

## Political and Constitutional Thought Sami Frashëri

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**Abstract:** Sami Frashëri is one of the most erudite Albanian minds of XIX century Albania. Born in Frasher, Permet on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1850, Sami, an Ottoman citizen, stated "I am an Albanian," and in some of the articles in the newspaper "Sabah" (Morning gazette), rejected the thesis that Albanian Muslim were Turkish and Albanian Orthodoxy were to be treated as Greek. Through such terms he helped in differentiating the terms Turkish and Muslim, and not to be recognized as synonyms. He was known as a reporter and editor, creator of literature and of scientific works, but I believe that his deep political opinion is recognized in his non-political works. Beginnings of the political thought are given in his political drama of 1874, *Besa yahud Ahde Vefa* (Honoring the Promise), where loads of high emotional artistic tools, "hide" political goals. "Besa" (Promise) is treated, not as the rate of a customary to justice, but as the value of the constitution and faithful soul for the new "homeland." The vocabulary entitled "al-laam Kamus", can be considered a political commentary on Albania and Albanians. The other vocabulary of Turkish normative linguistics "Kamus-i Turki", explains the words, Arnavud (Albanian), Arnavudça (Albanian) Arnavudluk (Albania). Sami defines the terms Arnavudluk as the nation or nationality, which is Albanian and place (memleket) of Albania, which consists of four majorities. Political thought and constitutional dimension appears to "What Albania was, what is and what will become?" In this writing lies the thought of the establishment of political institutions designed according to principles of Montesquieu. The legislative body was called the General Council. The form of government was according to Republican ideology, under the Head of State collegial, which he described as Strabonious, "Wise Men Council", and an executive power, with seven ministries. Judiciary was established in three divisions. The political, natural boundaries coincided with the four vilayets. Albania was divided into 15 administrative units, which he called "plots", with 15 of their capitals and the capital of Albania, which would have been SKENDERBEGAS. Political project of Sami Frashëri was associated with a Draft Budget, the structure of state administration and their salaries, according to functions. Aim of Study: Enriching the political "Fund" of Albanian political elite, with political thought and constitutional dimension of Sami Frasher. Survey Methodology: Finding the political thought of Sami Frasher through his artistic, scientific and academic writings. Analysis of political project "Albania, what was, what is and what will become?" in order to reveal the dimension of constitutional thought. Comparing between local and foreign authors and the narrative description of deductions, to prove the hypothesis.

**Key words:** Wise Men Council, Presbytery, Ministers Council, Minister, plots, misset, nome.

### Introduction

Sami Frashëri is one of the most erudite Albanian thinkers of the XIX century. He was born in Frashër of Përmet on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1850, (according to a biography edited by himself in the "Serveti Funan" magazine, nr 273 dt,06.06.1312, based on a birth certificate belonging to the date 19.06.1896, he declares to be born based to the Muslim birth register no. 22 of 1266, which to the belongs to the dt June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1850) was educated in Ioannina during 1861-1868 and gave intellectual fame to the Ottoman Empire and Albania, through his impressive creativity in Istanbul starting from 1871, till his death on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1904. In 54 years of his life he produced over 57 writings. Some of the writings are dedicated to the Ottoman Shemsedin Sami. The Turkish Jusuf Akçura considered him a Turkish nationalist. Sami was an Ottoman citizen, declaring "I am Albanian" and through articles in "Sabah" newspaper (morning) objected the thesis that Albanians are Muslims and that Albanian Orthodox are Greek. Through his writings, he helped for the terms Turkish and Muslim not to be treated as synonyms, because, according to him not all Albanians are Muslims and not all Muslims are Albanians. Not without intention, in the Encyclopedia he treated his birthplace as a big village or a small town inhabited by 1500 with 3 mosques one Teqe and 20 shops. Sami is known as a journalist and chief editor, as author of literary and scientific writings, translator and drama author, a patriot and intellectual of the Albanian National Renaissance, but I don't think that his political thought is known profoundly in his non-political writings and the dimension of his constitutional thought in the writing entitled "Albania, what was, what is and what will become?".

### Strands of political thought through artistic and scientific writings.

Sami Frashëri's political thought can not be treated separately from the context of political development of Europe, nor from political developments of the Ottoman Empire and himself as an Ottoman citizen and an Albanian patriot. The political history serves as a framework, inside which are the history of political and legal institutions and the political thought of its

actors. Vilhem Leibnic,(1646-1716), articulated that the present is full of the past and heavy loaded with future (le present est plaint du passé et charge de l'avenir), while Georgios Giakoumis, considered history as the future of a past science. In this sense, the knowledge on Sami's political thought does not serve to understand the European philosophy and modern ideas in the environment of the weakened Ottoman Empire, but also to use European political philosophy and his constitutionalist dimensional thought in establishing and consolidating the political and rule of law institutions in Albanian.

After the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte and the establishment of Vienna Treaty, the sultan pointed the ottoman military power against Ali Pasha and Bushatli Pasha ruling, who influenced the birth of a political thought and the start of an Albanian National Movement, enabling to the Greeks their independence. Ioaninna had a famous school named Zosimea, financed by the Albanian Zhapa and politically supported by Ali Pasha, (donating 1200 grosh every month), after 1830, was the educational center of the South Albania elite. Other fundamental figures of Albania Independence Movement were educated like Ismail Qemali, Kostandin Kristoforidhi, Mehmet Ferid Pasha, ex Interior Minister and Grand Vesir in 1903-1908, Abedin Dino ex Foreign Relations Minister, Naim Frashëri, Hoxha Tasin and many others. Precisely here in Zosimea, Sami, in 7 years, 1861-1868, excellently graduated and learned European languages, Greek, Latin, French, Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Sami was born when huge reforms were undertaken in the Empire. 1839-1876 reforms were called "Tanzimat" (Reform) from the author Ahmet Xhevdet Pasha (1822-1895). On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1839 "The Saint Decree of Gjylahne", established the guarantees of life, honor, property, etc. On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1876, the great reformer Grand Vesir, Mit'hat Pasha, declared "Kanun-Esasi", the first modern constitution in the backward Empire. According to article 8, all individuals in the empire were called ottoman despite religion and article 17 stated that ottomans were equal in front of the law, with rights and obligations, despite religion or sect. This legal and political reform made possible for Sami to give political sense to words such as: nation, ottoman, motherland (vatan) and citizen (tabijet). "Tanzimat", despite laicism aimed at giving rebirth to the Islamic nation. Such tendencies can be found in the drama "*Vatan veyahud Silistre*", (Motherland or Person) of the Turk Namik Kemal, written in 1872 and staged in 1873. After the administrative division in 1870, Albanian territories were separated in the Vilayets of Shkodra, Kosova, Ioaninna and Manastir (Bitola) and most of the Albanians were muslim and loyal to the European side of the Empire. Among the terms Ottoman and Ottoman citizen, the author linked the religion, as a sign of patriotism for the ottoman motherland. The hero of the drama Islam bey, (religious name), put the ottoman motherland in the same level as the holy laws, shariat, while Zekije Hanëm, the Albanian, accompanies her husband in the war dressed in the traditional Albanian costume, reflecting the loyalty of Albanians for the Empire.

Sami Frashëri, pushed by the drama's subject, probably by the anger of forced migration in 1872 in Tripoli of Libya, wrote in 1874 the drama "Besa yahud Ahde Vefa", (Honoring the Promise). The 24 year old Sami, having great artistic power of expression places his own words in the mouths of the characters his ideas and political thought, inspired by the French philosophy, as he had translated "The Miserable" of Victor Hugo. As a loyal citizen, the motherland notion is characterized by the multi-identities under the ottoman flag together with the little motherland, Albania and Albanians, who were treated by different authors as wild rebels, untrustworthy and driven by old norms. In a letter that he sent to his friend Namik Kemal after the "tanzimat", he reflects on the philosophy of the cultural assimilation and denial of the Albanian Language for not to weaken national feelings. *Its impossible not to encourage the spread of our languageto the Greeks and Bulgarians, but this is possible to the Albanians, stated Namik Kemal*, for whom he recommended the closure of all schools in that language so that it can be forgotten in twenty years. As a counter positions, Sami, with the hero of the drama, who kills his own son for the word given does not mystifies the common law but aims at the rise of the national feeling with the political message of "Promise" to the Albanian Nation. Through this drama he built the accusation to the empire, who gave the right of language to Rumies (Christians), denying it to the Albanian Muslims, whose nationality was linked to the Muslim identity. The political thought takes shape artistically when Zyber, a low class person, reminds to Demir Aga, an aristocrat, from Tepelena, that according to Sultans Law, there are no distinctions in front of the law, because as he says:

*This is the period of the glorious tanzimat. Today, our Sultan is the one that admits great pain, to protect our lives, honor and property. Those times where you were ahead of all others are gone forever.*

Through these elements, Sami, asks for the recognition of the national rights for Albanians. The political influence of the "promise" was shown four years later at the "League of Prizren", in 1878 where the heads of the 4 vilayets pledge allegiance and promise and established the first political and governmental institutions. This was again proven 5 years later, when the *Society of Albanian letters Press Association* was established by the catholic Pashko Vasa, orthodox, Jani Vreto e Koto Hoxhi, muslims Hoxha Tasin and Said Toptani, headed by the 28 year old S.Frashëri and 15 years later by the League "Besa besë" of Pec, Kosova.

Sami is known as the first writer of the first novel in the empire, protector of women rights with the brochure "kadinlar", founder of the first ottoman encyclopedia in six editions, "Kamus al-A'lam", 4380 pages of historical, geographical, cultural

and demographic facts, as founder of the first Turkish vocabulary "Kamus-i Türki", 40,000.00 words and other strictly academical writings.

The "Kamus al-A'lam" vocabulary might be considered as a real political speech on Albania and Albanians because after the first 2 editions investigations began for the Frashëri family. Ali Nevzat Efendi, aristocrat from Gjirokastra and kajmekam of Kaza, declared that Sami and his brother Abdul since Ioaninna were openly declared for the independence (istiklal) of Albania. Abdul on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1878, had kept provocative speeches in regards to the lack of progress of the state and nation (dovlet ve millet), ignorance (cehalet), despotism (istibadad) and the corrupt administration in the Turkish parliament. The political thought in the academic writing, "Kamus al-A'lam", is seen in some elements. **Firstly**, in the ancient hood of the Albanian population, language, history and virtues who differentiates from other nations. In this encyclopedia, the notion Arnavud (Albanian), is treated in long pages, while the Turkish only in three pages! Albanians are the most ancient population, in their own territories, in the Balkan, older than Greeks and Romans. **Secondly**, the institute of "Besa" is treated in national values and respect for the protection of the moral (ahlak), good customs (adat) honor (namus), which for the nation or nationality (cinisayet), clan (kabile) and family (aile) and promise given (söz), the Albanian gives its own life. **Thirdly**, Sami formulates that Albania (Arnavudluk) is the name of the country comprised of sanjak of Ioaninna, Gjirokastra, Berat, Leskovik, Preveza, Manastir, Korça, Dibra, Prizren, Prishtin, Novi Pazar, Skopje, Pec, Shkodra and Durrës. **Fourthly**, Shemsedin Sami describes Skanderbeg as the greatest enemy of the empire, *the most brave man and master of the art of war*. **Lastly**, the notion nation (kavim) has political meaning, like the French term "nation". The concept of Nation, Sami dimensioned it in "Kamus-i Türki". According to it, in congresses and political conferences, the nation has more considerations than religion. His concept was contrary to tanzimat principles where nation was one with religion. At the time there were lots of discussion for the ottoman motherland, and Sami introduced the Albania concept in the vocabulary. He defined that Arnavudluk is the "nation of Albanian nationality and the territory (memleket) of Albania, comprised of 4 vilayets; Shkodra (Iskodra) Kosova, Manastir and Ioaninna. His definition that Albanian is the one who doesn't deny Albanianism, (Arnavudluğunu inkar etmiyor) made Sami Frashëri the symbol of Albanianism "Red and Black"!

### The dimension of constitutional thought in "Albania, what was, what is, and what would be"?

This writing was written and published without name in Bucharest in 1899. Sami's name was announced on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1904, after death, by Shahin Kolonja son-in-law of Naim, Sami's brother. Parts of it were published in the Ottoman language, in the "Drita" (Light). It was published in German in 1913, 69 pages, indicating that the author is S.Frashëri. Such a material has not been studied to understand the dimension of constitutionalist thought of Sami. Albania was oppressed and despised, no identity, no history and no future. Ottoman Empire was declining, since from the "defeat" with the Russian Empire in 1877. Neighboring principalities of Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, supported by the Russians, the English and French, and sought annexation of Albanian vilayets. Walking in the same path of the Catholic Pashko Vasa, the writing entitled "The truth about Albanians", Sami has created a work of true constitutionalist political dimension. In the first part of the work, it provides answers theses to the Serbian "Narçetania" and the Greek "Megali idea", which ascend their historical heritage and claimed possession of the Balkans, Serbs as heir to the Empire of Stefan Dusan and Greeks as heirs of the Byzantine Empire. In chauvinistic viewpoint, Albania did not exist, because according to them, it had no historical legacy. Sami argued scientifically, that Albanians, Serbs and Greeks have their historical heritage, from ancient times, from the Pelasgians, to the story of Scanderbeg deeds, Sami states clearly:

*All European powers had hope... They expected salvation from Albanians... They were no brave men like Scanderbeg, nor did they have the besë of the Albanians. Many times Hungarians (maxharëtë) and the pope put Scanderbeg in difficult situations, then left him alone.*

In the second part, Sami argues that Albanians are despised by the empire, which they serve faithfully, and saw the salvation of the Albanians in the "Nation of the Albanians". This, according to him, held the Albanian language, regarded as *the oldest and most beautiful language of the earth ... friendly with the old Greek, Latin, Sanscrit, language of India..., the Old Persian.... Many of which are dead but the Albanian*, in his opinion, prove to the world, *it is a language that is written and spoken ... any other language is not spoken and written that easily as Albanian*. Sami analyzes language as a political element of the nation and as a professional geographer, treats another element of the nation, territory. Albanians by him are in the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian from 42 degree, up at the sleeves of Arta below 39 degree. Limits of northern Albania, separated from the sea, by being close to the north on the border of Montenegro and Novi Pazar, the Serbian border to above 43 degree ... So Albania is in the 39 degree and 43 grad degree in north and 17 degrees and 19 degrees 25 minutes East instance. Its about 450 km long an over the 200 km wide, where about 2 million inhabitants live. Through

such an analysis, the greatest thinker of the Renaissance elaborated the theory of nation-building because *Albanians have all that a great nation should have and that there can be no force to prevent them in performing the real historical right*. Sami's formulations were made, when the Albanian "elite" was silent.

### Political institutions of the State in constitutional viewpoint of Sami

In the third act, Sami reveals the dimension of a constitutionalist thinker. Sami's political project has strong national colors and spirit of a western constitutionalist. He designs the modern state, unlike the legacy of Ottoman Oriental government. Political institutions will be built according to the principles of Montesquieu, with legislative power, executive power, separate, independent and balanced, with a President and a collegial state and local government decentralized and independent from government.

Political project, Albania predicted divided into 15 plots, with their capitals, *Shkodra, Peci (Ipeku), Prizren, Preshtina, Ysqypi (Skopje), Manastir, Dibra, Elbasan, Tirana, Berat, Korce, Kastoria, Ioannina, Gjirokastra and Preveza*. Governor will become the *nome*, from *Qeverindar*. Plots will be divided into 3-4 subplots. Governor will become the *nënqeverindar*. The capital will be built in a new healthy climate and beautiful, the road right in the center of Albania (Tirana / Belsh) and will be called *SKENDERBEGAS*. Every small town was to be called *katundari* (beledije). *Katundari's* Council will be created by the general meeting to vote on the 20-year-olds every year. Executive body would be *Kryekatundari*, the Deputy, 3 Judges "JUDEX de Paix".

The political environment of the Sami, consistent with the natural boundaries of the Albanians, residents of 1870 in four vilayets, living along with democratic political institutions unlike the monarchical government of neighboring states. It would be a *national government, as called by Sami, who works for the need of the following rights of Albanians*. By analyzing the situation after the Congress of Berlin, Sami predicted loss of European part of Turkey, therefore, warned "illusionists" that *Albania has no foundation, no long roots, lives on ruined foundation of Turkey... with the fall of the great storm even Albania will fall. Yes ... Albanians, although they see, again don't give up in being supported under it ... Aren't they feeling that they support a falling wall? Feeling disappointed by the reaction of the "political elite", he demands that Albanians view this as treachery and turn their back to Turkey, which seeks to suffocate and send in the bottom of the sea even them. This is the way of salvation, not a different one*, Sami stated. Through logical analysis, its predictive power, different from the "political elite" of the time, who continued to believe, perhaps for fear of grinding by neighbors, expected solving the national question of from the empire! Sami warned that *Turkey can not exist thereafter, nor knows, nor will exist, and neither should exist*. According to him the Albanians had the right and power to be disconnected from the empire, because as he said, *we are not even Turks nor do we come from Asian deserts. We are the oldest nation in Europe*. He asked Albanians around him, the empire keeps the slyness of the betrayal, or do Albanians tie their own hands to the empire, satisfied with the functionality that "Dovlet Baba" gives them! Sultan by the need for Albanians in the moment of crisis donated elite positions to Albanians, as did the appointment of Mustafa Ferit Pasha, Grand Vesir, in the Macedonian crisis, and after the merger of league "Besa-bese" in Pec on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1903. Sami considered the empire as the main enemy, and therefore stated that, *Albania needs to separate immediately and establishing its borders. Its necessary for the country to be recognized by Europe*, as according to him, Albania had everything that should, *but rather that all Albanians should pledge a great general trust between them to make a union, to include the whole of Albania*. Sami's forecast was proved in the First Balkan War, when the Albanians did not participate and the collapse of Turkey was considered the losing party and its territory were considered the same with Turkey and the associated consequences until 1920, when it was liberated legally by capitulations.

### The Head of State / Presbytery

Sami argued that unlike the monarchical traditions of the Balkans, Albania had to be a republic. Head of State may not be the chief or king, because he would not have had Albanian monarchical heritage and as such may return this to a source of conflict among Geg and Tosks, Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox. But, according to him, could not be even a stranger than by his *foreign prince or king would come with a caravan of hadëmë (slaves), women, land, cart, that will spend more money and we will break the tradition of governance*. Regarding tradition, Sami referred to Strabonious, who in his work "Geography", Plakonia / Presbytery was a form of government in Epirus during antiquity. Why take away, this beautiful custom of government, Sami said, wishing that the *Presbytery should reign and command forever*. As a western constitutionalist, Sami gives the legal form, establishing the President state institution. Head of State, Presbytery, will be a collegial body, with chiefs for each plot. Albania is divided into 15 plots; therefore Presbytery will have 15 members who



will choose, by ballot, the chairman and vice chairman. The Head of Presbytery of the seniors will perform a function of the Prince or King. The Head of the seniors, Nome / ordinances will sign after receiving the opinion of the jury.

### **Powers of the Head of State / seniors**

Head of the seniors, would be a prince instead of the king, one would expect and meet people. A call would be held in the General Council in the opening. Speaker will be decreed by the government. Nome will decreed, (laws) that will emerge from General Council. He would run the Presbytery by a 4-year mandate; half of them would be changing every 2 years. Presbytery would affect the General Council, taking the middle lane. Presbytery will be functional and meet every day. Presbytery would have the Secretary General, whom Sami called him Chief Writer, and every member of Presbytery would have a mentor, who would not change for life. Presbytery members' age would be over 30 years old, taught and learned.

### **General Council**

The General Council had 100 members, 2 for each subplots or one for 20 thousand persons.

Elections for the Council would be held every 4 year, from electors over 20, who would pay 5 frangs if did not know how to read and write.

Members of the General Council should have had over 25 years of age, graduated, and pay 10 frangs to the government. They would be elected every 4 year and half of them would change every 2 years. The General Council would elect a head and the vice. This General Council would meet once a year for the governmental budget. The council would approve nomes/laws that the government would require to.

### **Executive branch/Ministries**

Minister would be seven. One of the ministers, and would be prime minister. Council of Ministers will meet 1-2 times a week. Council of Ministers would respond before the General Council for advice. If Kryeqeverindari would be mandated from the Sultan, his term would be 5 years and will be legal if accepted by the Presbytery and General Council. Ministries would be termed as:

Minister of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister of the Army and of the sea, the Minister of Finance, Minister of Justice / Besëve, Minister of Knowledge / Besëve, Minister of General Affairs, for the roads, railways, forests. Ministry of Justice or of Knowledge would also deal with besë works by having: A great for Muslims Mufti, an Albanian Christian Orthodox Exarch, a primate for Catholics, headquarters of the Bektashi and religion would be free to Jews and Protestant.

### **Jobs and Prosperity, Finances, Banks**

According to Sami, Turkey taxed 3,000,000.00 Turkish every year from the Albanian vilayets and customs. He thought that by a better management revenues would hve been much higher and enough for a dignified living. Sami was for the establishment of the middle class. He forecasted the foundation of the National Bank and of other banks in the plots and subplots, who would produce the Albanian denotation. Albania would produce the golden lira tha would be worth 20 frangs, the lira valued by 100 cinga made silver and nickel.

### **Wages according to project**

The head of state 3000 cop (frangs), Vice 2500, Prime Minister 2500, Ministers 2000. Representatives in the General Council 1000. Heads of the besë, Muslims Mufti, the Albanian Christian Orthodox Exarch, the Primate for Catholics 2000.

### **Judicial power**

Local Court 1000. Trial Court 2000. High Court 5000. As it can be seen, he valued very much the justice system and sought a higher wage than the Head of State for the High Court judge.

## Conclusions

- The study of the political thought of Sami Frashëri, “enriches” the pool of political thought among the Albanian elite in XIX century.
- The political and constitutional thinking of Sami Frashëri was guided by the European political philosophy of Montesque.
- The political project and “modern” constitution established the politics in Albania by the 4 natural borders of the 4 vilayets, founded by the administrative division of the empire in 1870.
- Sami Frashëri should be treated as the first Albanian constitutionalist. His “Constitution”, in my opinion, should have served, as the legal foundation for the establishment of political institutions of the Albanian state, starting from the National Assembly in Vlora of the November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1912.
- The methodology and forecast of development opportunities of the Albanian state is evidently of the time European standards.
- The power of ideas and forecast of the political developments of his have been proven.
- Sami Frashëri, was the most modern politician of the backward empire and the greatest “Red and Black” patriot.

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