

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE QIRIAZI SISTERS TO THE EMANCIPATION OF ALBANIAN WOMEN



Women's Studies

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Abstract

“Two Albanian heroines” were named by Hester Donaldson, the sisters Sevasti and Parashqevi Qiriazi. They stood out among the first Albanian women in the foreign world and were considered unusual in their eyes. The success achieved by the Qiriazi sisters in the college of Constantinople was first of all a continuation of a family inspiration, but also of preparation in the American school. This is what Sevastia herself says: "The foundations of my education were laid at the American Mission School in Manastir". The Qiriazi sisters, without a doubt, occupy one of the places of honor for their struggle and commitment, both in education and even more so in diplomacy, distinguishing their attitude in the fact that they devoted their whole lives to the issue of the homeland. They make known, in front of the foreign opinion, the goal and the just fight that the Albanian people fought for freedom and independence, for education and their national language. The Qiriazi sisters, in addition to opening a school for girls, also founded a society called Yll'i Mëngjezit with Parashqevi Qiriazi as president. According to the statute, the goals of the Association were efforts to educate women and improve their position in the family and society. This activity influenced the strengthening of the national feeling among the women of Korça and its surroundings.

Introduction

The Qiriazi family originates from the village of Peras, Kolonja district, Peras used to be a small village in terms of the number of houses. Those 50 families living in Peras were all relatives.² Of the males in the family, the father Mehilli kept only one grandson, Qeriazin, at home. They baptized him that way because he was named after Mehilli's father, and the Qiriazi family probably got the surname from this grandson or one of his great-grandfathers.³ From the first quarter of the 19th century, when the Beylers started looting and burning, the residents with heartache abandoned their hearth, their houses, their lands and fled to other places.⁴

Sevasti Qiriazi recalls in her memories:

We were large landowners, and later merchants and educated people living in the city. At the beginning of the 19th century, Ali Pasha Tepelena, known as the Lion of Ioannina, as an ambitious man who had the desire to have control over all the affairs of the country, he made the destruction of all the feudal lords of Albania a key point of his policy. One of these unfortunate feudal lords was my great-grandfather Kyrios Mihal. In this period, the Turks aimed at destroying the feudal leaders. After a heroic war, Mr. Mihail and his family left their homeland and all their property,

¹ This paper was presented on the 5th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference (IMSC-2022) held by The Association-Institute for English Language and American Studies, Tetovo, North Macedonia.

² *Instituti për Studime shqiptare dhe protestante, Jeta Ime, jetëshkrimi i pabotuar i "Mësueses së Popullit" Sevasti Qiriazi – Dako, Tirana: ISSHP, 2016.*

³ Skender Luarasi, *Gjerasim Qiriazi: Jeta dhe Vepra*, (Tirana: Naim Frasheri, 1962), 7.

⁴ Sabit Jaha, *Qiriazet dhe shkollat shqipe: Vëllezërit e motrat Qiriazi, figura te shquara te Rilindjes Kombëtare* (taken from the *Fjalori pedagogjike i Shefik Osmanit*, botuar 1983 ne Tiranë), 59

including flocks of sheep and cows, moved to Ternovo, a village two or three hours away from Bitola-Manastir.⁵

As soon as Dhimitri got married to Marie, he came down to Manastir and set up a thong shop, which he quickly expanded into a large warehouse of wooden logs. Dhimitri and Marie had 7 sons and three daughters who inherited the surname Qiriazzi, these were Tashko, Konstadin Gjerasim, Gjergj, Naum, Kristo, Pandeli, daughters Franka, Sevastia, and Parashqevia.⁶

He lived in the center of Valillek all the week in a small modest house and returned home at the beginning and end of the week. He brought the family to the city only five years after his father's death.⁷

The house of the Qiriazzi family was located at the center of a large village as well as on the road that connected Albania with Istanbul and other countries, and it became an important national house that received and escorted prominent patriots of the Renaissance such as: Konstadin Kristoforidhi, K. Hoxha, P. Sotiri, P. Luarasi. All the patriots who came from the colonies to bring forth education and knowledge to Albania to awaken the national feeling in the people were expected and escorted. Albanian books were collected and distributed in the Qiriazzi house. Esteemed sons and daughters of the Albanian nation were educated in this house.⁸

There are rare cases in the history of the Albanian people, especially in the period of our National Renaissance, when members of a family entered as active activists of the Albanian National Movement, who dedicated all their moral, material, spiritual and intellectual potential to the national cause, both in the liberating plan, as well as in the cultural and educational one, like the Qiriazzi family of Manastir, which gave the nation five intellectuals: Gjerasim, Gjergj, Kristo, Sevastia and Parashqevi.⁹

Sevasti and Parashqevi Qiriazzi

In the history of Albanian political thought, the Qiriazzi sisters undoubtedly occupy one of the places of honor for their struggle and commitment, both in education and even more so in diplomacy, standing out with their attitude in the fact that they devoted their entire lives to the cause of the homeland, making known to the foreign public the goal and the just struggle of the Albanian people for freedom and independence, for education and their national language.¹⁰

Regardless of their individuality, both of these sisters are treated together in many historical writings and documents for their important and common activity that they carried out in terms of

⁵ *Instituti për Studime shqiptare dhe protestante, Jeta Ime, jetëshkrimi i pabotuar i "Mësueses së Popullit" Sevasti Qiriazzi – Dako*, Tirana: ISSHP, 2016.

⁶ Skender Luarasi, *Gjerasim Qiriazzi: Jeta dhe Vepra*, (Tirana: Naim Frasher, 1962), 10.

⁷ Skender Luarasi, *Gjerasim Qiriazzi: Jeta dhe Vepra*, (Tirana: Naim Frasher, 1962), 14.

⁸ Sabit Jaha, *Qiriazet dhe shkollat shqipe: Qiriazet, familja patriotike dhe atdhetare*, 162.

⁹ Sabile Kecmezi Basha, *Qiriazet: Familje patriotike dhe atdhetare*, (Shkup: Instituti i trashëgimisë shpirtërore e kulturore të shqiptarëve – 110-vjet alfabet shqip, 2018), 386.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 387-388.

the defense of the national issue, the development of Albanian education, the women's movement and the emancipation of Albanian women.¹¹

The Qiriazi sisters broke the society's taboo regarding women's education; they were the first ones to be educated and to graduate from a university.

Sevasti Qiriazi attended a Greek primary school and an American secondary school in Manastir-Bitola. Then she continued her studies at the American college for girls, in the USA, where she graduated in 1881.

In 1905, Sevasti Qiriazi went to the USA to continue his post-graduate pedagogic studies at the University of Chicago, which he completed in 1908.¹²

Sevastia's footsteps were followed by her younger sister Parashqevi. She completed her primary and secondary school in Manastir in Greek. Then she started studying literature in 1900 at the Female College of Istanbul, and finished it in 1904.¹³

In 1912 she enrolled at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Oberlin, in the USA.¹⁴ Of special importance for the history of Albanian education is the study of Parashqevi Qiriazi: "*The development of schools in the Turkish Empire and an ideal system for education in Albania*", written in 1913, which is considered to have been presented as a dissertation after university studies at the University of Oberlin of the state of Ohio and as a work program for the temporary government of Vlora.¹⁵

The participation of the two sisters Parashqevi and Sevasti Qiriazi in the Congress of Manastir and Elbasan was not accidental, but a result of the high authority they enjoyed due to their education and ability. Until that time, no woman had participated in any political and cultural activity, meeting or national congress. Sevasti Qiriazi participated in the Congress of Elbasan (1909); she was a member of the committee for reviewing school textbooks set up by the "Përparimi" society,¹⁶

While Parashqevi was the only woman delegate in the Congress of Manastir. She was elected secretary of the Committee, working with the eleven other members.¹⁷

¹¹ Dibra, *Fjalori enciklopedik i gruas shqiptare*, 423.

¹² https://docplayer.org/116029670-Revista-dielli-demokristian-nr-28-vjene-mars-2017.html?fbclid=IwAR_0QqBbp_DsaOvU4KVoxE63TJlbM-szvlWnSV2E_nDdXh1ia-zhsc-GkL7j8 15.7.2020

¹³ Hajrullah Koliqi, *Historia e arsimit dhe e mendimit pedagogjik shqiptar*, (Prishtinë: Libri shkollor, 2002). 296.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 297.

¹⁵ Edi Shukriu, *Gratë te shquara shqiptare*, 52.

¹⁶ https://docplayer.org/116029670-Revista-dielli-demokristian-nr-28-vjene-mars-2017.html?fbclid=IwAR0QqBbpDsaOvU4KVoxE63TJlbM-szvlWnSV2E_nDdXh1ia-zhsc-GkL7j8 15.7.2020.

¹⁷ David Hosaflook, *Alfabet i dashur, atdhe i dashur: origjina e panjohur e "Himnit te alfabetit"*, (Shkup, 2018)

The active life that Parashqevi Qiriazi led during the work of the Congress made a strong impression on her and inspired her to create a hymn of this alphabet.

In 1909, a hymn began to be sung throughout Albania, with the value of a national anthem: "Alphabet Anthem", written by Parashqevi Qiriazi, which calls for the unity of Albanians around the alphabet, with pen in hand. "Alphabet Anthem" was written immediately after the First Congress of Manastir.¹⁸

She also designed the first Albanian primer with the alphabet approved by the Congress of Manastir. About this primer, the newspaper "Bashkimi i Kombit" on November 5th, 1909, wrote: "This small book with 32 pages and 18 sheets is beautifully arranged according to the new method with the alphabet as decided upon by the Congress of Manastir".¹⁹

The Qiriazi sisters also made a great contribution to publishing. Sevasti was the author of several textbooks. In 1912, she published several texts for the Albanian school in Manastir, such as *"Elementary Grammar for Primary Schools"*, *"The Alphabet of the Albanian Language"*, to continue with the other texts *"History of Ancient Times"*, *History of Modern Times*, *"Numbers"*, *"Physics"*, then the book *"The art of writing letters 1917"*²⁰, magazines such as *Library Zëri i Shqipërisë [Voice of Albania]*, published in Sofia, *Letter of brotherhood*.²¹

In 1917, the periodical "Morning Star [Ylli i Mëngjesit]" was published in Boston under the leadership of Parashqevi Qiriazi.²² Parashqevi became the first woman editor-in-chief in the history of the Albanian press.²³ The first issue of this magazine came out on January 15th, 1917, the magazine came out regularly twice a month, with 32 pages, from the middle of the second year it started to come out once a month, while in the third year the issues became even rarer. So e.g. between numbers 8 and 9 of the third volume there is a gap of 9 months.

During this period, Parashqevi was a delegate to the Peace Conference in Paris. The magazine came out in three years, 36 issues were published, in 3 volumes. "Ylli" was no longer published when Parashqevi returned to Albania. The last issue is from September 1920. Teuta Toska. The language of "Morning Star" is the literary Tosk dialect of Albanian.²⁴

In this magazine, the problems of culture and national education are dealt with, whole pages were dedicated to the heroes of the fighting and patriotic traditions of the Albanian people, it was vocal against the massacres of the war armies in the Albanian territory during the first world war,

¹⁸ David Hosaflook, *Alfabet i dashur, atdhe i dashur*, origjina e panjohur e "himnit të alfabetit" (1909), (Shkup: Instituti i trashëgimisë shpirtërore e kulturore të shqiptarëve – 110 – vjet alfabet shqip, 2018), 24.

¹⁹ Sazana Çapriqi, *Roli i kanonit letrar në përfundimin e gruas shkrimtare nga historia e letërsisë shqipe*, (Prishtina: Scientific Conference: Historia e Letërsisë Shqipe, 2010), 162.

²⁰ Koliqi Hajrullah, *Historia e arsimit*, 293-294.

²¹ Edi Shukriu, *Gratë të shquara shqiptare*, 52.

²² Teuta Toska, "Ylli i mëngjesit" kontribut, madhor i iluminist i Qiriazve përmes publicistikës, (Korçë: Universiteti).

²³ Ingrid Sharp, Matthew Stibbe, *Aftermaths of War: Women's Movements and Female Activists, 1918-1923*, (Boston: Brill, 2011), 184

²⁴ Toska, "Ylli i mëngjesit", 7.

it reflected the programs and efforts of the Albanian delegations for the protection of freedom, independence and territorial integrity of Albania at the Peace Conference in Paris.

Undoubtedly, their greatest contribution is the emancipation of Albanian women. Both Qiriazi sisters dedicated their entire lives to the education and emancipation of Albanian women, to prepare them as mothers of tomorrow and powerful pillars of our nation. They take a place of honor in the history of Albanian education and culture due to the fact of them establishing their girls' school at a very difficult time, when there was a great backwardness in the country and women were oppressed, despised, abandoned in ignorance. Also, both sisters have merit as creators among the only women of their time, because they dared to write and create didactic publications.

Girls' school

An important event for education in Albania was the opening of the Albanian school for girls in the city of Korça, on October 23rd, 1891, by Gjerasim Qiriazi, who, together with his sister Sevastina, founded it.²⁵

At first, it was opened in a room within the house where Gjerasim lived and then in the neighborhood Çezma e Arave which consisted of a wide courtyard, a large living room and six rooms.²⁶

This school served as an important center for the education and raising of of the national feeling in girls, it also served to raise the cultural level of women and their educational role. From here came many female educational staff, who were later put to work in national education.²⁷

In her memoirs, Sevasti Qiriazi wrote that it was Gjerasim, the one who taught her to write and sing in her native language in Manstir-Bitola, while her friends had started these lessons before her, so, consequently, the first school for Albanian girls was in Manastir, in the house of the Qiriazi family. It can be said that the Korça Girls' School project was developed in Manastir-Bitola and its founders and teachers came from there. The prominent Pleiades of Qiriazis were also the ones who prepared the school textbooks.²⁸

"Everything starts with ideas. Before this Albanian girls' school crowned the place where it stayed for 30 years, it existed in the mind of my late brother Gjerasim, who saw a great need for such an institution that would serve for the emancipation of women".²⁹

²⁵ Bilali Halluni, *Arsimi jopublik parauniversitar*, 51.

²⁶ Beqir Sinani, *Shkolla e Vashave në Korçë*, (shih: Sabit Jaja, *Qiriazët dhe shkolla shqipe*), 166.

²⁷ Akademia e shkencës e Shqipërisë, *Fjalori enciklopedik shqiptar*, 1023.

²⁸ Prof.Dr. Xhevat Lloshi Dr.David Hosaflook, *Te fillimet e shkollimit shqip për shqiptarët në Maqedoni dhe në Kosovë*, (Shkup: Instituti i trashëgimisë shpirtërore e kulturore të shqiptarëve, Shkup, Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, Qendra e studimeve albanologjike e Tiranë, Scientific conference on the theme: "75-vjetori i hapjes së shkollave shqipe në Kosovë dhe në Maqedoninë Perëndimore, 2016), 5.

²⁹ Instituti për Studime shqiptare dhe protestante, *Jeta Ime, jetëshkrimi i pabotuar i "Mësueses së Popullit" Sevasti Qiriazi – Dako*, Tirana: ISSHP, 2016. 107.

In this work they were assisted by Naim Frashëri, who intervened to give them the will (order) from the Ottoman government. Permission in the form of an imperial decree was facilitated by the fact that it was in the service of a foreign society and that it was presented to the Sultan as an English-language school.³⁰

The school was built according to the model of European schools, in the first five years it was a primary school and the next 4 years it was a lower secondary school.

18 subjects (social, scientific, and artistic) were taught, including learning to read, write Albanian, grammar, and the history of Albania.

In the beginning as a primer was used the one that Naim Frashëri published in Bucharest. In the first grades, only Albanian was taught, and later the Turkish, Greek, French and English languages were also introduced.

In addition to subjects, they gave importance to singing songs with patriotic motifs, working with embroidery with national motifs.³¹

The strongest enemies of the Albanian school were the Turkish government and the Greek Church. The Orthodox clergy had activated the Greco-Roman elements of the city, at the same time putting pressure on the Ottoman authorities to close down this school. Their enmity was so strong that twice they tried to physically eliminate Gjerasim. Orthodox clergy used all the ways and means against the girls' school and its leaders, with the most cunning methods of war against Albanian language workers and Albanian schools.

Sevasti, with her prudence and coolness, was able to face the opponents of the school, the Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul and the High Porte.

*"The brave school teacher, Miss Qiriazi, writes E. Durham,³² led with a skill and enthusiasm that deserves the highest praise. And despite the fact that attending school meant that parents and children risked persecution by the Turks and the Greek priest, still the school was always full."*³³

In January 1894, Gjerasim died at his parents' house with a body that got weak from the illness.³⁴

Sevasti writes in her memoirs: *"On January 4th, 1894, 32-year-old Gjerasim died. My hope disappeared, I was crushed, but a voice spoke to me inside me and urged me to live for the sake of my brother"*.³⁵

³⁰ Bilali Halluni, *Arsimi jopublik parauniversitar*, 51.

³¹ Ilazi, *Gratë të njohura të trojeve shqiptare*, 79.

³² Edith Durham, *Njëzet vjet ngatërresa ballkanike*, (Tirana: Argeta – LMG, 2001), 45.

³³ Xhejms Klark, *1912 dhe Ungjilli*, (Gjirokastër: AEM-Misioni Ungjillor, 2012). 69.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

³⁵ Instituti për Studime shqiptare dhe protestante, *Jeta Ime, jetëshkrimi i pabotuar i "Mësueses së Popullit" Sevasti Qiriazi – Dako*. 125.

In the will that Gjerasim left to his sister Sevasti, he instructed her, among other things:

"Don't forget that you are Albanian...! You should be always conscious and enthusiastic in carrying out the sacred burden you are undertaking by devoting your whole mind and heart to national education, preaching the ideal and completing patriotic duties.

These are the only pillars, the only principles of a people's life. To kindle in all hearts, love for the homeland and the desire to learn the mother tongue".

And he continues: *"You have been given the task of working to open the iron gates to save the Albanian girls from the slavery of the past, but you always put forward someone who is obedient in their duties and leads and you lead in a way to use judgment in every work they do, so that their activity is right.*

In this way, try to keep the spark of your ideal life burning and make sure that it is not extinguished even by strict pursuits. And at the end he advises her: "Your path is full of thorns. But, no good work is achieved without tears and struggles."³⁶

There are two forces that will hinder your national path, the Turkish invasion and the Greek clergy. Open your eyes not to oppose these two forces at once because they are strong when they are united. But if you cannot do otherwise, try to get the help of strong friends who sympathize with your national work. With these testimonies about you and your work, I wish you good health, dear sister".³⁷

When Gjerasim died, Sevasti was only 23 years old, but she continued her work heroically despite constant threats from the Turkish authorities and the Greek clergy.³⁸

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In her memoirs she writes:

"The whole burden of school fell on my shoulders. I worked without stopping without giving up hope and at the right time help really came to do the work. After the death of Gjerasim, Gjergj, my younger brother who was an agent of the American Bible Society in Thessaloniki, invited to take

³⁶ Skender Luarasi, *Gjerasim Qiriazhi: Jeta dhe Vepra*, (Tirana: Naim Frashëri, 1962), 48.

³⁷ Ibid., 48.

³⁸ Klark, 1912 dhe Ungjilli, 66.

³⁹ Klark, 1912 dhe Ungjilli, 66.

*the place left by Gjerasim as an agent of the British Bible Society and for foreign countries for Macedonia and Albania, this made Gjergj work for his country and it gave him possibility to help my school.*⁴⁰

He became closely associated with sister Sevasti and the school. He solved the financial difficulties without any problem and contributed to the enrichment of didactic publications.

In addition to sketches, he prepared poems of a national character, published the original physics text in 1898, then published two christomaths with didactic and patriotic poems in 1902-1904.

After the death of Gjerasim, the school had some fluctuations, the number of students that year dropped to 40, in this situation Sevasti made an effort to overcome the obstacles. Now that the school year had begun, one of her main problems was securing and preparing textbooks.⁴¹

Regarding this, she writes in her memoirs:

*“We had to fight the lack of books, until late at night we compiled texts. We chose English, Italian or French text from the shelf books and translated into Albanian language, sometimes we had to combine several texts into one. Then the books had to be mapped in detail by amateur cartographers, after which the books were given to the students. Step by step, a large number of texts were achieved to meet our needs. At first, we started with only primers and some texts readings. Currently we have at home all the required texts for a college.”*⁴²

Sevasti managed to overcome everything with strength, will, and work to achieve the goal she had set for herself, which was the education of girls who until that time were uneducated, did not know how to read or write.

In addition to Sevasti, in the 1895-96 school years, two other teachers, Fanka Eftimi and Thanas Sina, served.⁴³

The teaching staff of the girls' school in the school year 1900-1901 was as follows:

Sevasti Qeriazi: History of Geography, History of Albania, General history, English, Greek and Arithmetic.

Fanka Eftimi: Arithmetic, Geography, Natural History.

Polixeni Dhespoti (Laurasi): Demonstration lessons, Reading and Writing.

⁴⁰ Instituti për Studime shqiptare dhe protestante, *Jeta Ime, jetëshkrimi i pabotuar i “Mësueses së Popullit” Sevasti Qiriazi – Dako*. 125.

⁴¹ Dishnica, *Motrat Qiriazi- monografi*, 49.

⁴² Instituti për Studime shqiptare dhe protestante, *Jeta Ime, jetëshkrimi i pabotuar i “Mësueses së Popullit” Sevasti Qiriazi – Dako*.126.

⁴³ Dishnica, *Motrat Qiriazi- monografi*, 57.

Thanas Sina: Albanian grammar, Greek.

Grigor Cilka: English and Natural Sciences.⁴⁴

In the year 1904-5, the girls' school remained under the direction of Parashqevi. Sevasti stayed for several months in the USA to specialize in the field of pedagogy.⁴⁵ The year 1904-1905 was also an ordeal for Parashqevi; she was subject to persecution by the government and the Greek Church.⁴⁶

In the year 1910, the National Movement suffered a severe blow, when the Ottoman authorities closed down Albanian schools with the exception of the girls' school, because Phineas Kennedy, who enjoyed American protection, refused to obey this decree. For a time the Girls' School under their protection was the only female school functioning in the country. At this time, the school was named the American School.⁴⁷

The school existed until 1914. In 1913 it was paralyzed by Greek threats, while in 1914 it was finally closed down.⁴⁸

Morning Star [Yll' i Mëngjezit] Society 1909

The society was formed in January 1909 in the city of Korça at the initiative of the Qiriazi sisters, with Parashqevi Qiriazi as its president. According to the statute, the goals of the Society were efforts to educate women and improve their position in the family and society, learning and reading the Albanian language, distributing Albanian books, promoting patriotic, cultural and social activity of the society. This activity influenced the strengthening of the national feeling among the women of Korça and its surrounding areas.⁴⁹

In Korçë, on October 29th, 1909, two scenes from Schiller's play "Vilhem Tel", translated from English by Sevasti, were staged by the women's society "Morning Star", in the Albanian school for girls. This society also created a theater group made up of girls from the Qiriazi School.⁵⁰

After that, the suspicious Young Turks accused Parashqevi of rebellion and tried to break up the company, but they did not achieve their goal.

Sevasti in her memoirs writes as follows: "*I was arrested and took me to court, writes Parashqevi when she tells about this adventure. Oh, I didn't even want to go there at all. Then they put me in the criminals' bench, in a dirty place. The bench was so dirty. I was the only woman in*

⁴⁴ Zyher Dervishaj, Doktoratura: Historiku i mësonjëtores kombëtare shqipe të Korçës, Gjakovë: Universiteti Gjakovës "Fehmi Agani", 2017. 65.

⁴⁵ Dishnica, *Motrat Qiriazi- monografi*, 65.

⁴⁶ David Hosaflook, *Lëvizja protestante te shqiptaret 1816-1908*, (Prishtina: Tenda, 2019), 357.

⁴⁷ Kuanrud, *Gjerasimi: predikues, iluminist, rilindës*, 205.

⁴⁸ Hivzi Pacolli, *Mësim ndë gjuhë të mëmës*, (see: Sabit Jaha, Qiriazet dhe shkolla shqipe), 180.

⁴⁹ Akademia e shkencës e Shqipërisë, *Fjalori enciklopedik shqiptar*, 2509.

⁵⁰ Darina Minga, Tema e doktotatures: *Gjuha shqipe ne mjetet e komunikimit masiv*, (Tiranë: Universiteti i Tiranës, 2015), 91.

the courtroom. The Qadi with his turban glared at me angrily shouted Sit down but the bench was so dirty. She tells how her voice would rise and fall with a strange accent. Now I don't want to, then he yelled at me more Sit down, while I looked at the bench and said: How can I sit here? So he ordered loudly to the guard: Bring a chair from my room and then shouted to me: Now will you sit down? Yes, thank you and I took a seat".⁵¹ Parashqevi was tried twice, once for founding a political club while the second time as the head of a political school. The first time she was fined five pounds. The club would be allowed to continue as long as they removed her as president. After the first fine was not paid, she continued to run the club, so the second time she was fined 4 pence. Her case was defended by a lawyer and she again refused to pay the fine. But why they made this issue so big? Asked the infuriated Qadi. You couldn't pay a ticket, couldn't you? "Yes, I can pay a lot of money, Parashqevi had told them, but when it is right to do it. In this case, no, I don't want to pay."⁵² They finally released this defiant little woman, allowing her to return to her school and her club, but guarding and keeping her under strict surveillance as a "high risk" person.⁵³ This society functioned until the summer of 1914 when, with the outbreak of the First World War, the Qiriazis sisters left for Romania and then for the United States. During this period, the society made a great contribution to the development of education and the emancipation of Korça women.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The Qiriazis sisters left a mark in history and are a model for all other women, they are pioneers of Albanian education and the emancipation of women at a time when darkness and centuries of backwardness had left deep traces and the gap between the activities of men and women was so deep that it made their participation in political and social life impossible. Both Qiriazis sisters dedicated their entire lives to education and emancipation of Albanian women and to preparing them as mothers of tomorrow and powerful pillars of our nation. They take a place of honor in the history of Albanian education and culture and because of the fact that they established their girls' school at a very difficult time, when there was a great backwardness in the country and women were oppressed, despised, and abandoned in ignorance. Also, both sisters have merit as creators among the only women of their time, because they dared to write and create didactic publications. The participation of both of the sisters Parashqevi and Sevasti Qiriazis in the Congress of Manastir and Elbasan was not accidental, but a result of the high authority they enjoyed because of their education and ability. Until that time, no woman had participated in any political and cultural activity, meeting or national congress. Sevasti and Parashqevi represented their school with dignity in these important national forums, bringing the school's experience, both in terms of organization and pedagogy. Undoubtedly, when we talk about the Congress of Manastir (1908), we cannot help but emphasize the importance of the Qiriazis sisters, who played a major role in the organization and smooth running of this historic event. Qiriazis sisters had also participated in other

⁵¹ Instituti për Studime shqiptare dhe protestante, *Jeta ime, jetëshkrimi i pabotuar i "Mësueses së Popullit" Sevasti Qiriazis – Dako*, 182.

⁵² *Ibid.* 182.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 183.

⁵⁴ Akademia e shkencës e Shqipërisë, *Fjalori enciklopedik shqiptar*, 2963

important events and were among the leaders of the cultural club “Bashkimi” of Manastir, which dealt with propagation of the education in Albanian language. They also founded the women society Yll’ i Mëngjezit for the education of women and improvement of their position in the family and in the society. Today's women and girls should take as an example the passion, will, persistence, clarity of mission and courage of the Qiriazhi sisters to raise emancipation of the Albanian woman.