

Educational and cultural traditions in Elbasan during the nineteenth century – 1912

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Abstract:

In XIX century the city of Elbasan was one of the most important cities of Albania. Geographical position and development of this city gave him a special significance being considered as a powerful source of culture. In Elbasan during this period were established a number of patriotic club such as: "Bashkimi", "Vellazeria", "Aferdita". In these clubs and patriotic societies held an important cultural activity and education of the city. Request to the Ottoman Empire as: the teaching of the Albanian language in schools, opening of schools etc. were the continuation of claims submitted by the League of Prizren in 1878. A good job of spreading the albanian language in Elbasan made and members of clubs. Besides cultural educational movement that characterized the city during this period, played an important role publication activity of the patriots of the city. At this time the press became the main panel of the Albanian political and social thought. Newspaper "Tomorri" became reflective of social, economic and political opinions Albanian intellectuals. In this newspaper have been reflected the role of social groups in the national movement. Congress of Elbasan and opening of the high school named "Normale" had an importance in the educational movement of the city. Many personalities gave their contribution not only to political developments but also in educational developments among which were: Aleksander Xhuvani, Lef Nosi, Emin Matraxhiu etc.

Introduction:

Elbasan is one of the most important regions of Albania, presented as a city with a physical and geographical position more favorable, which significantly influenced in its further development not only local but also national level. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Elbasan was presented with features of a city of Oriental-Balkan style, which constituted the economic base of small artisan production. Craftsmanship, as centuries ago presented specialized. It was obvious expression of the cultural heritage of this city. Among the types of crafts of this period were : weaving, working of copper, making the vessels of everyday use, woodworking etc.. These products of high quality sold in the markets closed, called "Bezistane" and evaluated for their workmanship, not only within Albania but also outside its borders. Besides the development of handicrafts, the region of Elbasan distinguished for religious tolerance. This phenomenon was shown not only on the local level (Region of Elbasan) but also at the national level. The belief was part of the conscience and soul of people, and national level during this period there were four religious beliefs which were Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Bektashi. But never in any case, the presence of many religions has not been an obstacle on the relationships that exist between these religious communities, but rather, what more Albanians united despite beliefs were common interests to serve the nation and country, especially in difficult moments. Religious tolerance has always been an important aspect of social and cultural progress in the region of Elbasan. The community of this city is always interested in education development. Many families, failing schools in the city, sent their children to be educated in other countries outside their homeland.

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During the Renaissance period 1830-1912, Elbasan was a center where efforts to develop social emancipation, political and cultural. One of the representatives of the Albanian Renaissance was Konstandin Kristoforidhi. He was a linguist with more authority in the nineteenth century, who set cultural values of national education.

Kostandin Kristoforidhi was born in Elbasan. In 1847 attended high school Zosimea of Ioannina. In 1857 he went to Istanbul where drafted a 'Momerandum

Albanian language. " Has lived in many places in Tunisia, Malta, Istanbul, Albania. In 1867-1868 he published two books for learning the Albanian language for students. Together with Naim Frasheri became the founder of Albanian-fiction for children. Dictionary of Albanian language, Albanian language grammar are two of his major works.³⁶³

The activity of this linguist from Elbasan can not separate from the activities of other personalities, who develop their activity in the political, social and economic fields. In 1890, Losh Papamihali patriot, his shop had turned into a secret place where writing and reading taught in Albanian language. Muc Shqiptari, at the time of detention of learning Albanian language by the Ottoman Empire, was secretly distributed to citizens of this city newspapers and magazines in Albanian. Dhimiter Pina teacher, taught students to whom he had confidence, Albanian language. Occurred under the pressure of political and military of the Ottoman Empire, Albanians were forced to study in foreign schools, in Turkish and Greek language. In the years 1908 - 1912 national cultural movement characterized by an increased level of its organization, which was reflected in the creation of a whole network of cultural and political clubs. In the region of Elbasan, was established a number of clubs as the clubs "Bashkimi", "Vellazeria" and "Aferdita". In these clubs develop a national educational cultural activities, impacting positively on the continuity of the development of the Albanian National Movement. Request to the Ottoman Empire as: the teaching of the Albanian language in schools, opening of schools etc. were the continuation of claims submitted by the League of Prizren in 1878.

Collapse of the absolutist regime of Sultan Abdul Hamiti (july 23, 1908)³⁶⁴, encouraged the Albanians to engage the opening of schools in Albanian language. Fejzulla Guranjaku, was teacher at the Turkish school, he taught his students the Albanian language, although this action was very dangerous. It was his patriotic contribution that enabled the opening of the first school in Elbasan in the Albanian language, August 2, 1908.

Magazines 'Albania' wrote: "All newspapers have written about events that took place in Elbasan in January. A young man had opened a private school in Elbasan,

³⁶³ Instituti i Studimeve Pedagogjike: Historia e arsimit dhe e mendimit pedagogjik shqiptar, Tirane 2003

³⁶⁴ Akademia e Shkencave e Shqiperise: Historia e popullit shqiptar, vell.II, Tirane 2003

where he invited fellow citizens learn to write and to read their native language, but Turkish authorities captured and put him in prison, the courageous teacher.³⁶⁵„

Clubs established in the city of Elbasan became centers for the spread of the Albanian language. In October 1908 opened a school where teaching approximately 70 students each evening. A good job of spreading the Albanian language in Elbasan made and members of clubs. Clubs that were established in Elbasan in 1908 were two "Bashkimi" and "Vellazeria", which were established as a result of the efforts of patriots of this city. While the club "Bashkimi", in Elbasan was formed with the initiative of some patriots of this city by September 8, 1908.

Newspapers of this period for opening the club's "Vellazeria" in Elbasan wrote: "On April 18, opened the club "Vellazeria", to spread the Albanian language in the city and its surrounding villages. Officially opening it was celebrated with great joy by the people.³⁶⁶ „

The population of the city helped collecting financial aid for clubs. Members of clubs and societies established in the following years, were: Emin Haxhiademi, Josif HaxhiMima, Simon Shuteriqi, Hasan Mezja, Alush Saraçi, Qemal Karaosmani, Dhimitër Deljana, Fot Papajani, Myrteza Demeti, Ahmet Dakli, Peter Dodbiba etj.

"Albanian brothers. Have set up here in Elbasan, a cultural society named 'Aferdita'. The aim of this society is to create a musical band, through which to spread the patriotic feelings of the Albanians³⁶⁷ „

Also, efforts were made to spread the Albanian language in the villages around the city, as in the province of Shpati. Hysen Ceka teacher went to province of Shpat, and the shepherds learned to write and read Albanian. Clubs and patriotic societies choose their chairmanship with the rotation model. New elections were held in October 1909, and the head of the club "Bashkimi", solved Hostopalli Hysen. Monitoring of these clubs and societies become a supervisory board under the direction of Aqif Pasha (Elbasani).

Besides cultural educational movement that characterized the city during the nineteenth century until the end of 1912, played an important role publicistic activity of

³⁶⁵ Magazine "Albania" vitit 1897, nr.1, fq.15

³⁶⁶ P.Kita : Elbasani në luftë për çlirim. Tiranë 1974

³⁶⁷ Newspaper "Tomorri", Elbasan, 1910, 20 prill, nr.5.

the patriots of the city. "Tomorri", was the first newspaper in the city of Elbasan. On March 10, 1910 began publishing the newspaper "Tomorri" temporary political - literary, published three times a month. It was not coincidence edition of this newspaper, if we consider that the activities of intellectuals publicist had started earlier in the press abroad. "Tomorri" as the first organ of the press in Elbasan, will leave traces in the history of the press of this city for the importance that had. The emergence of the periodical press in the early twentieth century was the necessity of time. Educational and cultural traditions of Elbasan served as incentive to the emergence of the periodical press. As a catalyst in the emergence of the press in Elbasan served the intellectual environment of this city. To mention are also some other factors such as economic development of this city, and active participation of its representatives in the political life of the country. In its activities, the Elbasan's periodic press reflected the struggle and effort that made the Albanians for the development of education and culture, securing political independence and subsequent efforts for the establishment, consolidation and democratization of the country's life. Personalities of this city as Lef Nosi, Aqif Elbasan, Salih Ceka being active participants in the political arena trying to secure a rapid contact between their political ideas and the wider mass of people. It was led by Lef Nosi who was also its publisher. Based on newspaper program main goals were: strengthening of national sentiment and support for high school which would prepare teachers of Albanian language.

"... will try to awaken the national feelings of the Albanians, for their civilization...

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Although it appeared for a short time Tomorri newspapers quite positively influenced the emergence of other publications of the periodical press in the city of Elbasan. It played an important role in the political, educational, cultural of the country, and influenced the further development of the press in Elbasan. It contained political articles as: "How are brought against the Turks and Albanians behave?", "The enemies of the Albanian language are enemies of the Constitution", "Balkan alliance", "Constitution and the rights of Albanians", etc., literary articles as "Tomb of lovers", translated by Simon Shuteriqi, historical writings as "Life of Pyrrhus", – Aleksander

³⁶⁸ Newspaper "Tomorri", Elbasan, 1910, 10 mars, nr.1

Xhuvani , “ Who are the Albanians „- Kristo Dako . Collaborators active and continuous in this newspaper, were some of the most prominent personalities of the time as : Luigj Gurakuqi, Aleksander Xhuvani, Kristo Dako, Simon Shuteriqi etc. Names of those personalities is added the name of Emin Matraxhiut, in 1921, will publish a newspaper “Shkumbini „.³⁶⁹

Historical importance, the development of education and culture of this city, was the organization of the Congress of Elbasan and the opening of high , named “Normale„. National Congress was convened in September 2, 1909 and continued the proceedings until September 9. It is one of the most important events in the history of culture and national education. Initiators in organizing this Congress became Albanian Thessaloniki club, led by Mithat Frasheri. This club, March 25, 1909, designated as the site for the development of the proceedings of the congress, the city of Elbasan. The organization of this congress was not random events, but was important during these processes, political, ideological, educational, cultural, which was accumulated years ago and whose culmination was this congress.

In an article, Simon Shuteriqit, wrote among other things: “ We want to open our schools, but unfortunately, teachers who are able to undertake this mission missing... is necessary, the opening of a school to prepare teachers... „³⁷⁰

In Congress, attended by 35 representatives from 28 clubs and patriotic societies. Among the delegates, were more teacher and Albanian National Movement activists, as : Orhan Pojani, Mithat Frasheri, Dervish Biçaku, Refik Toptani, Sevasti Qiriaz, Gjergj Qiriaz, Kristo Dako, Ahmet Dakli, Simon Shuteriqi etc.³⁷¹

Congress held its meetings in the building of “Bashkimi „ club. Chairman of the congress was Dervish Bicakciu and Mithat Frasheri was elected vice. Most important problems discussed in this Congress were those of development and organization of national education. Participants in this Congress focused their discussions on these problems:

³⁶⁹ Petro Kita: Emin Matraxhiu, Tiranë, “8 Nëntori”, 1973

³⁷⁰ Newspaper “Tomorri” Elbasan, 1910 ,10 qershor, nr.10

³⁷¹ Kujtim Bevapi: Normalja në fokus te bashkekohesise, Elbasan, 1999

- Opening of a high school, for teacher training
- Creation of a center that would deal with the budget and the organization of Albanian schools.
- Creation of a center that will manage the budget and to care for the organization of Albanian schools.
- To better coordinate the activities of national clubs, and to design and adopt a joint program for them.

The works of this Congress was reflected in the Albanian media, assessing the spread of open learning Albanian and Albanian language primary schools were made a necessity for the development of national education. In this Congress, the act of decisions were approved, consisting of 15 points, but three of them were more important. According to the newspaper "Union of the Nation" (Bashkimi i Kombit) the essence of the Congress were three decisions:

- high school opening "Normale,,
- creating a society, "Perparimi,, as the central educational society
- the Manastir club defined as the central club³⁷²ⁱⁱ

The decision for opening in December 1909, a high school in the city of Elbasan, is the first point of decisions. This high school had six classrooms and prepare teachers for primary schools in the Albanian language. In accordance with the second decision, in the town of Korca central educational society was founded. Decisions of the Congress of Elbasan became known inside and outside Albania, which is evidenced by domestic and foreign press. From the numerous articles in newspapers highlight :“ What we expect from Congress of Elbasan „ – “Liria „ (Freedom) newspapers³⁷³ⁱⁱⁱ, newspaper "Lidhja Ortodokse"(Orthodox League) makes propaganda and calls for keeping Congress in Elbasan^{374iv}, newspaper “Dielli,, (The Sun), was published in Boston of the United States of America, which largely reflected the decisions of Congress^{375v}. From the numerous difficulties in the country, just three months after the Congress, on December 1, 1909, in Elbasan was opened the high school, the first in Albania, which

³⁷² Newspaper “Bashkimi i Kombit” Manastir, 1909, shtator, 23, nr.1

³⁷³ Newspaper “Liria”, Selanik, 1909, 25 korrik 1909

³⁷⁴ Newspaper “Lidhja Ortodokse”, Korçë, 1909, 17 gusht

³⁷⁵ Gazeta “Dielli”, Boston, 1909, 1 tetor

began teacher training that were necessary for the opening of schools in the country. Its opening was the finalization of numerous efforts, the Albanian patriots who tried to develop education and progress of the Albanian nation. On December 2, in high school began teaching. In the early days in school were enrolled 50 students^{376vi}, but after three months the number of students reached 150, coming from different regions of Albania as , Peja,Gjakova, Prizreni, Vuçiterna, Mitrovica, Gjlani, Presheva, Shkupi, Dibra, Shkodra, Elbasani,Tirana , Kavaja,Permeti. Contribution to the progress of the learning process at school gave the Albanian nation personalities Luigj Gurakuqi, Sotir Peci and intellectuals from the city of Elbasan Aleksander Xhuvani, Peter Dodbiba, Demetrius Papparisto, Hasan Mezja, Simon Shuteriqi etc. First director of the school was chosen Luigj Gurakuqi. In Italy, the newspaper 'La nazione Albanese', directed by Lorekio (of Albanian origin) wrote that:

“They decided to open a school, as in all civilized countries,”³⁷⁷

Decisions of the Congress of Elbasan and the formation of society “Perparimi,, in the town of Korça, directly influenced the expansion of the Albanian national schools. During the year 1909 - 1910, the number of schools and courses in Albanian language and national education was extended to all Albanian territories, from Mitrovica, Kosovo to southern parts of the Çameria. After the Congress of Elbasan was opened about 25 new schools in the Albanian language.³⁷⁸ Contributions to the opening of Albanian schools in Kosovo gave especially patriotic Hasan Pristina, Bajram Curri, Nexhip Draga. Attempts to open Albanian schools made the Albanian clubs in Diber, Struge, Durres etc. In these years of education in Albania began the stage of development, with many difficulties and obstacles, which were part of the political, economic situation in Albania.

Conclusion:

Albanian national movement during the Renaissance, 1830 - 1912, has been movement for political independence, for opening of schools in the Albanian language and cultural emancipation of the Albanian people. An important role, have played and

³⁷⁶ Arkivi Qendror SHteteror,Fondi Nr.3,Dos.53, p.1.

³⁷⁷ Newspaper “La Nazione Albanese”,Catanzaro,1909,15 tetor,nr.19

³⁷⁸ Instituti i Studimeve Pedagogjike:Historia e arsimit dhe e mendimit pedagogjik shqiptar,Tirane 2003.

patriots of the city of Elbasan, being activated in the event of important political, educational and cultural in the country. Efforts of the Patriots were associated with the spread of education and national content. Historical legacy in this period characterized by efforts elbasan`s patriots who did not stop for a moment their efforts to engage the region of Elbasan and the patriots of this region in the revolts of the years 1910-1911-1912 until reaching the final goal, the Albanian declaration of independence on November 28, 1912. This event marked the final separation of Albania from the Ottoman Empire.