

**T.R.
YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
PHILOSOPHY M.A PROGRAMME**

M.A. THESIS

**THE BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL RENAISSANCE IN
MODERN ALBANIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

**MUHAMET KOLA
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**TEZ DANIŞMANI
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Çaksu**

**ISTANBUL
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ÖZ

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Muhamet Kola

Haziran, 2020

Arnavut milliyetçiliğinin şeceresinin incelenmesi, Arnavut alimler arasında vatanseverliği zayıflatabileceği ve Arnavutluk'un bir millet olarak ortadan kaybolmasını tehlikeye sokabileceği yanılsamasını yaratmıştır. Arnavut bilginlerin arasında yaptığı çalışma hala tabu olarak kabul edilirken, pek çok yabancı bilgin Arnavut milliyetçiliğinin doğuşunu ele aldı. Bu tabu gerçeği öğrenme korkusuyla ilgilidir. Gerçek, kökeni ve tarihi mitlerin yaratılma şeklini ortaya çıkarabilir. Bu çalışmanın amacı Arnavutluk milli bilincinin nasıl inşa edildiğini analiz etmektir. Arnavut milliyetçi söylemlerin başlangıcı 19. yüzyılda ortaya çıkmaya başlamıştır. Arnavut entelektüellerinin standartlaştırılmış bir ulusal dil oluşturma girişimleri, ulusal gazeteler ve çeşitli ulusal çalışmalarla milliyetçi söylemleri başlatmıştır. Arnavutluk milli duygusunu yaratmaya çalışan Arnavut aydınları, Arnavutluk Ulusal Rönesansının temsilcileri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu tezin nihai hedefi de milliyetçiliğin içsel bir sosyal sonuç ya da Arnavut toplumunun milliyetçilik yaratma talebinin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıktığı argümanını ortadan kaldırmaktır. Bu nedenle bu çalışmanın alt amacı, Arnavut milliyetçiliğinin toplumun böylesi bir değişim talebinin bir sonucu olarak inşa edilmediğini, ancak yapımının jeopolitik tehdit nedeniyle acil bir ihtiyaç olarak Rönesans aydınları tarafından getirildiği hipotezini oluşturmaktır. Bu çalışma nitel yöntemle ele alınmıştır. Arnavut milliyetçiliğinin oluşumunda yer alan, Arnavut entelektüel elitlerin bazı baskın temsilcilerinin çalışmalarını analiz etmekten ibarettir. Arnavut milliyetçiliğinin inşa edilme biçimlerinin betimleyici bir yorum gerektirdiği için metin çözümleme yöntemiyle hermenötik daire yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: şecere, Arnavut milliyetçiliği, tarihsel efsaneler, ulusal duyarlılık

ABSTRACT

THE BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL RENAISSANCE IN MODERN ALBANIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Muhamet Kola

June, 2020

The study of the genealogy of Albanian nationalism has created the illusion among Albanian scholars that it may weaken their patriotism, which could endanger Albania as a nation. Therefore, many foreign scholars have taken up the study of the birth of Albanian nationalism, since amongst Albanian scholars its study is still considered a taboo. This taboo is related to the fear of the truth which may reveal the origin and the way the historical myths presented to Albanians were created. That is why one of the aims of this study is to analyze how Albanian national consciousness is constructed. Albanian nationalist discourses began to come to existence in the 19th century through attempts to create a standardized national language, national newspapers, and various national works by Albanian intellectuals of the period. The Albanian intellectuals who tried to create Albanian national sentiments are considered to be representatives of the Albanian National Renaissance. The problem that this thesis deals with consists of the deconstruction of the argument that many scholars of Albanian nationalism uphold that it arose as an internal social consequence or as it can be better put, as a consequence of the demand of Albanian society for the creation of nationalism. For this reason, another purpose of this study is to establish the hypothesis that Albanian nationalism was not constructed as a consequence of society's demand for such a change but its construction was imposed by Renaissance intellectuals on Albanian society as an urgent need because of the geopolitically threatening reality. The methodology used in this study is of a qualitative nature, consisting of analyzing the works of some of the predominant representatives of the Albanian intellectual elite who were involved in the creation of Albanian nationalism. Since the ways in which Albanian nationalism was constructed required descriptive interpretation, the hermeneutic circle method together with the text analysis method was used.

Keywords: genealogy, Albanian nationalism, historical myths, national sentiment

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1. INTRODUCTION

The 19th century in the Balkans is recognized as the century of the formation of national consciousness and nationalist movements of the Balkan states. The region experienced the first nationalist movements of different nations against the rule of the Ottoman Empire. These nationalist movements that created the conditions for national consciousness were made also possible by the weakening of the Ottoman Empire's power.

Albania was one of the Balkan countries that managed to create its own nationalist movement through the intellectual elite that it possessed at that time. "There is no doubt that the historians, Albanian and foreign, ascertain, though in different time dimensions, the fact of the Albanian "national delay"..., the delayed modernization of Albanian society to the level of a nation and a national state"¹. The reasons for delaying the declaration of independence were different, ranging from internal factors to various external factors.

"For example, on the transnational scale, the genesis of the Albanian question appeared at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 when Bismarck denied the existence of an Albanian nation in the Balkans, although the British Ambassador in Istanbul, Goschen, in July 1880 wrote about the inevitability of affirming an Albanian nation and the creation of a strong and united Albania"².

There were factors and reasons like these that set in motion the Albanian intelligentsia to work for the creation of an Albanian national identity. The nationalisms of other countries were more developed than the Albanian nationalism for reasons derived from the policies pursued by the Ottoman Empire³. This lack of

¹ Hristo, Neno, Marian Ninov, "People's Character as a Prerequisite for the Albanian National Delay", **5. International Conference on Education, Social Sciences and Humanities, 2-4 July 2018**, (Dubai, U.A.E Proceedings of Socioint, 2018): 317.

² Arben Puto, **Shqipëria Politike**, (Tiranë: Toena, 2009), 20.

³ Bernd Fischer, "Albanian Nationalism and Albanian Independence", **SEEU Review**, special ed., v. 10, i. 1 (2014): 26.

development of Albanian nationalism created the foundations for the creation of the intellectual elite that would attempt to create a national consciousness.

“Rilindja”, which means Renaissance in Albanian “created an awareness of national identity and made the Albanian language the matter-of-course vehicle of literary and cultural expression for the Albanian people”⁴. So it was this nationalist movement, created by Albanian intelligence, called Albanian Renaissance (Revival/Awakening), which brought in Albania a new political program through its agenda. At a time when Albania was facing the risk of fragmentation by the great European powers and an Ottoman Empire that was only falling from its power, the agenda of this movement was to create the Albanian national consciousness, as such a thing did not exist.

Why was this nationalist movement created by the intellectual elite called renaissance or revival? It was called a renaissance or revival implying the belief, common among its participants, that they were discovering a long forgotten sense of their innate identity, prompting them to revive a national culture that had merely been ‘dormant’ for several centuries. “The intelligentsia’s linguistic and folkloric pursuits led directly to the development of nationalist aspirations, and that their literary activities became inseparable from the formulation of political strategies”⁵.

“The Albanian national movement began to push forward the idea of Albanian League designed to promote the unification of all Albanian lands into a single autonomous entity”⁶. This nationalist movement had its representatives like Pashko Vasa, Sami Frasheri (in Turkish known as Şemsettin Sami) and Naim Frasheri, who through newspaper articles or art books tried to create an Albanian national consciousness that would serve to unify ethnic Albanians. In addition to newspaper and art books, another challenge that they had was the creation of an alphabet of the Albanian language, which was forbidden by the Ottoman Empire. There is a big debate among historians about the period in which the first elements of Albanian nationalism appeared. However, my study will not be confined

⁴ Robert Elsie, **Historical Dictionary of Albania**, 2nd ed. (Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2010), Ivii.

⁵ Jane C. Sugarman, “Imagining the Homeland: Poetry, Songs, and the Discourses of Albanian Nationalism”, **Ethnomusicology**, v. 43, i. 3, (1999): 421.

⁶ Petr Akhmedovich Iskenderov, “Great Powers and Albanian National Movement (1878-1914)”, **International Relations and Diplomacy**, v. 6, i. 4 (2018): 240.

only to the years after 1845, but also to the years before it. I select the ending year of the National Renaissance activities in this work the year of independence of Albania (1912).

This study raises the main hypothesis that the essential role in the formation of Albanian nationalism belongs to the intellectuals of the renaissance. Thus, Albanian nationalism is constructed upon a vertical structure, where the intellectual elite of national renaissance being above this structure, transmits to the society the concepts of Albanian political identity. The other variable explaining the continuity of the main hypothesis shows that this vertical movement of the concepts of Albanian nationalism from national intelligence to the social strata came as a result of an immediate need for the geopolitical threatening reality where Albania found itself.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the political elements that contributed to the creation of Albanian nationalism by answering to some research questions like as follows: How did the standardization of the Albanian language influence the creation of nationalism? What was the influence of religious diversity in the creation of Albanian nationalism? How did tribal structures influence the creation of nationalism? These are some of the key issues that will be analyzed from the point of view of political philosophy and will provide the basis for analyzing Albanian nationalism. This study refers to the period before the declaration of independence of Albania (1912), seeking to analyze the genealogy of Albanian nationalism.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

There are different factors that contribute to the creation of national consciousness in various lands. Each country is unique in the way it creates its nationalism. Before analyzing the conditions in which Albanian nationalism was created, it would be useful to give an example as to how national consciousness is created in general.

“Benedict Anderson, in linking nationalism to modernity, explains that a new secular and historical understanding of time was central to the formation of national consciousness. This came about through the *representation* of simultaneity in novels

and through the ceremonial *experience* of simultaneity with newspapers, both a result of what he aptly called print capitalism”⁷.

It was these novels and newspapers, who brought a new approach and understanding of the concept of simultaneity. The concept of simultaneity meant breaking the past and the future in the form of the present that was installed in consciousness. For example, when one reads a novel, even though the subjects of the novel live at different times and may never meet, they still live in the mind or consciousness of the reader.

Anderson proposes that the nation can be defined as “an imagined political community”⁸. So, in order to explain how the formation of consciousness was possible Anderson meant that people inside this community had to communicate together, which happened through print capitalism. “In the Albanian conditions, the press and the book would play a more central role”⁹. The press and books would create this “imagined political community” in Albania.

The press and the book not only created the “imagined political community”, but it also made possible the linking between modernism and nationalism in Albania. “Modernization is an interlinked process of structural differentiation, cultural rationalization, and personal individuation”¹⁰. “To call something ‘modern’ makes sense only if the concept possesses a ‘distinction value’ that sets certain realities analytically apart from others”¹¹.

This modernization made it possible for the intellectuals of the Albanian Renaissance to produce a nationalist discourse that through print capitalism reached out to an entire nation.

“In every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward

⁷ Maria Todorova, “The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism”, **Slavic Review**, v. 64, i. 1 (2005): 141.

⁸ Benedict Anderson, **Imagined Communities**, (London: Verso, 2006), 9.

⁹ Nathalie Clayer, **Në Fillimet e Nacionalizmit Shqiptar: Lindja e një Kombi me Shumicë Myslimane në Evropë**, trans. Artan Puto, (Tiranë: Botime Përpjekja, 2012), 138.

¹⁰ Volker H. Schmidt, “Modernity and Diversity: Reflections on the Controversy between Modernization Theory and Multiple Modernists”, **Social Science Information**, v. 49, i. 4 (2010): 513.

¹¹ Volker H. Schmidt, **Global Modernity. A Conceptual Sketch**, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 18.

off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality”¹².

“The concept “discourse” originates from Latin “*dis- cursus*”, meaning “running to and from”, and generally refers to “written or spoken communication.”¹³ “Discourse, as a social construct, is created and perpetuated by those who have the power and means of communication”¹⁴.

By describing the etymology of the word discourse we can make a difference between modern and pre-modern discourse.

“Pre-literate societies have their thaumaturgies, witchdoctors, etc., and sometimes whole lineages or castes of them; literate civilizations have their priestly and/or clerical classes or estates. But an ‘intelligentsia’ is something different, and a phenomenon essentially connected with the transition. Intelligentsia is a class which is alienated from its own society by the very fact of its education”¹⁵.

So, it is this intelligentsia that tries to achieve through the political discourse the goals it wants.

The creation of Albanian national conscious is different even for the role that the political system has in it. “The leaders of national movements since the French Revolution have been by definition articulate persons, and their propaganda among their own populations, designed to implant in them a national consciousness”¹⁶. The change of the political system in Albania did not come as a response to the demands for change from the masses of the society but as a result of the implementation of the nationalist policies of the representatives of the National Renaissance.

1.2. Methodology

The thesis methodology is based on a qualitative study where will be used primary and secondary literature related to the creation of nationalism and national consciousness in Albania. Hermeneutics will be the method that will follow the work

¹² Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, **Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader**, ed. Robert Young, (Boston, USA: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd), 52.

¹³ Victor Pitsoe, Moeketsi Letseka, “Foucault’s Discourse and Power: Implications for Instructionist Classroom Management”, **Open Journal of Philosophy**, v. 3, i.1 (2013): 24.

¹⁴ **ibid**, 4.

¹⁵ Ernest Gellner, **Thought and Change**, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 169-170.

¹⁶ Hugh Seton-Watson, **Nations and States**, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1977), 9.

throughout its entirety, in order to give justifiable responses to the research questions that this paper raises. Given that some research questions related to primary literature require descriptive answers, the hermeneutic circle method will be synthesized with the text analysis method. The hermeneutic circle method is a kind of epistemological reading approach that is done to a certain text that by merging the particular elements of the text and the text in general, a hypothesis can be constructed. The text analysis method will serve to explain and interpret ways of how Albanian nationalism managed to reach the masses of society¹⁷.

Also, as secondary literature, the works of most famous scholars who dealt with nationalism in Albania will be used in order to achieve the most accurate interpretation of the primary texts. The method of the hermeneutic circle will try to answer questions that require the opinion of other scholars regarding the particular features of Albanian nationalism. In the field of political philosophy, there are many scholars who deal with the analysis of the historical framework like Nathalie Clayer¹⁸ in which the national renaissance was created and developed. Many scholars have analyzed the role of politicians and political actors in creating national renaissance. Concepts such as language, identity, rebirth, religious diversity, tribal structure are variables that are taken into account to analyze the creation of national consciousness by the intellectual elite.

The study will also include the discourses of the Albanian intellectual elite found in their works. It will use discourse analysis method when the need arises, through content analysis or document analysis. The literary, philosophical or historical works of the intellectuals of the National Renaissance will be analyzed in order to create a deep understanding of their philosophical and political approach to nationalism, which made possible the creation of nationalist consciousness.

1.3. The Significance of the Thesis

There are still big debates in Albania about the Ottoman Empire's relationship with the ethnic Albanian population that used to populate the geographic territory of

¹⁷ "Hermeneutics", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hermeneutics/#HermCirc> [17.11.2019].

¹⁸ Nathalie Clayer, **Në Fillimet e Nacionalizmit Shqiptar: Lindja e një Kombi me Shumicë Myslimane në Evropë**, trans. Artan Puto, (Tiranë: Botime Përpjekja, 2012).

today's Albania. It should be noted that Albania is still seen today in a part of the Albanian academia as occupied by the Ottoman Empire, which is due to the imposed panorama of the communist regime. The communist regime used all Renaissance intelligentsia to create a foreign enemy such as the Ottoman Empire in order to legitimize dictatorial power. So this study will also serve as a deconstruction of the nationalist myths raised during the communist regime.

Also, as there is a great lack of philosophical research in the field of political thought on the genealogy of nationalism in Albania, this work will hopefully contribute to the philosophical works on Albanian nationalism.



2. ALBANIAN INTELLECTUALS' CHALLENGES IN CREATING NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Creation of a national consciousness involves issues pertaining to consciousness, national consciousness and national identity that have all been debated among scholars. There are different approaches to and theories about these phenomena, which I will briefly discuss in the following sections of this chapter before proceeding to the Albanian case.

2.1. Consciousness

One of the most important concepts in contemporary analytical philosophy of mind is the concept of consciousness. Although it is known for its ambiguity, consciousness remains a very important concept in this field of philosophy. When analyzing the etymology of this concept, which has its roots in Latin it is seen that this word is divided into “*con* (with) and *scire* (to know)”¹⁹ which will serve us to unravel this concept. In this perspective it can be said that consciousness is a form of thought. Thus it can be concluded that consciousness is related to the potential that man has to know and analyze. But what kind of thought is consciousness more specifically?

To better understand the concept of consciousness in philosophy one must return to the beginning of the modern period where it is clearly evidenced that consciousness is equated with the process of thinking about thought. Among the first philosophers to begin the study of the thought process would be Rene Descartes. He tried to argue the separation of the mind from the body and at the same time argues that the mind is something metaphysically different from the body which is a physical substance. At the moment of using the Cartesian method he equates the necessity of the concept of consciousness with the necessity of the concept of thinking or with the thought itself. In his own words Descartes would state that “for

¹⁹ “Consciousness”, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/consciou/> [03.05.2019].

assuredly, if we but considered the ideas themselves as certain modes of our thought (consciousness), without referring to them to anything beyond, they would hardly afford any occasion of error”²⁰. So for Descartes, thought could not exist independent of consciousness, as the absence of consciousness would mean the absence of thought.

Another philosopher who analyzes the concept of consciousness as related to the process of thinking is John Lock. Although with small changes and without referring to the concept of consciousness more broadly, according to Lock consciousness is essentially related to thought, which in itself carries the identity of an individual. Lock states as follows:

“I do not say there is no soul in a man, because he is not sensible of it in his sleep; but I do say, he cannot think at any time, waking or sleeping: with-out being sensible of it. Our being sensible of it is not necessary to anything but to our thoughts; and to them it is; and to them it always will be necessary, till we can think without being conscious of it”²¹.

At this point it is clear that Lock questions the theory that the lack of consciousness of an individual leads to the absence of the soul. He does this by taking the example of sleep where he states that the fact that man is asleep does not mean that the lack of consciousness at this moment also leads to the absence of the soul. So he concludes that the process of thinking at a given time has an existential need for consciousness at that given time, as man, to experience the process of thinking, must at the same time be “sensible” of it.

However, in contrast to this thesis will be listed the philosophy of Leibniz, which was among the first to analyze the difference between “Perception” and “Apperception” (Consciousness). According to him, the mistake in which the Cartesians fell was the consideration of perceptions for which the individual is unconscious as non-existent, thus expressing the impossibility of the existence of

²⁰ Rene Descartes, **The Rationalists, Discourse on method; Meditations**, trans. John Veitch (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1974), 131.

²¹ John Locke, **An Essay Concerning Human Understanding**, trans. Jim Manis (New York: The Pennsylvania State University, 1999), 92.

imperceptible thoughts. Leibniz sees the Cartesian connection between death and the period of unconsciousness as a great confusion²².

Another philosopher, Gilbert Ryle, goes even further than that by considering consciousness as “myth” and “mental processes” as unconscious and considering them as merely “reflex movements”. He first argues that no one in philosophy attributes the findings or discoveries of certain philosophical theories directly to his consciousness, so no one can say that I have discovered these theories from or “out of consciousness”. For Ryle, it is a “logical abuse” to consider consciousness as “mental states”, because the verb to know itself is the clearest explanation that can be given to this phenomenon. The reduction that he makes to consciousness and its absence goes as far as comparing consciousness with knowing them and its absence with “ignorance”²³.

2.1.1. National consciousness

Among the fundamental components in an individual’s nationalist life is national consciousness. This element must necessarily be found in a certain group in order to preserve the existence and continuity of a nation. As everything starts from the thought, even this element, that is, national consciousness has its origin in national thought. An individual born and raised in an environment of national thought is without doubt characterized by this element. In such an individual, national consciousness is formed, as the first element from which national love naturally springs.

Being conscious of something means understanding something new and being sensitive to that new thing that has been discovered. Sensitivity to this new thing that has become part of the individual becomes part of his consciousness. Consciousness is at the same time the ability of the human mind and senses to know and understand the world around it. It may be considered as the ability to recognize oneself and others and to judge and evaluate the situation in which one acts. Thus, consciousness is our ability to know our inner and outer world through our inner epistemological tools.

²² Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr Von Leibniz, **The Rationalists, Discourse on Metaphysics; The Monadology**, trans. George Montgomery (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1974), 456-457.

²³ Gilbert Ryle, **The Concept of Mind**, (London: Hutchinson and Company Ltd., 1949), 160-161.

National consciousness is the state of knowledge that you exist as an individual and that you belong to a certain group of people and that this group of people has a nation. So in a way it can be equated with the sense of belonging, which in our case is belonging to the nation. The ability to determine that you belong not only to yourself but also to a nation also may be seen as national consciousness. National consciousness is related to the voluntary action of individuals to take concrete steps to consciously relate to the nation.

But in order to understand clearly what national consciousness is, the concept of the nation that constitutes the root of the word national must be explained. The definitions of the concept of nation are numerous by many different scholars, but at the same time there are many similar elements in these definitions, which show a kind of unity of researchers in relation to this concept.

This is easily noticed in the definition given to the concept of nation by J. Bluntschli and the Italian Pasquale Mancini. So if Mancini states that “a nation is a natural society which comprises the unity of territory, origin, traditions, language and self-consciousness”, for Bluntschli “a nation is a historical society, which developed after regulating the social life of definite communities having common interests, customs, spirit and creating fixed state structures”²⁴. This comparison clearly shows the common elements of defining the concept of nation. For example if we were to analyze both definitions we would see that in both we find the common element of a society, which one refers to it as a natural and the other as a historical entity. So, if Mancini refers to the nation as a natural society, it shows that he considers it as a natural development or evolution of a certain group in the nation, while for Bluntschli the concept of the nation is approached as a historical entity, but generally both of them state that the concept of nation has some features in common.

Even though the definitions of the word nation can be very subjective from time to time, it cannot be said that there is a lack of objectivity in explaining it. So, it can be said that there is a wide debate among researchers about the lack of objectivity of explaining this concept. Hugh Seton-Watson may be accused of subjectivity because he states that “a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they

²⁴ Natia Tevzadze, “National Identity and National Consciousness”, **History of European Ideas**, v. 19, (1994): 437.

form one”²⁵. In this explanation of the concept of the nation, the high dose of subjectivity is easily noticed, because for Hugh Seton-Watson to form a nation it would be enough for any group of people to consider the group as a nation.

What makes Hobsbawm to be diametrically opposed to the subjective explanations of the nation is the a posteriori explanation they offer, as for him these are “open to the objection that defining a nation by its members’ consciousness of belonging to it is tautological and provides only an a posteriori guide to what a nation is”²⁶. Therefore, it is dangerous for the definitions of the concept of nation to be subjective, as its definitions would be truncated and would show only half of the history of this concept, that is, only that of its aftermath.

Thus it would be much more objective if the concept of nation is seen as a way of describing “a human community that has acquired national consciousness”. But before reaching the result of achieving the creation of national consciousness, it should be mentioned that there are many initiating factors that influence its formation. Among these factors can be listed many elements such as traditions or interests, which are common to a certain group only. Since these elements are not tangible elements of a physical reality but have an ‘imaginary’ premise, it can be said that up to these moments national consciousness exists only metaphysically as such and the moment of creating a state with a certain territory is precisely the moment of overcoming this metaphysical reality into the physical reality. “National consciousness, therefore, relates to the state of awareness of one’s environment and the necessary feeling of collective identity, unity, and bonding among the people within a particular country”²⁷.

2.1.2. National Identity

National identity is a concept that has been studied by various scholars of philosophy. One of them is Margaret Moore, according to whom, philosophers dealing with the study of national identity focus mostly on the questions of the moral

²⁵ Hugh Seton-Watson, **Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism**, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1977), 5.

²⁶ E.J. Hobsbawm, **Nations and Nationalism since 1780**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 7–8.

²⁷ Neil Davidson, **Nation-States; Consciousness and Competition**, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 35.

sphere of what to think about these identities. The moral question about national identity opens up other discussions about the question of what is the normative status of identity in general. Moore recalls that identifying a certain group with national identity and leaving out other groups that is part of that nationality and is forced to become part of it raises major moral questions that are directly related to the moral justification given to the selection of one group as opposed to another²⁸.

To understand national identity, one must first analyze the concept of identity. One of the philosophers who deal with the philosophical examination of this concept is Poole. He divides the relevant philosophical interpretations into two planes. The first philosophical interpretation of the concept of identity according to him

“refers to what is characteristic of and perhaps specific to a particular group or community: in this sense, national identity designates the particularities of tradition, politics, history, geography and culture insofar as these enter into a prevailing conception of a nation”²⁹.

According to this approach, the concept of identity includes in itself everything that is special only for a certain group, or if it can be said more precisely, the concept of identity includes the possession of a quality of a certain group that distinguishes it from another group.

While in the second approach that Poole makes to the concept of identity, it seems that he inserts inside the qualities of this concept a quality that belongs to the concept of national consciousness where he states as follows:

“The term is often used to refer to a mode of individual existence - a way in which individuals conceive themselves and others. In this sense it is individuals who have identities (or sometimes search for them), and national identity is a certain kind of shared self-awareness”³⁰.

Through the second explanation of the concept of identity, it is noticed that Poole opens a great debate about the difference and similarity between the concepts of national identity and national consciousness, because many researchers consider

²⁸ Margaret Moore, “Nationalism and Political Philosophy”, **The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism**, ed. Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar (2006): 94-95.

²⁹ Ross Poole, “On National Identity: A Response to Jonathan Ree”, **Radical Philosophy** 62, (1992): 14–15.

³⁰ **ibid**, 14–15.

the quality of shared self-awareness as part of the concept of national consciousness rather than identity.

As for Gilbert, although a person is not necessarily aware of his national identity, this does not mean that awareness of national identity is something that can be imposed on an individual. Consciousness about national identity cannot be imposed on an individual because of its political character and its non-defining character, as it is a “contestable identity”, which means that it is a changeable and not permanently fixed identity. According to Gilbert, national identity is related in a way to a kind of local identity, because the power of a state lies in a certain geographical territory. This identity makes people identify through the geographical origin of the individual. So in a way, individuals are identified with national and local identities and both are part of a certain territory. Therefore, the connection of the geographical territory with the national identity is a necessary aspect of the existence of this identity³¹.

While national identity is today taken for granted in politics, there are significant studies relating it to political myths. The investigation of the concept of myth has been carried out by various philosophers and among the first philosophers that can be mentioned is Plato, who according to Annas includes myth in his philosophical thought³². According to Tudor, there are two different theories about the concept of myth that are considered legitimate to be studied in depth. According to the first theory, myths should be classified as allegories that carry great philosophical explanations. This type of approach found a wide use in antiquity, but in its totality it is found in the thoughts of the Stoic school, because according to them myths served as a way of breaking down the “cosmological doctrines”. In a way, the allegorical approach to myth classifies myths as absurd to the extent that only the hidden meaning they carry can be taken for granted or true.

The second approach to myth according to Tudor relates to the approach of the German Idealists to myth, which defended the thesis that man does what he thinks he knows, so according to them it would be consciousness that would determine existence. To clarify the point of view of the German idealists, Tudor goes

³¹ Paul Gilbert, **Peoples, Cultures and Nations in Political Philosophy**, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 59-61.

³² Julia Annas, “Plato’s Myths of Judgement”, **Phronesis**, v.7 i. 22 (1981): 119.

on to explain that it is the ideas of the individual that change the way they behave. Since these ideas in their original form are imperfect, then it is clear that their path is towards full perfection.

It would be precisely the thinkers of German Idealism who are seen as the first to sow the seeds of “modern totalitarian myths”, because

“the Idealist vision of human affairs as determined by the action of a supra-individual *weltgeist* helped give the state a personality and a destiny which mere individuals might share but which they could never hope to resist. And this, we are told, is the stuff of which the political myths of our time are made”³³.

In another way, the individuals of a state who share this common vision with the state seem to be injected with an inevitable nationalist quality within their identity, through which and on whose behalf nations are constructed upon.

The construction of nationalist identities is another important role of myths. Therefore, the analysis of the nature and importance of myths is one of the main issues investigated in political philosophy. As was analyzed above, one of the earliest philosophers to deal with the analysis and use of myth is Plato, who “tried the use of a myth or falsehood to help secure legitimacy for his Republic”. However, Plato makes a clear distinction between “logos” which is considered to be the product of truth and “mythos” which do not play such a role, due to the lack of an “epistemological status” between the two³⁴.

There is a great deal of debate among philosophers about national identity and myths. The debate lies in the idea of which of these precedes the other, whether the existence of myths leads to the creation of national identities or it is these identities that impose the development of myths. This debate is brought to attention by Bottici who clearly explains this division when referring to Schmitt and Sorel regarding this debate: “for Schmitt the myth is a “symptom” because it reflects an identity that is given, whereas for Sorel it is the means for creating an identity yet to come”³⁵.

³³ Henry Tudor, **Political Myth**, (London: Pall Mall Press Ltd, 1972), 21.

³⁴ David Archar, “Myths, Lies and Historical Truth: a Defence of Nationalism”, **Political Studies**, XLIII (1995): 476.

³⁵ Chiara Bottici, **A Philosophy of Political Myth**, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 230.

Having provided some relevant theoretical discussions, we can now proceed to the creation of Albanian national consciousness. The creation of a non-existent national consciousness was a major challenge faced by Renaissance intellectuals because of the many factors that existed in the Albanian society of the nineteenth century. It is important to examine the structure of the society where Albanian nationalism developed in the second half of the 19th century. The systems of identification on which the Albanian national identity was formed should also be considered. The network of solidarity in this society is another area to be examined. These are important issues that need to be considered before starting the examination of the ideological building of Albanian nationalism. We should also bear in mind that social and political developments were very fast, showing clearly that it was not a static society. Having inherited from the Ottoman Empire a plurality of multi ethnic, multilingual and multi religious identities, this complex society is engulfed by a new wave of identity-building.

Among the first factors that prevented the creation of national consciousness was the lack of a standard language in the territories of Albania at that time. This was the biggest barrier to the intellectuals of the Renaissance, because they could not send any political message to society unless there was a communication channel. Thus, the first difficulty to deal with was the formation and creation of a common language that would facilitate the communication of Renaissance intellectuals with the social base.

In the base of this challenge stood another big issue, that of the tribal structures of the Albanian society. The lack of a standard language had come as a result of a division of the Albanian society into northern and southern Albanians, who spoke different Albanian dialects. This made it almost impossible for the intellectuals of the Renaissance to speak for the creation of a national consciousness. In this way, a lack of standard language contributed to the lack of social cohesion between the Albanians of the north and the south.

Yet the challenges did not end there, because another challenge, perhaps even bigger than the first two, was the challenge of religious diversity. Although the majority of the population followed the Islamic faith, there was also the Orthodox faith in the south and the Catholic faith in the north. Each of the communities had created a really strong barrier when it came to religious belief, perhaps even stronger

than the north-south tribal identity. This made it even more unimaginable for the creation of an Albanian national consciousness by the Renaissance intelligence.

2.2. The Lack of a Standardized Albanian Language

“A standard language is usually defined as a superposed variety of a language which serves as a national medium of discourse, primarily in education, administration, and science”³⁶. The formation of the unified national literary language (the standard language), as the most elaborate variant of the Albanian language, has been a long process that began in the sixteenth century, but its elaboration entered a new period, in the 19th century, during the National Renaissance. In the Renaissance program, the teaching and delivery of the mother tongue, the efforts to enrich it, and the cleansing of foreign words, occupied a central place.

“The nationalists would put a great emphasis on the literary Albanian language, as it was the most important characteristic of the Albanian nation. First of all, a common language (despite various spoken dialects) would be a common denominator for the Albanians divided by customs, religions, and tribes”³⁷.

During this period, a vast literary, cultural and linguistic activity took place. The main reason for not having a unified language was because “natural barriers had divided the Albanian people into two distinct groups with different dialects and great variations in their social structures”³⁸. The natural boundary dividing these dialects was the Shkumbin River, passing through Elbasan, in the middle of Albania. On the right side of the Shkumbini lies the northern dialect (Geg), on the left side of it, the southern dialect (Tosk).

Another factor that had a great impact on not having a standardized language was the fact that

“the literacy rate at the end of the nineteenth century was the lowest in the Balkans and there was no proper national education system. The few state schools that did

³⁶ Janet Byron, **Selection among Alternates in Language Standardization: The Case of Albanian**, (Paris: Mouton, 1976), 11.

³⁷ Pınar Akçalı, Enis Sulstarova. 2008. “Constructing the Albanian Nation Through Discourse: Continuity and Change in Three Periods in Modern History of Albania”, **Albanian Journal of Politics**, v. 4, i. 2 (2008): 109.

³⁸ Miranda Vickers, **The Albanians: A Modern History**, (London: Tauris, 1999), 5.

exist used Turkish, and the Greek schools in the south, run by the Orthodox clergy, of course, taught in Greek”³⁹.

So practically there was no idea or attempt to create an Albanian national language by religious communities because all of them were content with the power they possessed over various Albanian religious groups. Therefore it was not necessary for any religious community to have in its agenda the creation of a national language.

Even though in order to have a national language one also needs to have an education system that responds to the conditions for having one. “Albanians lacked many of the necessary preconditions generally associated with unity, including an advanced civilization based upon a developed educational structure”⁴⁰. In addition to the internal provincial challenges mentioned above, another obstacle was the Ottoman government that did not accept the development of an Albanian curriculum in educational system, as it would stimulate the feelings of Albanian nationalism.

Although the internal social structure was an obstacle to the creation of a standard language and the Ottoman government was against it, this did not prevent the Renaissance intelligentsia from starting to publish the first Albanian vocabulary in an attempt to create an Albanian standard language. It was “Naum Veqilharxhi” who would publish a primer called “Eveter” in the Albanian language elaborated according to his perspective of language. As the demand for this primer was very high, he decided to publish one even more sophisticated one year later⁴¹.

Another way to accomplish the standardization of the Albanian language was the first translations of the foreign literary works into the Albanian language. Although it was illegal to teach Albanian in schools, “Kostandin Kristoforidhi” translated church books published by the English Biblical Society”. But the most important of his works was “Dictionary of the Albanian Language”, because this would make possible the creation of “Albanian literary language”⁴².

³⁹ Fischer, 2014, 26-27.

⁴⁰ **ibid**, 26.

⁴¹ Kristo Frashëri, **Rilindja Kombëtare Shqiptare**, (Tiranë: Ndërmarrja Shtetërore e Botimeve ‘Naim Frashëri’, 1962), 6.

⁴² **ibid**, 14.

However, these efforts were not sufficient to attain what the National Renaissance ideologues had thought. In order to spread the standard language at the national level, efforts should have been made by all intellectuals throughout the territories even from outside of Albania. That is why

“a great boost to Albanian cultural development occurred in 1879 with the formation in Constantinople of the Society for the Printing of Albanian Writings. Like similar Balkan societies, its aim was the publication of books, journals, and newspapers in the national language. The president was Sami Frasheri [Şemsettin Sami in Turkish]. Books were printed and national pride and self-awareness increased”⁴³.

Of course, these efforts would also encourage other groups of intellectuals to try to open different publishing houses also in other countries.

“Albanian elites of the time had to invest extra efforts for ‘imagining’ the Albanian community. And since imagining a nation passes through the spread of literacy and thinking profoundly in new ways, as Anderson famously put it, the development and spread of printed/written Albanian language and literature would become the cornerstone of Albanian nationalism and a guide for us to track its development”⁴⁴.

2.2.1. The Role of the Albanian Language in Nationalism

The spread of knowledge, education and national culture, which was one of the main issues of the Renaissance, was reckoned by Renaissance thinkers as a major challenge to create a national consciousness that previously did not exist. The Renaissance, and especially the movement for the Albanian school and culture, took on a political character because it was directed against Albanian anti-nationalist ideology, including those religious ideas that relied on the interpretation against Albanian nationality, seeing the individual only as a bearer of religious identity, not a national one.

It was time now for an individual to carry more than one identity: now he would learn to be an Albanian Muslim and he did not need to be a Turk in order to be Muslim. “Language as a distinctive feature of a people has often served as a factor of

⁴³ Barbara Jelavich, **History of the Balkans**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 85.

⁴⁴ Jonilda Rrapaj, Klevis Kolasi, “The Curious Case of Albanian Nationalism: the Crooked Line from a Scattered Array of Clans to a Nation-State”, **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, v. 44 (2013): 198.

national identity”⁴⁵. The individual had also to learn that using Albanian as his mother language would make him an Albanian. The problem was that

“multilingualism was a very common thing, where any language was used in certain situations. Turkish was the language of the administration, the Greek and Italian were the languages of trade, while in some regions Albanian or Slavic language remained for private use. Consequently, one-language identification was not so natural”⁴⁶.

The necessity of knowing so many languages was so high that identifying with only one language was so difficult. This difficulty would come from the economical and administrative conditions where without multilingualism one could not survive. Language has the main role in the formation of the Albanian nation, as the division of Albanians into different religions resulted in their ethnic classification according to the religions they possessed. From this perspective, it can be said that “language itself which has been ethnicized” in order to overcome religious divisions⁴⁷. Renaissance thinkers, as a challenge to create a national consciousness needed to emphasize the importance of being identified as Albanians through the Albanian language.

Also, the requirements for the school and the Albanian literature were not of a purely cultural nature. Albanian Renaissance also had a political character, which became a powerful weapon of effort to create national consciousness. By spreading the education and culture in the Albanian language, the Renaissance aimed to accelerate its national awakening, to help further the political consciousness because Albanians were the only nationality inside the Empire that did not use local language to teach at schools. “The southern Albanian leaders consequently stipulated that Albanian schools should be opened and that the language of the administration should be Albanian”⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Stavro Skendi, “Language as a Factor of National Identity in the Balkans of the Nineteenth Century”, **Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society**, v. 119, i. 2 (1975): 186.

⁴⁶ Clayer, 2012, 23.

⁴⁷ Albert Doja, “The Politics of Religion in the Reconstruction of Identities, The Albanian Situation”, **Critique of Anthropology**, v. 20, i. 4 (2000): 432.

⁴⁸ Stavro Skendi, “Beginnings of Albanian Nationalist and Autonomous Trends: The Albanian League, 1878-1881”, **American Slavic and East European Review**, v. 12, i. 2 (1953): 226.

Although it is still argued among some scholars of nationalism if the language was the main factor that would raise the national consciousness, for example

“Hobsbawm underlines that in the example of Naim Frasher (1846-1900), who wrote that ‘We are not a tribe and a family, we are of a blood and we have the same language’, the pioneers of the founding of the Albanian nation submitted more convincing arguments than language to awaken solidarity. In the above definition, the language comes in the last place”⁴⁹.

2.3. The Religious Diversity of Albanian Society

Albanians entered modern history divided into four different religious denominations: in addition to the former Orthodox and Catholic religions, which were preserved by a part of the population, the Muslim and Bektashi ones were added, to which most Albanians now belonged. The 19th century along with this religious division of the population also inherited the theocratic policy of the Ottoman sultans, which had the millet system and treated the Albanian people with four faiths, divided into four different millets (religious – political groups). This policy was echoed also by the Istanbul Greek Patriarchate, as well as the governing circles of neighboring states and their respective churches.

The spiritual life (religious consciousness) of the Albanian believers was ruled by four religious institutions, four schools and four cultures. These clerical institutions depended on three universal centers, the Caliphate, the Greek Patriarchate and the Roman Papacy, none of which supported the idea of an Albanian nation state.

Throughout this time, various actors and institutions competed for influence over different parts of the Albanian society. Through their religious identity, they also sought to receive support from these parts of the population. The military conflicts between the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary and Venice had some kind of transformation into a competition for the trust of the Albanians. This process happened because religion was the main source of identity for the subjects mentioned above. Most Catholic clergy, for example, had support from Austria. The religious identity of the Albanians was one of the major conflicts of that time.

⁴⁹ Clayer, 2012, 22.

Thus, being in this situation it was seen that Albanians for the first time seemed obliged to consolidate and clearly define their identity. By consolidating their identities, Albanians would define and share their political views both within Albania and internationally. This is certainly a modern phenomenon, where the amalgam of Albanian identities would have to find its way to fuse into an identity that would include within it the part of religious affiliation. In this way, the Albanians were put in a position to reassess what qualities they would share in their religious and political identities, as the two were closely linked.

Although the Albanian people resisted this centuries-old pressure, the division into four different religions, especially their dependence on foreign clerical institutions, and the religious disunity among the Albanians made the unification of the Albanian people difficult and became a barrier to the national Renaissance. In addition, the High Porte, the Greek Patriarchate on which the Albanian Orthodox Churches depended and other foreign powers tried to use religions in Albania as a tool to serve their politics⁵⁰. The negative consequences stemming from this religious separation of Albanians can be seen as one of the factors that determined the somewhat slower pace of the process of political emancipation and the national awakening of Albanians.

Dividing the population into different faiths and the policy of religious division that followed it could not prevent the Albanian national movement. Shared religion, along with national ideas, was a factor that brought these Balkan states spiritually closer and accelerated their national awakening in the liberation war against the Ottoman rulers, who were Muslims. As the population of these countries belonged to the same religious faith, the leadership of their movement benefited from religious antagonism with the Ottoman rulers to use the church as an ideological force in the liberation movement. Whereas in nineteenth-century Albania, the population was divided into different religious beliefs and most of them were Muslims. Thus they had the same religion as the Ottoman rulers, which meant that there could not be the case of religious antagonism.

⁵⁰ Nathalie Clayer, "Religious Pluralism in the Balkans During the Late Ottoman Imperial Era: Towards a Dynamic Model", **Imperial Lineages and Legacies in the Eastern Mediterranean**, (2017): 101-114.

2.4. The Tribalism of Albanians

Albania's diversity was as geographical as it was ethno-sociological. As mentioned in the first chapters in the north of the Shkumbin River lived a linguistic subgroup called the Geg. The Glegs were very different from the Tosks, who lived in the southern part of the Shkumbin River, as their society was tribally organized which they called *fis*. Elsie, a very famous linguist has his own version of translation for the Albanian patrilineal kinship-group concept of "*fis* as tribe", although he admits that the term can also be translated as "clan"⁵¹.

Only some scholars may differentiate the terms for "clan" and "tribe" and usually translate the Albanian concept "*fis*" as both "clan" and "tribe". Robert Elsie describes the *fis* or tribe concept in "the northern Albanian context", as "a patrilineal kin group, for example as a tribe in which all male members regarded themselves as being of common descent". He goes on and defines the *fis* as a "community that is aware of common blood ties and of a common history reaching back to one (mythical, purported or factual, provable) male ancestor". While tribes in the broader sense are seen as "ethnographic regions with a distinct history and identity that are not strictly tribes but are often regarded as such"⁵².

Because the Glegs were living on mountainous terrain, they were forced to have a pastoral life. One particular thing had to do with the fact that whatever religious differences they might have had between them, what united them was the *Kanun of Lek Dukagjini*, which can be considered the legal constitution of all northern Albania. The Kanun governed all daily interactions or even interactions in political, social, economic or even religious life, regardless of the religion to which the clan belonged.

So, the Kanun was above the religious parties, which today can be seen as a secular constitution that protected the rights of all communities or clans of that time. The Kanun system often led Muslim and Catholic families to come together in a single clan. Also, in addition to social cohesion, the Kanun made it possible for tribes of different faiths to allow marriages between them, thus becoming one of the first

⁵¹ Robert Elsie, **The Tribes of Albania: History, Society and Culture**, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 3.

⁵² **ibid**, 3-5.

secular legal codes. The Geg clan was also far from the direct influence of the Ottoman Empire due to the very difficult mountainous terrain and was forced to pay only a small amount of tax to the empire because of the kind of autonomy enjoyed in northern Albania.

Whereas in the south of Albania lived the Tosks, who unlike the northern Glegs, used a feudal farming system, making it much more accessible to the Ottoman Empire and with greater influence on them. In the southern cities, there was a great deal of trade as well, thus developing a class of traders, which was possible because of the close distance with the sea, through which most of the trade transfers took place at that time.

Even though the Tosks and Glegs were living in one country, the ethnic consciousness would not be at the same level in both parts of Albania. This can be seen in the case of revenge where Margaret Hasluck suggests that “national solidarity was known in the disputed border areas where Slavs and Albanians lived next to each other. If an Albanian was killed by a Slav, then in revenge, another Albanian would kill another Slav, which would bring the Albanian and Slav families against each other”⁵³.

Thus, the northern Albanians would give more importance to the ethnic consciousness because they were facing the threat from the Slavs every day and the southern Albanians to them were closer than the Slavs. This kind of behavior would derive also from the Kanun laws that the Geg population was following and that is why the southerners would not have the same feelings for the Glegs of Albania. This situation shows again how different social structures were in these two groups.

But there was also another way to see the structure of Albanian society of that time: could be seen and Nathalie Clayer suggests that

“The population could be divided into three “groups”: the city-dwellers (craftsmen, merchants, civil servants, landowners, etc.); the villagers (peasants or shepherds); and the “Malisors”, *i.e.* the mountaineers, who lived on the western fringe of the region (being generally shepherds and brigands because of the lack of resources)”⁵⁴.

⁵³ Clayer, 2012, 23-24.

⁵⁴ Nathalie Clayer, “The dimension of confessionalisation in the Ottoman Balkans at the time of Nationalisms”, ed. H. Grandits, N. Clayer, R. Pichler. , **Conflicting loyalties in the Balkans, The Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire, and Nation-Building**, (2011): 91.

This sort of subdivision of Albania made it difficult or almost impossible to realize the rise of national consciousness, as each of these subgroups maintained with great fanaticism their affiliation with them. This fanaticism was the biggest obstacle for the intellectuals of the Albanian Renaissance, as individuals were fanatical because of their strong clan beliefs. Thus, the great task of Renaissance intellectuals was urging their compatriots to be part of a larger group than the local ethnic group, which was the Albanian ethnic group. This would be the turning point for Albanians because for the first time they would be offered the idea that they could be part of a larg



3. ALBANIAN INTELLECTUALS' SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGE OF CREATING NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

National Renaissance ideologues understood the importance of knowledge for the culture. They believed in the power of knowledge that would serve them to create national consciousness. Yet for National Renaissance ideologues, culture was not just a deposit of knowledge, but it was primarily the ability for active stances in history. The living spirit of the new culture was the idea of Albanianism, which represented the most important act of emancipation of Albanian culture. The idea of Albanianism was the home of all the new ideological currents of the National Renaissance culture.

The struggle for culture became, first and foremost, a struggle for national culture, for a system of knowledge, values, and actions that would attempt to instill the unity of the material and spiritual life of the Albanian nation. Without the national culture of the Renaissance, Albanians in the 19th century would not have been able to distinguish themselves as a nation different from all the others.

The idea of Albanianism became the cultural axis around which Albanians could unite, regardless of their religious or social affiliation. However, at the turn of the 19th century, there had been historical changes that had brought the National Renaissance for culture to a new and higher stage. These values increased the driving force of this culture and its contribution to the struggle for national consciousness. The multifaceted combination of educational cultural activity and political activity is one of the most essential features of this phase of the national consciousness movement.

From all the constituent parts of national culture, at this stage, political culture became more prominent and more developed, which became the core that gave its tone and spirit to all its other components. It is not to be thought that the ideas of the Renaissance at this stage were extinguished, but the aspect of culture was

narrowed and its political aspect strengthened. The politicization of culture was also expressed in the close connection of the activity of cultural centers with political activities. Another peculiarity of Albanian nationalism is that it would be elaborated by relying mainly on language rather than religion. It would have more obstacles to overcome than Balkan nationalism: not only religious divisions but also the cultural ones.

3.1. The Development of Nationalist Publications

The lack of a common religion that was analyzed in the chapters above led the Renaissance intellectuals to look for other elements that could unite the Albanians in one nation. One of the ways they saw as the most efficient method was to standardize the language that would break down the barriers that were raised over the geographical area. Other methods that might have played the role of a proto-national conception were a common origin, religion and above all political consciousness of belonging to a stable political unit. In the Albanian case, various religious affiliations could not form the basis of a proto-nationalism. On the other hand, ethnic consciousness seems to have also been very weak, as tribal divisions were much emphasized. So the only method left for the conception of national consciousness was to create a standard language that would be understandable to all Albanians from south to north.

Therefore the individual and collective strategies that defined the positioning of the intellectuals towards the Albanian nation in formation should be highlighted, adapting to changes in the political and social context. For this reason, the development of nationalist publications and especially the press had to be carefully analyzed, which in the Albanian case can be considered as the first indicator of the nationalist impulses. It is important to keep in mind the dynamics of this process over time and space, to highlight the social profiles of the actors involved in these activities and the possible links that may exist between them. It has also been necessary to analyze the content of publications, books and newspapers in order to present the diversity of Albanian constructs.

The emergence of nationalism is a phenomenon largely associated with the proliferation of written language and printing. The intellectuals first tried to build a

written native language and produce books and periodicals. The importance of the press at that time was enormous and as Anne Marie-Thiesse suggests

“[The press] plays a major role in spreading the sense of identity, laying the foundations of a new form and framework of the debate. The press [...] creates and structures public opinion, defines topics and the targets of the discussions, orally recaptured from the environments frequented by his readers, thus finding themselves embedded in a space that transcends their personal and professional experiences”⁵⁵.

The role of the press had to come from different national movements that were created in different countries around the world, where intellectuals had the physical capabilities to print different books and newspapers. These literary movements had major supports from different countries but

“a major aid to the literary movement occurred in 1879 with the founding of the Society for the Printing of Albanian Writings in Constantinople. The goal of the organization was to establish a standard language that would lead to the publication of books, journals, and newspapers to be used and understood by all. The translation of important foreign works was also an objective”⁵⁶.

The aim of all the literary movements was firstly and primarily to create a standard language. By creating this standard language they could be able to spread the national consciousness even to Albanians that could be from different geographical parts, because

“all enlightened nations have been ... civilized by writings in their own language. Every nation that does not write in its own language and has no works in it is in darkness and is barbarian. And the Albanians, not writing their own language and having no works in their own language, are in the same state”⁵⁷.

But this was easier said than done, because there were a lot of obstacles posed to the intellectuals of the Renaissance regarding the standardization of the Albanian language at that time. Given that there were two large dialects in the territory where Albanians lived, a choice had to be made as to which dialect would be used for the formation of the Albanian language. A bigger challenge would be the creation of a

⁴⁰ Clayer, 2012, 138.

⁵⁶ Charles and Barbara Jelavich, **The Establishment of the Balkan National States 1804 - 1920, A History of East Central Europe**, (London: University of Washington Press, 1977), 225.

⁵⁷ Stavro Skendi, **The Albanian National Awakening**, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 120.

common alphabet that had not yet been determined: would it be based on the Latin or Arabic alphabet? Another obstacle was also the education system, as there was a significant lack of educational institutions. Some religious education institutions that existed were supported by other states that aimed to extend their political power over the Albanians. Thus, the existential need for the creation of an Albanian secular educational institution arose, where the teaching process had to be instructed in the Albanian language.

3.1.1. The Philosophy of Faik bey Konitza in His Political Review

In the midst of many newspapers and magazines, “Faik Bey Konitza”, a writer and publicist “founded the periodical *Albania*, which soon became the most important organ of the Albanian press at the turn of the century”⁵⁸. He has been considered as one of the most influential intellectuals in the creation of a standardized Albanian language and he attempted to reach this goal through his “review”. “Faik Bey Konitza” studied at “Jesuit Saverian College in Shkoder” and then he furthered his education at “Imperial Galata School in Istanbul”. He went to study in France at the “University of Dijon”. Lastly, he graduated from “Harvard University in the United States. He had knowledge of many languages like “Albanian, Italian, French, German, English and Turkish”⁵⁹.

As an intellectual who had experienced the education of the best western universities he would try to do his best at creating the Albanian national consciousness but

“Faik Konitza, unfortunately, produced little in the way of literature per se, but as a stylist, critic, publicist, and political figure, he had a tremendous impact on Albanian writing and culture at the turn of the century. His periodical *Albania*, published in French and Albanian, not only helped make Albanian culture and the Albanian cause is known in Europe but also set the stage for literary prose in the Tosk dialect. It is widely considered to be the most significant Albanian periodical before World War II”⁶⁰.

One of the main aims of the magazine “Albania” was to create a national consciousness, which would form the construction of an Albanian political identity.

⁵⁸ Elsie, 2010, 239.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 239.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, 240.

Of particular importance were two areas in his journal, namely literature and language. In the first issue of his magazine *Albania* in 1896, Faik Konitza wrote that the enemies of Albania were the Albanians themselves:

“We have written with our blood many pages of European history, but apparently we do not want to shed any light on our freedom... The reason for this embarrassing clumsiness is that we have not yet developed the spirit of independence. So we agree to remain slaves”⁶¹.

In his opinion it was the Albanians who willingly agreed to remain slaves of other countries; for if they realized that they could be free then they would not accept this. So Konitza attributed this awakening of Albanians to national consciousness as a task for his magazine. That is why he regarded his review as a media space through which all Albanians could speak as “civilized people who fight with their words for their ideals”⁶². According to him, these ideals were to be linked to “the love of truth and Albania”⁶³.

He described the situation where Albanians lived as the life of the body and issued a message for Albanians to enter into intellectual life. In his opinion only the biological existence was what the Albanians were living. He was also trying to promote learning as a method for the future of Albanians. After some time, in another article in the *Albanian* magazine, he emphasized the need for the unification of Albanians as one of the conditions for being perceived as a nation by others⁶⁴. Konitza gave fundamental importance to the process of learning, which must be put into function in order for a community to flourish and develop.

Thus, the challenges that were posed to the review *Albania* were related to building a common alphabet that would be used by all Albanians from the north to the south and creating a standard literary language that would be easily understandable and usable for both the Geg and Tosk communities that had different dialects.

“The visionary Albanians in this field are aware of the dangers that come from the coexistence of these two dialects, as well as of the difficulties associated with fusing

⁶¹ Faik Konitza, “Introduction”, *Albania*, i.1 (1897): 1.

⁶² Faik Konitza, “What is freedom”, *Albania*, i.2 (1897): 32.

⁶³ *ibid*, 32.

⁶⁴ Faik Konitza, “Introduction”, *Albania*, i.8 (1897): 121.

them together. The problem is to create beyond the parallel existence of two dialects, a literary language that is the same for all of Albania”⁶⁵.

The fusion of these two dialects into a single national language was what Konitza would strive to achieve through the review of *Albania*. It seemed that Konitza was trying to avoid the problem of diglossia which

“is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language there is a very divergent, highly codified superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation”⁶⁶.

Avoiding diglossia, Konitza was trying to create a single Albanian national language. Another article related to the issue of the dialects that were published in the *Albania* review was titled “For the foundation of a Literary Language”⁶⁷. This article published several years after the creation of this journal attempted to take the responsibility of creating the bridge between Gëgs and Tosks. In his own words, Konitza states that the magazine *Albania* had paved the way for the establishment of a language without which “our people can never be considered as a true nation”⁶⁸.

Regional dialects and allegories were treated as constituent elements of Albanian national identity. When Konitza spoke of Albanian literary language as one of the fundamental qualities of national identity, he saw the latter as an all-encompassing thing. The creation of a literary language and the birth of a national identity were raised together at the same time. In Konitza's texts, they were raised on the intertwining of two regional identities reflected in their respective dialects, Tosk and Geg. National identity as a new way of self-identification was on its way to getting created, and it had to be created by the intellectuals. Thus, Faik Konitza was envisioning the cultural nationalizing processes of a nation-state. An Albanian state had not yet been established and he was among the first to begin the process on which the Albanian language policies would be based.

⁶⁵ Faik Konitza, “Introduction”, *Albania*, i.10 No.1 (1898): 73.

⁶⁶ Charles A. Ferguson, “Diglossia”, *Word* 15:2, (1959): 336.

⁶⁷ Faik Konitza, “Introduction”, *Albania*, i.6 (1905): 123-125.

⁶⁸ *ibid*, 123.

Even though the creation of a standard language was necessary for the achievement of a union of the two different dialects that existed at the time, Konitza came to realize that such a thing required a long period of time. During this long period, it would be necessary for the two dialects to converge together without being damaged. Of course, the best thing would be for the language to reach its maturity through the process of evolution and to take the final form as the Albanian standard language. And here Konitza had in mind the examples of some European countries, when he thought of the process of building a standard language. There the royal courts or literary activities decided which dialect would take precedence.

But the Albanians lacked all these instances and the possibility of the same thing happening. Albania did not even have a royal court and at the same time was threatened by foreign countries' intentions to divide it⁶⁹. Albania had no time to lose. Albanians did not have a large intellectual middle class either that could deal with the creation of a standard language. Konitza, therefore, saw the immediate need for the intervention of the intellectuals of the Renaissance to create a standard language.

Although Konitza's multi-dialectic solution was indeed a brilliant finding as in this way he satisfied all the dialectic speaking subgroups of the society, he would still have to face other problems related to the obstacles of standardizing the Albanian language. Even though the Albanian language was very old, it still lacked many qualities, since according to Konitza this language was used only in daily speaking creating deficiencies in the expression of ideas. He speaks more specifically about the shortages of the Albanian language when he says that the Albanian language was more like a "folklore and wedding language"⁷⁰.

Konitza does not stop fighting this lack of Albanian vocabulary but goes further with his actions when he calls on the *Albania* review for anyone in the highlands who knows the names of flowers well to write them down and send them to the newspaper. To put it in his words, he says that

"many times we wanted to use some names of flowers or herbs but could not because our language is very poor in this respect. The number of flowers or herbs

⁶⁹ Faik Konitza, "For the foundation of a literary language", **Albania**, i.6 No.4 (1905): 124.

⁷⁰ Faik Konitza, "What we did", **Albania**, i.11 No.2 (1898): 201.

whose name is known is probably not more than fifty. But in our highlands, it is known that the highlander knows how to name them one by one”⁷¹.

Thus, except publications of his review *Albania*, Konitza also calls for some kind of voluntary activism in support of the Albanian language. Konitza also speaks of an urgent need for schools to instruct in Albanian, as most Albanians study elsewhere outside the country due to the lack of education in Albanian. For him “there is no other tool greater and more powerful than schools to civilize a nation. The heart crumbles, seeing that there is no school for Albanians in our country where we are mixed with Slavs while our Slavic enemies are opening schools”⁷².

Another article entitled “Progress of Albanian” mentions how the development of the Albanian language through the review of *Albania* was not taken seriously at first by many other countries that saw it with contempt and skepticism. But as this review developed and became known in the Albanian lands, neighboring countries began to view it as a threat⁷³.

Konitza knew that in fact Albanian language was really old and lacked many concepts, so he decided to fight the problem by encouraging Albanians to make progress in this field. He encouraged Albanians to develop their language, citing examples of other neighboring states that had made great progress in developing national languages. He takes the example of Greece which had made it possible to build a standard language through which one could write books that were understood by all individuals belonging to that state and also had made “possible the communication between people not born in the same place”⁷⁴. So the only way to unite the Albanians was to develop a multi-dialect Albanian standard language.

For Konitza, the creation of such a standard language was not related to his love for the Albanian language in particular or to languages in general, but rather to a political and national purpose. Following this political goal, he made a political choice when he chose the Latin alphabet for the Albanian language, as he sought to place Albania in the European context. This political solution to the alphabet of the standard language alphabet was something that came from the intellectual elite of the

⁷¹ Faik Konitza, “Language”, *Albania*, i.10 No.2 (1899): 77.

⁷² Faik Konitza, “For Albanian Schools”, *Albania*, i.10 No.2 (1899): 103.

⁷³ Faik Konitza, “Introduction”, *Albania*, i.10 No.2 (1899): 137.

⁷⁴ Faik Konitza, “For the Foundation of an Albanian Literary language”, *Albania*, i.1 No.1 (1897): 4.

time and not from the normal development of the language itself. This was due to the fact that the need to unite Albanians in a standard language was crucial to those circumstances.

3.2. The Instrumentalization of Religion to Create National Consciousness

In most Balkan countries religion played an important role in the process of creating a national identity. Especially during the 19th century, Balkan nationalist intellectuals tried to inject religious elements into the nationalisms they created. Nationalism, though a modern ideology, is often fueled by values and symbols that were present before modernity, which was largely borrowed from kinship systems and religions.

Regarding the creation of national movements, in the Albanian case, it was expected that religion would not only play a divisive role but also would pose a serious obstacle to national unity. The division of Albanians into some religions was also seen as an opportunity for foreign countries to penetrate through divisive influence.

For this reason, the intellectuals of the Renaissance, unlike in all other Balkan movements, conceived and developed the Albanian National Movement as a movement in competition with religions and even as an alternative to religions. Therefore the intellectuals of the Renaissance attempted to convince the Albanians through their works that the Albanian nation, composed of Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics, is a homogeneous body and the essence and that religions are later acquired identities and therefore changeable. In this way, they discovered a specific way of achieving the creation of an Albanian consciousness, and this gave the national identity more importance than religious identities.

Studying the relationship of religion with nationalism in the Albanian context is very important, because the link between religious segregation and nationalism expresses its capability to contribute to the understanding of how the dynamic interaction between religion and social movements is related. The way the Renaissance developed after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, in the period from the mid-19th century to the Declaration of Independence in 1912, demonstrated that

language and history were the most important cultural indicators for shared Albanian values.

The instrumentalization of religion for the construction of national identities in a multi-religious Albania by Renaissance intellectuals was inevitable, as religious division posed a threat against the creation of national consciousness. In all religious camps, there were both objections to and acceptance for this instrumentalization. Therefore, after deciding how would be dealt with religion, its instrumentalization was simply a matter of time. Injections of religious elements into national ideology began to appear.

3.2.1. The Philosophy of Bektashism

A factor that has played an important role in preserving the ethnic boundaries of Albanians is related to the coexistence of two different sects of the Islamic religion. The official Islam of the Sunni version was one of them. The mosque was a place where communications were made from the state and all orders and laws were read there. On the other hand, there was Bektashism, which was between Shiite and Sufi-inspired movements. Bektashism, in general, was also a Muslim religious fraternity and a Sufi order, derived from Shi'ism and spread from the 14th to 16th centuries in lands that stretched from the Caspian Sea to Anatolia. Bektashism enjoyed some political importance in the Ottoman Empire because of their strong relationship with the army even though it did not spread widely. Bektashism was very strong in the Janissary corps which contained the elite soldiers of the Ottoman sultan. But when the rebel Janissary corps was eliminated in 1826, the persecuted Bektashis (followers of Bektashi religion) fled to remain in the Albanian land of the time, which became their privileged center.

In these circumstances, it is important to say that the Albanian Bektashis ceased to be seen by the government as ordinary followers of the Islamic religion and began to be seen as an independent sect. The reason why Bektashism spread so much to Albania is very simple. If the Janissary troops and the Bektashi Order were officially excluded, their removal could only be effective in the provinces where the central administration exercised authority. But Albanians were geographically far away from the territory where the political authority was exercised. The authority of

the central administration was rather weak over the Albanian lands, so the Bektashis could live there easily⁷⁵.

However, without political support, Bektashism was unlikely to become a major factor. One of the political supporters for Bektashi leaders was Ali Pashe Tepelena⁷⁶, who was the ruler of southern Albania. He was a politician and as such needed more power and he would use the religious infrastructure of Bektashism to gain more political power. At the same time, he would use the leaders of Bektashism and the support that they had from ordinary people in order to expand his political power.

Therefore these were some of the reasons why it was easier for Bektashism and its followers to be part of the elite that demanded the creation of Albanian national consciousness. Their political positioning had already begun to gain a great reputation both among normal people and among intellectuals. The issue of creating national consciousness became more or less part of their political philosophy. This attitude has certainly contributed to the traditionally difficult relations with the religious and political authorities in Istanbul and also their characteristic lack of openness to the new ideas⁷⁷.

However, religious affiliation in Albania was part of the process of socialization through the pursuit of a collective identity. So an individual belonged to a particular religion because the community, tribe and family where he lived belonged to that religion. Although the same individual might share prejudices against other religious groups, the core values of the religion were established by a kinship system. To be a religious person was based on what religion, family, tribe and social group this individual belonged to. To be a religious man was not based on religious belief, but on social culture.

The establishment of Bektashism in Albania has been of great importance. The replacement of Albanian popular beliefs with Bektashism was a very easy and rapid process. Most of the Bektashis were settled in rural areas and the religion they

⁷⁵ Albert Doja, "A Political History of Bektashism in Albania", **Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions**, v. 7, i. 1 (2006): 83–107.

⁷⁶ Frederick Hasluck, **Christianity and Islam under the Sultans**, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929), 428–442.

⁷⁷ Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, **Nazione e Religione in Albania (1920-1944)**, (Bologna: Mulino, 1990), 41.

proposed began to be seen as a pure form of faith and also a preserver of Albanian rural traditions. This great belief in Bektashism reached its highest level when it was seen as the only national religion⁷⁸.

3.3.2. Naim Frasheri's Use of Literature to Raise National Consciousness

Naim Frasheri was one of the greatest intellectuals of Albanian nationalism whose main goal was to bring together the Albanians whose national orientation is apparent in most of his literary work. He is considered as the most prominent and brightest figure of the National Renaissance. He was a great poet and thinker. He put himself at the service of the nation with all his intellectual being and creative power which played a major historical and cultural role. His creativity that stood out during the Renaissance and has remained fresh and productive to this day was an inexhaustible stimulus and source for raising national consciousness.

His work was primarily dedicated to his homeland and his people, but it sometimes transcended national frameworks and belonged to mankind as a whole. Naim's religious obedience was also at the service of man and humanity. He acquired contemporary knowledge under the influence of writers and philosophers of rationalism and Enlightenment on the one hand, and those of the East with the Islamic faith of the Bektashi sect on the other hand.

The variety of Naim's work was influenced by the family environment, Bektashi faith, ancient Greek, Roman literatures, ideas of Enlightenment and European Romanticism. In the light of this, it is easy to see why Naim found himself at a crossroads between civilizations and cultures and between the West and the East. The Enlightenment thought became dominant in Albanian thinkers' worldview. These influences coming from the West also penetrated to the works of Naim Frasheri⁷⁹.

Qosja suggests that Naim Frasheri is undoubtedly the greatest creator until today in Albanian literature⁸⁰. The great considerations that he gets even today are because he gave wide importance to the publication of books that the Albanian school needed. As an intellectual of the Renaissance, he not only paid attention to

⁷⁸ Doja, 2006, 83, 107.

⁷⁹ Elsie, 2012, 151.

⁸⁰ Rexhep Qosja, **Panteoni i Rralluar**, (Tiranë: Naim Frashëri, 1988), 88.

equip the younger generation with scientific knowledge, but also had advanced pedagogical concepts. He was for the equality of boys and girls in learning, incorporating science into school curricula, perfect moral education and unifying learning with education.

Naim's poetic work laid the foundations of national literature and played a pivotal role in encouraging the patriotic awareness of his compatriots. He became the founder of new literature with patriotic and human content, with artistic force and remarkable style values. With his poems, Naim sang to the love of the homeland, to the national pride and to the glorious past of the Albanians. But he also revealed the secrets of the human soul by meditating on life and death, beauty and love, being and non-being, God and the universe, in the spirit of the poetic and philosophical pantheism that characterized his thought. He was considered as a philosopher because he tried to spread his nationalist philosophy through poems⁸¹.

Naim affirmed the Albanian homeland and patriotism, creating the poetic image of the motherland that the Albanians lacked. This image invited Albanians to return home. The great metaphor of return, present in all Romantic Renaissance literature, is not the same as the romantic dream of returning to exotic lands, or to the bosom of free and immaculate life from the diseases of modern civilization. It is not just a romantic escape from the chaos and bustle of urban life, but a longing for the lost homeland and a civic appeal to return to the values of the homeland, to revive them and with them to revive the nation. This was the mission of Naim's poetry, which attempted to create national consciousness.

Naim Frashëri was a representative of the Albanian Renaissance which united the civic political ideals of the nation's rebirth and the human ideals of human rebirth. The rebirth of the nation and the freedom of the nation in Naim's thoughts were associated with man's rebirth and with man's freedom, with his mental and spiritual awakening and enrichment and with his moral perfection.

These motifs brought a novelty and artistic wealth previously unknown to Albanian poetry. With them, Naim Frashëri established the genuine lyric style in the Albanian. The work of Naim Frashëri synthesized the most prosperous tendencies of

⁸¹ Alfred Uçi, **Pesëtmëdhënjtë e Letërsisë Shqipe në Optikën e një rileximi** (N. Frashëri, Gj. Fishta, F. Konica, M. Kuteli, Migjeni), (Shkup: Vatra, 2003), 11.

the Albanian national historical and cultural development and made the era of bringing their literature to a new path.

Naim Frasheri had a great importance for the development of the Albanian literature contributed to the creation of the national consciousness but his significance as a nationalist intellectual

“rests not so much on his talents of literary expression or the artistic quality of his verse but rather on the sociopolitical, philosophical, and religious messages it transmitted, which were aimed above all at national awareness and, in the Bektashi tradition, at overcoming religious barriers within the country. His influence on Albanian writers at the beginning of the 20th century was enormous”⁸².

Before him, an old tradition of written Albanian had been used, in the depth of which the love of the Albanian language was expressed. There was also a tendency of indigenous cultural development of a nation that distinguished itself from others no matter how much was the pressure of foreign languages and cultures on it. The significance of this tradition was limited by the fact that the language of the Albanians was reduced within the largely didactic, utilitarian function of the 16-18th century literature, as well as the fact that it had failed to gain internal continuity.

Naim’s work transcended these limitations and so it marked an epochal change in Albanian culture by creating a new type of literature that expressed the spirit of the nation with a poetic language⁸³. By using the language of poetry as a popular language, Naim Frasheri emancipated the poetic expression from conventionalism and freed the words from the inertia of a tradition hardened by the established language of dogmatic books, or by the pressure of foreign poetic models. In this way, he created the path to modern poems⁸⁴. In Naim’s work, Albanian literature essentially developed without being dependent on the influence of other works of literature and cultures. It began to flourish independently as the literature of the Albanian nation. Naim thus brought literature closer to the processes of spiritual and national development of Albanians and made it a true expression of their moral and aesthetic consciousness.

⁸² Elsie, 2012, 152.

⁸³ Sabri Hamiti, **Veptra Letrare 8, Letërsia Moderne**, (Prishtine: Faik Konica, 2002), 328.

⁸⁴ Dritero Agolli, **Jeta në Letërsi: Artikuj dhe Shenime**, (Tirane: Naim Frasheri, 1987), 201.

3.2.3 Naim Frasheri Employing the Philosophy of Bektashism

The threat of religious divisions by the believers was reinforced by the fact that many members of the Albanian and non-Albanian clergy tried to define the ethnicity of the believers in non-Albanian terms, thus blocking the creation of an Albanian national consciousness. But it would be Naim Frasheri, one of the intellectuals of the Albanian Renaissance, who was directly involved in injecting Bektashi belief into the question of building a national identity. More specifically, Frasheri attempted to promote the history of Karbala among Albanians as a kind of inspiration against the Ottoman rule. To be more specific, he wrote a book for the story of the Karbala entitled “‘Qerbelaja’ (Kerbela; Bucharest, 1898), a Shi’ite religious epic in 25 cantos”⁸⁵. Naim attempts to play with the emotions of the Albanians by focusing heavily on the suffering factor around an unjustly dead man and a lost battle. So he tries to shift to the Albanians the pity of Shiism that was felt for the death of Husain (Prophet Mohammed’s grandson). In this way, he strives to instrumentalize the suffering and the feeling of persecution of Bektashis in order to unite the Albanians with different religions or social structures.

These two exterior elements for the Albanian culture and religion found their place very quickly in Albanian nationalist consciousness. In this work, Naim Frasheri exalts the image of the imam, whom he regards as a symbolic figure against the invaders and injustice of the tyrants. Since his work was literary and artistic this comparison could be seen as symbolic of Eastern philosophy, but in fact behind it was a completely political agenda. Yet this is not the only approach to this work, as it is also seen as an intellectual work, which calls for moral perfection⁸⁶.

Thus, if the events are analyzed objectively and critically we see that Naim tries to present the battle of Karbala as the battle of Albanians against the Ottoman rule and that in every way it is Albanians who will eventually be the winners, because it is Albanians who have the moral right to be on the side of the winners as they are claiming their rights for independence. In support of the thesis that the hidden agenda is purely political lies the fact that at the end of this work he does not deal with the history of Karbala any more, but all of a sudden speaks for the

⁸⁵ Elsie, 2012, 152.

⁸⁶ Zija Xholi, *Naim Frashëri midis së Kaluarës dhe së Sotmes: Studime Naimiane*, (Tirane: Luarasi, 1998).

obstacles to the creation of national consciousness such as the spread of the Albanian language, the need for unification of Albanians regardless of the religious divisions they have and for the education of Albanians. The very fact that the conclusion of this work places emphasis on the problems of Albanian national unity creates at least some doubts about the purpose of writing this work.

In this work, it is unavoidable to see different sides of the characters representing two opposing ethical poles. These characters express at the same time two opposing ethical categories, such as virtue and vice. Through these contrasting ethical categories Naim strives to create a black-and-white reality where there is only the extreme good that represents virtue and the extreme evil that represents vice. He is extraordinarily careful not to have an option for any middle alternative so that his nationalist message can be conveyed as clearly as possible. Therefore, in the act of 'Karbala', he presents as representatives of the extreme good or virtue Imam Ali and his followers, while he puts their opponents in the group of extreme evil and vices that are representative of evil.

Thus, in most of Naim Frasheri's poetic lines, life is observed a clear dualistic approach of the forces in history, nature and human activity. His works are mostly based on the struggle between good and evil, God and the devil, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice. He does not spare the inclusion of this dualistic view even at the level of nationalism. In his work 'Karbala' one clearly sees this dualistic approach, having an ontological and cosmological coherence to the world from its genesis without offering a rational explanation for it:

"The good and the evil,
God and the devil,
The heaven and hell,
and all other things that exist
are not other but human.
....
you can choose either the Imam Hussein
or Yazid and Muawiya;
one grant you salvation,

and the other perdition”⁸⁷.

This dualistic approach to the conception of the world is based on the good and evil and as well as conquered and conqueror constitutes much of Naim’s philosophical thought expressed through poetic verses. But this approach produces a very dangerous way of thinking as it creates the mentality of being with us or against us, where the one who is against us would be the conqueror, the evil, the one with vices, while for us, we would be the morally good individuals, the conquered ones. The demonization of the other is a consequence of this dualistic approach, which can easily justify the exercise of violence as a means by which nationalist goals are achieved⁸⁸.

Thus, anyone from the Albanian community who could oppose Bektashism or Albanian nationalism in any way would be demonized as the ‘other’ and could be expelled from the community perhaps even violently, as he could be seen as a traitor who could cooperate with the conqueror. It seems that high psychological pressure that threatened the Albanians of the Bektashi faith with the consequence of being persecuted or excluded from the group made most of the Albanians loyal to Naim’s Albanian national ideology and Bektashism at the same time. Also, the demonization of the other, that is, the conqueror, in this case, made it easier to maintain cohesion within the social group where individuals with common national traits such as language would find it easier to oppose the conqueror.

More specifically, in this case, the demonization was carried out against the Ottoman rulers and the Slavic or Greek neighbors, who figuratively were represented as with reference to the history of Karbala, and on the opposite side stood the Albanians who had the moral right in this war. Thus, Naim Frasheri writes metaphorically as follows:

“You too work, to save Albania. Albanians are happy for you,
and becomes happy with you, and you also for Albanians, for its good
works for your homeland, that is not alien to you,
for the language of Albania, which is the language of God,

⁸⁷ Albert Doja, “The Politics of Religious Dualism: Naim Frasheri and His Elective Affinity to Religion in the Course of 19th-century Albanian Activism”, **Social Compass**, v. 60, i. 1 (2012): 127.

⁸⁸ **ibid**, 127-130.

to bring Albanians in the right and best way, [...] for Hasan and Hussein,

for you and for homeland to strive night and day, until we come to light”⁸⁹.

In this way, Naim Frasheri sought to spread the nationalist spirit among Bektashis and Albanians in general by instrumentalizing the martyrs of Karbala like Hasan and Hussein. He also attempted to inject in Albanians the love for their homeland by sacralizing the Albanian language. All these attempts had only one purpose and that was the construction of an Albanian identity through the instrumentalization of Bektashism.

But Naim Frasheri went even further for the sake of the Albanian nationalism; he even tried to transform the ideology of the religion itself. In order to bring near to his nationalist plans all the general people and also the Bektashi leaders that would not support his nationalism, he attempted to make these kinds of interventions on Bektashism. These interventions are clearly evidenced in his work entitled ‘The Bektashi Notebook’ where he writes:

“To strive day and night for the nation that is called Father, it is for them to work together with the primacy and the wisest, for the salvation of Albania and the Albanians, [...] Together with the primacy and the wisest, to create love and brotherhood, the unity and friendship between all Albanians, not to be separated from each other, Christians and Muslims to be one”⁹⁰.

As it is suggested by him in these verses of his poem, he would transform the concept of love of Bektashism in a nationalist sense, in which everyone should love each other as a brother if they are from the same homeland and not on the basis of religion. According to him, now the love between two people would have to take place on nationalist grounds and not on religious ones. So he does not only try to sacralize the language, but also tries to reduce the divine love only into nationalist terms.

Naim Frasheri attempted to construct an Albanian identity and spread his nationalist ideas through the instrumentalization of Bektashism. The religious elements in his works were very easily grasped by the masses, so he used them extensively and even often merely as artistic metaphors that did not necessarily have a divine or religious value. Utilizing both religious and realistic arguments and

⁸⁹ Naim Frasheri, **Qerbelaja**, (Tetove: AZA-Sesoft, 1996): 136’ dan aktaran Clayer, 2012 , 434.

⁹⁰ Naim Frasheri, **Fletore**, 14’ten aktaran Clayer, 2012, 431.

combining Eastern and Western traditions made him one of the most effective intellectuals in fostering the national consciousness. Although religion occupies a special place in his works, he nevertheless invites Albanians in the entirety of his works to make a religious compromise for the sake of nationalism. Naim Frasheri's writings were primarily patriotic, while the religious element served to reinforce nationalist ideas.

3.3. Political and Nationalistic Myths

In the modern world and especially after the Enlightenment, reason and rationalism occupied an important place. However, myths including political ones did not disappear and not enough attention has been paid to political myths. One reason for this is perhaps that myth is seen in direct relation to speculation, which contradicts the very essence of modern philosophy, which is rationalism. But in the modern era, nothing seems to hinder philosophers from analyzing the roles of political myths⁹¹. Therefore, the instrumentalization of myths by intellectuals who attempted to form nationalist identities prompted many scholars to analyze various methods of these instrumentalizations. Ethnic myths were used to construct national identities by these nationalist intellectuals. In order to create a stronger social cohesion in national groups, nationalist intellectuals used ethnic myths, which were nothing but a blend of some historical facts combined with hyperbolic literary narratives.

One form of ethnic myth-building would be to invoke the common ancestry of a community that poets would use to build ethnic nationalism. Through these common ancestors, these poets could go so far as to legitimize their claims for high status, because the individual who made a genealogical connection to the community could be a great hero. This way of constructing myths expresses the idea that the community can legitimize the claims for the privilege on the basis of its biological connection to the hero⁹².

Another factor that is used by the nationalist intellectuals to construct nationalistic myths is the common language. Historical evidence has shown that

⁹¹ Bottici, 2007, 6.

⁹² Anthony D. Smith, **Myths and Memories of the Nation**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 57-58.

language played a major role in undermining the position of religion. The division by religion of the Albanians forced them to acquire Turkish, Greek and Latin identities, thereby shifting to a second-place the linguistic identity which was not recognized by European nations at the time of Renaissance. But for Albanians language had vital importance, as they can be seen as a people who built their identities entirely on the basis of language. This process was so strong that Albanian nationalism based primarily on the Albanian language became an ideology called Albanianism, much like the religion became for other people.

In fact, Albanianism is very much related to a significant concept called civil religion and as it had all the necessary elements to be considered a civil religion. Pashko Vasa's poem "O moj Shqypni" ("Oh Albania, Poor Albania") appeals for a national awakening, which is thought to have been written in the period between 1878 and 1880. He calls on his country: "Awaken, Albania, wake from your slumber, / Let us all, as brothers, swear a common oath/And not look to church or mosque, / The faith of the Albanian is Albanianism!"⁹³. The lack of ethnic unity with nationalist sentiments was one of the biggest problems Albanians faced. According to Vaso Pasha, when Albanians were asked what they were, their answer would be "I am Albanian", regardless of their religion. Thus Vaso Pasha tried to create a national identity⁹⁴.

One should note that there are various notions of civil religion and Albanianism as a civil religion is quite close to Rousseau's understanding of civil religion. Unlike most of the intellectuals of his era, Rousseau believed that traditional religions could contribute to the well-being of a society by helping peace and harmony, provided that they were tolerant to the existence of other religions and were also controlled by a civil religion above them. This is because, the believers of conventional religions were used to obedience and submission and therefore they could easily obey and submit to the state through a civil religion it would establish. A common civil religion above the conventional religions was necessary, because without it, members of various conventional religions might get into conflict and even clash, as they could believe in the supremacy and domination of their own

⁹³ Elsie, 2010, 467.

⁹⁴ Uğur Bahadır Bayraktar, "Mythifying the Albanians: A Historiographical Discussion on Vasa Efendi's "Albania and the Albanians", *Balkanologie*, v. 13, i. 1-2 (2011): 1-6.

religions. Thus, civil religion, as Rousseau advocates it, can be considered in a simplified sense as “the state’s religion”⁹⁵. It aimed at producing a good citizen and a faithful subject. With civil religion, Rousseau envisaged a sort of a religion of Enlightenment based on mutual tolerance and understanding⁹⁶. Similarly, the religion of Albanianism was a civil religion above the conventional religions like Islam and Christianity and thus ensured peace, harmony and mutual tolerance among the Albanians.

Since Albanianism was born as a need to have a sort of religion that would unite all Albanians, at its core there was tolerance of religions. Denying a conventionally religious doctrine made it possible to create a new religion based on tolerance and inclusiveness. Thus, Albanianism did not adopt Christianity, Islam or any other religion as a national religion. By naming it entirely Albanian, this new civil religion ensured the preservation of the nationalist element that functioned like a religion, keeping the faithful together for the sake of unity and social harmony.

Thus this new ‘religion’ of Albanians needed ‘believers’ that would believe in their common origin. This belief in common origin injected and naturalized the other attributes of Albanians, language, and territory, which began to be perceived as unchangeable traits to the detriment of religious traits. Language is of great importance in defining Albanians as an ethnic group, thus creating a resource for the preservation and development of the myth of common origin.

The gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire forced the intellectuals of the Renaissance to look for more common cultural elements of the Albanian community, as Albanians were in constant threat of division by their neighbors. The immense pressure of neighboring countries to portray Albanians as Ottoman or Greek made Renaissance intellectuals to even employ their imaginative abilities to invent some myths that could only be linked to the culture of the ethnic Albanian community alone and would not be anyhow related to the other neighbors⁹⁷.

⁹⁵ Ali Çaksu, “Devletin Emrine Tanrı Olarak İtaat: Thomas Hobbes’ta Sivil Din”, **Kutadgubilig, Felsefe – Bilim Araştırmaları**, (17 March 2010): 72.

⁹⁶ Ronald Beiner, “Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion”, **The Review of Politics**, Cambridge University Press, v. 55, i. 4 (1993): 617.

⁹⁷ Albert Doja, “Perdorimi Politik i Fese ne Rindertimin e Ideniteteve: Rasti Shqiptar”, **Instituti Shqiptar per Studime Nderkombetare**, (2001): 28-29.

Thus, the intellectuals of the Renaissance were in search of a common origin and managed to use the continuity theory of the Albanian people since ancient times. In this nationalist theory, Albanians of that time were a continuation of the ancient Illyrians. Of course, the theory was not invented by mere imagination, as it would not be convincing, but “it was based on paleo-linguistic assumptions [...] that the Albanian language descended from the Illyrian language, leading to the belief that the Albanians must have been the direct successors of Illyrians”⁹⁸.

This theory not only claims a common origin of Albanians, but also continues explaining that the Illyrians were never conquered by any imperial power and that Albanians were the direct descendants of the Illyrians who had managed to preserve their ethnic identity. According to this theory, the Illyrian ancestors were Pelasgians, a native Balkan population⁹⁹. The theory proves once again that Renaissance intellectuals were forced to use any method to prove that Albanians were an ethnic identity separate from their neighbors and that they had a historical and biological continuity.

The creation of this theory by Renaissance intellectuals required a historical interpretation of the linguistic evidences they had found in order to create a narrative that was more credible to the individuals of the society. Since “collective memory [...] includes many elements or events which individuals did not directly experience”¹⁰⁰ this interpretation had to be implemented in the collective memory in order to be as successful as possible and spread as widely as possible among the Albanians as an integral part of their community.

“What makes these myths, values, symbols, and memories so attractive and potent is their invocation of presumed kinship and residence ties to underpin the authenticity of the unique cultural values of the community. In this sense, the ethnic community resembles an extended family, or rather a ‘family of families’”¹⁰¹.

Having used the continuity of the Albanian people from antiquity until that time as one of the methods of developing national consciousness, it was now time for

⁹⁸ Danijel Dzino, “Constructing Illyrians: Prehistoric Inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula in Early Modern and Modern Perceptions”, **Balkanistica** 27, (2014): 15.

⁹⁹ **ibid**, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Stefan Berger, “On the Role of Myths and History in the Construction of National Identity in Modern Europe”, **European History Quarterly**, v. 39, i. 3 (2009): 492.

¹⁰¹ Anthony D. Smith, **Nationalism and Modernism**, (London: Routledge, 1998), 46.

Renaissance intellectuals to search in the history books any historical figure that would connect all the Albanians with it. This historical figure would have to be transformed into a national hero who fought against the ‘injustices’ done to the Albanian people so that everyone could identify with him.

3.3.1. The Myth of Skanderbeg

In front of the Renaissance intellectuals, a very difficult task was laid and it was the finding of a hero who would unite all Albanians. This task was very difficult due to the deep religious divide that the Albanians had, as they had to choose a figure that represented all religions. Another problem facing Renaissance intellectuals in finding such a hero was the north-south division of Albania and the tribal division of Albanians. The only figure that could overcome these obstacles would be

“Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu (Skanderbeg), who is depicted in a romantic manner and idealized as a national hero. The figure of Skanderbeg was crucial for the cultural and national identification of the Arbëresh, the population of Albanian origin, which had lived in southern Italy since the fifteenth century. For them, Skanderbeg was the main hero of a glorious past, the only and unique leader of the Albanians. The Skanderbeg era provided the poetic material for some of the main Arbëresh poets such as Jeronim De Rada or Gavril Dara i Riu, whose poems lie at the foundations of modern Albanian literature. But in Albania itself, he was merely a local hero whose name was involved in legends and tales especially in the region of Kruja”¹⁰².

Skanderbeg’s name was George Castriotta, whose family was from a northeastern region in Albania. His father sent him to Adrianople (today’s Edirne) where he got military education and converted to Islam. He changed the name to Iskender, who after some courageous participation in wars against the Christians was rewarded with the title of ‘bey’ and the name became Skanderbeg. After he gained the trust of the sultan he was appointed the commander of Kruja in Albania and then he abandoned the Ottoman troops and joined the local people who were against the Ottomans.

In this situation, he immediately created alliances by marriages with the biggest Albanian tribes of that time and also asked for help from the Republic of

¹⁰² Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, **Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945)**, (Central European University Press, Budapest, Hungary, 2007), 299–300.

Venice in Italy, which was granted in order for him to prevent the Ottoman Empire to reach them. And he did actually prevent the Ottoman Empire several times and for this protection of the Christendom, he was entitled as *Athleta Christi* by Pope Calixtus II. Several years after his death and with the advancement of the Ottoman Empire to Europe, Scanderbeg became popular in Western Europe as a figure who was able to stop the Ottomans. Decades after his death Marinus Barletius published the “*Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi, Epirotarum Princeps* (History of the Life and Deeds of Scanderbeg: Prince of Epirus; Rome, ca. (1508–1510)”¹⁰³.

This historical figure so famous in the West certainly could not escape the attention of the intellectual elite who were so earnestly seeking a historical figure that could demolish the emotional or religious connection of Albanians with the Ottoman Empire. The reasons why he was the right historical figure were numerous: one was related to the fact that Scanderbeg succeeded in establishing a kind of independent local government in the area where he ruled and it could be presented to the Albanians as the first Albanian state. In this way, it could be played with collective memory to create the idea of an Albanian state that had been overthrown by the Ottoman Empire.

Due to the fact that he was a defender of a particular religion, the intellectual elite was forced to present him more with the quality of the warrior who fought for national identity rather than for religious reasons. “As Fatos Lubonja notes, the fact that Skanderbeg was born an Orthodox, became a Muslim and then a Christian again fighting under the flag of Catholicism (even declared as the Champion of Christianity by Pope Pius II) fit very well with the construction of Albanian national identity as essentially non-religious”¹⁰⁴. The nationalist approach to this figure would find more support in Albania with deep religious divisions.

Another reason for the instrumentalization of this figure relates to the fact that it had gained much fame in the West which could easily be used by the

¹⁰³ Elsie, 2010, 398-399, 401-402.

¹⁰⁴ Fatos Lubonja, “Between the glory of a virtual world and the misery of a real world”, **Albanian Identities: Myth and History**, ed. Stephanie Schwander-Sievers and Fischer J. Bernd, (London, Hurst and Company, 2002): 92’den aktaran Jonilda Rrapaj, Klevis Kolasi, “The Curious Case of Albanian Nationalism: the Crooked Line from a Scattered Array of Clans to a Nation-State”, **The Turkish Year book of International Relations**, v. 44, (2013): 211.

nationalist intellectual elite to show the early and inexorable link that the Albanians had always had with Europe¹⁰⁵.

In this way, they were trying to create a new historical and emotional connection of Albanians with a new alliance that would be Europe.

“Moreover the myth of Skanderbeg served also another important function. In front of the Greek and Serbian threat and in the absence of the Ottoman Empire (as protector of Albanian lands) Albanian intellectuals needed to gain the sympathy and support of the West, and Skanderbeg was already also a hero of the Christian world”¹⁰⁶.

All these attempts by the intellectual elite to link the Albanians to Europe had reasons even beyond nationalist interests in Albania, as they also sought to convince the Europeans that the Albanians were a people with their national identity different from the Ottomans or Greeks with whom they were often confused. Through the figure of Scanderbeg, they tried to show that Albanians were Europeans who had tried to thwart the Ottoman Empire. Thus, to justify the right of Albanians to create their own independent state and to live in that land in freedom, the intellectual elite instrumentalized Albanian historical figures known in the West as in the case of Scanderbeg and also their prehistoric connection with the Illyrians who were regarded as indigenous people.

Seeing the local and international effects of this kind of strategy, the intellectual elite were engaged in the writing of many literary works on the figure of Scanderbeg who “was indicative of the Albanian resistive tradition”¹⁰⁷. At the same time, he represented “many of the ‘virtues’ that commonly marked the ‘heroic origins’ model (martial valour, generosity, temperance, self-sacrifice, endurance, loyalty and, above all, patriotism)”¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁵ Enis Sulstarova, *Arratisje Nga Lindja: Orientalizmi Shqiptar Nga Naimi te Kadareja*, (USA: Globic Press, 2007), 42.

¹⁰⁶ Rrapaj, 2013, 211.

¹⁰⁷ Guy, Nicola C. “Ethnic nationalism, the Great Powers and the Question of Albanian Independence, 1912-1921” (Doctoral Thesis, Department of History, 2008), 44.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, 44.

3.3.3. Building Nationalist Mythology Through the Poem “Istori’ e Skenderbeut” (History of Scanderbeg)

For all the reasons listed above, most of the intellectual elite was concerned only with writing as many literary works as they could in order to present Scanderbeg as the hero of all Albanians, regardless of religion or province. One of the authors who dealt most extensively with the Scanderbeg figure was Naim Frashëri. This nationalist author devoted to Scanderbeg an entire work to be titled “Istori’ e Skenderbeut (History of Scanderbeg; Bucharest, 1898), a historical epic of 11,500 verses, which Frashëri regarded as his masterpiece”¹⁰⁹.

The events that take place in the work are set in the 15th century, with Scanderbeg in power and at the head of the political organization of the time. The political power was divided into different tribes that ruled Albania. The heads of these tribes were always looking for an extension of their power. This brought a rivalry between them later caused discord and conflict up to the point where some of Scanderbeg’s closest associates were forced to abandon him and become in favor of the Ottoman Empire.

Naim Frashëri attempts to write quickly and superficially the parts where some Albanians betrayed their leader because he tries to portray throughout the work a more united and happy Albania together. One does not know precisely the origin of the sources that Naim Frashëri used in the writing of this work, but it can be noted that he attempted to obtain from Marinus Barletus historical facts and the manner of writing the poems he was influenced by Homer¹¹⁰.

Instrumentalizing Scanderbeg’s figure for nationalist purposes, Naim Frashëri mentions him as a great, clever and brave person from the very beginning of his poem. But what may get the attention the most is the fact that in the lines below he mentions Alexander the Great, whom he considers being Albanian. To concretize this he states:

“Show us the great Scanderbeg,

....

¹⁰⁹ Elsie, 2010, 152.

¹¹⁰ Naim Frashëri, **Historigj e Skenderbeut**, (Tirane, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Mihal Duri, 1967), 11.

It was the place of God,
For the first time Albania,
The homeland of the wise,
In which is born goodness.
The Great Alexander, the man,
Who did not have a friend for life,
Who never had anyone,
And never will have",
The brave Pyrrhus and other,
.....
Were all Albanians,
Were sons of the Albania,
They were not Greeks or Bulgarians,
But from the place of God"¹¹¹.

Throughout these verses, it can be clearly seen the way in which the myth that Naim Frasheri attempts to spread among the Albanians. One of these ways is the sacralization of the land where the Albanians lived, considering Albania the first place God stayed. Although today it may seem that these lines are far away from the reality, it should be kept in mind that the social structure of Albanians at that time had at its base a layer of religious people who at the same time were uneducated. So the impact of building these myths may have been so great that these myths may have been considered a reality by a huge part of the society. However, recognizing Naim Frasheri's Bektashi background, the sacralization of the homeland may also be addressed to Bektashi believers.

In his Albanian nationalist lines, he includes other heroes, Alexander the Great and Pyrrhus, who appear to be born in these Albanian lands and at the same time are revealed as Albanians. He directly denies the fact that they could be Greek or Bulgarian. In this way, Naim Frasheri glorifies the homeland that has 'produced' great people and the reason for this is that the homeland of the Albanians is where "God first stood". Using the historical figure of these two characters, Naim tries to

¹¹¹ *ibid*, 15-16.

highlight more the sacralization of the homeland than the fact that they might have been Albanians. He implies that this sacred homeland can produce again such people, while in this way he seems to be inviting Albanians to unite for the creation of an Albanian nation where all Albanians have the potential to be descendants of these historical characters.

Naim Frasheri goes on and tells the story of how Scanderbeg and his brothers were taken by the sultan of the Ottoman Empire (Mehmed) from their parents, who belonged to the most important family at that time. Another moment of the sacralization of Scanderbeg's figure is given at a time when he was young:

“He had a great heart and feelings,
Also wisdom, knowledge, and posture,
A big body and behavior,
And powers like a God.
On the right side of his arm, when he was born,
There was a mark like a sword,
And persuaded the whole world,
Even his best friends,
That he who would become brave,
That would honor the homeland,
...
His mother had dreamed of him,
Like she had borne a dragon,
When she was pregnant with him”¹¹².

In this passage, in addition to the deification of Scanderbeg's powers, which are presented as God-like powers, there is another element that might seem as a historical fact and it relates to the sword mark on the right side of Scanderbeg that the nationalist poet speaks of. Even the dream that Scanderbeg's mother sees is also put into function in constructing a mythological narrative of Scanderbeg's figure.

This mythological narrative is expressed throughout the verses of the whole work by occasionally introduced nationalist elements in order for Albanians to

¹¹² Frasheri, 1967, 39.

identify with the strong Scanderbeg whose powers were beyond human beings and also with his nationalist traits also. Another mythological element is expressed in the last verses of the poem:

“Skanderbeg is alive,
Lives and reigns for life,
This word is not a fairy tale
To the wise man, this is true”¹¹³.

This kind of mythological evocation of the eternity of Scanderbeg’s figure seems to be justified by the element of ‘eternity’ that religions promote. Therefore, in order for the construction of a national identity to come to life, Naim Frashëri implements a combination of mythology with religious elements such as ‘eternity’ so that the myth could become part of the collective memory, as religion had become.

¹¹³ **ibid**, 278.

4. THE PHILOSOPHY OF NATIONALISM IN THE MAIN WORK OF SAMI FRASHERI, THE MOST IMPORTANT INTELLECTUAL OF THE NATIONAL RENAISSANCE

To understand how the concept of national identity was conceived in the case of Albania, one must bear in mind that the most important role was played by the intellectual production of the representatives of the national Renaissance. To understand properly the development of Albanian national identity, the intellectual works of that period which had the greatest impact on the elite intellectual networks and the wider population need to be studied in depth.

Although, for various reasons, it is perhaps impossible to describe the situation of national identity for all members of society, analyzing the texts of the intellectual elite of that time is fundamental to grasp the origins of nationalist discourses and their development. Certainly, intellectual production concerning the formation of an Albanian identity was an agenda driven by intellectual elites, which intertwined intellectual production with political and cultural activism. I have chosen this work to be analyzed for various reasons. There is a lack of analysis of this work specifically in the academic works of scholars of nationalism. Furthermore, this intellectual figure, namely Sami Frasheri also is part of a big paradox related to the fact that he carries a variety of national identities, a phenomenon that is crucial in explaining the creation of Albanian nationalism.

To achieve a clear and complete analysis of the creation of the Albanian identity, the nature and personality of the creator of this nationalism must too be taken into consideration. This intellectual and creator of national sentiment experienced a dualism of identities as he was an individual who had more than just one political identity, both local and transnational, because as an Ottoman citizen he had to be Ottoman and Albanian at the same time. Therefore, the author Sami Frasheri (Şemseddin Sami in Turkish) was of those intellectuals who carried more than national identity. To avoid nationalistic affiliation Sami Frasheri (Şemseddin

Sami in Turkish) will be named here simply as Sami, since it is a middle name used in both languages.

4.1. Sami Frasheri (Şemseddin Sami) (1850-1904)

Sami was one of the main representatives of the Albanian intellectual elite who sought to promote the creation of national consciousness and thus to foster a national identity of Albanians. He was born in Frashër, Permet. He received his first education in his native village. In 1865 he and his five brothers and two sisters settled in Ioannina. Here Sami attended the Greek high school “Zosimea”, where he also learned Latin and Old Greek as well as French and Italian.

Zosimea was a school that helped to create some of the greatest minds in the region in the 19th century. It can be said that due to the scientific and modern knowledge that Sami received at this school he managed to master a different attitude on nationalist issues. He faced both cultures, Western and Eastern, in the early years of his formation. This certainly had its consequences in building him as an intellectual.

He completed his studies in Ioannina and then in 1872 settled in Istanbul where he carried out a broad patriotic activity for the creation of the national identity of the Albanian people and cooperated with the representatives of the Turkish democratic-bourgeois movement. He was one of the main organizers of the “Central Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Albanian Nationality” and was elected chairman for the founding of the “Society of the Writing in Albanian Letters” (1879). In Istanbul, this committee served for the protection of the rights of Albanians and was also involved in the creation of an Albanian alphabet with the final approval of Sami. Although authored of many works in Turkish, it can be seen that some works he wrote in Albanian as well.

A work written in the Albanian language which had an extraordinary impact on the Albanian national movement was the “political manifesto “Shqipëria-Ç’ka qënë, ç’është e ç’do të bëhetë? Mendime për shpëtimt të mëmë dheut nga reziket që e kanë rethuarë” (Albania—What It Was, What It Is and What Will Become of It? Reflections on Saving the Motherland from Perils which Beset It; Bucharest,

1899)”¹¹⁴. Sami also wrote plays and novels in Turkish. The most important work is “Besa” (Pledge), published in 1875. Sami also contributed to the field of journalism by writing numerous articles¹¹⁵.

4.1.1. The Political Manifesto “Albania – What is Was, What It Is and What Will Become of It?”

Most scholars of Albanian nationalism have failed to provide an accurate picture of the important works of Sami. These scholars can be divided into two groups. The first group includes those who write about Sami’s work as influential only in the construction of Turkish nationalism, while the second group includes those who think that Sami is dedicated solely to building Albanian nationalism. All scholars of nationalism from different backgrounds and nationalities have used his works to promote their nationalist ideas about ethnic formation and the development of the nation. As Bilmez better explains it

“Sami was one of the most productive intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century and has been praised both in the Turkish and Albanian historiographies in the twentieth century for his contributions to Turkish or Albanian nation-building respectively”¹¹⁶.

But this chapter will not deal with the study of Sami's contributions to the construction of Turkish nationalism, though it may be mentioned at times. The main purpose of the chapter is to thoroughly analyze the formation of Albanian nationalism, presented in the book “Shqipëria - Ç’ka qënë, ç’është e ç’do të bëhetë?” (Albania—What It Was, What It Is and What Will Become of It?).

The book is divided into three chapters and the first chapter, entitled ‘Albania—What It Was’ deals with the history of the creation of Albania as a nation and attempts to bring back to the memory of Albanians some nationalist myths about their origins. The second chapter describes the current situation of Albanians in the years when the book was written. It deals with issues related to the formation of a particular language, Albanian borders and Albanian friends and enemies. In the last

¹¹⁴ Elsie, 2010, 152-154.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, 153.

¹¹⁶ Bülent Bilmez, “Sami Frasheri or Şemseddin Sami? Mythologization of an Ottoman Intellectual in the Modern Turkish and Socialist Albanian Historiographies Based on ‘Selective Perception’”, *Balkanologie*, v.7, i. 2 (2003): 19.

chapter Sami seeks to foresee a future for Albania as a nation by itself and the ways Albanians can achieve it.

4.1.1.1. Constructing the Myth of Albanians' Common Origin

To create a national identity for the Albanian speaking community, a common history of this community had to be created. As we have seen the way Naim Frasheri created this common origin story, we also see in his brother Sami the same attempt to defend that thesis, but this time we are presented with a more detailed explanation.

That is why chapter one begins by claiming the thesis that Albanians are the oldest nation in Europe, who came from Central Asia and brought with them the knowledge of home-building and the ways of “planting and harvesting”. He then analyzes the genealogy of the word Albania which was then called Arber. Albania was called Arber precisely because the Albanians possessed the knowledge of planting the field and those who knew the planting of the field were called “arberes” (field makers) according to Sami. The combination of these two words in Arber or as the person planting the field was the name by which the early Albanians were identified. The Romans, he adds, turned this word on in Alban while the Greeks addressed Albanians like “Arvanit”, causing the Turks to call Albanians “Arnaut”¹¹⁷.

However, it should be added that Sami's attempts to explain the origin of the word Albanian relied solely on his words, giving no historical evidence or any scientific argument. The lack of such evidence leads one to think that his attempt was purely propagandistic in support of the formation of the Albanian national identity and not in search of the truth about the origin of the word Albanian or the origin of the Albanians.

Sami then analyzes the mythological narrative without providing any scientific basis on the origin of the Albanians from the ancient Pelasgians. He points out that the borders of the Albanian people stretched from Italy to Anatolia, being an integral part of all of Eastern Europe. According to him, the Greek people came after the Pelasgians and mingled with them or banished some Pelasgians from their lands.

¹¹⁷ Sami H. Frasheri, *Shqipëria-Ç'ka qënë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhetë? Mendime për shpëtimt të mëmë dheut nga reziket që e kanë rethuarë*, (Albaniana, Prodhim Dixhital, 2015), 5-6.

Sami claims that Albanians are most similar to Latin and that is why the Albanian language has a lot of similarities with Latin¹¹⁸.

To prove the ancient connection of the Albanians with Europe and the continuation of this connection, Sami begins to analyze the religious belief of the Pelasgians whom he regarded as the forerunner of the Albanians. According to him, their beliefs were polytheistic and they believed in the gods of any natural phenomenon such as believing in the god of the sun, of the stars, of the moon or the lightning. He then says that this belief of the first Albanians was taken over by the Greeks and Europeans who developed it. Sami suggests that “this belief, called mythology, is the belief of our first parents, the Pelasgians”¹¹⁹.

Initially, Sami tries to mix the Greeks with the Pelasgians and then says that the Greeks came later than the Pelasgians. Since he became familiar with the history of Greek philosophy while studying at “Zosimea” school, one can see how Sami attempts to legitimize the common ancestry of Albanians by borrowing the concept of Greek mythology and presenting it as Pelasgian religious belief. Even in this case, he does not rely on any scientific or historical evidence, making the history he offers very unreliable, which leads one to think that this story was constructed only to create a credible story for Albanians to make it possible for them to create their national identity.

Like his brother Naim Frasheri, Sami also defends the thesis of the Albanian common ancestry by suggesting that the Pelasgian descendants were Illyrians who spoke the Albanian language at the time and had no difference with them. The defeat of the Illyrians and Epirotes (considered Albanian by Sam) to the Romans led Albania to settle under their rule. In an attempt to elicit a reaction from the Albanian people, he says that even in those conditions Albanians opposed the occupation of Rome and never became its slaves.¹²⁰

Sami’s work does not lack nationalist myths such as the figure of Scanderbeg, which relates to the same mythological stories that were analyzed in the works of his brother Naim. He explains that Scanderbeg was a brave man, a thinker, a man of

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, 6-7.

¹¹⁹ Frasheri, 2015, 7.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, 10-11

pure spirit and given much honor in Albania. Skanderberg's image is portrayed as a hero who confronted the Turks and a man of high virtues who served much of Europe but which (Europe) betrayed him several times¹²¹.

After presenting the relationship of the Turks with the Albanians as a pragmatic one, the benefit of both sides is to analyze the language of the Albanians, which he considers one of the oldest languages in the world. He presents the Albanian language as an ancient language which is still alive unlike some others which are now called dead language. Treating Pelasgians as an Aryan race and as the oldest nation of this race, Sami explains that the Albanian language was the language they too used.

For the first time in all his work it seems here that he is trying to bring scientific evidence, or more accurately linguistic evidence to prove his claim, but he simply cites that there are many signs that the Pelasgians used the Albanian language. According to him, the signs were related to the names of the gods the Pelasgians believed, borrowed by the Greeks and Romans, which made sense in the Albanian language. Thus, the linguistic evidences that Sami attempted to bring to the Albanians' attention rested solely on the meaning of the names of the Greek or Roman gods in the Albanian language¹²².

Although it may have seemed like one of the moments when he was brought to bear on a scientific proof in support of his theory of borrowing mythology from the Greeks and Romans, his failure to support his theses is clearly shown when he fails to bring up even one example of the names of the mythological gods. Of course, it can be said that he fails to bring a language proof, if this fact goes under the objective optics of the science of linguistics but, in the period in which he lived and wrote this work, the Albanians who heard such theories took them and trust them blindly. They chose to believe these stories more with emotion and passion than with scientific objectivity.

However, Sami provides a reference in support of his theory where he mentions the name of the Austrian philologist Johann Georg von Hahn, who was involved with the study of the Albanian language. In his work Sami says that

¹²¹ Frasheri, 2015, 16-18.

¹²² *ibid*, 22-23.

“Doctor Hahn, the great German philologist, that has written many truths about Albania, has found in the corner of Albania a stone written in Albanian with some letters that look much like finiqian (unrecognizable language) language and seem taken from them, but it is not from them. These letters have not been seen in another place, and it is not known to have been used in Albania”¹²³.

Even though Sami mentions a great scholar of the Albanian language who supports the theory that the Albanian language is a very old language, he still fails to prove that the Greeks borrowed the concept of mythology from the Albanians.

The last part of this first chapter mentions the psychological quality of Albanians, which can be understood from the title of this part itself: “Albanians always for the world, never for themselves”. Here it is clear that Sami indirectly criticizes the Albanians, because, in the beginning, he mentions that Albanians are very smart and very combative in order to praise them, but then he writes that all their bravery and ingenuity have historically been put to the service of others. Here he mentions the nationalist figures of the neighboring nations as Pyrrhus of Epirus. Sami suggests that Albanians did not get anything, but the Greeks used them as their heroes¹²⁴.

He then mentions the Romans, who according to him had been benefitting from many Albanians where the Albanians' fighting skills and intelligence were used for the Romans. In the end, he writes about the benefit the Turks have had from the Albanians, claiming that the greatest wars won by the Turks were achieved because of the Albanians but that the world had always attributed the victories to the Turks and not to the Albanians. He also mentions the Albanian viziers and armies who managed to win many wars on behalf of Turkey.

Wanting to create a union between Christians and Muslims who were highly divided, Sami points out that Muslim Albanians have sacrificed themselves for the Turks, while Christian Albanians for the Greeks, who do not want the Albanian national unity and have prevented it. After mentioning the names of many fighters who participated in the wars between Greece and Turkey, he explains that the whole world thought that the war was fought between these two states, but in fact it was fought between Christian Albanians and Muslim Albanians. According to Sami the

¹²³ Frasheri, 2015, 25.

¹²⁴ *ibid*, 27.

greatest beneficiaries of wars between the Albanians have always been the enemies of the Albanians. A great paradox is observed by Sami

“Not only with the blood but also with pen and mind Albanians have always served to foreigners. By not writing in their language, they have been forced to write in Greek, Latin, Turkish, and Arabic; and their names were used to praise the representatives of these languages while Albanians are presumed wild and ignorant”¹²⁵.

The fact that this statement may be considered as a great paradox relates to the fact that Sami himself was one of the persons he was talking about, as he was one of the Albanian intellectuals who had written most of the works in Turkish.

4.1.1.2. The Use of Compassion to Construct National Consciousness

Sami begins the second chapter of his work by describing the borders of Albania. According to him Albania has undergone a very large contraction of its territorial boundaries since it was extended beyond the present one. He then talks about the geographical terrain of Albania and claims that Albania is one of the most beautiful countries in Europe, in order to increase love for Albania so that Albanians can identify as Albanians by strengthening their patriotic feelings.

In the third part of this chapter, he mentions tribal and religious divisions that existed between Albanians and nevertheless considers them as a normal phenomenon which does not bring any division among Albanians. Sami's attempt to unite Albanians into one national identity is evident when he speaks of Albanians of different religions but common ancestry, thus using the myth of common origin. He also tends to elevate Albanian ethnicity to a level higher than other ethnicities by arguing that Albanians are above other nations in all spheres, for example in education or technical work¹²⁶.

After expressing the fact that historically Albanians have been friends with Turks and participated in wars together, Sami states that the situation has changed now and the Turks are no longer friends with Albanians, but are their enemies, as Albanians are now more humiliated than any other nation. He mentions the pain the Albanians were experiencing, suggesting that it was the Turks who did not teach the

¹²⁵ Frasheri, 2015, 29.

¹²⁶ *ibid*, 39.

Albanians any profession other than fighting, but now want them to pay taxes, while the “poor Albanians”¹²⁷ do not have any means to pay. The use of compassion by him for oneself is seen as one of the most effective methods of establishing a national identity. Sami is one of the representatives of the intellectuals of Renaissance who uses this method in his work.

Another part of his book is dedicated solely to nationality where he talks about the love Albanians have for their nation. Sami goes so far as to call a traitor and evil the one who does not love his nation, stating that the sacrifice to the nation is the highest virtue an Albanian can have. To prove the supremacy of Albanians, he claims that all other nations change nationality with religious belief while for Albanians it is the opposite. For them nationality comes first and then religious belief¹²⁸. Reiterating the need for a unified standard language, he speaks of the necessity of creating a written Albanian language. According to him, this need is very immediate because of the new circumstances in which Albanians found themselves, while their neighbors are the biggest threat to their existence.

The threat he is talking about seems very real, given the geopolitical situation of the time when border shifting was happening very often threatening directly Albanian borders. According to Sami, one of the biggest threats at the time was Ottoman authority who used the Muslim religious faith of some Albanians to regard them as Turks, while they categorized Christian Albanians as Greek. The Greeks viewed the Christian Albanians as Greeks and tried to eradicate the element of Albanian nationality by using Greek schools, which were allowed by the Turks, who forbade the opening of Albanian schools for the Albanians. According to Sami this alliance of the Greeks with the Turks and with other countries around Albania was made to divide the Albanian lands among themselves to the detriment of Albanians¹²⁹.

Yet Albanians also had many friends, according to Sami, who wanted the Albanian nation to exist. He expresses that these friends are different European countries. In this way, he was trying to forge a strong bond of Albanians with

¹²⁷ Frasheri, 2015, 45

¹²⁸ *ibid*, 48-50.

¹²⁹ *ibid*, 52-55.

Europe. But the biggest problem, according to Sami, was the economic situation of the Albanians, which was greatly aggravated by the heavy taxes the Turks had imposed and the fact that Albanians were unable to pay. At the same time, he blames the Turkish government for not being there for the Albanians when it came to maintaining order but coming to exist only at the time of tax collection¹³⁰. Uprisings and rebellions occur often in such poverty situations with severe economic conditions, so Sami tries to create a kind of indignation in the Albanian population to bring out the preconditions for building a national identity by using the mismanagement of the Turkish government.

4.1.1.3. Sami's 'Republic'

Sami begins the third chapter with great concern for the future of Albanians as part of Ottoman Europe, who will have to necessarily break up with Turkey as it is. According to him, other nations have taken action and are preparing for the fall of Ottoman Empire by setting up their schools and preparing the ground for self-government, while Albania is far behind in the process. He argues that Albania is in the midst of a huge dilemma for which the answer is very simple.

The dilemma relates to the fact that Ottoman Empire is sinking and will have a certain end. Sami questions the position of Albanians: should they fall with it or create the conditions and opportunities to stay on their feet? His simple answer to this dilemma suggests that Albanians must create their written language and schools, that they must abandon Ottoman Empire and that Albanians must think about their destiny¹³¹.

Somewhere else in the book Sami raises the big question of whether Albanians can manage to maintain their integrity by relying on themselves and anyone's help. After explaining the concepts of being right and having the power to defend the right, he concludes that Albanians have both human resources and the right to be a nation independent of others and capable of standing with its forces. To motivate Albanians in the war with Ottoman Empire, he says that Albanians should relinquish their service as mercenaries of war to Ottoman Empire, viewing it as a shameful act and considering the struggle for their homeland as the highest virtue. As

¹³⁰ Frasheri, 2015, 66.

¹³¹ *ibid*, 68-69.

for the situation of the Albanians, he blames both the Turks and the Albanians for their situation, as he says that the Turks ‘use’ the Albanians for their own ‘interests’ while the ‘naïve’ Albanians allow themselves to be used by the Turks¹³².

To create hostility with the Turks was not only enough to transform Albanians, it was necessary at the same time to express a theory that would have a greater impact on them. This is clearly seen in Sami’s attempt to present the Turks as evil people where he says that

“What are the Turks? A wild nation that came from the deserts of North Asia... With their savagery they occupied the most beautiful and civilized places in the world; ... We are not even Turks coming from the deserts of Asia. We are Europe's oldest nation; we have more rights in European land than any nation”¹³³.

Initially, what is most clearly evidenced in these words is the use of Orientalism. Sami states that those who come from Asia are wild people, implying that those who come from Europe are necessarily cultured and knowledgeable people. At the same time, it is very clear that Sami is trying to sever Albanians from their close relationship with Turkey, saying that Albanians are European people who do not have anything to do with the Turks. He concludes the paragraph by expressing the right of the Albanian nation to exist and to live as an independent state on European soil as a natural and inalienable right of Albanians.

Another Albanian concept that he would need to analyze is the concept of “besa” (the pledge) which was treated as if it was sacred by Albanians. Essentially it was a promise that had to be kept in any situation. “Besa” was not just a given word (the pledge) to Albanians, since keeping it represented a kind of divine obligation. Certainly, Sami could not leave without using this sacralization of the pledge (“Besa”) in the service of the creation of national identity.

After talking about its fame that is spread everywhere in the world, Sami suggests that it will be exactly “besa” that will save Albanians from the situation they are in. He asserts that Albanians should give the “besa” (the pledge) that they will get all Albanian lands back wherever they are and that they will unite together in one nation. In his opinion, any Albanian who would not keep this pledge should not be

¹³² Frasheri, 2015, 72-73.

¹³³ *ibid*, 74-75.

considered Albanian, but should be considered a traitor. Sami invites Albanians not to give big importance to each other's religious differences, but to appreciate each other's common origin and ethnicity¹³⁴.

Sami was one of the first intellectuals to analyze and provide an overview about how the first Albanian state institutions would have to be created for the country. He talks about creating a ministry of justice that would be responsible for building courts¹³⁵. In addition to the construction of the Sami's institution of justice, he also makes an economic calculation of the state's ability to operate with the income that it has. After calculating the economic performance of Albanian administration he predicts the salaries of the administration staff and as a result, suggests that the state's ability to operate with this income is unquestionably possible¹³⁶.

At the end of this work, he also explains the necessity of creating municipalities, which will be treated as separate institutions and not linked to the state. This institution will deal with self-financing and self-management of collected taxes he suggests¹³⁷. Thus ends the greatest work produced by the intellectual elite of the Renaissance essential to create an Albanian national identity. However, it very valuable to this study to analyze the great paradox of some intellectuals like Sami, because they are perceived as bearers of both Ottoman and Albanian nationalities. Analyzing this overlap of national identities will follow in the next section.

4.1.2. Sami's Ambiguous National Identities

The ambiguity of Sami's national identities is noted in the fact that he appears in Turkish historiography as one of the main intellectuals who enabled the birth of Turkish nationalism, while at the same time in Albanian historiography he is regarded as one of the most important intellectuals in fostering national sentiment and creating Albanian national identity. So the question is how can one person be responsible for two different nationalisms?

¹³⁴ Frasheri, 2015, 78-79.

¹³⁵ *ibid*, 82.

¹³⁶ *ibid*, 86.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, 88-90.

In the modern context, this phenomenon seems to be a great paradox, as it is assumed that one can maintain only one national identity. The fact that in this study he is named as Sami indicates the need for objectivity in the evaluation of this intellectual, because Albanian scholars of nationalism refer to him as Sami Frasheri, while Turkish scholars refer to him as Şemseddin Sami. For example, Albanian scholar Stavro Skendi seems to regard Sami's figure as an Albanian one when he refers to him in his work by the Albanian name Sami Frasheri. Skendi also defends the thesis that Sami saw the Turkish coexistence with Albanians as impossible and thus demanded autonomy of the Albanians¹³⁸. Certainly, it cannot be said that Skendi is wrong because, as analyzed in the above chapters of Sami's work in Albania it was him the one who sought to motivate Albanians to create a national identity and to form an Albanian state that would function independently of any other state.

Even though he is recognized by Skendi as an Albanian intellectual who helped to construct nationalist sentiments for Albanians, Bilmez suggests that "the fact that Sami was taking an active part in the Albanian nationalist movement until the end of his life has always been neglected or denied by the Turkish historiography"¹³⁹. Albanian sources regarding the history of Sami's political activism try to prove his connection with the rise of Albanian national identity, while Turkish sources try to prove otherwise.

Although Sami's contribution to the creation of an Albanian national consciousness is heavily defended by Albanian scholars, Bilmez explains that "it must be emphasized, on the other hand, that the overwhelming majority of Sami's writings were in Turkish"¹⁴⁰. Even though it is widely known in Albanian historiography, this fact does not in any way hinder Albanian scholars of nationalism from viewing Sami as an Albanian intellectual only.

Another proof that links Sami to the construction of modern Turkish national identity is noted in his Hafta (week) magazine whose 12th issue has not been

¹³⁸ Skendi, 1967, 167.

¹³⁹ Bülent Bilmez, "Şemseddin Sami Frasheri (1850-1904): Contributing to the Construction of Albanian and Turkish Identities", **We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe**, ed. Diana Mishkova (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009): 6-7.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, 7.

translated into Albanian despite all other works being translated¹⁴¹. That is why Bilmez suggests that “in Turkey, however, this article is conventionally referred to as a key text demonstrating Sami’s revolutionary contribution to the construction of Turkish nationalism”¹⁴². At this point, of course, many questions would be raised and one should seek to analyze the great paradox of how it is possible that the explicit part where Sami’s affiliation towards Turkish nationalism is expressed is not translated into Albanian.

As analyzed in the preceding chapters, it was Sami who used the myth of the Albanian’s common origin, which he claimed to be Pelasgians to build the Albanian national identity. But we will also see that it was the same intelligence of the Albanian Renaissance who would consider Turkish as his language, implying that his national identity tends to be more than Turkish nationalism. The article written by Sami entitled “our [Turkish] language” states as follows:

“The name of the people (kavim) who speak this language is really “Turks” (Türk) and the name of the language they speak is the Turkish language (lisan-ı Türki). This name, which is seen as a derogatory term by ignorant people ... is the name of a great community (ümme) which should be proud to be called so”¹⁴³.

Any Albanian scholar who has been dealing with Albanian nationalism and reads this text that is written by Sami would reflect on how he presented the Turks in his work ‘Albania’ and how he regards himself in this magazine as a Turk, adding that every representative of this nationality should feel proud of his or her nationalism. This kind of psychological shock that every Albanian nationalist academic should experience in moments like this makes one think about what nationalism was for Sami and how he thought of it. Was nationalism something important to him as many academics believe, or was it something that simply needed to be instrumentalized to achieve certain goals?

If one needs to answer this question from the above-analyzed Sami’s ‘Albania’, it can be said that he had a kind of love and nostalgia for the old times of

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, 8.

¹⁴² *ibid*, 8

¹⁴³ Şemseddin Sami, “Lisan-ı Türki (Osmani)”, *Hafta*, 3 November 1881, 177–181’den aktaran Bülent Bilmez, “Shemseddin Sami Frasheri (1850-1904): Contributing to the Construction of Albanian and Turkish Identities”, *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, ed. Diana Mishkova (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009): 11.

the Turkish relations with the Albanians when both peoples benefited from each other. However at the moment when he writes his work there is a completely different situation where Turks are seen as the sole beneficiaries of their relationship with Albania, which should motivate Albanians towards establishing their national identity.

But a better answer can be found in Nathalie Clayer, who states that this kind of nationalist ambiguity of Sami is related to the geopolitical reasons of the time. She talks about the threat that Albania had as part of the European lands of the empire, for which it was unknown what its fate would be. Many of these countries were foreseen to be torn apart or become part of neighboring countries. This, according to Clayer, prompted Sami to start and instrumentalize Albanian nationalism, as it was the only way that could counter the risk of the Albanian territories being broken¹⁴⁴. In support of this logical line one should analyze the second part of the title of his work Albania, where it is written “Reflections on Saving the Motherland from Perils which Beset It”. Even Sami himself, through this title, implies that the essence of this book is about protecting the Albanian lands that under the threats of its neighbors. So, it can be easily noted that it is a geopolitical necessity for existence that drives Sami to participate in the formation of two different nation-states such as Albania and Turkey.

On the other hand, for Bilmez, the problem lies more in how one puts the issue, because if one sees this dichotomy of nationalities with the modern lens of nationalism, certainly the problems that will be posted in this case will be great and unsolvable. These problems would arise from the fact that in modernism, according to him, one cannot have more than one national identity. In this way, the paradox of Sami’s contribution to the construction of two nationalisms becomes even more difficult to understand.

But according to Bilmez “the unfamiliarity or strangeness of his views to us today may lie rather in *modernity* that sees multiple-national identity as a paradox or abnormality”¹⁴⁵. So the solution that Bilmez offers is to change the approach to the paradox. The approach that must be taken when considering such a paradox must be

¹⁴⁴ Clayer, 2012, 246.

¹⁴⁵ Bilmez, 2009, 24.

constructed by establishing oneself in that period, when the paradox has happened and not falling into the anachronistic error of judging historical paradoxes with modern lenses. By changing the modern approach to this paradox with the historical approach, it can be thought that in the period when Sami lived one could live with two national identities without creating any paradox in one's mind.



5. CONCLUSION

The revolutions in modern history are generally recognized as changes of existing political order with another political order claiming to be better than the current political order. This is the promise through which revolutions succeed, thus promising a progressive change that will bring politics to the benefit of communities or nations. However, two keywords need to be analyzed in these elaborations which are the words modern and the word progress.

Modernity as a historical period is usually equated with the idea of constant change. This constant change in modernity is considered progress. So these two words are closely related to each other, making it impossible to exclude one or the other. Modernity claims that human societies, because of their incompleteness, seek to be perfected, that is, to progress through human knowledge and reason. This advancement of human societies in modernity is achieved only through human reason which is the means that modernity has produced through enlightenment.

Man, as an agent of modernity, using the means he already possesses which is the reason, begins to advance society and himself through scientific knowledge. Through progressivism in modern reality, it is seen how societies evolve politically from theocratic states to nation-states. The birth of this new form of governance has certainly had to build its institutions that will ensure its legitimacy and functionality at the same time. So, if in the pre-modern theocratic governments' legitimacy was provided by religious institutions, now, according to the reason that legitimacy had to be derived from the abstract notion called the people (birth of democracy).

However, at this moment there is seen a lack of people's intellectual capacity to produce legitimacy. So the reason is once again put in place to create methods that will enable people to get educated so that they can produce legitimacy. In such a situation human reason succeeds in producing educated people through standardized language and national conditions. These conditions relate to industrial production,

technology development, the development of urbanization processes that would enable people to move from village to town and the development of science.

In these social circumstances, as a product of modern structural forces is borne that which is called nationalism. Nationalism was certainly not born of the people or the masses but it would be the reason or the modern intellectual class that would produce it. Given that in modern societies the intellectual class possesses cultural capital, it would be the responsibility of this class to create the national narrative and create the myths that would serve to build their nation. For the myths to be embraced by the people, modern societies developed ways of creating a standard language for all people. After the creation of this standard language and its distribution through “print media” the new borders of the nation will be the extension of this standard language.

At this point, the image of the nation as a single national community or as a single political body begins to expand by replacing the sacred references to religion that it had before. At the end of this long process is seen as the birth of the nation-state and the end of the state governed by religious principles. Now the principles governed by the state are not taken from religious sacred books but from the book of human laws called the constitution, created by human reason. The religion of the people prohibits being the traditional religion proclaimed as divine but the new religion is nationalism which has its prophets which are historical myths produced by the intellectual class. God ceased to exist at the center of the functioning of human society and now the new god was the human reason.

This was the modern political and social landscape of European societies which must be kept in mind when analyzing the creation of the Albanian national identity. Being part of the Ottoman Empire, Albania developed its social and political life through the laws of that empire. Thus the intellectual class of Albanian society, or as it is called the Albanian National Renaissance, was formed to create a sentiment of nationalism among Albanians so that they too could create their nation-state.

Although the nation-state model in modern European societies and their way of functioning may have influenced the creation of the need for an Albanian national identity, this work generally supports the idea that this need for national identity

among Albanians arose mostly as a response to the projects of neighboring states of Albania to dismantle it. As proof that supports this theory, one can find the work 'Albania' of Sami wherein the second part of its title he talks about reflections on the dangerous intentions of the neighboring states of Albania. It would be a grave academic mistake, however, to ignore the influence of European Enlightenment on a large part of Renaissance intellectuals.

Albanian Renaissance intellectuals did not have a defined status so they often have different roles, where they can be seen in the role of teachers, journalists, and politicians at the same time. Despite the use of different methods, their goals were to create an Albanian national identity through the formation of an alphabet and eventually a national standard language, transcending tribal divisions and redressing religious divisions among Albanians, which were the major obstacles to the creation of an Albanian national conscience.

The attempt of Renaissance intellectuals to create a historical narrative for Albanians and their attempt to create national myths should not be seen as forms of primitive worship but should be seen as ways to build a collective memory. This collective memory had the task of building on Albanians the perception that Albanians in the past had been very happy compared to their current miserable situation. Another function of the effort to build collective memory was to create the idea that the salvation of the nation depended solely on the participation of Albanians in modern European civilization and the separation from the Ottoman Empire.

The Albanian national movement followed the principle of peoples' right to self-determination and never had hegemonic goals in the Balkans. Renaissance intellectuals sought to unite the four large administrative divisions of the ethnic Albanian majority territory that had been established by the Ottoman Empire. Neighboring Albanian states seek to legitimize this idea of Renaissance intellectuals as a hegemonic policy since the realization of this idea would eradicate their territorial intentions on Albanian lands.

Since ethnic boundaries were the way geographical boundaries were defined in the period when the Albanian intellectual elite was acting, this would be the path they would follow to realize the creation of national identity. So Albanian intellectuals used the myth of the same ancestry and the mythology of historical

figures that united the Albanians, but what was even more important was that living people had to prove the supposed primordiality of the nation. They had to find a primordial element that was specific only to the Albanians and to no other ethnicity, which of course was the language. According to them, to be considered Albanian in that, you must necessarily have known the Albanian language.

In this way, language is seen to be one of the main motives of Renaissance intellectuals for the creation of national identity. The language was the only element that could achieve the goals set by the Albanian intellectual elite because Albanians were religiously and politically divided. But the use of the common language as a unifying element of the Albanians had its problems as there was a dialect of this language divided into two large groups. This would be one of the greatest challenges of the intellectual elite as tribalism and localism were at a high level among Albanians and was viewed with fanaticism by representatives of these communities. Undermining this localism pride was a problem that took many years to realize. The intellectual elite emphasized the importance of a standard language because only through it could modernization and development of the country be achieved. The lack of a standardized language prompted Western countries to think that Albanians were uncivilized and wild tribes, considering them as unable to decide for their future.

Due to the lack of a common religion that could accomplish the creation of national consciousness, the intellectual elite was forced to think of the nation as more important than religious principles. What played a role in this way of dealing with the nation were the idea of national sovereignty and the idea of secularism that was elaborated in the enlightenment of European modernity. By radicalizing the idea of secularism intellectuals used it as a necessary condition for the existence of the Albanian nation. Although some intellectuals held religious beliefs in spreading the idea of the nation, the principle was generally maintained that the nation had to be upheld without relying exclusively on any of the existing religions. External secularism was another important element that attracted many intellectuals of the Renaissance to deal with as the local Albanian religious authorities' reliance on foreign authorities posed a great risk for the creation of an Albanian national consciousness.

In conclusion, the Albanian National Renaissance can be described as a nationalist or cultural movement that sought to create an Albanian national consciousness through which it tried to project the political independence of Albanians. Also, the concept of the Albanian nation was perceived as an interfaith community of persons who were speakers of the Albanian language. Renaissance intellectuals promoted the development of the Albanian language through the opening of Albanian schools and promoted the independence of Albanians. Their project consisted of creating a nation composed of educated and professional individuals for the specific roles that they would play in building a modern Albanian society.



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