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ARTAN PUTO

**FAIK KONITZA,
THE MODERNIZER OF THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE
AND NATION¹**

Faik bej Konitza was an important figure of the Albanian National Movement. During the communist regime in Albania he was labelled a „reactionary,“ and therefore no studies could be undertaken on him. His main sin was to have served as minister in Washington, for King Zog I (1928–1939). With the end of isolationism and fall of the communist regime in 1990, the road for thousands of Albanians to leave the country and for Konitza to come back home, once and for all, was opened. His remnants were brought to Albania in 1995. His simple tomb in the park of the capital Tirana has thus fulfilled his last wish, to be interred in his „fatherland’s soil.“

I present him here as the subject of a case study for three main reasons. Firstly, he was one of the main figures of the second phase of the Albanian National Movement (1878–1912). This allows for some comparative approaches in relation to the „fathers,“ or the first generation of Albanian nationalist intellectuals, one of the most important among them being Shemseddin Sami Frashëri (1850–1904). Secondly, considering the discursive articulation and political instrumentalization of the concepts of folk, people, nation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it should be noted that Konitza, more than anyone else among Albanian nationalist intellectuals of his time, stressed the importance of an Albanian literary language in forging an Albanian nation. Through his work it can be seen how the local context was important in informing his intellectual argument about the supremacy, in the European context of late 19th century, of „natural“ or national languages over „artifi-

1 For assistance with this paper I would like to thank all the staff of CAS and all the friends and colleagues involved in the *We, the People* project for their valuable criticisms and suggestions.

cial ones.“ It also allows a better view into „intellectual cosmopolitanism,“² or the appropriation and domestication of European ideas of the „people’s character“ and „language as the personification of people’s spirit,“ by local nationalist intellectuals. The Albanian nation of Konitza was an idea that was constructed *vis-à-vis* other competing identities, such as religious and regional ones. Thirdly, his figure has remained in the shadows for a very long time. Therefore my article will include a short critique of Albanian historiography in „discovering“ him and his works.

I will analyze Konitza’s articulation of the Albanian nation through his articles published in his magazine *Albania* (1897–1909) until 1912, the year of Albanian independence. In order to have as complete a picture as possible, I will also consider an essay on artificial languages written in French in 1904. My research will seek to reconstruct Konitza’s concept of the Albanian nation along the following subtopics: a) Albanian nation and Albanian language, dialects and regions; b) Albanian nation and religion; c) Albanian ancient origins. I will concisely compare Konitza’s articulation of an Albanian „nation“ with some points on the nationalist discourse of Shemseddin Sami Frashëri (1850–1904). This comparison will help grasp the evolution of the discourse on the Albanian language as the focal point of the intellectual tradition of the Albanian National Movement in constructing an Albanian nation: from a legitimating hallmark, used mostly to indicate the existence of the Albanian nationality in the first phase of the National Movement, to a functionalist perception that saw the Albanian literary language as a means of bringing inner coherence to the would-be Albanian nation.

WHO WAS FAIK KONITZA?

Faik Konitza was born on March 15, 1876, in Konitza – at that time a small town in a Balkan province of the Ottoman Empire, which became part of Greece after the Balkan Wars. His parents were one of the high-ranking Muslim families holding important positions in the Ottoman administration.³ Konitza received a comprehensive and scrupulous education. He studied in Istanbul, later France and the US, mastering important Eastern and Western languages. His education was completed at Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts), when in 1912 he received his Master of Arts Degree in Literature.⁴

2 I borrow this term from Anne-Marie Thiesse, who uses it when she explains the role played by various "Western" European "collectors" or creators of folklore during the 18th and 19th centuries as part of a patriotic project, and model to be followed later on by "eastern" colleagues, to endow respective people with a "spirit, character" indicating their uniqueness through unity of language and culture in general. Thiesse (1999), p. 66.

3 Jorgaqi, (2001), p. 55.

4 Jorgaqi, (2001), p. 205; *ibid.*, p. 61.

In 1897, when he was only 21 years old, Konitza started a monthly review called *Albania* in Brussels, published partly in Albanian and partly in French. The review lasted until 1909 and has been considered one of the most important factors concerned in the promotion of the Albanian language and culture. After five years in Belgium, in 1902, Konitza moved to London, where he continued the publication of his review. In the autumn of 1909, he arrived in Boston, Massachusetts (US) and took over the editorship of the Albanian weekly *Dielli* [The Sun], the newspaper of the Albanian emigrants there. In 1912, together with Bishop Fan S. Noli and other leaders, he founded the longest-lasting Albanian patriotic organization, the Pan-Albanian Federation of America, *Vatra* [The Hearth], which still exists nowadays. *Vatra*, played an important role in defending the independence and the territorial integrity of the newly created Albanian state.

After the proclamation of Albania's independence on November 28, 1912, Konitza left for Europe to plead the cause of Albania in various capitals of Western Europe, including London, where the Conference of Ambassadors endorsed the independent status of Albania in July 1913. During the First World War, he lived in Vienna and then in Rome. From 1926–1939, he was minister for King Zog I (1928–1939) in Washington, where he died in 1942.

THE NATION OF FAIK KONITZA

A) ALBANIAN NATION AND ALBANIAN LANGUAGE, DIALECTS AND REGIONS

Konitza's central preoccupation was related to the problems of the Albanian alphabet and written language, or the „literary language“ as he called it. In what follows, I shall examine the meaning Konitza lent to the national language as a national asset. A good chance to do so is offered by his „*Essai sur les langues naturelles et les langues artificielles*,“ which appeared in the French review *Pan*, in 1909. It was written in 1904. The essay was a reaction against the spread of the so-called universal languages, such as Esperanto, „Blue Language“ and „Volapuk,“ which Konitza considered as *artificial* languages, in contrast to *natural*, or national languages.

Konitza presents his essay as a treatise on language philosophy, aiming to explain the inner rules governing natural languages. Most of the sources and references – provided in the footnotes – used by Konitza for his treatise dealt with language philosophy or linguistics. From philosophy, Konitza applied the evolutionist school. Here he cited Herbert Spencer, Alfred Russell Wallace, John Locke, etc. From linguistics, he referred mostly to the French linguists Arsen Darmesteter, Remy de Gourmont (whose *La vie des mots* and *La culture*

des idées were among the most quoted) and Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), whose dictionary he held in high esteem.⁵

Here I shall focus primarily on the relationship Konitza drew between natural languages and „race,“ in the sense of both „people“ and „nation.“ He summarily presented his starting point by arguing that: „The artificial is in fashion today. Everything that is the natural outcome of a long chain of historic conjectures is now at risk of being replaced by manufactured products. Everything is manufactured, even the universal languages.“⁶

Konitza contemptuously dismissed artificial languages with the use one of his strongest arguments: prior to natural languages, artificial languages were useless, as the former were the translation of the „national genius“ of a given people into sounds. The way different people write in their languages can tell a great deal about their „racial manners,“ „intellectual leanings, traditions and moral values.“

What was Konitza’s idea of „race“? Referring to the „French race,“ he wrote that from an „anthropological point of view,“ that is, as a physical type, it did not constitute a homogenous whole. The „French race“ might have looked like a „Latin one,“ but in reality was a fusion of different „physical types“ dominated by the „northern blonde type“ and „Neanderthal man.“ The „racial uniformity“ of the native speakers of a specific, in this case the French, derived from language and psychology.⁷ For Konitza, French racial uniformity was evident in the „people’s psychology.“⁸ He argued that any particular nation had its own model of thinking and behavior, which came out through the language it used. Referring to the French language and the difficulties a foreigner might encounter to fully learn it, Konitza wrote:

I think that for a foreigner it is impossible to think in the same way as the French do. There are ways of sensing, of analyzing, of sorting, which French people inherit and that even the ablest foreigner couldn’t but spoil them. Besides that, the foreigner should learn one by one the same words that French people carry with by birth.⁹

He defined the French language as *analytic, clear and graceful*, English as *sharp and dry*, whilst Italian had *wearisome features and loose construction*. According to him, these structural linguistic diversities were influenced by their respective „racial typologies.“ Konitza’s position on this issue should be understood in the terms of the momentum which ethnic nationalism had

5 Starova, (2001), p. 17.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 133. To bear proof of his assertion, namely that human beings are born with certain knowledge of respective mother tongue, Konitza takes the example of the nightingale born in a cage, which sings in the same way as its free cohorts in the wood.

gained in Europe in the second half of the 19th century, through the transformation of the concept of race and Darwinian evolutionism, when „race“ and „language“ were seen as two concepts closely linked to each other.¹⁰

Konitza further maintained that the natural language used by a people was an indicator of the level of their civilization. His thesis was backed by the following observation: the more the people or „the race is civilized, the fewer exclamation marks its natural language possesses.“ He thus thought that exclamation marks were incompatible with the austere and introvert character and the higher scale of civilization of Northern European writers.¹¹ The national language was similarly shaped according to „the professional skills of the people,“ exemplified by the mathematically exact Semitic languages, which suited the national genius of Arabs for calculations and combinations.¹² In Konitza’s view, natural languages subscribed to the laws of evolution: unlike the artificial languages which were condemned to fossilization, they change as nations change and this happens in conformity with the „spirit of the race.“¹³

Konitza’s main concern was just the fear that artificial languages were part of a strategy aimed at completely erasing natural diversity as embodied in the nationalities and their natural languages.¹⁴ It is also very likely that he saw them as a threat to his intellectual mission as constructor of the „Albanian literary language.“

Turning to his writings in *Albania*, in the start of the first issue (1897), it was written that the magazine would be devoted to „literature, linguistic, history and sociology.“¹⁵ Konitza’s first article there, „The enemies of Albania,“ sought to explain the Albanians’ present degraded situation by the fact that „there are fewer literate Albanians than true words in the priest’s mouth,“ that „Albania’s enemies are the Albanians themselves, as they have shed their blood for the others, thus selling themselves,“ that „Albanians do not love freedom,“ „some do not speak Albanian and for this reason believe they are not Albanians.“¹⁶ Konitza therefore conceived his review as a medium through which all Albanians could come together and talk „like civilized people who fight with their words for their ideals.“ These ideals were „the love for truth and for Albania.“¹⁷ He saw Albanians as a people with only a biological existence, or „the life of body“ (physical living) as he put it. The

10 Starova (2001), p. 117. Hobsbawm (2002), pp. 108–109. See also Suny and Kennedy (2001), p. 28, Anderson (2003), pp. 67–83; Breuille (1994), pp. 54–69.

11 Starova, p. 116.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

14 Here Konitza refers to Gustav Flaubert’s book *The sentimental education*, where the author puts in the mouth of one of his eccentric personages the idea of a universal language for the whole of humanity: Jorgaqi (2001), p. 62.

15 *Albania*, no. 1 (1897).

16 *Albania*, no. 1 (1897), pp. 1–2.

17 *Albania*, no. 2 (1897), p. 32.

future should be different: the national language was invested with the role of reviving a community, which in the eyes of Konitza had lost the consciousness of being one whole.

Konitza's stance on this issue derived from a broader political design. Under the conditions of growing Balkan nationalism and an increasingly weakening Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century, he supported the idea of a „gradual cultural preparation of the Albanian people“ through a stage of administrative autonomy for Albanian lands within the Ottoman Empire. This would provide a kind of temporary shelter for Albanians until their full political independence. In the meantime, all efforts would be needed to save their nationality, or else, „in a quarter of a century we will pass from the Sultan's hands to the Slavs', Greeks' and Italians' hands, like miserable slaves.“¹⁸ The Albanians should be prepared, as an already distinct and compact „national community,“ to face the future crumbling of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ And this national community would be forged through cultural development, leaving aside the armed rebellions. At that time this stance was supported by Austro-Hungary, which financed his journal, in view of the preservation of the *status quo* in the Balkans. Assistance from Austro-Hungary was considered by Konitza to be of paramount importance to help achieve this goal and protect the Albanian-inhabited lands from being partitioned by the newly founded Balkan states. He believed in Austro-Hungary's interest in helping the Albanian nationalist movement as a barrier to Slav advancement in the Balkans.

Central to the attainment of cultural development of Albanians was the forging of a literary language. That for Konitza had two main dimensions – the creation of a common alphabet and a standardized Albanian literary language. The condition of both was similar to the one described by Maria Todorova about early 19th-century Bulgaria: defined by the existence of multigraphia and multilingualism.²⁰ Until 1908, the time of the Young Turk Revolution, nationally-minded Albanian intellectuals used three alphabets for printing their literary productions.²¹ What Konitza wanted to achieve was to promote the usage of his own alphabet, which was close to that of „Bashkimi“ literary society, and make it the basis for the unification of the others.²² It was intended to fuse the two major written dialects, the northern Geg and the southern Tosk.²³ All this would go hand in hand with the major goal – the creation of an Albanian literary language.

How did Konitza perceive the Albanian language at that time, and how did he

18 Jorgaqi (2001), p. 8.

19 *Albania*, no. 2, (1897), p. 1.

20 Todorova (1990), vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 439–450.

21 *Historia e Shqipërisë* [History of Albania], (2002), p. 211; pp. 348–352, 359. For a more detailed account of this issue see also Skëndi (1967), pp. 111–316; also Skëndi (1980), pp. 211–233.

22 Skëndi (1980), p. 220.

23 Jorgaqi (2001), vol. 5, pp. 297–300.

justify the approach he took? On many occasions, Konitza expressed the idea that the Albanian language was an ancient, but uncultivated language – archaic and lacking enough words to express ideas.²⁴ He thought that Albanian was a rather „folklore and wedding language,“ „poor in philosophical and general terms, which made it difficult to express oneself with the appropriate clarity on major topics.“²⁵

For Konitza, the problem of creating the Albanian literary language pertained more to the existing political and national order than to philology. The problem was political, as its solution did not come from the gradual evolution of the language itself, but came through the intervention of Albanian nationalists based on the urgent need to bind Albanians together around a literary language. It was also a question of „national renaissance,“ „civilization and progress of the people.“²⁶

Konitza saw the written dialects as „dividing factors“ amongst the Albanian people. In „*Les dialectes albanais et la nécessité de leur fusion*,“ Konitza presented his thesis to fuse the two main dialects, the northern Geg and the southern Tosk into one literary language.²⁷ He argued that their difference, as everyday spoken languages, was based on phonetic nuances, but which became more accentuated in the written forms. Therefore, he thought that a common literary language taught at schools could diminish this distinction and bring unity:

The question here is not to erase Tosk or Geg, nor to convince Albanians to improve their everyday spoken language, Tosk or Geg, in view of the unification of the dialects. Such a thing would be impossible and not convenient either. For changing the language of people would amount to change its character and spoil its personality. The Tosk dialect, which is vivid, light and in an ever going evolution, reflects very well the Tosk character, with its constrained austerity, humorous, bent on intrigues and skilful. On the contrary, the Geg dialect, massive one, immobile, without ambiguous expressions, shows very well the Geg character which is serious, sincere, more often without bad intentions and resilient to novelties. The question is to create beyond the parallel existence of the two dialects, a written literary language that is the same for all Albania.²⁸

The solution for Konitza seemed to be the preservation of both dialects, not just for the sake of preserving linguistic richness, but to employ them for different uses. The dialect of the more urban and pragmatic people of the south, was more suitable for prose. While the dialect of the epic, unruly and stubborn people of the north, was deemed by Konitza to be more convenient for poetry. By these means Konitza wanted to push literate Albanians towards

24 *Albania*, no. 6, (1906), p. 119.

25 *Albania*, no. 11, (1898), p. 201; Konitza, (2001), vol. 4, p. 5.

26 *Albania*, no. 6, (1906), pp. 120–121.

27 *Albania*, no. 10, (1898), pp. 173–174.

28 *Albania*, no. 10, (1898), p. 173.

a better knowledge of each dialect thereby increasing the communication between people of different regions. The coexistence of the two written dialects was conceived as a transitory period toward the creation of a common written language. Some years later, Konitza wrote another article with the title „Towards the foundation of a Literary Language,“ where he stated that:

So far, the Albanians didn't know the common life, but only that of the village or town; therefore everybody was happy with the dialect of the area where he lived. Today Albanians entered a new wider life, the national life. This huge widening in their life obliges us to widen also our language. This new body, the Nation, needs a new organ.²⁹

Faik Konitza thought of the „national life“ as a new, more qualitative and more inclusive life experience compared to the regional one. It also had a fundamental prerequisite, which was the national language, or Albanian literary language.

In our case, the dialects and their respective regional allegiances are treated as composite elements of an overarching Albanian national identity. When Konitza wrote on Albanian literary language, as one of the main features of the national identity, he conceived the latter as an overarching one. The dichotomy between dialect and national literary language in Konitza's texts accounts for that inherent conflict within nationalist ideologies between authenticity and modernization.³⁰ The dialect is held to be an authentic and more direct set of values for the inhabitants. Through the agency of press, text books, linguistic standardizing intervention, the dialects should be gradually transformed to fit the modernized version of the literary language. This new kind of language entailed the acquisition of a new self-identification, the national one, which was still missing among Albanians. In an article of 1898, with the title „Albanian Nation,“ through an invented dialogue between an Albanian and a foreigner, Konitza ridiculed the way his compatriots perceived their identity:

Foreigner – What are you?

Albanian – I am Moslem (or Christian, depending on the case). F – I am not asking what is your religion, but please be kind enough and tell me what are you?

A – You do not understand; I just told you I am Moslem. F – I am afraid you understand nothing; I am asking what nation are you from. Do you know what nation is about? A – I don't get it so well.

F – Nation is a gathering of people, who have one origin, one language and one way of living. Now, tell me what are you? A – I am a Turk. F – Ok, do you know Turkish?

29 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

30 Peckham (2004), pp. 41–60.

A – I don't know, may be that little that I learnt at school. F – And your customs are the same as Anatolians? A – Not at all

F – So, you are not a Turk then, may be you are Greek or Latin. Do you know those languages?

A – My language is neither Greek, nor Latin, the language taught by my mother, the language I have heard at home is Albanian. F – Albanian is an old and nice language. So, you are Albanian. A – I am Albanian, but also Turk.

F – One can not have both things at once, if you are Albanian you are nothing else. Maybe you are Moslem Albanian, but you are not a Turk. A – I tell you I am a Turk.

F – Religion is religion, nation is nation. As you speak Albanian and you live in Albania, you are not a Turk, nor a Greek, nothing else but an Albanian.³¹

Language thus gained predominance over religious divisions. National versus religious identity was another way to construct the „Albanian nation.“

B) ALBANIAN NATION AND RELIGION

In his articles, Konitza used two levels to construct the Albanian nation as an antinomy to religion: the past Golden Age and the depressing present. He presented the nation as older than religion, as a higher and nobler set of values. In Konitza's view, but also in articles written by other authors in *Albania*, religious allegiances were perceived as a more recent phenomenon, which had superseded the national ones. This is how Konitza explained the dynamics between nation and religion:

Nation means all people who live in the same land, speak the same language and have the same origin. We Albanians, we live in the same land, speak Albanian and have the same origin, and therefore we are one nation, we are the Albanian nation. Some nations are Moslem, some are Christian, or some are both mixed Moslem and Christian. But all nations had no religion two thousand years before. Today, the Albanian nation is Moslem, Catholic, Orthodox and Bektashi, mixed altogether. But, like the other nations, the Albanian nation has believed in the moon, in the sun, the stars, the trees and the rocks . with time, the Albanian nation changed its religion and became all Christian, till the arrival of the Ottomans. The Ottomans came to Albania in the 15th century, and after 30 years of fighting, the Albanian nation was forced to become Moslem; some 50 years later some Albanians returned to the old Christian religion, while the rest remained Moslem, either because they found it better or because it served them more. Albanians have always been brave and strong, but after being divided by religions, they have lost their strength.³²

31 *Albania*, no. 10, (1898), p. 181.

32 *Albania*, no. 9, (1898), p. 146.

In this text religion has an ambiguous dimension in relation to the national one. It comes later and changes over time, while the Albanian nation remains one and the same through the centuries. This a-historic and essentialist perception of Albanian nation serve above all to highlight the past golden age in contrast to the gloomy present, where religion had exerted its long-term noxious effects on the nation causing the loss of its former strength.

Religion was, for that reason, a matter of concern for Konitza and other authors writing in his review. The articles related to this topic oscillated between two poles: the Albanian religious indifference and tolerance, and an Albanian nationality torn apart by different religious affiliations. The attention of *Albania* leaned more towards the second tendency. This is also explained by the fact that Konitza conceived of religious tolerance as characteristic of a bygone time. Now, his action aimed to revive that „national virtue“ deemed to have been temporarily lost. In an article written on the state of „Albanian nationality“ in 1898, he quoted the English traveller E. C. Hobhouse, who in the early 19th century made a trip to Albanian inhabited lands and distinguished Albanians among all the other people of the Ottoman Empire as the only ones who identified themselves according to their nationality and not their religion.³³

But, when it came to the present time, the end of the 19th century, Konitza was worried that Christian Albanians declared themselves to be Greeks. He blamed this „alienation“ on the Hellenizing policies of the Greek state.

However, when refuting foreign allegations on Albanian religious fanaticism the picture he presented was not as problematic as that drawn up for „internal consumption,“ when addressing the Albanian readers. His main counter-argument to foreign patterns of perceiving Albanians as „religiously divided“ was that the Albanians were the least religious people in the Balkans, except for some Albanian border populations that were „infected“ by the religious fanaticism of their neighbors.³⁴ The stance became more critical when he spoke to his co-nationals: then he was the educator of the nation who pointed out the „weaknesses“ of his community that needed to be redressed.

It should be stressed that the „religious indifference“ of Albanians remains one of the most resilient ideological constructs that still inform Albanian studies. It is based upon the belief of the survival of certain Albanian „national qualities,“ which had made possible the relegation of religion to a secondary position. This basically essentialist, primordialist and holist view of the Albanian nation has much in common with the ideological constructs in Konitza’s discourse about Albanian pragmatism, religious tolerance, or religious indifference.³⁵

33 *Albania*, (1898), p. 17. The book cited by Konitza is *A journey through Albania through the years 1809–1810*, by E. C. Hobhouse, London, 1811.

34 "What the foreigners think about Albanians," *Albania*, no. 7, (1903), pp. 101–102.

35 *History of Albanian People*, (2002), pp. 27–28; also Skendi (1967), pp. 7–21. See also the study

From a functionalist point of view they were also „invented traditions,“ whose aim was „to establish or symbolize social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities.“³⁶ On the one hand, they were trying, via these traditions, to give a message, or to create the image of a united nation, on the other, they were doing so as Albanian nationalist intellectuals, like Konitza, were aware of strong religious loyalties among the people.

How did Konitza see the overcoming of religious divisions and rendering them less harmful to national identity?

The solutions presented by Konitza are closely linked to how he formulated his future „ideal Albania.“ In his view, Albania should be „passionate nationalist and aware of its leanings towards the occidental world.“³⁷ He saw the solution in „Albanizing“ the religion. The stress is put here on the fact that religions in Albanian-inhabited lands were professed and controlled by foreign clergy, who did not use the vernacular in their practices. The idea behind these texts was that the language used for religious services should be Albanian. Apart from the importance given to language as a transmitter of national feelings, Konitza’s texts also revealed the concern of their author to handle with care this issue and not to offend the religious attachments of Albanians.³⁸In other cases, Konitza opted for more militant solutions indicating a clear and definitive rupture with the „backward Orient.“³⁹ According to him, the links with the more backward Orient were kept alive by Albanian Muslims. Consequently, Albanian Muslims were required to undergo major changes in order to join the „civilized Albanian nation“ through conversion. But the key element, in Konitza’s opinion, which could also help the conversion of Muslims into Christians, was the „Albanization“ of Orthodox Albanians. This meant to isolate Albanian Orthodox community from Greek influence.⁴⁰When this community gained religious independence then it would become, as Konitza imagined it, a pole of attraction for the Albanian Muslims, who could join them and return to their ancestors’ faith. To make the question of religion appear more urgent he foresaw that, after the retreat of Ottoman domination from its European territories, Albanian Muslims would find themselves in a precarious predicament. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire would bring along with it the partition of Albania between the Christian states of the Balkans. Consequently, Albanian Muslims would be expelled towards Turkey, but they would not be accepted by the Ottoman authorities.⁴¹When Konitza dealt with

of Clayer in *Mésogeios*, no. 2, (1998), pp. 17–39. Clayer rightly points out that one can speak of "religious superficiality among Albanians" only for certain groups and for certain periods of time, without imposing a general pattern over Albanians as a whole homogenous community.

36 *Hobsbawm*, *Invented traditions*, p. 9.

37 *Albania*, no. 5, (1907), p. 121.

38 *Albania*, no. 2, (1897), p. 21; *Albania*, no. 8, (1897), p. 121.

39 For the orientalist discourse in the texts of some of the most important Albanian national leaders during the National Movement period, see Sulstarova (2003).

40 *Albania*, no. 7, (1906), pp. 144–146.

41 *Albania*, vol. XII, (1909), pp. 22–23. In this article Faik Konitza refers to the fate of Muslims in

a religious problem, he expressed himself at times in a form of wishful thinking, a desire for an idealized situation, and sometimes he seemed to believe that Albanians really possessed certain intrinsic qualities. Konitza held that the Islamization process in Albanian-inhabited lands was uneven, though forcefully carried out, and resulted in a nonhomogenous community. As a result, for Konitza, the northern Gëgs were more fanaticized than the southern Tosks, who were only superficial Muslims. On the other hand, women could also lend a hand in this undertaking:

Since old times, Albanian woman felt through an unmistakable instinct that Islam – with its polygamy, with its easy divorce and reducing a legal woman into a servant – was dangerous for women’s rights and for the sanctity of the family.⁴²

However variegated the discourses Konitza held on the religious problem were, in general, Albanian nationalist intellectuals considered it of primary importance. For Konitza, a religious union would immediately bring about „the union of the nation.“⁴³ The religious division among Albanians was a frustrating issue for the Albanian intellectuals of that time, as despite their patriotic rhetoric on Albanians’ „religious indifference,“ they considered it a real factor on the ground, albeit a harmful one, for the future project of a culturally homogenous Albania. If they spoke on religious tolerance they didn’t describe the picture on the ground. They were formulating a strategy for constructing a national community of Albanians.⁴⁴ This community would be uniform in all its aspects and loyal to the nation and not to religion.⁴⁵ This role was ascribed to the common Albanian literary language, which was of the same ancient origin, but not religion, as it was practiced in foreign languages.

As was seen above, religion was not discarded from the set of tools that could be used in molding an Albanian nation. But, while the national loyalties had to be constructed, yet remaining a virtual reality, religious values were deeply entrenched in the customs of the people. Therefore, since they could not be avoided, religious values were to be transformed. The national project of Konitza foresaw the „Albanization“ of religion, as a means to compensate

Serbia, namely Vranja and Leskovac. He says that when Serbia took possession of these lands it expelled the Muslim populations.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 145.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

44 This is clearly stated in the article written by Fan. S. Noli in *Albania* with the title "The Albanian Orthodox Church." See *Albania*, no. 5, (1907), pp. 35–37. In 1908, the author would become the head of the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Boston. Noli underlines the great importance the religious factor plays in the unification of the people. Noli dismisses the option of conversion among Albanians and suggests instead that the religious leadership should be a national one. It must carry out religious practices in Albanian. His main concern here was with Muslim and Orthodox Albanians, as Catholics enjoyed religious institutions where Albanian language was taught. Skëndi, (1980), p. 218.

45 Clayer, (1998).

for the existence of three religious communities among the Albanians. If he speaks about „Albanization“ of religion through creating local religious centers and introducing Albanian language in their practices in the cases of Muslims and Orthodox Albanians, he seems to exclude the Albanian Catholics from this question. From his national point of view, Konitza already considered the Albanian Catholic community in a positive way: firstly, because this community was already in possession of Albanian schools; and secondly, because it was under the Austro-Hungarian protectorate, that the Albanian vernacular was promoted as far as possible to counterpoise Slav advancement in the northern areas inhabited by Albanians.⁴⁶

In this matter his major concern, as for other nationalist intellectuals previously, was to present Muslim Albanians as different from the Turks, more tolerant and autochthon. This was not only on account of the fact that a major part of Albanian population was Muslim, but also in order to secure them a place in the Balkans, in the aftermath of the crumbling, then withdrawal of the Empire from its European territories.⁴⁷

C) ALBANIAN ANCIENT ORIGINS

In the article „The enemies of Albania,“ the most important factor uniting Albanians came to be the same roots, or a common origin. Konitza said that there were Albanians who did not speak Albanian language, but nevertheless it was the origin which bound them together:

Those between us who do not speak Albanian easily say they are not Albanian. What does the language have to do with this matter? Swiss people, for example, speak either French, or German, but they are one nation. Why? Because they have one origin and nation is a matter of origin and not language.⁴⁸

Throughout the pages of *Albania*, Konitza explored the old origins of the Albanians in the territories where they lived. Generally, the part of the review dealing with history had two kinds of writings: 1) popular history; 2) unpublished documents or studies on Albanian history, archaeology, folklore and ethnography.⁴⁹ Konitza was more attracted to the history of antiquity, the history of Albanian national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbej (1403–1468), and the Albanian diaspora.

I will mention here only what Konitza published in his review about the ancient origin of Albanians. This topic has quite often been examined in Al-

46 Skëndi, (1980), p. 218.

47 Clayer, (2007).

48 *Albania*, no. 1, (1897), p. 2.

49 Jup Kastrati, (1995), p. 106.

banian studies, but it was not put in the appropriate context.⁵⁰ As we will see, the old origin of Albanians was greatly influenced by the findings of Western scholars and also the political agenda of the Albanian nationalist intellectuals of that time.

From the first issues of his review, Konitza began to publish pieces of documents on the Pellazgs, who were held to be the most ancient populations living in the Balkan area. They are mainly pieces taken from Homer and Herodotus, where the name of Pellazgs is mentioned. They are mentioned in the sense of being older than the Greeks and their language being different from Greek. From the title of the column, „Written proofs from Antiquity on the origin of the Albanian nation,“ it becomes clear that Konitza was establishing a direct connection between the Pellazgs and the Albanians.⁵¹ He said that from these pieces the reader would draw the conclusion that: 1) the ancient writers believed that the Pellazgs lived in the same territories where Albanians live today; and 2) the names of the deities and all the beautiful verses of the Greeks were taken from the Pellazgs.⁵² A more direct statement on the continuity between Pellazgs and Albanians comes from the poetries of Naim Frashëri (1850–1900) – Sami’s elder brother and Albanian national poet – which, Faik Konitza published in two successive issues. The first bears the title *Albania* and the second *The Pellazgs – the Albanians*.⁵³ The author wanted to construct an image of Albanians as the most ancient people in the region described in an Albanian Golden Age, as opposed to the present miserable predicament where they found themselves.⁵⁴

This mythical presentation of Albanian history had a variety of elements. Myths of territory, military valor, the myth of ethno-genesis and antiquity, myths of kinship and shared descent were intermingled in the text with each other. By establishing a direct link between Pellazgs and Albanians, Konitza aimed to assert their superior right to the territory in which they lived, over all other populations.

Konitza used these myths as instruments of self-definition and identity transfer. They created an Albanian distinctiveness *vis-à-vis* the other people. They were different from the Greeks and the other people surrounding them. On the other hand, it provided the targeted community with a new identity, a homogeneous national one that transcended all the other modes of self-definition, be they religious or regional ones.⁵⁵ Konitza and other Albanian authors, through their writings on Albanian history, wanted to give hope to their co-

50 The main idea prevailing in Albanian studies is that Albanians are the successors of Illyrians, but with certain connections to those more ancient populations which had lived within the current borders of Albania. Aleks Buda (2002), pp. 5–13.

51 *Albania*, no. 1, (1897), p. 5.

52 *Albania*, no. 2, (1897), p. 23.

53 *Albania* no. 3, (1897), p. 40; and *Albania*, no. 4, (1897), p. 50.

54 *Albania*, no. 4, (1897), p. 72.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

nationals that they might reach Albania's former splendor in the future, as a prosperous nation in its own right.

The theory of Pellazgs as the predecessors of the Albanians was not an invention of Konitza, or other Albanian authors who published in his review. As Nathalie Clayer has written:

*Comme dans le cas grec, turc ou arabe, la science occidentale a exercé une 'influence' sur les débuts de la construction identitaire albanaise. Elle a fourni des outils qui ont été utilisés et transformés en fonction de leur propres buts et du contexte dans lequel ils évoluaient, un contexte différent de celui dans lequel les auteurs occidentaux avaient conçu leurs theories.*⁵⁶

Clayer attributes the „discovery“ of the Albanian people by Western scholars to three factors: 1) the growth in the early 19th century of the political interests of European Great Powers towards the areas, partially or entirely populated, by Albanians; 2) a Romantic push to better know Greece, which resulted also in „discovering“ another people living nearby, that is, the Albanians; 3) the development of sciences like philology, comparative linguistics and history. Stavro Skëndi mentions also lexical and ecclesiastical works in the vernacular by Orthodox and Catholic priests, which showed the antiquity of the Albanian language.⁵⁷ Among the most important Western authors that wrote on the Albanians' origin and language were: Malte Brun (1775–1826); Johann Thunmann; F.C.H.L. Pouqueville, French consul to Janina; Johann Georg von Hahn, the Austrian consul to Janina, who in 1854 published his *Albanesische Studien*; Franz Bopp; etc.⁵⁸

These studies contributed in forging an image for the Albanian nation that was that of a very old „nation,“ autochthonous and speaking a very old language considered to be the heir of the Pellazgian. Malte Brun and Hahn especially emphasized the Pellazgian roots of the Albanian nation and saw it as the common source from which Greek and Latin people sprang. The language in particular was a means through which this link was demonstrated. Hahn used it to decipher the names of Greek deities implying a temporal precedence for Albanian.⁵⁹

Those studies delineated a certain profile for the Albanian „nation,“ which was later taken on by various Albanian authors of the time of the National

56 Clayer, (2007), p. 119. "As in the Greek, Turkish or Arabic case, the western science has exerted its 'influence' on the starting of the Albanian identity construction process. It provided the tools which were used and transformed depending on the pursued targets and the context in which they evolved. This context was different from that in which the western authors conceived their theories."

57 Skëndi, (1967), p. 112. *Albania*, no. 1, (1902), p. 19.

58 Skëndi, (1967), pp. 111–29; Clayer (2007), pp. 160–70. Since the first issue of *Albania* (1897), in the article "La langue des fils de l'aigle" on the ancientness of the Albanian language, Konitza refers to Johann Georg von Hahn's *Albanesische Studien*, Jena, 1854.

59 Jorgaqi, vol. 3, (2001), p. 19.

Movement. Apart from the very old origins going back deep in history of humankind, the Western authors depicted the Albanian „nation“ as a warrior people, albeit a noble one, isolated in their mountains. Another constitutive element which was taken by the Albanian nationalist intellectuals was the superficial religious character of the Albanians and its division into two main dialectal-cultural groups.⁶⁰ The northern more rural and more religiously fanaticized Gegs, and the southern more urban and subtle Tosks.⁶¹

But interest in the old origins of the Albanian people as a topic was constructed and used by the Albanians living in Italy too. They were the representatives of the Albanian diaspora settled in Italy in the 15th century, after Ottoman domination of their regions. In the early 19th century they started their efforts to build an Albanian identity. Their enterprise was focused on two main directions: 1) publications in the Italian language on the origins, and the history of Albanian language and „nation“; 2) compiling a literary corpus through collecting popular songs.⁶² Among the most distinguished figures in this respect were Angelo Masci (1758–1821), Giuseppe Crispi (1781–1859), Jeronim de Rada (1814–1903) and Vincenzo Dorsa (1823–1885).⁶³

The Pellazgian theory, which considered Albanians to be their heirs, was a prevailing element of their discourse. Another characteristic of the writings of the Albanians of Italy was the stress put upon the Albanian-Greek distinction, and also the creation of a national pantheon with Skënderbej, Philippe, Alexander and Pyrrhus. All these elements are loyally reproduced in the above-mentioned poems published in Faik Konitza's *Albania*.

Throughout the 19th century the Albanian-Greek contrast was present in the nationalist discourses of Albanian intellectuals. If, on the one hand it is true that „each culture constructs its discourses in opposition to another and this allows the culture to see itself as enduring and unique, as a bearer of moral true,“⁶⁴ on the other, the image of the Albanians, as opposed to the Greeks, was developed in concrete political backgrounds and its function was variable. As Nathalie Clayer has written:

*Après la Guerre de Crimée, c'est la poussée de l'hellénisme, à la fois dans le Royaume de Grèce et dans l'Empire ottoman, qui renforça le courant albaniste, soit par association, soit par réaction.*⁶⁵

60 Jubani, (1871). See also Pekmezi, (1924).

61 Clayer, (2007), pp. 126–127; *Albania*, no. 7, (1897), pp. 116–119; *Albania*, no. 8, (1902), p. 202.

62 Clayer, (2007), p. 128.

63 Nathalie Clayer has explained in her book that these scholars of Albanian-origin came from the ranks of the Orthodox clergy, which was at odds with Bourbon Catholicism. On the other side, their identity-building activities were of a Romantic inspiration that praised the "essence of nationalities coming through the language, popular songs and customs," in Clayer, (2007), pp. 128, 131.

64 Schöpflin, (1997), p. 28.

65 Clayer, (2007), p. 148. "It was the drive of Hellenism inside of the Greek Kingdom or inside the Empire, which after the Crimean War, reinforced the Albanianist stream, either by association or

After the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when the Greek irredentist intentions targeted part of Albanian-inhabited lands in Epirus, the Albanian-Greek contrast was further sharpened and politicized. Albanian intellectuals of the time used this contrast to attribute to Albanians a territorial legitimacy as the heirs of the old Pellazgs, thus presenting the Greeks as latter day intruders.⁶⁶

KONITZA, THE „CRITIC“ OF THE NATION

In the first issue of *Albania*, Konitza wrote about the religious division among Albanians, epitomized by Muslim circumcision practice and Christian baptizing:

Another reason [for the religious division of Albanians] is that some Albanians are circumcised and some others baptized. Such issues are pretty laughable matters, and if any reader does not understand them, here it is briefly shown how they happen. When a boy grows up to become seven or eight, his father brings home friends, who drink, eat and sing, and then, fiddling, one rascal closes in on the poor kid, who yells and cries, and, with a scissor, cuts a slice of flesh off a body part which I would be ashamed to tell you. There are Albanians who do not practice such business, but they, when their boy is born, take him to a stinky-bearded priest, who nabs and dumps him stark naked into a washtub full of water. Do not get my opinion wrongly, please; I am not against those things, good or bad as they come, any person is free to believe and maintain them as his customs. But, with all due respect, I shall only ask you a question: can you understand how a man's origin can change from the fact that when he was a kid, a lump of flesh was sliced off him, or that he was put into a washtub with water? Myself, I don't get it.⁶⁷

No one from the first generation of the Albanian nationalist intellectuals (1878–1900) would be able to write in such a way. It was not a matter of indecency by a young journalist. It was a novelty in many respects. It was a grotesque description of religious practices in a lively and entertaining vernacular Albanian. The Albanian fathers of nationalism were too didactic and moralistic to be entertaining.

Konitza was a writer who opened new dimensions for Albanian literature of the early 20th century. The satiric and sarcastic tones in his writings and essays contrasted with the Albanian Romantic literature of the late 19th century, which mostly hailed „Albanian traditions and virtues.“ Unlike his Romantic predecessors, who were the „teachers of the nation,“ Konitza is considered to be „the critic of the nation,“ who loved his country through criticizing the failures of his co-nationals.⁶⁸ Influenced by the French literature of the 19th

by reacting to it.”

66 Frashëri, (1899). See Bülent Bilmez's contribution to this volume. See also Vasa, (1879).

67 *Albania*, no. 1, (1897), p. 2.

68 Jorgaqi, vol.5, (2001), p. 142.

century, for Konitza it was easy to discard many works of Albanian patriots as poor from a literary point of view.⁶⁹ Konitza was too sophisticated to appreciate the „nationalist outpourings on the lofty virtues of the Albanian people.“⁷⁰ In 1906, Konitza asserted that a good literary work had nothing to do with a patriotic content, but only with its pure artistic values.⁷¹

With Konitza, Albanian prose entered the transition from Romanticism to realism.⁷² Through his translations, he offered to Albanian readers the masterpieces of world literature. He translated from Arabic *A thousand and one nights*, which appeared in Albanian with the title *Under the shade of the Date Palms*; Shakespeare, Miguel Cervantes, Henrik Ibsen, Edgar Allan Poe, etc. He held the opinion that translations from world literature would help the elaboration and a further refinement of Albanian language.⁷³ The translation of these books into Albanian would be almost impossible using the linear and heavily dialectal form of written Albanian the fathers of Albanian nationalism, such as Shemseddin Sami Frashëri (1850–1904), or Pashko Vasa (1825–1892) used. Konitza was more colorful, richer and more expressive in prose. In fact it is also closer to present day written Albanian.

Faik Konitza occupied himself with the task of laying the foundations for modern Albanian prose and a literary critique as an important genre of *belles lettres*. For Konitza, the Albanians would enter modern civilization not only endowed with a language of their own, but with an elaborate and stylish Albanian literary language. In short, with regard to the parameters set for a literary language, Konitza's contribution can be summarized as: 1) stressing the aesthetic values of the language; 2) establishing a personal style which was different from that of the first Romantic generation of the Albanian patriots.⁷⁴

When compared to Konitza, Shemseddin Sami Frashëri represents both similarities and differences. Both Sami and Konitza put strongly stressed the importance that Albanian language had for the „awakening“ of the Albanian nation. Though Sami, living and working his entire life in Istanbul, and

Konitza, who spent his life in Western Europe and the US, worked in different periods of time and in different cultural contexts, they both tackled important issues in dealing with the written Albanian. These were the alphabet, the purification of the Albanian language, orthography and the creation of neologisms.⁷⁵ Like Sami, Konitza too based his theories of the ancient origins

69 Jorgaqi, vol. 5, (2001), p. 348.

70 Destani, (2000), p. x.

71 Jorgaqi, vol. 1. (2001), pp. 246–47. In this article Konitza set out his ideas to critically follow the Albanian letters and establish a literary critique.

72 Jorgaqi, vol. 5, (2001), p. 235.

73 Jorgaqi, vol. 5, p. 121.

74 Jorgaqi, vol. 5 (2001), p. 287.

75 Kaleshi, (1978), p. 195. *Albania*, no. 6 (1897), p. 99. See also Bojan Aleksov's contribution to this volume with regard to the elaboration of Serbian language by Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj.

of the Albanians upon the findings of the Western „*Albanologie*“ and made Romantic use of the Albanians' „Golden Age“ of the time of Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbej in the 15th century.⁷⁶ This because at the close of the 19th century, Romantic elements in Albanian literature co-existed with realism and it is not possible to draw a clear-cut line between these two literary streams. They continued in their symbiosis even in the first decades of the 20th century. Therefore, it would be more correct to define Konitza's literary production as a kind of blend of Romanticism and the new elements of realism.⁷⁷ In fact his literary legacy bore the connotations of the two historical periods in which he lived.

I would disagree with the conviction that Sami created the Albanian literary language.⁷⁸ Sami dealt with the most fundamental elements of a written language, such as the alphabet, formation of new words and first grammars. Sami could not establish his own style when writing Albanian. His written Albanian was a path-breaking work and as such it had more of an enlightening and legitimizing value than an aesthetic one. Sami aimed at proving that the Albanian language existed – while Konitza's pretences were of a higher level: positing that this language can produce art.

No one before Konitza had devoted so much attention to the problems of Albanian literary language as a means of bringing Albanians closer to each other. This derived from a deep awareness of his that Albanians were too divided among themselves to make up a nation. These divisions had to do not only with religious differences, but were also heightened by regional cleavages too. Konitza stressed the different cultural Albanian typologies in clearer terms than the fathers of Albanian nationalism.

In Konitza's texts the northern Geg was the embodiment of the true Albanian, its traditions and character. The southern Tosk had a kind of „Albanian-ness“ that yielded his „essence“ to changes brought about over the course of time. The Geg implied uniqueness, exoticism and archaism. The Geg is not „touched“ by „alien“ influences, a good many of them living in the middle of high mountains, practically seen as inaccessible spots. His image is associated mostly with the mountaineers of northern Albania, as opposed to the urban southern lowlander Tosk, more open-minded as well as more exposed to the outside world.

This imaginary sees the resilient Geg as a stumbling-block against time and change. Thus, it gains an aura of being loyal to pristine virtues, but also symbolized backwardness and transpired as a sense of getting lost in the modern world. The Geg was easy prey for the sarcastic and aristocratic Konitza. Very

76 See Bülent Bilmez's contribution to this volume. See also Clayer, (2007), p. 275.

77 Jorgaqi, vol. 5 (2001), p. 133.

78 Kaleshi, (1978), p. 178.

often in his texts the Geg resembled a fine specimen suitable for a museum of ancient times, to which the roots of the nation could be traced back.

Here is one of the many dialogues invented by Konitza, between a rude northern Geg and a more nationalist and progressive southern Tosk:

Tosk- Do you want me to teach you Albanian my brother?

Geg – What are you talking about Tosk?

T – Look at this book. It is Albanian. Listen a bit ...

G – You are trying to make me „kaur“ [Christian in Ottoman]?

T – What is this stupidity. Learn your language, nothing wrong is with it.

G – What are these kaur writings? Get out of here, kaur ...

This is the way most of Moslem Glegs are used to thinking. They are the biggest obstacle to the progress of the nation. There is a great need to produce nationalist propaganda in Gegheria [northern Albania], because otherwise it will have been in vain.⁷⁹

The superiority of the more emancipated Tosk comes out through the terms he uses in the dialogue. When addressing the Geg, the southern Tosk uses the term „brother,“ but, all the more, he shows an eagerness to teach Albanian to the former. The Geg is backward as he does not understand the benefits of learning Albanian and he refuses the Tosk’s offer of brotherhood. The combination of Muslim and Geg is seen as fatal for progress, and, for Konitza, it was tantamount to stepping backwards in time. In 1899, he wrote that the National Movement is less developed in northern Albania and „particularly among Moslems, who do not even know that their language can be written.“⁸⁰

Here is another example where Konitza saw religious factionalism as an Albanian malaise compounded by the ignorance of the northern Glegs:

The bad thing is that our Geg brothers do not have the same love for their language as the Tosks do; because in all towns and villages of Toskeria [the southern part of Albanian-inhabited lands] there are Albanians who write and read their language, and are glad when they receive Albanian journals. But in Gegeria [the northern part of Albanian-inhabited lands] people who love their language and their country are rarer. Unlike many areas in Toskeria, people in Gegeria haven’t yet understood that religion is religion and Albanianism is Albanianism.⁸¹

The Geg pattern of backwardness and ignorance was a deeply entrenched belief displayed by Konitza in different texts and periods of time. In an unfin-

79 *Albania*, no. 4, (1901), p. 15.

80 Jorgaqi, vol. 3, (2001), p. 48.

81 *Albania*, no. 11, (1898), p. 203. It is interesting to see how in *Albania* the journalist explains to the common people the idea of a "nation" through the verses of the Koran in Arabic. It is like speaking to the people the way they understood the best. It is also an attempt at convincing people that believing in an "Albanian nation" is not a sin, but allowed by their religion. Also *Albania*, no. 2, (1897), p. 36.

ished popular version of the history of Albania written in 1935, Konitza wrote that the people of the mountainous north, called „Gegs,“ lived in complete isolation and consequently they had „greater patriarchal simplicity than the rest of their countrymen, and their whole mental outlook was decidedly medieval.“⁸²

In the texts of Shemseddin Sami Frashëri, the division of Albanians into Gegs and Tosks was not so well articulated.⁸³

In the political treatise *Albania what it was, what it is and what it will be*, already mentioned in Bülent Bilmez’s contribution to this volume, Sami’s concept of an Albanian nation was that of a socially homogenous community, where solidarity, common sense and love reigned over anything else. Albanians are shown as a community characterized by horizontal fraternity. He wrote:

[...] before being Moslem or Christian, Albanians are Albanians [...] In spite of religious difference, Albanians are not divided but united by their love between each other [...]⁸⁴

Sami considered the national solidarity between Albanians a strong link which had survived from generation to generation and had not faded away with time.⁸⁵ The only division that Sami only vaguely mentioned, and as something not very important, was the internal regional division of Albanians into Gegs and Tosks. Anyway, he believed that the difference could be overturned by the elaboration of a literary language. This was a task that would be carried out by Konitza.⁸⁶

One of the major differences between Sami and Konitza lies with the fact that they lived and worked in specific political-cultural contexts. The way they approached the articulation of the Albanian nation was clearly influenced by those contexts. Sami worked as an intellectual during the last quarter of the 19th century, in a multicultural Ottoman Empire that was undergoing important changes due to modernization and Westernization of its state apparatus and the formation of ethnic nationalisms among its populations. His „Albanianism“ was intertwined also with other discourses, such as Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism.⁸⁷

For Sami, an Ottoman intellectual, his Albanian identity was fused into a general „Ottoman“ political loyalty, which he deemed a shelter for the various

82 Jorgaqi, (1957), p. 112.

83 See also Bülent Bilmez’s contribution to this volume.

84 Frashëri, (1978), pp. 48–49.

85 *Ibid*, p. 47.

86 *Ibid*, p. 47.

87 Clayer, (2007), p. 273. See also Alexander Vezenkov’s contribution to this project.

peoples comprising the „Ottoman peoples.“⁸⁸ On the other hand, his articulation of an Albanian nation was ambiguous. When he tried to establish a Latin-based alphabet for the Albanian language during the Eastern Crisis of late 1870s, he simultaneously put forward a Muslim Albanian identity to argue against Greek territorial claims over Albanian-inhabited lands in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, while he evidently promoted a different discourse in other circumstances, due, in part, to state censorship.⁸⁹ He also played a major role in the consolidation of the modern Turkish language, presenting himself as a member of the Turkish „we“ group.⁹⁰ Sami displayed throughout his work a kind of coherence in recognizing the importance of the vernacular for the spiritual revival of the nationalities. Sami's simultaneous involvement in Turkish linguistic nationalism and his Albanian contribution should be seen from this point of view. All the more so, as his „Turkism“ and his „Albanianism“ were not rival modernizing projects, given that the respective lands did not border on each other.⁹¹

Konitza was an openly laic modernizer. He never included religion as part of his Albanianess.⁹² If for Sami, Islam could be a channel for transmitting science and progress,⁹³ Konitza was too „Westernized“ and could not accept it. For Konitza, „Western Christian civilization“ was without hesitation far higher than any other.

Finally, taking into account Miroslav Hroch's categorization of the linguistic programs of national movements, I think that Sami's works can fit better into phase A (celebration and defense of the language), and B (language planning and codification), while Konitza's input should be placed mostly in phase C (intellectualization of the national language).⁹⁴

With regard to their Albanian identity, Sami worked in a time (last quarter of 19th century) when making the Albanian nation's existence known to the outside world was of paramount importance, requiring the presentation of a monolithic shape without internal breaches. Konitza operated in a latter (early 20th century) phase when the idea of the Albanian nation was to be diffused among his „co-nationals“ and involved tackling various obstacles to its taking root. For this reason, he did not hesitate to highlight national deficiencies.

88 Frashëri, (2000), p. 315.

89 Clayer, (2007), p. 280.

90 See Bülent Bilmez's contribution to this volume.

91 Clayer, (2007), p. 283; Karpát, (2001), p. 339.

92 *Albania*, no. 4, (1903), p. 63.

93 Frashëri, (2004a), pp. 20–21; Frashëri, (2004b).

94 Hroch, (1994), pp. 15–17.

4. ALBANIAN STUDIES ON FAIK KONITZA AND HIS REVIEW, ALBANIA

Konitza's name was quickly rehabilitated after the fall of the communist regime in 1990. We now have a series of publications on him, including articles in the periodical press, books and collections of his literary output. Nonetheless, studies on Konitza's works are of a rather narrative style, and give a somehow more Romanticized representation of his name than a textual critique. Almost all of what has been written on him so far transpires as a kind of enthusiasm in „discovering“ after a long period of silence such an interesting figure as Faik Konitza.

The way Albanian studies present him, especially in relation to the Albanian literary language is strongly linked to some deeply entrenched ideological dogmas in Albanian studies. First of all it was always held that Albanians represent a specific case in the Balkan context with regard to religion. Albanians had never forgotten their nationality, despite being divided into three religious communities; this being due to their superficial religious affiliations. Secondly, and unlike other Balkan people who identified religion with nationality, Albanians had to cope with a far more difficult situation. Religious affiliations are taken as an obstacle to national unity, national awakening and political emancipation.⁹⁵ Consequently, the choice of language as being the „strongest link“ by Albanian intellectuals of the National Movement is considered by Albanian historiography as more „rational“ and more „scientific“ when compared to religion.⁹⁶

In fact many studies on Balkan nationalisms emphasize the importance of national languages as a marker of nationality, and it cannot be taken to be an Albanian specificity. In fact, the use of language to define nations was an important part of national projects all over the peninsula, especially in the second half of the 19th century. As Paschalis Kitromilides has shown in the case of the rise of Greek nationalism in the early 19th century, the linguistically- based Greek community, as part of parochial secular ideals of nationalism, ran counter to ecumenical and theocratic values of Orthodoxy.⁹⁷

In general, Balkan nationalist intellectuals of the 19th century used language both as a means of enlightenment and unification, but also as a factor of national identity.⁹⁸ If Faik Konitza was a modernizer and nationalist intellectual with the intention of realizing the project of a cultural homogenous entity in a particular context, such as the Albanian nation, then an Albanian literary language was the most convenient tool to bring it into being. The Albanian literary language in this case is not merely the improvement of a „national attribute,“ such as the spoken vernacular. It was the outcome of a selective process

95 *Historia epopullit shqiptar* [History of the Albanian people], vol. 2, (2001), p. 27.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

97 Kitromilides, (1994), p. 56.

98 Skëndi, (1980), p. 33.

of nationalist intellectuals, who took certain elements from traditional culture to be incorporated into the new culture, the „national“ one. This process of selection is more visible in the case of language, as „not all dialectal features could be absorbed into a single literary standard, but the principle extends to every one of the national characteristics.“⁹⁹ The literary language was also an ideological construct with a highly symbolic significance. It secured continuity between old populations and Albanians, it was a strong identity-marker and at the same time, it could legitimize the Albanian nation in the eyes of Europe and give it license to enter civilization.

In Albanian studies the Albanian nation as a culturally homogenous community of people is not taken to signify a project in the minds of nationalist intellectuals based upon a certain context and conditions of modernity, but rather as a natural stage in the development of Albanian people seen through a linear and finalist perspective. The Albanian nation was always there and the National Movement had the merit to „awaken“ it.

One of the main reasons is the fact that Albanian historiography was born and developed after the Second World War. It coincided with the period of the communist regime, when the country was being steadily led towards its full isolation from the outside world. The communist period in Albania overlapped, and was inextricably linked to the ongoing, and yet unfinished nationbuilding process in the country. In a sense it completed that process, which had been set off by the Albanian monarchy in the 1930s. The first real national and modernist state in Albanian history coincided with the 50-year-long centralized communist state administration. It built up a capillary education system, one of whose main tasks was to inculcate a strong self-referential world outlook and nationalistic value system – hidden under a communist cover – in the Albanians. In spite of undeniable efforts to shake off the legacy of the past, the pervasive and the long-lived presence/interference of the communist state in both public and in private spaces has left its deep-seated traces, one of them being a strong Romantic/nationalist standpoint in dealing with history.¹⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

The Albanian nation of Faik Konitza was a community of people based on a common language, a common descent, the same blood and traditions. If he devoted much more attention to the creation of an Albanian literary language, it did not mean that common descent was of lesser importance. It would be

99 John-Paul Himka in Suny and Michael D. Kennedy, (2001), p. 111.

100 Clayer, (2007), p. viii; also Puto, (2003), pp. 91–105; and Puto, (2006), pp. 13–34.

better to see these factors as complementary and interchangeable elements in the hierarchy of national values. Religion could produce the image of a culturally heterogeneous Albanian nation, since Albanians belonged to three different faiths. Thus it had to be subdued through vernacularizing policies. Faik Konitza's concept of the Albanian nation was evolutionary, organic and historicist one. This aspect of his Albanian nation becomes clear when he deals with the Albanian literary language. In Konitza's writings the literary language is seen as a quality of a wider community that goes beyond the regional level.

This was well in tune with the liberal ideology of the 19th century, which presumed the creation of nations as a process of historical evolution going from smaller units to larger ones, from family, tribe and region to the national level.¹⁰¹ By every means Konitza tried to make his review seem to address the whole Albanian-speaking population. One indicator in that direction was the attention devoted to language, namely insisting on creating a „national literary language“ understood by all Albanian-speaking people. This would enforce among them the feeling of belonging to a wider and more homogenous cultural community, such as the „Albanian nation.“

Konitza's nation was „a personalized nation,“ which in the eyes of its people, appeared as a single body in need of its own distinct space. As Hroch has explained, but also as it arises from Konitza's writings, these claims are based on appeals for two criteria: 1) for the principle of an area defined by ethnic homogeneity of its population, „as a common linguistic-cultural group“; 2) for the notion of a historic territory with its own traditional borders.“¹⁰² Here the evocation of the Pellazgs is meaningful. Konitza believed in a cyclical development trajectory of the Albanian nation, going from birth, growth, to efflorescence and decline. This historicist perspective of conceiving the nation is personified by comparing past splendor to the miserable present.¹⁰³

Konitza was convinced that the Albanian people urgently needed to civilize themselves and were not yet ripe for an independent political life.¹⁰⁴ Therefore the main goal of his review *Albania* was to culturally and politically prepare the Albanian people for this future challenge. He brought in a variety of topics that ranged from linguistics, history, folklore, up to agriculture and commerce.¹⁰⁵ The main aim of these writings was to teach Albanians how to improve themselves and go towards a higher level of emancipation as a precon-

101 Hobsbawm, (1990), pp. 33, 38.

102 Hroch, (1993), p. 15.

103 Smith, (1991), p. 87.

104 *Albania*, no. 4, (1), pp. 57–58; *Albania*, nos. 10,11,12, (1906), pp. 198–199.

105 For example in the article "Two words on agriculture and commerce," Konitza explains the benefits coming from tilling the land with iron ploughs, *Albania*, no. 9, Brussels: 1898, pp. 165–166; in "Some words on livestock" Konitza shows the importance of commerce, agriculture and livestock for the prosperity of the country, *Albania*, no. 10, (1898), p. 184; in the article "Potato," he explained the origin of this vegetable and its uses, *Albania*, no. 4, (1899), pp. 59–60.

dition to deserve a political and independent life in the form of a national state.

Although Konitza was very critical of his nation, it seems that on certain occasions he assigned himself the role of „educator of the nation,“ one who stood among the *avant-garde* of the Albanian nationalist movement.¹⁰⁶ This role is conceived in sheer contrast to those who, in the early years of the 20th century, were in favor of violent methods of reaching Albanian national affirmation.¹⁰⁷

*Il y a une douzaine d'années, on pouvait compter sur les doigts le nombre des nationaliste shqipëtar [Albanians]. Sans doute il ne manquait pas de gens dont une vague curiosité pour la langue nationale secouait quelque peu l'indifférence; mais les nationalistes sincères, avec des opinions fixées et un but précis, étaient fort rares et passaient pour des exentriques. Cependant, avec le temps, l'idée faisait du progress et l'attrait de tout ce qui est neuf et hardi nous amenait de jour en jour des adhérents, généralement des jeunes [...] Educateurs de la nation, c'est-à-dire l'opposé de demagogues, nous n'avions nulle envie d'entrer en concurrence avec des charlatants frénétiques.*¹⁰⁸

In my opinion, Faik Konitza should be seen as a nationalist intellectual and a modernizer.¹⁰⁹ Throughout the period of publication of his review *Albania*, Konitza perceived a „national idea“ or „national feelings“ as being an elitist attribute, and not yet a common patrimony, or at best something developed only at a regional level.¹¹⁰ The role he set himself was to transform it into an encompassing „national dimension.“ In his perspective, the Albanian nation was a concept closely linked to that of progress, marking a higher stage of the evolution of the Albanian people.

Konitza's outlook and activity should be placed in the ideological context of his time. He spent most of his life in Western Europe and was influenced by ideological and cultural streams of the 19th and 20th century. This period of

106 Jorgaqi, vol. 3, (2001), pp. 18–60.

107 The "Macedonian" question of late 19th century and early 20th century was one of the most intricate affairs that the Ottoman Empire was facing in his European territories, Rumeli. It marked the starting of a period of intervention of the Great Powers, which pressed over the Sublime Porte to undertake reforms to "relief" the plight of the Christian Balkan populations. The ensuing territorial reorganization of Rumeli brought about an escalation of clashes among various Balkan nationalisms, such as Serbian, Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, each of them contending various portions of the Balkan Ottoman dominions and trying to expand the respective "ethnic" space to the detriment of the other rivals. In this context, and under the example of the other Balkan nationalisms, Albanian armed bands were formed to "propagate" the national idea and "save" the motherland from the partition between the Balkan neighbours.

108 *Albania*, no. 5, (1907), pp. 118–119. "About a dozen of years ago, the *Shqipëtar* [Albanian] nationalists could be counted with the fingers of one hand. Of course, there was no lack of people whose vague curiosity about the national language would somewhat shake up the indifference, but, sincere nationalists were quite rare and regarded as eccentrics. However, as time went by, the idea made progress and the attraction of everything which is new and daring made disciples join us day by day, mostly youngsters. As educator of the nation, i.e. adversaries of the demagogues, we did not bother at all to enter into a race with frenetic charlatans."

109 I am indebted to my friend and colleague Bülent Bilmez for helping me to find the proper definition of the work of Albanian nationalists of the time, such as Konitza.

110 Jorgaqi, vol. 3 (2001), pp. 18–60.

time was, in Europe and its immediate peripheries, „a golden age of vernacularizing, lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs.“¹¹¹ This century also marked a growing interest in questions of origin and descent of peoples and of their cultural distinctiveness and historical character. Since the 18th century, European thought had used „national character“ as a necessary tool to explain the history of people.¹¹² The development of humanistic education and science inspired a belief in the possibility of progress and evolution of nations.¹¹³

Faik Konitza was an actor and propagator of a national project for Albanians. It was part of a modernizing process similar to that undergone by most Balkan countries in the 19th century. Konitza was part of that process, as he was also using the means produced by modernity, such as periodicals, newspapers, whose task was to grasp and develop the „spirit of the nation.“¹¹⁴ The audiences of the print media were seen as embodying the idea of a cultural community, and precisely this concern with culture – in the sense of particularity and community – was one aspect of modernity.

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111 Anderson, (2003), p. 71.

112 Smith, (1991), p. 87.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

114 Breuilly, (1993), p. 58.

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