

Albanian Religious Media in Kosovo and National Identity

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Abstract: The reason for choosing this theme is the subject of the fact that until today has not been an object of special study. Even in all studies of Communication Sciences, there is no study work that has conducted a thorough analysis of this religious periodical. Hence, this scientific paper seeks to fill this gap by analyzing its objective. This contemporary scientific topic remains closely linked to the current developments of the Albanian nation and Albanian culture, which is another additional reason for selecting this topic. The main goal is the objective recognition of the role played by the press and the religious periodical in terms of the rigid Islamic, Catholic, cultural, educational, social and national formation of Kosovo Albanians and beyond. In the object of our study, the religious media in Kosovo have begun to emerge in 1970. On the part of the Muslim community; the "Edukata Islame" magazine was launched, followed by "Dituria Islame" by the Catholic community has emerged the magazine "Drita" and the same year it also marks the beginning of the release of religious media in Kosovo after the World War II. These media have played a major role in the treasure of national culture. They were strong tribunes of religious spirituality; arts, philosophy, thought, education, etc., and as such, have marked an event for the Islamic and Christian movement of thought in Kosovo, but of course also for the history of the Albanian national press.

Keywords: religious media; communication; identity; Albanian nation; tolerance

Importance of the Work

The paper reflects the role and the report that these Albanian media have had in maintaining and strengthening the Albanian national identity, during the very delicate periods of history; like that of communism and the nineties, and the nation was being exterminated by apartheid and from unprecedented violence and then to murder. These religious media, without having been studied before, have left deep

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traces of our treasury and our cultural and linguistic wealth. The Religious and intellectual as well as the national formation, based on the concepts of these magazines, have continued to walk parallel the paths so to reach the point where there is a meltdown, in what is called; the complete formation of the individual, as well as the wider society. The “Dituria Islame” magazine, for the Muslim community as well as “Drita” for the Catholic community, has become the most recognizable sign of the Albanian religious press in our entire Albanian space.

This was a challenge due to the lack of mass communication with Albanian believers, because; there was no religious literature in the beautiful Albanian language, there was also no complete translation of the Koran into Albanian.

The media have put a focus their attention on the religious information of the public in general, but also on others that are in their own interest and are in the public interest. As Charles A. Dana, has said; “Everything that interests a large part of the community and that until then, there was no chance to be made public” (Melwin, 1991).

On the agenda of these media, in these years there were more and more present news, as are information on the religious developments of these communities. In addition, their role and the information mission are to provide the best education and upbringing for the mass, with the aim of man to change behaviors and to make a quieter life with oneself and others. The media has helped a lot in following the truth about the ethics and religious values of our society.

For primary purpose, the religious media have had the patriotic spirit, for the preservation of the trunk of national identity in this communist iron period, where the circles of the Yugoslav state continually worked to eliminate the Albanian language as well as everything else related to it.

The goggle of communism, has brought to the humankind; poverty, misery, ethical and economic poverty.

Since the first issue of the magazine “Dituria Islame”, in June 1986, the program and the mission of this magazine, were published in bold thick lines.

1. We will provide readers with information about the needs of the Islamic Community;
2. We will address the problems that this institution is been challenged with.

3. It will contribute positively along with the other press in Albanian language, in the development and cultivation of human values, fraternity, union and coexistence;
4. Reinforcing the truth of faith in the heart of our nation and simplifying religious lessons that are readily available to readers.

Religion in every society has its influence where less where more and no country or institution can not be indifferent to religion. The development of religious media is evolutive as a result of the influence of religion in society, in relation to the state, in an attempt to show its weight and its importance to the way of leadership of the state exercised by political parties, which has emerged victorious in parliamentary and presidential elections. Most governments also have the religion (religion minister), which implies that neither the state nor government can be indifferent to religious institutions and religion (Burjani, 2000).

The common denominator of Albanian media (press), with religious content in Kosovo since the 1970s, is been focused on consolidating our national identity. During these decades, the press seen as one of the nationwide domestic needs, for highlighting those features that Albanians shared and preserving the national identity, from the influences and threats of the regime, of the former Yugoslavia of Tito. In order to raise the national awareness; the press of this period had used different tools and forms, where each one has done this in the form that he saw it as reasonable. This doctoral thesis is based on the theoretical and empirical treatment of Albanian media with religious content in Kosovo, namely the “Dituria Islame” magazine as well as the magazine “Drita”, has given the contribution and commitment that have offered half acentury to this day. Exploring the numbers of these media as well as other religions such as Edukata Islame, Dituria Islame, Takvim (Kosovo), Zani i Naltë, (Albania), Hëna e Re (Macedonia), Drita (Kosovo), we find articles that appreciate harmony, tolerance, religious coexistence and patriotism, which characterizes the Albanian people, but at the same time translated as an incentive to preserve these unique identities of our nation. Albanian identity in today’s globalization circumstances is an interesting subject for different study approaches.

Consequently, at the present time, we have a continuous clash of national identities, on the one hand, as an effort to preserve and develop the peculiarities and on the other hand; to spread the cultural elements (always when it comes to globalization in this area) globally. The Sociologist; Anthony Giddens, conceiving globalization as an intensive communication process, points out that Globalization of social

relationships, must be understood above all as a system of time and social space. Therefore, our life is more and more under the influence of events, which take place far enough away from the social framework, where we do our daily activities (Giddens, 2004).

Overall; the magazine “Dituria Islame” and “Drita” also influenced the religious and cultural upbringing of Albanians and our identity, and were very powerful and fearless voice in the framework of defending our identity and national determination, for freedom and independence, by generating the generations that have synthesized a unity of faith and religious commitment, as two components that cannot walk without each other on the path of the development of a nation, and certainly have maintained relationships with the homeland and freedom, highlighting the contribution of all those scientific works and thoughts, which would become the future conscience of our Albanian nation.

Albanians who have maintained their existence, language, customs and character for so many centuries, have been convinced that by being under the dominion of another government, whatever they do, they will not delay to lose all that good and end by changing; therefore, any transformation that can change their language, customs, traditions and their nation, for them will be the climax of misfortune (Kulla, 2003).

One year after the publication of Takvim, the quarterly magazine “Edukata Islame” (1971) is been published, so the Muslim community has now become with more than two religious cultural journals.

The decision was made on 02.02.1971 and because of the proposal of the chairperson of the Islamic Community Presidency; Ismail Hakiu, so the magazine was renamed “Edukata Islame”. It was the first and only Albanian-language magazine, in all Albanian territories since World War II.

In this year (1971), it must be clarified that two events of great religious and national significance occurred: the decision for the publication of “Edukata Islame”, which it became the cornerstone of Islamic publicity in Albanian language and the decision to open the University of Pristina that became the core of our national knowledge, science, and culture. In these first numbers contributed brighter dances such as Muderiz Sherif Ahmeti, Nexhat Ibrahim, Bajrush Ahmeti, Hajrullah Hoxha etc. The first editor-in-chief of Islamic Education was Muderiz Sherif Ahmeti, etc. who had a clear vision of how to keep magazines up with the public and how to communicate with the greatest extent and with great devotion turned into a forum, of genuine spokesman for cultivation and the teaching of Islamic thought in Kosovo and the

Albanian territories, in the former Yugoslavia. A special place in Islamic education has been the translation of the heads of Islamic thinkers, such as; Muhamed Gazaliu, Muhamet Tantavi, Jusuf Kardavi, Mustafa Mahmud, Husein Xhozo, Sinanudin Sokolovic, Hasan Kaleshi, Enes Kariçi and others. These religious media has prepared the ground for the release of the scientific, religious and cultural journal "Dituria Islame" in June 1986 and was monthly. This magazine at the same time became the pivot of all religious press in Kosovo and beyond the territories inhabited by Albanians. With the copyright writings at this stage have contributed personalities and proven national and religious figures, of the Albanian and Islamic culture as the translator of the Qur'an; Muderiz Sherif Ahmeti, dr. Muhamet Pirraku, Vehbi Ismaili, prof. dr. Gazmend Shpuza. Dr. Skender Riza, Nexhat Ibrahim, Mentor Çoku, Hysen Xhozo, dr. Kristaq Prifti, dr. Hakif Bajrami, mr. Qemajl Morina, Iljaz Rexha, Ali Pajaziti, etc. The topics covered by this magazine were more diverse because they had a scientific and philosophical character, where translations from classical Islamic literature were found, as well as arguing arguments. This is because the Islamic Community already had a substantial framework that had completed theological studies in Tripoli, Baghdad, Sarajevo, Cairo and elsewhere.

In the following issues there are many cultural and scientific writings by different Albanian and foreign authors, especially those that illuminate the cultural, national and religious contribution of distinguished intellectuals and activists such as brothers Frashri, Hoxhë Tahsini, Nazim Gafurri, Hoxhë Kadri Prishtina, Hafiz Ali Korça, Ibrahim Dalliu, mulla Idriz Gjilani, hoxhë Voka, Qamil Bala etc. (Hamiti, 2005).

The religious and cultural magazine "Drita" came out on March 25, 1970, it was a monthly magazine and continued to run until 1992, and depending on the years it varied, two or three numbers emerged in some periods. The founder of this magazine was Nikolle Mini, parish priest of Prizren and remained responsible director until 1974, when the editorial office and magazine administration has moved to Ferizaj. With this act, the magazine is no longer the body of the parish of Prizren, but becomes the body of the Bishopric Skopje-Pristina and; the responsible director becomes Bishop Nika Prela and remains there until 1992. The term identity; is generally characterized as a term of the subgroup of the notion "my ego" and as such, is been contained in the images of an individual collected in the head, who is it in fact and is been defined as the distinct of the character, the physical characteristics, the way of non-personal behavior, etc. (New Webster's Dictionary).

It should be emphasized that Albanian national identity, in essence, is a cultural identity. It implies features that differ from those of other nations, such as; every

day's language, historical heritage, popular culture, social mentality, unwritten laws, lifestyle, political aspirations and in some historical moments the religion (Frashëri, 2006).

These media have made a very valuable and important contribution to the preservation and promotion of the interreligious dialogue that unifies our nation as well as to the preservation and preservation of religious relations, the tolerance between Muslims and Catholics deriving from the strengthening of national identity, thus being transformed into tribes of religious and national thought.

On the other hand religions have allowed Albanians to preserve their national identity; because, beyond religion, there were very few elements that would allow them to distinguish themselves from Serbs or Bulgarians in such a way as to prevent assimilation. Islamization of Albanians has been an ambush against Slavic pressure (Roka, 1994).

In all councils, religious instruction is done in Albanian. Information represents and plays an extremely important role in the processes and formation and establishment of a society in terms of values, feelings and progress in different spheres of life, as well as the right and healthy orientation in practical life.

For this purpose, Islam has devoted the importance that it deserves, whether in the propagation of the mission and its purposes during the construction of the new society or even during the dialogue with those forces that had the opinion of reverse (Morina, 2005).

Media have followed the course of being an inseparable part of the Albanian cultural framework and being a factor of creativity in the developments that have to do with the overall national identity values and have not at all avoided this national discourse.

The Role of the Press with Religious Content in Interfaith Tolerance

By studying religious media and their content, we encounter inter-religious tolerance as an Albanian gem, which has constantly lived for centuries among Albanians and has been cultivated with the greatest jealousy. Religion never orders believers to destroy these human values, but encourages them to support and redirect them to new generations. Faith is never imposed, but it deals with obedience and consent. The sign of tolerance among our people is also noted with the preservation and care of religious institutions and shrines, pilgrims and priests. I will not investigate the

causes that the Islamic religion faces in an unprecedented understanding of the world, but to those who think that it has spread only with the sword, I can tell them that they deceive themselves (Arnold, 1961).

Dituria Islame aims to provide the reader with information about the needs of BI (Islamic Community, our note) regarding its daily problems, so that the public is directly informed of the achievements of the BI, with the enjoyment of their religious affiliations, for which our and your magazine will give their positive contribution and which will help all other magazines in Albanian-language for the development of human values of fraternity-union and coexistence (Bajrami, 1986).

The necessity for the proper Islamic religious formation, for the recognition of our religious and national identity, for a fair appreciation of contemporary developments and challenges related to our religious communities, has resulted in the need to establish and publish the "Dituria Islame" magazine, as a source of knowledge and information about the religious, Islamic, cultural, historical, sociological, and our common values (Bruçaj, 2016).

The religious press through these two magazines and others expressed the commitment and responsibility of the editorial staff who played a very important role in the patriotic formation and education of Albanians, always maintaining the great love for the homeland and the national identity as well as its destiny. Through these topics, Albanian youth is been educated with the highest sense of responsibility for concretizing the century-long objective that the ethnic Albanian lands that remained under the regime of Yugoslavia, were to be liberated and united with state of Albania.

Even the Bishop of Kosovo, Dodë Gjergji, on the 30th anniversary of the magazine "Dituria Islame" states that "Our magazine "Drita" and your magazine "Dituria Islame" have been a lamp of light and knowledge" that have tried to enlighten the mind and heart of our believers in the darkness of an atheistic society and a communist state. The brightness of this light is need for our believer (Gjergji, 2016).

Religious media "Dituria Islame" and "Drita" managed to break the cliché by their work, for which during the decades of the darkness of the communist system, where religious contributions and knowledge were seen separately from national ones. "Even from communism, religious contributions have been seen with some" natural antagonism between them. The scriptures on the pages of this magazine addressed these contributions in the light of objective truth, in the light of documented sources, according to which the patriotic and religious activity of many prominent

personalities of the Albanian world, had developed in whole, as an inseparable and functional (Matoshi, 2015).

Summary

1. Religious media are committed to a more peaceful and fraternal climate between the religions in Kosovo, respecting and evaluating each one's religion, and this peaceful relationship has also influenced the reader and the believers in general.
2. These media as the official bodies of religious communities, strengthen inter-religious ties and all together been contributing to national tranquility as in harmony, interfaith coexistence and as such have become a model and pride for our little nation, which is an example of countries and nations that are bigger than us.
3. The Balkan region is making efforts to integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures, and to have a European perspective in which coexistence between cultures and beliefs is manifested. So, we are a nation that we have what to export in this regard and we can become a further factual example and global reference regarding respect, coexistence and religious tolerance, as an integral part of our national identity.
4. Religious media should enhance initiatives for more promotion of interfaith dialogue, and by no means it does not create a good spirit if we start each one of his or her own identity. This does not help at all, because each one presents and does not betray his religious identity. But there are always ways to walk together, for things we have disagreement to tolerate each other and at the mutual points of helping one another.

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