

Artan Puto

‘We, the People’ fellow 2004 – 2005

## **THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE OF FAIK KONITZA IN HIS NATION-BUILDING DISCOURSE**

Faik Konitza was born in March 15, 1876, in Konitza. At that time the town of Konitza was in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It became part of Greece after the Balkan War of 1912. It is situated in the north-western part of actual Greece. His parents were coming from important Moslem families. Many of them held important positions in the Ottoman administration. Konitza family was very much respected in his native town both by Moslems and Christians.<sup>1</sup>

Faik Konitza was carefully and fully educated. After his schooling in his hometown (1885-1886) and Istanbul (1890), at the age of fourteen, he was sent to France to follow his higher education.<sup>2</sup> For the next two years he attended the government College de Lissieux (Normandy, France), where he distinguished himself in classical letters. In 1892 he entered the Lycée de Carcassonne (South France) to study letters and philosophy<sup>3</sup> and in 1895 he successfully passed the examination for the degree of *Bachelier ès Lettres-Philosophie* at the State University of Dijon. From Dijon, he went to Paris, where he lived for about two years, attending courses in Medieval French Literature, Latin and Greek in the College de France. His education was completed at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, when in 1912 he received his *Master of Arts Degree in Literature*.

In 1897, when he was only twenty-one years old, Konitza started in Brussels, a monthly review called *Albania*, published partly in Albanian and partly in French. That review lasted until 1909 and has been considered one of the most important ones with regard to promoting Albanian language and culture. In particular this review published documents on Albanian history, local customs, literature by Albanian and foreign authors, and became a periodical that devoted much more attention than any other to linguistic problems. Its final aim was to forge a literary national language.

After five years in Belgium, Konitza moved to London in 1902, where he continued the publication of his review. In autumn of 1909 Konitza arrived in Boston, Massachusetts 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 most long-living Albanian patriotic organization, *Vatra* (The Hearth), which still exists in nowadays. The Pan-Albanian Federation of America *Vatra* played an important role in defending the independence and the territorial integrity of the newly created Albanian state.

After the proclamation of the 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 decided for the independence of Albania in July 1913. During the First World War he lived partly in

---

<sup>1</sup> Faik Konitza, pg.55, “Faik Konitza, Works”, Vol.1, Editing House “Dudaj”, Tirana 2001.

<sup>2</sup> At that time it was unusual for Albanian Moslem families to send their children to study in Western Europe. Most often these well-to-do families used to send them to Istanbul, the capital of the Empire, where possibilities for a career in the state administration were far more numerous. See Jup Kastrati, “Faik Konitza’s personality”, in “Faik Konitza, works”, vol.5, pg.205, Tirana, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, pg.61.

Vienna and then in Rome. He returned to USA again in 1921 and till 1925 he directed “Dielli”, the newspaper of the “Vatra” Federation. From 1926-1939, Konitza became ambassador of the King Zog I (1928-1939) to Washington. He was one of the harshest critics of the Albanian president and latter King Zog I. He changed his course arguing that “it was senseless to continue to fight with him and not in the best interests of the country”.<sup>4</sup> He died in 1942 in Washington.

In the following section of the paper, I will analyse Konitza’s articulation of Albanian nation as it appeared in his writings until 1912, the year of Albanian independence. For a matter of technical convenience I focus my research only upon the role and importance Albanian literary language had in Faik Konitza’s nation-building discourse. The other elements such as 1) religion and/or 2) ancient descents would be a topic for another study on its own. This section will include an essay published in a French magazine and various articles by him that appeared in “Albania” review during the same period. The next last section of this paper will include a general overview and critique of the way the Albanian studies have dealt so far with the Konitza’s literary heritage.

## **The Albanian Language**

Faik Konitza devoted a particular attention to the problems of the Albanian alphabet and the written language, or the “literary language” as he called it. What is important for us here is to see what was the meaning Konitza lent to Albanian language and which place he designated for it in the repository of national assets. Before doing that it would be better to know his opinion on the importance of national languages as a “national characteristic”.

We are offered a good chance to analyse it in an essay by him with the title “*Essai sur les langues naturelles et les langues artificielles*”. It appeared in 1909 in the French review “*Pan*”. In fact the essay was written earlier, in 1904, and came out as a brochure on its own. In 1909 it was republished through the intermediary of his friend, the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918).<sup>5</sup> The essay was a reaction against the spread of the so-called universal languages, such as “Esperanto”, “Blue language” and “Volapuk”, and was intended as a defence of national languages. For Konitza the firsts were *the artificial languages*, while the second ones *the natural*

---

<sup>4</sup> Qamil M. Panarity, pg.xxxiv in the preface of the book of Faik konitza “Albania: The Rock Garden of Southeastern Europe” published in Boston in 1957.

<sup>5</sup> This essay came out as a brochure written by Pyrrhus Bardyli, “*Essai sur les langues naturelles et les langues artificielles*”, Brussels, Kiessling, 1904. *Pyrrhus Bardyli* was the nickname of Faik Konitza. Apparently he borrowed the names of the Epirot king of antiquity Pirro and the Illyrian king Bardyli, indicating his passion for antiquity history and his desire to see in the ancient people of the Balkans the predecessors of Albanians. He made it known and explained why he was using a nickname in a letter sent to Guillaume Apollinaire of 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1904. He tells to his French friend that he liked the idea of being hidden under nicknames and in this he was following the example of Henry Beyle, alias Stendhal, one of his dearest idols together with the French linguist Remy de Gourmont. As cited in the book of Luan Starova, “*Faik Konitza dhe Guillaume Apollinaire, një miqësi europiane*”, (*Faik Konitza and Guillaume Apollinaire, an European friendship*), op.cit., pg.20-21. This book contains unknown writings and articles of Faik Konitza, which are not included in the collection of his works and is preceded by an introduction of the author of this new collection. This collection was first published in French with the title “*Faik Konitza et Guillaume Apollinaire, une amitié européenne*”, L’Esprit des Péninsules, 1998, Paris.

*languages*. The study in itself was an implicit concern about preserving his “Albanian mother tongue” from being wiped away and its “natural course” of development negated.

Konitza presents his essay as a treatise on language philosophy, aiming to explain the inner rules governing natural languages. Luckily enough we are provided here also with footnotes, through which one can examine the literature used by Konitza while completing his essay. Most of the books he used were dealing with language philosophy, or purely linguistics. From philosophy Konitza referred to evolutionist school. Here he refers to Herbert Spencer’s book “Philosophy of the style”, in “Essays: Scientific, political and speculative”, London 1883, then he mentions Edward Claude “Pioneers of Evolution”, London 1902, and lastly Alfred Russell Wallace “Contributions to the theory of natural selection”, London 1871. He refers also to John Locke “An essay concerning human understanding” (no date). From linguistics Konitza refers to French linguist Arsen Darmesteter “La vie des mots” (no date), Remy de Gourmont, “La culture des idées” (no date), Henry Sweet “The practical study of languages”, London 1899, Henry Estienne “Thesaurus Graecae Lingae”, Paris 1842, Thomas de Quincey “Oeuvres complètes” (no dates), George Borrow “English gypsy language”, London 1888. According to Luan Starova, Konitza held a high esteem on Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) dictionary. The French linguist compiled this dictionary in 1697. One of his privileged authors was also the French linguist Remy de Gourmont, whom works like “Esthétique de la langue française” and “La culture des idées” are among Konitza’s privileged books. In his essay he referred more often to Arsen Darmesteter, Remy de Gourmont and Herbert Spencer. These authors are referred when Konitza argues or explain his arguments, the others mostly for bringing in examples.

This essay has a brief introduction and is composed of three parts. In the introduction Konitza makes a short presentation of artificial languages. The first part is a kind of inquiry into the structural make-up of artificial languages. He advanced his argument concerning their inner shortcomings, their inefficiency and, at the same time, their impossibility to become pan-human languages. The second part deals with the serious limits of artificial languages in becoming literary languages, as compared to the natural languages. The third part is a kind of conclusion, stressing the importance of natural languages, and his attempt to sketch out the future developments regarding the affirmation of an international language, selected from the “biggest western languages”.

We will focus mainly on the relationship Konitza envisaged between natural languages and “race”, either in terms of “people” or “nation”. He makes clear his position at the very beginning when he writes 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.”<sup>6</sup>

Konitza contemptuously dismissed the artificial languages using one of his strongest argument: the artificial languages were useless in front of the natural languages, as the latter were a direct feature of the “race”. Konitza saw the natural languages the mirrors reflecting certain aspects of the people. The natural language was the reflection translated in sounds of the “national genius” of a given people. The

---

<sup>6</sup> Faik Konitza, “Sprovë për gjuhët natyrore dhe gjuhët e sendërgjuara”, (Essay on natural and artificial languages). In Luan Starova, “Faik Konitza, and Guillaume Apollinaire, an European friendship”, op.cit., Tirana, 2001, pg.109. I will refer only to the Albanian version of this book.

way different people write their language can tell a lot regarding “racial manners”, “level of civilization and gender influences”, “intellectual leanings, traditions and moral values”.

Language was seen as “race’s spirit and people’s outward look”. Here we should explain what Konitza intended by “race”. Referring to the “French race”, he writes that from an “anthropological point of view”, intended as physical type, the “French race” did not make a one and the same. Konitza thought that “French race” may look like a “Latin one”, but in reality it is a fusion of different “physical types”, dominated by the “Northern blonde type” and “Neandertal man”. Instead, its “racial sameness” derived from the language and psychology of the owners of the given language<sup>7</sup>. For Konitza, the “French racial uniformity” is evident in the “people’s psychology”, which can be understood through an analysis of “linguistic philosophy”.<sup>8</sup> Konitza argued that a particular nation has its own model of thinking and doing, which comes out through the language it uses. He perceived the language spoken by a certain people as a “national peculiarity”, or “race specificity”.

Referring to the French language and the difficulties a foreigner might encounter to fully learn it Konitza wrote that:

“I think that for a foreigner it is impossible to think in same way as the French do. There are ways of sensing, of analysing, 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.”<sup>9</sup>

What Faik Konitza took for national traits, like “mental techniques”, “national way of thinking”, or “particular intellectual capabilities” of different people, found their full expression in the natural languages as well. Konitza described here the morphological nuances of various languages and he tried to explain them via respective differences existing in the “races” who spoke them. He defined the French language as analytic, clear and graceful, English as sharp and dry, whilst Italian had wearisome features and loose construction. He said that these structural linguistic diversities clearly suggest they were influenced by their respective “racial typologies”.<sup>10</sup>

Konitza’s position can be better understood in the framework of the rise of ethnic nationalism in Europe in the second half of the XIX century. It was the time when ethnic nationalism gained more momentum 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.<sup>11</sup> According to Hobsbawm:

“The links between racism and nationalism are obvious. “Race” and language were easily confused as in the case of “Aryans” and “Semites”, to the indignation of scrupulous scholars like Max Müller who pointed out that “race”, a genetic concept, could not be inferred from language, which was not inherited....However, what brought “race” and “nation” even closer was the practice of using both

---

<sup>7</sup> Faik Konitza, “Essay on natural and artificial languages), op.cit, pg.141.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pg141.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pg.133. To bear proof of his assertion, namely that human beings are born with certain knowledge of respective mother tongue, Konitza brings the example of the locked born nightingale, which sings in the same way as his free cohorts in the wood.

<sup>10</sup> Luan Starova, “Faik Konitza and Guillaume Apollinaire”, op.cit., pg.117.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Nations and Nationalism since 1780, programme, myth, reality”, Cambridge University Press 2002, pg.108. See also Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy, “Introduction” to “Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation”, The University of Michigan Press 2001, pg.28.

as virtual synonyms, generalizing equally wildly about “racial/national” character, as was then in fashion...Linguistic and ethnic nationalism thus reinforced each other”.<sup>12</sup>

Let us take a closer look at Konitza’s discourse on “racial representations” coming out through natural language. First of all, the natural language, and precisely the way it is written, is a kind of indicator of the “inner characteristics of the race”. Konitza took the example of the French language, whose letters very often are not spelled, but nonetheless not disappearing because they play somehow a trimming role, a kind of cunning device for embellishing the words and phrase. Consequently, he saw in this linguistic element the loyal mirroring of “the taste of arts”, or in his words, “the taste for superfluous, but decorating things”, which is typical for the “French race”.<sup>13</sup>

Further on, Konitza continued by saying the natural language was an indicator of the level of civilization of its people. And his thesis is backed here by the following observation: the more the people or “the race is civilized, the fewer exclamation marks its natural language possesses”. Obviously, the opposite is true for “the less civilized people, whom languages have more exclamation marks”.<sup>14</sup> This is because Konitza thinks the exclamation marks are closer to the language spoken by the human primates and are numerous among African idioms, which he describes as “wild” or “the blacks”. On the contrary, for the northern European writers the exclamation marks are a somehow farcical souvenir. Konitza thinks they were incompatible with their austere and introvert character and at the same time with their higher civilization scale.<sup>15</sup> The national language was shaped according to “the professional skills of the people”. Here Konitza cites the example of the mathematically exact Semitic languages, which suit the national genius of Arabs for calculations and combinations<sup>16</sup>.

In Konitza’s view natural languages had another important advantage, as they subscribed to the laws of evolution. They change as nations change and this happens in conformity with the “spirit of the race”. In this case the frozen and static artificial languages would be fossilized as they were unable to change due to lack of racial linkages.<sup>17</sup>

Konitza saw in the physical and physiological changes of the race the first causes of phonetic alterations, and later on, of structural modification of the language itself. He referred to massive movements of populations, which influenced their life conditions. For Konitza these changes were reflected subsequently in the language itself. The example presented here is the case of biblical Jewish exodus from Egypt and their sufferings in the deserts. Konitza explained that the guttural spelling of the Jewish language was due precisely to those tough conditions, and reflected the sense of “thirst and suffocating heat provoked by living in a desert”.<sup>18</sup>

The last section was a kind of synopsis of what was said in the previous parts, but also an attempt to anticipate the future linguistic developments with regard to the affirmation of an international language among the major western “natural”

---

<sup>12</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, op.cit, pg.108-109. See also Benedict Anderson, “Imagined communities”, Verso, London, 2003, chapter “Old Languages, New Models”; John Breuilly, “Nationalism and the State”, The University of Chicago Press, 1994, chapter “Sources and forms of nationalist ideology”.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pg.116.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pg.116.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid,pg.116.

<sup>16</sup> Idem.pg.119.

<sup>17</sup> Luan Starova, “Faik Konitza and Guillaume Apollinaire”, op.cit, pg.165.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pg.129.

languages. In the very beginning of the third and last part of his essay we have the following observation:

“One of the most interesting phenomena of nowadays is of course the amazing awakening of a cluster of nations and languages deemed as swallowed once for all by their stronger neighbours. But, it is extremely strange to note the parallel, co-temporal and opposite tendency to this individualistic movement of socialism and universal languages. The first (awakening of national languages-my note A.P.) is the diversity, irregularity, and most of all the exerting of this vital function which is the propensity to survive and prevail over the others. The second is the uniformity and the wild mania of a panhuman erasing. Universal languages, born of the same fake needs and similar thrust as socialism, take little into account of the very complex and multifarious nature of the human beings”.<sup>19</sup>

Konitza took the “awakening” of the national languages as part of an evolutionary process of the history of the humankind. They followed the same life cyclical trajectory as “the personality-nation”. Speaking about the influence of romanticism and the phase B (dominated by linguistic and cultural demands) of the national movements during the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century Miroslav Hroch writes that:

“A new concept of the nation as a personalized body emerged, based on this very coexistence and interconnection, and this metaphor was soon transformed into a basic conception, whereby the ethnic group was internally defined as “us”. When seen as a personality, the nation could therefore naturally only use one literary language, just as it could only incorporate one common past into its “memory”. The life of this personality-nation and its dissimilarity and differentiation from other nations, logically depended on the successful spread of national languages; if that failed, the personality-nation would “die”.<sup>20</sup>

In his essay Konitza’s basic concern was just the fear that artificial languages will impede the natural growth of national languages. Therefore, the artificial languages are taken as part of a strategy aiming to erase to the ground the natural diversity as embodied in the development of nationalities and their natural languages.<sup>21</sup> It is more than probable that Konitza might have seen them as a “threat” to his intellectual mission as constructor of the” Albanian literary language”.

One can easily detect a common line of thought pervading Konitza’s essay. This is the evolutionary idea, that “natural”, or national languages, follow the same progressive gradual trajectory of development as respective nations do. They exist as a “natural” potential of values, they may be forgotten and fall asleep, but they will wake up through the specialized and intellectual agency of their owners. In Konitza’s vision natural languages will become tools of civilization in the form of literary language capable to articulate in arts and science. The “artificial” languages by contrast did not take part in this process as they could not obey to the natural laws, just because they were artificial.

Let us now return to his writings in “Albania” review, which he started in 1897 and continued through up to 1909. One of the main targets of “Albania” review was the cultural development of Albanians in view of their future political independent life. The stress here was put again on literature and language in particular. In the forefront of the first number and below the title “Albania” it was written “literature, linguistic, history and sociology”.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Luan Starova “Faik Konitza and Guillaume Apollinaire”, op.cit., pg.175.

<sup>20</sup> Miroslav Hroch, “The Social Interpretation of Linguistic Demands in European National Movements”, in European University Institute Working Paper EUF No.94/1, pg.25.

<sup>21</sup> Here Konitza refers to Gustav Flaubert’s book “The sentimental education”, where the author puts in the mouth of one his eccentric personages the idea of a universal language for the whole humanity. “Faik Konitza, Works”, vol.I. pg.62.

<sup>22</sup> “Albania”. nr.1, Brussels, 1897.

Just one year before starting its publication, in a letter sent to a friend of his in March 1896, he says that Albanians were never conceived as a nation by Europe, as they lack 1) literature, 2) a clear program, “an idea”, as Konitza put it, and finally 3) the way how to reach it.<sup>23</sup>

His first article “*The enemies of Albania*” in the “Albania” review dwells more at length on this issue. Konitza explained the degrading situation by the fact that “there are fewer literate Albanians than true words in the priest’s mouth”, “that the Albania’s enemies are just the Albanians, as they have shed their blood for the others, thus selling themselves”, “that Albanians do not love freedom”, “that some do not speak Albanian and in this way they believe they are not Albanians”, and “some are circumcised and others baptised”.<sup>24</sup>

Konitza 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”. According to him, these ideals were “the love for truth and for Albania”.<sup>25</sup> He described the actual stage of Albanians as “the life of body” (physical living), and calls for “entering into the intellectual life or life of the mind”. Konitza perceived Albanians as a people living only a biological existence. The future should be different. They should cultivate themselves through learning. Some months later, in another article Konitza stressed the need for union, as one of the preconditions for being perceived as a nation by the others.<sup>26</sup> The common thread of his writings was the importance given to learning in order to prosper and regenerate a community, which in the eyes of Konitza had lost the consciousness of being one and the same.

Konitza’s stance should be placed in its political context. In the conditions of an ever growing Balkan nationalism and an increasingly weak Ottoman Empire by the end of the XIX, Konitza supported the idea of a “gradual cultural preparation of Albanian people”, aiming at an administrative autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. The latter would be a kind of temporary shelter for the Albanians till their full political independence. In the meantime Albanians had to make all efforts to save their nationality, as otherwise “in a quarter of century we will pass from Sultan’s hands to Slavs’, Greeks’ and Italians’ hands, like the miserable slaves that we are”.<sup>27</sup> The option for Konitza was to be prepared as an already distinct and compact

---

<sup>23</sup> Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit (AQSH) (National Archives), F.13, D.13, pg.3. Konitza is worried as besides some grammar text books, songs and tales, Albanians do not have a real literature, which according to him is made up of “verses, novels, history, etc”. As a further indication of this poor state he adds that “there isn’t even a long or short poem on Scanderbeg”, the ‘Albanian national hero’. Then he continues by explaining that the second element is the idea how to revive the old splendour of Albania, which “does not merely mean Albania of the Middle Ages (Scanderbeg-my note), but also the Pellzags”. He foresees a bright future for this nation as he constructs a huge political entity going from Greek Macedonia, Epirus and including even Sicily and Calabria in Italy. For Konitza the Albanian element was prevailing there. There is a hand-made drawing in the letter of this “Albanian super-state” under the name Pellazgia. This idea was probably a short-living and very romantic one, which had temporarily caught the mind of the twenty years old Konitza. But, the above letter summarily gives an idea of the future directions and priorities of his review. They were the developing of an Albanian national literature and hailing the antiquity of the Albanian nation as a source for pride and a strong motive to lay future political claims for independent political life.

<sup>24</sup> “Albania”, nr.1, Brussels 1897, pg.1-2,.

<sup>25</sup> “What is freedom”, “Albania”, nr.2, Brussels 1897, pg.32,

<sup>26</sup> “Albania”, nr.8, Brussels 1897, pg.121.

<sup>27</sup> “Faik Konitza, Works”, vol.4, op.cit., pg.8. Letter sent from Paris on April 18<sup>th</sup> 1896 to an Albanian friend of him (no name).

“national community” to face the future crumbling of the Ottoman Empire”.<sup>28</sup> And this “national community” would be forged through cultural development. Assistance from Austro-Hungary was considered by Konitza as of paramount importance to help achieve this goal and protect Albanian inhabited lands from being partitioned by the newly founded Balkan states. He believed Austro-Hungary was interested to help the Albanian nationalist movement growing as it would be a barrier to the Slav advancement in the Balkans.

Konitza thought one of the best ways to guarantee the cultural development of Albanians was to forge a literary language. Here the role of Konitza comes out to be really important. The intentions of Konitza were clearly stated in another letter from Brussels, dated 18 August 1897, sent to Theodor A. Ippen, the Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkoder (northern Albania). In describing his review’s target he wrote that:

“From a literary point of view our effort has a limited goal: to inspire in the majority of Albanians the desire to lean towards the unification of their language, in fusing in a rational way the dialectal differences in Albania.”<sup>29</sup>

The problem of the Albanian language for Konitza encompassed two main issues, that of a common alphabet and that of the creation of an Albanian standardized literary language.

The situation pertaining to the Albanian alphabet, and written Albanian language in general, confirms what Maria Todorova has written about the language problem in Bulgaria of XIX century. It is about the existence of multigraphia and multilingualism.<sup>30</sup> The Albanian nationally minded intellectuals until 1908, the time of Young Turk Revolution, used three alphabets for printing their literary productions. The Istanbul alphabet created by the “Society for the Printing of Albanian Letters” (1879), the alphabet of the Albanian Literary Society “Bashkimi” (Union), founded in 1899 in Shkoder, and the alphabet of the Albanian patriotic society “Agimi” (the Dawn), which was created in 1902. While the first alphabet combined Latin and Greek letters, the last two were founded upon Latin ones only.<sup>31</sup>

What Konitza wanted to achieve with his review was to use his own alphabet, which was close to that of “Bashkimi”, and make it the basis for the unification of the others.<sup>32</sup> It was intended to be a fusion of two Albanian major written dialects, the

---

<sup>28</sup> In his article “Without support Albania is lost” written in “Albania”, November 15<sup>th</sup> 1897 Konitza writes “The affairs of Orient may yet last who knows how long. But, one thing is clear; the affairs of Orient, like all the others, will end one day. Then, what will happen with Albania? The Albanians will ask, Albanians’ friends will ask...Albania needs to strive to have the support of a big and healthy state, which does not want our bad, but instead to open ways for a sufficient autonomy and for the progress of the nation,- FOR SALVATION”. “Albania”, nr.2, Brussels 1897, pg.1.

<sup>29</sup> This is a letter of Faik Konitza sent to the Austro-Hungarian consul and is preserved in the Vienna Archiva of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unfortunately the archival indications are not shown so we are obliged to cite as it is published in the book “Faik Konica, Works”, vol.4, op.cit, pg.20.

<sup>30</sup> Maria Todorova, “Language as a Cultural Unifier in a Multilingual Setting: The Bulgarian Case During the Nineteenth Century”, in *East European Politics and Societies*, Volume4, no.3, fall 1990.

<sup>31</sup> See “Historia e Shqipërisë” (History of Albania), Academy of Sciences of Albania, Institute of History, Tirana 2002, pg.211; chapter on “Elaboration of Albanian language and the spreading of the Albanian writing”, pg.348-352, pg.359. For a more detailed story about this issue see also Stavro Skendi, Skendi “The Albanian National Awakening”, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1967, chapter on “The Struggle for national Affirmation 1881-1908”, pg.111-316; also Stavro Skendi, “The History of the Albanian Alphabet: A Case of Complex Cultural and Political Development”, in “Balkan Cultural Studies”, Columbia University Press, New York 1980, pg.211-233.

<sup>32</sup> Stavro Skendi, “The History of the Albanian Alphabet: A Case of Complex Cultural and Political Development”, in “Balkan Cultural Studies”, op.cit, pg.220.



northern Geg and the southern Tosk.<sup>33</sup> All this would go hand in hand with the other major goal, namely that of encouraging the birth of an Albanian literary language.

How Konitza perceived the Albanian language at that time, and in what terms were his action justified?

Konitza expressed in many cases in his writings the idea that the Albanian language was an old, but not a cultivated language. This language, as it was inherited by the Albanians' ancestors, was archaic and lacking a lot of words expressing ideas.<sup>34</sup> He thought that the Albanian was more a "folklore and wedding language", remained at the status of the spoken vernacular.<sup>35</sup> This language "was poor in philosophical and general terms, which made it difficult to express with the appropriate clarity for major topics".<sup>36</sup>

One of the methods he used to make more visible this deplorable predicament was to confront the Albanians with the progress made by other people in the region. The latter were far ahead. They had a literary language with which they wrote books and "make possible the communication between people not born in the same place". Here he refers to the Greeks.<sup>37</sup>

"Only Albanians do not have such a language and therefore they have remained divided amongst each other. It is important to create a literary language as a means for unification".<sup>38</sup>

Consequently the literary language was deemed to be a tool for uniting Albanians. For Konitza the problem of the creation of the Albanian literary language pertained more to the political and national order rather than to the philological one. The main targets, as he defined them, were to choose Latin alphabet, as Albanians were a European people. Latin letters were also more practical, as it would be easier to use them for printing Albanian books in Europe. For him this was a political problem 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".<sup>39</sup>

Among the main targets of the Albanian nationalist at that time was the overcoming of what they perceived as "the dividing factors" amongst the Albanian

---

<sup>33</sup> Janet Byron, "Faik Konica dhe gjuha letrare shqipe" (Faik Konitza and the Albanian Literary Language), in "Faik Konitza, Works", vol.5, op.cit, pg.297-300.

<sup>34</sup> "The foundation for every progress is the question of abc", "Albania", nr.6, London 1906, , pg.119. This is also a repeated topic in the "Albania" review. In the first year of the publication of the review 1897, in the article written in French with the title "The question of the Albanian writing", nr.7, Brussels 1897, pg.111, Konitza defined Albanian language as "able to express sentiments, but not to discuss ideas". He underlines again his opinion that this language has arrived in nowadays is it was formed by the ancestors, i.e. "folklore language, popular one, but not a language of culture".

<sup>35</sup> "What we did", "Albania", nr.11, Brussels 1898, pg.201.

<sup>36</sup> In a letter sent to a friend of him in Bucharest in 1896, Konitza writes that about his own difficulties in writing in Albanian, when he wanted to deal with philosophy or sciences in general. "Faik Konitza, Works", vol.4, op.cit. , pg.5.

<sup>37</sup> "For the foundation of an albanian literary language", "Albania", nr.1, Brussels 1897, pg.4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, pg.5.

<sup>39</sup> "The foundation of every progress as the question of abc", "Albania". nr.6, London 1906, pg.120-121. In this article Konitza reiterates his idea that the question of Albanian alphabet is a national problem and not a philological one. He supports the idea of adopting the Latin alphabet also for another reason. He thinks that the Latin alphabet he is using in his review is somehow the continuation of an alphabet used by some catholic Albanian priests, Pjeter Budi (1621), Frano Bardhi (1635), who published their books with Latin letters. Konitza believes that in every field of human activity, sciences, politics, civilization as a whole is based on "loi de continuité", as he puts it. He sees himself as drawing on a more ancient experience.

people. In this respect the regional differences, as reflected in the dialects, were to be tackled through shaping an Albanian literary language.

In one of his most referred articles published in “Albania”, written in French with the title “*Les dialectes albanais et la nécessité de leur fusion*”, Konitza presented the linguistic situation in the Albanian inhabited lands as dominated by the existence of two main dialects, the Geg and the Tosk, and their minor subdivisions.<sup>40</sup> His thesis is that their difference, as everyday spoken languages, was based on phonetic nuances, but which became more accentuated in the written forms. He warned that the written forms could become more divergent from each other as there were not Albanian schools which could smooth this distinction through the propagating of a standardized language

“The visionary Albanians in this field are aware of the risk deriving from the coexistence of these two dialects, as well as for the related difficulties to fuse them together. 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”.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore the solution for Konitza seemed to be the preservation of both dialects, to encourage linguistic richness as part of character of the people speaking them, but to employ them for different uses. As a transitory period he thought that it would be better to use both dialects for different purposes. The dialect of the cunning, 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. The technique here was to “tame” the regional characters, to tune them towards a wider “national” one, and not to “repress” them.

However, the problem would require according to Konitza a unique grammar, drawn up by foreign albanologues and learned Albanians, which would bring together dialect elements in a rational way. This would be how to advance towards creating a common language for all Albanians. Konitza referred here to the Greek *Koine Glossa*.<sup>42</sup>

The problem of creating a literary language out of spoken dialects was not a particular Albanian phenomenon. Writing about the Bulgarian case in the middle of XIX century Maria Todorova writes that:

“The Bulgarian press of the 1850s and 1860s is extremely interesting on account of, among other matters, the lively discussion on how dialectal differences could and should be overcome. Roughly speaking, two major viewpoints emerged: one, for the creation of the Bulgarian literary language on a poly-dialectal basis, i.e., the formation of a common language which would include some characteristics of all possible dialects; and the second, shared by the greater number of contemporary literary figures, for the creation of the Bulgarian literary language on a mono-dialectal basis”.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> “Albania”, nr.10, Brussels 1898, pg.173-174.

<sup>41</sup> “Albania”, nr.10, Brussels 1898, pg.173.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, pg.174.

<sup>43</sup> Maria Todorova, “Language as a cultural Unifier in a Multilingual Setting: The Bulgarian Case During the Nineteenth Century”, In East European Politics and Societies, vol.4, no.3, Fall.1990, pg.442.

Some years later Konitza wrote another article with the meaningful title “*For the foundation of a Literary Language*”.<sup>44</sup> It was a further elaboration of his initial ideas about Albanian linguistic issues. In his view “Albania” review had acted as a bridge to link two segregated populations, the Gëgs and the Tosks (compared to two un-bridged peninsulas in the text). In the words of its editor-in-chief, “Albania” review had paved the way for the foundation of that language without which “our people can never be considered as a true nation”.<sup>45</sup>

“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. How can an Albanian from Peja (today Kosovo- my note A.P.) feel he is from the same nation as that from Filat (today Greece- my note, A.P.)? Everybody who is able to understand will see the most important need for the moment is to have a common language, a literary language”.<sup>46</sup>

Faik Konitza thought of the “national life” as a new, more qualitative and more inclusive life experience compared to the regional one. It required also a fundamental prerequisite, which was “the national language”, or Albanian literary language. He thought that dialects reflected only the regional level of the community’s life, but “nation” as a new “body” needed new “organs”.

The idea of the nation as a collective body with a unique physiognomy and possessing an essential “character” became widespread in the nineteenth century. Such a concept was further supported by the influence of the new deterministic theories of racial and cultural evolution that perceived the nation in biological terms as a “living organism”.<sup>47</sup> In this sense the process by which individuals or groups embrace the concept of the nation as the most “meaningful context for self-definition necessarily involved temporarily marginalizing other categories that could also provide a sense of identity”.<sup>48</sup> “Englishness”, “Frenchness”, or “Greekness” were all identity-building processes closely “bound up with the celebration of local and regional identities”, and the process of their national acculturation.<sup>49</sup>

In our case the dialects and their respective regional allegiances are treated as composing 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 growth of a literary language and national identity went in parallel. In Konitza’s texts they were constructed upon the fusion of the two main regional identities reflected into the respective dialects, the southern Tosk and the northern Geg. The national identity as a new self-identification form was on its way to construction, and it should be built upon by learned Albanians.

In a way Faik Konitza was anticipating the cultural nationalizing processes of a nation-state. There was not yet an Albanian state in place and he was among the initiators of the process on which later Albanian linguistic politics would be based. Following Mirolsav Hroch’s division of national movements, Konitza is somehow

---

<sup>44</sup> “Albania”, nr.6, London 1905, pg.123-125.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, pg.123.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, pg.123.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Shannan Peckham, “Internal Colonialism, nation and region in nineteenth-century Greece”, in “Balkan Identities, Nation and Memory”, Maria Todorova, editor, Hurst&Company, London 2004, pg.43-44.

<sup>48</sup> Mary Poovey, “Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864”, Univerisyt of Chicago Press, 1995, as cited by Robert Shannan Peckham in his above mentioned article, pg.44.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Shannan Peckham, op.cit, pg44-45.

situated in between phase A (scholarly interest on the language), and phase B (the period of patriotic agitation). Or to put it differently, he belongs to “the period of fermentation-process of national consciousness”.<sup>50</sup>

Konitza knew the importance of the national state in giving the final solution to a national literary language.<sup>51</sup> He was aware of the fact that a transitory period of time was needed to reach that stage. This transitory period meant bringing the two main dialectic forms of the written Albanian into the closest possible contact without extinguishing them.<sup>52</sup>

The ideal conditions for Konitza would be to let to the evolutionary process to shape and mould the common literary language for all Albanians. Konitza here explained his idea drawing a parallel with other countries. For Konitza in other countries, and the hint here is clear to the Western developed ones, the literary language had been sanctioned due to the imposing of the dialect spoken either in the kings’ courts, or as a result of the literary activities of major writers, who made possible through their work the prevailing of their own dialect. According to his exposé Albanians lack many things in this respect. The first one, no royal court was in place. Albanians were living among inimical neighbours, which constituted a real danger for the future of Albanian nationality.<sup>53</sup> Therefore there was no time to lose. Moreover Albanians were not civilized enough to tackle sophisticated problems such as the Albanian literary language. Albanians could not wait for their language to be created with time, or through established state institutions. He invoked the intervention of Albanian patriotic activists. He suggests for both dialects to come closer around the Elbasan language, an Albanian town centred in the middle of present day Albania.

On the basis of his discussion on the topic related to the problem of dialect-literary language, it was Konitza’s conviction that the primary and the most entrenched loyalties of the Albanians were the regional ones. However, Konitza tried to diminish the differences reducing them only to the phonetic level. The dialectal-regional loyalties in his text sound like differences rooted in the same Albanian essence. But, if left uncultivated, their difference could only deepen further.<sup>54</sup> The most common perception was that northern Moslem Gëgs were more backward than

---

<sup>50</sup> Miroslav Hroch, “Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe, A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations”, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pg.9.

<sup>51</sup> “The question of how to write Albanian”, “Albania”, nr.7, Brussels 1897, pg.113.

<sup>52</sup> This is explicitly stated in his article “For the foundation of the Albanian literary language”, “Albania”, nr.1, Brussels, 1897, pg.5.

<sup>53</sup> See the article “For the foundation of a literary language”, “Albania”, nr.6, London 1905, pg.124.

<sup>54</sup> In “Albania”, nr.4, Brussels 1901, pg.15. it is published the following dialogue between a northern Albanian Gëg and a southern Albanian Tosk. “Tosk- Do you want me to teach you Albanian my brother; Gëg- What are you talking about Tosk?; T- Look at this book. Is Albanian. Listen a bit...; G- you are trying to make me “kaur”?; T- what are these stupidities. Learn your language, nothing wrong is in it; G- What are these kaur writings? Go away kaur... this is the way most of Moslem Gëgs are made to think, who are the biggest obstacle to the progress of nation. There is a great need to make national propaganda in Gegeria, because otherwise it would be in vain”. This bears a striking resemblance with what writes Roberst Shannan Peckham about regional allegiances in Greece during first half of XIX century versus nation-building policies. “Regions were characterised by distinct languages, a situation that was satirised by the playwright Dimitrio Vyzandios in his play *Babel, or the Regional Corruption of the Greek Language* (1836) where different characters, speaking mutually incomprehensible dialects, meet up with cosmic consequences in a tavern in Nafplion”. In “Internal Colonialism, nation and region in nineteenth-century Greece”, “Balkan Identities, Nation and Memory”, Hurst&Company, London 2004, pg.49.

their “co-national” southern Tosks. This is because they were deemed to be a mountainous population, which needed to be brought closer to the southern brethren through schooling and national propaganda. The awareness of a serious regional cleavage was the strong motif behind his work to create an Albanian literary language.

The dichotomy dialect- national literary language in Konitza’s texts accounts for that inherent conflict within nationalist ideologies between authenticity and modernisation.<sup>55</sup> The dialect is held to be an authentic and a 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 entails the acquiring of a new self-identification, the national one.

Konitza delineated different profiles of the “Albanian nation”. It was not always homogenous and unitary. We will see that depending on the context he used different languages to express his own vision of the “Albanian nation”. His stress on language is not always constant as well.

On the other hand in an article by him dating February 1898, with the title “*Albanian Nation*”, through an invented dialogue between an Albanian and a foreigner he ridiculed the “distorted self-identification way” of his compatriot.

“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 do not know 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 Turk.

F- Ok, do you know Turkish?

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. May be you are Moslem Albanian, but you are not a Turk.

A- I tell you I am Turk.

F- Religion is religion, nation is nation. As you speak Albanian and you live in Albania, you are not a Turk and nor a Greek, nothing else but an Albanian”.<sup>56</sup>

Here instead, it is language that gains primary importance. Besides regional and dialect cleavages, there were the religious ones which came to the fore from time to time in the pages of “*Albania*”. National identity versus religion was another way to construct the “Albanian nation”.

<sup>55</sup> See in particular the case of Greece in Robert Shannan Peckham “Internal Colonialism, nation and region in nineteenth-century Greece”, in “Balkan Identities, Nation and Memory”, Maria Todorova, editor, Hurst&Company, London 2004, pg.41-60.

<sup>56</sup> “Albania”, nr.10, Brussels, 1898, pg.181.

### **Albanian studies on Faik Konitza and his “Albania” review**

As mentioned above, after the Second World War the Albanian official historiography considered Faik Konitza a “reactionary figure”, due to “his negative role in hindering the efforts of the Albanian people to create its own national and independent state and to progress in the road of democracy, social and spiritual emancipation”.<sup>57</sup> He was mainly blamed for being “the representative of the landowning feudal class, for defending the feudal class’ interests and having no trust in the Albanian people’s capacities to build up its own independent state”.<sup>58</sup> He was also accused “to have favoured an Austrian protectorate for Albania in the early XX century and after the First World War an Italian protectorate”.<sup>59</sup> Finally, his biggest “sin” was the fact that “he accepted to be the diplomatic envoy of the former King Zog I to Washington”.<sup>60</sup>

However, the personality of Konitza was too important to be completely erased from the history of the Albanian National Movement. In the collective work of the Albanian Academy of Sciences, “The Albanian Encyclopaedic Dictionary”, published in Tirana in 1985, which contains the names of the most outstanding Albanian figures, we find this information on Konica:

“The name of Faik Konitza is linked to “Albania” review, one of the most important political and cultural periodicals of the National Awakening, which he directed from 1896 until it was closed in 1909. Most of the review was dominated by the articles of Faik Konitza, his studies, notes and pamphlets which are notorious for their sarcastic and slanderous tones against his personal and political adversaries. Faik Konitza strived for a unique Albanian literary language and contributed to the enrichment and the elaboration of the literary and journalistic style of the written Albanian. Faik Konitza was one of the pioneers of the Albanian literary critique.”<sup>61</sup>

The author of this paragraph was careful to strike a balance between Konitza’s literary contribution, worth being mentioned, and his controversial character. In first place this had to do with the importance his activity had for the creation of a standardized Albanian language. Konitza made pioneer steps towards laying the foundations for the standard literary Albanian language.<sup>62</sup> He gave an undeniable contribution to “the intellectualization of the national language”.<sup>63</sup>

After the fall of the communist regime in 1990, his figure was quickly rehabilitated. We have now a series of publications on him, including articles in the

---

<sup>57</sup> “Drita” (“The Light”, newspaper of the League of Albanian Writers), August the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1990.

<sup>58</sup> Kristo Frashëri, “Kush ishte Faik konitza” (Who was Faik konitza), “Nëntori”, nr.1, 1991, Tirana, pg.78. This was one of the first articles appearing in the Albanian press on Faik Konitza after the fall of the communist regime in Albania in 1990. The author explains the reasons why the Albanian historiography after the Second World War had discarded Faik Konitza from the Albanian patriotic elite of the National Movement and tries to rehabilitate his figure.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, pg.78

<sup>60</sup> Idem, pg.79. Robert Elsie writes that “Konitza’s ties with the Zogu regime in later years created consternation among many Albanian intellectuals and it is this more than anything which caused his influence on Albanian literature and culture to be underestimated and ignored by post-war critics in Tirana”, Introduction to “Faik Konitza, selected correspondence”, edited by Bejtullah Destani, The Centre for Albanian Studies, London, 2000, pg.x.

<sup>61</sup> “Albanian Encyclopaedic Dictionary”, Academy of Sciences of the Socialist Popular Republic of Albania, Tirana 1985, pg.521.

<sup>62</sup> Q.M.Panariti, idem, pg.xxv. See also Robert Elsie “Histori e Letërsisë Shqiptare” (History of the Albanian Literature), pg. 271, Dukagjini, Tiranë-Pejë, 1997.

<sup>63</sup> Miroslav Hroch, “The social interpretation of linguistic demands in European National Movements”, in EUI Working Paper EUF no.94/1, European University Institute, Florence 1994, pg.16.

periodical press, books and collection of his literary production. Here we mention only the most important. In 1993 we have the first book on Faik Konitza, which was the first collection of his writings.<sup>64</sup> The book contains his articles and prose. In 1994, Sabri Hamiti, a scholar from Kosovo, published “Faik Konitza: it is me”, which was a first attempt of literary critique on his prose and poetry.<sup>65</sup> One year later Jup Kastrati published in New York a study on the work of Faik Konitza.<sup>66</sup> In 1998 Luan Starova, an Albanian scholar from Macedonia, wrote a book in French with the title “Faik Konitza et Guillaume Apollinaire, une amitié européenne”.<sup>67</sup> This book is a collection of articles that Konitza wrote in French and also texts by the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire on Konitza. In 2001 Nasho Jorgaqi published a five volume collection, which includes his poetry, translation from foreign literature, novels, essays on language and literature, epistolary with foreign and Albanian colleagues, articles appearing in the Albanian press of the time and studies on his work.<sup>68</sup>

Many of the authors converge on considering the publication of *Albania* review (1897-1909) his greatest contribution to the Albanian National Movement and creating a literary language out of the Albanian dialects.<sup>69</sup> They praise his role in setting the first rules of modern Albanian syntax.<sup>70</sup> The motto of the review, as written in the front page of the first issue, was “*It defends the rights of the Albanian Nation*”.<sup>71</sup> The programme of the review may be summarized by this paragraph written by Konitza in the first page of the review:

“The aim of the magazine is to preserve and to help Albanian nationality to grow. To exercise and embellish the language, as the language is the marker of the nationality. To improve the situation of the people, for the nationality is stronger, free and integral when people are not poor”.<sup>72</sup>

Then he announced that the content of his review would include poetry, folk songs, linguistics, history, science and news. The review had its historical column, where its editor used to publish different studies on Albanian history by foreign authors and unpublished documents, found in archives or libraries, on Albanian history, archaeology, traditions and customs.<sup>73</sup> Konitza was particularly careful about Albanian popular literary production and thought of it as an indicator of the “artistic genius” of the Albanian people.

According to scholars dealing with Faik Konitza’s works, the multifaceted character of “Albania” made it a “*vox clamans in deserto*” in a time when Albanian periodicals were still few and the Albanian culture was not very developed in its

<sup>64</sup> Nasho Jorgaqi, Xhevat Lloshi, “Faik Konitza- vepra”, Shtëpia Botuese “Naim Frashëri”, Tirana 1993.

<sup>65</sup> Sabri Hamiti, “Faik Konitza: jam unë”, Shtëpia Botuese Onufri, Tirana 1994.

<sup>66</sup> Jup Kastrati, “Faik Konitza”, Gjonlekaj Publishing Company, New York 1995.

<sup>67</sup> Luan Starova, “Faik Konitza et Guillaume Apollinaire, une amitié européenne”, L’Esprit des Péninsules, Paris 1998. This book was translated into Albanian and published by Shtëpia Botuese Onufri, Tirana 2001.

<sup>68</sup> “Faik Konitza, Works”, edited by Nasho Jorgaqi, Tirana, “Dudaj” Editing House, 2001. This is a first step in collecting the dispersed literary work of Konitza. Nevertheless, it lacks a good informative apparatus and materials are published without a clear criterion.

<sup>69</sup> Ernest Koliqi “Konica, mjeshër i gjuhës shqipe” (Konitza, a master of the Albanian language”, “Faik Konitza, Works, vol.5”, pg.83.

<sup>70</sup> Martin Camaj, “Mbi funksionin e gjuhës së Nolit dhe Konicës” (On the function of the language of Noli and Konitza), idem, pg.109. See also Stavro Skëndi “Balkan Cultural Studies”, Columbia University Press, New York 1980, pg.220.

<sup>71</sup> “Albania”, nr.1 Brussels 1897, pg.1.

<sup>72</sup> Idem, pg.1.

<sup>73</sup> Jup Kastrati, op.cit, pg.220.

written forms.<sup>74</sup> That was the first Albanian periodical, which opened its pages to Albanians living in different countries and writing in the two major dialects, Geg (north) and Tosk (south). Konitza and his review “Albania” marked also the beginning of the modern Albanian prose, and more specifically of satire and the essay. The Albanian prose was not very much elaborated until 1897 when Konitza began to write. Verse and political treatise was the most used literary genre during that period of time of the National Movement.<sup>75</sup>

Konitza is considered to be the forerunner of a long transformation process of the Albanian language into a standardized one.<sup>76</sup> All studies underline his deep linguistic knowledge, his talent as a writer and his mastering of various languages, dead and alive, from East and from West.<sup>77</sup>

They praise Faik Konitza’s importance for Albanian culture and view him as the founder of Albanian literary critique. He was perhaps the first to follow the Albanian literary production of that time and to try to set some parameters for its evaluation.<sup>78</sup> Konitza perceived criticism as a literary genre *per se* and tried to compile a history of Albanian literature from the XVII to the XIX century.

Konitza has been seen as the writer who opened new dimensions for Albanian literature of the early XX century. The satiric and sarcastic tones in his writings and essays contrasted with the Albanian romantic literature of the XIX 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”.<sup>79</sup> Influenced by the French literature of the XIX century, for Konitza it was easy to discard many works of Albanian patriots as poor from a literary point of view.<sup>80</sup> According to Robert Elsie, Konitza was too sophisticated to appreciate the “nationalist outpourings on the lofty virtues of the Albanian people”.<sup>81</sup> With Konitza Albanian prose entered the transition from romanticism to realism.<sup>82</sup> Through his translations, he offered to the Albanian readers the masterpieces of the world literature. He translated from Arabic “*The 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 was of the opinion that the translation of the world literature into Albanian would help its further elaboration and refinement.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Arshi Pipa “Çelësi i personalitetit artistik të Faik Konicës” (The key to the artistic personality of Faik Konitza), in “Faik Konitza, Works, vol.5”, Tirana 2001, pg.62.

<sup>75</sup> Rexhep Qosja writes that during the National Movement period the Albanian prose was developed mainly in the form of a journalistic prose and not so much as a literary genre. See Rexhep Qosja “Prej tipologjisë deri te periodizimi” (From typology to the periodization), Academy of Sciences of Kosovo, Prishtina 1979, pg.166; pg.343.

<sup>76</sup> Xhevat Lloshi, “Stili i Faik Konicës”, (The style of Faik Konitza), idem, pg.287. See also Robert Elsie “History of Albanian Literature”, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, pg.271.

<sup>77</sup> Jup Kastrati, idem, pg.226.

<sup>78</sup> Rexhep Qosja “Faik Konica, ngadhnjimtari i vonuar” (Faik Konitza, the belated winner), in “Faik Konitza, Works vol.5”, op.cit, pg.135.

<sup>79</sup> Rexhep Qosja, op.cit, pg.142.

<sup>80</sup> Luan Starova, “Ese për gjuhët natyrore dhe artificiale” (Essay on natural and artificial languages), in “Faik Konitza, Works, vol.5”, Tirana 2001, pg.348.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Elsie, Introduction to “Faik Konitza, selected correspondence”, edited by Bejtullah Destani, The Centre for Albanian Studies, London 2000, pg.x.

<sup>82</sup> Dhimitër Fullani, “The prose of Faik Konitza”, in “Faik Konitza, Works, vol.5”, Tirana, 2001, pg.235.

<sup>83</sup> In Martin Camaj, op.cit, pg.121.



All these studies have the merit to collect and systematize for the first time the otherwise dispersed literary production of Faik Konitza in various newspapers and archives. They have raised interest in him and have made easier the task of scholars who want to study his figure. One common characteristic of these studies is the delineation of Konitza as somebody who was different from the first generation of the Albanian nationalist leaders of the period from the Congress of Berlin till the end of XIX century. First of all he was the “critic of the nation” and not the “teacher” of the nation. He had a new way to love his country, which was criticizing and stressing the deficiencies of “the Albanian nation”, unlike the emphatic appraisal of national virtues of the previous generation of national leaders.<sup>84</sup> Due to his wide knowledge in various fields, such as history, languages, music, ethnography, etc, these studies consider him as the most advanced intellectual of his time, the father of Albanian *belles lettres* and a consummate stylist of Albanian language.<sup>85</sup> Konitza is held to belong to an intermediary period of time that stands between the National Movement (1878-1912) and that of Independence (1912-1939).

However, according to Rexhep Qosja, at the close of the XIX century romantic elements in Albanian literature coexisted with realism and we can not draw a clear cut line between these two literary streams. They intermingled with each other and continued in their symbiosis even in the first decades of the XX century. Therefore, it would be more correct to define Konitza’s literary production as a kind of blend of romanticism with new elements of realism.<sup>86</sup> In fact his literary legacy bore the connotations of the two historical periods in which he lived.

In most of the studies he is seen like an intellectual who strives to pull out the Albanian people from Ottoman obscurantism and push it towards Europe. In this sense Faik Konitza is depicted as somebody influenced by both Oriental and Occidental cultures, but the latter triumphing over the former.<sup>87</sup> He is seen as a symbolic representation of the European almost born leanings of Albanian people.<sup>88</sup>

With few exceptions, studies on him are rather narrative, and somehow romanticized representation of his figure, than textual critique. Almost all that has been written on him transpires a kind of enthusiasm in “discovering” after a long period of silence such an interesting figure as Faik Konitza. However, he is devoid of ideological and cultural backgrounds. He is simply an erudite and patriotic Albanian intellectual, who, due to his exceptional talent as a writer and his fully Western education, played a major role in the national culture of the time of National Movement.

Some studies mention the influence of Montaigne, Voltaire, Diderot on Konitza, when he initiated the essay as a new literary genre in Albanian literature at the end of XIX century. But, they do not explain in what sense their influence can be grasped in his works.<sup>89</sup> Others claim that he was influenced by the French school of

---

<sup>84</sup> Rexhep Qosja, “The belated winner”, in “Faik Konitza, Works”, vol.5, op.cit, pg.142-143.

<sup>85</sup> Jup Kastrati, “Faik Konitza”, op.cit., pg.532. See also Nasho Jorgaqi, “Faik Konitza, the writer”, in “Faik Konitza, Works”, vol.1, op.cit, pg.16.

<sup>86</sup> Rexhep Qosja, op.cit, pg.133.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, pg.534. Also Nasho Jorgaqi, “Faik Konitza, the writer”, op.cit, pg.13.

<sup>88</sup> See for example the introduction written by Ismail Kadare to the Albanian version of Luan Starova’s book “Faik Konitza dhe Guillaume Apollinaire, një miqësi evropiane”, Shtëpia Botuese Onufri, Tirana 2001, pg.6. See also Rexhep Qosja, “Introduction” to Jup Kastrati’s book “Faik Konitza”, op.cit., pg.25.

<sup>89</sup> Nasho Jorgaqi, “Faik Konitza-the writer”, introduction to “Faik Konitza, Works”, vol.I. op.cit., pg.28.

impressionist criticism, whose leaders were Charles Baudelaire, Jules Le Maitre, Paul Valéry and Remy de Gourmont.<sup>90</sup>

To thoroughly scrutinize them would require a study on their own. We can quickly touch upon the influence of symbolism and the evolutionary ideas. This is possible as Konitza has left clear references to them. In his essay on artificial languages Konitza refers very often to the French symbolist writer Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915) and English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Konitza mentions two books of Remy de Gourmont “L’esthétique de la langue française” (1899) and “La culture des idées” (1900). The main message of de Gourmont’s conception of symbolism was the liberty that every individual has in interpreting and judging art and that the latter’s representation is the way how we perceive it. The stress was put on individual aesthetic as a fundamental precondition in creating art. For de Gourmont words were the substratum of thought, its form and essence, they have unique aesthetic values.<sup>91</sup>

Konitza seems to have appropriated the above ideas and applied them in some of his writings. When in 1906 he promised to publish in his review a regular literary critique of Albanian literature, intended as a literary genre per se, he wrote that the methodology of literary critique should be different from that of the sciences. According to Konitza literary critique is subjective as it is only to personal impression.<sup>92</sup> Here he makes a clear division between patriotism and aesthetics, the latter only being the right judgement on literary production. This was an obvious break with the romantic poetries and prose of other Albanian writers of his time. Like de Gourmont, Faik Konitza was also obsessed with the style of writing and devoted particular attention to correctly writing Albanian.<sup>93</sup>

The other characteristic of Konitza’s writings is the constant references to the idea of evolution. It has to do in general with the Albanian speaking people, as a community going towards a higher stage of its development, which is the Albanian nation. In particular it refers to the Albanian literary language, taken as the evolution of the spoken popular language, the dialects, into the Albanian literary language. The latter is intended not only as a product of changes over time, but also as national asset of a higher quality, as it will be the tool to produce literature.<sup>94</sup> The other quality of the language is that Konitza takes it as strictly connected with the people speaking it. He ascribes to the natives a predestined genetic capacity to speak their own language.<sup>95</sup>

Here he refers to the definition of the style of writing formulated by Herbert Spencer as pertaining “to economize the attention of readers”.<sup>96</sup> Konitza writes that

<sup>90</sup> Rexhep Qosja, “The belated winner”, op.cit, pg. 138.

<sup>91</sup> See also three texts of Remy de Gourmont “Le symbolisme”, “L’art libre et l’esthétique individuelle” and “L’ivresse verbale”. In <http://www.remydegourmont.org> as accessed in June 2005.

<sup>92</sup> “Periodization of Albanian letters”, in “Faik Konitza, Works”, vol.5, op.cit, pg.244.

<sup>93</sup> “Some advises on the art of writing”, “Faik Konitza, Works”, vol.5, op.cit., pg.224.

<sup>94</sup> In the article “For the foundation of a literary language”, “Albania”, nr.9, London 1905, pg.230-235, the author Lek Gruda refers to Faik Konitza efforts in creating an Albanian literary language. Gruda sees this language as a product of both the evolution of dialects, but also as progress, as something new, which need careful and scientific elaboration.

<sup>95</sup> Luan Starova, “Faik Konitza dhe Guillaume Apollinaire, një miqësi evropiane”, op.cit., pg.126.

<sup>96</sup> “Faik Konitza and Guillaume Apollinaire”, op.cit, pg.125. Here Konitza refers to Herbert Spencer book “Philosophy of the style”, in “Essays: scientific, political and speculative”, London 1883, vol.II, pg.11. Spencer held that along with the human evolution people have acquired through biological heritage certain capacities that are developed independently from individual experiences. See “Storia della filosofia moderna e contemporanea” (History of modern and contemporary philosophy), vol.2, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1997, pg.145.

only a writer of the same “race” as his readers had full chances to succeed in his literary performance. His perception of the writer’s style in a natural language is that it creates that unique atmosphere through which his work can be assimilated by his native speaker’s audience. With this atmosphere Konitza understands a kind of climate created by cognitive signals expressed through the mother tongue, which can induce people to have an understanding of a message and to contextualise it easier and with less mind action, or “attention”, than a foreigner could do. According to him, this is possible in natural languages only. Their evolution is based on long living experiences of a given people, but also on the born instincts to appropriate the native language.

On the other hand Spencer’s influence on Konitza, and his positivist ideas in a wider sense, can be seen on the claim to explore linguistic phenomena only in a scientific way. This is reinforced by a strong belief on progress, in a laic stand with regard to politics and agnosticism with regard to religious matters.<sup>97</sup> This matched well with the intention of Konitza to create an Albanian identity out of linguistic and descent commonality, as primary national attributes, rather than on any religious basis.

Some authors have rightly pointed out the importance of his knowledge of various foreign languages in his undertaking to forge an Albanian literary language.<sup>98</sup> The influence of French is evident in the way he writes Albanian.<sup>99</sup> Others refer to his classical education (Ancient Rome, European Renaissance) when they praise the clarity, the beautiful expression of his thoughts and the way Konitza constructs his phrases.<sup>100</sup>

While writing on Konitza, Albanian scholars have delineated for him the profile of an “erudite awakener” and “enlightener” of the nation.<sup>101</sup> He is seen as a patriot intellectual, who elaborated the Albanian language and enhanced it at the level of literary language. His linguistic contribution is conceived as reviving and improving a national attribute such as the national language. This way of explaining his role is strongly linked to some deeply entrenched ideological dogmas in Albanians studies.

---

<sup>97</sup> “Storia della filosofia moderna e contemporanea”, vol.2, op.cit, pg.149. For Konitza the reforms in the Ottoman Empire in early XX century would have only one major importance: to transform the religious Ottoman state into a laic one. As for the Albanian nationalist movement, which is seen as opposed to the other more religiously influenced Balkan movements, he writes that: “Le seul élément de progrès dans l’Empire ottoman c’est le parti national albanais. En effet, nous autres Albanais, nous ne nous plaçons jamais au point de vue religieux. Nous respectons toutes les convictions sincères, mais nous considérons qu’elles sont affaire de conscience... Unis dans un même désir de progrès intellectuel, d’amélioration politique et économique, tous ces Albanais ne se réclament que de leurs droits en tant qu’hommes... Le mouvement albanais est donc un parti *moderne* de progrès *vrai*. Les autres mouvements, quelle que soit leur étiquette, ne sont que des *confréries religieuses*”. In “Albania”, nr.4, London 1903, pg.63.

<sup>98</sup> In various articles with the title “New Words”, while trying to create new words in Albanian, Konitza brings in examples from French, Greek and Turkish. See for example “New Words”, in “Albania”, nr.6, Brussels 1897, pg.97.

<sup>99</sup> Luan Starova, “Faik Konitza dhe Guillaume Apollinaire”, op.cit, pg.10. Konitza used to write in French when he wanted to explain problems related to the writing of a language. See “La question de l’écriture albanaise”, “Albania”, nr.7, Brussels, 1897, pg.111. The second part of this article is published again in French in the successive issue of “Albania”, nr.8, Brussels 1897, pg.133. Another important article regarding the Albanian literary language is written in French as well. “Les dialectes albanais et la nécessité de leur fusion”, in “Albania”, nr.10, Brussels 1898, pg.173.

<sup>100</sup> Rexhep Qosja, “Introduction” to “Faik Konitza”, op.cit, pg.20.

<sup>101</sup> Jup Kastrati, “Faik Konitza”, op.cit., pg.527. Also Sabri Hamiti “Faik Konitza: it is me”, op.cit., pg.36; Luan Starova “Faik Konitza dhe Guillaume Apollinaire”, op.cit., pg.11.

First of all it is always held that Albanians represent a specific case in the Balkan context with regard to religion. Albanians had never forgotten their nationality though divided into three religious communities. It was 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.<sup>102</sup> Consequently, the choice on language as the “strongest link” by Albanian intellectuals of the National Movement is considered by Albanian historiography as more rational and more scientific as compared to religion.<sup>103</sup>

Many studies on Balkan nationalisms emphasize the importance of “national” languages as a marker of nationality. It is not an Albanian specificity. The use of language to define nations was instead an important part of national projects all over the peninsula, especially in the second half of the XIX century. As Paschalis Kitromilides has shown in the case of the rise of Greek nationalism in the early XIX century, the linguistically-based Greek community, as part of parochial secular ideals of nationalism, ran counter to ecumenical and theocratic values of Orthodoxy.

In general Balkan nationalist intellectuals of the nineteenth century used language both as a means of enlightenment and unification, but also as a factor of national identity.<sup>104</sup> If Faik Konitza was a modernizer and nationalist intellectual with the intention to realize the project of a cultural homogenous entity in a particular context, such as the “Albanian nation”, then the “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 of nationalist intellectuals, who took certain elements from the traditional culture to incorporate into the new culture, the “national” one. This selective process 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”.<sup>105</sup> 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-maker, and at the same time, it could legitimize the Albanian nation in the eyes of Europe and give it the license to enter civilization as a predestined target.

In the Albanian studies the Albanian “nation”, as a cultural homogenous community of people, is not taken as a project in the minds of nationalist intellectuals based upon a certain context, but rather as a stage of development of Albanian people seen through the optics of a linear and finalist perspective. 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 and when the country was steadily going towards its full isolation from the outside world. Consequently, it still suffers from ideological and romantic representation of the history of the country, such as the concepts of “renaissance”, or “national awakening”, when it deals with the period of National Movement.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> “Historia e popullit shqiptar” (History of Albanian people), vol.II, op.cit, Tirana 2001,pg.27.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, pg.80.

<sup>104</sup> “Language as a Factor of National Identity in the Balkans of the Nineteenth Century”, in “Balkan Cultural Studies”, Stavro Skëndi, Columbia University Press, New York 1980, pg.33.

<sup>105</sup> John-Paul Himka “The Construction of Nationality in Galician Rus: Icarian Flights in Almost All Directions”, in “Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation”, Ronald Grigor Suny, Michael D. Kennedy (eds), The University of Michigan Press, 2001, pg.111.

<sup>106</sup> See Nathalie Clayer, “Aux origins du nationalisme albanais”, op.cit., pg.viii.

## Conclusion

The Albanian “nation” of Faik Konitza was a community of people based on two main pillars: a) common language and b) common descent, 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 a lesser importance. It would be better to see them as complementary and interchangeable elements in the hierarchy of national values. Religion could produce the image of a culturally heterogeneous Albanian nation, being that Albanians belonged to three different faiths. Thus it had to be subdued through vernacularizing policies. The concept of Faik Konitza of the “Albanian nation” was evolutionary, organic and historicist one. This aspect of his Albanian nation comes 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 XIX 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 national level.<sup>107</sup> For Konitza the evolution process was of paramount importance in bringing about changes in the language too. He compares the language to a human body, which grows and is affected by the outside factors in the course of its development.<sup>108</sup> Konitza tried by all means to make his review appear as addressing the whole Albanian speaking populations. One indicator in that direction was the attention devoted to language, and namely insisting to create a ‘national literary language’ understood by all Albanian speaking people. Konitza thought the latter to act as a medium, through which strengthening the links between Albanians and enforcing in 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 appears as a single body in need of its own distinct space. As Hroch has explained, but also as it comes out from Konitza’s writings, these claims are based on appeals to two criteria: a) to the principle of an area defined by ethnic homogeneity of its population, “as a common linguistic-cultural group”, and b) to the notion of a

---

<sup>107</sup> E. Hobsbawm, “Nations and Nationalism”, op.cit., pg.33;38. E.Hobsbawm in his book describes the idea of nation and nation-state in the XIX century as part of the liberal ideology, which considered the development of nation as a phase of human evolution that goes from smaller units to larger ones.

<sup>108</sup> “Les néologismes et les lois de l’évolution phonétique dans la langue albanaise”, in “Albania”, nr.6, Brussels, pg.99-100. In this article written in French Konitza writes that: “Ce ne serait pas une vaine image que de comparer les langues à l’organisme humain. De même que le corps de l’homme se forme, se développe, et croît en force et en santé, grâce au concours de matières étrangères, - de même une langue n’arrive à une puissance d’expression et une vie propre, que par l’emprunt antérieur d’une foule d’éléments étrangers. Et de même que le corps digère les aliments, de même encore une langue se transforme, pour se les assimiler, les mots qu’elle prend d’une autre. Mais cette transformation qu’une langue fait subir aux mots étrangers- avant de les faire siens, avant de se les infuser, pour ainsi dire, dans les veines- n’est pas une œuvre de caprice: c’est une véritable fonction qui, comme les fonctions digestives, a ses lois: ce sont les lois de l’évolution phonétique”.

historic territory with its own traditional borders”.<sup>109</sup> Here the evocation of the Pellazgs is meaningful. Konitza believed in a cyclical development trajectory of the Albanian “nation”, going from birth, growth, efflorescence and decline. This historicist perspective of conceiving the nation is personified by comparing the past splendour to the miserable present.<sup>110</sup>

Konitza’s definition of Albanian nation pertains to essentialism and consensus. For him Albanians should be made aware and had to know they were people having the same blood, the same origin and the same language.<sup>111</sup> This implied the forging of such a community through the agency of the intellectuals like him. In their view they had to awaken their people from the present torpor and give them the sense of “who we are”.

Here we come to the point how he conceived his own role in publishing the review. We can deduce it from the wide range of topics touched by Konitza in its review. Konitza was convinced that the Albanian people urgently needed to civilize itself and was not yet prepared for an independent political life.<sup>112</sup> Therefore the main goal of “Albania” review was to culturally and politically prepare it for the future challenge. He brings in a variety of topics that range from linguistics, history, folklore, up to agriculture and commerce.<sup>113</sup> The main aim of these writings was to teach Albanians how to improve themselves and go towards a higher level of emancipation as a precondition to deserve a political and independent life in the form of a “national state”.

Although Konitza was very critic to his “nation”, it seems that in certain occasions he assigned to himself the role of the “educator of the nation” and one who stands in the avant-garde of the Albanian nationalist movement.<sup>114</sup> This role is

<sup>109</sup> Miroslav Hroch “How Nations are Formed”, in “New Left Review”, nr.198, (March-April 1993), pg.15. In another article of him, Hroch has written that: “When seen as a personality, the nation could therefore naturally only use one literary language, just as it could only incorporate one common past into its “memory”. The life of this personality-nation and its dissimilarity and differentiation from other nations, logically depended on the successful spread of the national languages”. In “The Social Interpretation of Linguistic Demands in European National Movements”, EUI Working Paper EUI No.94/1, pg.25.

<sup>110</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “National Identity”, Penguin Books, London 1991, pg.87.

<sup>111</sup> This definition is borrowed from Nathalie Clayer, which uses it in her book when she analyses the study of Vincenzo Dorsa, “*Su gli Albanesi. Ricerche e pensieri*”. Nathalie Clayer, “Aux origines du nationalisme albanais”, op.cit., pg.132.

<sup>112</sup> Just to mention the article “Director’s page”, in “Albania”, nr.4, London, 1906, pg.57-58. In this article Konitza deplores the fact that in Albania there are few people able to understand and judge on literature matters. In another writing of him, Konitza explains to the readers that creation of a national state is an international act. For him, the creation of a national state is a kind of indicator of the degree of civilization of a certain nation that should be sanctioned by Europe and recognized by other developed countries. Konitza says that Albanians are not yet able to give such guarantees. See, “The Liberation Road”, “Albania”, nr.10,11,12, London, 1906, pg. 198-199. In “Political training of the nation” with the subtitle “The two schools”, “Albania”, nr.3, London, 1907, pg.59-62. Konitza reiterates the idea that Albanians lack political experience to reach independence. He is against violence and opts for preliminary political preparation, which means to have a clear political program.

<sup>113</sup> For example in the article “Two words on agriculture and commerce”, Konitza explains the benefits coming from tilling the land with iron ploughs, “Albania”, nr.9, Brussels, 1898, pg.165-166. In “Some words on livestock” Konitza shows the importance of commerce, agriculture and livestock for the prosperity of the country, “Albania”, nr.10, Brussels, 1898, pg.184. Or the article “Potato”, where he explains the origin of this vegetable and its uses, “Albania”, nr.4, Brussels, 1899, pg.59-60. In another case Konitza tells the reader the wine producing process. See “The Wine”, Albania”, nr.1, London, 1904, pg.5-6.

<sup>114</sup> With this regard Konitza will write in this way about himself. “In 1895 I was in Paris when I firstly got acquainted with the existence of an Albanian propaganda and the publication of Albanian books in

conceived in sheer contrast to that of those who were in favour of violent methods to reach Albanian national affirmation.

“Il y a une douzaine d’années, on pouvait compter sur les doigts le nombre des nationalistes shqipëtar (Albanians- my note). 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 excentriques. Cependant, avec le temps, l’idée faisait du progrès 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 charlatans frénétiques. Avec une continuité ininterrompue de méthode, nous nous sommes toujours appliqué à éviter de flatter les passions populaires et n’avons recherché d’autre succès que la conquête permanente d’intelligences libres.”<sup>115</sup>

In my opinion Faik Konitza should be seen as a nationalist intellectual and a modernizer. He should be seen in the framework of Smith’s definition of nationalism, as an ideological movement for “attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential “nation”.”<sup>116</sup> Smith’s concise formulation of nationalism as a political ideology with a cultural doctrine in its centre applies well in Konitza’s case. Konitza’s vision pertains to the principal propositions of nationalist ideology, namely a) the world is divided into nations, each with its own individuality, history and destiny, b) the loyalty to the nation overrides all other allegiances, c) human beings must identify with a nation if they want to be free and realize themselves, d) nations must be free and secure if peace and justice are to prevail in the world.<sup>117</sup> This implies recognizing the priority of developing the nation and then endowing it with a state of its own. Throughout the period of publication of his review “Albania”, Konitza perceived “national idea”, or “national feelings” as an elitist attribute and not yet a common patrimony, or at best something developed only at a regional level.<sup>118</sup> The role he set himself was to transform it into a “national dimension”.

On the other hand, 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 XIX and XX century. This period of time was in Europe and its immediate peripheries “a golden age of vernacularizing, lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs”.<sup>119</sup> This century marked also a growing interest in questions of origin and descent of peoples and of their cultural distinctiveness and historical character. Since the XVIII century European thought had used ‘national character’, and ‘national genius’ as necessary tools to

---

Bucharest. Since 1890 I was dealing with the elaboration of my language and I had created a library containing all books written by foreign albanologues. I had started to write some articles on Albanian nationality in a Paris based newspaper. This shows that Albanian propaganda was nul. Because I was one of the very few tackling this issue pushed by my own initiative”. In “Memorandum on Albanian National Movement” written by Faik Konitza in 1899 for the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry. “Faik Konitza, Works”, vol.3, op.cit, pg.18-60.

<sup>115</sup> “L’Albanie nationaliste”, in “Albania”, nr.5, London 1907, pg.118-119. Konitza was not very regular in publishing his review, and some numbers were prepared with much delay. This number of his review was prepared in 1908, but on the cover page of the review was written 1907.

<sup>116</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “National Identity”, Penguin Books, London 1991, pg.73.

<sup>117</sup> This is Anthony Smith’s definition of ideology of nationalism. In “National Identity”, op.cit, pg.74.

<sup>118</sup> See Faik Konitza’s “Memorandum on Albanian National Movement”, op.cit., pg.18-60.

<sup>119</sup> Anderson refers here to Hugh Seton-Watson’s book “Nations and States. An Inquiry into the origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism”, Boulder Colorado, 1977. Benedict Anderson “Imagined Communities”, Verso, London, 2003, pg.71.

explain the history of people.<sup>120</sup> The development of humanistic education and science inspired a belief in the possibility of progress and evolution of nations. As Anthony Smith has written:

“Historicism, the belief in the birth, growth, efflorescence and decay of peoples and cultures, became increasingly attractive as a framework for inquiry into the past and present and as an explanatory principle in elucidating the meaning of events, past and present”.<sup>121</sup>

But, Smith has singled out another interesting element, which seems to be important in informing Konitza’s “national outlook”. This is “literary medievalism”, which greatly strengthened the emerging consciousness of each nation’s ethnic background and ethnic nationalism.

“For the medieval era and its golden age of ethnic heroes seemed to answer more fully to the historicist vision that underpinned the new language and ideology of nationalism, revealing in every corner of Europe the unsuspected glories of one national genius after another, each drawing inspiration from the golden age and poetic landscape of his or her ethnic community. Medievalist literary historicism spread the cult of national distinctiveness even to the most submerged community and cultural category of Europe’s population”.<sup>122</sup>

Faik Konitza studied in Lycée of Carcassone medieval French literature and various articles published in “Albania”, written by him or by others, revered the Albanian ‘national hero’ Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg (1403-1468) and its battles against the Ottoman armies as a glorious time. The period of Scanderbeg battles has a sheer symbolic connotation. History presented in this way provides identity into a historicist framework. On the other side, symbolic history provides an intense and summary view of the past and here “the most favoured events are times of heroic resistance to aliens”.<sup>123</sup> The yearning for an idealized golden age and heroic past, as opposed to the lamentable present, was also an aspect of the influence of romanticism, which aimed to bring before the readers a point of reference for a “national regeneration”.<sup>124</sup>

Faik Konitza was an actor and propagator of a “national project” for Albanians, or to put it differently, of a modernizing process, similar to that undergone by most of the Balkan countries in the XIX century. Konitza sought to create a literary language for the community he claimed to represent, to create a homogenous “organic” Albanian nation by trying to give a sense of unity to all Albanians and endeavouring to turn Albanians from a passive ethnies into an active “ethno-political community, a subject of history”. Konitza was part of that process as he was using the means produced by modernity, such as periodicals, newspapers, whose task was to grasp and develop the “spirit of the nation”. 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.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “National Identity”, op.cit, pg.87.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, pg.87.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, pg.90.

<sup>123</sup> John Breuilly, “Nationalism and the State”, The University of Chicago Press, 1993, pg.66.

<sup>124</sup> As an example we can refer here to “Skander begu”, “Albania”, nr.3, Brussels, 1897, pg.33. Here the author praises the deeds of the ‘national hero’ and exhorts Albanians to awaken and repeat the heroic undertakings of the past. It is important to note the author writes on Skanderbeg in a way that seems like introducing him to Albanians, explaining who he was. The other article is “How to work”, “Albania”, nr.5, Brussels, 1897, pg.65. Here the past of the ‘national hero’ is in sheer contrast to the present, when Albanians are divided and fallen asleep. Another case is the article, “The beauty of Albania”, “Albania”, nr.11, Brussels, 1898, pg.207. Here Konitza, as the title indicates itself, praises the beautiful Albanian landscape.

<sup>125</sup> John Breuilly, “Nationalism and the state”, The University of Chicago Press, 1993, pg.58.



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.