

## The reality confronting the merit principle in the Albanian civil service: a historical comparison going back to the roots

### Abstract

*There have been many studies that have investigated the history of the meritocratic competitive testing of public officials, with historians of and researchers in administrative science concluding that China was the first country to apply the principle of merit in selecting public officials through open competition. The novelty of the approach set out in this article is to analyse historic facts through the eye of an employee who has significant experience in the public administration of Albania. There have been attempts to introduce the merit principle in Albania, but these have encountered significant difficulties due to the communist traditions of the country and the problems of its 28-year transition to democracy. In exploring the origin story developing in a faraway eastern country, the questions arise as to why China was the first country in the world to apply the principle of merit in selecting public officials and what lessons this has for Albania today. By combining historical and analytical method, analysing the history of meritocratic competitive testing, this article aims to serve the development of public administration in Albania.*

**Keywords:** *civil service, meritocratic recruitment, competitive testing, religious philosophy, secularism, democratic transition*

### Introduction

It can be very difficult to investigate the history of a phenomenon starting from its etymology to the birth of the main elements forming the concept as we know it today.

The historical method approach is very valuable in learning the origin and evolution of natural and social occurrences, but various social, cultural and economic dynamics place significant pressures of change on society over the course of time. Even so, despite substantial aspects being compromised, the permanent essence of certain phenomena remains unchanged. Due to this, to investigate the historical aspect of the term ‘civil service’, one must focus on one core element that has endured over time, i.e. ‘meritocratic competitive testing’.

The phrase ‘civil service’ comes from the British East India Company, in which some employees became administrators and were referred to as ‘civil employees’ to distinguish them from military and other non-administrative employees. This term was initially intended to be ephemeral but it started to gain more permanent charac-

teristics when competitive testing started to be applied in the civil service of the ‘Company’ in 1833.<sup>1</sup>

In the current conditions, there is no generally-accepted definition of the term ‘civil service’ since there are different regulations of laws in different places and, therefore, the terminological characteristics are derived from the purpose of each country’s legislator in seeking to create:

A civil service that is stable, professional and based on merit, moral integrity and political impartiality.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, any civil service is focused on its investment in human capital, which constitutes the core of public administration and which does not take into consideration particular administration activity. The reform of the civil service on the whole therefore has the aim of building necessary organisational structures with capable people, individuals selected via objective method and under a competitive process, who are independent of politics and interested in continuously increasing their professional knowledge and performance at work in order successfully to sustain a wide range of administrative activities.<sup>3</sup>

One of the mechanisms with which to achieve this purpose is to carry out ‘meritocratic competitive testing’<sup>4</sup> for all those that aspire to be accepted and promoted into public administration posts. Consequently, although the term ‘civil service’ has evolved and been transformed over time, the actual notion in practice is closely associated with that of ‘meritocratic competitive testing’.

Knowing the process of the birth and development of meritocratic competitive testing has specific importance because the application of the principle of merit in the civil service constitutes one mechanism for delivering the contribution of human potential in the most important structures of the executive branch of the state. The civil service is, furthermore, the most essential and stable entity within public administration.

In learning the origin, evolution and cultural context in which this principle was born and developed, we turn our attention naturally to China, where the meritocratic

- 1 For more information, see: Barry J. O’Toole (2006) *The Ideal of Public Service: Reflections on the higher civil service in Britain* London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, pp. 48-50.
- 2 For more information see: Article 1 of Law No. 152/2013 ‘On the Civil Servant’ *Official Gazette* No. 95, 7 June 2013, Tiranë: Shtypshkronja e Qendrës së Publikimeve Zyrtare, p. 3952; Guy Van-Biesen (2006) *Overview of civil service selection procedures in EU context* Seminar on Civil Service Recruitment Procedures, Vilnius, 21-22 March 2006, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/countries/lithuania/36762418.pdf>.
- 3 Vuksanlekaj, Kozeta (2019) ‘The Deformed Politicization of the Public Administration in Albania’ *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Juridica* 15(1): 34-50. <http://www.journals.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/juridica/article/view/5442>.
- 4 The notion of meritocratic competitive testing, in a practical sense, means the organisation of competitions which test the abilities of applicants who are competing for a position in employment in public offices. The purpose is to select the most capable and the most worthy both for employment and for promotion into different hierarchical administrative positions.

competition of public officials is a process that has been applied over many centuries.

The oldest system of open competitive testing

A search for the earliest historical traces of competitive testing in respect of recruitment into public offices<sup>5</sup> does not lead to developed democratic western countries and neither to ancient states. Many researchers have confirmed that there is no evidence of public competitive testing in the ancient countries – Egypt, Greece, Rome, Assyria, Mesopotamia and Persia – that might have been a source of influence on other western countries with their civilisations.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, public competitive examinations were not given focused attention even in western countries until the 19th century. Positions in state administrative apparatuses were the subject of politicisation and fell within the patronage of the ruling classes. Until late centuries, the methods used to recruit people into public offices in western countries were far from meritocracy:

Historically, strict meritocratic recruitment into public office has been a rare phenomenon. Mann (1993: 445-446) outlines four alternative ways of obtaining office: through heritage; election; purchase; or patronage. Only in the 19th and 20th centuries did meritocratic recruitment increase in importance in the western world.<sup>7</sup>

In searching for the historical roots of meritocratic recruiting, all paths lead to China. It can be concluded with certainty that the oldest system of competitive testing for selecting public officials was used in China. The researcher Têng Ssu-yü comments:

It is easy to ascertain that China was the first country in the world to use open competitive examinations.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, William Martin reports:

The germ from which this sprung was a maxim of the ancient sages, expressed in four syllables, *Kü hien jin neng* – ‘Employ the able and promote the worthy’; and examinations were resorted to as affording the best test of ability and worth. Of Yushun, that model emperor of remote antiquity, who lived about B.C. 2200, it is recorded that he examined his officers every third year and, after three examinations, either gave them promotion or dismissed them from the service.<sup>9</sup>

- 5 Meritocratic recruitment is a procedure followed during competition through previously-developed rules in which one person is selected on merit as the best and most worthy candidate for a particular position in public offices.
- 6 Têng, Ssu-yü (1943) ‘Chinese Influence on The Western Examination System: I. Introduction’ *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 7(4): 267-312. doi:10.2307/2717830.
- 7 Sundel, Anders (2012) *What is the best way to recruit public servants?* QoG Working Paper Series No. 7.
- 8 Têng (1943) *op. cit.* at p. 268.
- 9 Martin, William A. P (1870) ‘Competitive Examinations in China’ *The North American Review* 111(228): 62-77, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25109555>.

Consequently, as far back as 4,000 years ago, the principle of periodic testing after entering public service was already in place. The practice of the periodic testing of public officials is a very important historical detail because one test, no matter how standardised it is, is insufficient to select the most capable and most worthy for two reasons;

- first of all, the real capability of a public official is demonstrated during practice and work experience
- secondly, the integrity of a public official is proven and demonstrated only after being confronted with specific situations in the administrative field during daily engagement with civilians and in other situations that arise while working in this sector and at the interface between private and public interest.

Over time, competitive testing continued to develop during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), one of the longest and largest dynasties in the history of China:

In 206 BC., the Han dynasty, introduced competitive examinations to select the best civil officials. These examinations were held in the Forbidden City, where these very examination rooms still stand today.<sup>10</sup>

In the meantime, public officials seeking higher positions, and whose moral character had been proven, would undergo further evaluation to prove their intellectual abilities.<sup>11</sup> Testing thus had two inseparable parameters: a judgment of intellectual capacity, but also of the integrity of the competing applicants. This evidence reflects the development of public service careers in which people would undergo continuous testing focused on observing their ethical behaviour in the performance of their public duties. In this way, the moral character of state employees was of special importance and, indeed, a prerequisite for promotion.

It is worthwhile mentioning that, in such an early period, government duties and the responsibilities of public officials were closely connected with the Confucian philosophy, which laid down a stable ethical and moral base that completed the potential and capacity of state officials:

The Chinese rightly considered that the faithful performance of domestic and social duties is the best guarantee of fidelity in public life.<sup>12</sup>

Such historical evidence holds special importance for a contemporary world in which the trust of citizens in the integrity of public officials has fallen considerably, even in (or perhaps especially in) developed democratic states. Contemporary states are mainly focused on managing and refining already-existing behaviours as a means of combating any unethical behaviour among public officials, whereas the Chinese were convinced that Confucianism would guarantee the proper functioning of mech-

10 Van-Biesen (2006) *op. cit.* p. 2.

11 Martin (1843) *op. cit.* at pp. 66-67.

12 *ibid.* at p. 66.

anisms of public governance, to the point at which they established a university to train and test officials in the techniques of Confucian governance.<sup>13</sup>

The content of the Confucian canon was not directly connected with the specific duties for which competitive testing was being conducted. Nevertheless, the Chinese had understood this canon – and its philosophical religious approach – to be the source of all knowledge and the guarantee under which officials would faithfully perform their duties on behalf of the state. The fundamental cultural basis of ancient China was the motive of wanting to know and apply the highest values, achieving complete spiritual enlightenment to attain the greatest good. In this journey of developing the personality of the human being, the spiritual and cultural teachings of the three main cultural traditions – including Buddhism and Taoism in addition to Confucianism – were seen as complementary to each other. Many researchers have paid special attention to the unique culture of China on the grounds that the philosophical teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism connected religious themes with the human aspect and with ethical spirit and a high moral sense, leading to each possessing a stable, leading power in both the spiritual and the human dimensions.

Consequently, it is not a coincidence that the birth and development of the meritocratic principle occurred in China: the ethical rules followed naturally by the Chinese in the context of public administration are not just formal rules but a part of the spiritual values that have been cultivated over centuries.

History has shown that, when state and religion have been closely intertwined, this has resulted in extremist behaviour – the use of religion for the submission of the masses, for prolonging exploitative regimes and, in the worst case, in deforming and tainting religious doctrine with the encouragement of wars and schisms that are contrary to development and humanity. In the case of China, however, we can see a completely different relationship between the state and religion in which the culture of philosophical religious teachings was sufficiently ingrained to secure the potential of people with integrity in public administration who had not only superficial faith but also a deep knowledge of religious philosophy and teaching.

This provokes an interesting contrast with 21<sup>st</sup> century post-socialist countries which are aspiring to build democratic values. Furthermore, despite the fine construction of laws and detailed regulations providing for the ethical behaviour of public officials, the inspiration of the will and devotion within the public official to serve the public interest and create a fair and reliable relationship with citizens has yet to be found.

It is no coincidence that, in today's world, democracy tends to have been consolidated only in those states where the secular and neutral state has been intertwined with philosophical religious teaching; and with the function of the promotion of freedom of faith and consciousness as a key element in the moral perfection of the person in general and of the public official in particular.

Looking at the reality of what existed thousands of years ago, one is left baffled at the strict rules set down for increasing the professional capacity of employees so

13 *Encyclopedia Britannica* 'Chinese civil service' last edited by Amy McKenna 9 February 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-civil-service>.

that they might be promoted to the highest positions, as well as at the detailed regulations set down to guarantee the impartiality of public officials in the pursuit of their state duties. On top of all that, however:

The competition was extremely keen. Only a very small percentage of the contestants at each of the successive examinations achieved the coveted degrees.<sup>14</sup>

The written tests were very difficult, but the system continued to have high credibility. Testifying to the high levels of competition present in competitive testing, we might compare some education institutions in the England of the nineteenth century, in which:

The University of London admits to its initial examination annually about 1,400 candidates, and passes one half. The government examinations of China admit about 2,000,000 candidates every year, and pass only one per cent.<sup>15</sup>

When one thinks that such a system was built at such an early period, our curiosity is concentrated not just on the superficial figures applying to that period but also necessarily on the historical and cultural context that created the basis for the birth and development of the merit principle.

### The implementation of democratic values in a non-democratic system

The American researcher, William Martin, who was able to observe in person the Chinese reality in the 19th century, writes with huge admiration of the justice and impartiality of a system in which state officials were not a separate, favoured caste but who enjoyed an amount of respect which stemmed from public appreciation of their level of self-development which had allowed them to attain such rank:

Those stately officials for whom the people make way with such awe-struck deference, as they pass along the street with embroidered robes and imposing retinue, are not possessors of hereditary rank, neither do they owe their elevation to the favor of their sovereign, nor yet to the suffrages of their fellow-subjects. They are self-elected, and the people regard them with the deeper respect, because they know that they have earned their position by intellectual effort.<sup>16</sup>

China, a state famous neither in the past nor in the present for its system of governance, thus managed to crystallise many centuries ago the values that guaranteed the maximum human potential in public office by the selection of the most capable and the most devoted in the accomplishment of state duties. There are some eternal values that, despite the colour of the faith or the system of governance, win authority in human consciousness because they are based on real justice and on unchangeable values and principles. Winning a position, or gaining a certain position through

14 Tung, Shih-Kang (1959) 'A Chinese Cribbing Garment' *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 20(4): 175-181. doi:10.2307/26403006.

15 Martin (1870) *op. cit.* at pp. 74-75.

16 *ibid.* at pp. 64-65.

ceaseless effort, is a difficult road that deserves honour and respect from every person because it serves society as a whole.

For this reason, a state that seeks justice and merit in the selection of the most capable people for state positions, that offers and underpins the realisation of the intellectual efforts of human beings, arouses the respect of people and society despite the flaws or problems that might exist with its system of governance. On the other hand, such basic values in the realisation of the intellectual potential of the individual may contribute to extending the life of a governance system which might not be the best model in terms of improving the well-being of the nation. We should, nevertheless, observe that impartiality in the selection and promotion of the most capable public officials demonstrating the highest levels of integrity comprises one of the most essential elements in a true democracy, as Martin states:

What can be more truly democratic than thus to offer to all ‘the inspiration of a fair opportunity’? In this, China stands unapproached among the nations of the earth; for whatever imperfections may attach to her social organization or to her political system, it must be acknowledged that China has devised the most effectual method for encouraging effort and rewarding merit.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequent to Martin’s assessment, the historical chronology of the development of the Chinese meritocratic system entered a pause in 1905 in the context of efforts to modernise the system. Subsequently, the changing political winds produced an anti-cultural and anti-religious spirit, followed by the communist regime being put into place during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in 1949. Yet, after some time, the Chinese socialist government of the single party state made positive changes with the Deng Xiaoping reforms in 1978 and with the opening and liberalising of the economy. These created the pathway for the industrialisation of China and committed to a positive approach to traditional religious activities, putting an end to the oppression of the rich cultural values of the Chinese.<sup>18</sup>

Democracy is a system of governance that has been effective not just in the aspect of economic development but also in increasing the well-being of citizens. But the system of democratic governance, on top of the building of democratic institutions and passing laws on free elections, freedom of speech and encouraging criticism of the government, has other essential cultural values without which it cannot be materialised in reality.

It is interesting to observe that China, with its non-democratic system of governance, has put in place one of the most essential values of democracy during its history of the implementation of a meritocratic system. The cultural values of democracy are important in any type of governance system because they offer the individual the opportunity to realise potential and feel fulfilled.

17 *ibid.* at p. 65.

18 For more information, see: Jack Barbalet (2011) ‘Chinese religion, market society and the state’ in Jack Barbalet, Adam Possamai and Bryan S. Turner (Eds.) *Religion and the State: A Comparative Sociology* London, New York, Delhi: Anthem Press, pp. 185-206. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wn0r14.14>.

Of course, such a cultural basis is not sufficient by itself to build a real democratic state. Moreover, such democratic cultural values are able to hide the flaws and they may give birth to unsuitable political alternatives for governing the state. On the other side, one cannot deny the connections between Chinese cultural values and democracy: the encouragement of people to cultivate the rich values of the Confucian tradition, within the function of the self-fulfilment of the individual, are identical with the fundamental civil rights of the human being that form the foundation of a true democratic system.

### Building a democratic system in Albania

It is very interesting to reflect that individualism, one of the cultural values of contemporary democracy, has been applied since early times in ancient Chinese dynasties that had a completely different form of governance compared to democratic states. Meanwhile, the sense of offering individuals opportunities to realise their potential and feel fulfilled is difficult to apply in post-socialist countries aspiring to build a democratic system. Albania, which was under an isolated socialist system for half a century, has passed many democratic laws and sought to build democratic institutions in the years following 1990, but has been confronted with a very difficult process in the construction of a democratic system.

In 2013, Albania passed a law with high standards that had the purpose of sanctioning the application of the merit principle in the civil service for the selection and promotion of the most capable and devoted individuals in important positions in public administration. Nevertheless, the implementation of this law continues to encounter problems in delivering the results desired by the Albanian legislature. The implementation of the merit principle in the civil service continues to be faced with militant opposition and other negative phenomena within public administration.

The current reality of Albania establishes that democracy cannot be built only through composing and passing laws with democratic values. Composing a democratic constitution, and delivering basic human rights – the main values in the development of a democracy capable of regulating the life of a citizen in all respects – must be accompanied by attempts to create a democratic consciousness in the individual. If we do not invest in human capital to create a deep-seated observance of democratic values and of the authority of the law in order that citizens feel obliged to the law not just legally but also morally, the development of those democratic values will not have the desired effect.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, the implementation of the merit principle in the civil service will continue to face many obstacles in Albania if the fundamental cultural values that comprise the spirit of democracy do not become crystallised in the consciousness of Albanian citizens. Albania is not alone in this, but it is an example of many states in the contemporary world which formally call themselves ‘democratic’ but in which privilege and corruption lead the way, the merit principle is violated and the intellectual elite devalued.

19 Vuksanlekaj (2019) *op. cit.* at p. 47.

Contrasting the historic development of the merit principle in the Chinese civil service with the problems of its implementation in the civil service of Albania raises the very interesting question of whether current Albanian society realises the importance of philosophical religious teachings in guaranteeing the integrity of its public officials. The short answer is 'no', to judge not least by the international institutions which have concluded that Albania has very high levels of corruption; a reality which confronts us with disappointment in the integrity of public officials in all institutions.

It is true that the real number of people claiming some sort of religious affiliation is much lower in Albania than the simple statistics on religious communities would indicate:

We have evaluated that around 25% of the population is religious in which Christians and Muslims have more or less the same percentage of followers, but with the real number of 'true followers' being around 4-5 per cent.<sup>20</sup>

The main reason is not just the inertia of the past following the period of communism when religion was prohibited by law – Albania was declared a secular country since 1967 and as the world's first atheist state in 1976 – but also the lack of deep philosophical religious teaching in Albanian society. In truth, Albania needs to be praised for its religious tolerance and harmony in the context of religious plurality – but such values need to be accompanied by a spiritual and cultural enrichment underpinned by philosophical religious ethics. Such values are connected with democratic values in the construction of a better society with good citizens and public officials willing to help in the creation of a state of justice and good governance.

To understand more clearly the issues that Albania is facing today, one needs to evaluate the negative consequences that have risen during its fifty years under a communist regime:

The history of communism over half a century not only spread poverty and isolation but it harmed human capital. By creating a new human breed with socialist and communist ideas, it created a loyal slave to the state-party. According to Article 9 of the Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania:

*'The state has developed a wide range of ideological and cultural activities for creating the new human. The state takes care specifically of the development and comprehensive education of the new generation with socialist and communist ideals.'* (Albanian Constitution, 1976, Article 9, p. 12)

The socialist order of society created a new individual, fed with the unattainable ideals of communism, creating a false reality of 'communism' in the thoughts of citizens away from the gloomy reality of poverty and isolation. The new human was the official, the worker and every Albanian who, for fifty years, was fed with false ideals of the better life which would be achieved through communism. But, after the 90s, the new human was confronted with the truth and the house of cards of false communist ideologies. The socialist and communist era had left society out of the normal flow of the development of society. It had left it impover-

20 'Faktet: Feja dhe statistikat fetare në Shqipëri' 28 May 2016, available at: <https://opinion.al/faktet-feja-dhe-statistikat-fetare-ne-shqiperi/>.

ished and isolated but, above all, stripped of faith and basic human rights, transforming the people into blind slaves of the ideologies of the Workers' Party and communist ideals.<sup>21</sup>

In the years since 1990, although there has been a lot of will and passion for building a true democratic state, Albania has been confronted with many obstacles on its journey to integrate in the family of developed European countries that have a consolidated democracy. Living under a communist regime, in total isolation from the developed world, brought not only poverty in the material sense of the word but also a cultural crisis which has had long-lasting negative consequences on the consciousness of Albanian citizens. Furthermore, the official prohibition of religion by the communist regime in 1976 led to the spiritual impoverishment of the Albanian citizen, and the decline has been substantial:

Once, Arnold Toynbee wrote that religion is one of the most amazing inventions of humans. It offers us a perfect painting of the world which we put opposite the corrupted world in which we live and, in this manner, religion plays an important role in moral perfection.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the transition to a new phase of society during the 90s and afterwards has been accompanied by a crisis of values, including of the cultural, moral and ethical values that public officials in public administrations should have.

The constitutional and legal reforms in Albania that took place after 1990 in building democratic institutions and rights, and in guaranteeing a neutral position of the state towards all religions, will result in success only if state institutions encourage and promote philosophical religious teachings to aid an understanding of history, critical views and the contribution that the different religions have given to world culture and to Albania.

Philosophical religious teachings are thus of crucial importance in healing the negative consequences of communism that brought mistrust and that shook Albanians' cultural, historical and ethical values to their core.

This does not imply the need for unity between state and religion, but instead highlights that the independence of the state from religion is the best mechanism for realising the mission that they have in common in fulfilling the potential of every individual in the interest of the greater development of society. The Albanian Constitution highlights:

State and religious communities must respect each others' independence and must cooperate for the good of each and every one.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the independence of the state from religion is a fundamental principle of a democratic system, but the state also needs to guarantee religious freedom of activity.

21 Vuksanlekaj (2019) *op. cit.* at p. 46.

22 Sinani, Gjergj (2017) *Feja dhe edukimi* Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, p. 8.

23 Albanian Constitution, 1998, Article 10, Clause 4, para. 3 (changed in 2007, 2008, 2015 & 2016), available at: <https://www.parlament.al/Files/sKuvendi/kushtetuta.pdf>.

It does not matter if in a country there is a majority from a certain religion or there exists a multitude of religions. The important thing is that the state is secular and neutral in the encouragement of freedom of faith and consciousness. Meanwhile, religious institutions should have a positive influence in public consciousness and the behaviour of people in a diverse and multicultural world, thus increasing the common good.

Our historical investigation shows clearly that philosophical religious formation was the main reason behind the inculcation of moral and ethical values in Chinese public servants, as well as being the best guarantor of high moral conscience, and devotion to duty and the fulfilment thereof, required of public officials for the good of society as a whole.

## Conclusion

China, a country which is not renowned for its system of governance, was yet the first state to materialise – and centuries ago – the values that deliver the greatest human potential in public offices via the selection of those who are most capable and most worthy in fulfilling the duties of the state on the basis of the principle of merit. The cornerstone of the ability, loyalty and devotion of public officials in conducting their state duties is not just their knowledge and abilities in the administrative field but the adoption of a philosophical religious ethic.

A philosophical religious ethic has significant persuasive power in the behaviour of public officials because it naturally inspires high consciousness in relation to other people and is also the best guarantee as regards their devotion to the fulfilment of their state duties.

Meanwhile, the evolution of the Chinese meritocratic system proves that the cultural values of democracy as put together in institutions and democratic laws are not sufficient by themselves to build a democratic system of governance. It is difficult to build a functional democracy in post-communist states that are missing the cultural values of democracy.

The modern state should be secular and neutral towards religious beliefs and must encourage coexistence and harmony among different religions as a spiritual asset of the nation as a whole and of the individual specifically: this can act as a foundation for ethics in all aspects of life, including in the faithful execution of state duties by public officials. Despite the different types of religious beliefs, all religions inspire moral perfectionism which is the fundamental guarantee of the integrity of a person. At the same time, developed democratic states understand the value of philosophical religious teaching in the perfection of the individual in the context of a diverse, multicultural society in which a plurality of religions is an important trait.

Living under a communist regime, isolated from the developed world and in which religion was strictly prohibited by law, has resulted in poverty in its material aspect and in terms of a cultural crisis, both of which have had long-lasting negative consequences for Albanians. Thus, the transition to a new phase after 1990 has been accompanied by a crisis in the system of values, both cultural and ethical, that officials in public administration should possess as well as in the approaches of ordinary citizens to public officials.

Albania deserves to be acknowledged for its tolerance and religious harmony in conditions of religious plurality but, to improve its public administration ethos, such values must be accompanied by a spiritual and cultural enrichment together with a philosophical religious ethic. The development of philosophical religious teaching is of key importance in healing the negative consequences of communism and in the construction of a better society with good citizens and devoted public officials that want to create a state of rights governed by justice.

Ultimately, the implementation of the merit principle in selecting individuals for public positions who are capable and who have the highest levels of integrity will increase the faith of civilians in public administration. Ultimately, it will lead to civilians having greater levels of respect for the application of human potential in the structures of the state which aims to serve them.

## References

- Barbalet, Jack (2011) 'Chinese religion, market society and the state' in Jack Barbalet, Adam Possamai and Bryan S. Turner (Eds.) *Religion and the State: A Comparative Sociology* London, New York, Delhi: Anthem Press, pp. 185-206. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wn0r14.14>.
- Denhardt, Robert B and Janet V. Denhardt (2010) *Administrimi Publik: Veprim i orientuar [Public Administration: An Action Orientation]* botimi i gjashtë [6<sup>th</sup> Edition], edited by Petrit Dollani and translated by Blerta Selenica, Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese Universitare UFO Press.
- Encyclopedia Britannica* 'Chinese civil service' last edited by Amy McKenna 9 February 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-civil-service>.
- Lee, Ming-Huei (2017) 'Modern New Confucians on the Religiousness of Confucianism' in David Jones (Ed.) *Confucianism: Its Roots and Global Significance* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 26-38. doi:10.2307/j.ctv3zp043.8.
- Martin, William A. P (1870) 'Competitive Examinations in China' *The North American Review* 111(228): 62-77, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25109555>.
- O'Toole, B. J (2006) *The Ideal of Public Service: Reflections on the Higher Civil Service in Britain* London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Sinani, Gjergj (2017) *Feja dhe edukimi* Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- Sundel, Anders (2012) *What is the best way to recruit public servants?* QoG Working Paper Series No. 7.
- Têng, Ssu-yü (1943) 'Chinese Influence on The Western Examination System: I. Introduction' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 7(4): 267-312. doi:10.2307/2717830.
- Tung, Shih-Kang (1959) 'A Chinese Cribbing Garment' *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 20(4): 175-181. doi:10.2307/26403006.

Van-Biesen, Guy (2006) *Overview of civil service selection procedures in EU context* Seminar on Civil Service Recruitment Procedures, Vilnius, 21-22 March 2006, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/countries/lithuania/36762418.pdf>.

Vuksanlekaj, Kozeta (2019) 'The Deformed Politicization of the Public Administration in Albania' *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Juridica* 15(1): 34-50. <http://www.journals.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/juridica/article/view/5442>.

'Faktet: Feja dhe statistikat fetare në Shqipëri' 28 May 2016, available at: <https://opinion.al/faktet-feja-dhe-statistikat-fetare-ne-shqiperi/>.

Albanian Constitution, 1998, Article 10, Clause 4, para. 3 (changed in 2007, 2008, 2015 & 2016), available at: <https://www.parlament.al/Files/sKuvendi/kushtetuta.pdf>.

Law No. 152/2013 'On the Civil Servant' *Official Gazette* No. 95, 7 June 2013, Tiranë: Shtypshkronja e Qendrës së Publikimeve Zyrtare, p. 3952.

