

The Role of the Institute of Albanian Studies in Albanological Research

Xhoana Faja

"Aleksandër Moisiu" University, Durrës, Albania

xhoanafaja@live.com

Abstract Albanological researches unlike many other countries have started relatively late, especially in institutional form. All the efforts of the Albanian intellectual elite to establish an Albanian Studies Society, finally were finalized with the establishment of the Institute of Albanian Studies on April 8, 1940, and certainly, the support of the Italian government at the foundation of this institute is considerable. This institute aimed to develop the national Albanian language, to gather the best issue of Albanian folklore, to collect data and documents on the history etc.. This study will consider the issues relating to the establishment of this institute, the organization, status, and integral structures and the program of the institute. The institute did a significant work in scientific activities in the field of linguistics, literature, history, archeology, science and art by providing an exceptional contribution to Albanological Researches. This study applies even to evaluate the work of intellectuals in raising the value of the Albanian nation. Unfortunately this work so valuable was skipped for a long time by the communist regime, because a part of the members of this institute was seen as cooperator with the Quisling Government and as such were sentenced, imprisoned and killed by the communist government.

Keywords: institute, linguistic studies, history, albanological research, activities

1. Introduction

A group of foreign albanologists, that visited Albania on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Independence Day in 1937, discussed among other issues on the possibility of foundation of an Albanian Studies Organization, with head office in Tirana. They presented their proposal to the respective Albanian authorities and decided to organize in Tirana on September 1st 1937, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Kingdom proclamation, a meeting with all Albanian and foreign researchers of Albanology (Përpekja Shqiptare 13, 1938). Independently from the desire of the above mentioned researchers, they could not realize the creation of an Albanology studies center.

On April 7th 1939, the fascist Italy militarily invaded Albania. Immediately after the invasion, in the framework of directing the county toward fascism, the Italian authorities took adequate measures on the control and propaganda. It was founded the Fascist Party of Albania, as a branch of Fascist Party of Italy. A great number of organizations were founded under the Party, as the one of women, youth, and students that would work to introduce the fascist ideology (Akademia e Shkencave 2008, pg. 27). The daily newspapers of Tirana "Drita" and "Shtypi" were closed and replaced by the daily newspaper "The Fascism", which was an official newspaper of the Fascist Party (Bernd J., Fischer 2004, pg. 81). In this framework it was founded the Albanian Studies Institute too.

2. The foundations of the Institute of Albanian Studies

The foundations of the Institute of Albanian Studies were formalized in the Albanian Studies Convention held on 9 - 13 April 1940 with the initiative of the Albanian Ministry of Culture and with the support of fascist Italy (Ma i pari Kuvend i Studimeve Shqiptare, 1940, 52). The creation of this Institute in a way as an effort through which the Italian invaders tried to influence the Albanian intelligence and integrate it in the structures of the invader's regime (Akademia e Shkencave 2008, pg. 29) and this would help later in the propagation of fascism. The Albanian Studies Convention realized the first meeting of the Italian researches of Albanology and the Albanian ones (Ma i pari Kuvend i Studimeve Shqiptare, 1940, 52). The main protagonists of these convention were: Ernest Koliqi, Mati Logoreci, Carlo Tagliavini, Eqerem Çabej, Mustafa Kruja, At Zef Valentini, Dhimitër Berati, Domenico Mustilli, Franchesko Ercole, (Director of the Albanian Studies Center at the Italian Royal Academy), Sergio Bettini, Petraq Pepo Mateo Bartoli, Antonio Badacci, Paolo Emilio Pavolini, Papas Gaetano Petrotta, Mit'hat Frashëri, Karl Gurakuqi, Gennaro Maria Monti, Giuseppe Schiro, Pappa Mihali, Nikola Loruso Attoma etc.

In the Albanian Studies Convention there were discussed important issues on Albanology and the ones related to the linguistic, literary, historic and anthropologic studies, etc. Regarding the linguistic studies the Convention were (Ma i pari Kuvend i Studimeve Shqiptare, 1940, 9) Prof. Carlo Tagliavini and Eqerem Çabej, meanwhile for some issues of the

Albanian there was a paper presented by Mustafa Kruja. The studies on the Italian – Albanian Studies were presented by Ernest Koliqi and Gaetano Petrotta.

On the second and third day of the convention for the researchers, the organizers has prepared tourist visits in the cities and important historical and cultural sites in Shkoder, Korçe, Voskopojë, Krujë , Petrelë etc.

The forth day of the Albanian Studies Convention (12 April 1940) was the most important day of this event. In the session of this day, there were presented two academic references (Ma i pari Kuvend i Studimeve Shqiptare, 1940, 10): the one of the Prof. Domenico Mustilli, with the title: "Albanian Archeological Studies" and the reference of Prof. Zef Valentini with title: "Albanian Historical Studies". During the same day, it was discussed on the possibility of organization of an International Convention of Albanian Studies in Naples and it was approved the foundation of the Albanian Studies Institute.

The fifth day of the Convention on 13 April 1940 was considered the first day for the directing structures of the Albanian Studies Institute. Basing on the official documents that accompanied the foundation of the Institute of Albanian Studies, it had the mission *to cultivate the national language regarding the cleanness, phraseology, lexicology, to gather and extract the Albanian folklore and try to gather information and documentation on the story and Albanian art*. The Institute of Albanian Studies, would be a branch of "Skënderbeg" Foundation that was founded under the decision of the Italian King Representative in Albania n. 114 date. 8 April 1940 (AQSH,F.200,v.1940,D.10, fl. 2) and had as principal scope the fascist propaganda in the culture field. This foundation would include the "Italian – Albanian circle "Skënderbeg" which was founded to support and strengthen further the social and cultural relations between Albanians and Italians (Fletorja Zyrtare, 1940). In the letter that the first director of the institute, Mr. Mustafa Kruja, sent to the King Representative in Albania, Francisko Jacomoni, in the first day of the work of the Institute, he expressed his gratitude on the big support of the Albanian culture, and on the other hand he assured to undertake wide activities supporting the fascist spirit. (AQSH,F.200,v.1940,D.11) The Albanian intellectuals engaged in this Institute had the scope to use this opportunity to create an initiative and to undertake studies that would benefit the national culture. For this reason the foundation of this institute was welcomed from many well-known intellectuals, but nevertheless, the major part of them didn't accept to cooperate and to be part of the Institute (Akademia e Shkencave, 2008, pg.29).

The Institute of Albanian Studies, till the beginning was organized in 2 commissions (AQSH,F.200,v.1940,D.10,fl.17)

1. The Commission of Language and Folklore and 2. The Commission of Story and Art.

Every commission was made up of at least 4 internal members. The general activity of the Institute was organized and directed by the Scientific Council part of which were the chairmen, vice chairman and 4 councilors that were appointed by royal decree under the proposal of the Minister of Instruction and elected from the effective Albanian and Italian members of the Institute.

The Scientific Council of the Institute of Albanian Studies was made up of the following personalities (Fletorja Zyrtare, 1940): Chairman: Mustafa Kruja, Vice Chairman: Prof. Carlo Tagliavini and councilors: Prof. Eqerem Çabej, At Zef Valentini, Dom Lazër Shantoja, Prof. Aleksandër Xhuvani.

At the end of each academic year, the Chairman Mr. Mustafa Kruja, sent to the Italian King Representative in Albania, (Albania was part of the Kingdom after the fascist invasion) and to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, a report on the activities undertaken by the Institute during the year.¹

Regarding the progress of its activity, the Institute was engaged to realize cooperation with other cultural institutes within the country and homologue institutes abroad. In this initiative, it obtained the support and cooperation of the Italian Royal Academy and its representatives in Albania Lombardi, Daniele Rodici.

As part of its publishing activity, the Institute beside publishing the original works of the Albanian researchers, tried to underline also the problems that existed in the field of the albanological studies. On the bases of the academic program of the Institute, this institution had the scope to translate and to publish in Albanian language fundamental works written in foreign languages on Albania which were not known by the locals.

At the same time, the Institute engaged in the organization of many conferences not only in Albania, but at the same time in Italy, to make Albania more recognized by the neighbor country. The Institute would prepare publications in form of articles and studies on Albania, which would be published in well known and important European academic newspapers and magazines.

¹ After the invasion of Albania from fascist Italy, the Constitution was changed. Following the new Constitution all the executive power of the state was given to the King of Italy, who was represented in Albania by his Representative. This Representative was responsible to control the doll regime founded in Albania and was represented by the Council of Ministers. The appointment of the Council of Ministers was made by the Representative with the help of the Italian councilors appointed in each ministry.

It was the task of the Institute to publish a research study in which to present the level of albanological studies. The members of the institute thought that before it was necessary to compose a full bibliography of the albanological studies through professional files, with all necessary information of the Albanian on the Albanian and foreign researches and their works. As immediate task of the Institute, it was determined (Ma i pari Kuvend i Studimeve Shqiptare, 1940, 51-57) to present the situation of the Albanian studies, compilation of the Albanian language dictionary and collection of important historical documentation on Albania.

When Mustafa Kruja was appointed in the position of the Prime Minister, as chairman of the Institute of Albanian Institute was appointed the writer Ernest Koliqi, which was First Minister of Instruction after the invasion of Albania from Italy.

From December 1941 until end of August 1942 (AQSH, F.200, v.1942, D.19, fl.7), the Institute suspended its academic and cultural activity, because it was engaged not only in the preparation of the legislation to give a more clear juridical physiognomy to the institution, but also in infrastructure works of the Institute head office. The normal activity of the Institute restarted on September 21st 1942 (AQSH, F.200, v.1942, D.19, fl.18), with the meeting of all members resident in Tirana and this act noted the second phase of its activity.

Despite the status that the Institute of Albanian Studies obtained by the decree N. 114 date 8 April 1940 it was necessary to determine the juridical physiognomy of the Institute of Albanian Studies.

Under the proposal of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, the General Representative of the Italian King in Albania, decided the Institute of Albanian Studies to be named "The Royal Institute of Albanian Studies" (AQSH, F.200, v.1940, D.10, fl.8). In a solemn ceremony organized on September 28th 1942, the new Chairman Ernest Koliqi swear in front of the King Representative declaring the change of the Institute name from Institute of Albanian Studies to The Royal Institute of Albanian Studies (Lek, Drini, 1942). Important changes were performed to its program and statute. In contrast with the Institute of Albanian Studies, that included in his activity general studies on the language and art, the The Royal Institute of Albanian Studies following its new program had the scope to stimulate and coordinate the Albanian intellectual movement even in other fields as human sciences, arts, curricula etc. This scope would be realized not only based on the propaganda, but also by organizing scientific conferences, stimulating and supporting publications and various academic works of the local and foreign authors. The emblem of the Institute was accepted to be the column of Apol Agiens (AQSH, F.200, v.1942, D.21, fl.30), which was very popular in the ancient numismatics of Illyrians predecessors of Albanians.

The Royal Institute of Albanian Studies would be made up of 4 commissions (AQSH, F.200, v.1940, D. 10, fl. 11):

- 1) The Commission of Literature (AQSH, F.200, v.1942, D.19, fl.35) : Vinçens Prendushi, Sotir Kolea
- 2) The Commission of moral and historical sciences: Prof. Marcos Milone, Dhimitër Pasku, Thoma Rollogai, Hasan Dosti, Kolë Dhimitri, Prof. G. Lorenzoni
- 3) The Commission of natural sciences, physics, mathematics: At Mark Harapi, Nikolla Lako, Vasfi Visoku, Prof. Michele Parino, Dr. Ali Mihali, Dr. Jano Basho, Dr. Hamdi Sulçebeku, Prof. Stefanuli
- 4) The Commission of Arts : Odhise Paskali, At Lorenzo Tardo, Prof. Kristo Kono etj.

After passing from Italian invasion to the German invasion, following the decree of the Higher Council of Albania, The Royal Institute of Albanian Studies changed its name to the Albanian Studies and Arts Institute². This institutions following its legal program would have the scope to promote the Albanian intellectual movement in the field of sciences, curricula and arts. Chairman on this Institution was elected At Anton Harapi, which following the statute was elected by the internal members of the Institute basing on the decree of the Higher Council of Albania. The first meeting of the ASAI was organized on February 24th 1944 in Tirana under the direction of Father Anton Harapit, and participated only the members resident in Tirana as (AQSH, F.200, v.1942, D.22, fl.198) : A. Xhuvani, A. Paluca, Dh. Berati, K. Gurakuqi, E. Vlora, L. Shantoja, Xh. Korça, O. Paskali etc. In the first meeting was decided (Kritika, 1, 1944, 39-40) that the Institute

² In September 1943, Albania passed from the Italian fascist invasion into the German Nazism invasion and immediately after the invasion special attention was dedicated to the Constitution change. A lot of constitutional changes made by the Italian authorities were suspended and it was left in power the decree of year 1928, following which Albania was proclaimed Monarchy. Starting from this fact, Germany left opened the possibility for King Zog to return in Albania and decided that Albania will be government by a High Council of Regents made of four members, one representative from each religious community. This Council formed a government, which would collaborate with the German authorities.

would be apolitical and not honorary, but it will give value to all Albanian knowledge and art works. The subject word of the Institute was "Pro cultural" (AQSH,F.200,v.1944,D.25,fl.9)

In order to change the Statue and the juridical rights of the Institute, it was elected a commission made up of (AQSH,F.200,v.1942,D.22,fl.199): A. Xhuvani, Xh. Korça, , K. Gurakuqi, O. Paskali. Juridical experts were elected Gjergj Ashta. Following the statute of ASAI, in contract to its predecessor, the Institute was separated in three branches (AQSH,F.200,v.1944,D.25,fl.6) : Literature, Arts and Sciences.

In contract with the programs of activities of the two previous periods, ASAI in his activity would not serve only to an elite but to much wider social range. On the other hand on of this engagements was to intensify the work for the intellectual development of the country. The Institue would serve as a basis for opening of the University and Academy in Albania immediately after the war. In support of this philosophy, it compiled a wide working program regarding three of its main branches: literature, sciences and art.

The working program for the literature branch (AQSH,F.200,v.1944,D.25,fl.77) included : publications, translations, manifests, opening of libraries. The publication activity of ASAI would be concentrated in periodica publication, collection, monographs, etc.

The Institute engaged in the compilation of an Albanian bibliography (AQSH,F.200,v. 1944,D.25,fl.94) where would be registered all books and artiled published in the Albanian language and those published in foreign language on Albania and Albanians. It was requested to the Government, the approval of a law on bibliographic indicator following which all publishers should note in their publications a progressive number that would be provided by the Press Office of the Albanian government. At the same time decisions on the copyright were taken, following the proposal of Mr. Vangjel Meksi which was published in the cultural magazine of that time "Shkëndija" (AQSH,F.200,v.1942,D.2,fl.201)

In the framework of the Albanian Studies and Arts Institute was founded the Kosovo Department with a very wide working program (Instituti Shqiptar për Studime dhe Arte,1944). This department would deal with the research, collection and organization of documents and various publication in the field of history, ethnography, economy of Kosovo and to reflect the efforts of the Albanian population of this region against assimilation and ethnical denationalization. In its program, this department included: the publication of an historical document and of an atlas – album on Kosovo. To realize these objectives, it was not sufficient only the department working program but this initiative required the collaboration of all researchers and cultural entities which would contribute together to the study of the denationalization of Albanian population of Kosovo and other regions with ethnical Albanian population in the Balkans. On the other hand, Kosovo department guaranteed its support to the individuals and entities that requested it. In order to function properly this session founded four commissions:

- 1) The Commission of History
- 2) The Commission of Ethnography
- 3) The Commission of Economy
- 4) The Commission for the creation of documentation on the denationalization politics toward the Albanian population in Kosovo and in other ethnical Albanian populations in Balkans.

The Institution progressed further in his work by undertaking promoting activities in different fields of history, language, culture, folklore, arts and music, implementing the foundations on original scientific studies in the field of albanology.

The Institute made a lot of efforts on the foundation of the scientific institutions as the building of the Albanian Museum of Natural Sciences. It will contain the zoological collection, herbarium of the Albanian flora and a collection of the minerals and fossils discovered till that time. It was created the Library of the Institute basing on the contribution of the Albanian intellectual elite itself. This library would further enrich the activity of the Institute. This Institution stopped existing immediately after the end of the war and the major part of its contributors left Albania.

3. Instead of conclusions : The Most Important Activists of the Institute

Mustafa Kruja, born in Kruja, on 15 March 1887 (Mustafa, Kruja,2007). He completed his studies in the University "Mylkije", Istanbul. He is one of the signatories of the Independence Act and has served as the Prime Secretary of Ismail Qemali government. He supported the regime of Prince Vid and in the Durres government he was appointed Minister of Post – Telegraph, ect. Under the Italian regime, he was elected senator of Italian Kingdom. In April 1940, under his initiative, it was founded the Institute of Albanian Studies, which he leaded till year 1941 (Kastriot, Dervishi,2006,pg.187). After that, he was appointed Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, in December 1941, in 1942 he directs the Ministry of Justice. He spend the major part of his life in immigration to Austria, Italy, Egypt, France, USA.

Ernest Koliqi was born in Shkoder on 20 May 1901 in a very well known patriotic family. He completed his studies in the "Jesuit College" Arici in Brescia. He received his diploma in the Padova University in the literature branch. Initially lector

of Albanian language in the University of Padova and later Professor of Albanian Language in the University of Rome (AQSH, F.200, v.1941, D.3, fl.10). He is noted in his activity as poet, prose writer, dramaturge, researcher of literature and literary translator. This activity and literary creations were exercised during his whole life. After the invasion of Albania, he comes back to Albania and is appointed Minister of Instruction in Shefqet Vërlaci Government. With the foundation of the Institute of Albanian Studies he is noted as one of the most diligent activist and in December 1941, he takes over the direction of this Institution gathering the most well known culture activists and writers.

Father Anton Arapi, Franciscan, graduated in Austria in Philology – Theology branch. He was founder of the "Ora e Maleve" group, chief redactor of the magazine "Hylli i Dritës", collaborator of various publications, as "Iliria", "Arbëria", "Demokracia" etc. After the foundation of the Institute, he is elected internal member and in April 1944 he is appointed Chairman of ASAI.

Dhimitër Berati born in Korçë in 13 October 1887. He is graduated in Bucharest for political sciences and in Rome for juridical sciences (AQSH, F.200, v.1941, D.3, fl.4). He has represented Albania in the Albanian Issues in diplomatic missions in Italy, France, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia. After the decline of Rexhep Mitrovica government he left Albania forever, he lived in Italy, where he undertook multiple political activities. He died in Rome in 1970.

Father Justin Rrota. Franciscan graduated in Austria in Philology – Theology branch (AQSH, F. 200, v. 1941, D. 3, fl.16) and was one of the most known linguists of that time. He dedicated all his life to the Albanology field. He gave his contribution in the collection of many documents on Albania from the Veneditian archives. He has published many works in the literature domain.

Don Lazër Shantoja was born in Shkoder 1892. He completed his high studies for priest in Austria. He was part of the Albanian political life in 1923-1924, where he showed his capacities as orator. He was noted for his satirical works and different publications. He was an effective member of the Institute of Albanian Studies.

Father Zef Valentini is one of the irreplaceable contributors in the activity of the Albanian Studies Institute. He was born in Padova, on 1 July 1900. He graduated for Philosophy in year 1924 and after that for Theology. He is presented as theologian, albanologist, byzantinologist and historian. Father Valentini was an Italian Jesuit, that came to Albania for the first time in year 1922 (K.Krisafi, N.Kulla, D.Thomollari, 2006, pg.10). He learned very fast the Albanian language, and anybody could tell that he was a normal Albanian cleric and he would cordially devoted himself to the Albanian quotidian life. He had good relations with all the Albanian researchers hierarchy till 1941. He worked as councilor and secretary of the The Royal Institute of Albanian Studies. He is considered well known as result of his bibliographic volumes and published books which represent a real treasure for the Albanian culture.

Unfortunately, despite the extraordinary contribution given by the above mentioned researchers, but also from others which are not mentioned here, they were left out of sight for a very long time. The communist regime considered them as collaborator of the Quisling Government and their contribution and work was never considered.

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