that were dismembered as a bargaining

borders, after declaration of independence of Albania, the same platform goes on. A look into the education documentation of the years 1915-1918, "in some schools in Kosovo, these subjects in Albanian Language were being taught: writing, grammar, composition, numerator, handcraft and letters, history, song, religious learning". The process of learning was very classic and influenced by religious culture, catholic as well as islam culture, because it was being practiced mainly in churches, mosques and shrines. The teacher' role was comprehensive in the classroom. They were not working with books, because they were not available, consequently, the teachers were free to choose the topics. Teaching of that time can be defined in this axiom: "What teacher does, will later be done by the student". According to statistics, which is also referred to by Prof. Abdullah Vokri, until 1918, teaching in most schools of Kosovo was conducted in Albanian Language only (Vokri, 1990, 12). After 1918, teaching in Albanian Language was prohibited, and in all the schools of the territory of Kosovo, teaching was conducted i Serbian language, as Kosovo was reoccupied and remained under the rule of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (SKS) (SCS).<sup>12</sup> Albanian population of Kosovo was submissive to the violence and was deprived of all national rights as well as of the official use of Albanian Language. During this period, Albanians from the territories remained under the Yugoslavien Kingdom were underestimated and did not enjoy the basic rights of life and social, cultural and educational development. Even though primary schools were functioning in Kosovo, the Albanian students had no right to practice their native language. Albanian Language was not allowed even in communication between the Albanian students at school, not to mention the official communication.

### **Situation of education in Albanian language in the territories ruled by Austria-Hungary 1915-1918**

The First World War or the Great War was the war that involved almost the whole world, from 1914 until 1918. During 1914-1919, Albanian territories, were invaded by Austro-Hungarian, Italian, French, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian and Montenegrin Armies" (Duka, 2007, 89). Regardless of limitation set by the status of the war, during the period 1914-1918, the Albanian school neither ceased to exist nor did the efforts stop the opening of new schools. The situation created, prevented the Government of Vlora for a unified development of all national education, but managed to preserve the national spirit within schools.<sup>13</sup> What is specific during these years in the field of chip and remained under foreign rule. As it's documented by archival sources, the patriotic and educational activity in Kosovo was conducted according to S. Frashëri's platform.

<sup>12</sup> Teaching in schools in Kosovo was conducted only in Serbian Language, and was attended by a small number of Albanian students, who did not know the Serbian Language. Teaching was very simple and the goal was to learn the first elements of writing the Serbian Language. Teaching of religion for Albanian students, who were taught in foreign language, was obligatory, where religious behaviours and rules were applied.

<sup>13</sup> Development of Albanian education in this period had its characteristics with parcelized developments, based on the zones of the country, however, it preserved characteristics of national identity due to the care and attitudes of teachers, specialists of education, especially Albanian patriots. This activity often managed to even get through the imposed borders, in Kosovo, where education was mainly conducted illegally.

education is the fact that Albanian Language became an official language. The network of Albanian schools was created during these years, which was temporarily extended in a part of Kosovo as well as in other Albanian territories. Their goal was adherence of the Albanian education and culture to European systems of education. These years are also characterized with the opening of courses for preparation of teachers, also, many students continued their studying abroad, in secondary schools as well as in higher education in Europe, especially in Austria, Italy, France and Switzerland. During the First World War, numerous teachers and education specialists moved back and forth voluntarily, based on the needs, from Kosovo to Albania and vice versa, serving as teachers. These difficult show a struggle for the opening of Albanian schools as well as extension of education network, publication of school texts and development of Albanian schools (ISP, 2001, 322).

During the period 1915-1918, The territory of Kosovo was divided in two zones of invasion, the zone of Austria-Hungary and the one of Bulgarians. Whilst the Bulgarian invaders strictly prohibited the opening of Albanian schools, Austria-Hungary had quite a different attitude. After 1915, the Albanian schools started functioning in many areas in Kosovo. This was the first time that the Albanian school in Kosovo was legalized. Such schools were opened in: Zym, Gjakovë, Prizren, Mitrovicë, Vushtrri, Pejë, Gjurakoc, Beran, Zllakuqan, Strelle, Istog, Plavë, Guci, Brodosanë, Rakosh etc (Gjoshi, 2004).

Austria-Hungary allowed the Albanians to use national symbols such as: the national flag, independence day and Albanian language (Gjocaj, 1992). "The Albanian Literary Commission" had a significant impact during the Austria-Hungary invasion. It carried out an extensive language, artistic and pedagogical activity, where many Albanian and foreign intellectuals worked. Taking advantage of the tolerance of Austrian authorities, the Literary Commission set itself a task of drafting and publishing textbooks. In the meeting of 11.9.1916, the Commission was requested "to establish a literary language". Prof. Nachtigal worked as an advisor for this Commission. Prof. Cabej, who began his Commentary in the Congress for standardizing the alphabet exactly with the Literary Commission of Shkodra, also spoke for the great role that the Literary Commission had played in bringing the two dialects of Albanian Language (Geg and Tosk dialects) closer to each other in a specific historical period (Krasniqi, 2004, 233). These authorities decided on the use of Albanian Language as the Albanian official language.<sup>14</sup> Austria-Hungary organized the education by creating firstly the General Education Directorate, in Shkodër, as the highest institution in the field of education. Subordinated to it, the Directorate network, included three more education directorates. First Teachers' Training College, called "Normalja e Elbasanit" was founded. Education Directorate of the Northern Albania issued a lot of legal acts as well as official notes for schools such as: instructions, orders, circular letters, which intended to support schools on: obligatory

<sup>14</sup> The political atmosphere, objectives and commitment of our patriots on the eve of the First World War, as well as the orientations of the all-albanian movement, are also reflected in the article of the newspaper "Shqipëria" (Albania), where, among others, was said that "Letters come from all parts of Albania, which indicate the great blaze and love of the people to illuminate the fate of the country. But the evil thing is that we do not have a centre, a common path, for all of us, we do not know where we go to."

school attendance, attendance of schools by students, fulfillment of school needs and control over the teacher's education work. According to the review of education documentation of the years 1914-1918, at schools in Albanian Language in Kosovo, the following subjects were being taught: writing, grammar, composition, numerator. Teacher's role in the class was comprehensive. He instructed, controlled, disciplined the children. The children usually worked individually on their desks and tables, where teaching was conducted through such a manner: "What teacher does first, the student will do later". Until 1918, as everywhere in Albania, teaching in Kosovo also was conducted in Albanian Language only (Vokri, 1990, 12).

### Conclusions

During 1914-1918 in Kosovo there were 68 primary schools in total (Duka, 2007, 58). Until the reannexation of Kosovo, according to archival data, it is obvious that 50 Albanian schools were closed down, in which, more than 4000 students were attending lessons. Different armed formations were engaged to close down the Albanian schools in Kosovo, such as: army, gendarmerie, police guard, especially the so called flying band of guerrillas". Terrible violence and tortures were committed in Gjakovë, Pejë, Mitrovicë, Prizren and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> The Albanian book was a privilege of only those who were educated out of the borders of Kingdom of SKS (SCS). At that time, all the measures had been undertaken, so that, not a single book in Albanian comes into this territory. An unseen genocide was exercised over the Kosovo Albanians. They were denied the use of Albanian Language, as well as lessons in their native language.

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<sup>15</sup> Yougoslav Archive, fig.14. page102-409, Telegramsko odeljenje o kacackoj aktivnosti na Kosovu. (This telegram is a fact that in the name of the fight against Kacacs, Albanians were terrorized through the barbaric operation against the education in Albanian language. This was undertaken by the implementators of the policy of King Alexander, such as Pachic, Pribiqeviq, Drashkoviq, Toma Popoviq, Punisha Raçiq etc.).



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