

Ilirjana KACELI
Tirana University
Tirana/ Albania

Education in the Albanian Colony of Istanbul

Abstract

On January 1, 1918, a group of Albanian personalities in Istanbul decided to establish a society named "Helping Society of Albanian colony in Turkey". The main purpose of establishing this society was to strengthen the close ties between Albanians. All Albanians of Turkey, wherever they were, had to coordinate all their efforts for their moral, human, commercial and health needs. To achieve this goal they should care to provide their compatriots every patriotic service in different ways. Were assigned the duties and obligations of each member, age over 21 years of membership and also the right quotation. Beside it they tried to open schools in Albanian trying to educate the sons of Albanian emigrants living there.

Keywords: *Albanian colony of Istanbul; Education; "Shoqata e djelmohave"*

1- Introduction

Albanians settled in Istanbul while they were under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. In the capital of the Ottoman Empire, during the Renaissance, and especially after the creation of the “League of Prizren” attempts were made to establish an Albanian cultural society, which met at the Sublime Port objections. Albanian intellectuals and patriots gathered in Istanbul, from all Albanian territories on October 12, 1879, and founded an Albanian cultural society known as the “Society of the Albanian Printing Letter”, otherwise known as the “Society of Istanbul” (Bozbora, 2002, 197).

This society tried to develop culture and national education. With the funds collected this society had managed to publish several textbooks and magazines in Albanian-language. All these publications, along with ABC-book would enrich the cultural and educational Albanian tradition outside Albanian territories. Society of Istanbul would attempt to raise the national awareness through the dissemination of learning and the raising of Albanian national schools. Their efforts were crowned with successfully with the opening of the Albanian school of Maidens in Korça on March 7, 1887. Even in the period after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1928, in September 1908, Austrian consul Tahitian reported that the Albanians of Monastery were trying to develop a congress where the main issue was to create a national alphabet (Gawrych, 2007, 251).

Even in 1991, the scholar society “Burimi”, in Istanbul, wrote to an Albanian man ,where he asked for some books for the library that they had founded (AQSH, D.60, v.1911, fl.1). Besides this letter, there existed even another letter of the head of the Central Committee of Istanbul, Abdyl Ypi, sent to a person, to whom he wrote about the turning of iptadiye into Albanian schools. (AQSh, D.60, V.1911, fl.1)

Albanian patriots tried hard and built a complete strategy in the educational system and followed it step by step. This strategy started with the publication of the first Albanian dictionaries, translation of the literary literature, numerous alphabets in Albanian language, and to come into their final compilation, on the “Congress of Manastir”, on November 1908 (RAMA, 2005, 12). Parallellally, was passed from the certification of educational programmes, into the compilation of school texts and staying focus on the first lines of the Albanian pedagogical thought (ISP, 2003, 224-250).

In August 1908 an Albanian man from Istanbul, demanded to the club of Monastery: “Please don’t forget Albanian books because even Albanians here are collecting money to build a school and buy books just to learn Albanian language”. But apart him another Albanian also wrote to the “unity” of Monastery requiring Albanian books because he wanted to open a bookstore (AQSh, F.101, 1908, fl.3).

2- Education in the Albanian Colony of Istanbul During 1919-1923

After the declaration of independence, Albanians of Istanbul couldn't be as united with each other as before because a part of the political elite had begun to return from Istanbul and was moving to Albania to serve in the new government. During the First World War, there are no documented data that Albanians in Turkey, had made efforts to develop education in Albanian language. Actually the Albanian population in this period was in a phase of survival, because many of its provinces were being deployed in different cities of Turkey, and the whole country turned into a battlefield and a part of the Albanian population remained outside the native territories. However, after the change of political situation in Turkey, the issue of education in Albanian language was still present. This was observed in cities where Albanians were placed in Turkey, as well as throughout diaspora, where the role of the organization of this activity was played by different cultural and political clubs, where gathered the most active Albanians (Gogaj, 2007,71).

But the situation changed in 1918, when the Ottoman government forced by events not only domestically, but also by international pressure, was forced to declare amnesty, which found Albanians deployed in many areas of Turkey, especially around the cities of: Istanbul, Tekirdag, Bursa, Edirne, Kutahya, Izmir, Inebol, Kirklareli, Sakarya, Aydin etc. (Ağanoğlu, 2012, 147). So besides political, artistic and cultural activities, Albanian created even clubs dealing with the issue of education of children of emigrants. On January 1, 1918, a group of Albanian personalities in Istanbul decided to establish a society named "Helping Society of Albanian colony in Turkey ". The main purpose of establishing this society was to strengthen the close ties between Albanians (AQSh,F.101, d.4, 1921, fl.1-6).

All Albanians of Turkey, wherever they were, had to coordinate all their efforts to fulfill all their moral, human, commercial and health needs. To achieve this goal they should care to provide in different ways to their compatriots every patriotic service. Were assigned the duties and obligations of each member, age over 21 years of membership and also the right quotation. A special section of the statute of the company would explain that, "A school teacher is a member of the council without vote, he could express his precious thoughts in every issue and be considered a very useful part of the council. A year later, on March 3, 1920 in order to increase the feeling of love and sincerity between Albanians of Turkey, the Albanian society was reorganized, and the Central Committee of Albanians in Istanbul was known as "The Albanian society".

Apart of the main committee of the colony, was established even "Shoqeria djelmoshe ". This society had as main purpose the education in the Albanian language of the children of Albanians in Turkey, and as a president was elected, Riza Drini. This society could not find space to unfold its activities related to the education of Albanians who lived in Istanbul. However, this society managed to open three centers for learning albanian language in some of the neighborhoods of Istanbul as: Topkapı, Eyüp, and Üsküdar (AQSh, F.101,d.4, 1919, fl.1).

In Topkapı district lessons were developed in the mosque of Baba Abdullah, and in Eyüp, lessons were developed in the mosque of Baba Bektash. While in Üsküdar learning took place at the home of Myslym Permeti. But it should be noted that, besides the desire for knowledge and education in their native language, Albanians also encountered difficulties in providing text books, which as it was well known, used to have a high cost. Having heard about this problem, an Albanian patriot Kasem Durrezi, from the city of Durres, sent a letter to the society presidency. He was ready to help with ABC-books, grammar, singing, for the first year, which were to be reproduced by the printing press of Elbasan. "I do not want profits for myself, he writes, my profit is to know i am giving my help to fulfill this sacred purpose". Besides these schools, Albanian clubs tried to open new branches in other quarters of Istanbul, as in Ferikoy, which was named after one of the most outstanding national poets, Naim Frasheri. This educational progress and the opening of this new school, made very happy Albanians of Turkey. The newspaper "The Truth", claimed that this step that was important and valuable to all those who know the Albanian colony in Turkey and its history (AQSh, F.101, D.4, v.1921, fl.1-6).

After coming to power Sulejman Delvina's government, the central committee of Albanian colony in Istanbul, alongside the recognition and establishing an Albanian state representative, asked the Albanian Prime minister texts and the curricula of the elementary school in Albania. Prime minister Sulejman Delvina, which was chosen as prime minister by "Kongresi i Lushnjës", as representative of the Albanian colony of Istanbul, would respond that he will help them, and soon sent a number of different books (Frasheri, 2005, 79). A year later they again repeated their request to Iljaz Vrioni, the new prime minister, who would respond, "The school program will be sent to you, once we find a faithful person.

The Ministry of Education will also send the appropriate books. The program, which came from Albania was fully published in the newspaper "E Verteta" under the auspices of Nesip Era (Voshtina). These facts lead to the opening of more Albanian schools in other districts of Istanbul. So a new school was opened in Besiktas, which was a school with 10 desks and each held 6 pupils. This school named "Eagle" held the same name as the school in the Ferikoy's neighborhood. This school had three classes, and a total of 110 pupils. The teacher of Besiktas School, Nesip Era, during the Albanian society's meetings, made calls on Albanian compatriots to attend school where beside teaching their mother tongue, he tried to give practical and vital lessons about commercial culture and some crafts lessons. Even this school also failed to meet the needs of Albanians living in the big city of Istanbul, so another new school was opened in the neighborhood "Fatih" that would take the name "Chameria". This showed that the great desire to be educated in their mother tongue, influenced in the growth of the success of education in the Albanian language. Albanian representatives of "Eyup" club, opened a school in their neighborhood known as "Kosovo", and teacher would be Muntaz Kokalari, a guy from Gjirokastra. The Albanian press in Turkey would evaluate the opening ceremony of this school in the center of Istanbul (E verteta, 1920, no.4). The Albanian press, among other things, stated that in the city of Istanbul were opened several schools in the Albanian language in which there learn about 500 students.

(Shqipëria e re, 1921).

A month later this newspaper would quote "Albanians in Istanbul are working better than anywhere else, except in America. In Istanbul was published the newspaper "E verteta", of "Shoqëria Djelmoshe" which tried and opened several schools in the city, and also tried to give a concert in the Albanian language. According to literature data, there are proves that Albanian schools were opened, not only in the city of Istanbul, but also in Izmir, Burses, Edirne, Inegol. In 1919, the club of Izmir required to The Central Committee of the colony in Istanbul 400 ABC-books in Albanian language. But this paper indicated that a person called Nuri made clear to the center in Istanbul, to sent ABC-books which were required a lot of time ago. He states in his letter that: "I was announced that ABC-books published in Istanbul will be sent. It has passed a lot of time and we had no news from you but we desperately need you to send us quickly, a sufficient quantity of ABC-books which were already printed". Also in August 19, 1919 a request came from another school in Bursa, for 40 pieces ABC-books, because there existed an important center of Albanians. During 1920, efforts which were on the issue of learning Albanian came alive. This paper was appeared on the "Truth" which became the tribune of significant recovery of Albanian emigrants in Turkey, where the foundations of his future would be reflected in the education in the Albanian language. Teacher Nesip Era (Voshtina) gave a valuable help in this direction because besides journalistic writings was also one of the prominent activists of the Committee's colony in Istanbul. Journal "The Truth" in 1921 published an article where among others showed the great pleasure about the schools which were opened in Istanbul and demanded Albanians to work hard to open other schools in the Albanian language, and he stated that a "nation without school is like a body without blood" (E verteta, 1921, nr.8). Several months later, the same newspaper has also published another article calling on Albanian parents to take care for their children, because only schools and unity could save Albania. (E verteta, 1921, nr.34). Optimistic for having a rich Albanian heritage, Nesip Era (Voshtina) claimed that Albanians will disappear the root of the evil and they would follow the road of improvement and by means of national education for "enlightened that they are devoting themselves hope of the fatherland (E verteta, 1921, nr.12). "Seeing things according to a political point of view, that the fate of the country was connected with those of Albanians living in foreign countries, in an article published in Romania would underscore that "the Albanian nation today is in his first steps and of success. So now dear brother, feelings and love for the language strengthens the work and evokes a sacred. Every Albanian's heart must feel love for their schools because from them we may ensure that the nation's vitality ... and will develop and Albanian language and Albanianism" (Shqipëria e re, 1921).

Even "Shoqëria Djelmoshe" had began to en live more in its activity. She tried to improve from the organizational point of view, so on May 20, 1921 was gathered the extraordinary assembly of this society. In the assembly, one of the main issue which it was given a great importance was the opening of schools in the Albanian language. They tried through political-cultural activities stage performances and concerts which were not only national but feelings come alive even add funds to open schools in the Albanian language. This society developed a series of

activities as they were collecting funds for poor children, providing clothing and school books. At the same time it published the map of Albania, would organize celebrations for November 28 and would raise funds in support of the newspaper "The truth". (Gogaj, 2007,83).

The Assembly decided to change the name of society from "Djelmosha", on "Djaleri" and chose the new leadership of this company: Asaf Xhaxhuli, Riza Drini, Adem Ylli, Neshat Panco, Sermed Xhaxhuli, Halid Ceka, Nazmi Monastery, Muharrem Vulashi, Emin Cami (E verteta, 1921, nr.32).

The reorganization of the Association brought an increasing in the number of the young members of this society, and increased the amount of the financial contribution of each. This company also decided to create a library and open a reading room, where also gave their contribution even Albanian students of Robert College in Istanbul (Shqiperia e re, 1921, nr.38).

Besides this educational and cultural associations, existed Association of Kosovo. On 17 November 1921, this association in order to bring together all Albanians living in Turkey under the leadership of the colony Committee decided to join the Central Committee of the Albanian colony in Istanbul (AQSh, F.101, d.5, 1921, fl.55). In January 1922 the Central Committee of the society in Istanbul decided to form a committee which would deal mainly with the issue of distribution and care in Albanian schools. Members of the committee were Father Bonati, Cem Debar, Sabri Qyteza, Shevqet Debar, Q. Dani, Sermet Xhaxhuli, Demetrio Fallo.

Sabri Qyteza followed closely the schools progress Besiktas and Ferikoy and said that he had been pleased by the response and their progress. Sabri Qyteza was one of the old personality who lived in Istanbul and at the time of the empire for several years had been teacher Albanian language at Public School Administration. He wrote a newspaper article for the newspaper "Shqiperia e re", expressing not only their condition, the high quality of teaching, but also the economic problems that schools had (Shqiperia e re, 1922, nr.87).

School exams were attended even by leading personalities of the elder lies of the Central Committee of Istanbul, as Tahsin Kalkandeleni, Ahmet Hoxha, and Dylber Opar. Problems that were observed were sent to the committee, where an important place was occupied by Albanian schools in Turkey.

In 1923, the general economic situation of schools was poor, and the Committee itself was not able to help them financially, so they asked for help, Nezir Leskoviku, the Albanian consul in Istanbul. The poor financial situation of the club, Albanian representative would explain it as a result of a weakness in the organizational system and disagreements that exist between Albanian heads of the committee. This had a bad influence because as they were not very decided in what they wanted and also they didn't have a clearly defined policy (AQSh, F.101, d.22, 1923, fl.6).

As a result the consular asked for assistance from the Ministry of Education to ensure

the salaries of the teachers on these schools, while rents and other expenses might be provided by the parents. Based on this notice even the Ministry of Education in Albania would require a loan for the Albanian consulate in Istanbul. One of the leaders of the Committee in Istanbul, Xhemaledin Debar, sent a letter to the Albanian Prime minister, Ahmet Zog. In his letter, he wrote about the issues of Albanian schools in Istanbul, where he harshly accused teachers of these schools, who for their own personal interests they used to sacrifice everything. Further, he would write that "teachers that you will send in Istanbul, would be preferable to be from the North Albanian", while as regard to Albania's consul, he showed his appreciation for his character, but showed reservations about his professional skills .

The newspaper "New Albania" during 1923, wrote about a decrease in the level of organization of the schools of Albanian language in Turkey and for a lack of organization of the Central Committee of Albanian colony in Istanbul in relation to this problem (Shqiptari I Amerikes, 1923, nr.13).

In the press was written that the Albanian government had appointed a fund to open an Albanian school in Istanbul at the beginning of the new academic year. Further the Albanian newspaper "Bariş" which was published in Turkey during 1924, confirmed the existence of an Albanian school in Istanbul, not in a separate building, but in the building where were set even the offices of the colony (Bariş, 1924, nr.13).

In this school used to teach voluntarily, Asaf Xhaxhuli, who was the chief secretary of the Albanian Committee in Istanbul, and Vasil Andoni a teacher in the school of "Robert Koleji".

In the years of 1925-1939 the organization of Albanian emigrants in some countries met with some obstacles, which were related to new social-political circumstances developed in the countries where they lived. In the framework of policies to strengthen the nation-states, in Europe generally were not implemented liberal policies about the organization of immigrant societies according to their ethnic background. In March 1925 the Turkish authorities closed the Albanian society known as "Pragu shqiptar" or "Istanbul Center Committee". Also it was banned the "Albanian club of Istanbul" and the sporting society "The morning star" (Historia e Popullit, 2007, 526) .

This company was closed because it was illegal out of the articles of the Statute and it dealt with issues of race and nationality. Indeed this measure was taken after the increasing number of arrivals from Kosovo and Tchermeria who were forced out of Yugoslavia and Greece and were sent to Turkey. However, the colony of Albanians continued its activity, keeping connections with Albanian clubs, political groups, Albanian legation etc.. Such attempts were made in all Turkish cities where Albanians lived as in Ankara, Izmir, Istanbul, etc.

3- Conclusions

In conclusion we can say that education in Albanian language was developed even later in the Albanian colony of Turkey, until the eve of World War II. A revival of the social life was seen in the end of 20th and the beginning of 30's.

The effort of the Albanian "Diaspora" for the maintenance and the development of education and of Albanian language , even though they met with some difficulties, it was again a special contribution on the Albanian national educational system, as a fundamental part of it serving as a base of the continual progress in this field. This was seen in the existence of a variety activities, as for example in the increase of the participation of the youth, participation of students and women in the social life and other achievements in the political, cultural and artistic field. They were highly activated in tradery, different branches of industry and economy, in the Turkish administration from the lower positions to the most important ones, also they were employed even in the army.

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