This paper deals with representative writings of an Ottoman intellectual, Shemseddin Sami Frashëri (1850–1904), who has simultaneously been represented in contemporary Turkey and Albania as one of the fathers of Turkish and Albanian nationalisms, respectively. Accordingly, he is known with two different names in these countries: “Sami Frashëri” in Albania and “Şemseddin (or Şemsettin) Sami” in Turkey. In order to avoid partisanship in this question, either his full name (as in the title) or the short version “Sami” will be used in this paper.

Sami’s contribution to the construction of two national identities both through his involvement in the first Albanian ethnically based movement and through his writings will be discussed here mainly by analysing some of his most representative writings. A brief “biography” of the texts and of their author is first provided for purposes of contextualization. Two articles and a booklet by Sami make up the main text corpus of this paper: a Turkish article published in Sami’s own journal Hafta [Week] in 1881 in Istanbul; the pref-

1 I would like to thank my colleagues Suraiya Faroqhi, Christoph Neumann, Artan Puto, Adrian Brisku and Emma Sinclair-Webb for their most precious comments on the previous versions of this essay. I am also grateful to the fellows of the “We, the People” project, from the comments and criticism of which I profited most, both addressed personally to me during my resident fellowship in Sofia during the spring of 2005 and publicly during several meetings in Sofia and Budapest in 2004 and 2005. Special thanks go to Diana Mishkova whose merciless and most valuable criticism and suggestions on the content and style played an important role in the shaping of the last version of this paper. Two important works covering themes discussed in this paper were published after the paper was written and are therefore not referenced in the text: George Gawrych, The Crescent and the Eagle. Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913, London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006; and Nathalie Clayer, Aux origines du nationalisme albanais. La naissance d’une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe, Paris: Karthala, 2007.


3 Sami (1881), pp. 177–181.
ace (İfade-i Meram [foreword]) of his monolingual Turkish dictionary Kamus-i Turki in 1900 in Istanbul;⁴ and his much-disputed Albanian book Shqipëria [Albania], published in 1899 in Bucharest.⁵ The focus with respect to the latter book will be on its first part, which presents in effect a mythological history of the Albanians and Albania. Sharing the same thematic and theoretical framework with his other texts discussed here, thus providing material for a meaningful comparative analysis, the themes of the first part of Shqipëria are particularly pertinent to the themes addressed in this volume. Furthermore, relevant entries in Sami’s six-volume encyclopaedia Kamus-ul Alam [Universal Encyclopaedia] such as “Turk,” “Turan,” “Turaniye,” “Albania,” “Albanians” and other relevant writings will also be considered. It should be stressed that these writings have become part of two national canons by being counted among the founding texts contributing to the emergence of the national(ist) discourse in each case; and that they indeed contain pioneering ideas presented with groundbreaking vocabulary.

As a modernist Ottoman intellectual contributing through his publications to the construction of both Albanian and Turkish national identities and personally playing a part in the cultural and political activities of the first ethnocentric Albanian movement, Sami is certainly one of the interesting European intellectuals whose writings have been “left out of the ‘core’ European canon since the age of the Enlightenment.”⁷ With two incompatible canonized images in two national historiographies featuring him as an initiator of two irreconcilable nationalisms, Sami’s case is illuminating in that each of these conflicting and, in terms of the modernist/nationalist paradigm, paradoxical images have been constructed through a selective and biased reading of his writings while ignoring the other side’s narrative. Elsewhere I have discussed the issue of his mythologization in Albania and Turkey and the role played by the press in this process.⁸ In this paper I attempt to bring the discussion of Sami’s writings a step further.

The writings of Sami, variously described in different circles as (liberal) Islamist, Turkist, Albanianist, proto-socialist and/or modernist, “remained

⁴ Sami (1900a).
⁵ Sami (1899a).
⁶ Sami (1889–1898).
⁷ Cf. the initial description of the “We, the People” project.
⁸ For the construction of the “mythologized image” of Sami in the Albanian and Turkish historiography,” Bilmez (2003), pp. 54–57. For the role of the press of the both countries in this mythologization, see Bilmez (2006), pp. 71–125.
outside of the mainstream of scholarly thematization” in Europe. This paper concentrates on those of his writings which directly engage in the problem-atic of this volume: I will explore the political instrumentalization of the concepts of “folk,” “people” and “ethnos” in Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries. Sami was a prolific author writing in different genres in Turkish and Albanian: articles in newspapers and magazines published by him or others; a monolingual (Turkish–Turkish) and three bilingual (French–Turkish, Turkish–French and Arabic–Turkish) dictionaries; several booklets on issues such as gender (the position of women), literature, languages and linguistics, aimed at the popularization of modern science and modernization of popular culture; three theater plays; a six-volume universal encyclopaedia; several translations from French, Persian and Arabic; and a novel which has commonly (and mistakenly) been represented in Turkey as “the first modern Turkish novel.” He was also known through his writings on Islam and Islamic civilization, where he was trying to offer a modern (moderate) interpretation of Islam and its history, and to prove that Islam as such is not incompatible with modern (Western) civilization. His texts analyzed in this paper are the ones most directly and explicitly focusing on the issues of (ethnic) identity, representative of the problem area tackled by this collective work.

9 Cf. the initial description of the “We, the People” project.
10 Cf. the initial description of the “We, the People” project.
11 For a comprehensive collection of his articles published in the Ottoman press during the struggle of the League of Prizren (1878–1881), see Sami (2000).
12 Sami (1900a); Sami (1882); Sami (1884b); Sami (1886f); and Sami (1895).
13 For his booklet on women, see Sami (1879a); and for his Turkish works on literature, languages and linguistics, see Sami (1886a); Sami (1886b); Sami (1886c); Sami (1890d); Sami (1891d) and Sami (1899c). For his Albanian works, see Sami (1879b); Sami (1886d); Sami (1886e). For Sami’s Turkish books aiming at the popularization of modern science, see Sami (1879c); Sami (1879d); Sami (1879e) and Sami (1885c). His Albanian books with the same characteristics are Sami (1879g); and Sami (1888a).
14 Sami (1875a); Sami (1875b); Sami (1876).
15 Sami (1889–1899).
16 For his translations from French, see Sami (1872a), Sami (1873a), Sami (1873b), Sami (1878), Sami (1880) and Sami (1884a). For those from Persian, see Sami (1885b) and Sami (1899b), the latter being an edited collection of old poems by Baki including a translation of a Persian poem into Turkish. For his Arabic translation, see Sami (1901a).
17 Sami (1872b).
18 For Sami’s books that are taken as implicit indicators of his (moderate) Islamism, see his book in Turkish, Sami (1879f) and another book in Arabic, Sami (1885a).
1. SAMI’S IDENTITY-CONSTRUCTING OEUVRE
AND ITS CANONIZATIONS

One can find accounts of Sami’s life and works in many secondary sources (including encyclopaedia entries) in Western languages. However, they must be read with caution, because there is much contradictory factual information on concrete issues, as many aspects in his life have not yet been systematically studied. Here, only the information about his intellectual and political activities on which there is consensus in the historiography will be summarized.19

Known as one of the most productive members of the Ottoman intelligentsia of the last quarter of the 19th century, a linguist, lexicographer, novelist and playwright, Sami was born in 1850 in Frashër, a village in the district of Berat, in the south of today’s Albania, in the Ottoman province of Yanya (the city of Ioannina in today’s north western Greece). He was from a Bektashi family, whose members (the Frashëri brothers) would become the most prominent personalities of the so-called “Albanian nationalist movement” after the Treaty of San Stefano (March 3, 1878) between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, following the defeat of the Ottoman armies in the Ottoman–Russian War of 1877–78. The treaty foresaw the formation of a Great Bulgaria as an autonomous self-governing tributary principality. Its territory included most of the previously Ottoman Balkan territories, including the ones inhabited by Albanians.

Having completed his initial education in traditional institutions (both at primary school and Bektashi tekke) in his village, after the death of his father he moved to Yanya together with his family, where he attended the famous Greek secondary school, Zossimea.20 There he must have undergone a kind of epistemological turnover through exposure to “modern” ideas and “scientific” knowledge, learning of Western languages (French, Italian) as well as ancient and modern Greek, besides improving his proficiency in oriental languages (Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Arabic). His mother tongue was Albanian, which did not have a written tradition at that point, but to the development of which he and other intellectuals would later contribute.

Modern Turkish historiography maintains that Sami dealt with the “Albanian question” only through his writings in the press during the time of the struggle

19 For an article underlining different contradictory issues about Sami’s life in the historiography, see Bilmez (2004a).

20 The essential role of this school in the intellectual and political formation of Sami has unfortunately not been studied yet.
of the League of Prizren (in Albanian *Lidhja e Prizrenit*) formed on June 10, 1878, just before the opening of the Congress of Berlin (June 13–July 13, 1878), which brought the main European Powers together to discuss the revision of the Treaty of San Stefano. The League was created by a socially rather mixed group of traditional and modern Albanian elites, with the support of the Ottoman state, which sought to use this local (Albanian) pressure against plans in Berlin for the expansion of the new Balkan states into the Ottoman territories inhabited mainly by Albanians. This “weapon” might well have played its expected role for the Ottoman state during and immediately after the Congress. But later it turned against the state as a radical group in the league continued to assert ethnocentric ambitions even after the boundary problems among the Balkan states were settled. These radicals opposed the empire and championed Albanian rights, but were finally defeated in 1881. The fact that Sami was taking an active part in the Albanian nationalist movement until the end of his life has always been neglected or denied by the Turkish historiography. However, as it has been commonly stated by the Albanian historiography, Sami had acted as “the chair of the Albanian Committee in Istanbul” since the beginning of the 1880s. The said “committee” was the Albanian society *Komiteti Qendror për Mbrojtjen e të Drejtave të Kombësisë Shqiptare*. [Central Committee for the Defence of the rights of Albanian People], which after the defeat of the League of Prizren was “re-organized illegally on the initiative of Sami in Istanbul to support the Albanian movement and to promote the publication of Albanian works.” Sami pursued his activities within this clandestine organization as a nationalist Albanian intellectual until the 1890s. It is well-known, furthermore, that he was actively involved also in the efforts of getting a licence for the opening of Albanian schools in 1885–87. Meanwhile, and until the end of the


22 See the letter of Thimi Mitko in Egypt to Jeronim de Rada in Italy sent on June 14/27, 1880 (*Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit*, F. 24, D. 54/6, fl. 186–187), the quotation is from fl. 186b. A common letter dated August 4, 1882 was signed by many prominent Albanian intellectuals in Istanbul including Sami, who was indicated as “the chair of the Albanian Society in Istanbul” (*Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit*, F. 51, D. 6, fl. 2b.).


1890s, he was in contact with the newly emerging more radical Albanian nationalist circles abroad. It was through these relations that his Albanian books were published in Bucharest and Sofia during his lifetime. He was also one of the publishers of the first Albanian periodical *Drita* in Istanbul in 1884, which in 1885 changed its name to *Dituria*.

It must be emphasized, on the other hand, that the overwhelming majority of Sami’s writings were in Turkish. Those scrutinized here have been canonized as a result of the efforts of several prominent Turkish nationalist scholars. It is again these texts that have been chosen for publication as appendices in the monographs on Sami or in general Turkish anthologies, examples of which will be given further down, showing the role of “selective perception” in the construction of his image. The 20th-century Turkish historiography has typically portrayed these texts as early manifestations of Turkish (cultural) nationalism in the 19th century. Furthermore, the fact that in his last years Sami was studying some old Turkish texts like *Kutadgu Bilig* ([Qutadgu Bilig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qutadgu_Bilig)), *Orhon Abidekeri* ([Orhun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orkhon)|Orkhon Inscriptions]) little known in Turkey in those days has been referred to in the Turkish historiography as a proof of his complete devotion to Turkism: “Advocating the idea that Turkish language and literature already began in Central Asia, Sami worked on *Kutadgu Bilig* and *Orhon Abidekeri*, aimed at making them known to the Turkish readers, and suggested that *Kudadgu Bilig* should be read in schools.”

26 A small part of Sami’s correspondence with the Albanian nationalist circles in the diaspora was published in Dodani (1930), pp. 32–35, 43 and 45–47.
27 For his Albanian works published in Bucharest, see Sami (1886d); Sami (1886c); Sami (1888a); Sami (1888b); and Sami (1900b). For the Albanian translation of one of his dramas published in Sofia, see Sami (1901b).
30 Tural (1999), p. 28. *Kutadgu Bilig* was one of the earliest Turkish books written in 1068 by Yusuf Has Hacip and was translated in his last years by Sami into Ottoman-Turkish through the help of Vambery’s (1832–1913) German translation (Tural, Şemsettin Sami, p. 121). This book played an important role in the construction and promotion of the myth of antiquity and the continuity of the Turkish “nation” from the Turkic people of Asia among the first Turkish nationalists. These *Orkhon inscriptions*, on the other hand, are named after the Orkhon Valley in Mongolia, where these 8th-century inscriptions were discovered in an 1889 expedition by Nikolay Yadrintsev. They were published by Vasily Radlov and deciphered by the Danish philologist Vilhelm Thomsen in 1883. The inscriptions were written in the Old Turkic script, also known as Orkhon-Yenisey script or Göktürk script, which is the alphabet used by the Göktürk from the 8th century to record the Old Turkic language.
Having made a name for himself as a translator, author and editor in the Ottoman-Turkish press and published the above-mentioned short-lived newspapers *Sabah* and *Tercüman-ı Şark* in Istanbul in the 1870s, in 1880 Sami began the publication of his first magazine *Aile* [Family] which was mainly addressed to women. However, it also ceased after its third issue. For five months in 1881 he published the weekly periodical *Hafta* [Week], which continued and ran to 20 issues in total. That magazine was a popular "encyclopaedic" periodical, aimed at popularizing modern (Western) knowledge and ideas among "ordinary people" and at advocating "modern civilization" and "progress." The main issues there concerned the fields of language (linguistics), sciences, literature, art and ethics. An established nationalist Turkish scholar has singled out this periodical as particularly important, in that Sami is said to have started to display there his "Turkist perspective through his writings on Turkish language." The article analyzed further down here was published in the 12th issue of this periodical, in August 1881. It is very telling that this article has never been translated into Albanian, although most of Sami's other articles in the Turkish press supporting the Albanian cause have been translated and published. In Turkey, however, this article is conventionally referred to as a key text demonstrating Sami's revolutionary contribution to the construction of Turkish nationalism. Besides, it is one of the few that have been reproduced (transcribed in the modern Turkish alphabet) as an appendix to books on Sami and in anthologies in Turkey.

Another Turkish text examined in this essay, the preface to Sami's monolingual dictionary *Kamus-ı Turki* [Turkish Dictionary], was published in 1900. The title chosen by the author at a time when the dominant term for the language of the Empire was "Ottoman," has been taken by the Turkish

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31 Hafta, edebiyat ve fünun ve sanaiye dair mecmuadır. Sahibi: Mihran, Muhariri: Şemseddin Sami, no. 1 (22 Ramazan 1298 [August 18, 1881]) – no. 20 (21 Safer 1299 [January 12, 1882]).


33 Below, it will sometimes be referred to this text by Sami in short as "the article."


37 Sami (1900a). In 1998 the dictionary was reprinted in Ottoman-Arabic alphabet with an additional "preface" by Ömer Faruk Akün in modern Turkish; Sami (1998).
WE, THE PEOPLE

historiography as indication that here was a pioneer of Turkish nationalism. Although such a claim may be more commonly agreed today, it was indeed a pioneering revisionist suggestion at that time, contributing directly to the emergence of Turkish nationalism.\(^{38}\) The preface to this dictionary has also been interpreted by different authors as a proof of Sami’s Turkish nationalism.\(^{39}\) For my purposes here I would like to pay attention to this “preface” because it was published just a few months after his Albanian book, where the abovementioned article was published almost 20 years earlier. A comparative analysis of these writings would help us to answer the question of whether Sami’s identity politics changed during this long period.

The much-disputed Albanian book *Shqipëria*, on the other hand, was published in 1899 in Bucharest without indication of the author and the publisher.\(^{40}\) Sami’s authorship of this book has usually been rejected in Turkey but was never disputed in Albania or elsewhere in Europe a topic that deserves, and has received, a separate treatment.\(^{41}\) The book’s canonization had already begun in the first years after it was published.\(^{42}\) Indeed, the main work by Sami used in the construction of his mythologized image in Albania had always been and still is this book, because it has always been seen as (one of) the first “manifesto”(s) of Albanian political nationalism foreseeing an Albanian state.

2. VISIONS OF ALBANIAN AND TURKISH IDENTITIES

One of the most important characteristics of Sami’s *Shqipëria*\(^{43}\) is the (re)production of the “myths of the ethnogenesis and antiquity” of the Albanians. Before discussing these myths, it must be reminded that “[e]very ethnic collectivity will have one or possibly more than one *myth of ethnogenesis and

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38 Kushner (1977), pp. 8–9.
39 Below, it will be referred to this text in short as “the preface.”
40 Sami (1899a).
41 My own delving into this issue led me to the conclusion that Sami was the author of the book, the first edition of which was published by the Albanian association *Shoqëria Dituria* [Society of Knowledge] in Bucharest in 1899; Bilmez (2006b), pp. 45–87; Bilmez (2004b), pp. 79–110; Bilmez (2005), pp. 97–145.
42 For praise of the book and a long quotation in the Albanian press of that time, see *Drita*, no. 1, November 1/14, 1901, p. 1.
43 Sami (1899a).
antiquity."

Typically these myths have been used by the nation-constructing intellectuals to prove superiority over all other ethnic groups in a given territory and/or the primordial rights of that ethnic group against the claims of neighboring countries. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that “the myth of origin, or ethnogenesis, was of special importance for Albanian nationalist writers.”

In its first section entitled “Pelasgians” it is bluntly maintained that the Albanians are the oldest people of Europe and direct descendants of the Pelasgians. It opens with the following statement:

Albania consists of every land (vendi) where Albanians live. The Albanians are one of the oldest people [nations] (kombeve) of Europe. They came from Central Asia to the European continent before all others [...]

The aim of this claim, being one of the core elements in the Albanian 19th-century nationalist discourse, seems obvious: to declare the Albanians as the real and only “owners” of the territories they inhabited by proving their greater antiquity. Here was an intellectual, himself later on mythologized, acting as a myth-maker and propagator of modern myths. As was common in his time, Sami dealt with the earliest history of the Balkans selectively replicating contemporary theories based on very little information and arbitrary speculations. Sami lists all the names of the ancient peoples in the Balkans commonly mentioned at that time: Illyrians, Epirotes, Macedonians and Thracians all of them as off-shoot tribes (fis) of the primeval Pelasgians. He also ventured into the etymology of the names of the Balkan ancient peoples to show that they were ethnically Albanian.

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44 Schöpflin (1997), p. 34.
46 Sami (1899a), pp. 3–6.
47 Sami (1899a), p. 3. In his encyclopaedia entry “Albania” Sami describes the territories of the geographical entity in details; Sami (1889a), p. 149.
48 Anthony Smith argues that “[m]yths of origins, whether of the genealogical or the territorial-political kind, are usually regarded by members and by many analysts as key elements in the definition of ethnic communities. Not only have they often played a vital role in differentiating and separating particular ethnies from close neighbours and/or competitors; it is in such myths that ethnies locate their founding charter and raison d’être.” Smith (2003), p. 173.
49 Sami (1899a), p. 5.
50 For such “etymology games” in Albanology and by Albanian intellectuals, see Malcolm (2002), passim, esp. p. 78.
The second (and rather short) section of the first part of the book was devoted to the Illyrians and the Epirotes. It should be noted that the idea of an uninterrupted direct link between the Illyrians and the modern Albanians, a theory (or myth) of the 20th century which has overshadowed the Pelasgian one, was not explicitly displayed here. However, an implicit connection between the Illyrians and the Albanians was hinted at, since the Illyrians were believed to have constituted one of the Pelasgian tribes, who were, as claimed by Sami in the previous chapter of the book, ancestors of contemporary Albanians. Furthermore, it was stated that:

according to the ancient Greek historians and authors the Illyrians and the Epirotes spoke the same language and had the same customs and traditions. From their language and customs stemmed later on those of today's Albanians.\(^{51}\)

While studying the changes, additions and deductions in the later editions and translations of Sami’s texts in Turkey and Albania, one can observe a kind of shift in the national discourses in the long term. An indicative example is the “editor’s footnote” to a recent Albanian edition of *Shqipëria* in which it was claimed that the Pelasgian-theory which used to be dominant at that time, was later proved to be wrong.\(^{52}\) Indeed, there had been many conflicting and intersecting “theories of Albanian origins” among the European scholars since the 18th century and the Pelasgian theory did not exclude or reject the Illyrian one. Sami also defends in his book the Illyrian theory as a part of the Pelasgian one, which, for Sami, is the clearest proof of the autochthony of the Albanians in the region because the Pelasgians were supposed to be the earliest inhabitants of that region. What might be seen as a “shift” in the relevant discourse after Sami is rather the shift of emphasis towards the Illyrian theory, which has never meant a clear rejection of the Pelasgian theory. Neither was this shift straightforward; there have always been people still emphasizing the Pelasgian origins.\(^{53}\)

\(^{51}\) Sami (1899a), p. 7. For a comparison with the ancestor issue in *fin-de-siècle* Bulgaria in the framework of the identity problematique, see Stefan Detchev’s contribution to this collective volume.


\(^{53}\) It is remarkable to observe that the myths of ethnogenesis and “military valour and resistance” were among the few values remained dominant during the intellectual and political
Sami’s *Hafta* article, on the other hand, starts with the question about the proper name of “our [Turkish] language” and its origin:

We do not think the term “Ottoman language” is quite correct, because this term is used only as the title of the State derived from the name of the family of the well known conqueror, the first of the Sultans who founded this state. Yet, the language (*lisan*) and nationality/ethnicity (*cinsiyet*) are older than the birth of the mentioned person and the formation of this state. The name of the people (*kavim*) who speak this language is really “Turks” (*Türk*) and the name of the language they speak is Turkish language (*lisan-ı Türki*). This name, which is seen as a derogatory term by ignorant people and used by some for the peasants of Anatolia, is the name of a great community (*ümmet*) which should be proud to be called so.54

Bearing in mind the pejorative use of the term “Turk,” which in the late Ottoman Empire was not used by any ethnic group as an endonym, these sentences can be and are read as an appeal for national consciousness among the Turkish-speaking people, for whom this kind of self-perception was new.55 Apart from the important fact that Sami obviously includes himself into this group (nation), it is interesting to see the reference to the “roots” of the Turks before the formation of the Ottoman Empire.

In this article Sami describes what Ottoman means: all people living as subjects of the Ottoman state are called Ottoman (*Osmanlı*). This definition, which can also be found in Article 8 of the first Ottoman constitution of 1876,56 was repeated in Sami’s Turkish dictionary, *Kamus-ı Turki*, where it is added that an Ottoman is “a person who belongs to the Ottoman people and race” (*kavim ve cins*).57 For Sami, the term “Turk,” on the other hand, is the name of the great community, only a fraction of which is the subject of the Ottoman state:

The relationship between Ottoman and Turk is similar to the one between Austrian and German: Austrian is used for all people who are subjects of

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54 Sami (1881).
57 Sami (1900a), p. 927.
the Austrian State, the Germans of Austria being the dominant community among them. German [on the other hand] is used for all members of this big community, in Austria and in Prussia and Germany, as well as in Switzerland, Russia and elsewhere. Similarly, also members of all the peoples subject to the Ottoman dynasty are called Ottomans, whereas Turk is the name of a great community extending from the shores of the Adriatic to the borders of China and interior of Siberia.58

In an entry on “Turks” in his six-volume encyclopaedia published in 1891, where it is stated that the Turks were a great and eminent people (ümmem) belonging to the Mongolian race (ırk) of the Turanian people (ümmem-i Turaniye), Sami had already presented these arguments at length by referring to European scholars.59 Similar information and arguments were repeated in the entries on “Turan”60 and especially “Turaniye” in the same encyclopaedia, where, referring to European linguistics, different languages of the Turanian people were listed in a table. Being themselves of Turanian extraction, the Turkic group (Türk zümrəsi), the most populous people inhabiting the territories from Inner Asia to the Adriatic, are said to speak languages with only trivial differences. All these languages could be called Turkish.61 Ten years later, Sami repeated this argument in an entry on “Turks” in his Turkish dictionary where “Turkishness” (Türklük) is described as of “Turkish race/lineage” (Türk cinsiyeti).62

People should not feel insulted by being called Turks, Sami taught, but, on the contrary, feel proud carrying this name, because “our language,” which had already existed for a long time by the time of the formation of the Ottoman state, is shared by lots of people in Asia outside the territories of the Empire as well. The language spoken by those people and “our language” are, according to Sami, two major branches of the same extraction.63 Sami’s attempts to make the Turkish speaking people feel proud of calling themselves Turks can also be seen in his article published in 1897, where he praised the Turks as “an indeed very brave and warrior people.” He states that their language might include some rather unrefined characteristics, but that it should

58 Sami (1881).
59 Sami (1891a), pp. 1639–1642.
60 Sami (1891b), p. 1682.
61 Sami (1891c), pp. 1683–1685.
62 Sami (1900a), p. 399.
63 Sami (1881).
not be forgotten that old (Eastern) Turkish [the language spoken by the Turkic people in Asia as oppose to the one spoken by the “Western Turks” living in the Ottoman Empire] was a very developed language with a written tradition even before Islam. Furthermore, he claimed that it would not be an exaggeration to see Turkish as the most beautiful language in the world.64

After discussing the brotherhood of all Turkish-speaking people in his Hafta article65 Sami dealt with the issue of the Turkish ancestors: when “our ancestors” (ecdadınız) came from inner Asia, they did not bring their literature and the grammar of their language, but gradually invented and developed new literatures or grammars several times in history. When he talks about the Turkic people in Asia, whom he calls “Eastern Turks” (Şark Türkleri), Sami uses the term hem-cinsler, meaning “of the same ethnic group (nationality).” He includes himself among the “Western Turks” living in the Ottoman Empire through constant use of the pronouns “we” and “our”:

As I see it, since the language of the Turks in those distant regions is one with ours, it is perfectly proper to give them the common name of “Turkish language” and in cases where it is desirable for difference between them to be observed, to call theirs Eastern Turkish [Türki-şiarki] and ours Western Turkish [Türki-i garbi].66

The rest of the article is devoted mainly to the modernization of this Turkish language.

The problematic use of the terms cins/cinsiyet, ümmet, kavim, millet, halk, anasır, zümre, etc. [race, stock, nation, people, religious group, etc.] by Sami in his Turkish writings deserves a separate discussion in terms of both conceptual history and conceptual-historical analysis of the discursive construction of the Albanian and the Turkish nations. However, these terms were used by Sami without clear definitions and distinctions. Though part of the European race paradigm, the discourse in Sami’s writings is not really an “accommodation and appropriation of the racist discourses and established racial hierarchies in Western Europe” as in the case of the Bulgarian discourse about

64 Sami (1897).

65 For a similar “belief in the naturalistic determinism of language as the most profound expression of national spirit,” by one of the first Yugoslav intellectuals, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj (1833–1904), which “clashed with parallel identification strategies based on confessional and historical allegiances,” see Bojan Aleksov’s contribution to this collective volume.

66 Sami (1881).
“race,” and “descent.” It was rather in later years, following the emergence of “political nationalism” among Muslim intellectuals, that the ambiguity started to decrease and the idea of “racial difference” in an ethnically based sense gradually gained more importance in Turkish nationalism. Indeed, “in the political rather than the scientific sphere, what is normally meant by ‘racial’ difference is a general sense of the ‘alienness’ or ‘otherness’ of communities or individuals that come from radically different cultures and religions, or whose appearance in terms of skin-colour or even costume is manifestly different.”

The pronouns “we,” “our,” etc. used in the definition of different collective identities. What makes Sami’s case remarkable is that at many places in his Albanian book he uses the term “we” meaning the Albanians. If one considers that the Albanian intellectuals of that time defined Albanianess through, inter alia, not being Turkish, Sami’s case becomes even more striking: these two “we”s fused in one “author” were actually conflicting with and, at least in view of the definition of Albanianess, excluded each other.

In the last paragraph of his Turkish article, Sami hints at the “political” dimension of his Turkish nationalist ideas by claiming that through the unification of a reformed/standardized Turkish language, there will emerge a unified great Turkish people/nation (Türk ümmeti), with a population of 20 million, in the place of the present Western Turks that were “not more than eight to ten millions.” Such remarks were understood by a contemporary Turkish scholar, Şecattin Tural, as a sign of Sami’s Turkish “political nationalism.” Tural’s view differs from that of most Turkish scholars who rather tend to see Sami as a “cultural Turkist”: “Shemseddin Sami’s claim that the unification of the eastern and western Turkish languages would also create the basis for political unification is very important because it shows his contribution to the idea of Turkism. The entries ‘Turk’ and ‘Turan’ in his universal Encyclopaedia (Kamus-ul Alam) show also that geographically he does not regard ‘Turkishness’ as consisting of only the Ottoman lands.”

Sami did not mention any state-like organization or other political entity of this Turkish-speaking people (such as nation), and it is not clear what kind of

67 Cf. Stefan Detchev’s contribution in this collective volume on the “instrumentalisation of the concept of “race” in the public sphere as well as supposedly scientific discourse” in fin-de-siècle Bulgaria.
69 Sami (1899a), passim.
70 Sami (1881).
71 Tural (1999), p. 28.
unity he foresaw. But it is obvious that his revolutionary, groundbreaking formulations could be seen as first steps in the process of the “emergence of linguistic nationalism” among the Turkish-speaking people, which evidently contain characteristics of cultural Pan-Turkism. What is striking here is that they were written by a native Albanian speaker using similar rhetoric to contribute simultaneously to the emergence of an Albanian nation to which he also felt loyal.

The paradox gets highlighted when we come across a similar argument on Turkish language in a text published just a few months after the publication of Shqipëria and almost 20 years after his article. In the preface to Kamus-i Türki, Sami reiterated his theory of “one Turkish language with two (Eastern and Western) branches” and used again the self-ascribing “we” and “our” when talking about the Turkish-speaking people and the Turkish language. He also explained once again why this language should not be called Ottoman, but Turkish. This, together with the fact that the dictionary was published as a “Turkish Dictionary,” can be taken as an indication of a Turkish (cultural) nationalism. Equally remarkable is the following assertion in his Turkish article: “we have had a written and literary language for a thousand years.”

Here, as in the Albanian case, the antiquity of the people was claimed to ensue from the antiquity of the language. Of course in the Turkish case it was clear that the Turks were not autochthones to the Ottoman homeland, that is, Anatolia. It is therefore worth noting that the question of who were the “autochthones of Anatolia” was totally elided by Sami.

Regarding Sami’s Turkish writings, it is worth emphasizing that there is no shift in the discourse in his different texts written at different times, although they were published almost two decades apart. Indeed, there was rather a gradual, albeit slow shift in the dominant paradigm in the Ottoman Empire between the time of the publication of his article and of his preface discussed above, and this was indicated by Sami himself in a press article published in 1898. At the end of his article about one Turkish language consisting of two main branches and several dialects and about the determining role it should play in the construction of one collective identity among its speakers, Sami reminded his readers that he had expressed this opinion 20 years earlier in the article published in Haftia (and discussed in this paper above) and had been attacked by many who claimed that “we” (the Ottomans) had no connection with eastern Turks or with Turks in general. Those Ottoman Turkish intellec-

72 Sami (1881).
tuals had claimed to be Arabs. Fortunately, since then, public opinion had changed quite profoundly and today, he argued, there were scholars in the Ottoman Empire specializing in the Eastern Turkish languages, the very name of which intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire had previously not wanted to hear.

3. AMBIGUITY OF NATIONALISM’S CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS: RELIGION, LANGUAGE, AND HISTORICAL HEROES

The modern projects of “collective identities” were largely based on the concept of “the people” as a new source of power. This new attitude was a direct component of the modernization process, which made the already complicated structure of overlapping “traditional” collective identities even more complex. By inserting the modern(ist) projects in this structure it generated an era of competing visions of conflicting and cross-cutting collective identities. Different ethnically based national projects were competing not only with the non-ethnic ones (like Ottomanism, Pan-Orthodoxy, Pan-Slavism, [Pan-]Islamism and/or any kind of federalism in the Balkans), but also and sometimes more radically with other ethnically based projects, especially when they were aimed at “the people” of the same traditional (usually religious) “we-group.” This is quite understandable as long as the intellectuals, who were responsible for the construction of the “nation” by redefining the traditional values and inventing totally new ones, used to verify the very existence of this nation by detaching it from another “we-group” that usually overlapped with or included it.

Sami’s desperate effort, much as that of the bulk of modern(ist) Albanian intellectuals of his time, to prove that religion did not and should not play any role in (the construction of) Albanian national identity, can be understood in this sense. Islam or Orthodoxy as umbrellas of traditional (pre-modern) “we-groups” posed a threat to Sami’s projects of constructing allegedly very old, but actually new “we-groups,” that were to become an “Albanian nation” or a

73 Sami (1898b).
74 Sami (1899a), pp. 28 and 35–36.
“Turkish nation.” The same can be said about the tension between “Ottomanism” and Albanian nationalism in the 19th century. However, what is striking in the case of Sami is that in his different writings he also showed, to a varying degree, devotion to both the supra-national identities like Ottoman and (more indirectly) Muslim ones, while actively participating in the construction of new ethnically based identities. First, in the construction of the Albanian national identity not only discursively but also through political engagement; and, during his later years, in the emergence of Turkish nationalism through a novel and sometimes original way of representing the Turkish language and history as constituting a “nation” of Turkish-speaking people.

While persistently underestimating the role of religion in the Albanian case and making indirect references to the pre-Islamic history of the “Turks,” Sami overemphasized the cohesive role of language for the Albanians and the Turks. In the case of Albanians, the claim of antiquity was, as we saw above, based on linguistic facts:

Albanians speak one of the oldest and most beautiful languages of the world. The languages contemporary to, or sisters of the Albanian language, became extinct a thousand years ago, leaving but fragments behind. Albanian is contemporary to Ancient Greek, Latin, Sanskrit (the language of Ancient India, as well as the language of Ancient Persia), Celtic, Ancient German, etc. […] A lot of [the above-mentioned languages] have not been spoken for thousands of years and have no life outside old books. They are called “dead languages,” while our native Albanian, though just as ancient as them, is alive and spoken nowadays as it used to be in the time of Pelasgians, who were Albanians just like us but disappeared since they forgot their language. The current inhabitants of the country called Albania today, however, retained their language very well and kept the old language of legendary Pelasgians spoken to the present. [Italics added]

75 While ignoring the decisive role of religion in the construction of traditional collective identities of that time, Sami was sharing the common attitude of Muslim intellectuals, except Faik Konitza, who was one of the few Albanian intellectuals initiating anticlerical propaganda (cf. Artan Puto’s contribution to this volume). Anticlericalism similar to that of Jovan Jovanić Zmaj in 19th-century Serbia (cf. Bojan Aleksov’s paper in this volume) became a component of the nation-building discourse in Albania in the 20th century.

76 For “Ottomanism” and “Macedonian nationalism” as projects of supra-national collective identities, see Alexander Vezenkov’s and Tchavdar Marinov’s contributions to this volume.

77 Sami (1899a), pp. 15–16.
This emphasis on language as the main component of Albanian national identity is one of the main characteristics of Sami’s thesis.\textsuperscript{78} This is most explicit in the following lines:

The sign of nationality is language; every nation has got its own language. A nation that forgets its language or gives up the mother tongue to make use of another language consequently loses its genuine nationality and becomes the part of the nation whose language it uses.\textsuperscript{79}

For him linguistic unity should ensure the cohesiveness of the modern identity of the Albanians who were divided in different geo-political (Geg and Tosk) and confessional (Orthodox, Catholic, Bektashi and Sunni Muslim) groups. These undeniably dominant traditional collective identities and therefore the segmentation among the allegedly existing Albanian “nation” could be fought only by emphasizing linguistic unity, whereas the importance of the difference in dialect and their role in the formation of different traditional “we-groups” were neglected or openly rejected.

The ambiguity of Sami’s attitude towards religion (Islam) and languages (Turkish and Albanian) can be better understood if one looks at his other works in Turkish, where we can find moderate Pan-Islamist tendencies.\textsuperscript{80} This would take another study. However, the book contains other aspects worth mentioning here. The contradictory treatment of religion is especially apparent in Sami’s treatment of the historical figure of Skenderbeg. Having saved Christian Europe from the “infidel” Ottomans through his longstanding resistance against the Islamization/Ottomanization of Albania in the 15th century, Skenderbeg was “mythologized by the Catholic church as a ‘Champion of Christianity’.\textsuperscript{71} Sami did not hesitate to declare him as “the only real Albanian national hero.”\textsuperscript{72} Considering the fact that Sami was a Muslim dedicated to Islam, which he used to praise in his other writings, this paradoxical attitude becomes more interesting. In his encyclopaedia, however, in the entry on

\textsuperscript{78} Sami (1899a), pp. 9–10, 17–19, 36–37, 46–49. For a similar attitude of another Albanian intellectual of that time, Faik Konitza, see Artan Puto’s contribution in this collective volume.

\textsuperscript{79} Sami (1899a), p. 17.

\textsuperscript{80} Sami (1879f) and Ş. Sami (1885a).

\textsuperscript{81} Lubonja (2002), p. 92.

\textsuperscript{82} Sami (1899a), pp. 11–13.
Skenderbeg, Sami had avoided the kind of praise characteristic of his Albanian book.\footnote{Sami (1890c), pp. 927–928.}

The paradoxical representation of the Ottoman Empire in Sami’s book starts in this chapter on Skenderbeg, but becomes most explicit in the next chapter on the period of Ottoman rule: Sami contributes to the mythologization of Skenderbeg as a national military leader who resisted the Ottoman invasion. However, he does not complain about Ottoman rule before the Tanzimat (the reform movement from above in the Ottoman Empire after 1839). He even indirectly praises the pre-Tanzimat period of Ottoman rule and highlights especially the role of the Albanians in the Imperial administration.\footnote{Sami (1899a), pp. 13–15.}

In an entry on Albania in his six-volume encyclopaedia, where the country’s geographical and administrative structure was discussed, Sami admitted that Albania had never enjoyed an administrative unity since it fell to the Ottomans. Until the Tanzimat administrative reforms from the 1840s onwards, it had been partitioned into different provinces and now it was divided into four administrative provinces (vilayets): Ioannina, Monastir, Kosovo and Shkodra.\footnote{Sami (1889a), pp. 149–153.} In his Turkish dictionary, published 10 years later, Sami described Albania as “[t]he country inhabited by the Albanians [namely] the Western parts of Rumeli [the Balkan peninsula]; [comprising] the administrative districts (vilayets) of Kosovo, Shkodra, Monastir, Ioannina.”\footnote{Sami (1900a), p. 31.}

Yet another controversial issue is Sami’s attitude to Bektashism. Although Bektashism has been the fourth confession in Albania besides (Sunni) Islam, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism, in his book Sami does not count it as one of the confessions in Albania and names only the other three.\footnote{Bektashism is officially acknowledged as a fourth confession in today’s Albania besides (Sunni) Islam, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism.} However, he counts
the heterodox (mainly Bektashi/Alevi) "dervishes" as participants in religious councils in future in Albania. He also advertises Bektashism as in some ways exemplary for the Albanian nation in the sense of presenting a model for brotherhood and solidarity among its members.

All in all, Sami's brand of nationalism exhibits certain internal tensions. In all his writings Sami advocates a kind of ethnically based nationalism, highlighting mainly a common language and history. Although, as mentioned above, in some of his writing we can find certain moderate Pan-Islamist tendencies implicitly praising a supranational collective identity based on religion, he never gives up the idea of the modern ethnically based nation as the ideal collective identity in the modern world. In the case of Albania this is clearly declared in Shqipëria.

Generally speaking, we can say that an independent nation-state is the ultimate aspiration of any (political) nationalism. The Albanian "state" as foreseen by Sami, however, is not always described as an independent nation-state, but often rather as an autonomous country and a vassal of the Ottoman Empire.

In his Turkish writings, however, we do not encounter any explicit call for the creation of a political/administrative or geographical entity for the "Turks." The only forthright nationalist element in his Turkish texts is the emphasis on the common language connecting the "Turks" of the Ottoman Empire both among themselves and with the "Turks" living outside of the Empire. This perception of a collective ("Turkish") identity was not only a blow to the idea of "Ottomaness" (Osmanlılık) as an imperial collective identity (defined by the loyalty of the subjects/citizens to the state/dynasty), but also to the traditional Muslim perceptions of the "common past" as starting with Islam or, alternatively, with the foundation of the Ottoman state.

Sami must have been aware that any supra-national project of an imperial (Ottoman) or religious (Muslim) collective identity would, by definition, be rivalling his ethnically based ones, both "Turkish" and "Albanian." He tried to

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88 Sami (1899a), pp. 81–83.
89 Sami (1899a), p. 91.
90 One can also interpret his moderate Islamist tendencies as an attempt towards using religion as a component of the nation. According to Kedourie, "[i]n nationalist doctrine, language, race, culture, and sometimes even religion, constitute different aspects of the same primordial entity. The theory admits here of no great precision, and it is misplaced ingenuity to try and classify nationalisms according to the particular aspect which they choose to emphasize." (Kedourie (1996), p. 67).
prove the superiority of the ethnic elements (language, common past, etc.) over both the supra-national (imperial, religious) and the sub-national (e.g., tribal) ones. Religion in particular, as the hitherto dominant element in traditional definitions of collective identity, took an important place in his (and other Albanian nationalistic intellectuals’) writings on the Albanian case.

4. INTELLECTUAL SOURCES

Besides explicit signs of influence of 19th-century Albanology on Sami’s texts, which can be observed through direct references, we can also see their implicit impact on his book, where he reflects on the common “Albanological” knowledge at that time. Terms and techniques developed in the European tradition of these studies were borrowed by Albanian intellectuals of that time, Sami being one of the most important among them, and used in the discursive construction of national identity. Numerous facts and myths in Sami’s book were borrowed from this same tradition. This can be best observed where he dwells on “the antiquity of the Albanian people and their language.” The myth of antiquity, serving the creation of a national pride among the Albanians, was based on the novel information found in the works of European scholars. Although there were different theories competing with each other during the 19th century, Sami was certainly devoted to the Pelasgian theory which also encompassed the Illyrian one.91

Indeed, Sami was only repeating in his Albanian book the information and arguments that he had already expressed 10 years earlier in three separate entries in his encyclopaedia on the Pelasgians, Illyrians and Albanians.92 One can also find similar information in his entry on the Arians in the same encyclopaedia, where the old languages Illyrian, Macedonian, Thracian and Phrygian were listed under the branch of Pelasgian in a table of the Arian languages.93 In his monolingual Turkish dictionary published in 1900, Sami described “Albanianness” (Arnavutluk) as “Albanian race/lineage [cinsiyet] and membership in this race/lineage” without mentioning the Pelasgians as the supposed ancestors.94


92 Sami (1890a), 1528; Sami (1890b), pp. 1161–1162 and Sami (1889b), pp. 143–148.

93 Sami (1889c), pp. 164–167.

Characteristic of Sami’s book is the amalgamation of different discourses, or “interdiscursivity.” As an interesting case, one can discuss the fusion of the modernist paradigm observed especially in the last part of the book, where Sami painted a modern(ist) picture of the future Albanian society and state, on the one hand, and his Romantic attitude throughout the same book, on the other. He underlined the positive effects of the centuries-long isolated life of Albanians, away from civilization, in the “barbarian times”:

How did it happen that Albanians were able to preserve their language during all these barbarian times? How was it possible that the Albanian language survived without changes or damages despite the lack of letters, writing and schools, while other languages written and used with great care have changed and deteriorated so much that they are now known as other languages? The answer to all these questions is very simple: Albanians preserved their language and their nationality not because they had letters, or knowledge, or civilization, but because they had freedom, because they always stood apart and didn’t mix with other people or let foreigners live among them. This isolation from the world, from knowledge, civilization and trade, in one word this savage mountain life allowed the Albanians to preserve their language and nationality.95

This Romantic picture of isolated “barbarian” life might remind us of Rousseau’s idea of the “noble savage,” which is also displayed, though implicitly, when Sami expressed, at several places in the book, his admiration for the Albanians as brave warriors. Nevertheless, Sami’s ultimate goal was the modernisation of Albania, which logically meant elimination of all those pre-modern values and institutions: the last and longest part of his Albanian book is devoted to concrete suggestions for a modern Albania.96 It is noteworthy, furthermore, to remember that the Ottoman government at that time had actually been attempting modernization of the empire, including Albania. It is not astonishing to see this ambivalence in other regions of the world as well. Writing on India during the British colonial period, Rumuna Sethi states that

95 Sami (1899a), pp. 17–18.
96 Sami (1899a), pp. 52–89. As discussed in Artan Puto’s contribution in this collective volume, another prominent figure of that time, Faik Konitza, was also “an actor and propagator of a ‘national project’ for Albanians, or to put it differently, of a modernizing process...”
[...] the writing of indigenous history has spread to take two self-contradictory courses: configuration within the orientalist constellation by an emphasis on the ancient past, and urge to break away from that very past. [...] The ambivalence is seen in the abandonment of ancestral culture for a more advanced standard and the demand that the ancient be retained as a mark of identity. Both the reliance on antiquity and the affirmation of modernity persistently held the emerging nation-state within the orbit of Orientalism, representing what Partha Chatterjee calls the “liberal-rationalist dilemma” of nationalist thought.  

The direct influence of Turkology studies on Sami’s Turkish texts studied here is not that clear, as there is no direct reference to any “source.” It can be stated, however, that Sami was transmitting the common knowledge and ideas of European Turkology of his time (as a component of Orientalism) when discussing the Turkish language and its (potential) role in the definition of a Turkish nation and the brotherhood of all Turkic peoples. The decisive role of western Turkology (which wrought a “paradigm shift” in the minds of many Ottoman Muslim intellectuals) has also been acknowledged with gratitude by the “founders” of Turkish nationalism themselves.

It must be underlined that Sami’s role as at times a direct, and at other times an indirect, “importer” of ethnocentric knowledge and ideas from the West was more revolutionary in the Turkish case than in the Albanian one. For, in the period in which Sami and his contemporaries were constructing the Turkish cultural nationalism, Albanian nationalism was already at a more advanced stage. It is difficult to speak of a political Turkish nationalism not only in the period analyzed here but until Sami’s death in 1904. However, it is remarkable to see Sami in close relationship with Turkish intellectuals, some of whom would also become leaders of political Turkish nationalism: Veled Çelebi [İzbudak] (1869–1950) and Necip Asım. Sami had friendly relations with the publisher and the writers of the journal İkdam, published with the subtitle “Turkish Newspaper,” which had an important place in the spread of cultural Turkism and the promotion of the idea of nationalism in Turkey.

Finally and more importantly, it is this consistent nationalistic discourse inherent in Sami’s writings that has kept them in the public eye through different periods and regimes in Albania and Turkey. It is to this peculiar contri-

bution to two incompatible nation-building processes—a paradox, if viewed within the framework of the modern nationality paradigm—that we shall turn in the concluding section.

CONCLUSION: AMBIGUITY AS NORMALITY

To be able to understand the (apparently) paradoxical case of Sami contributing to both Turkish and Albanian nationalisms, we must situate his thoughts in a broader context, which has been conventionally described as Westernization, Europeanization, or modernization. There were concurrently various alternative projects for collective identities in the Ottoman Empire based on political, social, linguistic or religious elements. Some of these projects were in strong opposition. It was the all-encompassing “master project” of modernization that offered a framework within which it became consistent to support simultaneously different sub-projects for collective identities that were both overlapping and conflicting with each other. It was this wide-ranging master project that rendered all other projects for collective identities only “instruments” in the march towards the ultimate target of “civilization.” Seeking the attainment of that all-encompassing goal of “modernization” above everything else, Sami was, first of all, a modernist, who regarded as instrumental other (minor) projects pursuing the construction of a modern collective identity within a modern (civilized) society. This identity could be either ethno-national or religious (Islamic) or imperial (Ottomanism). The last two might seem to be a continuation of the traditional (and vague) collective identities; they were, however, thought as modern identities constructed through re-interpretation and/or re-formation of traditional cohesive elements. Ethno-national identity (i.e., “nation”), on the other hand, was the ideal modern collective identity built thorough the use of newly-discovered or invented cohesive elements like common language, myth of common descent, etc. without refusing the opportunistic use of religious and imperial colours as well. According to many modernist intellectuals like Sami, the modern “nation” was the most developed (civilized) form of human society, a “national identity” was the ideal collective identity, and the “nation state” was the ideal political, economic and cultural framework for it.

There is a clear consistency, in this broader context, in Sami’s contribution to the discursive construction of modern national identities both for the “Turks” and for the “Albanians.” He attempted to accomplish this by bestowing on language itself a new role and meaning and by developing a new lan-
language (through ethnocentric re-interpretations of old words, invention of new ones, linguistic reform, etc.). Here was an indication of the discovery of the people and its power by a liberal populist intellectual. A very good example is Sami’s advocacy for the rapprochement (tekarub) between the written Ottoman-Turkish language and the language of the ordinary people (avam).\textsuperscript{99} Similarly, the then Ottoman Turkish literary tradition, which Sami saw as undeveloped and distorted (pek geri ve yanılsı bir yola sapmış) by diverging from the popular Turkish literature,\textsuperscript{100} could be improved by the rediscovery of folk literature, as the young nationalist poet M. E. Yurdakul (1869–1944) did in his pathbreaking poetry book, \textit{Türkçe Şiirler} (1899).\textsuperscript{101} As a reaction to the traditional Ottoman Turkish poetry that was a component of high culture not intelligible to ordinary people, this book consisted of poems in everyday Turkish of everyday people and was therefore accepted by the Turkish historiography as one of the initial manifests of explicit Turkism in literature. This pathbreaking project was praised by Sami in a letter to Yurdakul,\textsuperscript{102} because, for “national development,” such efforts were very desirable: “The expression of the national sentiment and opinion: This is poetry, this is literature!”\textsuperscript{103} Yurdakul’s attitude and Sami’s praise for it are clear instances of the “romantic passion for the folkloric rediscovery of the ‘people’.”\textsuperscript{104}

A problem arises rather within the paradigm of nationalism, according to which every individual is supposed to have one national identity only. As has been clearly shown in recent studies on nationalism, a national identity is usually defined through the use of cohesive elements (invented values and traditional ones that have been attributed a new meaning and importance). In addition, it is important for the adherent of nationalist doctrine to avoid being confused with “the others,” who are sometimes very artificially separated from the targeted group. As “not being Turkish” was one such determinant for “being Albanian” in the case of Albanian nationalism, it is paradoxical in the framework of the paradigm of nationalism to support, and even, to contribute to both nationalisms. It is important to realize that Sami was not an intellec-

\textsuperscript{99} Sami (1898a).
\textsuperscript{100} Sami (1897).
\textsuperscript{101} Mehmet Emin (1898).
\textsuperscript{102} This letter was published as a “preface” in Yurdakul’s poetry book, and later re-published (in the modern Turkish alphabet) as an appendix to a Turkish monograph on Sami: Levend (1969), pp. 158–160.
\textsuperscript{103} Levend (1969), pp. 158–159.
\textsuperscript{104} Cf. Stefan Detchev’s contribution in this collective volume.
tual who opted for one national identity (and initiated the elaboration of a respective nationalism) at one time in his life and for another one in a next phase. Neither did he consider either of these two identities as a sub-identity of the other one. Although he called both Turkey and Albania his “country,” he never contemplated the question of his personal “homeland.” The unfamiliarity or strangeness of his views to us today may lie rather in modernity that sees multiple-national-identity as a paradox or abnormality. In “transition periods” such as the one in which Sami was active, an era of radical and rapid shift in mega-paradigms (“Westernization”), overlapping and conflicting collective identities were normal condition.

Sami confirms it, but under the special conditions of the late Ottoman Empire.

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105 For the contrasting attitude of Jovan Jovanović Zmaj (1833–1904), a Serbian nation-constructor from the south of Hungary, who “referred to Hungary as his dear homeland” and for whom “the Serbian language remained his symbolic homeland” cf. Bojan Aleksov’s contribution in this collective volume.


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