

The Influence of Albanian Renaissance Writers: Pashko Vasa and Sami Frashëri, as Catalysts for the League of Prizren

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Abstract

During the National Albanian Renaissance, writers played a pivotal role in sparking the political movement known as "The Prizren League" in 1878. This league, emerging from the cultural and literary fervor of the Renaissance, symbolized the spirit of Albanian nationalism. The Renaissance, which began manifesting in the early 19th century and reached its zenith by the late 19th century, culminated in the declaration of Albania's independence in 1912. The League of Prizren, as the embodiment of the Renaissance ideals, legally endorsed concepts advocated by Renaissance figures for the formation of Albania. These principles included adopting a common language, asserting a shared territory (demonstrated in literary and historical works as belonging to the Albanians since ancient times), cultivating a unified cultural identity rooted in oral literature, and establishing Albanian schools. While all Albanian intellectuals played a part, this study delves into the specific contributions of key Renaissance figures, illuminating their catalytic roles within the Prizren League movement.

Keywords: Albanian Issue, National Renaissance, the League of Prizren, Albanian Language and Literature, Berlin Congress

INTRODUCTION

The intellectual vigor of any nation often finds expression in its literary and cultural Renaissance, serving as the crucible in which identity, language, and aspirations are forged. In the heart of the Albanian National Renaissance of the 19th century, a movement emerged that would play a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of a people: the League of Prizren. Rooted deeply in the intellectual soil of the Albanian cultural awakening, this league was not merely a political movement; it was a manifestation of the collective consciousness nurtured by Albanian Renaissance writers' words, pens, and ideals.

The Albanian National Renaissance, marked by an efflorescence of literature, philosophy, and art, paved the way for a profound socio-political transformation. At the epicenter of this transformative period were luminaries like Pashko Vasa-Vaso Pashë Shkodrani (in Turkish) and Sami Frashëri (in Turkish Shemsedin Samiu), whose intellectual contributions ripened into the fertile ground from which the League of Prizren sprouted. This research endeavors to illuminate the intricate interplay between these literary stalwarts and the birth of the Prizren League. Through a nuanced exploration of their writings, speeches, and socio-political engagements, this study seeks to unravel the intricate threads that bound the Albanian Renaissance to the League of Prizren, laying bare the intellectual foundations upon which Albanian statehood was envisioned.

As we delve into the annals of Albanian history, this research aims to dissect the multifaceted roles played by these catalysts of the Prizren League. By meticulously examining the ideological frameworks, linguistic pursuits, and cultural revivalism championed by Vasa and Frashëri, this study sheds light on how these literary luminaries acted as torchbearers, illuminating the path toward a unified Albanian identity. The League of Prizren, often considered the embodiment of Albanian aspirations, was not merely a product of political exigency but a manifestation of the dreams and visions articulated by these Renaissance writers.

Against the backdrop of the tumultuous late 19th century, where political boundaries were redrawn, and nations were reshaped, the Albanian story stands as a testament to the resilience of a people united under the banner of cultural heritage and shared aspirations. This research, by unraveling the symbiotic relationship between the Albanian National Renaissance and the League of Prizren, not only seeks to enrich our understanding of this pivotal period in Albanian history but also offers a nuanced perspective on the intricate dynamics between

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literature, politics, and nation-building. Through the lens of Pashko Vasa and Sami Frashëri, this study illuminates the transformative power of words and ideas, showcasing how literary luminaries can catalyze political movements and shape the destiny of nations.

Establishment of the League of Prizren

The contribution of writers to the cultural, literary, and socio-political movement, the Albanian National Renaissance (XIX century), played a pivotal role in establishing the political movement of the League of Prizren (1879). For instance, the literary works of Naim Frashëri, such as his poem "Bagëti e Bujqësi," subtly advocated for unity against external threats, reflecting the nationalist sentiment of the time. Association of writers with a political movement that had as its goal the creation of the Albanian state may seem meaningless today. However, 19th-century Albanian history was written through the patriotic and political actions of the Renaissance writers, whose literature was ideological to nurture the creation of the Albanian state and the final parting from the Ottoman Empire. The ideas that came through the Albanian literature of the National Renaissance were those presented through the League of Prizren (June 10, 1879). Albanian literature was a tool in the function of the cultural and socio-political movement of the liberation of the Albanian lands from the Ottoman Empire, formalized legally through the League of Prizren as a political movement.

In the list of main events with an essential role in the independence of Albania, the League of Prizren is considered one of the most critical events following the Assembly of Lezha (1444), which in the time of Gjergj Kastriot-Skenderbeu functioned as a diplomatic and military organization of Arbers (Albanians) against the Ottoman Empire. About four hundred years later, the League of Prizren gathered Albanian intellectuals from around the world, from the north of Albania to the south and centers such as Bucharest in Romania, Istanbul in Turkey, Cairo in Egypt, Sofia in Bulgaria, Thessaloniki in Greece, etc. This convergence highlighted the global solidarity of Albanians against the divisions proposed in the Treaty of San Stefano (March 3, 1878.) Personalities from all centers were organized, and on June 10, 1878, 110 Albanian delegates gathered at the Assembly of the League of Prizren held in the city of Prizren (Kosovo) to oppose the decisions that were signed in the Treaty of San Stefano (March 3, 1878) for the division of Albanian lands and to address the Albanian demands at the Berlin Congress (June 13 – July 13, 1878), for the preservation of the territorial integrity of Albania. The Albanian objections were articulated through a series of protest notes, meticulously documented and published by the Academy of Sciences of the RPS of Albania, Institute of History, in Tirana in 1987.)

"They decided to meet at Prizren on June 10, 1878. At short notice, representatives from many parts of the country convened there, especially from the northeast and the east. Most of them were landowners, Muslim clergy members, and chieftains. From the south, owing to lack of time, only two delegates could attend, including Abdyl Frashëri (brother of Renaissance writers Sami and Naim Frashëri), who was destined to play the most important role in the whole movement. The meeting held in Prizren was opened by Abdyl Frashëri, who invited the Albanians to unite to defend their country, which was in danger. Abdyl Frashëri was there as the representative of the secret committee, of which he was president, which was formed in Istanbul after the San Stefano Treaty and was called 'The Central Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Albanian Nationality' (Skendi, 1967).

Abdyl Frashëri's heroism in the League of Prizren activity turns into devotional verses in Father Gjergj Fishta's masterpiece 'Lahuta e Malcisë.' His interpretation has three levels. At the first level, it contains the Albanian permanence, weaving it through the ages compared to other nations. At the second level, it brings out the power of the conditional word and goes to the third level with the return to the existential formula against the Berlin Congress (Hamiti, 2021).

Albanian objections to the decisions of the San Stefano treaty came from all sides. Following, we will present protest notes of the Albanians from March 1878 to the day when the Berlin Congress started its work, published by the Academy of Sciences of the RPS of Albania, Institute of History, in Tirana in 1987." This documentation underscores the historical significance of Albanian resistance against the unjust territorial divisions proposed during this crucial period.

In addition to advocating for the protection of Albanian territories, Abdyl Frashëri, acting as the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the brother of the renowned Renaissance figures Naim and Sami Frashëri, also forwarded pleas to the Berlin Congress. These appeals implored the Congress to recognize the Albanian

language and uphold the fundamental rights of the Albanian people, allowing them to live in an independent state akin to neighboring nations. Regrettably, the Berlin Congress disregarded all of these appeals. Consequently, Abdyl Frashëri, a historical figure, found his place within the realm of literature, transforming into a literary character in Gjergj Fishta's seminal work, "Lahuta e Malcisë." Notably, literary critics in Kosovo, particularly in their analysis of "Lahuta e Malcisë," underscore the invaluable contribution of Abdyl Frashëri to the League of Prizren (Shala, 2022).

Renaissance writers in the League of Prizren

The writers of the National Renaissance served as the driving force behind the League of Prizren, their influence reaching far and wide, spanning Albanian colonies in Bucharest, Istanbul, Sofia, Cairo, and Arbreshwt in Italy. In essence, the literature of romanticism encapsulated the spirit of their homeland, albeit created in foreign lands due to the mass exodus of Albanians following the Ottoman Empire's conquest of the Balkans. Initially driven by a refusal to accept the loss of freedom, the diaspora later expanded due to pressures to assimilate, economic challenges, social upheaval, and even forced conscription into the Turkish army (Qosja, 1984a).

The League of Prizren, emerging as a late 19th-century political movement, was intricately tied to the National Renaissance, a cultural and literary movement that had taken root. By the late 1880s, the National Renaissance had crystallized its identity, centered around establishing an independent Albanian state. Against the Motherland's historical context and Europe's political landscape on the eve of the Congress of Berlin, these revivalists, scattered across different countries, initiated a more structured social, political, and cultural life. These communities, bound by a shared language and a vision of a unified historical nation, formed the nuclei of a burgeoning Albanian identity (Qosja, 1984).

Regardless of their cultural milieu, religion, or education, the leading figures of the Renaissance shared a singular objective: creating an independent Albanian state. Their collective efforts from various corners of the world not only revitalized the Albanian cause in Europe but also intensified the political endeavors of Albanians. This concerted activity, often rooted in the colonies they inhabited, became a powerful expression of their commitment to liberating Ardhë and establishing a sovereign Albanian state (Qosja, 1984).

The pivotal figures instrumental in articulating the political aspirations of the Albanian "nation" included Abdyl Frasherri (1839-1892) and his brother Shemseddin Sami Frasherri (1850- 1904), hailing from a Muslim family in the vilayet of Janina. Also prominent were Pashko Vasa (1825-1892), a Catholic from Shkodër in north Albania, who held significant positions within the Ottoman Empire; Jani Vreto (1822-1900), an Orthodox Christian from Berati in south Albania; Mehmet Ali Vrioni, a Muslim also from Berati; and notable Muslims from the Northern Albanian lands of the vilayet of Kosovo, including Zija Prishtina, Ymer Prizreni, Sylejman Vokshi, and Shaip Spahiu. The League of Prizren was not a haphazard assembly but a deliberate organization representing Albanian consciousness and the preservation of customs, culture, and territories. The concept of the national Renaissance did not spontaneously materialize but was painstakingly crafted by eminent figures driven by archaeological patriotism. Personalities such as Jeronim De Rada, Dara Plaku, Gavril Dara I Riu, Zef Serembe, FA Santori, Zef Skiroi, Naum Veqilharxhi, Thimi Mitko, Jani Vreto, Dora d'Istria, Pashko Vasa, the Frasherri brothers (Sami, Naim, and Abdyl), Ismail Qemali, Zef Jubani, PN Luarasi, Gjergj Fishta, Faik Konica, Philip Shiroka, Ndre Mjeda, Fan Noli, and many others contributed significantly. They meticulously laid the groundwork for the National Renaissance for Albanians and the Arbëreshs and were prepared to advocate for freedom, education, the Albanian language, schools, culture, and national literature. Their advocacy for Albanian identity transcended religious differences, emphasizing that the awakening of Albanians was intertwined with both domestic developments within Albania and the progressive tide in Italy and Europe at large (Leka, 2019).

In Arbëresh poetry, the theme of homeland stands as a central motif. Zef Serembe's lyrical work, notably the piece titled "God," resonates with elegiac musicality and profound melancholy, drawing inspiration from the sufferings and tragic history of Arberia. Within verses dedicated to Arbëria, Serembe not only offers prayers but also shares fragments of Arbëria's poetic legacy, encapsulating the essence of Albanian identity and heritage:

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është si Qiell pa Diell

it is like the Sky without the Sun

si Det pa ujë

like the Sea without water

që më pas të shtrojë qortimin më të mprehtë

which then lays down the sharpest

në adresë të bashkëkombasëde të vet përtej detit

rebuke to its compatriots across the sea

Në shpirt të Arbrit gjëma parapë gjëmon

The soul of an Arber roars

Më kot me ngjalljen e lavdisë së shkruar

In vain with the awakening of the written glory

T'u zgjojë mëshirë të tjerëve ëndërron

To awaken mercy to others dreams.

Hence, the poet conveys a poignant message to his compatriots, lamenting that Arber's faith remains futile, unable to stir the conscience of Europe concerning the bloodshed endured in her defense. In his sorrow, he articulates, "Prandaj muza ime qan e qan ngaherë" – "that's why my muse cries and cries all the time" (Aliu, 2008). Similarly, Jeronim Derada, through his literary endeavors, consistently explores historical themes. His poems mark his initial efforts to weave Albania's history into poetic narratives. Within these verses, historical elements serve as a vehicle to contextualize events, evoking the Albania of the 15th century in the minds of his readers (De Rada, 1975).

As corroborated by numerous accounts, the League of Prizren stands as a direct outcome of the cultural and literary fervor ignited by the National Renaissance. This movement found its roots in the literary creations of the Arbëresh people in Italy, who pioneered folklore collection and the champions of reviving the illustrious history of the national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti-Skenderbeu. Moreover, they endeavored to trace the Albanian lineage to ancient European peoples like the Pelasgians and Illyrians. This intellectual resurgence provided the fertile ground from which the League of Prizren emerged, intricately interwoven with the cultural tapestry woven by these literary pioneers.

Glorious Past

The aspirations of the prominent figures of the Albanian Renaissance were deeply rooted in a shared vision of their ethnicity's history, encompassing tribal characteristics, family lineages, language dialects, and a concerted effort to establish the Pelazgo-Illyrian origin. These endeavors were intricately linked to the liberation of Albanian lands and the establishing of a modern state where the Albanian language would serve as the unifying force for a cohesive ethnic identity. The literary luminaries of the Renaissance grounded their seminal works in the historical annals of the Albanian people. Their literary creations navigated two distinct temporal realms: the past, delineating what had occurred (historical account), and the future, envisioning what could transpire (literary account). The Greek philosopher Aristotle elucidated that historical accounts needed only be connected by their occurrence within the same time frame. A historian's duty, therefore, is to chronicle events regardless of their explanatory coherence (Feldman, 2019). Aristotle's Poetics delved into the intersection of literature and history, highlighting their nuanced differences. According to Aristotle, poetry (literature) explores potential occurrences, mirroring history in its essence. Poetry illustrated how things could be similar, while history illuminated actual similarities.

Moreover, poetry delved into universal themes, whereas history focused on particularities (Aristotle, 1984). This demarcation between literature and history was the foundation for our study. Within our research, we have explored the intricate interplay between these two realms, demonstrating their interconnectedness through concrete examples. Notably, in their literary endeavors, the Albanian National Renaissance writers often ventured into the realm of historical sketches. One of the most notable examples is Pashko Vasa, who crafted significant works such as "Historical Sketch on Montenegro According to the Traditions of Albania" (1872) and "The Truth about Albania and the Albanians" (1879), weaving history into the fabric of their literary legacy.

Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu as the Main National Hero Figure In The National Renaissance Movement

The figure of Skanderbeg is a fundamental theme in the literary work of the Renaissance, as a symbol and a cult of freedom. In Renaissance literature, the scholar, writer, publicist, and one of the most potent ideologists of the Albanian National Movement, Sami Frashëri, in the first part of his work written in prose, "*Albania, what it has been, what it is and what it will become*," pays special attention to the preservation of collective remembrance through the return of the era of Skanderbeg. Frashëri, through creating a literary hero from a national hero, aims to strengthen the national idea and spread it to unite the Albanian nation for an anti-Ottoman resistance, like in the time of glorious Skanderbeg. Pashko Vasa also deals with the return of the remembrance to the glorious Albanian past through literature in his critical study, known as the historical sketch "*The Truth about Albania and the Albanians*," where he supports the principles of the National Renaissance; research in the past to identify Pelazgo-Illyrian roots and attempts to prove the glory of national heroes and the acclamation of the Albanian language. The symbol of Skanderbeg, as in the works of all romanticist authors, has a distinct influence when we compare periods. During Skanderbeg's reign, Albania was triumphant but subdued and defeated following his death by the Ottoman Empire. It must be noted, however, that apart from the Albanian literary work, the figure of the Albanian national hero became an artistic inspiration throughout Europe. The opera "Skanderbeg" by the famous Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi was performed in Florence in 1718 and the admiration of the French enlightener Voltaire, pseudonym of François-Marie Arouet (1963).

In the eighteenth century, Voltaire would incorporate information about Skanderbeg into his Essai sur les moeurs in the 1750s, including the taking of the fortress of Krujë, which was the subject of Vivaldi's opera: He marched to Krujë... His party soon gained all of Albania. The Albanians were considered the best soldiers in the land. Skanderbeg led them so well and knew how to take such advantage of the harsh and mountainous terrain that with few troops, he always stopped the more numerous Turkish armies (Wolff, 2021).

Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu became an inspiring hero for European writers and composers based on the stories of his life and work (narratives that were told by Skënderbeu's comrades-in-arms) written by the Albanian humanist Marin Barleti, in the masterpiece of Albanian humanism "Historia e Skënderbet" (1508-1510). "Historia e Skënderbet" was first published in Latin and then translated into many European languages. Skanderbeg's story is structured in two parts with thirteen books: six books in the first and seven in the second. The story of the life of Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu is written chronologically from when the Sultan took him and his brothers hostage until his death in Lezhë-Albania.

This monumental work also inspired the Albanian Renaissance writer and a great contributor to the League of Prizren, Naim Frashëri. Frashëri, in his epic poem "*The Story of Skënderbeu*," besides the literary elements, by exposing evidence and facts about the national hero, represents the ideas of the National Renaissance and, at the same time, those of the League of Prizren. Based on this viewpoint, it is believed that the literary theme with the symbol of Skenderbeu is an indicator that, in addition to the linguistic and customary elements that distinguished Albanians from other neighboring nations, it was Skenderbeu's actions as a national hero and the Albanian military glory against the Ottoman Empire that were among the main distinguishing elements of the Albanians in Europe. For the first time, these elements rose to the highest level of unifying a nation into a political-military entity. This means that Skanderbeg's period, in a strong sense, served as a starting point that highlighted the ethnic element (Arbër-Albanian) as an element that creates bonds of a nation (Caka, 2020). Thus, the writers of the Albanian Renaissance turned the glory of the national hero, Skanderbeg, into a central theme for the inspiration of their Renaissance movement. Wherever they wrote, their theme had a familiar spirit: the return to history and the remembrance of the era of Skanderbeg (Hamitti, 2022).

Arbëresh renaissance writers, who left their homeland in the 15th century and settled in Italy, cultivated and preserved the tradition of folk literature. Oral poetry among Arbëresh people is one of the most cultivated forms and is considered the most artistically realized. Arbëresh oral poetry expresses ideas and phenomena, feelings and meditations, concerns and worries, joy and sorrow, love and hate, fate and misfortune, drama and tragedy that Arbëresh passed through their life. This type of poetry is divided into two primary forms: lyricism and epics. The songs about Gjergj Kastrioti predominate in the form of the epic narrative. The group of songs

Vu spërverjeret Skanderbeku (Skanderbeku and Ballabani) are well known. Kastrioti is also present in Arbëresh folk songs with historical themes, such as Skanderbeku keq` i zbet/ Skanderbeg paled badly (Berisha, 2013). The figure of Skanderbeg is a symbol of resistance against the Ottoman invaders since “*after the death of Skanderbeg, the Ottomans (Turks) invaded Albania. For the next 450 years, Albania was part of the Ottoman Empire*” (Penderli, 2010). Thus, the enduring theme of Skanderbeg in Albanian literature became not just a literary motif but a powerful emblem of national identity and resistance, resonating across time and space.

The History of the Albanian Language According to the Renaissance Writers

As an essential element of the National Movement, the Albanian language encouraged Renaissance writers to search the common past for the ancientness, purity, and beauty of the Albanian language, as they promoted the idea that a nation should know the history of its language. Thus, renaissance writers defined the language as a common element of the Albanian nation. Therefore, research trials were based on folk literature. Researchers of Albanian folklore confirm that the spirit of Albanian romanticism, before it appeared in literary works, was already present in historical songs, especially in those dedicated to the period of the two great Albanian Pasha’s (Ioannina and Shkodra), followed by songs about the slaughter of Manastir and generally songs about the uprisings against the Tanzimat. Even songs about the Albanian League of Prizren, as synthesizing values, represent ideas and poetic structures, which are expected in the written literature of Albanian romanticism (Fetiu, 2009).

The first Renaissance writers to start these researches were Arbëresh writers from Italy, such as Dhimitër Kamarda, followed by one of the most famous Renaissance writers Jeronim De Rada, and continuing with Gavril Dara the Young, Zef Serembe, Zef Skiroi, and others.

In addition to Arbëresh Renaissance writers, efforts to research the ancientness of the Albanian language were also made by Renaissance writers from other cultural centers. Pashko Vasa, who lived in places such as Albania, Great Britain, Turkey, Malta, etc., in the historical sketch "*The truth about Albania and the Albanians*" provides elements to prove the ancientness of the Albanian language as one of the oldest languages (since the time of Homer) and as a language unmatched with other languages. This served the function of strengthening the fundamental principle of the League of Prizren that a nation must live in its land and have its language as an element of national identity:

In Homer's writings, the term "Gigas" is mentioned in the region of Gegëri. Homer described, "Beyond the Akrokeraun mountains live the Gigas, says the Father of Poetry." The term "Gigas" translates to giant. This description aligns with the people residing in the highlands of upper Albania, who are notably taller than the average population. They regard the elderly individuals among them as giants and refer to them as such (Vasa, 2010).

Pashko Vasa in the League of Prizren

Pashko Vasa (1825-1892) was born in Shkodër, Albania. His literary and political life is connected with European and Asian countries, such as Britain, Italy, Syria, and Turkey. Being a connoisseur of foreign languages and living in different countries, Pashko Vasa wrote almost all of his work in a foreign language, including his only well-known and influential poem, "Mori Shqypni," and his historical writing. Letter "Albania and Sqyptarwt." The other work is in a foreign language, which raised discussions about why it was not written in the Albanian language until the author knew it well. Researchers of the works of Pashko Vasa write that it is said that Pashko Vasa wrote his works in foreign languages with the aim that foreigners know his works for Albanians and Albanians (Hamiti, 2002). The most famous literary works are: "*Historical Sketch on Montenegro according to the Traditions of Albania*" (1872), "*The Truth About Albania and the Albanians*" (1879) historical sketch/critical and historical overview", "*Albanian Grammar for Foreigners*" (1887) language texts and poetry. The most famous poem is "*O moj Shqypni*" (1880). Since Vasa was not only a writer but also an activist and a prominent ideologist of the National Renaissance, he was consequently also an ideologist of the Albanian League of Prizren.

In his youth, Pashko Vasa took various public functions. At 18, he started working as a secretary at the British consulate in Shkodër. Then he continued his career in essential positions in significant cultural, historical, and economic centers until the time when, as a senior and a vital personality who was part of the senior Ottoman administration with extensive life experience, he was appointed to the post of an adviser to the Governor of Kosovo in Pristina (Vilayet of Kosovo). When the so-called "*Eastern issue*" was put on the agenda of the most critical European diplomatic tables, he was firmly committed to the creation of the League of Prizren. During this time, he developed a dense political, diplomatic, and organizational activity for the correct orientation of the General Council, which emerged from the Constituent Assembly, and for endorsing the Albanian issue among British diplomats. Even after November 1878 and until the end of 1879, Pashko Vasa remained in the post of the advisor to the governor of Kosovo and in close contact with the developments in his country, which was facing crucial existential moments (Shpuza, 2017).

"*The Truth about Albania and the Albanians*" is a political-historical analysis from which one can see that Pashko Vasa has already decided about his political engagement path. In this analysis, Vasa tries to preserve the collective remembrance of the glory of the Albanian ancestors, in some cases connecting it with historical events and in some cases trying to create connections with some legends told to have happened in the Balkans. During attempts to prove Albanian ancientness in the Balkans, Vasa sometimes would go as far as to try and establish connections as far as Homeric times. With a similar spirit of bravery, Fishta later presents the Albanian resistance at the time of the League of Prizren. These contributions are noticed by foreign researchers who write that the Homeric inspiration from the myths about the Trojan War influenced the Albanian revolution of the late 19th century. Like Homer, Fishta tells the story of an often squabbling but always brave and patriotic alliance of aristocratic heroes in a long war against the Ottoman Turks and their allies. Unlike the Iliad, however, the Highland Lute tells a story still alive in the memories of Fishta's contemporaries: the Albanian independence movement of the late nineteenth century, including the seminal event of the Albanian national movement, the foundation of the League of Prizren in 1879 (Goldwyn, 2016).

Pashko Vasa outspreads his influence on the Albanian people to react against the Ottoman Empire and for the liberation of the Albanian lands through other literary forms as well. As evidence, he created his only poem, "*O moj Shqypni!*" (Oh my Albania), as an alarm to awaken the Albanians.

He wrote the poem "*O moj Shqypni?*" two years after establishing the League of Prizren in 1880. The poem with 72 verses, entitled "*O moj Shqypni,*" is similar to Albanian epic songs in terms of images and rhymes; it is estimated to be like the dedication poetry of the Albanian collectiveness, where its awakening is called upon, a text that can quickly influence the reader (Hamit, 1993).

<i>O moj Shqypni, e mjera Shqypni,</i>	<i>Oh my Albania, poor Albania,</i>
<i>Kush te ka qitë me krye n'bi?</i>	<i>Who you put your head under the ash?</i>
<i>Ti ke pas kenë një zojë e randë,</i>	<i>You were a strong lady,</i>
<i>Burrat e dheut të thirrshin nanë.</i>	<i>The men of the earth called you mother.</i>

In the first four verses, we have a characteristic symbol of the Renaissance, the return to the bright past, and the miserable situation in which the Albanian people found themselves due to the centuries-old Ottoman rule. With the comparison between the two periods, which is realized with four verses, the great contrast is given with the figure of the strong lady and her head put under ashes. The past tense shows the strong lady as a symbol of a strong Albania. In contrast, the present tense is written in tones of mourning with a poor Albania and with the image of humiliation where humiliation is implied through the head put under ashes, as a public despair.

The following verses are also built with approximate definitions that poetize the Albanian faith, honor, and bravery.

<i>Kur ka lidhë besën Burri i Shqypnisë,</i>	<i>When the men of Albania bound faith,</i>
<i>I ka shti dridhën gjithë Rumelisë;</i>	<i>It shook the entire Rumelia,</i>

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Ndër lufta t'rrehta gjithëkund ka ra, *Between fierce wars he had fallen,*
Me faqe t'bardhë gjithmonë asht da. *Moreover, with a bright face always left.*

With war cry tones, in the days when the movement of the League of Prizren was strengthened among the Albanian's lands, Pashko Vasa finished his poem of the war cry call with the following verses:

Coniu, shqyptarë, prej gjumit çoniu, *Wake up Albanians, wake up from sleep,*
Të gjithë si vllazën n'nji besë shtërgoniu, *Come together all just like brothers in one faith,*
E mos shikonin Kisha e xhamia: *Don't look at the Church and Mosque:*
Fe e shqyptarit asht shqyparia! *Albanian's religion is Albania!*
Qysh prej Tivarit deri n'Prevezë, *From Tivar to Preveza,*
Gjithkund lshon dielli vap'edhe rrezë, *Everywhere where the sun emits heat and sunlight,*
Asht tok' e jona, print na e kanë lanë *Is our land, our parents have left it to us*
Kush mos na e prekë, se desim t'tanë *Nobody to not touch it, we all die for it*
Të design si burrata që vdiqnë motif *We die like men died before*
Edhe mos marrohna përpara zotit. *So we are not ashamed before God.*

In this way, the poet and activist, the ideologist of the Albanian League of Prizren, Pashko Vasa, creates an emerging setting and demands for collective awakening, expressing his war cry call and through it also the dominant idea of the Renaissance as national unity, as a revival of the collectiveness (Hamit, 1993), for its unification in a body that excludes any difference whatsoever, like the verse: *The religion of Albania is Albania!*

It is estimated that Pashko Vasa was one of the first and the most prominent of that generation of ideologists, organizers, and writers of the Albanian Renaissance who, with their activity and their works, brought an excellent service to the national awakening and unity, the whole and the independence of the Fatherland, Albanian culture and the progress of its people (Shpuza, 2017). In the National Renaissance and the League of Prizren, Pashko Vasa left his mark as a patriot, writer, ideologist, and diplomat.

Sami Frashëri

Sami Frashëri, a prominent figure of the Albanian Renaissance, made significant contributions to the cultural landscape of the Ottoman Empire. As the younger brother of Naim Frashëri, he shared a fervent dedication to Albania's cultural independence. Sami was deeply knowledgeable in Italian, Greek, French, Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, excelling in linguistics, diction, writing, playwriting, and translation. While he actively contributed to the development of foreign languages and cultures, his lasting impact on Albanian language, history, literature, and culture remains unparalleled within the annals of the Albanian National Renaissance.

His seminal work, "Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është dhe ç'do të bëhet" (1899) - "Albania: What It Has Been, What It Is, and What It Will Become," stands as a pinnacle of political influence during the National Renaissance era. In journalism, he served as the editor of the Albanian-language magazines "Drita" and "Dituria" in Istanbul from 1884 to 1885. Additionally, his linguistic expertise manifested in the creation of essential resources for learning the Albanian language, such as the "Abetare e gjuhës shqipe" (Primer of the Albanian Language) in 1886 and the "Shkronjtore e gjuhës shqipe" (Alphabet of the Albanian Language) in the same year. Furthermore, he ventured into drama with his work "Besa" in 1875.

Sami Frashëri's significant contribution lies in his literary and linguistic endeavors and his relentless efforts to promote the Albanian language as an ideological tool within the National Renaissance. His dedication to creating school books in Albanian, a goal championed by key Renaissance figures formalized within the League of Prizren, exemplified a vital necessity for national empowerment in culture, literature, and politics. Through his multifaceted contributions, Sami Frashëri played an indispensable role in shaping the cultural heritage of Albania and the broader Albanian Renaissance movement.

As a writer, Sami Frashëri was also an ideologue of the National Revival and the League of Prizren. Therefore, in the drama *Besa*, he wrote with intent, a work with moral and ethical themes, the author a foreword, and a work using the Albanian faith as the supreme code of their behavior regarding honor. As we have mentioned, the Albanian language, the Albanian faith, and the openness of the territorial community of Albanians are vital elements of the League of Prizren, which united the Albanian cause for the creation of the independent Albanian state.

CONCLUSION

The Albanian renaissance figures, dispersed across Albanian colonies, played pivotal roles not only in the political sphere but also in the realms of culture, literature, and education, acting as catalysts for the inception and progression of the League of Prizren. This league transformed the Albanian issue from a local concern into a European matter of paramount significance. Among these figures, the Istanbul colony emerged as a central hub, nurturing and propelling the ideas and actions of Albanian intellectuals in the ideological, political, cultural, literary, and enlightenment domains, all converging toward the vision of the League of Prizren.

Pashko Vasa and Sami Frashëri come together at a point in the oriental culture since both of them served in Istanbul for consecutive years as servants of the Ottoman Empire, known as the empire of the Muslim faith. Meanwhile, Pashko Vasa died in Beirut (1892) and was buried in the so-called "pashalar cemetery" on the hill of Hazmieh, while Sami Frashëri died in Istanbul, Turkey (1904). However, for both of them the motive was known that Albania is the region that unites us, understanding that faith is individual and Albania is the homeland.

Pashko Vasa and Sami Frashëri were foremost among these intellectuals, whose multifaceted roles as ideologues, politicians, publicists, writers, linguists, and thinkers remained unparalleled. Their contributions stand as foundational pillars in the internationalization of the Albanian struggle for an independent state, the advancement of the Albanian language, culture, and literature, and the profound spiritual enrichment of the Albanian people. Through their relentless efforts, the Albanian cause resonated not just within their nation's borders but reverberated internationally, marking a significant chapter in the global struggle for cultural preservation and national identity.

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