

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN KOSOVA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR</b></p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>History</b></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> World War I, Austria-Hungary, Kosova, education, culture, etc.</p>
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**Abstract**

Following the occupation of Kosova by the dual Austria-Hungarian Empire, the Albanian people had now passed through a long period of occupation by the Ottoman Empire, as well as by the late occupation of the Serbian Kingdom, where the Albanians had gone through a terrible calvary from the new invaders. With all these sufferings and prohibitions, the occupation of Austria-Hungary found the Albanian people in a miserable state in terms of education. The majority of the population was illiterate, therefore the Dualist Empire aimed at bringing the Albanian people closer to itself and tried to regulate the issue of education as much as it was possible, as well as allow freedom in terms of Albanian culture and traditions. It also tried to raise the Albanian population to a higher level in every sphere by cooperating with bright figures, such as Hasan Prishtina and others. On this occasion, they took advantage of the opportunity to develop education in the Albanian language as much as possible. The German language was also included in the program. This short period for the Albanians was a great advancement in various fields such as in the improvement of infrastructure, culture and especially in education through the opening of schools and courses to combat illiteracy in Kosova.

Following a long Ottoman and Serbo-Montenegro rule, Austria-Hungary found Kosova without a unified national cultural tradition and without a developed national education, especially among the Albanian population.<sup>2</sup> For the Austria-Hungarian army and center in Vienna, immediately after the invasion of Kosova and other Albanian territories, it was considered necessary to establish a general alliance with the Albanian population. At the same time, with the support and cooperation of Albanian religious leaders, a proclamation was also announced, inviting Albanians to join the military and civil structures of the Austro-Hungarian administration, which aimed at developing Albanian society to face the challenges of the time and make it safer for her future. The Austro-Hungarian authorities wanted in principle to gain the support of the Albanians, to work together in national and state consolidation.<sup>3</sup>

At this time, the municipal government functioned according to the directives of the higher authorities of the Austro-Hungarian administration. Through this scheme and administrative structure, the governing circles aimed to ensure success through the administrative, economic, social and cultural-educational development of these territories. On 1 April 1916, they agreed to set the border of the occupied areas in Kosova, Albania, Macedonia, and Serbia. According to this agreement, the territory of Podujeva-Prishtina-Lipjan-Ferizaj-Kaçanik-Gjilan-Prizren-Rahovec, as well as a part of Eastern Albania, belonged to Bulgaria. While Mitrovica, Vushtri, Klina, Istog,

<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented on the 5th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference (IMSC-2022) held by The Association-Institute for English Language and American Studies, Tetovo, North Macedonia.

<sup>2</sup> Fitim Rifati, *Kosova during the First World War 1914-1918* (Institute of History “Ali Hadri” Prishtina, 2019), 222.

<sup>3</sup> Syrja Vlora, *Memories - from the end of the Ottoman rule in the war of Vlora*, translated by: Marenglen Verli, Lediana Dushku, (Tirana: Center for Albanological Studies - Institute of History, 2013), 159.

Peja, Gjakova, Zhur, Plava and Gucia, Ulqin, Tivar, Northern and Central Albania were part of Austria-Hungary.<sup>4</sup>

In the area administered by Austria-Hungary, a completely different policy was developed compared to the Bulgarian one. The condition of the Albanian population was much better compared to the period of the Serbian-Montenegrin occupation. Austria-Hungary, for low payment engaged Albanians of adult age in many jobs. This power brought some other benefits for the Albanians of Kosova, compared to the situation under Serbian and Bulgarian rule.<sup>5</sup> To give impetus to national education, under conditions of military administration, Austria-Hungary respected the cultural and national diversity in Kosova, but since Albanians constituted the largest percentage of the population, it recognized the Albanian language as the language of administration.<sup>6</sup> The General Directorate of Education was founded with headquarters in Shkodra, with the aim of spreading Albanian schools, but German language, Austro-Hungarian culture and history were also introduced as teaching subjects. This power was aimed at acquiring the Albanian mass. It allowed Albanians to use symbols such as: the use of the national flag, financed the opening and operation of schools in the Albanian language, and also allowed the celebration of 28 November, the day of Independence of Albania and the National Flag, the development of national culture, as well as local self-administration of the municipalities was in the hands of the Albanians<sup>7</sup>. Hasan Prishtina refused to be incorporated into the Austria-Hungarian leadership structures. There were armed conflicts between the Albanian and Austria-Hungarian military forces, while in terms of Albanian education; they had benefits, because they were enabled to learn in the Albanian language. At the beginning of the Austria-Hungarian administration, the Albanians in Kosova, who in terms of religious affiliation mostly belonged to the Islamic religion, expressed concern about the attitude of Austria-Hungary towards their religious identity.<sup>8</sup> However, the main result of the Ottoman missionaries in the Albanian countries, as well as of any individual who supported the Ottoman policy in Kosova, their concern was reduced with the reasoning that Austria-Hungary was an ally of the Ottoman Empire and that the religious affiliation of the Albanians will not be violated but would respect and help cultural and religious development. The cultural policy that Austria-Hungary implemented in Kosova and other Albanian countries was suitable and affirmative for the tradition, customs and national and cultural characteristics of the Albanians. It allowed the implementation of freedom of religion and the circulation of religious books.<sup>9</sup> The traditional right of cultural protectorate for the Catholic population was implemented by Vienna even during this time by subsidizing the Catholic Franciscan parishes in Kosova, such as in Peja, Zllakuqan, Gillogjan, etc. However, it did not prefer to conceive of religion as organically connected with the education of Albanians.

<sup>4</sup> Adem Murati, *The National Movement for Albanian Education - Mulla Sylva, distinguished teacher and activist*, (Association of Historians of Kosova "Ali Hadri" Ferizaj, 2012), 366.

<sup>5</sup> Murati, *The National Movement for Albanian Education*...366.

<sup>6</sup> Ragip Gjoshi, "The state of education in the Albanian territories during the First World War", in *Bulletin of the Faculty of Philosophy*, no. XXIX/2014, (Prishtina: University of Prishtina, 2014), 174.

<sup>7</sup> Gjoshi, "The state of education in the Albanian territories during the First World War"... 176.

<sup>8</sup> Hasan Bello, "The role of Austria-Hungary in the organization of Islamic religious institutions in Albania in 1916-1918", in *Albanological traces - series of historical sciences*, no. 43/2013, (Prishtina: Albanological Institute, 2014), 220.

<sup>9</sup> Rifati, *Kosova during the First World War*...224.

On 5 December 1916, the newspaper *Posta e Shqipnisë (Post of Albania)* began to be published in Shkodra, edited by Gjergj Fishta. This newspaper was published twice a week and, until 23 November 1918, when its last issue came out of the press, and it reflected important information from all the Albanian territories under Austria-Hungary.<sup>10</sup>

In the cultural-educational vision for the Albanians, the Austria-Hungarians derived the causes of the lack of cultural and educational development of the Albanians from the long period of Ottoman rule and the influence that the Ottoman culture had on the Albanians. The preservation of the native language was the greatest value that Albanians resisted foreign rule. The Austria-Hungarian state was extremely concerned about the lack of unification of the Albanian language. The differences in speaking the Albanian language in the north and in the south, which were based on two dialects, raised difficulties for the use of the Albanian language.<sup>11</sup>

The Austrian Academy of Sciences, in the framework of the Balkan Commission, engaged prominent scholars and albanologists who had the task of unifying and standardizing the writing of the Albanian language for Albanians.<sup>12</sup>

In the field of culture and education in Kosova, Austria-Hungary also paid attention to the education of Albanian women. In the assessment of the Austria-Hungarian military and civil administration, Albanian women, along with other peoples of the Balkans, were passive in cultural and educational life. Especially the women of the Muslim Albanians, besides engaging in housework, did not deal with any other social work. During this time (1915-1918), schools for girls continued to work and new schools were opened too. So, in this period, a big turn was marked in the education of Albanian women.<sup>13</sup>

In the school desks, for the first time, Albanian women of the Islamic and Catholic confessions sat together. With the commitment of Albanian patriots and with the help of Austria-Hungary, a special school for girls was opened in Gjakova and another in Peja. Official Vienna fully appreciated the importance of the Albanian issue in all the bodies and authorities of its general government in Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, to strengthen and affirm the cultural and national features. Unlike the Ottoman and Serbo-Montenegro rule, as well as the political and economic circumstances in Kosova, Austria-Hungary paid special attention to education and training, especially of the Albanian population.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Cetinjer Zitung*, "(Eine albanische Zeltung in Schkodra.)", no. 34, Cetinjj, am 10. Dezember 1996, sinte 4.

<sup>11</sup> Eqrem Zenelaj, *The Albanian issue from the perspective of diplomacy and geopolitics of Austria-Hungary (1699-1918)*, ("Faik Konica", Prishtina, 2010), 599.

<sup>12</sup> Tomor Osmani, "Issues of the Albanian literary language in the period 1916-1918", Scientific Bulletin, no. 1, (Shkodra: University of Shkodra, 1987) 49; Sulltan Kojçini-Ukaj, "Education and emancipation of our women in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries", Shkendija, Prishtina, December 1992, no. 10, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Hajrullahu Koliqi, *History of Education and Pedagogic Albanian e Opinion*, (Libri Shkollor, Prishtina, 2012), 337.

<sup>14</sup> Bajram Shatri, *Primary education in Kosova in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, challenges, evidence, facts*, (Libri Shkollor, Prishtina, 2006), 37.

Throughout the period 1915-1918, Albanians were extremely helped in educational life, as a prerequisite and main pillar for their national and state advancement.<sup>15</sup> In the area of the Austria-Hungarian occupation of Kosova (Mitrovica, Peja, Gjakova, Istog and the surrounding areas), the political and educational situation was more favorable.<sup>16</sup>

Although under the leadership of the occupation command, the Albanians gained a certain cultural and educational independence (autonomy), and this went in favor of the aspirations of the Albanian people for the Albanian language and schools. The aspirations and efforts of the Albanian people of Kosova, especially of its progressive intellectuals, for an educational system in the Albanian language began to rise in 1916, in those territories that were occupied by Austria-Hungary.<sup>17</sup>

Vienna helped not only the opening of Albanian secular and state schools, but at the same time it made it possible for, in part, the administration in Kosova to be carried out in the Albanian language. Ottoman schools and meyteps as well as any secular school in the Albanian language, maintained by Austria-Hungary, as in: Ferizaj, Prizren, Prishtina, Zym, Skopje, etc.

Schools with Albanian language teachers mainly worked in Dukagjin, such as Gjakova (opened by Bajram Curri). Austria-Hungary supported the education sector for both student tuition and teacher pay. For all students who attended the Normal School in Elbasan and who were poor, the Austria-Hungarian authorities allocated scholarships, and a number of students from Kosova were sent. Teachers were paid between 60-100 coronas per month for their services in schools.<sup>18</sup> Austria-Hungary also distributed scholarships to vocational schools in Vienna and Budapest, for Albanian students from Kosova. Among the scholarship beneficiaries was Krist Maloku from Prizren. Official Vienna was aware that the functional character of secular and religious schools in Kosova and other Albanian countries, which were financed by it, had temporary features until the future status of Albanians during the First World War was finally clarified. Its sole purpose was for schools in Kosova to conduct didactic and pedagogical activities. Their intention was that their management would be carried out by the relevant directorates of education and not by the army commands as was done during this time in Kosova.<sup>19</sup> It is known that two years after the opening of the Albanian school in Prizren, the school was opened in Zhur by Mati Logoreci and Lazer Lumezi who sent two more teachers of the Albanian language.<sup>20</sup> The money printing also worked in this village, and people also remember a miniature tram that connected Ferizaj with Zhur via Prizren. So, an Albanian school has operated in Zhur, as well as an evening school for adults along with a German course. A temporary and comprehensive organization of Albanian education was enabled for the school year 1916-1917, which provided for the opening of primary schools in all regions, including villages. The primary school subjects were: Albanian language, arithmetic,

<sup>15</sup> Hajrullah Koliqi, "School and education in Kosova in the years 1915-1918". ("Shkëndija", Prishtina, May 1994), 32.

<sup>16</sup> Koliqi, "School and education in Kosova in 1915-1918" ... 34.

<sup>17</sup> Rifati, *Kosova during the First World War 1914-1918*. 227.

<sup>18</sup> Zenelaj, *The Albanian issue from the perspective of diplomacy...*601.

<sup>19</sup> Rifati, *Kosova during the First World War 1914-1918...*227.

<sup>20</sup> Isa Halilaj, *On the path of knowledge*, (Tirana: 1998), 63.

geometry, history of Albania and Austria-Hungary, geography, religious instruction was mandatory for at least two hours a week.<sup>21</sup> The language of instruction in these schools was Albanian.<sup>22</sup> Children aged 7-12 were obliged to attend open schools in the Albanian language.

The teaching content, the way of working at school and the texts that were used in the Albanian schools of Kosova were identical as in the schools of Albania at that time occupied by Austria-Hungary.<sup>23</sup> Austria-Hungary has given an important contribution to linguistic unification.<sup>24</sup> Cultural and educational policies that Austria-Hungary took into consideration the enhancement of Albanians to the scale of civilization and European civilization, equal to all civilized peoples, simultaneously refuting and fighting Slavic propaganda against Albanians.<sup>25</sup> With the contribution of Bajram Curri, it was decided that a group of Kosovar teachers would return to Kosova and begin work on opening Albanian schools. It wasn't long before the first teachers arrived in Kosova, from Kruma, Berat, Elbasan and Zara. Although the Austria-Hungarian occupation lasted until the end of the First World War (November 1918), this time was short to enable the real development of the educational system and the education of large masses of the population, Albanian schools in this period had great influence in raising national consciousness and fostering a greater desire for national education.<sup>26</sup> In the Austria-Hungarian area, including the Albanian territories of Montenegro, a continuity of educational support for the Albanian population was observed, through the maintenance of existing schools and the opening of new schools in the Albanian language. This was a continuation of the spirit of "*Cult-protectorate*", which had been applied before by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy towards the Albanian population, which was also politically under its rule.<sup>27</sup>

Each conqueror had its own requirements and laws regarding the education of Albanians. Austria-Hungary, even though it was an occupier like any other occupier, compared to Serbia and Bulgaria, was considered the savior of the Albanians.<sup>28</sup>

Elementary schools in the Albanian language worked during the years 1915, 1916, 1917 and partially 1918. These schools worked with Austria-Hungarian educational plans and programs, but were adapted for Albanian students. The teachers of these schools came from Albania, but there were also Arber women from Zara, who spoke the Albanian language.<sup>29</sup> During the First World War, under the Austria-Hungarian occupation, textbooks were provided by Vienna and supervised by Luigj Gurakuqi, minister of education in the government of Vlora. Very few Albanian students

<sup>21</sup> Rifati, *Kosova during the First World War 1914-1918*...32.

<sup>22</sup> Rifati, *Kosova during the First World War 1914-1918*...227.

<sup>23</sup> Koliqi, "School and education in Kosova in, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Elena Kocaqi, *Albania and the great powers 1878-1918*, (Dodona Press, Tirana, 2020), 479.

<sup>25</sup> Sherif Daut Krasniqi, *Vranoci in the historical twist (ethnomonography)*, (Peja: "Dukagjini", 2011), 481.

<sup>26</sup> Denisa Kostovica, "Albanian School and Nationhood: Albanians in pursuit of Education in the Native Language in Interwar 1918-1941 and Post Autonomy 1989-1998 Kosova", Stephanie Schwandres and Bernd J. Fisher, *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 157; Bajram Shatri, *Primary education in Kosova in XX century, challenges, evidence, facts volume I*, (Prishtina: Libri Shkollor, 2006), 340.

<sup>27</sup> Metë Shatri, *Schools and education in the Prefecture of Prizren 1889-1944*, (Koha, Prishtina, 2017), 194.

<sup>28</sup> Shatri, *Primary education in Kosova in the XX century*...35.

<sup>29</sup> Murati, *The National Movement for Albanian Education*...366.

had managed to complete primary school, because the life of the Albanian school under the Austria-Hungarian administration was very short. After the first war ended in November 1918, Kosova was again reoccupied by the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian kingdom, which kept the schools closed for 23 years.<sup>30</sup> With the decisions taken by this kingdom, all Albanian schools were closed and they were denied almost all the elementary rights that the other peoples of the Balkans had. The violent displacement of the Albanian population from their lands followed, and families of Serbian and Montenegrin settlers settled on the lands and properties of the Albanians. The period from November 1918 to 1941 was one of the most difficult periods for the Albanian population of Kosova.

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<sup>30</sup> Murati, *The National Movement for Albanian Education*..369.

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