

How Church and Mosque Influence the Media of Albania

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A clear separation of State and religion

The relationship between the media and religion in Albania is multifaceted and frequently quite complex.

To begin with, for Albanians, the very concept of religious affiliation is in itself problematic. Albanian society reflects a multi-faith environment within which those of Muslim religious origin are in the majority. That said, all this must be correctly interpreted. For it is true that there are today a good number of Albanians, particularly of younger age, for whom the traditionally tolerant and non-militant form of Islam practised in Albania still commands respect as the religion of their ancestors, while yet no longer constituting a set of personal religious beliefs for them.

According to the statistics of a demographic survey carried out in 1920, 70 percent of Albanians living in Albania itself declared themselves to be Muslim, 20 percent identified as Orthodox Christians and 10 percent as Roman Catholics. However, after a century which has seen major socio-political upheaval, these ratios have undoubtedly changed considerably.

Three principal factors are involved in this evolution.

Firstly, five decades of a State policy promoting atheism have notably increased the number of people who today say they are non-religious and who reject all religious labels.

Secondly, intense rural depopulation and the very large flow of emigration abroad have considerably reduced the numerical gap between Muslims and Christians. Many more citizens of Muslim religious background have left the country than emigrants of Christian origin.

Finally, the recent opening up of Albanian society to western influences has encouraged the conversion to Christianity of a certain number of young people and has favoured the growth and influence of various Protestant denominations in Albania.

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SAGE: London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi, <http://dio.sagepub.com>

DOI: 10.1177/0392192106065971

As a result of such demographic changes, while Muslims still maintain a numerically dominant position in the country, their preponderance has become relatively less significant than in the past.

Since the 1920s, under the Republic and then under the monarchy of King Zog I, Albanian constitutions have constantly recognized the principle of the separation of Church and State by establishing a secular State which respected the rights of the principal religions present in the country.

King Zog had set the precise conditions for the exercise of the rights and functions of religious communities and the implementation of their spiritual missions. The State nevertheless retained a right of formal review over certain aspects of the operation of religious schools, over procedures and criteria for the election of the leading religious dignitaries and over policies for the construction of places of worship, etc. In practice, the State intervened only in specific cases of particular political importance where there was likely to be a definite impact on the strategy of preserving the nation's geopolitical interests. The pre-Second World War Albanian constitution laid down, for example, that heads of churches had to be of Albanian origin and blood, and that liturgies had to be recited in Albanian.

Henceforth public schools were to be separate from religious institutions and all religious instruction was banned within the precincts of public educational establishments. The State administration scrupulously respected its impartiality towards the various religious groups. The courts also applied the principles of a modern and entirely secular jurisprudence, borrowed as it was from Western European countries.

This formal separation of Church and State was in actual fact embedded within a remarkable religious tradition. The great intellectuals and leading political figures of the 19th-century Albanian Renaissance had as their principal concern the creation of an independent and sovereign state within a territory of clearly defined borders and one which was formally recognized in the international arena. Feeling threatened both by the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the territorial ambitions of neighbouring States, the men of the Renaissance tried to moderate as far as possible the impact the religious dimension might have on the relatively homogeneous national identity of their compatriots. They considered it fundamentally important to develop and transmit to the population ideological arguments in support of the existence of a homogeneous and compact Albanian nation living within those areas of the Balkans where Albanian was spoken. Any potential assimilation of Albanian national identity to one of the religious faiths present among them would have dealt a serious blow to the hopes of creating a national State within clearly defined borders based on a relatively homogeneous cultural and political heritage.

All of which explains why the Albanian Renaissance developed around a fundamental ideological stance which asserted that 'the religion of Albania is Albanity', that is to say, a sense of national belonging. This approach to culture which marked their collective identity still remains unshakeable and very much alive. It is in effect an integral part of the all but self-evident rhetoric which underpins the historicopolitical discourse of local elites. The fundamental cultural element which provides the 'cement' for national cohesion is the language, not religion. Since the time of the Albanian Renaissance, an Albanian is reckoned as being one who speaks the

Albanian language which he/she has inherited from his or her family, and who therefore considers Albanian to be his or her maternal first language.

After 1944, power passed to the Communist regime. The consequence of its adoption of an atheist ideology was an enormous reduction in the economic, cultural and spiritual influence of religious institutions. Religion was considered to be a dangerous social force which obstructed the realization of the 'new man'. Though no religious group was spared from the resultant political repression, the Catholic religious community was particularly targeted following resistance to the new regime organized by Catholic priests. Orthodox and Muslim clerics suffered the same fate, despite the fact that most of them did not openly challenge this modern Leviathan. In 1967, an ideological and political campaign was undertaken against religious organizations, which led to drastic measures being taken against them. Places of worship were closed, demolished or turned into restaurants, shops or sports complexes. Since then, the younger generations have lost all contact with religion. They are no longer familiar with the rituals, doctrines or religious symbols of their ancestors.

In 1990, the country entered into a transition period following the end of Communism,¹ opening itself up to democracy under the aegis of western values. The public demanded the institution of democratic rights and freedoms and the creation of a State subject to the rule of law. The first normative measures which marked the beginning of the period of democratization related to the reopening of places of worship, the establishment of individual liberties regarding religious practice and the renewal of liturgical activity by clerical representatives of the Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim communities.

Politically, economically and socially, the country turned towards the West. Indeed, Albanians feel profoundly European as a consequence of their history and their national constitution. They believe that the democratization of their country represents a return to a cultural horizon which has defined their history for a long time.

However, the arrival of democracy has brought with it consequences which may be somewhat contradictory. It allows for the free expression of religious convictions and permits all citizens freely to follow the religious rituals and practices of their own faith. But, paradoxically, a certain religious discourse is beginning to manifest some reticence towards the new social realities which followed upon the establishment of political freedoms and individual rights in the country.

Admittedly, the religious press, the preaching by clerics in churches and mosques and official declarations disseminated by leading religious figures in the various hierarchies do respect the democratic norms and values that are being established in the country. But despite this generally very positive attitude towards an environment which has put an end to whole decades of political repression of religion, a certain gap can nevertheless be detected between the religious outlook towards the present-day social order and the outlook of secular politicians and media.

At times, religious commentary published in the Muslim community press is openly critical of current trends in local social life. Articles can be found in it which affirm that the place of the woman must still be in the home if she is to be a 'good wife' and care for and bring up her children. Supportive comment can also be found

in these publications for a Head of State to take on the role of a spiritual father to his citizens and to be the architect and military leader of his country. The West is sometimes represented as a society constructed out of a mass of individuals who are becoming oblivious to all moral guidelines.

Be that as it may, these articles are little more than a few drops in the vast ocean of the present-day press in Albania, represented as it is by hundreds of daily newspapers whose circulation is in the tens of thousands. The conservative opinions expressed by certain Muslim and Catholic priests against the right to abortion, and their rigid opposition to the use of contraceptive measures, their negative attitudes to the rights of women to divorce, and so on, are little more than dispersed and isolated voices restricted to a marginal and peripheral media.

It is very rare to find a woman wearing a veil on the streets of Tirana. Only a very small number go about with their faces covered. In certain districts, places of worship, even when recently built, often remain closed and empty because of very low attendances.

The rural areas of the country are often the specific target of charitable campaigns in which the work of humanitarian assistance is often associated with efforts at evangelization. The progressive depopulation of the countryside, the dismantling of the former network of cultural institutions and the abandonment of these zones by higher-level managers, teachers, agronomists, engineers, economists and other professionals have resulted in the situation whereby the muezzins are once again becoming the central reference point around which local spiritual and family activities are being organized.

But despite this strong resurgence of religion, Albanian society has not experienced any tendency towards a fanatical re-Islamization.

History has already done its work. The social dimension and the religious dimension represent two entirely distinct realities for the average Albanian. The clear separation of the Church from the State, the education system, the law and politics is a self-evident reality for local public opinion.

Furthermore, the democratic openness of the country makes it impossible for any fanatical or religious fundamentalist movement to take hold. The younger generation has swiftly adopted the western way of life, together with an accelerated freeing up of social behaviour and of family and moral values. It is no longer at all conceivable that any moral or institutional authority figure could take away from Albanians the right to divorce, to family planning, to access to western media images, to free time and the rights to privacy, to free elections and individual liberties in the area of free expression of personal ideas and opinions, etc.² Any attempt to establish a religious movement requiring unswerving devotion and commitment, something which, in passing, is foreign to Albanian tradition, would be massively and immediately refused and rejected by the whole of society.

Economically speaking, Albania has become freely open to both Greek and Italian markets. More than 500,000 Albanians, nearly one-sixth of the population, live and work in Greece or Italy. Clearly they number among the most active members of the population. From this experience of living and working in Greece, Italy or elsewhere, Albanians rapidly learn both the good and the bad lessons offered by western societies. There are frequent conversions to the Christian faith. Some will adopt a

new personal name to be able to assimilate at least symbolically to the local society. They adapt their lifestyles to the rhythms of the West. They come to closely respect the values of tolerance and democracy. In doing so they gradually absorb cultural values which belong to the West. They marry girls from the countries in which they live, and often establish mixed-faith families.

Finally, mention should be made of the role played by western media and the significant impact they exert on Albanian public opinion. Any closed system of belief is shown up as powerless in the presence of the liberal and individualist culture implicit in the programmes transmitted by western television channels, which can easily be received in Albania. The average Albanian, particularly in the urban areas, is a faithful fan of western films; he or she enjoys listening to Italian, American or other songs, and quickly learns to recognize the show-biz stars of western television. Albanians enthusiastically engage with this show-business world, and become attached, sometimes to an exaggerated extent, to its defining symbols, which include nudity, conspicuous consumption and easy life-styles.

Media representation of religion

The media in Albania, both private and public, carefully respect the religious convictions of believers and scrupulously avoid any kind of discriminatory comment directed at a faith community.

Generally speaking, it can be said that relations between the media and the country's religious institutions are marked by reciprocal avoidance of public comment. It is very rare for journalists to probe into the affairs of churches and likewise it hardly ever happens that an ecclesiastical representative makes statements in the country's media or in the secular press, outside of religious festivals. Media coverage tends to be limited to television reporting of very formal and highly symbolic visits by leading government figures to the various religious communities of the country on religious holy days, and occasionally on public television one can see transmissions of the major religious ceremonies celebrated in the places of worship of all the faiths. This practice in fact very faithfully respects the strictest equality of transmission time for coverage of the rituals of each religious community.

The Albanian media operate by a code of conduct characterized as thoroughly liberal. The domains of morality, society, the family and so on are areas in which journalists can feel free of all constraint from a religious point of view; they have essentially a free rein to develop their investigations, their personal reflections or even their most speculative fancies. Local television channels broadcast films pirated from western TV channels that are often full of scenes and images which may shock traditional religious adherents. Nevertheless, it is almost unimaginable that representatives of Albanian churches should make public protest against such media manifestations. In the same way, despite the fact that divorce, abortion and the excessive liberalization of family structures are regularly condemned in the religious press, there are no known examples attested of ecclesiastical authorities being able to organize a demonstration or draw up a petition directed to the Albanian parliament against the current laws which give legal sanction to the practices in question.

Each religious community has its own newspaper.³ They provide a space for expounding the teachings of each church. There are analyses of social and historical issues based around the values and points of view of each religious institution. A paper may go so far as to address certain criticisms of the modern world which in its view may have become too 'materialist' and 'unbelieving', but very rarely is there any discussion of differences of opinion with representatives of other religious communities or any attempt made to teach religious doctrine to the wider public. Thus, religious discourse is carried on essentially in its own isolated sphere, with no real involvement in the life of the wider society.

Religions and geopolitical issues

For various reasons, quite a large divide has formed between the daily situation in which the diverse Balkan societies function and certain culturalist interpretations of the geopolitics of the contemporary world.

In Albania, for instance, the society is acting less and less in conformity with its former religious identities. Yet the culturalist approach to sociology is constantly gaining ground within the analytic framework that addresses the political, economic, media and geostrategic evolution of the country. Frequently, in order to be able to explain Albania's political orientation or to make sense of the conflicts in the Balkans between Croats and Serbs, Bosnians and Serbs, Albanians and Macedonians, Serbs and Albanians, the dissertation relies on a set of propositions which attempt to explain this conflictual nexus by invoking the great religious divisions that separate the nations and peoples of the region.

This hypothesis, which perceives a re-Islamization of Albanian society taking place, has been advanced with a great deal of intensity, most particularly during the Kosovo war. According to this line of thinking, the conflicts in the Balkans come about between on the one hand 'shapeless antidemocratic Islamic groupings or societies significantly infected by fanatical ideologies and Islamic fundamentalism, and on the other the anti-Islamic clusters which form with the Christian civilizational entity'.⁴ Within this schema, the declaration emerges that: 'Twenty years ago, apart from the Turkish enclave, there was only one Islamic country in Europe: Albania. With Bosnia, there are now already two, and America has done all within its power to create another one: Kosovo – while perhaps awaiting the emergence of a fourth: Macedonia.'⁵

By extension, there is talk of a geopolitical alliance between Albania and America, based on perceived religious affinities between Islam and Protestantism. As a result, the following assertion is propounded: 'We should note from the start that Protestantism, despite its deep-rooted fidelity to the person of Christ, nevertheless shares many points in common with Islam. The rejection of any intermediary between man and God, a certain reticence with regard to the concept of the sacrament, the central role of the priest yielding ground to guided individual prayer, an anathema towards sacred images, the pre-eminence given to the Scriptures, the common practice of circumcision and, at least for the extreme wing of American Protestantism, an absolute condemnation of alcohol and of all

stimulants, all establish a common ground of understanding between Protestants and Muslims.⁶

Certainly, various geopolitical approaches developed in order to explain the deep underlying reasons for the Kosovo war have constructed an analysis based on the culturalist component of the present-day conflicts in the world. Clearly, from that perspective, society in Albania had to be represented as being on the path towards a process of thoroughgoing re-Islamization. The political orientation in terms of the Albanian State's international policies should therefore of necessity rest upon the religious identity of Albanian society.

Indeed, the assimilation of the geopolitics of a country to the culture and religious traditions of a part of the local population does represent a very comfortable hypothesis when one tries to interpret the present-day conflicts in the world in their global context, especially those occurring in the Balkans. It is easy to see how such a theoretical construct should come to the fore, given that it is based on relatively immutable and 'traditional' splits which are present in the societies in question. Viewed from such a methodological, anthropological and cultural slant, it is clearly the religious differences between the various Balkan peoples which become the most visible factors which might explain the conflicts, in comparison with other more recent ones which are much more complex and are tied up with the empirical nexus within which economic, political, professional and territorial matters pertaining to the Balkan societies are all intermeshed.

The problem is that, on the heuristic level, this analysis does not lead very far. Four years after the Kosovo war, another conflict broke out, one pitting the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein against the western allies grouped around the United States. But this elicits a major question: if the Kosovo war proved the impact that the essentially Muslim identity of Albanian society was having on the policies of the Albanian state, what would the war in Iraq prove? This question quite naturally deserves an answer in view of the fact that the Albanian government supported the American military intervention in Iraq. In Albania, no protest against this intervention was noted. Even the Muslim community did not react. The Albanian government did not risk any electoral backlash in adopting a position in favour of the Anglo-American military intervention in Iraq. So where have the Albanian Muslims got to? Where is the so-called influence of a certain accelerated Islamization of Albanian society on the policies of its government? What has happened to the alleged affinities between Islam and Protestantism, factors considered to be decisive for the formation of world geopolitical alliances?

According to the geopolitical culturalist model, Albania should have publicly declared itself to be against the Iraq war. But nothing of the sort has taken place. On the contrary, Albanian politicians of all sides have rallied almost without exception to the American cause. The 'Albanian Islam' factor has had almost no effect.

The impact of religion on society

The political press in Albania is the reflection of a political and media space ordered around several well-structured political media organizations.

There are some newspapers which have an affinity with the political parties of the historic right. The term 'historic' is used here to refer to political parties which existed even before the arrival in power of the Communists after the Second World War. These parties represent no more than 10 percent of the Albanian electorate.

A detailed study⁷ of the content of these papers reveals that the public discourse of the historic right is based on a conceptual world-view made up of very specific elements. In general, the Muslim religion is considered to be more important than the other religions present within the country and to express more precisely than the others a certain 'essence' of Albanianness. This is said to be linked to the fact that Islam has been an invincible spiritual protective shield against the expansionist ambitions of the Orthodox populations of the Balkans. In this manner, the religious aspiration becomes synonymous with a nationalist one. This also manifests itself in a radically anti-communist attitude, which was characteristic of the social groups who made up the economic and political elite of Albania which governed the country before the Second World War. It was precisely these social groups that suffered most from persecution by the totalitarian regime. The type of discourse emanating from this sector goes so far as to justify policies which constantly demand the return of expropriated land and property to its pre-war owners.

To understand the links between these discursive elements, that is, the promotion of Islam as the national religion along with the demand for the return of land, it is useful to analyse the historical social status of those who proclaim them.

The greatest landowners in Albania were of the Muslim religious faith. After the Ottoman occupation and over the centuries that followed it, they were able to retain their property titles or obtain new ones by serving in the army of the Ottoman Empire and by converting to the Empire's official religion. Under pressure from these landowners, the peasants who tilled their fields also gradually converted to Islam, in doing so abandoning their ancestral Christianity. This process became particularly intense during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Under pressure from the Ottomans and their Albanian governors who had converted to the Islamic faith, dissident peasants who obstinately insisted on remaining faithful to the religion of their ancestors were forced to withdraw towards marshy regions or into the mountains, which offered only steep slopes for tillage and where the quality of the land was very poor. In the southern parts of Albania adjacent to Greek-speaking territory, the Ottoman Empire refrained from applying a policy of forced religious conversion of the Albanian-speaking population because of a concession to the Orthodox Church centred in Constantinople.

These historic factors have produced a socio-economic configuration in Albania marked by the circumstance that the most wealthy landowners and those who possessed the best quality land were usually of Muslim religious affiliation, while the Christians, whether Catholic or Orthodox, operated with much more marginal land in poor mountainous regions where they were forced to seek refuge in the neighbouring towns, finding work as small shopkeepers or in the traditional craft trades.

As a consequence of this balance of power, the establishment of the Communist regime in 1944 and the agrarian reform it put in place affected first and foremost the wealthy and medium landowners who were of Islamic faith. They underwent severe

political repression over the five decades that the Communists were in power, enduring real suffering that affected both individuals and whole families.

After the collapse of Communism and during the first few years of the period of transition to democracy, representatives of the historic right elaborated a political discourse imposed by the recent history and social circumstances of the right-wing electorate. This discourse was by nature radically anti-Communist. It gave expression to a whole way of life that had been spent under the political oppression of the totalitarian regime. It also gave vent to long-standing resentments and a certain spirit of vengeance, to painful memories which suddenly burst out and which sought an outlet for their aggression. Demands were made for the return of lands to their former owners dispossessed by the agrarian reform of 1946. The political parties representing this historic right make this return of land a basic demand. In the newspapers that reflect the thinking of these rightist parties, Islam appears as the only religion capable of representing Albanian identity. Its teachings are sometimes put forward as a necessary way of life for any person who wishes to be a 'good Albanian'. These papers regard the Southern Slavs and Greeks, insofar as they are populations belonging to the Orthodox faith, as perpetual enemies of the Albanian nation.

Naturally, there is also a political and media grouping in Albania where the opposite set of interlinked principles dominates the environment of political and moral expression. The political groups and associations representing the ethnic Greek minority in Albania lean towards a discourse based on the prospect of opening up Albania towards Greece. They demand greater respect be shown towards the Orthodox faith and call for an agrarian reform to distribute land to the peasant farmers who were living on it during the Communist period after it had been expropriated from its former owners.

A policy of free distribution of lands to peasant farmers without regard to the previous patterns of ownership is also supported by the Albanian left clustered around the Socialist Party.

In the discursive spaces of these groups, no appreciation is expressed for the Muslim faith. On the other hand, their papers do from time to time include news about the autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church. But the issue of the rights of former landowners is very rarely addressed in their columns. Yet the leading officials of these political groupings and the journalists writing for this press can be from a variety of religious affiliations. They can be of Muslim as well as Orthodox backgrounds. They principally come from the south of Albania where most Orthodox Albanians and the Greek national minority live. But the fact remains that the majority population of the south still consists of people of Muslim faith, who nevertheless support a left-wing political culture because of their past political traditions and socio-economic status. They are the descendants of former landless peasants who converted to Islam under pressure from the local notables on whose lands they had worked for generations.

A multiplicity of histories in place of a single History

The newspapers and periodicals of the country's three main religious communities publish articles devoted entirely to the dissemination of the teachings and rituals associated with their respective worship traditions. But the links that each faith has with the history of the nation are presented entirely differently.

The Muslim press tends to proclaim that true Albanian patriots can be distinguished by their Muslim religious beliefs. They embraced Islam and have maintained it over centuries as a spiritual rampart against the assimilationist ambitions of the Slavic and Greek peoples who represented large masses of Orthodox believers. According to this outlook, Islam represents the religion of Albanian survival in the face of pressures from its Slavic-Orthodox neighbours. The Orthodox press, on the other hand, naturally takes a different view. It presents Albanian Muslims as people who were unable to resist the pressure of the Ottoman occupier, who applied methods of forced conversion on local populations in order to rally them to its own official religion. The true patriots therefore are those who have managed to preserve the religion of their forefathers, hence the Orthodox. But a third element intervenes in this debate by adding another version of history. The Catholics claim to be the hard kernel of the Albanian nation because they declare they were the only people to have truly resisted the Turkish occupier without at the same time playing the game of the Greek and Orthodox groups who were hostile to the country's independence. For the Catholics, it is they who should be seen as the true bearers of Albanian literary culture as the principal affirmative element of Albanian national identity.

Certain circles close to the Islamic community sometimes tend to think that the countries of Western Europe show little interest in Albania precisely because of the fact that its population is of majority Muslim origin. As a result, they believe that Albania's foreign policy should be directed towards Turkey rather than towards the West. On the other hand, the Catholics and Orthodox insist strongly that Europe draws its spiritual culture from their two religious traditions which they see as the two almost convergent wings of Christendom. In their view, therefore, forging closer ties between Albania and Western Europe represents a process inspired and guided by the memory of the Christian roots of the Albanian nation which connect it to the West. Albania's conversion to Islam therefore represents to their eyes little more than a passing moment in history.

The religious press is reflecting the same processes that are apparent in the secular media of the country, where media techniques are being used to construct a virtual past history of the nation. Depending on their particular political and cultural affiliation and the aims and goals of their proprietors, the secular media are also producing quite diverse and conflicting versions of the history of the country, which are equally credible in the eyes of their respective publics. Thus, historical facts are being presented under completely divergent lights. A particular historical fact which is held to be important from the point of view of the historical perspective honoured by one newspaper is not considered to be so from a different historical approach that may be adopted by a rival organ. Contradictions and conflicting versions abound.

This has led to a multiplicity of interpretations of historical facts. The great figures

and events of history and the significance attached to great historical moments become ambivalent. There is no unifying historical discourse which could embrace and give a coherent structure to the general framework of the history of the nation.

Instead of a national History with a capital 'H', one finds only divergent versions of that history, which tend to be accounts formulated out of separatist logics which grow and multiply, all the while retaining the same level of credibility in the eyes of quite broad segments of the public opinion of the country.

During the transition period, the disintegration that occurred caused the social fabric to be rent between various factions, losing its essential unity and intersubjective cohesiveness. Instead of a single overall narrative which might provide an orderly framework within which to view the imagined past of the country, one finds a divergent multiplicity of imagined reconstructions of history.

Any recounted history takes shape only in the form of discourse disseminated via expressive media. Historical narrative always reposes on a process of reconstruction of the past through a medium of expression. Thus the narrative cannot have a historical reality 'in itself' which would allow us subsequently to make an empirical comparison between that 'reality in itself' and its variant expressed through the instrument chosen for that purpose. By losing the notion of the 'real model' of history, we also become no longer able to grasp its instrumentalized variant. In place of the dichotomy 'true history'-'instrumentalized history', we are obliged to be content with the concept of a 'multiplicity of histories' which provides the methodological vehicle for the historical diversities of disseminated historical accounts.

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Translated from the French by Colin Anderson

Notes

1. See Fuga (2003).
2. A recent study has shown that, on a grid of ten basic behavioural values, Albanians give more or less similar replies, independent of their religious affiliations. Social values once again take precedence over religious ones. But despite this general tendency, slight variations can be detected. Muslims, for example, are more attached to family. They appreciate more than others professions involving commitment and hard work. They have a more collectivist outlook on life. On the other hand, Catholics appear more individualist, are more open to society and education. Whereas those who identify as Orthodox indicate they are more open to the outside world, are more attached to service professions, appreciate more than others the role of money in society, etc. To access the full set of results of this research, see Fuga and Dervishi (2002).
3. The newspaper of the Islamic religious community bears the name of *The Light of Islam*. It takes the form of a four-page weekly running to only a few dozen copies sold from newsstands around the Grand Mosque in Tirana. The main Catholic papers are printed and published in the city of Shkodra in the north of the country. This city, which also has a little Catholic radio station, is where the majority of Albanian Catholics live. The main titles of the Catholic newspapers are *After You* and *The Sunday Echo*. Both these papers are sold at the doors of churches or from nearby newsstands. They circulate in very modest numbers among the Catholic intellectual elite of Shkodra. In contrast, the weekly Orthodox newspaper, *The Resurrection*, is published in Tirana by the autocephalous Albanian

Orthodox Church. It maintains a very high quality of printing, and it often contains colour photos of a very high professional quality.

4. Del Valle (2000: 125).
5. Volkoff (1999: 109).
6. Volkoff (1999: 111).
7. Fuga (1997), doctoral thesis.

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