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Programmatic Formulations in the Press of Shkodra (1910–1920): Identity and Public Self-Positioning

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Abstract

This study examines programmatic formulations in periodicals published in Shkodra between 1910 and 1920, with particular attention to mottos, slogans, and editorial statements accompanying newspapers and journals of the period. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis, these formulations are treated not merely as decorative or identifying features, but as meaningful textual units through which periodicals articulated editorial orientations and constructed public identities. The corpus consists of selected Shkodra-based periodicals with political, social, cultural, and religious profiles published during the same period. The analysis demonstrates that programmatic formulations fulfilled multiple discursive functions, including the articulation of editorial mission, moral values, national rights, and political objectives related to self-governance and independence. The findings suggest that these formulations operated not only as identifiers of publications but also as condensed discursive expressions through which periodicals constructed institutional identities, legitimized ideological positions, and communicated forms of public self-representation in relation to the political and national concerns of the time. In this regard, the study contributes to a broader understanding of the Albanian press not only as a historical source, but also as a site for the production and circulation of political and cultural meaning. By foregrounding programmatic formulations as an object of discourse analytical inquiry, the study highlights their significance in illuminating the relationship between editorial identity, ideological positioning, and public communication in the Albanian press of the early twentieth century.

Keywords: press in Shkodra; programmatic formulations; critical discourse analysis; public self-positioning; political discourse.

1. Introduction

The development of the Albanian press during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was closely intertwined with the cultural, political, and social transformations associated with the Albanian National Renaissance and the gradual emergence of Albanian public life. Within this context, Shkodra occupied a particularly significant position as one of the most active centers of press culture, where a diverse range of editorial initiatives—cultural, educational, religious, and political—emerged. Numerous periodicals published under varying historical and institutional conditions contributed to the circulation of ideas and to the articulation of debates concerning national identity, education, culture, and the political orientations of the period. These developments were closely linked to the broader dynamics of the Albanian National Renaissance, in which autonomy was understood not only in political terms but also as cultural autonomy, encompassing the expansion of education in the Albanian language and the adoption of the Latin alphabet. Within this framework, language, schooling, and cultural development were regarded as foundational components of national identity and political organization, while cultural and political awareness was considered a necessary condition for national development (Thëngjilli, 2020, pp. 370–379). Albanian press historiography has made a substantial contribution to the documentation and study of Albanian periodicals. In this respect, Daka's bibliographic work (1971, pp. 189–226) remains an important reference for the identification and systematization of early Albanian press publications. Subsequently, the studies of Boriçi (1997), Boriçi and Marku (2010), and Zelka (2001) contributed to reconstructing the editorial history of the press and to highlighting the role of periodicals in the development of written culture and Albanian public life. Collectively, these works have not only documented periodical publications but also illuminated the broader communicative and socio-political functions of the press within its historical context. The period 1910–1920, which constitutes the focus of this study, coincided with decisive political developments in Albania concerning autonomy, state formation, territorial borders, and institutional consolidation following the declaration of independence and the decisions of the London Conference. These developments unfolded amid persistent political tensions and ongoing efforts to safeguard territorial integrity and strengthen the Albanian state (Duka, 2007, pp. 30–33). A particularly important moment was the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920), during which competing political visions regarding the future of Albania were articulated. While segments of the political elite and press advocated for full and unconditional independence, other groups viewed the consolidation of the Albanian state as requiring the protection of a major international power as a safeguard against both internal instability and external threats. In this context, the periodical press functioned not merely as an informational medium but also as a space for the articulation of political, cultural, and national orientations. Despite their visibility and rhetorical prominence, programmatic formulations such as mottos, slogans, and introductory editorial statements have generally been treated in press historiography as descriptive elements used to characterize publications or indicate general editorial

orientation, rather than as an independent object of scholarly inquiry. As a result, their role in articulating editorial identity, constructing institutional self-representation, and shaping public positioning remains insufficiently explored. Although typically positioned prominently and formulated in concise and rhetorically condensed forms, these elements do not function solely as identifying markers of newspapers and journals; rather, they can also be understood as textual units through which periodicals expressed values, priorities, and conceptions of their editorial mission. Drawing on discourse-analytic approaches, this study conceptualizes programmatic formulations not as decorative or merely paratextual features, but as condensed expressions of editorial ideology and public self-positioning. In this regard, Fairclough's conception of discourse as social practice and van Dijk's theory of discourse-ideology relations provide a suitable analytical framework for examining how such formulations produce meaning and contribute to the construction of editorial identities. Within this theoretical framework, the article analyzes programmatic formulations in selected periodicals published in Shkodra between 1910 and 1920, with the aim of examining how newspapers and journals articulated editorial orientations, constructed institutional identities, and positioned themselves in relation to the key political and social issues of their time.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which conceptualizes discourse not merely as a linguistic structure but as a form of social practice implicated in the production of meaning and the articulation of ideological orientations. From this perspective, discourse is not a neutral reflection of social reality; rather, it is a medium through which meanings, values, and social positions are actively constructed, negotiated, and communicated. Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 55) define discourse as a form of social practice, emphasizing a dialectical relationship between discursive events and the social contexts in which they occur. Discursive events are shaped by social institutions and structures, while simultaneously contributing to their reproduction or transformation. This understanding enables programmatic formulations to be analyzed not simply as identifying features of periodicals, but as textual units embedded within specific historical, editorial, and social conditions of production. In a similar vein, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue that discursive practices are systematically connected to social processes, which are themselves partially or wholly realized through semiotic and linguistic forms. This perspective allows programmatic formulations to be interpreted as integral components of press practices through which editorial priorities, ideological orientations, and forms of institutional self-representation are articulated. The ideological dimension of discourse is further elaborated in Fairclough's conception of ideology as representations of aspects of the world that contribute to the establishment, maintenance, or transformation of relations of power and domination (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). Similarly, van Dijk (1998) conceptualizes ideology as the foundation of social representations, emphasizing its role in the organization and reproduction of collective meanings. From this standpoint,

ideology is understood not only as a system of beliefs, but also as a cognitive and social mechanism through which groups construct interpretations of reality and position themselves within it.

Within the present study, programmatic formulations are therefore treated as discursive units through which periodicals articulate editorial orientations, construct institutional identities, and position themselves in relation to the key social and political issues of their time. Accordingly, CDA provides a suitable analytical framework for examining not only the textual content of these formulations, but also their broader discursive function in shaping the relationship between the press, ideology, and the surrounding social context.

3. Methodology and Corpus

This study draws on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) both as a theoretical framework and as a methodological approach for examining programmatic formulations in the press of Shkodra between 1910 and 1920. In this regard, the analysis extends beyond the description of textual content to explore how these formulations articulated editorial orientations, constructed institutional identities, and produced forms of public self-positioning in relation to the historical and social context of the period. In this study, the term "programmatic formulations" is used as an umbrella category encompassing mottos, slogans, editorial binomials, and programmatic statements placed in the introductory or otherwise prominent sections of periodicals. These elements are treated as condensed textual units, typically positioned on the front page or in other highly visible locations, through which newspapers and journals expressed their editorial mission, ideological orientation, and understanding of their public role.

The corpus consists of periodicals published in Shkodra between 1910 and 1920, selected on the basis of three main criteria: the presence of identifiable programmatic formulations, their prominent placement within the publication, and their relevance for discursive analysis in terms of editorial orientation. Although the press tradition in Shkodra dates back earlier, with the publication of the first newspaper in 1879, this study focuses on the period 1910–1920 due to the increased density of periodical production, the diversity of editorial profiles, and the intensity of political and national developments that characterized this decade. The corpus includes periodicals with diverse political, social, cultural, and religious orientations, namely *Koha-Bashkimi* (1910), *Taraboshi* (1913–1914), *Shqypnia e Re* (1913), *Hylli i Dritës* (1913–1914), *Populli* (1914–1915; 1919–1920), *Lidhja Kombëtare* (1915), *Koha e Re* (1919), and *Besa Shqyptare* (1920). The selection of these publications is based not only on their historical significance, but also on the presence of explicitly articulated programmatic formulations that are visibly positioned as expressions of editorial identity and orientation. The analysis is organized according to the discursive functions performed by these programmatic formulations, with the aim of identifying the ways in which periodicals articulated editorial missions, moral and ideological values, national orientations, and political positions. In this way, the study integrates a historiographical perspective on the Albanian press with a

discourse-analytic reading of periodical material, treating programmatic formulations as key sites through which relationships between the press, discourse, and broader social context are constructed and negotiated.

4. Programmatic Formulations in the Press of Shkodra

4.1 Mission and National Commitment

Koha-Bashkimi (1910), a political and social newspaper (from Issue No. 2 titled *Bashkimi*), was accompanied by the programmatic formulation: "Kujdeson punët komtare e t'Ditunís" ["It cares for national affairs and knowledge"] (*No. 1, 1 January 1910, p. 1*). Constructed around the binomial "national affairs" and "knowledge," this formulation articulates an editorial orientation that directly links the newspaper's activity to both the national cause and the dissemination of knowledge. In this context, knowledge is not presented solely as an educational or cultural value, but as part of a broader civic and nation-building project. Through this formulation, the newspaper positions itself not merely as an informational medium, but as an actor engaged in shaping national awareness and promoting societal progress. A comparable articulation, although grounded in a different cultural and philosophical framework, appears in *Hylli i Dritës* (1913–1914), a religious, cultural, philosophical, legal, literary, and social journal, which was introduced by the formulation: "Ubi Spiritus Domini, ibi libertas," meaning "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (*No. 1, 1 October 1913, p. 1*). Rooted in a biblical reference, the motto establishes a link between spiritual freedom, knowledge, and cultural formation. Although the journal addressed a wide range of themes, its editorial profile was closely associated with the binomial "for faith and fatherland," which characterized the cultural activity of the Albanian Franciscans. In this sense, the programmatic formulation functions not only as an expression of a spiritual worldview, but also as an articulation of a broader cultural and national mission. This positioning became particularly visible in relation to the political developments of the period. *Hylli i Dritës*, considered one of the most influential and high-quality journals of its time, was suspended following the publication of At Gjergj Fishta's article "Nji komedi e XX qindvjetëve" ["A Comedy of the Twentieth Century"], in which the author offered strong criticism of Europe and of international political decisions concerning the Albanian question. The suspension of the journal illustrates how editorial orientations, as expressed through programmatic formulations, could intersect with broader political tensions and become implicated in contemporary public and ideological disputes.

4.2 Formulations of Ethos and Moral Positioning

Another category of programmatic formulation emerges in cases where the motto does not explicitly articulate a political or cultural program, but instead constructs a symbolic figure of moral steadfastness and editorial self-positioning. This category is particularly evident in the formulations of *Taraboshi* and *Populli* during its first publication

phase (1919–1920). *Taraboshi* (1913–1914), a newspaper with a broad thematic scope encompassing political, social, cultural, literary, economic, and contemporary issues, was accompanied by the programmatic formulation: "Thehem por s'përkulem – Frangar, non flectar" ["I break but do not bend"] (*No. 1, 26 September 1913, p. 1*). Constructed through the combination of a Latin maxim and its Albanian equivalent, the motto articulates an ethos of resilience, firmness, and non-submission. Rather than defining the thematic or programmatic agenda of the publication, it functions primarily as a form of editorial self-representation, projecting an institutional identity grounded in determination and principled resistance. In contrast to formulations that explicitly foreground national or political objectives, the motto of *Taraboshi* emphasizes the construction of ethos as a central dimension of meaning. Through this formulation, the newspaper establishes a mode of self-positioning in which moral steadfastness becomes a defining element of its public and editorial identity. A comparable articulation of ethos appears in *Populli* during its first publication phase (1919–1920), through the formulation "Pro Patriis Laribus," meaning "For the Fatherland and the Hearths" (*No. 1, 18 January 1919, p. 1*). Unlike the assertive stance of *Taraboshi*, this Latin formulation foregrounds moral duty toward the fatherland and the protection of the household as a symbolic representation of collective identity. In this sense, it constructs a patriotic ethos that situates the publication within a framework of service to the national cause and collective responsibility.

Although differing in rhetorical structure and symbolic reference, both formulations operate as forms of editorial self-positioning that do not directly articulate explicit political programs. Instead, they express moral and symbolic stances through which periodicals construct their public identities and negotiate their relationship to broader social and national imaginaries.

4.3 Formulations of National Rights and Political Orientation

Another group of programmatic formulations articulates the national and political orientation of periodicals in a more direct and explicit manner. In these cases, the formulations are not limited to constructing a moral ethos or expressing a general editorial mission, but instead position the publication in relation to concrete issues concerning national rights, independence, and self-government. *Shqypnia e Re* (1913), a political, social, literary, and cultural newspaper with news coverage of contemporary events, was accompanied by the programmatic formulation: "Mbron të drejtat Kombetare" ["It defends national rights"] (*No. 1, 15 June 1913, p. 1*). Formulated in a concise and declarative manner, this statement foregrounds the protection of national rights as the central axis of editorial self-positioning. Rather than outlining a detailed political program, it functions as a direct declaration of orientation, linking the publication to the defense of national interests and to the articulation of the emerging political consciousness of the period.

A more elaborated programmatic articulation appears in *Populli* (1914–1915), a political, social, economic, and cultural newspaper covering contemporary news. It

was accompanied by the formulation: "Mbron t'drejtat e popullit Shqiptar; e ka për qëllim sigurimin e indipendencës t'Shqipërisë" ["It defends the rights of the Albanian people; its aim is to secure the independence of Albania"] (*No. 24, 17 March 1915, p. 1*). Compared to the formulation in *Shqypnia e Re*, this motto is more explicit and more fully programmatic. In addition to defending the rights of the Albanian people, it clearly articulates the objective of securing independence, thereby aligning the newspaper's editorial positioning with a defined national and political project.

A further formulation within this group appears in *Lidhja Kombëtare* (1915), a political and social newspaper, which carried the motto: "Pron vetëqeverimin e Shqypnis e t'drejtat e popullit Shqyptar" ["It supports the self-government of Albania and the rights of the Albanian people"] (*No. 1, 29 March 1915, p. 1*). In this case, the emphasis shifts from the general defense of rights toward the explicit articulation of self-government as a political objective. The coupling of self-government with the rights of the Albanian people situates the formulation within a conceptual framework in which national and political dimensions are closely intertwined. In the same publication context appears the formulation "Deka e giuhës asht deka e kombit" ["The death of language is the death of the nation"], which reflects the strong discursive association between language and national identity characteristic of the period. Although not treated here as a separate analytical unit, its presence alongside discourses of rights and self-government broadens the framework of editorial self-positioning by linking national survival not only to political sovereignty but also to linguistic preservation.

Despite differences in stylistic form and degree of explicitness, the formulations of *Shqypnia e Re*, *Populli*, and *Lidhja Kombëtare* share a common discursive function: the articulation of national rights and political orientation as integral components of editorial self-positioning. In these cases, programmatic formulations operate as explicit declarations of ideological orientation and as discursive mechanisms through which periodicals construct their relationship to the national and political issues of the time.

4.4 Formulations of Political Mobilization and Self-Determination

A more articulated phase of programmatic formulations emerges in cases where slogans move beyond the declaration of general national orientations toward the explicit articulation of political objectives. In these instances, programmatic formulations are not limited to the defense of rights or the expression of editorial missions, but function as mobilizing discursive forms associated with self-determination, national unity, and independence.

Koha e Re (1919), a political and social newspaper, was accompanied by the formulation: "Për veturdhnimin e bashkimin kombëtar t'Shqypniës" ["For the self-determination and national unity of Albania"] (*No. 1, 1 January 1919, p. 1*). This slogan explicitly articulates two interconnected political concepts: self-determination and national unity. Rather than serving as a general declaration of identity, it expresses a clearly defined editorial orientation that links the newspaper's activity to processes of national organization and political consciousness. Through this formulation, the publication positions itself

in relation to a specific political horizon in which national unity and self-determination are constructed as central objectives of collective action.

From a Faircloughian perspective, in which discourse is understood as a form of social practice embedded in historical conditions and constitutive of social processes, the programmatic formulations of periodicals published between 1919 and 1920 can be read in relation to contemporary debates concerning the future of the Albanian state. Within this context, newspapers such as *Koha e Re*, *Besa Shqyptare*, and *Populli*, through their emphasis on national unity, freedom, self-government, and full independence, articulated not only editorial orientations but also explicit forms of public positioning vis-à-vis the dominant political and national questions of the period.

A related articulation appears in *Besa Shqyptare* (1920), a political, social, cultural, literary, and economic newspaper with contemporary news coverage, which was accompanied by the formulation: "Për liri e vetqeverim të plotë të Shqypnis" ["For the freedom and full self-government of Albania"] (*No. 1, 16 May 1920, p. 1*). Structured around the key concepts of freedom and self-government, this motto condenses an orientation in which national and political dimensions converge within a single programmatic statement. Unlike formulations primarily focused on the defense of rights, this slogan foregrounds the realization of full self-government, thereby situating the publication within a more explicitly political discursive framework.

This orientation becomes even more explicit in *Populli* (1919–1920), a political, social, cultural, literary, and economic newspaper. *Populli* initially carried the Latin formulation "Pro Patriis Laribus," meaning "For the Fatherland and the Hearths" (*No. 1, 18 January 1919, p. 1*), before shifting to the motto: "Për Indipendencën e plotë të Shqipnies" ["For the Full Independence of Albania"] (*No. 22, 15 June 1919, p. 1*). The transition between these two formulations is analytically significant. Whereas the initial slogan draws on a symbolic and affective patriotic ethos centered on the fatherland and the hearth, the later formulation articulates a direct political objective of full independence. This shift indicates a discursive movement from moral-symbolic representation toward explicit political articulation and self-positioning.

Despite differences in formulation and rhetorical emphasis, the slogans of *Koha e Re*, *Besa Shqyptare*, and *Populli* share a common discursive function: the mobilization of programmatic language to articulate political objectives linked to self-determination and national consolidation. In these cases, programmatic formulations operate not only as declarations of editorial orientation but also as discursive instruments through which periodicals construct their positioning in relation to the political aspirations and transformative processes of the period.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of programmatic formulations in the press of Shkodra between 1910 and 1920 demonstrates that these elements did not function merely as identifying markers or rhetorical expressions placed in the introductory sections of publications. Rather, they operated as condensed discursive formations through which periodicals articulated

their mission, editorial orientation, and modes of self-positioning in relation to the political, cultural, and social issues of their time.

The findings indicate that programmatic formulations exhibit different degrees of discursive articulation. Some are primarily associated with editorial mission and commitments to cultural and national development; others construct forms of ethos and moral self-representation; while a further group articulates more explicit references to national rights, self-government, and political objectives linked to independence and national consolidation. At the discursive level, these variations suggest a gradual movement from formulations grounded in mission statements, moral legitimation, and cultural orientation toward more explicitly political articulations, although not in a strictly linear or uniform progression.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, these findings support the understanding of discourse as social practice and highlight that periodical communication in this period extended beyond the transmission of information. Through programmatic formulations, newspapers and journals actively constructed editorial identities, articulated ideological positions, and participated in the production of political and national meanings.

In this sense, programmatic formulations can be understood as significant units of early twentieth-century Albanian public communication and political language, insofar as they condense the relationship between editorial identity, ideological orientation, and broader processes of national formation.

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