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Special Issue

This issue comprises the discourse segments (*lectio magistralis*) and the scientific lectures to the albanologic international conference:
**GEORGE CASTRIOTA SCANDERBEG, THE PERIOD HE LIVED
AND THE MARKS HE LEFT IN HISTORY**



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**ARBANENSE BISHOPRIC, GJON KASTRIOTI AND THE
QUARREL ABOUT THE BORDERS OF THE BISHOPRIC
LEZHA'S***

The present paper devotes some space to the period forerunning Gjergj Kastrioti's war and the following centuries, a very much discussed event among the local and foreign scholars. The quarrel between the Arbanense bishopric and the bishopric of Lezha (*Alexiense-Lexiensi*) about the appurtenance of a series of churches pretended or contested from both sides and for the history of this bishopric itself is here reported.

Up to now, the letter of Gjon Kastrioti, father of our Hero, sent to Serenissima is the oldest testimony of this quarrel. It is proved in the Acts of April 3, 1407, and from what Gjon writes, we understand that these 12 churches are in his territories and belong to the Arbanense bishopric for 800 years now. He asked for intervention to avoid the quarrels and turmoil among the people of those territories caused by this injustice. In the Acts, after a short explanation, it is given the text of the letter addressed to the Holy Father, the Pope Gregory XII, where it is asked to intervene in favor of the Arbanense bishopric, to force the Bishop of Lezha-*Alexiense* to not keep occupied those 12 churches of Arbanense, in letter *episcopatum Albanie*, 800 years old now. This is a very well-known letter by the scholars, and it is published by Jireček¹,

* This presentation is part of the discourse segments.

¹ K. Jireček, Zëei Urkunden aus Nordalbanien, *Monumenta spectantia Historiam Slavorum meridionalium*. v. Quintum, Zagabriae 1875, 86-899.

Ljubić², father G. Valentini in A.A.V³, and then is treated by Šufflay and the subsequent scholars.⁴

These aspects, the dating of *Arbanense* bishopric in its lands and the mentioning of the 12 churches, have been widely discussed, but Prof. Kristo Frashëri says: "... *the location of these 12 churches and what lied behind the interests of Gjon Kastrioti have never been investigated.*"⁵

This is the starting point of my presentation in parallel with the implication and the clarifications given in the history of that time on the bishopric and the region where this bishopric is positioned, until the end of this quarrel.

I had the transcript *Letter* of the Pope Gregory VIII sent to the Archbishop of Antivari - *Archiepiscopo Antibarensi* dating May 23, 1407⁶ by chance. At that time, in the see of Tivar, Martin from Ulqin (Martinus de Dulcinio 1395-1420) was the office-holder, while Andrea Summa (1405-1426) was the office-holder in Lezha. The Holy Father, encouraged by the *Petition* sent by *episcopo Arbanensi Georgij* demands the freeing of the taken churches from the Lezha's bishopric, which, *de jure*, belong to the bishop Georgij and his predecessors: *nevertheless, our honorable brother Andrea, Bishop of Lezha (Lexiensi) still unjustly continues to hold them causing a damage....* The Holy Father demands *that the bishop of Lezha and others to withdraw otherwise... could not wait for forgiveness from the Apostolic See for their suspension from duty or excommunication.*

The first study on this document, which we consider important, is reported in a paper titled "The bishopric of Arbër" in the conference "*Albanians and Hungarians: historical similarities and differences in centuries the contribution of their diasporas on their mutual*

² *Listine o odnosajih izmedju juznog slavenstva i mletacke Republike*, skupio S. Ljubic, knjiga V od godine 1401 do 1409, Zagreb 1875, 94-95.

³ G. Valentini, *Acta Albaniae Veneta saeculorum XIV et XV*, v.5,

⁴ M. von Šufflay, *Situata të kishës në Shqipërinë paraturke, Zona e depërtimit ortodoks në "digën" katolike*, Shkodër 2013, 98..O.J.Schmitt, *Arbëria Venedike 1392-1479*, Tiranë 2007, 569, K. Biçoku, *Toponimet mesjetare për studimin e historisë së Skënderbeut*, Tiranë 2016, 35-36.

⁵ K. Frashëri, *Skënderbeu*, Tiranë 2002, 69.

⁶ Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Registro Laterano, v. 128, 159^v-160. I thank for this Dr. Musa Ahmeti.

recognition,” run in Budapest on 26-27 May 2014, under publication process.

The facsimile of the letter sent to us from the Vatican's Secret Archive⁷ allows us to be as accurate as possible about the churches' saints and their location. The most important distinction from what is known to day is that from Lezha's Bishop were occupied 17 churches in 16 villages, at detriment of *Arbanensis diocesis*. The location of those churches and villages could be clearly understood. So, there are real and reliable data that clarify the quarrels and debates about this.

First, the bishop Georgij, the office-holder of the *Arbanensis* bishopric in the letter sent to the Holy Father his complain (*petitio*), as far as it could be understood in details (that date is unknown to us). From the letter results that the complain has been investigated according to the rules. The insvestigation was subsequently followed by the order or request of Vatican.

Second, in the letter we have the complete and precise list of the churches into question and their location:

Sancte Venere in *Baldreni*, Sancti Nicolai in *Blenisti*, Sancti Salvatori in *Malemalit*, Sanctu Johanis in *Merchina*, Sancte Eufemia in *Calameto*, Sancte Venere in *Vello*, Sancti Salvatoris in *Vello*, Sancti Georgij in *Fico*, Sancti Blasij in *Solomundo*, Sancti Demetrij in *Span*, Sancti Alexandri in *Bochiano*, Sancti Nicolai in *Soyme*, Sancte Barbare in *Pedana*, Sancte Venere in *Re*, Sancta Maria in *Soesa*, Sancti Michaelie in *Castineto*, Sancti Helie in *Guimala*

Let's examine the location of those 17 churches of 16 villages, about which have had only presumptions needed for aprioristic conclusions. The majority of these churches are found today in the villages with the same name that we find in the list.

- The church of Shna Prenda is situated in *Balldre(n)*.⁸
- The church of Shën Koll is not located in *Blinisht*, but in Kakarriq, nearby. However, in the Venetian Cadaster of 1416-17 we find both *the*

⁷ *Ibid*, I thank for this Dom David Xhuxha.

⁸ A.Meksi, *Arkitektura e kishave të Shqipërisë (shek.VII-XV)*, Tiranë 2004, 195-197, fig.150-152, G. Hoxha, L. Përzhita, F. Cavalini, *Monumente Historike të Kultit të Krishterë në Dioqezën e Lezhës*, Lezhë 2007, 60-63, fig. 30-33, B. Bregu, *Entre Orientet Ocident, l'architecture religieuse medievale du nord de l'Albanie. Etudes architecturales comparatives à travers les méthodes de l'archéologie du bati: les églises Sainte Parascève de Balldren et Saint Nicolas de Lezha, Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyene Âge* (en ligne),2016.

Village of Kakarriq and the Village called *Shën Koll of Kakarriq or Blinisht*.⁹

- The third in the list should be the Kisha e të Shelbuemit (Church of the Redeemer) in *Akrolis*, the mountain east of Lezha from which is preserved more the name rather than the ruin traces.¹⁰

- The church of Shën Gjini is located in *Mërqinë*.¹¹

- The church of Shën Eufemia (Mia) could be found even today in *Kallmet*.¹²

- The Shna Prenda and the Kisha e të Shelbuemit are situated in *Velë*.¹³

- The church of Shën Gjergj is situated in *Rasfik*.¹⁴

- In *Grykë Manati* is preserved the church of Shna Vlash and the name Solomund.¹⁵

- We couldn't find the location of the village of *Span*. In those areas, at Lezha's back, we have one church with the saint Shën Dhimitër in the village *Tresh-Dardhë*.¹⁶

- The church of Shën Llezhdri of Bokian is located in the *Spiten*.¹⁷

- The church of Shën Koll is located in *Zejmen*.¹⁸

- The Church of Shën Barbullë is located in *Pllana* (Pëdhanë).¹⁹

⁹ *Regjistri i Kadastrës dhe i Koncesioneve për Rrethin e Shkodrës 1416-1417*, Tiranë 1977, 93/a, 92/b; A. Meksi, *Arkitektura...*, 173, fig.113, G. Hoxha and others, *Monumente...*, 57-58, fig. 58.

¹⁰ On it K. Biçoku, *Toponimet...*, 35, note 93, thinks that this is about Saint Salvator of Rubik. G. Hoxha etc., *Monumente...*, 53, fig. 24.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 104, fig. 86.

¹² *Ibid*, 64-67, fig. 34-37, Copy of sandjak of Dibra register, *Lufta Shqiptaro Turke në Shekullin XV, Burime osmane*, Prepared for publishing by Selami Pulaha, Tiranë 1968, 364 (Kallmeti).

¹³ *Ibid*, 108, fig. 93-94 (Shna Prenda) and 106-107, fig.90-92 (Kisha e Shën Salvatorit).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 123, *Lufta Shqiptaro Turke...*, 336 (Fiku).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 73-75, fig. 43-49. *Lufta Shqiptaro Turke...*, 336 (Solomoni).

¹⁶ *Relacione mbi gjendjen e Shqipërisë Veriore e të Mesme në shekullin XVII, vol. I (1610-1634)*, the original text translated by I. Zamputi, Tiranë 1963, dok 31,401. K. Biçoku, *Toponimet...*, 36 note 93. reveals that near the village of Dardhë is preserved the toponym Shtëpan.

¹⁷ A. Meksi, *Arkitektura...*, 173-174, fig. 114-115, G. Hoxha and others, *Monumente...*, 60-63, fig. 53-57. *Lufta Shqiptaro Turke...*, 336 (Kapruli-Bokoiani).

¹⁸ A. Meksi, *Arkitektura...*, 169-170, fig.105-107, G. Hoxha and others, *Monumente...*, 84-85, fig. 58-63. *Lufta Shqiptaro Turke...*, 364 (Zejmeni).

¹⁹ A. Meksi, *Arkitektura...*, 174-175, fig. 116-118, G. Hoxha and others., *Monumente...*, 88-90, fig. 64-70 (architecture) and 127-138, fig. 111-117 (painting), *Lufta Shqiptaro Turke...*, 364 (Pëdhanë).

- The Church of Shna Prenda is located in *Rej*.²⁰
- The Church of Shën Mëri is unknown in *Zeze* (Reja e Zezë).²¹
- The Church of Shën Mëhill is situated in *Kashnjet*.²²
- We haven't found the church with the patron saint Shën Ilia in *Gjunal*, but in Jezull (Gazull) a nearby village.²³

Thus, all these 17 churches in 16 villages, are all East of Lezha city and north of Mati River.

Meanwhile; this list of churches and villages, has recently been published by Prof. Kasem Biçoku²⁴, but without focusing on the related problems.

Third, we should investigate the reasons behind the intervention of Gjon Kastrioti in this quarrel and the support for the *Arbanense* Bishopric. Thus, we think that these villages were in the possessions of Gjon Kastrioti, or because he was asked to help as he was a powerful lord of the territories near and with interest in the ways, harbors and the necessity for good relations with the Church and the local lords, by protecting their interests and rights. Apparently, once part of the Princedom of *Arbër*, these territories were now ruled by many small feudal lords. We think that, it should have been the chiefs of *episcopatus Arbanensis* those who asked Gjon Kastrioti for support. They were apparently not very much convinced that could solve this problem in their favor themselves, hoping in the good relations on reciprocal bases, between Kastrioti and the Republic. The latter had possessed Lezha²⁵ since 1393. So, the intervention and the support of Gjon might have been useful to them.

There is another explanation, as Gjon Kastrioti stated: "*they are in our possessions and belong to the Arbanense bishopric for 800 years now*," that they are in the lands of the Kastrioti family. I think that this statement is just an excuse for intervention, to be affirmed in a region near Gjon Kastrioti's territories and in old relations with them. It could help us on this a note at the end of the Ottoman Register of 1431-2,

²⁰ *Relacione*..... , dok. 31, 167 (401).

²¹ The village of Reja e Zezë is situated near the above mentioned village, but we can't find traces of this church.

²² G. Hoxha and others, *Monumente*., 118-120, fig. 105-107.

²³ *Relacione*..... , dok. 31,167 (401).

²⁴ K. Biçoku, *Toponimet*.....,35-36.

²⁵ *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, I, 2002, 323.

where in the Timar of Andre Karlo it is said: *Even nine pieces of villages, according tahvili of Scanderbeg's, son of Gjon, were taken from the Vilayet of Dhimitër Jonima and the Timar was registered in Gjon's land cadastre. In case of necessity to be seen [in] that register.*²⁶ This note dates in 1441 and it explains that these lands did not belong to Gjon Kastrioti previously, but to the Jonima family. Later, in the Register of Dibra's Sanjak dated in 1467, six of these villages were still under the Jonima family possession.²⁷

Now let's see what the Arbanense bishopric is, its history and location. The bishopric of *Arbëria* and the region's political organization of the region where it was located has been widely discussed. I was also interested in about this issue. In the Symposium of 1990 (December 4), I held a presentation entitled "*Episcopatum Arbanense*," which has not been sent for publishing at that time. However, it was sent for publishing without change or improvement in "*Hylli i Dritës*", in 1995,²⁸ along with a very interesting paper about the inscriptions of the churches of Gëzic and that of Brrar,²⁹ authored by Injac Zamputi. Surprisingly, some of the scholars involved in the area have not read it.

The bishopric of *Arbër* was first mentioned in the act of the Shën Trifon church dedication, in 1166, where the *episcopis Lazaro Albanensi* or *Lazarus episcopus Arbanensis*, its titular participates.³⁰ *Andreas prior Arbanensis* participated in the ceremony, in addition to the bishop Lazar, who dedicates the altar on the left of the principal one. Confusion has been created about *Andreas prior Arbanensis* in the Albanian historiography has been made a confusion, calling him as the principal of the region, but in fact *prior* refers to the head of the religious community in a diocese and classified after the bishop and we have to admit it.³¹

²⁶ *Regjistri i Sanxhakut të Arvanidit i vitit 1431*, Tiranë 2017, 234.

²⁷ *Lufta Shqiptaro Turke...*, see above the note 12 (Kallmeti), 14 (Fiku), 15 (Solomundi), 17 (Kapulli-Bokiani), 18 (Zejmeni), 19 (Pëdhana)

²⁸ A. Meksi, Peshkopata e Arbërit (Episcopatus Arbanensis), *Hylli Dritës* 5-6, 1995, 30-43.

²⁹ I. Zamputi, Two inscriptions at the beginning of the XIII century and their connections with the Principality of Albania, *Hylli Dritës* 5-6, 1995, 16-29, fig. 1-4.

³⁰ L. de Thalloczy - C. Jiricek - E. de Sufflay, *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia*, I. Vindobonae 1913, dok 93 13 iunii 1166 (hereinafter A.Alb.).

³¹ Giacomo Baroffio, *Dizionario Liturgico* (on line), 71, DIZIONARIO DEI TERMINI RELIGIOSI, AA.VV., Invictus Editori.

Researches have been made about the bishopric of *Arbër* and principality connected to it to enlighten their aspects and history, often with different outcomes. To give an accurate opinion and be as closer to the truth as possible, we have to follow its development process, define its geographic location and clarify some events related to it.

Regarding the ecclesiastic aspect, the territories inhabited by Albanians are found in the middle of the XII century under the jurisdiction of some church centers. The bishoprics of Tivar (Auarorum), Ulqin (Liciniatensem), Shas (Suacinensem), Shkodra (Scodrinensem), Driht (Driustinensem) and Pult (Polatensem) located in the north Albania depended hierarchically from the archbishopric of Ragusa-Epidauri.³² In the Central Albania we have the Metropolis of Durrës (Dyrrachium). The bishoprics of Lezha (Elison), Stefaniaka (Stefaniakon), Kruja (Kroon), and Kunavise (Hunavian) depend hierarchically on it.³³ In the eastern and southern Albania we have the Archbishopric of Ohrid. The bishoprics of Gllavnica, Deaboli, Kanina and Dibra depend hierarchically on it.³⁴ In the southern Albania we have the bishoprics of Himara, Butrint (Buthrot) and Drinopoja (Drinopoleos) hierarchically dependent upon Naupakt Metropolis.³⁵ The Catholics of Dyrrachium or the Latin people chaired by the archdeacon were closely related to the bishoprics in northern Albania which belong to the Catholic church. The latter was under the Vatican rule.³⁶

There are few records on the orthodox bishoprics in the Central and Southern Albania connected to Ohrid and Constantinople, but we have sufficient information about the structures of the Catholic church connected with Rome through the archbishoprics of Tivar and Durrës because the investitures of the Catholic bishops were done by the Roman Curia. The Catholic church replaced starting from the XII century the archbishopric of Ragusa with the archbishopric of Tivar

³² *Ibid*, dok 91;93; M. Sufflay, Die kirdrienzustande im vorturkischen Albanien. Die orthodoxe durchbruchszonein katholischen Damme, *Illyrische-Albanische Forschungen*, vol. I. Munchen und Leipzig 1916, 188-281.

³³ J. Darrouzes, *Notitiae Episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitana*, Paris 1981, 154-158 and 372-377, that is the report of Nil Doksopatri date on 1142-3.

³⁴ H. Gelzer, *Ungedruckte und wenig bekannte Bistumverzeichnisse der orientalischen kirche*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* I, 1892, 257.

³⁵ J. Darrouzes, *op. cit.*, 154-158 and 372-377.

³⁶ The first report on this archdeacon we have it on 1200, *A.Alb.* I, dok 126.

(Antivari) which was located in the northern Albania, up to Prizren. It is an Albanian church and located in the territories ruled by local feudal lords. During the Anjou rule, the Catholic church expanded its territory up to Vlora (Avellonense), Cernika (Cernicense), which appears in 1507 with the old name Scampense, and Vrego (Vregensis), having in these cases Durrës (Duracensis) as archbishopric center, with Kruja (Croense), Lezha (Alexiense), Stefaniaka (Stephanense et Bendense even Bendense et Priscense) and Kunavia (Canoviense) hierarchically dependent upon. There are many data up to the XV century about them.

In the beginning of the XV century, under the subordination of the Archbishopric of Tivar, are evidenced these bishoprics: Ulqin (Dulcinense), Shas (Suacinense), Shkodra (Scodrinensis), Balleci (Balleacenses), Drisht (Drivastense), Danja (Danense), Shurdhahu (Sardenensis), Pult (Polatensis). The latter, since the middle of the century is divided into the Polatensis Maior (Sarda) and Polatensis Minor (in Shën Pal of Pult), Shat (Sappatensis), Prizren (Prisrenensis), Arbëria (Arbanensis).³⁷

Now let's focus on the bishopric of *Arbër* and its territories basing on the historic data.

A year later from the Shën Trifon altar's dedication mentioning in Kotor (1167), the Pope Alexander III addresses to the bishop "*Lazarum episcopum de Albania*" praising him for refusing to follow the Greek rite and *having the will to avoid in many cases when is presented the possibility of the Greek rite*³⁸. On the same day, the Pope in another letter of great importance, confirmed the archbishopric of Ragusa its subordinates, but the bishopric of *Arbër* was not among,³⁹ which is not recognized as such even in previous papal bulls that confirm Ragusa's subordinates.⁴⁰ Thus, one of the bishoprics of *Arbër* is not among the subordinates of the metropolis of Dyrrachium or archbishopric of Ohrid.

Under these circumstances, we can think that this is a newly established bishopric and it is located in the territory of Durrës metropolis. This means that it was under the Byzantine rule whose

³⁷ A. Meksi, *Arkitektura*..., 70-71.

³⁸ A.Alb. I, dok.97, *Burime të zgjedhura për Historinë e Shqipërisë*, Vol. II, Tiranë 1963, 111.

³⁹ A.Alb.I, dok.94.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, dok. 84 (1142), dok.87 (1153), dok.91 (1158); M.Sufflay, *op. cit.* 202-205.

rulers were connected with the archbishopric of Antivari to affirm the existence or the religious convictions. If the bishopric was created long time ago, it would have been included in the subordinates lists, especially if detached from the Catholic bishopric. The latter was under the Tivari rule. The Bishopric of *Arbër* was found in the territories of Dyrrachium and this is stated in the above-mentioned letter of the Pope Alexander III, in which very clearly is noticed her affiliation in the orthodox rite (in the letter it written the *Greek*) and the dependence upon the metropolis (implying the metropolis of Durrës), *to which I should pay the respect he deserves*, what is explained by the good relations between the Pope and Manuel Komnenos, the emperor of the time.⁴¹

The establishment of a new bishopric in the medieval situations, detaching from the previous church structures with a long tradition, couldn't be understood without the support of a powerful state or a powerful feudal. The sources and the historic records do not prove the invasion of these territories by the rulers of Zeta or Rasha. Also, we do not think that Byzantine, with its center in Durrës, is behind this act, regardless the ceremony held in Kotorr, the Dalmatian shore which was also under the Byzantine rule as this act implies.⁴² We have to think that this bishopric could have been connected with a local feudal who under specific circumstances succeeded in setting his rule in that territory. This *appropriation* act was accompanied by the establishment of the bishopric administering the church in his lands.

In absence of other data, it is difficult to define the impact of the church administrative structures, the political forces and the religious ones in this new establishment process.⁴³ Here, we refer to the will of the scholars and the prelates of *Arbër* to be mainly bound with the Latin Church, the archbishopric of Ragusa and later with the archbishopric of Tivar. Probably, the abbey of Shën Aleksandër in Mali i Shenjt might have played a role. This abbey was connected with the Benedictines

⁴¹ F.Chalandon, *Les Comnenes*, II, Paris 1932, 555, 565-6.

⁴² In it, A.Alb. I, dok.73, is said: *kur ishte në fuqi perandori Emanuel (when was on power the emperor Emanuel)*.

⁴³ The fact that on a later letter, A.Alb.I, dok.133. year 1208, comes out that, the then ruler of Dhimitër principality, asked for help to the Pope *to exercise the purity of the cult* clearly speaks that beyond the desire for a special archbishopric has more political rather than religious reasons.

and other Catholic, e.g., the abbey of Rubik, whose church clearly proves through its architectural construction the connections with the Catholic world.

The other question that we have to define accurately relates to the time when this bishopric was established. Consequently, the Byzantine power weakened and possible alliances to make this act of *rebellion* be concluded from the side of local feudal, archon or a region's lord.

Historic data show that period from the victorious campaigns of 1149 of the emperor Manuel Komnenos in Corfu from where he entered Albania and passed to the north,⁴⁴ to the '70es, is the period of the confirmation of the Byzantine power among the southern Slavs and their rebellions acts, especially after the appointment of Stefan Nemanja as the great Župan of the state of Rasha. Once subdued in 1173, Stefan Nemanja was captured by the emperor and kept in Constantinople.⁴⁵ Under such circumstances the goals of the lords of this region and the bishopric founded by them couldn't have much affirmation possibilities.⁴⁶ Once the emperor died in 1180, efforts were made to become independent from Stefan Nemanja and other rulers north of Arbanon. Consequently, new possibilities were unfolded for the lords of the region the Arbanense bishopric belonged to.

Exactly in this time of decline for the empire, we have data about the involvement of the bishopric of *Arbër* in the lists of the subordinates of the archbishopric of Ragusa.⁴⁷ Based on a notice from the Roman Curia dated in 1188, Pëllumb Xhufi says that bishopric of *Arbër*⁴⁸ is directly dependent upon the Holy See.⁴⁹ This shows that after a period of existence instability or nonrecognition, the bishopric succeeds in being to be fully affirmed, proving at the same time a stronger position of the lords of this region and the clergy connected to Rome.

The same it is also proved by the participation of the archbishop of *Arbër* in a council kept in Tivar in 1199⁵⁰. The hierarchical dependence

⁴⁴ G. Ostrogorski, *Storia del Impero bizantino*, Torino 1966, 350 ; F.Chalandon, *op. cit.* 384.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 397-8.

⁴⁶ See note 41.

⁴⁷ A.Alb. I, dok. 104, (year 1188).

⁴⁸ A.Alb. I, dok. 116.

⁴⁹ A.Alb. I dok. 200, P. Xhufi, *Dilemat e Arbërit*, Tiranë 2006,400, Gj. Berisha, *Arbërorët ndërmjet kishës perëndimore dhe asaj lindore gjatë shekujve XI-XV*, Prishtinë 2015,141.

⁵⁰ A.Alb. dok. 120, September 1199, *Burime...*, 59-62.

of the bishopric of *Arbër* or the bishops of dioceses of Arbanon upon the archbishopric of Tivar has been mentioned since then.

The Princedom of *Arbër* or the state of Arbanon is inseparably connected with the Arbanense bishopric. The Albanian historiography has devoted an important space to this princedom by considering the first Albanian state to emerge in recorded history. The idea that the *arbërs* have had their own archonate for a long time, and the *Arbër State* was established under new circumstances, from 1190-1191 to 1215⁵¹ prevails.

Since the beginning we have stated that a powerful feudal structure with a proper territory might lie in the establishment of the bishopric Arbanense. The archons' presence in the hinterland of the Theme of Durrës is proved since the Taktikon of Uspensky, in 842.⁵² In the Preseancës (Presence?) lists, as we have said in a paper published in the "*Illiria*" of the Academy of Sciences in 1989, to Dyrrachium strategists were also recognized the archons of Durrës (in plural), persons and rulers in the hinterland regions of that important center of the Byzantine power, honorable people, known to the local and central administration until when, together with the strategists, could participate in the ceremonies held in the Imperial Palace at his presence. In that paper, we have widely treated the archons and the archonate and their being in time, even before Themas establishments, according to historic sources, scholars' opinion and on our stand for this problem in the case of medieval Albania⁵³.

We have tried to prove that they the lords of the regions hierarchically depending from Durrës, as autonomous structures. The presence of the bishoprics of *Elison*, *Hunavia*, *Stefaniakas* and *Kruja* in the List of the metropolis of Dyrrachium indirectly proves this. Those archonates were located in the hinterland of Durrës, and their population were in relation with and hierarchically dependent on it within the framework of the Byzantine Empire. The Alps in the North, the territories around Shkumbin in the South, the river Drin in the East and the Adriatic in the West were part of their territory. This is the

⁵¹ K. Frashëri, *Principata e Arbërisë 1190-1215*, 63,125, N. Loka, *Principata e Arbërit shteti i parë i shqiptarëve*, Tiranë 2015, 148, 163.

⁵² N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles*, Paris 1972, 56.

⁵³ A. Meksi, *Të dhëna për historinë e hershme mesjetare të Shqipërisë (fundi i shek.VI - fillimi i shek. XI), Iliria*, 1 1989.122-123.

Theme of Durrës that in time was extended to the Acrokerauns in the South and Tivar in the North, as comes out from the later lists of the bishoprics depending on Durrës.

Certainly, the first archonates might have had sub-divisions under the rule of the powerful lords. Apparently, here we can mention the division amidst the XII century from where the Arbanense Bishopric emerged for a spiritual rule on his people. About this branch or family, we know only what is recorded in the official papers of the time, but the data about their predecessors remain unknown.

Historians say that this was called the Principedom of *Arbër*, because of the title *princeps* granted to them by the Pope in his Letter, along with the titles *panhypersevast* and *great archon*. The history of the direct descendants of this family is well-known around the 1200 until the extinction of its rule under other historic circumstances, also because of the increased number of other ruling feudal families.⁵⁴ Probably, Gëziq might have been the see of the rulers this region, as proved by a famous inscription and their emblem found at the Church St. Mary of Trafandina.

We have stated that the word *Arbanense* of the bishopric (given also to the ruler of that region) refers to the ethnic relevance of the population of that territory and should be distinguished from the description that the historians and the historic sources give to Durrës' hinterland: *Arbanon*, while to the local population *arbër*,⁵⁵ descriptions that are extended when the foreign rulers include in their lands other regions inhabited by Albanians, as in the case of Anjou, whose kingdom Regnum Albaniae was extended down to the South.

The two other problems connected to each other that are to be discussed are:

1. Which was the territory and the see of this bishopric?
2. Is the bishopric of Kruja and the Arbanense bishopric the same?

⁵⁴ A.Alb. I, dok. 133, (year 1208), *Historia e...*, I, 228, K. Frashëri, *Principata...*, 71, N. Loka, *Principata e...* 152.

⁵⁵ P. Xhufi, *Dilemat e...*, 3-23, K. Biçoku, *Kastriotët në Dardani*, Prishtinë-Tiranë 2009 147-170.

M. S. Drinov (year 1894-5) stated for the first time that the bishopric of Kruja and the bishopric of *Arbër* are the same. In his study on the three letters of the archbishop of Ohrid about the marriage of Gregor Kamona, the ruler of Kruja with Komnina, the widow of the Dhimitër of *Arbër* and the daughter of Stefan Nemanja, Drinov says that Gjini, an Arbër's tribe was living in Kruja or nearby.⁵⁶ Also, he supposed that in the Latin documentation the bishopric of Kruja refers to the bishopric of *Arbër* —both of them are named after the region of location and the see, respectively as Dhimitër Komatianoï calls it (*episkopon Kroon*) in his third letter sent to the bishop of Kruja's.⁵⁷ Here are the publishers of *Acta Albaniae* and Šufflay a little bit later⁵⁸ based when affirming this standardization. The latter says that the double name of this bishopric caused confusion, and the Anjous intervened for the establishment of a special bishopric for Kruja and the Catholic bishop to *Arbër* was transferred elsewhere.⁵⁹

Also, Salaville emphasized it in his study on the epitaph of Konstantin Meles, archdeacon of Arbanon, which is dated around the end of XIII century.⁶⁰ Allain Ducellier⁶¹ has also this opinion, while K. Frashëri says that Kruja was the center of Arbanon Dioceses, and when the bishoprics of Lis and Stefaniaka came under the rule of Rome, those merged in one, *Arbër*.⁶² In contradiction with them, Dh. Shuteriqi in his first paper considers these bishoprics as separate entities until the end of the XIV century.⁶³

In absence of reports from the patriarchate of Constantinople about the end of the XII century and the first half of the XIII century, such a thesis is easily presented but, the presence of an Orthodox bishopric in Kruja after the inclusion of these territories under the rule of Epirus is

⁵⁶ M. S. Drinov, *Trudove po Bullgarska i Sllavianska istorija*, Sofija 1909, v. I, 587.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 599.

⁵⁸ *A.Alb.* I, dok.48.

⁵⁹ M.Sufflay, *op. cit.* 213.

⁶⁰ S. Salaville, *Epitaphe metrique de Constandin Meles, Archidiaque d'Arbanon, Echos d'Orient*, t. XXVII, 410-413.

⁶¹ A. Ducellier, *La façade maritime d'Albanie au moyene age*, Thessaloniki, 1981, 108.

⁶² K. Frashëri, *Trojet e shqiptareve në shekullin e XV, Shqipëtarët dhe trojet e tyre*, Tiranë 1982, 201-202.

⁶³ Dh. S. Shuteriqi, *Mbi disa çështje të Arbërit dhe mbi emrin Shqipëri, Buletin për shkencat shoqërore* 3, 1956, 199-201.

precisely proved in 1216.⁶⁴ Kamona turned to Ohrid and not to Durrës because of the authority of Komation and the delicacy of the problem, the solution on which couldn't be accepted if the answer came from the contested metropolitan of Durrës, Dokeianos, which appointment for the Nikea patriarchane was not canonical.⁶⁵

In the episcopal lists of the Catholic church, we see that from 1279 with Roman Crohensi⁶⁶ to the XV century we have always two parallel lines of Catholic bishops in *Arbëria* and Kruja.⁶⁷ However, the first hierarchically depended on the archbishopric of Tivari and the Catholic bishopric of Kruja hierarchically depended on the archbishopric of Durrës. Shuteriqi says that the letters of the Pope John XXII sent to Mihal, bishop of *Arbëria* and to Andrea, bishop of Kruja on June 6, 1318,⁶⁸ and the letter of the Pope Calixtus III in 1457, where it is said that the church of Church St. Mary of Trafandina is in the dioceses of *Arbëria*, while the church of Shën Veneranda of Kurbin is in the dioceses of Kruja⁶⁹ incontestably prove that the bishopric of Kruja and the bishopric of Arbanon are two different ekklesiastical entities. Here, we note that we have the conversion of the bishoprics of Central Albania (four) to Catholic which previously belonged to the orthodox bishopric of Durrësi. This means that Kruja was never replaced by the bishoprics of *Arbëria*.

As we define the bishopric of *Arbëria* as a different ekklesiastical entity from the bishoprics of Kruja, we define their territories. The location of churches in the jurisdiction of this bishopric helped to define the territory of the bishopric of *Arbëria*. In the investiture act of Shën Trifon in Kotorr of 1166, it is mentioned the abbot of the

⁶⁴ A.Alb. dok.150.

⁶⁵ D. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros*, Oxford, 1957, 41; A. Ducellier, *La façade...*, 150 Dokeianos was situated in this see on 1213 and his appointment is approved only on 1222.

⁶⁶ A.Alb. I, 400 (2.12.1279) mentions for the first time this Catholic bishopric of Kruja, whose archbishop left, as his colleague of Vlora, by the coming again of the Byzantines to live as retired some times in Rome and some time in Anjani (M.Sufflay, *op. cit.* 212).

⁶⁷ Respectively; A.Alb. I, dok. 502, (20.05.1266), dok. 505 (31.05.1287), dok. 552 (5.06.1294) dok. 525 (8.09.1295), dok. 636 (6.06.1318), dok. 663 (18.06.1320), dok. 664 (10.03.1320), dok. 665 (16.07.1320); A.Alb. II, Apendix 9 (25.06.1352), dok. 215 (8.06.1366), Apendix 34 (5.06.1372), 48 (19.01.1391), 76 (20.02.1400), 94 (13.04.1305), M.Sufflay, *op. cit.* 218 note 1 (year 1425). See also the respective appendix of this research.

⁶⁸ Dh. Shuteriqi, Mbi disa çështje.... 199, A.Alb., I, dok. 636 (6 iunii 1318).

⁶⁹ J. Radoniq, *Gjuragj Kastriot Skanderbeg i Arbanija u XV vek*, Beograd 1942, dok. 146 (18.08.1457).

Shelbuemit (Redeemer) church in Rubik (*Sancti Salvatori Arbanensis*), which is named so to be distinguished from the abbot of Tivar, also present in this celebration. The second monastery is the monastery of Shën Llezhdri in Orosh or in the Holy Mountain (and from *Agjios Oros* derives the toponym Orosh in parallel of the Mountain of the Saint). This abbey it is known in the records with the names *San Alexandri Maior de Albania*⁷⁰ and *Sancti Alexandri dioecesis Albanensis*,⁷¹ and should be distinguished from the monastery of Shën Llezhdër of Bokian which is found in the records with the name *San Alexandri di Collematia*.⁷² The latter was hierarchically dependent on the bishopric of Lezha.⁷³ The third church is the church of Gëziq that has been correctly unified with *Sancta Maria di Trafandina in diocesis de Albania*.⁷⁴

In his manuscript about the Gëziq's inscription Zamputi devotes some space to the questions related to it, in addition to his transcription. But we disagree with him when he says that during the Turkish occupation the church changed the name of the saint protector by being called now Shën Veneranda to become the cathedral of *Arbëria*, because the cathedral of Kruja in Kurbin was under this saint.⁷⁵ Also, the above-mentioned letter of the Pope Calixtus III (year 1457) leaves no room for such a hypothesis.

⁷⁰ A.Alb. I, dok. 93.

⁷¹ A.Alb. I, dok. 553, n.1.

⁷² M. Sufflay, *op. cit.* 273, on which Shuteriqi, Një mbishkrim..., 137) thinks that is "*Shën Lleshi i Oroshit të Mirditës në mos ai i Dukagjinit të Matit*". By the latter we think that he is mistaken. Also we think that the Assembly of 1602 that is held in Orosh that according to us comes out very clearly when is said that it's in Dukagjin region and after Serbia and Dibra that follow is mentoned the region of Mat. I. M. Ugolini, *Pagini di storia Veneta ai tempi di Skenderbeg e dei suoi successori con due documenti inediti, Studi Albanesi*, III-IV 1933-34, 23-25.

⁷³ M. Sufflay, *op. cit.* 273, note 3 (year 1435). There is mentioned that the monastery was the same with that of Orosh and the latter depended from Lezha. The ruins of this monastery are on the hills of the village of Spiten. See above the note 17.

⁷⁴ J. Radoniq, *Gjuragj Kastriot*..., dok. 146 (year 1457). For the stones with inscriptions on them see on Th. Ippen, *Stare crkvene rusevine u Albani*, *GZMB i H.* Sarajevo 1901, 585-586. Dh. S. Shuteriqi, *An inscription of Arbër (1190-1216) and other founded inscriptions in Mirdita. Studime historike* 3, 1967, 131-156, I. Zamputi, *Rindërtimi i mbishkrimit të Arbërit dhe mundësitë e reja për leximin e tij, Iliria* 2, 1984, 207-217.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 214-215.

All the three constructions, as Shutereqi shows about Gëziqi,⁷⁶ clearly define the extension of Catholic bishopric of *Arbëria* in the today region of Mirdita, bordering the bishopric of Lezha in the west, the region of Pult and the homonymous bishopric in the north, and the territories of the bishopric of Stefaniaka and bishopric of Kruja in the south and east.

Albanian scholars expressed different opinions about the manuscript published in 1995. So, Kristo Frashëri says that Kruja is the see, as he thinks that the 12 churches are in found the region of Misje, the bishopric is extended also to the south of the river Mat.⁷⁷ But the data reported so far prove that K. Frashëri is wrong.

Kasem Biçoku, in his study about this bishopric, supports our studies about the extension of this bishopric in the territory of Mirdita. Also, the reports of the XVII century extend it even in the territories of Kruja and Durrës.⁷⁸ These reports also inform about the organization of the church after more than a century of Ottoman rule. Marin Bici says in 1610 “*three bishoprics: Sapa, Lezha and Shtjefni have remained in Arbëria.*”⁷⁹ Latter on, Pjetër Budi, bishop of Sapa, in a Report of 1624 adds the bishopric Albanense as well. The latter replaces the archbishopric of Durrës and it is extended in the lands that traditionally were called *Arbëria*, but it's not the bishopric that has given it its name to the territory.⁸⁰

As to the Episcopal see, based on the importance of Orosh abbey in this territory and the fact that some centuries later it is called the Episcopal Abbey, we think that the see should precisely be searched in Shën Aleksandër of the Holy Mountain.

Our opinion on the cases that we have presented in the beginning can be briefly summarized:

1. The Arbanense bishopric was established under specific historic circumstances in the mids of the XII century by the powerful lords of the region, first being relating to and later included as subordinate of the archbishopric of Tivar. It was established along with the territories and churches of the Bishopric of Lezha, and probably of Stefaniaka. In

⁷⁶ Dh. S. Shutereqi, *Një mbishkrim...*, 149.

⁷⁷ K. Frashëri, *Skënderbeu*, 69.

⁷⁸ K. Biçoku, *Kastriotët në...*83.

⁷⁹ *Relacione...*, I, dok. 2,101.

⁸⁰ K. Biçoku, *Kastriotët në...*, 88.

this fact it should be searched the roots of the quarrel between the bishopric of *Arbëria* and the bishopric of Lezha.⁸¹

2. This bishopric is different from the Orthodox bishopric of Kruja (or Catholic when belonged to that religion), hierarchically depending on the metropolis or the archbishopric of Durrësi.

3. The territory of the bishopric of *Arbëria*, and of the principality forming it, was situated between the valley of Drin and the valley of Mati, between the Lezha and Lura's highlands. Its neighboring bishoprics were the bishoprics of Lezha, Pult, Stefaniaka and Kruja. The data about its principal extension, the enlargements and territory reduction in time, i.e, the annexing of its territories and their ceding to the bishopric as based on the letters of the Pope, and the administrative changes under the long Ottoman rule are meanwhile missing.

Also, we notice that the *Arbanense bishopric* does not cover the whole territory known from the medieval records under the name *Arbanon*, which church administration was the responsibility of the metropolis of Dyrrachium mainly.

Indirectly, the present manuscript defines the location where the Assembly of Mat was called up in 1462, by Pal Engjëll, the archbishop of Durrës, which Constitutions are presented in the manuscript *Ashburnham nr. 1167* (pages 1-37).⁸² Here we learn that Pal Engjëlli called up a special synod of the clergy of bishopric of Lis (*Lisignen*), subordinate of Durrës,⁸³ to examine and improve the defects that he himself noticed during the visits in the region, according to him a consequence "of the previous tyranny of the Turks or other disasters, which have affected the region for a very long time." He paid his visit at a time when he thought that the clergy was enjoying an extraordinary protection under the honorable signor Scanderbeg, lord of *Arbëria*.⁸⁴ In the constitutions there are some cases that in a way or another show the consequences of war against the Turks in the region and later during the occupation period. His statement explains the way the

⁸¹ *Acta Albania Juridica*, 1-2. Also Drinov *op. cit.*, had noticed that the archbishopric of Arbër should have been in neighborhood with Tivars' subordinates.

⁸² A. Meksi, The position of Monasteri Sancti Trinitati de Emathia, Qendra dhe shtrirja e Peshkopatës së Lisit në kohë dhe gjendja kishtarë në krahinën e Matit dhe ato pranë gjatë shekujve XIV-XVII, *Hylli i Dritës*, 2011,2, 33-57.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 33.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

church's wealth and properties at clergy level are considered and the deviations from church rules, but also the need for changes.

From the text of the Constitutions, we also learn that Mat, from the church organization point of view belonged to the Archbishopric of Durrës and also to the Province of the Franciscans Order (maybe is about their monasteries). The monastery of Shën Trini (*Monasterium Sancte Trinitatis de Emathia*) where the above-mentioned synod was assembled, "a very worthy place," as Pal Engjëlli says, "to celebrate such an endeavor"⁸⁵ is situated in Mat. He says that the bishop of Lis, Andrea and the abbots, the rectors, the officials and all the priests were invited to participate in this synod. He also adds that these orders should be fulfilled even by other bishoprics in Mat and its region, a clear indication that the bishopric of Lis did not extend across the Mati region.⁸⁶

This encourages us to look for new evidences about it, ruins or only traces in toponymy. We have to emphasize that all the scholars that have been interested in the linguistics and historic aspects of this document, have posed questions, but not about the location of the monastery in the region of Mat, because the evidence in the text of the Constitutions casts away all the doubts. However, Kasem Biçoku, who explains in details his thesis about the territory in the north of Mati River and east of Lezha where the churches are situated being called Mati, objects our thesis.⁸⁷

The location of the Monastery of Shën Trini near the village Lis of Mat, was first determined by Dilaver Kurti in 1966. He found near the village of Shëlli in Mat the ruins of an old church called *Shnritat* "between the village of Shëlli and the neighborhood Dazaj of Macukull, on the hill of Balla in Dharbël." Shën Mëria (Saint Mary) is the patron of Lisi, that according to Mark Skura it is situated in the land of Lis (*Terra di Lisia*).⁸⁸ Again, Dilaver Kurti shows that in the toponym of Lis and Shlli, we also have the toponym *Mali i Shën Mërisë* that might be connected with the monastery into question.⁸⁹ Dilaver Kurti, also

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 34.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ K. Biçoku, *Toponimet mesjetare*..., 183-241.

⁸⁸ Dilaver Kurti, *Dokumenti ma i vjetër i gjuhës shqipe dhe Trinia e Matit*, 1972, *Trashëgime Ilirio-Arbërore*, Tiranë 1999, 303.

⁸⁹ D. Kurti, *Shënime etnografike nëpër Mat*, 2004, 22.

thinks that the village of Lis might have been the center of Lisinense bishopric.⁹⁰ The village is situated near the medieval fortress of Stellush, famous for the wars at the time of Gjergj Kastrioti.⁹¹ Also, the village of Shqefën borders Stellushi. The scholars rightly unify Shqefen with the old bishopric of Stefaniaka, first mentioned in the IX century (Stefaniakon),⁹² even with the fortress Stefaniaka as the Procopius of Caesarea⁹³ says.

Kurti says that the the records of the XVII century do not report other churches dedicated to Shën Trinia in the Mati region and in the territory where the bishopric of Lis was situated.⁹⁴ Another case is in the region of Martanesh where such a toponym could be found.⁹⁵ In the center of the village of Peshk is preserved the toponym Kisha e Shëmtrinës. However, according to Mark Skura, the region is situated under the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Benda.⁹⁶ We share the same opinion with Dilaver Kurti about the location of this monastery in Lisi and not in Martaneshi, a remote area. Archeologic researches in the ruins of Shën Trini and in the cathedral of St. Mary in Lisi would be useful to the Albanian culture and history.

Another aspect of the Constitutions relates to the archbishopric of Lis itself, the head of this archbishopric and the place in the church organization by the time and the data about the heads of this archbishopric throughout its existence period. Regarding it and the bishopric of Lis itself, we share the same opinion with the authors of the manuscript, who say that it is about Lisi in Mat and not in Lezha as many others scholars of the church history stated.

The study of the known authors about the publication of the history of the church and its hierarchy, even of those who studied about it later

⁹⁰ D. Kurti, Dokumenti..., 303.

⁹¹ S. Anamali, Stelushi, qyteti i Skënderbeut në Mat, *Studime Historike*, 1967, 4, 105-120. D. Kurti, Një qytet i lashtë ilir në rrethin e Matit, *Studime historike*, 1967, 1, 185, quoted after Trashëgime..., 25.

⁹² S. Anamali, *op. cit.*, 107. D. Kurti, Diskutim mbi kumtesën e Skënder Anamalit "Kalaja e Varoshit në Mat – Stelushi - Nji hallkë e sistemit mbrojtës të Skënderbeut", *Trashëgime...*, 171.

⁹³ Procopii Caesariensis, *De Aedificis, Ilirët dhe Iliria tek Autorët Antikë*, Tiranë 2002, 439.

⁹⁴ D. Kurti, Dokumenti..., 304.

⁹⁵ D. Kurti, Shënime..., 295, A.Cuka, *E folmja dhe toponimia e Martaneshit*, Tiranë 2014, 120,123, (disertacion on line, www.doktoratura.unutir.edu.al).

⁹⁶ *Relacione për gjendjen Shqipërisë së Mesme e të Veriut në shekullin e XVII, përgatitur nga Injac Zamputi*, Tiranë 1965, v. II, (1634-1650), 337.

on, show that their mistake derives from the unification of the bishopric of Lezha (*Alexiense*) with the bishopric of Lisi (*Lisienense*, *Lixiense*). This mistake was first made Daniele Farlati,⁹⁷ but Eubel did not.⁹⁸ Farlati is followed by the publishers of *Acta e Diplomata...*⁹⁹ and lately by Fedalto.¹⁰⁰ We have studied this document, and based on his study and other sources, we are convinced that the list with the names of the bishops of Lisi that Eubel and Tacchella give¹⁰¹ is the most complete list. Giovanni Nigris, Michael de Natera and Nicolò Mondulo are the three names added to this list by us. But Burchardus and Johanis are two names listed in 1358 and around 1370, respectively. The list continues with a range of bishops of this diocese, established in the region of Mat in the mids of the XIV century.

This mistake is noted less among the Albanian scholars, because they know well and in details the place and the local history. Thus, Kristo Frashëri¹⁰² says that foreign scholars including Šufflay, are mistaken when considering it the bishopric of Lezha. Injac Zamputi makes the same remarks.¹⁰³ He says that many scholars are wrong when thinking that the church where the synod was assembled belonged to diocese of Lezha, unifying *Lisiense* with *Alexiense*. Here we can mention Farlati when saying the "*Lisienses seu Alexienses*."¹⁰⁴ However, if we attentively see the list of with the names of bishops Lezha of Farlati presents, it comes out that some of them are mentioned as *Alexiense* and some others as *Lissiense*. After the beginning of the XVI century when the bishopric of Lis had extinguished, only

⁹⁷ Daniele Farlato, *Illyrici Sacri tomus septimus, Ecclesia Diocletana, Antibarensis. Dyrrachensis, et Sirmiensis cum earum suffraganeis*, Venetis, MDCCCXVII. 384-394.

⁹⁸ *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi sive Summorum Pontificum, S.R.E. Cardinalium Ecclesiarum Antistitum Series, ab anno 1198 usque ad annum 1431 perducta e documentis tabularii praesertim- Vaticani collecta, digesta, edita per Conradum Eubel –editio altera*, Monasterii vëll. I, MDCCCCXIII, 83-84; vol. II 85, vol. III 84-85.

⁹⁹ A.Alb, I-II.

¹⁰⁰ G. Fedalto, *La Chiesa Latina in Oriente. Hierachia Latina Orientes*. Verona, 1976, vol. II.35.

¹⁰¹ Lorenzo Tacchella, *Le Antiche sedi episcopali Latine, Greche e Bulgare dell'Albania etnica e della Macedonia*. Milano 1990, 37-39 (Alessio), 85-88 (Lisia).

¹⁰² Kristo Frashëri, *Pesëqind vjetori i dokumentit më të hershëm shqip* (8 Nëntor 1462), *Formula e Pagëzimit*, Tiranë 2009 125.

¹⁰³ Injac Zamputi, *500-vjetori i Dokumentit ma të hershëm të shkrimt shqip. Formula...*, 129.

¹⁰⁴ D. Farlati, *Illyrici Sacri...*, 384.

Alexiense was used. Of the same opinion is also Kolë Ashta who says that Lis, as center of the dioceses of Mat and hierarchically depending on the archbishopric of Durrësi, and Lezha are two different things. Also, finally Peter Bartl, a god expert of our church history, has reservations and inaccurate data about the bishopric of Lisi.¹⁰⁵

Differently from them and us thinks Kasem Biçoku who says that the bishopric of Lezha has been closely connected with Scanderbeg, therefore Andrea, its bishop, was at the side of Pal Engjëlli,¹⁰⁶ and that the bishopric of Lisies *is an invention*, a mistake that occurred due to the mentioning from Mark Skura two centuries later. Except this, he says that Shën Trini is in Breg të Matës, because for him the hinterland of Lezha is part of Mat.

Biçoku has accurately studied about our paper on this topic, but he considers it wrong because *we have not restrained ourselves*, because in our lists of bishops some names are in different languages or are in two places (Lezha and Lis). We have to explain that; I haven't drafted a definitive list of mine because more detailed research is needed, but I have put all the bishops mentioned by publishers of the historic documents and other sources, and the scholars that I have known as well, referring that somebody might be in two places. Nevertheless, the appendix of this manuscript lists the lists with the names of the bishoprics of Lezha, Lisi, Kruja and Arbanense prepared based on additional data and a better interpretation these lists,¹⁰⁷ avoiding the unnecessary mistakes and repetitions. Now it is the turn of the future scholars to complete this list by studying the documentation preserved in the Archives, first of all in the archives of the Holy See, to find out the names of the bishops; their nomination, the see, etc., because the data about the period running from the first Ottoman invasions to the mids of the XVII century are missing.

About the bishop Andrea, the starting of the debate, who in the Constitutions it is considered the bishop of Lis (*Lisignen*) as reported by Gams¹⁰⁸ who apparently might have been based on the letter of the

¹⁰⁵ P. Bartl, Arqipeshkvia e Durrësit gjatë periudhës turke sipas relacioneve të vizitave baritore, *Hylli Dritës*, 2 -2011, 8-11.

¹⁰⁶ K. Biçoku, Mjedisi kishtar dhe politik i kuvendit të Arbërit, *Formula...*, 30-31.

¹⁰⁷ In these appendixes we have tried to make the respective corrections in accordance with this paper.

¹⁰⁸ K. Biçoku, *Toponimet mesjetare...*, 195.

Pope Nicholas V in 1454 where explicitly is described *episcopo Lixiensis*, also as Biçoku reports¹⁰⁹, we are convinced that it is Lis. This is because Eubel presents Lezha with *Alexien – Lexien- Less(i)en*, while Lis with *Lixien- Lissanen*, and not of Lezha. This name is not given by Farlati, in the Lists of whom there are other bishops covering those years, and the nomination depended on the case: Alexiense or Lisien, and after the extinguishing of Lisi, we find the term Alexiense only.

A key role on the thesis of K. Biçoku about Lisi *being an invention*, which has also been admitted by us (viz we framed), is the appointment of Andrea bishop of Lis-Lixense in 1441, after the death of Georgius who was appointed bishop of Lezha - Alexiense - Lexiense in 1440. Andrea was succeeded after the death by Blasius de Bramay on 1.6.1467.

However, if attentively look at the Lists of K. Eubel (v. II, p. 85), it results that after the death of the bishop Lezha, Petrus (Sarda) de Pirano who was appointed by the Pope Martin V (1411-1431) in 1426, Petrus Domgjon, the rector of the church of Shën Koll in Lezha (Alexien) was appointed bishop by the Pope Pius II (1458-1464) in 1459. Vitus Jonima, a noble from Shkodra,¹¹⁰ who was appointed bishop succeeded him after his death in 1474. These names are not listed in the list of Farlati, but their names could be found in the lists of Eubel and Bartl.¹¹¹ As we could notice, Petrus Domgjon was appointed by the Pope— a definitive data proving that Andrea couldn't be the bishop of Lezha. The bishopric of Lis has existed, therefore. The names of the officials of this bishopric are here listed as well. However, further investigation in the archives is needed.

The other aspect of K. Biçoku remarks, is that he finds our mistake when: *we have unified prejudicially the geographical extension of the toponym Emathia (of 1462) with the today extension of Mat's region*. This is incorrect, because in the present paper we have mentioned some contemporary reports about the location of Mati in the Middle Age, that

¹⁰⁹ K. Biçoku, *Toponimet mesjetare*..., 191. The letter has no indication on the position of this bishopric.

¹¹⁰ *Hierarchia Catholica*..., II, 85, *Albania Sacra, Gestliche Visitationsberichte aus Albanien I: Diözese Alessio* Herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Peter Bartl, Wiesbaden 2007, 14.

¹¹¹ *Hierarchia Catholica*..., II, 85, *Albania Sacra*..., I, 14.

with some unessential distinction has remained the same. Also, we remain of the same opinion that the toponym Bregu i Matit (situated north of the river Mat) does not have any connection with the region, but with the river of Mat flowing near by.¹¹²

From the documentation that is preserved we learn that during the middle of the XIV century all the existing bishoprics in the Durrësi hinterland which up to that moment were Orthodox bishoprics were established or converted to Catholic, changing their officials at the same time. With the Anjou occupation (at the end of the XIII century) and the introduction of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, we have frequent actions of the Catholic church from the Albanian bishoprics in Tivar and Durrës concerning the conversion of the Orthodox bishoprics to Catholicism.¹¹³

This activity gives stable outcomes especially after the extinguishing or the exclusion of the Orthodox prelates from the see of the metropolis of Durrës, which apparently is replaced by the Catholic archbishopric. As we have mentioned elsewhere, the latest mentioning of the Orthodox metropolis of Durrës dates in 1343 in the synod act, but whether it resided in its own see remains unknown.¹¹⁴

The establishment of the Catholic church structures under these new circumstances by replacing the Orthodox bishoprics, was characterized during the rule of the Byzantines or the Slavs by fluctuations, depending on the fluctuations of the church and Albanian aristocracy. The same thing happened during the first Turkish occupation around 1415, when the bishopric of Kruja converted to Orthodox, hierarchically depending on the Archbishopric of Ohrid. These events are accurately studied by Gj. Berisha.¹¹⁵

Interestingly, the Catholic bishopric of *Stefaniense et Bendense* with the bishop Demetrius serving as the head of the Catholic bishopric was called in 1363 *Stefaniense*. The bishop Demetrius was later transferred

¹¹² P. B.Gams, *Series episcoporum ecclesiae catholicae, quotquot innotuerunt a Beato Petro Apostolo*. Ratisbonae, 1873, 392. We need to mark that Gams as Farlati unifies the Bishoprics of Lezha and Lissus.

¹¹³ A. Meksi, *Arkitektura e...*, 68-70, R. Elsie, Two Irish travellers in Albania, *Albanien in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Internationales Symposium der SudosteuropA-Gesellschaft*, Munchen, 1991, 24-27; O. J. Schmitt, *Arbëria Venedike...*, 1392-1479, *Tiranë 2007*, 373, 453.

¹¹⁴ A. Ducellier, *La facade maritime ...*, 428-9. P.Xhufi....

¹¹⁵ Gj. Berisha, *Arbërorët ndërmjet kishës perëndimore dhe asaj lindore gjatë shekujve XI-XV*, Prishtinë 2015, 185-224.

to Durrës and succeeded by Julian in 1365— synchronously with Petrus, serving as the head of the unified sees of Stefaniaka and Benda,¹¹⁶ who continues to have this position years later. The inclusion of Benda makes us think that the see might have been there as well, i.e., little retention, but change of the see, and eventually the territory under its jurisdiction was placed in Benda and often in Priska as in some documents it is mentioned as “*Bendense et Priscense*”.¹¹⁷ In these documents it is reported that the Cathedral named after Shën Gjon Pagëzori (Saint John the Baptist), is situated in Moisisi (*terra di Moisisi*), which is today a small village between Shëngjini i Vogël and Qafëmolla. As in some documents dating years earlier (1358), the bishopric of Lis it was mentioned (hierarchically depending on Tivar) in the area nearby the old see in Stefaniaka (Shtjefën), we could explain that the conversion of the local clergy to Catholicism occurred later, under the influence of the Arbanense bishopric situated in east of Stefaniaka. During the rule of Gjergj Kastrioti Kruja became an important political center. So, this bishopric hierarchically depended on the bishopric of Durrës, and remained under this dependence from then. Mark Skura, in a document dating in the middle of the XVII century, emphasizes this dependence including in many territories which once belonged to Stefaniaka, but now the see is in Benda. Their extension could be understood by the villages and the churches mentioned by Mark Skura who says that these bishoprics haven’t had their officials for a long time.¹¹⁸ Also, this document shows that Lisia is situated in the centre of Mat, expanding its territory in the east, in the Dibra region to the shores of the Drini i Zi River— a natural border, and in the north, Mirdita. So, the western and southern parts of the region and the highland of Tirana remained to Stefaniaka and Benda.

From the XV- XVII century, the country and the church faced difficulties because of the wars with the Ottoman Empire and the difficult relations with the Holy See. The Ottoman occupation lasted for almost five years and it was accompanied by the conversion to Islam of the majority of the Christian population and the abandonment and the ruin of the religious buildings, which made the continuity and extension

¹¹⁶ A.Alb. II, Appendix 21, 20 Decembris 1363.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, dok. 747 (12 maii 1404).

¹¹⁸ *Relacione....*, II, dok. 63, 10^v (after 1644).

of the bishoprics and of any other church structure difficult. There are many the cases of the bishops not being able to exercise their duty during the first centuries of occupation, and with the conversion to Islam of the majority of the inhabitants, they were not mentioned anymore. However, the bishops' Lists proves their existence during the XVI-XVII century, and the time when each of them ceases to exists.

So, this was situation into which the church and the administration of the Catholic dioceses was found. They were left without spiritual leader. The churches were ruined and abandoned even by the believers, while the archbishopric of Durrës was displaced in Kurbin, in a safe highland area. We have a slightly different picture of the religion situation in the Central and Southern Albania practicing the Orthodox religion. By establishing the Timar system (possibly since during the rule of the sultan Mehmet I, in the respective registers are described the properties of the churches, bishoprics and the metropolis (the metropolis of Berat).¹¹⁹ This means that it was applied the policy declared by Mehmet II after the conquer of Constantinople in 1453. The properties and other rights were left by decree to the Patriarchane and subordinate churches. These measures were applied up to a certain point during the XV century.

Regarding the church administration, comparing this situation with the situation of the second half of the XIV century, when these territories converted from Orthodox to Catholic with the XV century about which there are more accurate data, regardless the difficult situation for the nation and church, helps us to know the church organization during the Gjergj Kastrioti – Scanderbeg rule.

There is no clear situation of the church even in the territories of Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg. Therefore, studies based on the Archives records and in the historic evidences of the time must further. The Albanian-Turkish war effected the church organization and the real functioning of bishoprics. Based on a document of 1453 shows that in the bishopric of Kruja *there is no Catholic priest and deacon to assist during the mass* the chaplain Don Elia, who has come together with the soldiers of Alfonso V, Gjon Berisha thinks that the castle inhabitants practiced the oriental rite and the Orthodox bishops at this time in

¹¹⁹ *Regjistri i...*, Timaret 148, 200.

Kruja, have played a role of the ambassadors of Scanderbeg. Here we can mention Stefan bishop who was sent to Gaeta in 1451.¹²⁰

The presence of Nifon, an Arvanite from Morea who became at the end of the century Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, in Kruja helps us understand the stand of Scanderbeg's stand towards the presence of both churches, especially after the Council of Florence (1439).¹²¹ Nifon and Zacharia undertook a missionary voyage and visited Kruja at the beginning of the '60es of that century. They were welcomed by Scanderbeg enthusiastically. They exercised their ministry throughout their stay in Kruja, until the city was threatened by the Turks and left to Ohrid.

Further researches are needed, because the Kruja case shows that the territories under the church jurisdiction of Durrës, alternated between the two religions due to the confusion created in the first years of the Ottoman rule and continued even after the death of the Hero and the fall of Kruja at the hands of the Turks and the fall of Durrësi in 1501. Kristo Frashëri says that the Albanians were not fanatic as Šufflay previously emphasizes,¹²² and the Albanian Middle Age was not a clash between Catholicism and Orthodoxy.¹²³

It is clear that during the XV century, when specific regions were occupied, the data on the church organization and its hierarchy incomplete. Under these circumstances, the church documentation has also created many confusions among the scholars. Even in our case, the events occurring in a century of wars and Ottoman occupation, are characterized by ambiguity. There are missing data about the continuity of the Arbanense bishopric, and whether it is related to the establishment of the bishopric of Lis, which in the XVII century administers a part of the territories. The rest of the territories were administered by Lezha. In the first case K. Biçoku¹²⁴ thinks that the extinguishing of the local aristocracy after the Turkish occupation is the

¹²⁰ K. Frashëri, *Skënderbeu*, 187. K. Biçoku, *Kastriotët në...*, 72, Gj. Berisha, *Arbëroret...*, 160-161. During that period are mentioned in the Castle of Kruja, the churches of Shën Gjergj, Shën Mërisë and Shën Ndreu, K. Frashëri, *Skënderbeu*, 244, K. Giakoumis, *Kisha e Shën Gjergjit në kështjellën e Krujës dhe tradita bizantine, Skënderbeu dhe Evropa*, Tiranë 2006, 218.

¹²¹ *Ibid...*, 186.

¹²² *Ibid...*, 188

¹²³ M. von Sufflay, *Serbët dhe shqiptarët*, Tiranë 2004, 122.

¹²⁴ K. Biçoku, *Kastriotët në...*, 73.

source of lack of political support for the Arbanense bishopric, and parts of its territory were included in other bishoprics, and here we would add that the highland territories were included in that of Lis.¹²⁵

The Arbanense bishopric was established around 1166, and it should not be unified with the bishopric of Kruja (Croïense), because it has different territorial area and different leadership. This bishopric was called in 1506 *Albanense* bishopric and Giovanni Corona was appointed bishop by the Pope Julius II (previously are also known Angelo da Macerata and a certain Paolo).¹²⁶ In 1513, Corona retires at favor of Martin Lelesa (Lalëzi),¹²⁷ who appoints Antonio Mida¹²⁸ vicar in the area of Rodon, and from the denomination Mysia, Musia of that area as reported in the documents of the time, derives the today toponym of Muzhli. Meanwhile, the bishopric extended up to Rodon, because, the bishopric of Durrës (and the archbishopric) had apparently disappeared. The bishopric of Durrësi was recreated in 1635 with Mark Skura as the bishop of Albania, whose see was displaced in Kurbin, in the monastery of Shën Veneranda. We think that the term *Albanense* does not refer to *Arbanense*, but Albania -Arbëria. This title is granted to Giovanni Corona to reorganize the church of the Central Albania that had dispersed and no leadership. It was impossible for him to move from Xara where he was placed under the protection of Venice until his death in 1515.¹²⁹

During his stay in Xara, Giovanni Corona appoints Giorgio de Nigris, the bishop of Lisie, as the general subordinate (*suffraganeo generale*). This proves that Corona was the leader of the church in the Central Albania and not of *Arbanense*. On this occasion, also Praga admits that Lisia is not Lezha, and the bishopric of Stefaniaka is a different bishopric.¹³⁰ There are appropriate data (XVII century) and some reports from Mark Skura about the extension of the dioceses of Lisie. In the report dating in the end of 1641, he shows that Lisia was situated between the Kruja mountain and Dukagjin Mountain

¹²⁵ *Relacione....*, II, dok. 63

¹²⁶ G. Praga, Il vescovado Albanense al principio di secolo XVI, *Rivista d'Albania*, II, luglio 1940, 143.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 144

¹²⁸ *Ibid*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 150.

¹³⁰ G. Praga, *Ibid*, 144-145.

(Mirdita). In addition, Mati region is a big valley, more than 30 miles long and more than 17 miles wide.¹³¹ Moreover, the *Albanense* bishopric, its subordinate, it is situated in the region of Elbasani which is called by him *città di Albano*¹³². This is another data that proves our theses, and at the same time it clearly shows that the old nominations and dependencies were extinguished from the memory of the local clergy and believers.

Another question to be addressed is the location meeting of the Assembly of Dukagjini in 1462. Generally, many authors say that this meeting was held in the Mati region, in a village with the same name and where the abbey of Shën Aleksandër (Saint Alexander) was situated.¹³³ Injac Zamputi emphasizes the same in his study about the country's situation in the XVII century.¹³⁴ Here it is hypthetised the transference of the official of abbey of Oroshi in Dukagjini in Mat due to the country's occupation. Later on, in his manuscript about the efforts of the Albanian leaders to liberate the country from the Turks, he remphasizes that "...we have the conviction that the Assembly was held in the village of Mat's Dukagjin...."¹³⁵ We think that this statement was based on *...insieme nel paese di Ducagini a Santo Alessandro....* Also, before the signatures it is written... *Data di Sant' Alessandro della provintia di Ducagini...*

In our paper about the bishopric of *Arbëria*, based on the documentary data, we think that the Assembly of Dukagjin was held in the famous abbey of Shën Aleksandër (Shën Llezhdri) in the Mali i Shenjt in Orosh of Mirdita in 1602.¹³⁶ This is further studied it in details.¹³⁷

2565 delegates from many parts of Albania were gathered in this Assembly aiming to organize a general rebellion. It was decided to address a special letter to the Republic of Venice, because it was hoped

¹³¹ *Relacione.....*, II, 245.

¹³² *Relacione.....*, II, dok.63. 11 (after 1644).

¹³³ *Historia e Shqipërisë*, v. II, Tiranë 2002, 568.

¹³⁴ I. Zamputi, Të dhëna të reja mbi gjendjen ekonomike shoqërore e politike të vendit tonë në shekullin e XVII-të, *Buletin për shkencat shoqërore* 2, 1956, 161.

¹³⁵ I. Zamputi, Projektet shqiptare për çlirimin e vendit drejtue Evropës në vjetet 1577-1621, *Buletin për shkencat shoqërore*, 4, 1956, 122 note 1.

¹³⁶ A. Meksi, Peshkopata e..., note 79.

¹³⁷ A. Meksi, Ku u mbajt Kuvendi i Dukagjinit i vitit 1601-2, *Hylli i Dritës* 4, 2007, 103-106.

that it would be in its own interest to support them in the war against the Turks.¹³⁸ The Assembly demanded of Seignory to help them to gain the freedom, ...*wich they had in the time of Gjergj Scanderbeg*..., and also to welcome the Albanian Ambassador Pal Dukagjini, the bishop of Sapa and Sarda (*Sapatense et Sardinense*) whose task was the negotiation with the Republic of Venice involving the stronghold of Kruja. Also, they were committed to putting at her disposal forty thousand warriors, the bravest ones, to whom could join the Orthodox Albanians, and even the Slavs, and together would make up a hundred thousand men in arms to fight the barbarians.

The requests were written in the letter, and it was hoped that the Republic of Venice would consider them their real and faithful vassals by supporting them and they were ready to live and die in the name San Marco. In the end, they ask to the Republic of Venice to protect them from any enemy and consider them her citizens. The letter dates February 15, 1602 and signatures after the regions: *oDukagjin, Serbia, Dibra, Shkodra, Sapa* (Zadrima with Lezha), *Mat, Kurbin, Kruja, Petrela, Elbasan, Durrës, Myzeqe, Padenia-Spaderica(?)* could be found in it.¹³⁹

The signatories, that prove with their seal the above-mentioned content, are the bishop of Stefaniaka and the Apostolic visitor for the entire *Arbëria Nikollë Mekajshi* (Nicolo Mecansci) and *Nikollë Bardhi* (Nicolo Bianchi), the bishop of Sapa and Sarda. The letter ends with the signature of the abbot of Shën Aleksandër's, fra Bernard Laçi, who wrote the letter "*with the command and the consensus of the above-mentioned chieftains and leaders of all Albania*".¹⁴⁰

The ranking of signatories according to region shows that it is about Shën Aleksandër in the Dukagjini region. Among the signatures there are some chieftains who are mentioned by name and others are described as "*other chieftains*". The chieftains of Serbia (meaning Kosova) Dibra, Shkodra and Lezha with Sapa, the Mati region are listed after Dukagjini. Therefore, Mati is not part of Dukagjini and has never been part of it. This can be understood even from the reports that

¹³⁸ L. Ugolini, *Pagine di Storia Veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg e dei suoi successori* (con due documenti inediti), *Studi Albanesi*, vol III-IV, 1933-1934, 21-25 (dok.1).

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 22-24.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 22-24. On N. Mekanshi, his life and efforts for the liberation of Albania see: R. Hoxha, *Peshkopi i Arbërisë*, Kavajë 1998.

the envoys in *Arbëria* and the local prelates such as Marin Bici, Mark Skura, Pjetër Budi, Pjetër Mazreku sent to Rome.¹⁴¹ These reports clarify the differences between the Dukagjini region and Mati region, and the Assembly of Dukagjin was gathered in the the Abbey of Shën Aleksandër in Malin e Shenjti and not in the village of Dukagjini in Mat, where there is an abbey with the same patron saint.

The old quarrel between the bishopric of Lezha and the Arbanense bishopric comes out again in the beginning of the XVII century when the envoys of the Congregation Propaganda Fide and the missionaries established in the missions, began to reestablish the church structures in the Central Albania. This is could be noted the letter of Marin Bici, the archbishop of Tivari, in 1610,¹⁴² where he says that except the bishopric of Stefania, the bishoprics of Sapa and Lezha have remained, meaning that the bishop of Stefania is the bishop of Albanense, once the Archbishopric of Durrësi. The first evidence about the quarrel dates in 1625,¹⁴³ when Benedict Orsini, the bishop of Lezha, complains about the behavior of Gjon Kolesi, because when he turned from Rome, brought the indulgence of the Holy Year only for his dioceses. This is because according to him it was not granted to the other dioceses. According to Orsini, the title *Albanense* for the dioceses of Kolesi is fake, because such a diocese does not exist. He doesn't want to understand that the Vatican has made a reorganization, according to which this bishopric includes all the territory that once belonged to Durrës. This bishopric was called the Archbishopric of Durrës and its see was in Shën Veneranda of Kurbin, as Durrësi was occupied by the time. These are the beginnings of the renewal of the old quarrel Lezha-Arbëria about the churches in the Mirdita, Mat and Kruja regions, which lasted repetitively for 30 years. Kolesi was appointed bishop by the time and was succeeded by the bishop Mark Skura.¹⁴⁴

This quarrel is described in many reports sent to Rome to ask for support, from each part. The cause is clearer, because the absence of the *Arbanense* bishopric and of the heads of this bishopric for nearly 150 years due to the Ottoman occupation, their reestablishment process

¹⁴¹ *Relacione...*, dok. 36, 44, 44^v, dok. 3, 185, dok. 5, 83, dok 37, 271.

¹⁴² *Relacione...*, I, dok. 2, 101.

¹⁴³ *Relacione...*, I, dok.22, 88^v.

¹⁴⁴ *Relacione...*, I, dok. 31,167, dok. 32.

faced difficulties with regard to the borders of Lezha first, and of the territory that was once of the bishopric of Durrës.

In the reports sent to Rome about his visit in 1629, B. Orsini mentions the villages at the back of Lezha, which he considers his villages, and also the villages in the highland (Ndërfanda, Fani i Vogël, Mirëdita, Bulgëri, Kthella, Selita etc. that he did not know), with more than 3000 houses that were not subdued to the Turks. According to him they belonged to the *Albanese* diocese.¹⁴⁵ The same year, after monsignor Gjon Kolesi bishop of Lezha dies, Orsini goes to the Mountains in Mirdita and makes the inhabitants swear under oath for him, and in the Abbey of Orosh, once Episcopal abbey, is appointed a new abbot.¹⁴⁶ Once bishop Mark Skura is appointed bishop in 1636, complains about the churches of Shpërdhasa, Velje, Gjunalit e Fandit të Madh, in which the bishop of Lezha presents himself while not belonging to Archbishopric of Durrës.¹⁴⁷

This quarrel required evidences from a group of clergymen and seculars, and a little bit later from some vicars who in 1636¹⁴⁴ show that the villages of Kthella, Mirëdita, Fand, Selita and Dibri, have been part of the Albanese bishopric for 60 years now. And when Mark Skura takes the same year from Rome the bull and the decrees for the Albanese church to administer *the peoples of Durrës metropolis: Bendense, Lisiense, Crojense, Canouiense*; he again complains about the bishop of Lezha for usurping the name *Lisiense* with *Alessiense* and taking some villages.¹⁴⁸

For this purpose, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide envoys Gjergj Usković as commissar for the borders between Lezha and Albanese in 1637.¹⁴⁹ Based on his reports, Gjergj Usković did not have right stand. Mark Skura in the letter says that B. Orsini would like to make the name of the Lis diocese disappear, and detaches Blinisht, Mirdita and other villages from this diocese.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ *Relacione...*, II, dok. 2, 215.

¹⁴⁶ *Relacione...*, II, dok. 6, 117.

¹⁴⁷ *Dokumente për Historinë e Shqipërisë (1623-1653)*, Transcribed and translated by I. Zamputi, St. Gallen-Prishtinë 2015, dok. 28, 125-125^v, (11 February 1636) dok. 29, 127-127^v, (24 March 1636).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* dok. 33, 119-119^v, (12 June 1636).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* dok. 43, 150-157^v, (28 May 1637).

¹⁵⁰ *Relacione...*, II, dok. 23, 217-218^v, (29 May 1637).

We have detailed reports on the church situation of the Catholic bishoprics from bishops and visitors since then and throughout the second half of the XVII century. These reports are partly published in Albanian. Here we can mention the reports made by Mark Skura (in the half of the '40s), Shtjefën Gaspari¹⁵¹ (in the end of the '60) and of Vincens Zmajević in 1701.¹⁵²

This quarrel had definitively ended in 1703, when the Council of Arbër defined the borders among the bishopric of Lezha, Sapa and Albani and the borders of the bishopric of Pulti.¹⁵³ However, there is space for further discussions and studies as well as about the history of the church organization for the XV-XVII centuries in the Central and Northern Albania. The studies by professor Zamputi, Peter Bartl and other Albanian and foreign scholars remain of great importance. Exhaustive research in the Archives of Vatican etc. are however needed.

The present paper provides information about the *Arbanense* bishopric; its establishment, extension, the quarrel with the bishopric of Lezha (Alexiense-Lexiense) and some current data about it. The abbey of Shën Aleksandër in Orosh (*Sancti Alexandri supra Montem Meriditarum*) played a great role.

We aim to inform about some of the many historic events of the Medieval Age as it is a period that requires further accurate researches in the Archives. The new generation of historians is needed to be trained about systematic research on data that should be published based on scientific criteria. So, the existing deficiencies have caused confusion in knowing this period of our history.

¹⁵¹ *Albania Sacra*....., I,108-122, (1671/72), *Albania Sacra, Gestliche Visitationsberichte aus Albanien 2: Erzdiözese Durazzo*. Herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Peter Bartl, 196-214 (1672), Wiesbaden 2011.

¹⁵² *Quellen und Materialien zur Albanischen Geschichte im 17. Und 18. Jahrhundert*, Herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Peter Bartl, München 1979.

¹⁵³ V. Malaj, *Kuvendi i Arbënit* 1703, Prishtinë 1998, 122, *Kuvendi i Arbënit*, Prishtinë 2003, 445-447, *Concili Provinciaali o Cuvendi JArbenit 1706*, prepared for publishing by Bardhyl Demiraj, Shkodër 2012, 201-205. In the decisions of the council is said that should stick on the conversations made in Mërqi on 1638. Thus: Shën Gjergji of Kukul, Shën Mëria of Lasingagji, Shën Marku and Shna Prenda of Kthellës, Shën Vlasi and Shën Lleshi of Selita are of Albani; While Shën Mëria of Fand and Shën Lleshi on the mountains of Mirdita, Shën Mëria and Shën Marku of Fand i Vogël, Shën Mitri in Fand i Madh, Shën Pali and Shën Shtjefni of Blinisht are of Lezha.

Only the multiplied efforts we can shed light on the Albanians' Middle Age, exceeding the frontiers of the first decades of the past century.

Appendix 1

The bishopric of Lezha (*Alexiense, Lexiense*)

1357	Jacobus	E ,I,83; ADA ,II, A.12; T 37;
1365	Dionisio	E ,I, 83; ADA ,II, A.28; T 39;
???	intruso Giovanni Lursi (Nigro)	E ,I, 83; T 39;
1369-72	Domenico Progoni di Camona	E ,I, 83; ADA , II,296,A.38 ; T 39;
???	Petrus	E I, 83;
1394	Francesco Petri	E ,I, 83; ADA ,II, A.59,65; T 39;
1397	Andrea Regino	E ,I, 83; G 392; T 39;
1405	Bartholomeo	R. L. 125, 208^r-209^r
1405	Andrea Sumae	F 388; E ,I, 84; R. L. 122A , 295 ^v -296 ^v ;
		LeQ III, 955- 956;; Fed II, 35-36
1426	Pietro Sarda da Pirano	F 388; E ,I, 84; G 392; Fed II, f.36; LeQ III, 955-956 R. L. 267, 234^v-235^r ; ; T 39;
1459	Pietro Domgion	E II, 85; T 39;
1474	Vito Jonima	E ,II, 85; T 39;
1478	Petrus Malonsis	F 389; E ,II, 85;
1485	Petrus	E II, 85;
1489	Petrus II. Malonsius	G 392;
1489	Blasius II	G 392;
1509	Petrus	G 392;
1513	Nicolo Dabri	E III, 103; T 39;
1518	Petrus Gil	E III, 103;
1518	Giovani Gionema	F 386, 390; E III, 103; G 393; T 39;
1519	Ferdinando de Rosas	F 386, 390; T 39; G 393; E III, 103;
1525	Nicolaus Naule	F 390; E III, 103; G 393;
1525	Joannes III. de Stymai Albanensis	F 390; E III, 103; G 393;
1529	Antonius Nigris	E III, 103;
1535	Guglielmus de Furrbitius	F 390; E III, 103; G 393;
1558	Nicolaus III. Guernus	F 391; G 393; E III, 103;
1559	Antonius de Nigris	E III, 104;
1560-75	Johannes IV. Crassinga	F 391; E III, 104; G 393;
1575	Theodorus Calumpsi	F 391; E III, 104; G 393;
1578	Marinus Brajano Ragusinus	F 391; G 393; E III, 104;

1596-1601	Innocentius Stoicini	F 391; E III, 104; E IV, 77; G 393;
1621	Benedictus Orsini	F 392; G 393; E IV, 77;
1656	Georgius Vladagni	F 393; G 393; E IV, 77;

The bishopric of Lis (*Liciense, Lisiense, Lixiense*)

1358-69	Burchardus	E ,I,83; ADA ,II, dok.270, A. 12;
Para 1370	Johanis	E ,I,83; ADA ,II,A.32,dok.270 n.4;
1370	Giovanni Hueti de Codomo	F 387; E I,309; T 85;
1373-85	Gregorio Laurenti da Venezia	F 387; E I,309; T 85;
1392	Martinus	E ,I,309; ADA ,I,256; Fed ,II,36; T 68;
?	Nicolo "Oculi Grandi"	E II,179; T 88;
1436	Giorgio	E ,II,179; Fed ,II,36; T 88;
1441	Andrea	E ,II,179; Fed ,II, 36; T 88;
1467	Biagio Bramay	F 389; LeQ ,II,96; E ,II,179;
		Fed ,II, 36; T 88;
1498	Francesco de Comitibus	F 389,A .60; E ,II,179; Fed ,II,36;
		T 88;
1510	Giorgio Nigris	LeQ ,II 956; P dok.9;
1513	Michael de Natera	F 389; LeQ ,II,956; T
88;		
1517	Nicolo Madulos	F 390;

The bishopric of Arbëria (*Arbanense, Albanensis, Albaniensis*)

1166	Lazaro	F 194, G 392; ADA ,I,dok.93; T 36
1199	N.N.	F 194; G 392;
1250(2)	N.N. (Petrus?)	F 194; M 29; G 392;
1292	Michael	E ,I,100; F 195;G, 392; T 36;
1306	Martino	F 196; G 392; T 36;
1316	Michael	F 196;
1317	Michael II	G 392;
1317	Martinus	E I, 100; R. V. 70, epis. 477;
		Mo. nr. 10362;
1350	Laurus	E ,I,100; F 196; G 392;
		ADA ,II,dok.78;
1354	Nicolaus	E ,I,100; F 196; G 392;
		ADA ,II,dok.104;
???	Andreas	E I, 100;
1364	N.N.	F 197; G 392;
1367	N.N. /Dominicus, 1372, G 392/	F 197; G 392;
1370-91	Giovanni Lourlis	F 197; E I, 100; G 392; T 36;
1391-97	Giovanni da Trieste	E ,I,100; G 392; ADA ,II,dok.459;
		T 36;
1398-402	Thomas	E I, 100; ADA ,II, A.82;

1402	Giorgio	E ,I,100; ADA ,II,A.82; R. L. 102, 147r-148 ^r ; T 36;
1411	Andreas	E ,I, 100; F 197; G 392; R. L. 189, 104 ^r ;
1412	Vulcanos Sinuti	E , I, 100; R. L. 135, 4 ^r -5 ^r ; T 36;
1426	Andreas Summa	E I,100; E II,104; F VII, 197-198; G 392; R. L. 337, 50 ^v ;
1441	Andrea Svinci	E ,II, 92; F VII, 197; G 392; R. L. 386, 13 ^v -14 ^r ; T 36;
1463	Nicolaus	E II, 92;
1471	Nicolo	E ,II, 92; T 37;
?	N.N. (Paolo ?)	F 198; P 143;
1494	Angelo da Macerata	E ,II, 92; F 198; G 392;
1506 (albanense)	Giovanni Corona	F 198; E ,III, G 392;114; P 143; T 37;
1518	Johannes (Jacobus) de Montalbo	E ,III,114; F 200; G 392;
1519	Ludovicus de Vivaldis	E ,III,114; F 200; G 392;
1540	Petrus de Torres	E ,III,114;
1554	Dominicus Bigorrei	F 202; E ,III,114; G 392;
1578	N.N.	F 202;
1598	N. N.	G 392;
1608	N.N.	F 202; G 392;
1615	Ioannes Collesius	F 202; E ,IV.74; G 392; T 37;
1635	Marcus Scurra	F 203; E IV, 74; G 392; T 37; 6;

The bishopric of Kruja (*Croensis, Croiense, Crojenses, Crojacenses, Croiae*)

1286-98	Romano	F 413-4; E , I, 216; Fed , II, 109; G 404; T 59;
1318-20-27	Andrea	F 413; E , I, 216; G 404; Fed , I, 109; T 59;
1352	Gregorius	F 413-4; E , I, 216; LeQ , II, 956; G 404; T 59; Fed , II, 109;
1366	Andrea	F 413-4; E , I, 216; LeQ , II, 956; G 404; T 59; Fed , II, 109;
1400	†Iohannes	E , I, 216;
1400	Gualtieri	E ,I, 216; R. L. 255, 94 ^v -95 ^{r-v} ; Fed ,II, 109;
1407	Johannes Petri de Arbania de Volpevisto	R. L. 132, 117 ^r ;
1409	Francesco	T 59;
1409	Nicola	T 59;
1415-25	Antonio Ventura de Urbe	F 415; E I, 216; G 404; LeQ ,II,956; R. L. 255, 94 ^v -95 ^{r-v} ; H I, 344 (nr. 724); T 61;
1457†	Silvester	Fed , II, 119;
1457	Paolo	E ,II, 140;); G 404; Fed , II, 110;

		R. L. 349, 254 ^{F-V} ;
		H I , 344 (nr. 724; T 61;
1468	Pietro de Varnis (de Brutis)	F 430; E ,II,140; G 404; T 61;
1471	Elia Sguri	E ,II,140; T 61; Fed ,II,110;
1475	N. N.	G 404;
1476 †	Iohannes	T 61;
1476	Nicolo	T 61;
1478	Pietro	T 61;
1480	N.N.	F 430-1; Fed ,II,110;
1498	Iohannes Didacus	F 413,431; G 404;
1498	Martinus de Portu	E ,II,140;
1517	Ferdinandus	F 431; G 404;
1525†	Paulus	F 431; E , III, 182; G 404;
1524(5)	Francesco de Chios	F 431; E , III, 182; G 404; T 61;
1542	Bonaventura Dalmata	T 61;
1632	N.N.	F 432; G 404;
1649	N.N.	LeQ ,II,956;
?	Iohannes	F 432; G 404;
1694	Isidorus	F 432; G 404;

Abbreviations:

ADA – *Acta et Diplomata Res Albaniae Mediae Aetatis Ilustrantia. Collegerunt et Digesserunt Dr. Ludovicus de Thallóczy, Dr. Constantinus Jireček et Dr. Emilianus de Sufflay. Volumen I, (annos 344-1343 tabulamque Geographicam continens); volumen II, (anos 1344-1406, continens).* Vindobonae: Typis Adolphi Holzhausen, 1913-1918.

E – Conradum Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi sive Summorum Pontificum, S. R. E. Cardinalium Ecclesiarum Antistitum. Series ab anno 1198 usque ad annum 1431 perducta e documentis tabularii praesertim Vaticani collecta, digesta, edita per Conradum Eubel. Editio altera. Monasterii, 1913, vol. I, ab anno 1198 usque ad annum 1431; 1914, vëll. II. ab anno 1431 usque ad annum 1503. [Sumptibus et typis, Librariae Regensbergianae. /Re-Impressio immutata Patavi 1960. Typis et sumptibus domus editorialis "Il Messaggero di S. Antonio" Provinciae Patavinae S. Antoni ordinis fratrum Minorum Conventualium apud Basilicam S. Antonii – Patavii, Italia].*

F – Daniele Farlato, *Illyrici Sacri. Tomus septimus. Ecclesia Diocletiana, Antibarenis, Dyrrhachiensis, et Sirmiensis, cum earum sufraganeis. Auctore, Daniele Farlato, presbytero Societatis Jesu, et Jakobo Coleti olim ejusdem Societatis alumno. Venetiis: Apud Sebastianum Coleti. Superiorum permissu, ac privilegio, 1817, vol. VII.*

Fed _____, *La Chiesa Latina in Oriente. Hierachia Latina Orientes. /Studi relegiosi /2/ una collana che presenta con rigoroso metodo scientifico momenti, istanze, problemi religiosi della nostra epoca. Verona: Casa Editrice Mazziana, 1976, vol. II.*

G – Pius Bonifacius Gams, *Series episcoporum ecclesiae catholicae, quotquot innotuerunt a Beato Petro Apostolo. A multis adjutus edidit P. Pius Bonifacius Gams, O.S.B. Ratisbonae: Typis et Sumtibus Georgii Josephi Manz, 1873.*

H – Ulricus Hüntemann. *Bullarium Franciscanum continens constitutiones epistolas diplomata Romanorum Pontificum Eugeni IV et Nicolai V, ad tres ordines S. P. N. Francisci spectantia collegit et eddidit fr. Ulricus Hüntemann O.F.M. lector iubilatus. Nova Series, tomus I, (1431-1455). Florentiam: Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi). Ex Typographia Collegi S. Bonaventurae, 1939, vol. I.*

LeQ – Michaelis le Quien, *Oriens Christianus, inquitur patriarchatus digestus; quod exhibentur Ecclesiae, Patriarchae, caeterique praesules totius orientis. Studio et opera R. P. F. Michaelis le Quien, Morino-Boloniensis, Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum. Opus Posthumum. Tres magnas complectens Diaeceses Ponti, Asiae, et Thraciae, Patriarchatui Constantinopolitano subjectas. Caeterique praesules totius orientis, tomus secundus. Pariis: Ex Typographia Regia, 1740, vol. II.*

M – *Monumenta Montenegrina, knjiga V, tom I, Crkve podloznice Barske Arhiepiskopije. Podgorica, 2001.*

Mo – Guillaume Mollat, and Guillaume de Lesquen, *Lettres Communes des papes d'Avignon. Paris: Libraire des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 1905.*

_____, *Lettres Communes de Jean XXII (1316-1334). Introduction la collation des bénéfices ecclésiastiques a l'époque des papes d'Avignon (1305-1378). Paris: E. de Boccard, 1921.*

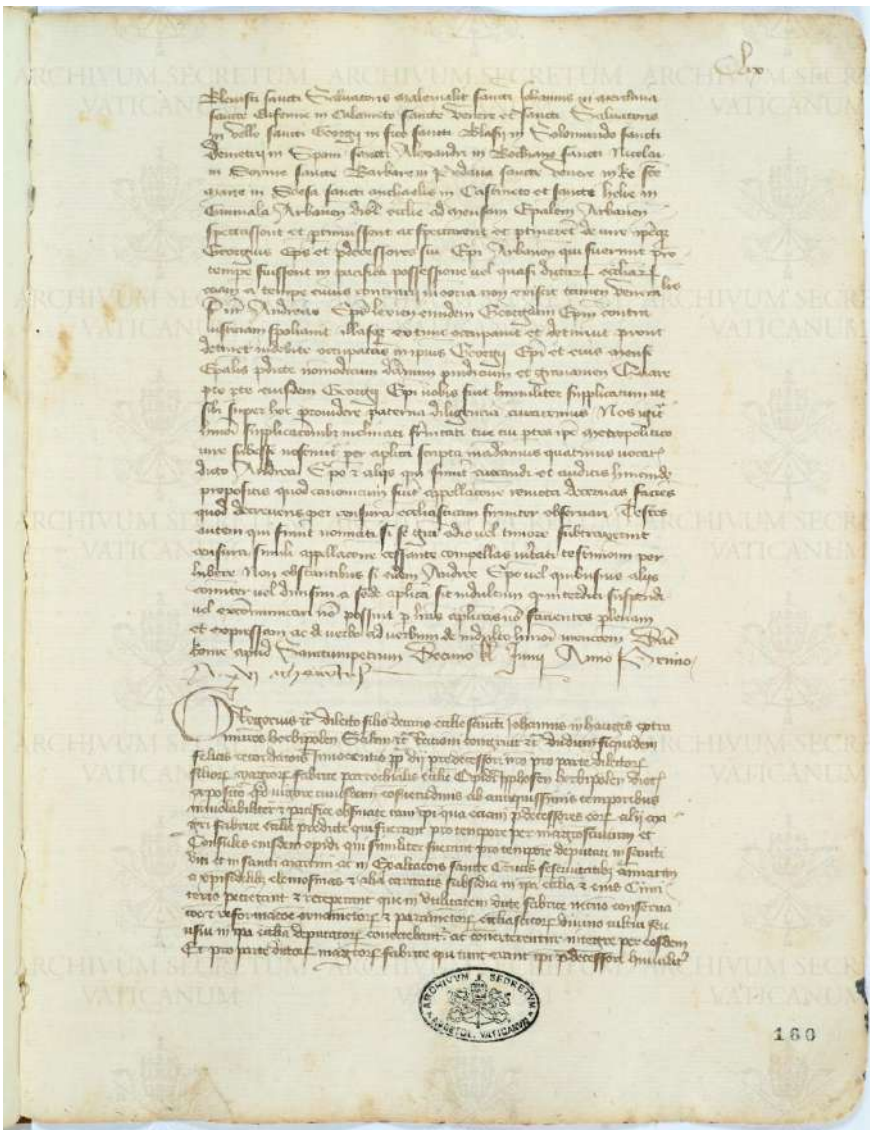
_____, *Lettres Communes Jean XXII (1316-1334). Analysées d'après les registres dits d'Avignon et du Vatican. Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1904.*

_____, *Les Papes d'Avignon (1305-1378). Dixième édition revue, remaniée et augmentée. Paris, 1965.*

P – Giuseppe Praga, *Il vescovado Albanense al principio di secolo XVI. In: "Rivista d'Albania." Milano II, luglio 1940.*

R L – *Registri Lateranesi, (Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatikan. Fond: Registri Lateranensi) vol. 102, 109, 112, 122A, 132, 133, 135, 162, 189, 204, 255, 267, 289, 320, 337, 349, 386, for the years 1401-1454.*

T – Lorenzo Tacchella, *Le Antiche sedi episcopali Latine, Greche e Bulgare dell'Albania etnica e della Macedonia. Milano: Biblioteca dell' Accademia Olubrense, 1990.*



Gregorius etc.

Venerabili fratri --- archiepiscopo Antibarensiese salutem etc.

Justis et honestis supplicum notis libenter- communimus illaque.favoribus
prosequimur oportunis exhibita siquidem nobis, nuper pro parte venerabilis

fratris nostrl Georgij episcopi Arbanensis .petitio continebat quod licet Sancte Venere in Baldreni, Sancti Nicolai [f. 160^r.(o1. 159r)] in Blenisti, Sancti Salvatoris Malemalit, Sancti Johannis in Merchina, Sancte Eufemie in Calameto, Sancte Venere et. Sancti Salvatoris in Vello, Sancti Georgij in Fico, Sancti Blasij in Solomundo, Sancti Demetrij in Spani Sancti Alexandri in Bochiano, Sancti Nicolai in; 'Soyme, Sancte Barbare in Pedana, Sancte Venere in Re, Sancte Marie in Soesa, Sancti Michaelis in Castineto et Sancti Helie in Guimala Arbanensis diocesis ecclesie ad mensam Episcopalem Arbanensisspectassent et pertinuisent ac spectarent et pertinerent de iure ipseque Georgius episcopus et predecessores sui episcopi Arbanensis qui fuerunt pro tempore fuissent in pacifica possessione vel quasi dictarum ecclesiarum etiam a tempore cuius contrarij memoria non existit tamen venerabilis frater noster Andreas episcopus Lexiensiseundem Georgium episcopum contra iustitiam spoliavit illasque extunc occupavit et detinunt prout detinet indebite occupatas in ipsius Georgij episcopi et eius mense episcopalis prediacte nonmodicum damnum preiudicium et gravamen quare pro parte eiusdem Georgij episcopi nobis fuit humiliter supplicatum ut sibi super hoc providere paterna diligentia curaremus. Nos igitur huiusmodi supplicationibus inclinati fraternitati tue cui partes ipse metropolitico iure subesse noscuntur per apostolica scripta mandamus quatenus vocatis dicto Andrea episcopo et aliis qui fuerinevocandi et auditus hincinde propositus quod canonicum fuerit appellatione remota decernas faciens quod decreveris per censuram ecclesiasticam firmiter observari. Testes autem qui fuerint nominati, si se gratia, odio vel timore subtraxerint, censura simili appellatione cessante, compellatis veritati testimonium perhibere, non obstantibus sed eidem Andre episcopo vel quibusvis alijs communiter vel divisim a sede apostolica sic indultum quod interdicti suspendi vel excommunicari non possint per litteras apostolicas non facientes plenam et expressam ac de verbo ad verbum de indulto huiusmodi mentionem.

Datum Rome apud Sanctum Petrum. Decimo Kalendas Junii Anno Primo.
N. XII. *Achevontius*.

(ASV. Reg. Lat. vol. 128,j.159^v-160^r.) transcribed by M. Ahmeti

Grigori etc.

Shaban SINANI

**ÀRBËRIA IN THE CENTURIES OF EUROPEAN
HUMANISM ACCORDING THE STATUTES CONFIRMED IN
THE EPOCH OF GJERGJ KASTRIOTI ¹**

I.

I was suggested to participate in the second session of the International Albanological Conference in the format *lectio magistralis*. For some days and weeks, I was somewhat undecided whether to hold this presentation, or another one.

Decades ago, since my dissertation on the Albanian heroic legendary epos, I have always posed the question why the cycle of Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg was preserved by the Arbëresh people in an almost complete way, while among the Albanians on the other side of the Adriatic the unwritten memory that kept him alive was only through *legends*, if we would have been served with the title of Marin Sirdani's deed; or in the post-Arbër epoch Albania's *onomastics* and *toponymy*. This is one of the most complicated questions of the Albanian knowledge, that until now has got its response only through questions:

1. Did the Ottoman Imperial rule obstruct the cult of Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg, while allowing the praise of Čuprilič, the family of the Koprülü dynasty, also even where there were held devastating campaigns such as in Bosnia? We can't say whether it is a bookish merit or an intuition merit that I. Kadare, in the novel *Pallati i ëndrrave* (*The Palace of Dreams*), the Greek rhapsodists invited by Kurt Qyprilli (Koprülü) are brought from Bosnia and not from their birthplace. Anyway, Čuprilič *the Vizier*, who in the traditional studies has been treated as a proper name, although indeed is simply one of the Koprülü viziers, viz, the Albanians Qyprillinj, has their glorified epos today

¹ This presentation is part of the discourse segments.

from the Albanian lute strummers, but there is not an epos dedicated to Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg. To the acceptance of an arbitrary interdiction from the Ottoman Empire, is also added the argument from some well-known scholars such as Kristo Frashëri, who also finds in the Fushë-Kosova battle cycle, names of identifiable heroes from the historic point-of-view, as Musa Arbanasi and Miloš Kopilić.

2. Always of a hypothetic framework remains also as answer the counterproposal if perhaps where the epicenter that guarded the epos was, including the cycle of the vizier Koprülü, *de gestibus Scanderbega* were not welcomed, because of the known rivalry between the Dukagjini and Kastrioti families, also expressed in the traditional unwritten law, at least in two definitions:

<i>The Canon of Lekas</i> (according to the Father Gjergj Fishta)	<i>The Canon of the Ghegs</i> (according to Father Gjergj Fishta)
<i>The house is inherited from the elder son:</i> referred to <i>seniority</i> concept and to the age ethic status, is even today the same authoritarian and sovereign.	<i>The younger, the best.</i> The foregoing generation lives with the younger son when the house is divided. This authority heritage principle in the family is similar with that of the Slavs, that synthetically is found in the expression <i>naimladši - nailudši</i> .
The heritage is inherited starting from the elder (expression of what is called <i>ius patris</i> , <i>the right of the elderly</i> , patriarchal right).	<i>The elder divides, the younger chooses</i> (Frano Illia)

3. On the other hand, this matter has complicated by the fact that it's almost an undisputable incompatibility that the country's cultural heroes of Arbër ends with the cycle of Fushë-Kosova battle, from where the heroic historic epic in which Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg is not shown but in people's stories and legends starts.

4. On the contrary, in the Arbëresh, at least starting with *Codice Chieutino*, which is authored by the well-known scholar Matteo Mandalà, *the cycle of Gjergj the Great almost pre-ready exits* for *Rapsodie di un poema albanese* of De Rada, and thus we have to carefully pull back from Macpherson's theories with which are explained the songs of this poem.

5. Because on *Gjergj the Great*, would be appropriate to remember that his name is mentioned in a side-writing code-graphic of 1441, and

rightfully Theofan Popa has addressed it to Gjergj Arianiti, because our Kastrioti in that time was neither great nor small. He had not returned in the country of his ancestors and was unknown to them.

6. A counter-answer, basing on the studies of Matteo Mandalà, would be in the form of a question if the Arbëresh, when they left, taking with them the icons, the bells, the codices, the genealogies, did they also take with them the cycle of Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg? Apparently not. Although even in the song *Moj e bukura More* (*beautiful Morea*) was composed after establishing in their new country of stay, as Mandalà thinks, when were somehow economically enriched, thought also to be enriched genealogically, and thus the cycle of *Gjergj the Great* can be considered *recreated*, in the form of the ancestor's memory, *prius parens*, and the questions takes a solution.

II.

I will pose some arguments about the question on *Arbëria in the centuries of European humanism according the statutes confirmed in the epoch of Gjergj Kastrioti* because on reasons that are connected not only with the Pan-National Year of Scanderbeg, but also even with some essential issues of the Albanian knowledge.

1. For the statutes and the rules of the urban custody of Albania's cities in the centuries of European humanism in the coastal line of the Albanian territories and in a way even in the *hinterland* during the last two decades, there were some studies carried out by local and foreign scholars such as, Lucia Nadin, Oliver Jens-Schmitt, Gherardo Ortalli, Pëllumb Xhufi, Luan Malltezi, Aurel Plasari, Ardian Klosi, Ismet Elezi, Ermal Baze etc. that must be honored. However, this heritage, with rare exceptions, *has not been seen in its anthropologic and ethno-judicial side*.

2. The Albanian historiography rightly has been based on the thesis that *Arbëria of the pre Ottoman centuries had the development level with the countries along the Adriatic basin*. Confirmed by the dean of the Albanian medieval studies, Aleks Buda, this thesis permitted to hypothesize that the idiom Adriatic basin was a metonymy for *the European continent*. This thesis was confirmed through many other data, but not from the legal order that is proved in *corpus iuris*

statuendi, in the collection of the Albanian cities, referring with this term to the *Statutory codices*, belonging to the XIII-XVII centuries.

3. In the Albanian studies tradition, the statutes, the rules and the laws of establishing the urban order, have been for a long time an excluded object, for two principal reasons: 1. Because of *a deeply puritanical stand, to the foreclosed limits*, expressed in the opinion that these acts are foreign for the Albanian tradition, are vassalage rules towards the Serenissima Seignory; 2. Because that the statutes are the rules of establishing the urban life in Albania of humanity centuries, are considered approaches of *religious culture*. These two reasons explain why in the entire history of Albania, from the beginning to-day, the statutes and rules, *do not occupy more than a page*. As to the ethno-judicial anthropology outcomes, *the statutes have been and remain excluded* even for a technical reason: *because the statutes are a written culture, while the customary law is an unwritten one*.

4. The studies about the state of Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg's age do not lack. However, also in these cases, the legal order of Scanderbeg's state has been considered *through the ambassadors credentials, alliances and treaties, chancelleries' acts, but not from the statutes*. Here might have played an obstructive role the fact that *the statutes were a phenomenon of the coastal façade*, while the Kastrioti family with their possessions were situated in the hinterland, but anyway, we in a case have found indirect data on Novobërda statutes. However, in the pre-state order organization, more than the alliances and leagues, more than the treaties and the conditional armistices, is proved by the statutes.

5. In the lines of the European scholars that have dedicated their studies to heritage that is known by the name *studia humanitatis*, there has been a scientific discussion with extension in all the continent about *the extension borders of Renaissance spirit*. This discussion has been developed *in the form of two questions, with inter-complementary character*: 1. *Which is the contribution to the enrichment of the pretending people to be included in this area and in these centuries of epochal enlightenment centuries?* 2. *At what level was the urban development legal regulation in the pretending country found?* The answers that have been given to the first question tended to border

Europe of humanism centuries within the today West. Italy gave to Europe the painting, the sculpture and the famous epopee *The Divine Comedy*. Spain granted to the humanist Euro-culture the first novel in history, *Don Quixote*. England enriched this heritage with the modern tragedies of Shakespeare. In the realm of the Germanic world was proclaimed Martin Luther's *Reform* and were born the people's languages of liturgy; along with Gutenberg and the printing. The Polish rightfully affirm that have given to Europe *the person who stopped the sun and moved the earth*, Copernicus. The great Portuguese and Spanish sailors; the discovers of the new worlds; the French universities and other values, are considered *adequate certificates to be included within Renaissance*. With the heroes literature, started by Marin Barleti, the Albanians of that epoch asked for their deserved place, solemnly proclaiming that have given to the continent a priceless masterpiece lacking which Europe lacked: *the strategist and the protector of the ancient civilization*, Gjergj Kastrioti. If we could search the answer by referring to the second question, in the light of the latest documentary discoveries, the answer would have been irrefutable: *Albania of the Middle Age centuries was a historic space that had adjusted the local life with statutes and rules, the same as the whole of Europe*, and this was the order that had produced the ruling order of *Renaissance*, which, with the devise *to return to the origin*, have idealized the antique models of the republican-cities, with councils and senates, with *agorà* and *foro romanorum*.

6. An important issues is the one that *has to do with the necessity of comparative law discipline independence*, which still can be considered a lacking knowledge. Because *ethno-judicial anthropology for Albanians has been a science borne from romantic and colonialist premises*, in most of the cases with exotic inspiration, from more than two centuries, Albanians' identity has been promoted as the identity of a Canon people, self-governed with unwritten laws. This also for the fact that the Albanian science has kept a silent stand towards the written law. And here is not only about *corpus iuris statuendi*, but at least for other two corpuses: 1. *Nomocànone* of that part of the country that was building the life according to principles and rules according to the eastern Christianity; 2. *Corporativo corpus iuris*, or *corporates law*,

rüfet law, *craftsmen law*, that flourished in the XVII-XVIII centuries, especially in Voskopoja, where there were not few but 14 rules of city's craftsmen. These three traditions never have been seen in comparative point-of-view, nevertheless as the statutes, as the *nomocànone* and the craftsmanship rules have some common aspects dictated from the equal degree of development, including the family order, citizenship hierarchy and the relation with the powers.

7. Here it is the case to remember that *corpus iuris statuendi* does not contains only *the Statutes of Shkodra* and *the Statutes of Drisht*, but also *the Statutes of Durrës*, *the Statutes of Ulqin*, *the Statutes of Danja*, *the Statutes of Tivar*, to add these also other statutes, mentioned by distinguished savants as, Alain Ducellier, who believes in the existence of *the Statutes of Vlora*, or Vikenti Makušev, that was certain for the existence of *the Statutes of Lezha* since 1443. As about another heritage, that more often is presented with the name *social law*, *corporation law*, referred craftsmanship order, called *fraternitas* and *confraternitas*, the studies are more complete. While the *nomocànone*, six codexes that contain church rules of the cities of Berat, Gjirokastra, Korça and Elbasan, are almost known in the codex-graph description by Theofan Popa. These three heritages *remain totally self-isolated islands to each-other*. Zef Valentini, Injac Zamputi and Ilo Mitkë Qafëzezi, that opened some window for these corpuses to be seen in each-others mirror, didn't had any successor.

The statutes, *notary* and *cadastre register*, are typical phenomenon of passing from the canonic writing in the evidential one. For the first time, the status of the *scribe* changed from imitator to transcribed. The writing culture is known as one of the most important signs of Renaissance environment. Only the city of Berat had six schools *ars scribensi* and calligraphy. In Shkodra there were three brotherhoods: one with the name of *Shën Barbara (Saint Barbara)*, the other with the name *Shën Mëri (Saint Mary)* and a third with the name *Kryqi i Shenjtë (Holy Cross)*. While in Drisht there were two other brotherhoods. On 1349, in Ulqin, Tivar, Pult and Shkodra, there were 18 Albanian notary scribes, viz two third of the total scribes number. Durrës was the city where *notary* knew the flourishing of two schools: in Greek and Latin.

The western side of the Balkan peninsula had achieved its maturity in regulating the life of the urban communities with statutes in all its extension. Statutes also had Kotorr, Budva and Raguza, Zara, Kapodistria, Pirani and Trieste. All these statutes, with no exclusion are already published in original and translated in the countries' language.

III.

Following, except the unavoidable cases, we shall not refer to the *Statutes of Shkodra* and nor to the *Statutes of Drisht*, because they already are well-known to Albanian studies.

To the collection of Albania's cities at the end of the Middle Age, the majority of which more than once confirmed for the last time during the age of Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg, are added:

1. *The Statutes of Danja*, with 597 articles, more than double of the *Statutes of Shkodra*. This document is preserved in the *Archive of Croatia* and is considered the most analytical statute of the European Renaissance for the Albanian historic space. Is found in the collection of the documents that Milan Šufflay had selected in function of drafting a history of Albania. These statutes are in the beginning confirmed on 1319 and then are reviewed, amended and reconfirmed some time, including the age of Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg. Three pages from this statutory codex have been donated to the National Central Archive on 2002.

2. *The Statutes of Tivar (statuta et leges Antibarensis)* during the three last decades almost are reconstructed on the bases of referring system in the judicial decision making from two well-known Croatian scholars Lovorka Čoralić and Savo Marković. The existence of these statutes has been mentioned for the first time on 1929, in Italy. Based on the notary acts, in the cadastre registers descriptions and especially in the acts of written right on them can be considered from indirect sources, these statutes are already known.

3. From the manuscript of the *Statutes of Ulqin (Statuta et leges Dulcinji)* exist two pages, exposed without any description in the Museum *Gjergj Kastrioti*. Also, these statutes are made widely known from two Croatian scholars, especially from Lovorka Čoralić, with the same restoration method. The *Statutes of Ulqin* mentioned since 1907,

in the same catalogue of the Italian Leone Fontana, who served as guide for the discovery of the *Statutes of Shkodra* with his descriptions.

4. On the *Statutes of Durrës*, the information is earlier and have been served by Konstantin Jireček. Milan Šufflay, in an unpublished study, entitled *Statuta, episcopis et civitas Durazzo*, that is preserved as manuscript in Zagreb, offers additional data on these statutes. According to Alain Ducellier, *Durrës was governed with its own statutes* at least since 1272.

With more importance are some archival sources that *inform for statutes and rules taken by the Arbëresh in Italy*. These statutes were used by them as legal reference and support to stabilize their situation in a new environment. The first that has informed about the agreements between the locals and the new comers on the inherited statutes bases by the latter, is the Italian Giuseppe la Mantia, who in his book *I capitoli delle colonie greco-albanesi di Sicilia dei secoli XV e XVI*, since 1904 mentions *the agreements of Arbëresh localization*, in which *were also taken into consideration the statutes that they have taken with them*. Another document, that is known with the name *Codice capitulazioni Frassinetto*, on which is spoken about the adjustment of Frasnita's Arbëresh status according the accepted chapters and rules, signed on 1440, which we have published ten years ago. The Arbëresh gained their status through legal acts inherited from their birthplace, as the chapters (*capitulazioni*), the agreements with the local authorities who welcomed them. The Arbëresh of Palazzo Adriano, the agreement chapters of acceptance were firstly signed on 1482 and twice reviewed and confirmed: on 1501 and on 1507. For the adjustment of their final status there was a breve from the Pope Leon X on 1518. The Arbëresh of Piana degli Albanesi signed the acceptance chapters of the legal stay on 30 August 1488. This document was renewed and reconfirmed on 1565, 1574, 1588 and 1606. The Arbëresh of Mezzojuso signed the acceptance chapters on 3 December 1551 and those of Contessa Entellina on 2 December 1520.

Referring to what is called *ius cesarianis*, it should be said that the interest on the Albanian cities statutes and rules during the Middle Age centuries, chronologically has been drafted by Italian savants, more than a century ago. The Catalogue *Bibliografia degli statuti dei comuni*

dell'Italia superiore, volume III (1907), always remains a primal important source.

In a later phase, the collection, the publishing and the study of the Albanian medieval statutes absolutely belongs to the Croatian Albanologist Milan Šufflay and to his collaborator Viktor Novak, which made known for the first time *Statuta et ordinationes ecclesiae civitas Drivasti* on 1927, in *Arhiv za arbansku starinu, jezik i etnologiju* (Belgrade 1927). There is no second to Milan Šufflay as collector and scholar to the Albanian cities statutes.

Because *the Statutes and the rules of the city of Drisht church* are published and re-published including that of Prishtina, in the periodic *Gjurmime albanologjike* on 1972, lately transcribed and translated by Etleva Lala and Musa Ahmeti, we will not focus on their content, but it's useful to be brought in the memory the quasi unbelievable history that how Šufflay achieved to secure their copy.

This manuscript is mentioned for the first time in the *Catalogue 438* and after in the *Catalogue 477* of the German bibliopole Karl Wilhelm Hiersemann, in June 1915. Hiersemann auctioned it, but the manuscript was not sold. Milan Šufflay, not having the possibility to buy the manuscript himself, because of the very high price the owner has set for the auction start, sent for the help of a Croatian rich men, with the call *to buy it for the Zagreb's University Library*. The same call for help he sent to the well-known Albanologist Holger Pedersen. Because this call of his remained unanswered, Šufflay tried again to possess it through his friend L. Thalòczy, by recommending him to buy it on account of *Vindobonensis Academy*, but without success. At the same time, he has required for the help of the Serb Academy of Sciences. On 1920, Šufflay was informed that now the manuscript has been sold for the dizzying price of 2000 marks. He was very much concerned, especially because the name of the buyer has not become known. Through his friend Henri Barić, on 1924, he achieved to identify the name of the buyer, the Danish Sir Thomas Philipps. In collaboration with the Albanologist and with his other friend Viktor Novak, Šufflay again addressed a supplication to the Danish Albanologist H. Pedersen to intermediate on the new owner to secure a photographed copy of the manuscript. Finally, on 1925, when he achieved to have a reproduction of the statutes, together with V. Novak, in a record time, prepared the

known edition of 1927, in *Arhiv za arbanasku starinu, jezik i etnologiju*.

The history of *Statuta et ordinationes ecclesiae civitas Drivasti* stabilization is known. Here we will mention only a fact. For the validation of the latest review was the Pope Pius II the one who gave positive response to the cathedral of Drisht authorities. On 1463, as is attested by the data of *Hierarchia catholica* publication, the Pope had charged with the duty Pal Engjëlli and one of his aides to prove if the reformation of the previous statutes of Drisht was necessary. The official recognition of judicial validity was made on 21 November 1464, with the presence of Pal Engjëlli, of the noble Gjergj Topia and of the region's nobles and clergymen.

On these statutes and the history of their preservation during the 1930, had written in sparing words, Marin Sirdani.

IV.

At the time of the city self-governance blossom, on the statutes and rules of Durrës, the city commune had a codex - *codex iuris civitatis*, where were registered all the public governance acts.

The sources where is mentioned the codification of the law in *the Statutes of Durrës*, prove that that these statutes are reformed and reviewed at least twice until the XIV century: on 1297 and on 1392. *The Statutes of Durrës* were confirmed even in the time when the city was rule by the Topia family.

In *the Statutes of Durrës*, a central place occupied the governance law. In it was defined that the city and the suburbs (*suburbis*) were protected by *two magistrates*. One of them had to focus on the municipality problems, the other with the protection of the city.

When Gjergj Topia was forced to surrender the city to the rulers of *Serenissima Seignory*, in the reached agreement was marked that *the city would be ruled with the old statutes of the country*, which should be not abolished for a long time; and that *both magistrates should continue to further stay in duty* under Venice's authority. However, *the Statutes of Durrës* soon become an obstruct for the Seignory authorities. From this cause, the local statutes were abolished, the magistrates were replaced, and this served as encouragement for the beginning of war between Durrës and Venice. On 1401, *the Durrës*

citizens achieved to copy 35 articles of the Statutes of Durrës and sent them to Venice to prove their seniority and authenticity.

Even in other circumstances, the city of Durrës, accepting the vassalage towards a foreign ruler, has put as condition the keeping in force of the proper statutes. So it happened on 1272, when the Durrës inhabitants asked to Anjou rulers to not touch *bonos usus et consuetudines* of the city tradition. The scholars are inclined to believe that also the Anjou achieved to pacify the population and to establish tranquility for their governance by recognizing to the local people *the old statutes (riconoscendo alle popolazioni locali gli antichi statute)*.

According the city statutes, the inhabitants of Durrës were divided in three categories: *local inhabitants*, who have reached the citizen status and the right to participate in the public life; *the foreigners* living in Durrës; and *the others*, staying for a short time in the outskirt neighborhoods (*suburbis*). The highest body of the city was *the commune council*, which approved the new laws *and its summit was a celebration day for the city itself*.

The statutes had their part in the penal law, on which bases should be judge and convicted the public violence, the injustices, the crimes against the life, blood feud, forgeries for property gain. By statute were established the rules and the rights of the foreigners: sailors, merchants, pilgrims.

In the Venetian relations regularly was specified that in *the Statutes of Durrës* there were formulas according to *proprie uxance* and *boni usi* of country's population. Andrea da Mosto, former director of Venice's national archive, 70 years ago wrote that the Republic of San Marco, even there were was dominant through its officials, asked for proportional adjustment in the self-governance (*grande autonomia*) and the outer republican control, by ruling *con i propri statuti*. Interesting is to study what represented the institution of the *lodge* that had legal authority in *the Statutes of Durrës*.

V.

For *the Statutes of Tivar* the earlier information comes from the studies in Italy, since 1929. Its more than a century since was notified that from 1427 *Tivar had a proper statute, nevertheless for the complicated cases should address for appeal to Ragusa tribunal*.

With *the Statutes of Tivar* in the last two decades have drawn the attention of foreign scholars: especially Croatians and Italians, in the framework of scientific interests for the development of the coastal cities in the Adriatic in the period of the European humanism, of similarities in the processing that happened in those centuries in the entire Mediterranean basin, of the Venetian and Dalmatian studies, of the studies on the maritime and trade law. The most complete studies belong to Savo Marković, author of the long paper *Statuta et leges civitatis Antibari*, followed with the study *Kontribut për studimin e Statutit të Tivarit në Mesjetë/Contribution for the study of the Statute of Tivar in the Middle Age*. To this scholar belongs the merit of the first effort to present some of the most secure sources not only for the existence of *the Statutes of Tivar* as historic document, but also for the governance and judicial activity that was developed during the centuries according their judicial power.

The source data prove that the judges, the councilors and the commune of the city of Tivar (*judices, consilarii et commune civitatis Antibaris*) have existed since the XIV century. As Ulqin and Kotorr, Tivar enjoyed from its statutes a wide autonomy of a *city - republic*, in which the sovereign (Venice's Seignory) *was represented by a count, that by rule was a local Latin*.

The Statutes of Tivar were drafted in the first decades of the XIV century. The earlier source in which are quoted *the Statutes of Tivar* as regulators of a legal act (an agreement for lend) is dating on 19 May 1330. In it is spoken for six inhabitants of Tivar loaning 300 perpers from an inhabitant of Kotorr, accepting the pay back on the day of Sant Stefan, *according all the previews in the statutes and rules of the city of Tivar (omnibus legibus et statutis civitatis Antibari)*.

After the fall of Rasha's kingdom, Tivar was ruled by the Balshaj family and controlled by Venice. In this period, was demanded the confirmation of the city statutes *by Pope's authority and privileges*. More clearly *the Statutes of Tivar* are mentioned on 1406, in a Venetian document, who guarantee that the city would be governed *according its statutes*. In another document, of an earlier period, is affirmed that the city of Tivar would have a new law (*civitas Antibarensis novam legum formam acciperet*). While in Serb "*povjela*", *the Statutes of Tivar* are

estimated as a model to be recommended to Budva's citizens and rulers how to fix their life.

Because *the Statutes of Tivar* have been time after time in a higher hierarchy degree than *the Statutes of Budva*, the latter deserve fewer words. *The Statutes of Budva*, with 285 articles, are opened with the knyaz's power definition (*kneževe regalije*) and concluded with the punishment for the borrowers that delay the debt payment. In these statutes, is mentioned many times how should be reviewed and adapted the laws for the city of Budva, including the case of surrendering the city, with the condition that the new ruler should accept the legality of some local habits (*uxance*), as are confirmed in *the Statutes of Tivar*. The voluntary acceptance of surrendering Budva in the hands of Venice, starting from August 1442, is concluded with the request to be governed *with the statutes of Tivar* (*con statuti d'Antivari*).

Statuta et leges Buduae were in power until 1650, when become known that the city accepted again the Venetian vassalage, with the condition to be governed with all the laws that were in power under Gjergj Balsha, *that are the same with those of the city of Tivar (...con tutte le leggi che questa città godeva sotto Giorgio Despot, che erano uniformi con quelle della città di Antivari)*.

From the order of the officials of the statutes, can be imagined that which was the degree and the model of the urban development of Tivar, Ulqin and Kotorr: count (*comes*), captain (*capitaneus*), castellan (*castellano*), magistrate (*magistrati*), ambassadors (*balio, ambassatores*), prosecutors (*procurators*), judges (*judices*), counselors (*consiliari*), chancellors (*cancellari*), chamberlain (*camerlengo*), mayor (*podestà*), notaries and proto-notaries, canonicals. In the XIV century are mentioned: the nobility and the people of Tivar (*seniores et populum Antibari*); the judges, the counselors and the commune of the city of Tivar (*judices, consiliarii et comune civitatis Antibari*); the mayor and the general council (*maius et generale consilium - majori et generali consilio seu tota universitate dicte civitatis*). On 1428 are mentioned *three sworn judges along with the great council and the small council (... cum majori et minori consilio)*.

Between the 1423-1512, Tivar was under the archbishop's authority. On 1501, is again mentioned the mayor and the general council *maius*

et generale consilium), a *secret council* (*conseiglio segreto*) and *the commune's palace* (*palazzo di comuna*).

Referring to all the data known until today on *the Statutes of Tivar*, their chapters could not be partially reconstructed, but only as complete law codes. In the following lines, we will make known the content of these statutes on a codified basis. Here, I see necessary to thank my daughter Danja, with education in law, without which help, especially in the terminology interpretation of some historic law notions, I wouldn't complete a recapitulation more or less stabilized of their articles, referring to the essential categories of law.

The private law:

In a disposition of *the Statutes of Tivar* is previewed that *every sale of real estate should be made public in advance through in go-between announcement. The advanced announcements of properties sale have to be previously marked in the notary registers, accompanied with a map.* Expressively, in *the Statutes of Tivar* is said that the properties' sale are announced with the ringing of the bells according the orders and the statutes.

The Statutes of Tivar recognize to the citizens of Tivar *the right of regaining their lost property if this was unjustly lost*, in accordance with the right of heritage, of complain and advocacy. From an appellate trial in Ragusa, comes out that the right of inheriting the lost property, in Tivar, as all in the Dalmatian coastal cities, was preserved until 40 years, *as required by our rules (quaranto anni chome se richiede secondo lo ordine nostro)*, with exception of Budva, where this term was 30 years. The specifics of the heritage statutory rights in Tivar is also proved by another trial of 1465, *casus of Boz's Saint Mary church versus a citizen of Tivar*, to whom was promised the equivalent in compensation for leaving three olives parcels, but the court refused, because *the statutes do not recognized the exchange (concambio)*, except voluntarily cases.

Testamentary law (*corpus iuris testamentis*):

The statutes of Tivar are quoted as legal reference in many cases of law that is qualified as *mortis causa - inter vivos: the will of dead among the living*. On 1330 the mayor of the commune left heritage to

the church of Shën Gjergj of Tivar his wealth, *according the country's statutes*. While on 1421, Andrea Zara registers his testament for leaving a wealth heritage to a cathedral in Ulqin.

In *the Statutes of Tivar*, the recognition of the trustee status, administrator and executive of the testament will, was not considered legal if *was not left by writing*. The closest people of the family: husband, wife, children, parents, are considered *trustee with high credibility* to confirm the testament's will.

Even in the cases when is interpreted a heritage testament in favor of the children, legally are invoked the statutes and the rules of the city. The Statutes preferred the conditioning of the property heritage right with the family genetic line continuity. The swordsman Marin Tivarasi left both his children his pharmacy, with all what belongs to him, and the art of swordsman mastery (*meam apothecam cum omnibus ferris et rebus pertinentibus ad artem meam magistrum spatariæ*). On 1421 the inhabitant of Tivar, Gjon, in his will, except the wealth he inherited to the heirs, specifies that has left an amount *for his soul*, which can be declared to the priest he was confessed to, after passing 50 days from his death.

In terms of statutory law, a heritage can be called a *property inherited by some generations*, bought or donated. In a referred property act on this right is said that *Marush, citizen of Tivar*, had one hundred years that possessed a property-garden, inherited by his parents and preserved and gained with his money, and now he would depart in peace from this life, because the property would be at the hands of his children. The Statutes encourage the property's *non-division and the non-sale of the bought lands from somebody out of the kinship*, without being completely into consideration the possibility of division with the kinship members (*cum consanguineis suis*), because in this way that property becomes more credible to be sold.

The Statutes had prescription on *the right of the women for a dignified dowry when the time would come to marry*. The dowry (*miraz, dote*) could have been described in a contract prior to marriage. To the husband was recognized the right to enjoy these properties, but not to sale them. The Statutes didn't contained limitations or definition if the woman's dowry that is married if should be real estate or not. As in *the Statutes of Shkodra*, and in those of Tivar, was guaranteed the

right of the daughters, married or unmarried, for their part of family or kinship wealth. The married daughter has the right to use for herself only one fifth of the dowry, while the other part has to preserve and to inherit to the children, as is confirmed by court verdict of 1435, in which is stated that the woman who leaves a heritage has spent only *one fifth of the dowry*, as was previewed in the statute (*segondo la forma del statuto*). Was also previewed the obligation towards the concubine, which has to be granted a guarantee to give birth and raise with dignity the children born out of wedlock.

The maritime and trade law:

The maritime right in *the Statutes of Tivar* is not presented the same at the time of the international maritime law. There is a distinction of the regulation degree of these relations compared with those on land's property.

From two acts of buying sailing ships from citizens of Tivar on 1281 and 1630, can be partially rebuild the content of *the Statutes of Tivar's chapters on the maritime law*. In the first act is mentioned the son of the master Petraq from Tivar as buyer of half of a ship, in accordance with the country's laws, prior buying the ship, *it has to settle all payments and fees for goods charged*, in accordance with the terms of the maritime law *naulum et lucrum*, tariffs and payments. In the second act is marked that the citizen from Tivar called Nikollë Ujku, before buying a part of the ship and to sign a sailing contract with it, accepted the condition referred in the term of the maritime law *pro aptatione, for maintenance*, according city's *de legibus*.

The notion of the maritime insurance in case of harming of complete lost is proved by the Ragusan archival sources, on which is spoken for *insurers that have been paid in advance* to afford these expenses, according the *legal conditions that are the same in Ragusa and in Tivar*. Two oil merchants from this city, on 1571, have insured the goods in the measure *three percent of risk*, while on 1582 in the measure of *two percent of risk*.

Categories of the maritime law that contained *the Statutes of Tivar* are found inclined with the testamentary law, as the case of the sailor Gjergj from Tivar, who, on 1517, left as heritage to the church of Shën Mëri of Rotac an amount for celebrating a mass for the salvation of his

soul. While on 1420 in an abbey out of the city, is marked as profiteer of 100 florins, from one of the advance paid taxes for a sea cargo.

Obligations law:

The category of the trading company, partnership (*socio*), is known in the laws of the commune's statutes since 1358. The partnership of the merchants from Tivar, according the country's laws, could be *for a voyage, for some voyages, or permanent*. Such companies are known for the trade of wheat, wine, oil and wood. Their main principle is *the proportion of capital gains and losses*. The citizen of Tivar was allowed to invest simultaneously. From the court verdicts comes out that the statutes foresaw *the right of the tribunal to preserve 15 percent of the one property value* for administering it in the latest stage in the occasion of putting an end to the activity (bankruptcy, lost, failure).

The notion of giving up illegal claims, that is referred to the term *renuntiando*, was applied in Tivar for any borrower, who preliminarily had to declare that, with the settlement of the obligations, had no other right but to exercise the activity. The borrowing in the commune of Tivar had as limit *five to six years*, while the default interest was limited to 20 percent, as both in relations within and outside the municipality.

The Statutes of Tivar recognized the duty of prosecutor, if was previewed with contract or registered in a notary office, to carry out the fulfillment of the public cases and the obligations towards the citizens connected to a trade activity, *with the right of a commissioner*. In this function are also often presented the clergymen of Tivar.

The statutes recognized the omnipotence of a mandated person by writing, who was charged with matters of an important order, as *restitutions*, in the case of trials with far communes, including the republic of Ragusa and Venice. On 1494, *in the capacity of a omnipotent advocacy*, a citizen from Tivar called Anton de Paskui, ordered for *the case Crnojević*, to represent as *claiming party for the return of a ship together with the cargo it possessed*.

When the case had to do with profits, property interests, the order formulation for the prosecutor or the lawyer had to be specified and specifically foresee if was about sale right, gift, rent; for a *casus* at trial or previously judged. On 1337, a Kotorr inhabitant gave an omnipotent

order to his wife Dobra in Tivar (*uxor mea Dobre in Antibaro*), with the right to sell, inherit or transferring to the new contract all his properties.

The Statutes of Tivar recognize the right of self-representation in a tribunal, without previously asking for mandate. This omnipotence right for protection was recognized to the citizens that the tribunal might have invited as witness. Marinza, a self-protected woman, is remembered as a *brilliant witness before the small council, city mayor and guarantors*.

Similarly, the commune set the limits and the interests of crediting, also the collateral of the real or movable estates and the guarantee of a debt till was paid off. On 1360 the archbishop of Tivar accepts as mortgage assets, according the city's statutes, *two silver chalices and a codex entitled of Gjon*. While the citizen of Tivar, Marin Zara, is recognized as *guarantor self-sufficient with his personality*, that within *two years would pay off the remained debt*.

The pawning also previewed how would be sold the *pawn property*, the way of pawning in a trade society, and the occasion commissions. The pawning terms were clearly specified in the statutes in 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 12 months. The months counting was made referring the saint days in the church calendar: *from Shën Gjergj to Shën Mark (Saint George to Saint Mark)*.

In the period 1308-1339, between Tivar and Venice results that are signed 36 credit agreements, all with obligation settlement within the foreseen term.

The inability to repay obligations within the set deadlines in the statutes and accepted in agreement with them was punished with serious penalties and fines or other ways. In a Ragusan document of 1370 has been recorded the statement of a citizen from Tivar, through which is guaranteed that if he would not returned in due time the obligation that was foreseen in the agreement, he would allow the sale of his properties and would assist himself in the public sale.

Except this sanction, the statutes provided the imprisonment, in case of non-payment of the obligation from the sale of his other properties. In the notary office of Ragusa, was written the affirmation of the consent of a citizen from Tivar for his imprisonment sentence if he doesn't pays off the debt.

Statutory regulation of lease and rent agreements is widely reported through court arbitration. It is possible to identify objects that according to the statutes were considered for rent, from a house and other assets that could bring profit. Do not lack the articles for *exclusion from obligations in cases of natural disasters, war or epidemics*.

On a rent contract were also based the relations master-prentice in the city's crafts. The master, in addition to teaching the craft, over a period to 6-8 years, took over the student's clothing and food, work tools and the holiday. While the prentice recognized the obligation to work for free for the master according to the signed deadline, which would be the same even if he would learn the profession in advance. The prentice should fulfill the loyalty condition towards the master. The relations master-prentice and those of employment of a paid worker were agreed by the principle of the Roman law *locatio-conductio* and contain the essential elements of a service contracts.

All the work contracts should be in accordance with the commune's statutes. For cases of non-compliance were provided severe penalties. They excluded coercive formulations, the parties had to commit only voluntarily: *I promise, I will fulfill, on this job he will be rewarded*. Job relations in the statutes *previewed also an executive element*, as was proved by the statement of Matteo Ruci, who accepts 20 *zecchini d'oro*, which should have been given to him since two years ago by his employer, but *the condition was not applied*. The employer is forced by the commune and its laws to liquidate this obligation.

Though in a more limited degree, is proved the existence of sanctions on bank relations. Are mentioned guarantee banks and compulsory court verdicts against those that were not correct in payment of debts, or non-liquidated obligations. One of them was the Florentine bank house *Bardi e Peruzzi*.

Jurisdiction law on the penal and civil cases

In a specific way has been settled in the statutes the jurisdiction on statutory and legal cases, starting from the penal ones. Was not excluded no authority to overpass the given responsibility in the statutes. On 1423 is registered a punishment on the voivoda of Tivar, whom, out of his legal power, kept for five days tied in chains in the city stronghold a thief.

On 1444, the mayor of Tivar requires by writing that *the criminal cases* to be judged according *the Statutes of Venice*, while on *civil cases* to be applied the local statutes and the rules (*statuta et ordines dicte terre*). In the document is mentioned that *this division has to do with the honor and authority of the Republic of Venice*. However, in the cases when was lack of punishments in Seignory's law, could be applied the punishments of *the Statutes of Tivar*. The Seignory itself has asked to knyaz of Tivar the acceptance of the competence *to justly punish, taking into consideration the honor of our government*. The punishments according the Venetians rules of the rebels agaisnt the Serenissima Seignory ruler, that is informed on 1559, included torture, public lynching by dragging the rebels in the public roads, in the market and squares, tied with chains and *the ring*. These punishments prove that the jurisdiction on criminal cases belonged till lately to *the Statutes of Venice* and to the tribunals established on their bases. However, the non-application of the country's statutes and the punishments by Seignory's law, encouraged a new rebellion in the city.

Procedural trial law

According *the Statutes of Tivar*, the citizen of the commune couldn't be suddenly appealed in the court. Exist specific terms how long before the citizen must be summoned even as convicted, or as witness. Suddenly can be appealed only for major cases, that are proclaimed as such from the commune's authorities.

The Senate of Venice protested by writing agaisnt the modifications made to the procedure for summoning in court in Tivar, especially to the right of the authorities *for sudden call*, and informed that would not recognize any punishment that would be inflicted *to her citizens of the republic with the local statutes*. Moreover, if a Venetian national commits a crime in a foreign country, he cannot be judged from the tribunal of that country but has to present himself in the Seignory courts. The judge should present himself in his duty even if the defendant does not respond to the summon.

The Statutes of Ulqin, nevertheless drafted, edited, confirmed and reconfirmed according the model of the Republic of Venice, preserve clear signs of traditional habits. The authority of the Republic of Venice was limited mainly by setting the trade relations. In the reports

of the Venice envoys is spoken about *bonos usus*, on *loro usanze*, *loro statuti*. One of these *good behaviors* is expressed in the severity of sentences of *prostitutes*, incomparable with those of the Republic of Venice, foreseeing light punishments, except the repeated cases. The efforts to establish walls between the local ethno-judicial tradition and the statutes, even between the Albanian population and the population that was governed by the statutes, is just as exclusive towards the truth, as the efforts to present them in a total local development. Arnold von Harf, the pilgrim cleric who travelled in Europe and in the Balkans, to draft his *Dictionary*, had prepared a nest of questions on words and useful standard expressions for a foreigner not only on the Albanian language, but for all the languages and the spoken dialects he met during his pilgrimage. In Albanian, the answer for the expression *I require a women* lacks, differently from the other languages, because in the Albanian mentality couldn't be accepted *to be required a women*, as was required the cheese, the wine, the bread, the tavern, what was connected with the local heritage.

The relations between *the Statutes of Shkodra*, Drisht, Tivar, Ulqin, Dana, Durrës, Kotorr, with *the Statutes of Venice* are an *archetype-variant* relations. How was the degree with the *archetype*, this is proved by the innumerable cases of mentioning the traditional character of Albania's city statutes with that of Seignory in *Acta et diplomata*, in *Hierarchia catholica*, in *Monumenta montenegrina* and other medieval corpus sources. The presence of two essential categories of the peoples law on this side of the Adriatic: of the oath on just testimony, according the *besa/faith*, sourcing from Albanian tradition (is rightfully considered as the first time of presenting by writing of the word *besë*) and of the category of *uražba*, deriving from medieval Slavic meaning *retaliation*, is an evidence that the Venetian law not rarely was found unprepared to linguistically express the presence of *usanze popolare*.

VI.

Were the Statutes of Durrës, Shkodra, Drisht, Danja, Tivar, Ulqin, Kotorr and in other unidentified statutes, as those of Vlora, Lezha, Kruja and Shas, transcription of *the Statutes of Venice*?

Some expressed opinions, that the statutes are a foreign culture and has not to do with the Albanian tradition the same as the canons do not

stand, because for the simple reason that the authorities of the Republic of Venice themselves, as is thoroughly proved at that time documentation, inform their missionaries, legations, merchants, that in the Albanian cities there are statutes, but they *are not like ours*, because are based on *loro usanze*. The opinion that *the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini* is not only *the totality of the norms of customary law*, but this deed contains *the ethnic marrow of the Albanian nation and its culture*; there is place for discussion. Has been father Gjergj Fishta the first who, in the *Parathënjen e Kanunit të Lekë Dukagjinit/Foreword of the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini*, has affirmed the aristocratic and the civilized character of the ancient laws, called statutes, referring to the *Statutes of Drisht*, that had just been published by M. Šufflay and V. Novak.

As belonging between to the aristocratic character of the statutes and the patriarchal-tribal character of the canon, is enough one of the most quoted articles of *the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini: The price of the man's life is one, as for the good also for the bad. Everyone says is good and says to himself: "I am a man" and the others say to him: "Are you a man... Therefore the blood feuds are left by Lekë as one thing: from the good comes out the bad and from the bad comes out the good. Soul to soul, because the appearance is given by God*. This article is the ultimate nail on the coffin of the old aristocracy. A new aristocracy, based on the military investiture of the former Ottoman empire, on the base of sword merit and service, would occupy the place to the once great patronymic families, with European titles: *capitaneus, count, duke* etc. To conclude the comparison between the statutes and the canons, to the urban law and the mountains law, of the written law and the unwritten law, we are in parallel quoting only the status of the woman within the family:

The women in *the Statutes of Shkodra*:

Article 166: *Everything that gain husband and wife together is considered equal, viz half belongs to the man and half to the woman;*

Article 186: *The daughter and the woman in general have the right to issue a testament, starting from 12 years old and on;*

Article 196: *The woman that is a mother has the right to issue a testament and to spare for prayer to her soul one fifth of the dowry, if this dowry had not meantime passed to her daughter. Otherwise, she*

had to give her requiem that has remained after distributing to the sons their share.

The women in the canon of *Lekë Dukagjini*:

Article 20, chapter III: *The Albanian women has no heritage on her parents, none in property nor at home. The canon considers the woman as redundancy in the house. The parents do not think for dowry and anything else for the proper daughter: he who marry her, will take care on her.*

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Paskal MILO

SCANDERBEG AND THE EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION*

Every anniversary of events or of big national personalities is always a good impetus to further reflect and deepen more in their study, to extract new point-of views in their less illuminated sides.

The 550 anniversary of Gjergj Kastrioti's death is such a great motive. Scanderbeg's war against the Ottoman sultans is a remarkable epoch in the Albanian history that has been source of inspiration for the Albanian and foreign scholars involved in the field of history, literary and artistic creativity since the XVI century. It has been written so much about him that it would be very hard for every author to report new elements as a real contribution to this part of history. However, the efforts to show Scanderbeg and his age as a multidimensional radiance theme that always offers new possibilities of objective and neutral feelings when writing about. Therefore the present manuscript aims to re-dimension the European character of the Albanian resistance against the Ottoman invasion under the leadership of the national hero in the framework of the 550 anniversary of Scanderbeg's death.

Europe has felt the threats coming from the East for some centuries, but from the end of the XIV century those became more dangerous from the raising Asian power of the Ottoman Turks. They had already achieved to be partially established in the Balkans, at Europe's gates. With the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the path towards conquering Europe was completely open.

The European civilization of that time as a complex of cultural, intellectual, moral, material values and living way was in front of a big challenge.¹ Christianity was at the roots of this civilization and its

* This presentation is part of the lectures segment run from 1-2 November 2018.

¹ François Guizot. General History of Civilization in Europe. Edited, with critical and supplementary notes, by George Wells Knight, Ph.D. New York. D. Appleton and Company 1896, p. 17-18, 23; Fernand Braudel. Grammaire des Civilisations. (Translations in Albanian).

promoter at the same time. The European civilization soon became a mixture of the Greek-Roman traditions, the Hebrew-Christian ones and the so-called barbarian traditions.²

In the XV century, the European Christian civilization was found under the pressure of the Islamic empowerment and its more organized political version of the Ottoman Turks. The threat from them, was "a permanent universal danger," therefore also "the Christianity should protect itself against this civilization, i.e., its own existence."³ This is the beginning of the geopolitical clash between of the two civilizations— the Eastern Moslem and the Western Christian. This view has been embraced by many European historians, philosophers and writers across the centuries, including the Albanian ones— from Marin Barleti in the XVI century to nowadays.

Albania, situated in the European geographical, political and cultural periphery became a clash arena of these two civilizations. The Albanians situated in the line of demarcation between the two empires, the Western Roman and Byzantium Empire in the East, embraced both Catholicism and Orthodoxy, the two major branches of Christianity, depending not only on the administrative relevance, but also on their influence power. Çabej says: "*This stand in-between West and East, and the preservation of their unique nature has forever incised Albania her special face.*"⁴ Historians have agreed that "...the Albanian space in the Middle Age was an area with special cultural diversity, a cross-road of the cultural influences from the Byzantine and the Western world one, which has been sketched according to the Albanian environment."⁵

After the second half of the XIV century, Albania was a feudal mosaic possession in the hands of some noble families. Exception made some coastal cities in the Adriatic like Durrësi, Lezha, Shkodra, Ulqini, Tivari and Drishti that were under the rule of the Republic of Venice.

Shtëpia e Librit & Komunikimit, 2005, p. 39, 42-43; Oxford word power Dictionary. Edited by Sally Wehmeir. Oxford University Press 1993, p. 108.

² Historie de l'Europe. Sous la Direction de J.Carpentier et F. Lebrun. Editions du SEUIL 27, rue Jacob, Paris VI^e. Octobre 1990, p. 180-18/2.

³ Camille Paganel. Historie de Scanderbeg ou turks et chrétiens au XV^e siècle. Paris Didier, Libraire Editeur 35, Quai des Augustins 1855, p.b.

⁴ Eqrem Çabej. Shqiptarët midis Perëndimit dhe Lindjes. M.Ç.M. Tiranë 1994, p. 19.

⁵ Oliver Jens Schmitt. Arbëria Venedike 1392-1479. K&B 2007, p. 14; A. K. Brackob. Scanderbeg. A history of George Castriota and the Albanian Resistance to Islamic Expansion in fifteenth Century Europe. Buffalo. Las Vegas. Palm Beach. 2018. p. 28.

Some Albanian nobles in rivalry to expand the territorial areas among them, sought and received the aid of the Ottoman Turks, and became at times dependency of them.

At the eve of the XV century, Albania faced the same political, economic, social and cultural development with the other Balkan-Adriatic countries. The medieval Albania achieved the peak level of its progress before the Ottoman attacks and invasions. Many foreign renown historians, e.g., Šufflay and Jireček have stated that "until the Ottoman occupation, Albania followed Europe's civilization development," and, "the Albanian lords were equal to the Italian high nobility" and the Albanians in the Middle Age "were old Christian people and more civilized" than the Slavs.⁶ Agriculture and farming were two principal fields of the economic development, meantime that in the capitals of the Albanian princedoms, in the cities were exercised different crafts with a growing production rate. The cities, especially the coastal ones served as important trade hubs for the Balkan-Adriatic areas on grain, salt, fish, constructing materials etc.⁷

In the XV century, before the complete Ottoman occupation, Albania had a unique social structure. The timar system that was the essence of the Ottoman feudal-military order was established in the southern and coastal areas occupied from the Ottomans. According to this system, the peasants were legally free (were not serfs), but had political and economic obligations towards the Spahi as representative of the Ottoman caste in possession of which was granted the timar (a specific land area). The pre-Ottoman central and northern Albania was in the beginnings of the feudal order. In these regions serfdom was unknown. There ruled the local self-government customary law. The chieftains of these areas aimed to live in harmony with the free highlanders.⁸

The Albanians until the XV century had a state-building experience. The first feudal state in Albania was established in the end of the XII

⁶ Fan. S. Noli. Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu (1405- 1468) in: vepra 4. Shkrime historike. Tiranë 1989, p. 342; Aurel Plasari. Shqipëria dhe shqiptarët në Europën e Piut II. Botimet IDK. Tiranë, 2014, p. 191.

⁷ Aleks Buda. Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu dhe epoka e tij. Shkrime Historike. Akademia e Shkencave. Instituti i Historisë. Tiranë, 1986, p. 271.

⁸ Kristo Frashëri. Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu. Jeta dhe vepra (1405-1468). Botimet Toena Tiranë, 2002, p. 481.

century. However, the foreign rules (Byzantine, Angevins, Norman, Serb) who followed and replace each other, didn't allow this state-building process to be consolidated. Only after the end of the first half of the XIV century started the process of Albanian principalities establishment. The foreign invasions have obstructed the nationality's formation, the development of the urban life and of a social class with wide economic, merchant and cultural interests. Such an embryonic elite, mostly intellectual, religious and cultural existed in the coastal cities and in the Episcopal centers and monasteries.

Christianity in both its branches, Catholic and Orthodox, was preached in Latin and in the old Greek that were elite languages and incomprehensible for the Albanian masses. The Albanian language was not used in the Catholic and Greek-Byzantine liturgy. It wasn't a cultivated language, and reflected the shortcomings of Albania's general development and identity.

The identity weakness, the foreign invasions, the division and wars among the lords of Albanian principalities delayed the national process. The church and nobility local elites, throughout their existence did not become the holders and active leaders of emancipation and consciousness of the masses of the people with the awareness of the special Albanian common affiliation. This process required a powerful catalytic agent to unite the special identity elements that chaotically existed and acted in the Albanian life.

The Albanian society couldn't develop by being isolated. At a large extent, she was in contact with and under the influence of other stronger identities. In the first half of the XV century those Albanian principalities dependent in relationship with the Ottomans, were still free in their Christian faith. There existed a special situation. Religiously, culturally and from a trade point of view they were oriented towards the western countries, mainly to those situated beyond the Adriatic Sea, while being subdued to the timar system. The Albanian coastal cities that were under the rule of the Republic of Venice were also centers of a versatile European influence. It occurred that Albanian princes, slowly without understanding and often unconsciously absorbed the European identity.

The Albanian and the European identity intertwined based on spiritual, cultural, traditional and trade connections values. The first

steps towards political collaboration was made even before the Ottoman threat, as a menace to the common values. Not only, but this political component of Albania with the European countries, especially with the Italians, has existed before the Scanderbeg time, with alliances of individual Albanian nobles with the Papacy, Kingdom of Naples, Republic of Venice, Republic of Ragusa etc.

Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg to this natural inclination and shy in the beginnings of the majority of the Albanian nobility gave a new form and made it an essential characteristic of the Albanian identity. Scanderbeg established a concentrated and functional state for the time's conditions and circumstances through which for the first time in the history of country gave to Albanians such an important role in the defense of the European civilization.

It neither the place, nor the time to mention the great Albanian battles against the Ottoman armies larger in numbers, or the unsuccessful sieges of Kruja and other Albanian strongholds by Murat II and Mehmet II. The Ottoman armies nearly a quarter a century committed the greatest barbarisms in the Albanian lands, but couldn't defeat Scanderbeg and his Albanians.

Scanderbeg as far he was alive turned into a legend, meantime the centuries established other glorious superstrata of his heroism. Beyond this phenomenon that is more a European contribution rather than Albanian, the genuine historical scientific analyzes have recognized to Scanderbeg and his Albanians an extraordinary role and contribution to the war against the Ottomans in defense of the European civilization.

Gjergj Kastrioti wasn't the "condottiere" as might have been considered by some historians (Iorga, Marinesco, Langer, etc.)⁹ All his life and deeds proved that he was conscientious political and statesman leader of the time, also a perfect strategist and military strategist. Scanderbeg raised the flag of freedom and was deeply committed to supporting the feelings of the Albanian people, their will to be free in their mountains and fields, to defend the Christian religion and their traditions.

⁹ N. Iorga. *Brève histoire de l' Albanie et du peuple albanais* Bucarest, 1919, p. 47; C. Marinesco. *Alphonse V, roi d' Aragon et de Naples et l'Albanie de Scanderbeg*. In: *Mélanges de l'école Roumaine en France*. Paris 1923, p. 9, 75; Fan. S. Noli. *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu (1405- 1468) ...* p. 229.

Scanderbeg was also aware that the greatest challenge, i.e., the war could not be faced without an Albanian alliance and the unification of all internal powers. For this reason, his first major political act was the League of Lezha, March 1444, in which the majority of the Albanian nobility participated. It was decided the unification of all powers to protect the country from the imminent Ottoman attacks and Scanderbeg was elected general captain of the united military forces.

Gjergj Kastrioti was very clear and didn't nourish any illusion about the Ottoman fury of Sultan Murat being faced for a long time in the name of the freedom and with the internal Albanian alliance only. He knew his powerful enemy very well, his potential and ambitions. Scanderbeg also knew that the European countries, first of all the Italian ones for years closely felt the Ottoman danger, and the efforts to create an anti-Turkish crusade had failed. The Albanian cause and interests met the European interests towards the danger coming from the East. So great was the Scanderbeg need for the European support that it could raise the name of the Albanian confrontation beyond the Adriatic to save Europe from the Ottoman menace. Both the relations and the cooperation were a mutual and useful process for both parts.

Albania as a country in Scanderbeg's time has exercised an organized foreign policy, mainly with other European countries. There had been chancellery and officials for this job, counselors, ambassadors, special envoys which according to the missions they had received different names. The archival documents of the time and other historic sources provide information about the Scanderbeg's diplomatic envoys to the Holy See in Rome, to the Republic of Venice Senate, to the royal courts of Naples and Hungary, to the duchies of Milan or Burgundy, to the city of Ragusa etc.

Scanderbeg was not simply an Albanian guerrilla leader or a powerful man of sword as ordinarily described in the special chronicles of the time, or in later book pages. He was a real statesman who sketched the European orientation of Albania, conscientiously forged alliances with the European countries. Scanderbeg "possessed a complete political control, and of course was able to define by himself the direction program of his action."¹⁰ Strongly emphasizing this substantial feature of his policy is more than a justified the attention

¹⁰ Oliver Jens Schmitt. Skënderbeu. K&B.Tiranë, 2008, p. 460.

that one must pay to Gjergj Kastrioti's Europeanization in order to not modernize and misuse it. He has to be placed in the framework of his time and in the logic of the political alliance against a foreign civilization that was estranged to European civilization. So, from Gjergj Kastrioti, as the renown Albanologist father Giuseppe Valentini rightfully notes, we don't have to expect from Scanderbeg to have left us a treaty on Europeanization, or to have mentioned Europe in his speeches in front of the soldiers.¹¹

There was a hierarchy of relations in the foreign policy and Scanderbeg's alliances with the European countries. The priorities were defined by a number of factors such as the importance these countries had and the role, they played against the Ottoman danger; their readiness toward Scanderbeg in his anti-Turkish resistance, their perception of this threat, their specific interests toward the non-confrontation with the Ottomans and the authority and influence that these countries had at European level. Based on these factors, the Scanderbeg relations with these countries have been characterized for 25 years by highs and lows, but never lost the fulcrum of the European orientation in the foreign policy.

A number of historians involved in this specific part of our history think that the Holy See in Rome has been the first and the principal ally of the Albanians in their anti-Ottoman resistance.¹² The arguments are that the high moral authority of the Catholic metropolis, the long history of efforts to lead a Christian crusade against the Ottomans, the financial aids and the high appreciations of the Popes for Scanderbeg as the defender of Christendom.

The authority of the Holy See in the XV century wasn't at its peak. The powerful European kings and princes in a Europe where the national specific particularities prevailed, didn't obey to the Christian universalism of the Popes of Rome. They more and more were in quarrel among them for power and for territorial enlargements. The Holy See has failed in organizing the anti-Ottoman crusade from 1439 to 1464, exactly because of the different interests, lack of readiness and

¹¹ At Giuseppe Valentini. *Skënderbeu dhe Papati. 1442-1467. Studime dhe tekste historike*. Botimet PLEJAD, 2013, p. 64.

¹² Fan. S. Noli. *Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu...* p. 228-229; Athanas Gegaj. *L'Albanie et l'Invasion Turque au XV^e siècle*. Université de Louvain, Paris, 1937; Aurel Plasari. *Skënderbeu. Një histori politike*. Instituti i Studimeve "Gjergj Fishta". Tiranë, 2010, p. 10.

special states flirtations with the sultans. Not all the European countries perceived the Ottoman danger in the same way and intensity. The Papacy, the Italian and the central European states were in the frontline of the Ottoman threats.

Scanderbeg as the leader of the Albanians in the anti-Ottoman resistance, was not appreciated in the beginning. Only after his first victories against the Ottoman armies, the echo of his battles reached Rome and other Italian and European chancelleries. The defeat of the armies of Sultan Murat II and Mehmet II in front of Kruja walls and in other long battles in the Albanian lands renew the great expectations about the Europe's salvation. As the prominent Christian knights were few, the victories in the battles echoed in Rome.

The popes, contemporary of Gjergj Kastrioti gave him different epithets for nearly a quarter a century. They have spoken with the vocabulary of the Catholic faith, natural for the role and mission of the Holy See. The Pope Nicholas V (1447-1453) called him "a very strong warrior" of Christianity and champion in his defense against the Turks.¹³ The Pope Calixtus III (1453-1458) considered him "the strong protector and true warrior of the Christian faith."¹⁴ His successor, the Pope Pius II (Enea Silvio Piccolomini) (1458-1464) who glorified him more than any other pope, describes Scanderbeg as "Athleta Christi", "the most unrelenting defender of Christ", the man "who nearly spent all his life fighting in the name of Christ."¹⁵ The Pope Paul II following the traces of his predecessors called Scanderbeg "the brave champion of Jesus Christ."¹⁶ Such descriptions overpass the religious borders and take on another dimension...This glorious character of our history enters a wider and substantial dimension, because Christianity was

¹³ Fan. S. Noli. Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu...Shtojcë. Dok.Nr.7. p. 401; Aurel Plasari. Skënderbeu... p. 429.

¹⁴ Ignatius Parrino. Acta Albaniae Vaticana. Res Albaniae Saeculorum XIV et XV Atque cruciatam spectantia. Tomus I. Acta ex libris brevium excerpta collingens. Città del Vaticano. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 1971. Doc. Nr. 260; M. Sciambra. G. Valentini. I. Parrino. L'Albania e Scanderbeg nel piano generale di crociata di Callisto III (1455- 1458) Badia di Grottaferrata, 1967, p. 118-119; R. P. Duponcet.Histoire de Scanderbeg. Roy d'Albanie...p. 19-20; C. Marinesco.Alphonse V, roi d'Aragon et de Naples et l'Albanie de Scanderbeg... p. 126; J Radonić. Djuradj Kastriot Scanderbeg i Albanija u XV veku. Beograd, 1942.Dok. Nr. 140.

¹⁵ Zef Mirdita. Krishtenizmi ndër shqiptarë. "Drita". Prizren&Misioni Katolik Shqiptar në Zagreb. Prizren-Zagreb 1998, p. 173; Fan. S. Noli. Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu...Shtojcë. Dok. Nr.23. p. 416; Aurel Plasari. Shqipëria dhe shqiptarët në Europën e Piut II... p. 89, 110.

¹⁶ R. P. Duponcet. Histoire de Scanderbeg. Roy d'Albanie... p.562-563.

recognized and accepted as the philosophy and the basis of the European civilization.

At first sight, these appraisals create the image that the Albanians' war lead by Scanderbeg were simply of a religious character. Some historians have tried to nourish this impression, also basing on the letters Scanderbeg sent to the Popes where among others he writes them that the Ottomans are "our enemies and of the Christian faith", that "we want to be counted in the lines of Christ's believers," etc.¹⁷

No doubt that Christianity as ideology and religious faith was an encouraging and unifying factor among the Christian Albanians, but not the only one. Lamartine, the French historian of the XIX century says that Scanderbeg's cause was a national cause rather than a religious cause.¹⁸ And also, the underestimating observation of the Christianity's role in the Albanian resistance and the conclusions that Scanderbeg was standing above the religions have been inaccurate.¹⁹

The Holy See was a state and, in its way, and with its tools it conducted a specific policy in accordance with its objectives. Therefore, the appraisal and opinions of the popes towards Scanderbeg should not be simply seen as courtesy and encouraging religious actions of the time, but actions with a political message. The popes could neither speak other language, nor be out of their mission. The protection of Christianity from "the infidels," from the Moslem Ottomans was at the heart of the crusade. The Pope Pius II appointed Scanderbeg general commander of the European ground forces during the preparations of the crusade of 1464. However, behind Christianity's protection and in its name, the crusades and special European countries as the Kingdom of Naples, the Republic of San Marco or some other countries aimed to expand in the eastern Mediterranean territories and beyond.

The popes have praised Scanderbeg in a superlative way by comparing him with other kings and princes who contributed to the defense of the European civilization. The Pope Calixtus III wrote to Scanderbeg on February 1458: "If only there existed one of your kind

¹⁷ Oliver Jens Schmitt. *Skënderbeu...* p. 335.

¹⁸ Alphonse de Lamartine. *Histoire la Turquie*. Tome III. Paris. Librairie du Constitutionnel 10, Iu; De Valois. 10. 1854, p. 146.

¹⁹ Aleks Buda. *Gjergj Kastrioti- Skënderbeu dhe epoka e tij...*, p. 284-285.

had among other Christian princes, we wouldn't have been worried or despaired about the defense of the religion."²⁰ Also the Pope Pius II expresses the same worry to the Albanian leader when he writes to him: "we are deeply sorry that we couldn't find among the Christian princes that dedication we hoped to find towards the religious affairs...."²¹

These high considerations for Scanderbeg and his role from the Holy See didn't always meet the help that the popes gave him. Historians have different opinions about this issue. Barleti, Noli, Gegaj, Plasari, etc. think that the Holy See deserves the first place among those countries who helped Scanderbeg.²² On the other hand, Foygt, Fallmerayer, etc. say that the help from the popes was too small, "only apostolic blessings and panegyric speeches".²³ Some evidences of the time prove these critics. When Scanderbeg went in Rome to seek help on December 1466, an ambassador informed his center that "he has come with few horses; as if he was a poor man."²⁴ The majority of his demands were turned down. One observer said: "*he took so little that couldn't be mentioned without a Christian blush...*".²⁵ The most shocking testimony has been left by Scanderbeg himself, always referring to the chronicles of the time, when in conclusion of his visit in Rome on 14 February 1467, ironically he stated that "from now on he had to fight the Church more than the Sultan."²⁶

Scanderbeg deserved the support of the allies and alliances because of his mission in protecting the European civilization. By the time the front of the war against the Ottoman Turks was in the Danube and the Adriatic Sea area. Two were the strongholds of resistance against the Ottoman penetration in Europe: the Hungarian kingdom with its regent, the great captain János Hunyadi and Albania with her great captain, Scanderbeg. Edward Gibbon, but also other historians, place Hunyadi and Scanderbeg in the list of the heroes also for another reason. They

²⁰ Ignatius Parrino. Acta Albaniae Vaticana. Dok. Nr. 306; M. Sciambra. G. Valentini. I. Parrino. L'Albania e Scanderbeg nel piano generale di crociata di Callisto III (1455- 1458) ... p. 118.

²¹ Ignatius Parrino. Acta Albaniae Vaticana..., Dok. Nr. 495.

²² Fan. S. Noli. Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu... p. 228; Aurel Plasari. Skënderbeu... p. 10.

²³ Fan. S. Noli. Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu... p. 227.

²⁴ J Radoniç. Djurad Kastriot Scanderbeg... Dok. Nr. 340.

²⁵ R. P. Duponcet. Histoire de Scanderbeg d'Albanie... p. 542; Aurel Plasari. Skënderbeu..., p. 700-701.

²⁶ Kristo Frashëri. Skënderbeu... p. 450.

"since the moment of their involvement against the Ottoman armies delayed the destruction of the Greek empire (Byzantine -PM)" as one of the important political formations and cultural hubs of the Middle Age".²⁷

Scanderbeg and Hunyadi have never met each other because of the circumstances, regardless the efforts made. However, at a distance, in mutual respect to one another and through their representatives tried to forge an alliance. Although, this didn't happen in the form of a written document, it worked out on the battle fields against the common Ottoman enemy. Anyway, its known that the both great captains have sent to each other ambassadors or representatives to coordinate the help and the actions between them. These contacts began in 1448 and continued until 1456, when Hunyadi died, just after the Ottoman failure in besieging Belgrade which was protected by the Hungarian hero.²⁸ His death left Scanderbeg without an ally in the battlefield. He "remained the only active crusader in the Balkans" and took on the Hunyadi's role as the hero of Christianity.²⁹

The Italian states were Albania's allies in the anti-Ottoman war, but they didn't engage genuine military formation, but some small contingents to protect the strongholds. They declared several times that were ready to join the crusades that the Holy See was trying to organize, but nothing more. They had their aims which didn't want to sacrifice in the name of the anti-Ottoman war. Not only, but these countries, especially the Kingdom of Naples and the Republic of Venice were in fierce rivalry and have flirted with the Ottoman sultans.

Their relations with Scanderbeg mainly worked in the anti-Ottoman plan, but also were defined by the type of relations he had with each of these countries. The Albanian leader has often found himself in delicate positions to maintain the balance of his stand towards them.

²⁷ Edward Gibbon. The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. In eight vols. Vol.VIII. Paris Baudry's European Library 1840, p. 171; Francise Pall. Skënderbeu dhe Huniadi. Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike (12-18 January 1968) I..., p. 76.

²⁸ Francise Pall. Skënderbeu dhe Huniadi.... p. 79-85; C. Marinesco. Alphonse V, roi d' Aragon et de Naples et l'Albanie de Scanderbeg..., p. 35.

²⁹ Franc Babinger. Mehmet pushtuesi. Botësulmuesi në kapërcyell kohe. Shtëpia Botuese "55". Vëllimi i parë. Tiranë 2005, p. 99; Donald M. Nicol. Byzantium and Venice. A study in diplomatic and cultural relations. Cambridge University Press 1988, p. 387.

Consequently, the Albanian resistance was characterized by different fluctuations and change of priorities throughout its existence.

Scanderbeg had one major priority: protecting of Albanian lands from the Ottoman invasion, which required political relations and alliances with the Italian states. Based on the interests about the Albanian resistance at different times, they responded to the demands of Scanderbeg by either supporting these demands or turning them down.

The ambassadors of Scanderbeg signed in March 1451 a treaty under his name with the representatives of the king Alfonso V of Naples in Gaeta, Italy. The treaty written in the spirit of the age and in difficult situations for Scanderbeg, secured him the necessary aids and guaranteed him the support to face the frequent Ottoman Turks attacks. However, the value of the Albanian resistance has been many times greater. Scanderbeg crossed the Adriatic Sea to Naples in 1461 to support the king Ferrante, successor of Alfonso V, whose throne he saved the from his rivals. All this was done as a sign of respect for the signed agreement with Alfonso V and the aids has received from him. Ferrante did not support Scanderbeg very much to give him the possibility of resistance to the end.³⁰

However, this was not the main thing. The importance and the benefit of the great Albanian resistance for the European civilization, was beautifully emphasized by Scanderbeg in the well-known letter sent on October 31, 1460 to one of the rivals of king Ferrante, the prince of Taranto, Giovanni Antonio de Orsini: "...if I was defeated, Italy would have experienced the consequence for sure, and in that case, that possession which you acclaim yours, would belong to the Turks."³¹ This truth was made quite clear by the English knight John of Newport, Scanderbeg's fellow warrior which in that time wrote that "the conquest of Europe is certain, *because there is no other power that can do this resistance if the castle falls.*"³²

³⁰ David Abulafia. I regni del Mediterraneo occidentale dal 1200 al 1500; la lotta per il dominio, Roma-Bari. Laterza, 1999, p. 239-240; N. Iorga. Brève historie de l'Albanie e du peuple albanais... p. 46.

³¹ J Radoniç. Djuradj Kastriot Scanderbeg... Dok. Nr. 200; C. Marinesco. Alphonse V, roi d'Aragon et de Naples et l'Albanie de Scanderbeg..., p.135.

³² Aleks Buda. Gjergj Kastrioti- Skënderbeu dhe epoka e tij... p. 266; Kristo Frashëri. Skënderbeu..., p. 484.

Some European countries tended to adapt to the established conjectures, according to the interest of the moment and didn't want to see beyond. For them, the Ottoman danger was close or away depending on the Hungary's resistance in the Danube front and Adriatic front, Albania. The defense of Christianity in the name of which crusades were organized, didn't meet the priorities each European country had in the political and trade fields. The Venetians were said to "have put their kin above the religion; they were Venetians first, then Christians".³³ Venice was a powerful trade country in the Adriatic and Mediterranean area. This country had a great merchant and military fleet and many fortified strongholds in all this maritime space. The Republic sometimes approached to the European Christian alliance against the Ottomans and sometimes left this alliance when it came to concrete actions, based on her interests. The Seignory had signed in 1430 a peace treaty with the Sultan Murat II and was trying benefit therefrom.

This traditional pragmatism of the Republic of San Marco was fully manifested also in the relations with Scanderbeg, which were complex and complicated, with highs and lows for almost a quarter of a century.

The Great Council of Republic did not pay any particular attention to explosion of the anti-Ottoman rebellion in Albania in November 1443. The interest increased only after the establishment of the League of Lezha in March 1444, when Scanderbeg unified the majority of the Albanian nobility and was recognized as *primus inter pares* and as leader of the League's joint forces. The information of the Venetian observers and governors in Albania about the first victories of Scanderbeg against the Ottoman armies, differently from one might think didn't cause so much pleasure in the Republic. The political events in Albania, the establishment of the League of Lezha, the growing authority of Gjergj Kastrioti didn't "meet the necessities of the international policy of Venice in 1444-1445."³⁴

The Republic of San Marco didn't want the Sultan be misinformed that this Republic was behind Scanderbeg and openly encouraged his resistance only because of her coastal possessions in Albania. She was

³³ Donald M. Nicol. Byzantium and Venice... p. 422.

³⁴ Freddy Thiriet. Disa mendime rreth politikës së Venedikut ndaj Gjergj Kastriotit-Skënderbeut in: Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike (12-18 January 1968) ..., p. 62.

not interested in breaking the status-quo in the relations with the Ottomans established with the peace treaty in 1430. On other hand, the real and the growing threat of Ottomans crossing the Adriatic Sea to Italy was a very strong reason as proved by a chronicle of 1446 that the Venetians assisted time after time Scanderbeg "in such a way to not cause Turks envy, help that was insufficient...".³⁵ An assistance that as the Romanian historian N. Iorga says "*to make to the Turks a protective war without showing up*".³⁶ Noli calls this Venice behavior very strange, with the exception of some short interruptions continued to subsidize Scanderbeg, although it hated him head over heels!³⁷

These dilemmas nourished another the doubt of Venice had towards the Albanian leader of the League of Lezha. The Assembly of the Albanian lords was rightly seen at that time, and certainly years later, as a beginning of Scanderbeg's project on a unified Albanian state. If such an effort would have succeeded, naturally at a more suitable time, part of it would have also would been all the Albanian territories occupied or possessed by foreigners, including here Venice's coastal possessions. This scope was against the Republic's interests, because her coastal bases in the Adriatic shore of great economic and strategic importance, connected with the merchant interest in Levant (Eastern Mediterranean).³⁸ This remains only a speculation, because until today no evidence about this scope has been proved.

The anti-Ottoman resistance and the tendency to create a united Albanian state were in parallel. No doubt that this state would be Christian and European. The Republic of San Marco of course didn't like such a perspective. The doubts gradually influenced the two-face policy of the Republic towards Scanderbeg, in accordance with the conjunctures and the interests. The period from 1446 was the beginning of the policies of conflicts. Scanderbeg was not interested in opening a new battle front and being between the two fires. But, his unification project and the feudal logic of the time gradually brought the conflict with Venice, in December 1447 about the city of Danja, north of Albania.

³⁵ Kristo Frashëri. Skënderbeu... p. 145.

³⁶ N. Iorga. Brève historie de l'Albanie e du peuple albanais. Bucarest, 1919, p. 46.

³⁷ Fan. S. Noli. Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu (1405- 1468) ... p. 230.

³⁸ Peter Bartl. Relazioni fra Scanderbeg e Venezia. In: Albanica 30. Giorgio Castriota Scanderbeg e l'identità nazionale albanese. A cura di Matteo Mandalá. Palermo 2009, p. 35.

At the time of the conflict, The Great Council of the Republic showed two standards in the policy towards Scanderbeg. It ordered his men in Albania to invite the Turkish army and to help it defeat "the obnoxious Scanderbeg" and banish him "from Albania and possibly from the face of the earth". These people were instructed to encourage Albanian lords in the north of the country against Scanderbeg. From the other side, the Council required to stop him through evoking the past friendship and the promises for a good neighborhood, including an annual reward in money".³⁹ The conflict ended with a peace agreement in October 1448, but the mistrust on both sides and moments of tension among them continued.

The suspicious stand the Republic of Saint Marc had towards Scanderbeg had another reason. In 1451 the Albanian leader had signed an alliance treaty with the king Alfonso V of Naples who was the biggest rival of the Seignory among the Italian states, but also for expansion and trade in the Adriatic and eastern Mediterranean area. This climate of rivalry was also reflected in the relations between Scanderbeg and each of these two countries. After the death of king Alfonso in 1458, the kingdom of Naples was involved for some years in an internal war for the throne inheritance. Scanderbeg came in aid to his ally, king Ferrante, saved his throne, but the kingdom lost its previous power and influence.

Under these circumstances, Scanderbeg necessitated more help and support for the frequent attacks of the Ottoman armies. Very unlikely to face the Ottoman threat, he in April 1463 made peace with the Sultan Mehmet II. On the other hand, Venice didn't have any big trouble from the weakened traditional rival, the kingdom of Naples. The Republic was now more than ever menaced by the Ottoman danger, considering her possessions in the Albanian shore. This common interest marked a new phase in the Albanian-Venetian relations. Here the Pope Pius II was personally engaged in the organization of the anti-Ottoman crusade.

The Albanian-Venetian approach was crowned with signing of an alliance on August 20, 1463. The agreement had 6 points and was favorable to Scanderbeg. The Republic promised to put under

³⁹ J. Radonić. Djuradj Kastriot Scanderbeg. i Arbania u XV veku... Dok. Nr.18; Donald M. Nicol. Byzantium and Venice..., p. 387.

Scanderbeg's command her forces situated in the Venetians possessions in Albania in case of war against the Ottomans, would secure the Albanian and the Dalmatian shores with her ships in time of war, offer Scanderbeg financial support and some privileges, and would never separately sign a peace agreement with the sultan without a preliminary consultation with him.⁴⁰ Few days after this agreement, Venice proclaimed war to Turkey.

Marin Barleti, Dhimitër Frangu, etc., Scanderbeg's earlier biographers, have exalted this agreement and in general his relations with Venice. The truth is that in 1463 because of the common sensitivity from the Ottoman threat and the involvement in the anti-Ottoman crusade, the relations had a new development. However, the Republic of San Marco remained loyal to her traditional conjectural policy. It didn't wholly respect the agreement, withdrew or was engaged depending on the development of the battle front in Albania.

The documents of the time prove that ambassadors of Scanderbeg and his son from 1463-1467 often knocked at the doors of the Great Council, but the assistance was modest. Also, when the information about the Albanian resistance were pessimistic as those of 1466, the high Venetians decision makers, in face of the demands for help, as a document of October 1466 shows, "would better throw the money into the cesspools rather than spending there."⁴¹

Typical of the Venetian policy, a year later, considering that the situation in Albania was "very bad and dangerous," the Great Council tried to sensitize Rome. It demanded help to the Pope to take the necessary measures warning that "once the Albanian seashore falls (God defend it!) to the enemy, has nothing left but to cross to Italy and whenever it wishes to destroy Christianity from its foundations."⁴² Scanderbeg himself warned the popes, Venice and Naples "that couldn't stand to the rampant greed and the blind courage of the barbarians (the Turks-P.M) if all Europe's powers wouldn't agree."⁴³ Unfortunately, Venice and other Italian states even when saw the danger at the door-step gave a little to assistance to Scanderbeg.

⁴⁰ Burime të zgjedhura për historinë e Shqipërisë. Vëllimi II. Shek. VIII – XV. Tiranë, 1962, p. 333 – 336.

⁴¹ J Radoniç. Djuradj Kastriot Scanderbeg. i Arbania u XV veku... Dok. Nr. 336.

⁴² Ibid. Dok. Nr. 364.

⁴³ Virgjl Kule. Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu. Kryqtari i fundit. OBRA GVG. 2011, p. 474.

Among the Albanians neighbors, only the Republic of Ragusa nourished sympathy and solidarity without interest for their war. Being formally under the sovereignty of the king of Hungary, but in reality, a neutral state, Ragusa helped Scanderbeg made useful services within the possibilities that the small state had. The city had a community of Albanian citizens, from whom had come out distinguished families and with influence, but also high clerics. Here we can mention the Gazulli family who became Scanderbeg's supporting base.

Ragusa served Scanderbeg as a transit center during his movements and of his collaborators to Italy, but also the army who went to assist king Ferrante of Naples. The city very often undertook diplomatic and intermediary missions to the Hungarian kingdom, the Italian and Balkan states on behalf of the Albanian. Also, she raised the voice about the urgent need Scanderbeg had for support. In a letter sent to the Pope Pius II on June 1464, the Sovereign of Ragusa, the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus expressed his concern: "nobody puts in doubt that he (the Turk-P.M) does not only wish the Epirotes mountains, but will use them as a bridge to crush the whole Christianity."⁴⁴

Albania and Ragusa had economic and trade relations between them. The Albanian merchants exported in Ragusa cereals, salt, meat, wine, leather etc., while imported from that country processed materials and especially textiles.⁴⁵ The Ragusans were also good and reliable bankers. Scanderbeg trusted them his money and the aids coming from Italy.

The anti-Ottoman European Christian alliance in national degree should have given to Scanderbeg a greater support and assistance. Not only the fate of Albania, but also that of the European civilization was at stake. There was established a European front in miniature in Albania and in Scanderbeg battle fields. Marin Barleti and other chroniclers of the time noted that in Scanderbeg's army existed "a greater diversity of the nations," Italians, French, Spaniards, Germans, English, Serbs, Dalmatians, etc.⁴⁶ The observers had seen in the roads of Albania tens of French knights going to align as crusaders warriors

⁴⁴ J. Radoniç. Djuradj Kastriot Scanderbeg. i Arbania u XV veku.... Dok.Nr.271.

⁴⁵ Jahja Draçolli. Marrëdhëniet e Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeut me Republikën e Raguzës in: Skënderbeu dhe Evropa (Papers' summary). Tiranë, 2006, p. 111.

⁴⁶ R. P. Duponcet. Histoire de Scanderbeg. Roy d' Albanie. Paris, 1708. M. DCCIX, p. 239, 253; Alphonse de Lamartine. Histoire la Turquie. Tome III. Paris. Librairie du Constitutionnel. 1854, p. 145;

in Scanderbeg's army.⁴⁷ Gibbon writes that "the most courageous adventurers of France and Germany were tempted by his fame and put themselves at his service."⁴⁸ Evidences show that the German volunteers were the most distinguished soldiers in protection of Kruja, the Scanderbeg's capital, during the first siege from Sultan Murat II in 1450.⁴⁹ John of Newport was the most distinguished British soldier. He was also engaged in diplomatic missions. The panoramic view of the European symbolic alliance among the lines of Scanderbeg army becomes more complete when counting that hundreds and thousands of people sent by the kingdom of Naples, Republic of Venice etc., in Albania. All the foreign warriors and also Europe "*saw him as the leader in the holy war for protection of Christianity from the attack of the Islamic invaders.*"⁵⁰

The overwhelming majority of the historians, philosophers, poets and writers who wrote about Scanderbeg during the centuries, agree on one thing: warrior and guardian of the European civilization. There is a long list to be mentioned of epithets given to Scanderbeg, even excluding the Albanian ones. Scanderbeg it's not only the national hero of Albanians, but also an asset to the European civilization and its pride.

⁴⁷ C. Marinesco. Alphonse V, roi d'Aragon et de Naples et l'Albanie de Scanderbeg... p. 107, 130; Francisc Pall. Skënderbeu dhe Huniadi... p. 86; Aurel Plasari. Arbëria e Skënderbeut dhe Burgundi i Filip – të mirit; in: Skënderbeu dhe Evropa (Papers' summary) ... p. 137; Virgjil Kule. Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu. Kryqtari i fundit... p. 224.

⁴⁸ Edward Gibbon. The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire... Vol.VIII, p. 173.

⁴⁹ Johannes Irmscher. Skënderbeu dhe Gjermania, in: Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike (12-18 January 1968) ..., p. 552.

⁵⁰ A. K. Brackob. Scanderbeg. A. History of George Castriota and the Albanian Resistance to Islamic Expansion in fifteenth Century Europe..., p. 187.

Titos JOCHALAS

**GJERGJ KASTRIOTI – SCANDERBEG IN THE MODERN
GREEK HISTORIOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE***

Fan Noli, this Albanian eminent personality in the field of politics, literature and religion tells us in his *Autobiography* that when was still a student at the Adrianopolis Greek high school, during the summer holidays in his village Ibrik – Tepe, read two of the most precious books recommended by "uncle Tassi": The New Testament translated by Kristoforidhi and a history of Scanderbeg, written and published in Greek. The biography of the Albanian hero in Greek impressed him so much, that the personality of Gjergj Kastrioti would continuously lead him throughout his life.¹

Also, Jani Vreto, another Albanian intellectual and ardent representative of the *Albanian Renaissance*, read the biography of Scanderbeg in Greek, when was a student at the Zosimaia school in Ioannina, which made him so much enthusiastic, that just finishing it, wrote the poem *Historia e Skënderbeut (The history of Scanderbeg)*.²

Also, Theodoros Kolokotronis, an eminent personality of the Greek Revolution of 1821 and a humble man and with little education, writes in his *Memories*, dictated by Tertsétis, that during his life had read only three books: *The history of Greece*, *The History of Aristomeni* and *The history Scanderbeg*. This is what expressively Kolokotroni says: "*I read Scanderbeg's life. I was thinking of his deeds. He never locked himself up in Kruja*,"³ therefore, he was putting in evidence the military

*This presentation is part of the discourse segments.

¹ Fan S. Noli, *Fiftieth Anniversary Book of the Albanian Orthodox Church in America 1908-1958*, Boston, Massachusetts 1960, p. 54.

² N. Clayer, *Οι απαρχές του αλβανικού εθνικισμού*, [translated from French by A. Sideris], Ιωάννινα 2009, p. 182, 657, note 81.

³ Θ. Κολοκοτρώνης, *Απομνημονεύματα*, [edited by G. Tercetis], Αθήνα 1958, p. 97, 225.

tactics of Scanderbeg to never lock up himself within the castle, but to attack from outside the enemy inflicting great damages on them.

What is this Greek biography that influenced so much the Albanians and Greeks, the savants, poets, dramatists, writers and even painters, as we will later on see? We are speaking about the first biography in Greek about Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg, published without author's name in Moscow in 1812⁴. It was not an original work, but a summary of P. Duponcet's work, *Histoire de Scanderbeg, Roy d' Albanie*, published in Paris in 1709,⁵ for the elaboration of which the French author was based in the first biography on Scanderbeg, written and published in Rome by the priest from Shkodra Marin Barleti.⁶

This biography in Greek about Scanderbeg's life and courage, except the great spread that had in Greece, was also spread to the Russians, after being translated into Russian and published in Moscow in 1852,⁷ and also to the Romanians, after being translated into Romanian and published in Bucharest twice, in 1847 and 1857.⁸ It was also translated into Italian by Andreas Papadhopulos-Vretòs from Lefkada, and was printed in Naples in 1820⁹ with a supplementary about the establishment of the Albanian population in the Kingdom of two Sicilies after the death of Scanderbeg.¹⁰ Just this Vreto's translation was republished twice in Palermo under the care of Nicolò Spata and represents a pleasant reading which had an impact on many Arbëresh

⁴ *Επιτομή της Ιστορίας Γεωργίου του Καστριώτου του επονομασθέντος Σκεντέρμπεη, βασιλέως της Αλβανίας μεταφρασθείσα εκ του Γαλλικού, εν Μόσχα 1812.*

⁵ Τ. Γιοχάλας, *Ο Γεώργιος Καστριώτης-Σκεντέρμπεης εις την Νεοελληνικήν Ιστοριογραφίαν και Λογοτεχνίαν*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1975, republished from the printing house Δωδώνη, Αθήνα 1994, p. 30.

⁶ *Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi Epirotarum principis.*

⁷ [Andrej Lizlov] *Iskander-bei epizod iz istorii Albanii*, perevod s grečeskogo A-ra L-va, Moskva 1852, (see N. Rozov-N. Čistjakova, *Povest' o Skanderbege*, Moskva-Leningrad 1957, p. 128, note 2).

⁸ I. Bilciurescu, *Preskurtare din istoria lui Georgie Castriotul, numit Scenderbei, printul Albaniei*, vol. 1-2, Bukurești 1847, 1857, (see F. Pall, "Marino Barlezio uno storico umanista", *Mélanges d' Hist. Générale* 2(1938), p. 160).

⁹ A. Papadopulo-Vretò, *Compendio dell' istoria di Giorgio Castriotto soprannominato Scanderbeg principe dell' Albania tradotto dall' idioma Greco-moderno e corredato di note dal Dottor Andrea Papadopulo Vretò Leucadio*, Napoli 1820, vol. 1-2.

¹⁰ *Appendice alla storia di Scanderbeg contenente gli avvenimenti più rimarcabili dopo la sua morte, e le trasmigrazioni degli Albanesi nel regno delle due Sicilie compilate dal traduttore, (ibid, vol. 2, p. 209-252).*

savants.¹¹ Vreto's Italian translation together with two supplements was "brought" also in Greek and published without name in Athens in 1848,¹² and it was republished in 1858 and 1884. This work had a wide spread among the Greek readers and influenced many Greek writers, which wrote books on Scanderbeg. Also, Vreto added an insulting letter that the prince Picinino sent to Scanderbeg and the proud reply of Scanderbeg, where he praises his "Epirotes" origin calling himself successor of Pyrrhus¹³.

Another biography about Scanderbeg was printed in Greek in 1861 by N. Dragúmis¹⁴ and its a translation from the French of the work by C. Paganel, *Histoire de Scanderbeg*, Paris 1855, with many supplementary comments by the interpreter. This biography was published by Dragúmis, and it was so warmly welcomed by the readers, that it was republished in Smyrna in 1880.¹⁵

Paganeli in his work has called the Albanian hero "the last representative of the ancient Greece heroes and the most important harbinger of the New Greece."¹⁶ Paganeli's point-of-views which were embraced by the Greek interpreter Dragúmis, made the Greek public have the idea that Scanderbeg was Greek. Thus, when in 1873 C. Hopf published in *Chroniques greco-romanes* also a text of Spandugino where it was said that Scanderbeg was "uomo valente e per origine serviano,"¹⁷ undermining the Slav origin of his mother, an opinion that the historian Konstantinos Paparigópulos accepted without any objection, as he wrote, reconsidering his opinion for the alleged Greek

¹¹ *Storia di Giorgio Castriotto soprannominato Scanderbeg principe dell'Albania*, Palermo 1845, 1847.

¹² *Ιστορία Γεωργίου Καστριώτου του μετωνομασθέντος [sic] Σκεντέρμπεη ηγεμόνος της Αλβανίας μεταφρασθείσα εκ του ιταλικού με πολλάς σημειώσεις. Προσετέθη δε και έκθεσις των συμβάντων μετά τον θάνατον του Σκεντέρμπεη και των εν τω Βασιλείω των δύο Σικελιών Αλβανικών αποικιών*, Αθήναι 1848, 1858, 1884.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 154.

¹⁴ *Ιστορία Γεωργίου Καστριώτου του επιλεγμένου Σκεντέρμπεη, επεξεργασθείσα κατά Παγανέλ, υπό Ν. Δραγούμη, εν Αθήναις 1861.*

¹⁵ *Ιστορία Γεωργίου Καστριώτου του επιλεγμένου Σκεντέρμπεη, επεξεργασθείσα κατά Παγανέλ υπό Ν. Δραγούμη*, Εκδίδεται [sic] υπό Ι. Μάνου, εν Σμύρνη 1880.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62 "...le dernier représentant des héros de la Grèce antique, c'est le plus éminent précurseur de la Grèce moderne".

¹⁷ C. Hopf, *Chronique gréco-romanes, inédites ou peu connues publiées avec notes tables généalogiques*, Berlin 1873, p. 334.

origin of the hero,¹⁸ a fierce polemic exploded through Athens newspapers among the Greek historian, the Greek savants, and Albanian scholars, a part of which recognized - the Greek-Epirotes origin of the hero (Petridhis),¹⁹ others recognized his Greek origin, but his later Albanianism (Miliarakis),²⁰ while others such as M. Dhímicas²¹ and the Albanian from Korça Eftim Prandi²² who was living in Egypt recognized the Albanian origin of Scanderbeg. Prandi also called the Greeks the blood brothers of Albanians, and proposed the construction in Athens of the monument of the hero. So that he could be admitted in "the congregation of greatest heroes and of the Greek wise men society!"²³ Therefore, the reaction of the Greek and Albanian savants against Paparigópulos has been allegedly against Scanderbeg's Slavic origin. Although in the latest edition of the Paparigópulos's history it was admitted the Albanian origin of Gjergj Kastrioti,²⁴ there have been many Greeks who continued to consider Scanderbeg Greek until the second half of the XX century.²⁵

A fourth biography (unfortunately unfinished) in Greek about Scanderbeg was published without authorship in 1880 with the title, *Ιστορία του Σκενδέρβη* (=History of Scanderbeg) in the newspaper published by Anastas Kullurioti *Η Φωνή της Αλβανίας*²⁶ (=Voice of Albania).

The fifth Greek biography was the titled, *Γεώργιος Καστριώτης* (=Gjergj Kastrioti) and was published in *Νέα Ημέρα*²⁷ (=New Day), a Greek newspaper in Trieste. It summarizes the book, *Scanderbeg, Historische Studie (Wien 1894)* authored by Julius Pisko, who was the Austro-Hungarian consul in Ioannina. For the elaboration of his work Pisko was based on Barleti.

¹⁸ Κ. Παπαρρηγόπουλος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, εν Αθήναις 1874, vol. 5, p. 379.

¹⁹ Α. Πετρίδης, letters in the *Ωρα* newspaper (Athens, February 9, 1876), and the *Λαός* newspaper (Athens, 28 February and 29 March 1876).

²⁰ Α. Μηλιαράκης, *Ολίγαι λέξεις περί της καταγωγής του Σκεντέρμπεη*, εν Αθήναις 1876.

²¹ Μ. Δήμιτσας, *Κριτικά έρευναι περί της καταγωγής και εθνικότητας Γεωργίου Καστριώτου του Σκεντέρμπεη*, Αθήνησι 1877.

²² Ε. Πράντης, *Αλβανικά παράπονα*, εν Αθήναις 1880.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 101.

²⁴ Κ. Παπαρρηγόπουλος, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, (6th edition), Αθήναι 1932, p. 294.

²⁵ See Τ. Γιοχάλας, *Ο Γεώργιος Καστριώτης -Σκεντέρμπεης*, op. cit. p. 40-49.

²⁶ From nr. 27 (24 May 1880) until nr. 39 (16 August 1880).

²⁷ From nr. 1053 (15 February 1895) until nr. 1062 (19 April 1895).

The last publication in Greek about Scanderbeg and his deeds is a short biography published by Ilias Ikonómopulos on 1904, based on the work of Dragúmis about Scanderbeg.²⁸

These Greek biographies about Scanderbeg impacted more or less the Greek writers who wrote on Gjergj Kastrioti tragedies, poems, stories, and painters.

The following works are written in Greek:

1. The tragedy, *Γεώργιος Καστριώτης* (=Gjergj Kastrioti) (1818) authored by J. Zabelios (1787-1856)²⁹ from Lefkadha.

2. The tragedy *Σκενέρβης ο βασιλεύς των Ηπειρωτών* (=Scanderbeg king of Epirotes) (1889) authored by A. Antoniadis, born to parents from Crete (1836-1905).³⁰

3. The poem, *Σκεντέρβης* (=Scanderbeg) (1839) of the romantic poet from Ermúpolis and Síros J. Karasútsas (1824-1873).³¹

4. The poem, *Μια φωνή του Καστριώτη* (=A voice of Kastrioti) (1854) authored by A. Dandolos from Corfu (1788-1863), with a pure rebellious content.³²

5. The epic poem, *Σκεντέρβης* (1861) which is made up of 3850 verses and authored by Gregoris Stavrides, (1830-1893) from Ohrid's, and known more with his Slavic name Prličev. Stavridhis presented this work in Athens, in poetic competition in 1861, but without taking any prize, as was it was awarded his poetic work *Ο Αρματωλός* (=Armatoli) a year before, in 1860. *The epic poem* by Stavridhes, a poem about Scanderbeg was firstly published in Sofia in 1967 by the Bulgarian H. Kodov.³³

6. These are the stories in Greek about Scanderbeg:

²⁸ Η. Οικονομόπουλος, *Γεώργιος Καστριώτης ο Σκεντέρμπεης*, Αθήναι 1904.

²⁹ *Γεώργιος Καστριώτης* in the work of Zambelios *ΤραγωδίαΙ Ιωάννου Ζαμπελίου Λευκαδίου*, εν Ζακύνθω 1860, vol. 1, p. 147-214.

³⁰ *Σκεντέρμπεης ο βασιλεύς των Ηπειρωτών, δράμα εις μέρη πέντε*, εν Αθήναις 1889.

³¹ *Ο Σκεντέρβης*, in the work of Karasutsas *Η Λύρα, ήτοι συλλογή λυρικών του τινών ποιημάτων*, εν Ερμουπόλει 1839, p. 12-14.

³² *Μια φωνή του Καστριώτη*, Κερκύρα τη 16 Μαρτίου 1854, [leaflet].

³³ Η. Kodov, *Gr. St. Pürlichev, Skenderbej*, Sofja 1967, 1969. See also S. Çomora, G. Perlichev, *Skënderbeu*, Tirana 1967. G. Stalev, G. Prlichev, *Scenderbeg, Poema prepeal Georgi Stalev*, Skopje 1961. M. Petručevski, *Grigor S. Prlichev, Skenderbej-Σκεντέρμπεης*, Skopje 1974. O. Jašar-Nasteva, "Die Verserzählung "Skanderbeg" von Grigor Prlichev", *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie* 1967, Heft 1, p. 34-50. Τ. Γιοχάλας, "Το επικό ποίημα του Γρηγορίου Σταυρίδου (Prlichev) 'Σκεντέρμπεης'", *Μακεδονικά* 11(1971), p. 194-212.

a) *The Rise of Iskander* (London 1870) authored by Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) and translated into Greek and published in Patra in 1880 by P. Lakiotis,³⁴ and

b) the last literary work written in Greek and published with the title *Η εικόνα* (=the Icon) by the storyteller and poet Kostas Krystalis, from the village of Syrrako, Epirus, then *Ottoman Empire*.

The story of Kostas Krystalis *Η εικόνα* (=The Icon)

Η εικόνα (=The Icon) is the latest literary work in Greek about Scanderbeg, and at the same time most successful from an artistic point-of-view. It was written by the known poet and storyteller Kostas Krystallis and it was first published in Athens newspaper *Ακρόπολις* (*Acropolis*) in May 23, 1893, (page 2-3).

The poet Kostas Krystallis was born in Syrrako, Epirus, in 1868. When he was a student at Zosimaia School in Ioannina, he wrote the long poem *Αι σκιαί του Άδου* (=Hades Shadows), totally patriotic, and because of that he was persecuted by the Turkish authorities. Once this young poet escaped the arrestment, he took refuge in Athens where, tired state by the efforts of daily living, exhausted by illness, sufferings and misery, passed away in April 22, 1894, at a very young age. In his work, mainly poetic, he sings with grace and shows his longing for the livestock and agriculture of Epirus.

The content of the story, *Η εικόνα* (=The Icon)

In Ioannina, in the area still today called "Karavatjà", there is a coffee bar owned by Zoi Azoiri, who after becoming suddenly rich and finally economically ruined, was living by the few revenues of his coffee bar. This bar was frequented by some old men from Ioannina and all kinds of "Albanians", who take coffee and talk on the old times, and a young boy, apparently the storyteller, attracted by the wisdom of these old men. However, one afternoon he finds his fellows gathered around a strange icon. Krystallis wrote:

"It presented a brave handsome knight with giant stature. It had a beautiful white and red face, full of kindness and nobility, a pure royal face. He had an aquiline nose and prominent brow, pure face and long

³⁴ *Η Ανάβασις του Σκεντέρ ή Γεωργίου Καστριώτου, διήγημα συγγραφέν υπό Βενιαμίν Δισραέλη, νυν κόμητος Βήκονσφηλδ, μεταφρασθέν υπό Π. Λακκιώτου, εν Πάτραις 1880.*

beard that juts out, and haircut. It was as if the nature had bestowed upon him unmatched dexterity and special powers. He carried a cap decorated with beautiful feathers, and a green and long mantle of silk, adorned with golden stripes, that marvelously brightened...."³⁵

"The mantle wavered because of the horse's jump, and the golden chain of the royal emblem was glittering in his chest and a diamond cross welded, which seemed to be kept safe with deep clemency in his chest as if it was a talisman. His big yellow shoes could be noted because of his wavering mantle. A Damascus sword with golden ribbons hung on the belt on his left, and the scepter made of wild cornel was hidden after the knee. And above all, his glittery eyes and the torso of a real man showed that he had a dragon his heart and the power of lion. Nobility and beauty and grace in all his were all met in this man. He was holding the horse's bridle with his left hand and with his right hand was holding a long shield with the red flag and the two-headed eagle in the middle."

"His horse was black and only the forefront was a little bit white. The horse was also wearing a golden and silver saddle and all the kinds of ornaments. He had raised proudly his head and the ample and bright crest poured as a wavering wave on the knight's chest... It curved the body as a viper and on the back raised the hairy tail. The legs were just like wings in the wind, without touching the ground, and all the four silver horseshoes brightened. Down below there was an inscription, carved and decorated in French, showing the name of the brave knight and the place where it was painted, Florence."³⁶

The old men couldn't read the Italian inscription, and tried to distinguish from the form and the weapons the hero of the painting. To some, he looked like Shën Gjergji (St. George), to somebody else he looked like Shën Dhimitri (St. Demetrious), to another was similar to an ancient Greek or medieval western stratiot.³⁷ However, when the school boy, after reading the inscription told them "*he is our king*," and then they questioned him:

"George?", asked the old men.

³⁵ See the publishing of Λ. Βρανούσης, *tek Βασική Βιβλιοθήκη (Biblioteka Themelore)* 19, (p. 124), which are referred other quotations on Kristalis's text.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 124.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 125.

"The Sultan?", asked the Albanians.

"What George and what Sultan are you talking about! This is the King of the Epirotes."³⁸

Then, only the "Thin Old Man" dared to guess:

"*Pyrrhus, my son?*"³⁹

By hearing Scanderbeg's name "the Albanians" exploded in an indescribable joy, because they were watching the undisputed king, but expressing at the same time a great sorrow, because of the miserable situation into which they were found today, totally the opposite of the free and happy life in which the king of Epirus, Scanderbeg fought so hard and so bravely for.

"Here beholds torso, behold bravery! Come on o Scanderbeg, come on, the sensational king of Albanian. Why don't you raise again to invite us with your big proud call: 'As far as Scanderbeg lives, the Albanians will never be the slaves of the others'. And it's true my son, wouldn't you die, and us also, wouldn't we have drawled o poor Lulo as thieves and bad dredgers throughout world's mountains without bread and without shelter, with half cap on the head and dog-poor shoes."⁴⁰

Exactly at that moment, one of the friends, the Thin Old Man, tells a beautiful story about the astonishing deeds of Scanderbeg's childhood, the strange dream of his mother before he was born, and the different legends about hero's life and deed. The story becomes more vivid and more natural with the "Albanian" words, which Kristalis introduces in some suitable moments of the narration, as allegedly articulated speeches from the "Albanians" (*Hajde, more plak, ku i di ti të gjitha këto, i bëfsha t'ëmën palofrëngut murdar!*), and exited as they are, finally embrace and kiss the Thin Old Man and with tears in the eye say in Albanian:

"We're brothers, old man, not a big deal we have two faiths, and let the poisonous mouths of the enemies say whatever they want."⁴¹

By these words of "Albanians" ends the story by Krystallis's.

We think that Krystallis was based on the Vreto's information about a painting of the hero found in Florence. With the description of the

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 125.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 125.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 125.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 127.

face, body, clothing, and armament characteristics on his mind, from that source, allegedly invented the myth of finding in Ioannina of a Scanderbeg's "picture (kádthroje)" painted in Florence, and that presents him in the same way described also by Vreto. However, Krystallis speaks about the Scanderbeg on the horse. The painting in the Galleria degli Uffizi of Florence illustrates the torso and the profile of Scanderbeg.

Immediately after, we observe that in the majority of the known paintings referred to Scanderbeg, the hero is already presented in advanced age. However, in an old painting of Scanderbeg on horse, I at least, have not seen. In most of the cases, as bases for the paintings' presentation has served a figure of Gjergj Kastrioti, printed from a xylography of Barleti's biography.⁴² This figure has been systematically copied or some formal and essential elements of it have been preserved: the torso from the right temple, lively eyes, sharp nose, abundant beard and the cap on his head.

However, it is posed this question: Whether it has happened or not everything that Krystallis describes, is it possible for him to have in mind just a painting work?

I have found an icon, which probably Krystallis has been seen by before writing his novel.

This undated icon, and has as inscription these words: *Ο ΑΗΤΤΗΤΟΣ ΗΡΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΗΣ ΗΠΕΙΡΟΥ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΚΑΣΤΡΙΩΤΗΣ 1443-1467, ΕΚΔΟΤΗΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΧΡΗΣΤΙΔΗΣ, ΟΔΟΣ ΠΟΛΥΚΛΕΙΤΟΥ 4-ΑΘΗΝΑΙ* (*The undisputed hero king of Epirus Gjergj Kastrioti 1443-1467 publisher Gjeorgjios Christidhis, road Poliklitou 4 –Athens*). This icon is not work of Gjeorgjios Christidhis, but of Sotirios Christidhis, a noted painter from Athens, who at the end of the XIX century, and especially in the beginning of the XX century often hummed heroes' figures of the Greek Revolution or known thieves' figures of the time. It seems that he had also included Gjergj Kastrioti in his list of heroes. Christidhis wrote his name on the right, below the icon of Scanderbeg, in the abbreviated

⁴² O. Paskali, "La figure de Skanderbeg dans les beaux-arts européens", *Studia Albanica*, 1 (1968), p. 35.

form Salv. Christ. (Salvatore Christidhis = Sotirios Kristidhis).⁴³ The illustration of Scanderbeg on a white horse is close to the presentations of Shën Minai (Saint Menas) or more of Shën Gjergj (Saint George). The names of these saint figures are uttered by the men from Ioannina, when they saw the "kadhron" implied in the Krystallis' story:

"One called him Saint George, another one called him Saint Demetrius, another one called him ancient Greek and another called him French and Flanders soldier."⁴⁴

The other icon of Scanderbeg on the horseback is anonymous and with an undated lithography in the national Historic Museum of Greece (Athens).⁴⁵ This lithography openly manifests the imitated features of a known painting by the renown French painter Theodor **Gericault** (1791-1824).⁴⁶ Probably this lithography was copied by the painter A. Ballamaçi from Korça, an Αρβανιτοβλάχος ("Albanian-Vlach" as he has signed in Greek in his work) in 1889. This work belongs to the National Gallery of Arts of Tirana. Except that, Scanderbeg on the horse was painted in **1913** by the painter Spiridhon Xega from Korça, and represents regardless the small changes in Scanderbeg's cap and in the painting's, background copies of the above-mentioned lithography or directly of Ballamaçi's work.⁴⁷

Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg in the modern Greek Historiography and Literature

Currently, only the above-mentioned works about Scanderbeg have been written and published in the Greek language, always (but the short biography of I. Ikonómopulos) during the XIX century.⁴⁸ This cannot be a coincidence; therefore, we think that there is a need for interpretation.

The Greek people after the bitter experience of four hundred years of slavery, characterized by a social-economic development, within the

⁴³ Hristidhis-had other works with his transcribed name. Here we can mention: *Georgios I, Konstandini successor of the Greek throne etc.* signed as S. CHRISTIDIS.

⁴⁴ See the figure

⁴⁵ See the figure.

⁴⁶ See the figure

⁴⁷ Dhorka Dhamo, "Skënderbeu në artet tona figurative", *Studime Historike* 1967, fashik. 4, p. 142.

⁴⁸ At least that has achieved to prove our research.

possibilities of that time, yet felt the urgent need to raise against the tyrant. However, except the military organization and preparation, Greek also needed a source of inspiration that would give them courage and strength. Therefore, in parallel with the specimen of the ancient Greeks, whose bravery against the enemies was unfamiliar to the wide masses of people and difficult to adapt to the current situation,⁴⁹ it became natural the search for specimen from the Greek later history. Except that, the only majestic figure from the near Greek past, was Constantine Palaiologos. He was more a personification of sacrifice and honorable death rather than a leader of tribe rebellion, and this could have probably evoked in the memory of the people unpleasant events causing demobilization. On the contrary, Gjergj Kastrioti, as being closest to the Greece main skid, this Christian man, whose name naturally sounded in Greek (Γεώργιος Καστριώτης), with his glorious wars near Epirus, the frequent defeats of sultan Murat II and sultan Mehmet II attacks, the powerful strikes against the Turks, violently bowing the pride look of the sultan Mehmet II, conqueror of Constantinople, frontline warrior for the protection of freedom and Christianity, unbeatable, overstated and mystified from Barleti and his systematic imitators, became a source of inspiration for the Greeks. This legendary figure showed up at a moment when many signs attested that a rebellion against the Turks was closer and necessary and welcomed in Greece more than ever.

The translation into Greek of the first biography of Scanderbeg which was printed in Moscow in 1812 came to the Greeks' aid. It could be noted that the translator finished the summary of Duponcet's work basing on the victorious wars of Scanderbeg against the Turks excluding the details and facts that were not directly related to the victories of the hero and the defeats and destructions Turks. Also, the language of the text, although it can't be called popular (demotic), regardless the frequent "demotic" forms that we meet in the text, keeps on being simple. The simplicity probably manifests the translator's

⁴⁹ From the ancient Greeks, the figure of Alexander the Great is often met in the New Greek Literature. However, the Turks, for many post Byzantine historians are successors of the Persians defeated by Alexander the Great. See. G. Veloudis, *Der neugriechische Alexander*, München 1968, p. 211.

goal, addressing its message to the wide masses of the Greek people and not only to the savants.

We think that this is the way the first presence of the Scanderbeg's biography in the Greek literature should be interpreted. And the first Greek who took the trouble to translate the old biography of the hero published by Duponcet into Greek, anyhow aimed to foster the national question and not the promotion of himself. This is why didn't want his name to be mention (including here the security reasons).

However, encouraging the Greeks was not enough for to an armed war to be started. First, it was needed organization and preparation. Only a central authority and power, powerful enough for the necessary preparations and coordination of the different actions could succeed. This necessity spoke mostly to the hearts of three Greeks: A. Tsakalov, N. Skoufas and E. Xanthos, who founded in Odessa the Society of Friends, (Φιλική Έταιρεία), only two years after the publishing in Moscow of the first biography on Scanderbeg in the Greek language. The Society of Friends started to spread very fast through its friends even in Greece. Here we can mention Ioanis Zabelios, who was informed about this association by doctor J. Zapralís, from Syrrako. Enthusiastic, extremely fearless and patriotic, the poet from Lefkada immediately put at the service of the war everything he could, his wealth and pen. He was spending his fortune to buy weapons. He went to Acarnania many times, and put his life in danger. He inspires and encourages to jump into the war through his presence and tragedies. By the time he had already written the tragedy "Constatine Palaiologos." It was not difficult to arrive to the last victorious protector of Epirus freedom, viz on Gjergj Kastrioti from the character of this majestic ultimate of Byzantium freedom. He had read the hero's biography published in Moscow and had meantime written some parts of the tragedy *Γεώργιος Καστριώτης* (=Gjergj Kastrioti). J. Zapralís, a member of the Society of Friends told him: "Who knows my friend whether with you will be renewed new heroes, new Kastriots, and their glory will open up a new phase for your Melpomena!" Right at this moment of exhalation and emotion, Zabelios was introduced by Zapralís to the Society of Friends, while some time after the poet finished writing the tragedy, "*Γεώργιος Καστριώτης*" (=Gjergj Kastrioti), in which the hero is sworn once again to "fall as a thunder"

against the Turks, killing them and cutting them out from the homeland.

A little bit later, internal turmoil and the war among the clans shocked the political life of the small Greece. Kapodistrias was made an attempt, the life of king Otto was in danger, the bad policy - of the Regency first, and of the Bavarians latter, who were appointed to high position in different offices by king Otto. The king, even when he became an adult, caused a great indignation among the Greek population, which continuously expressed its disaffections towards the king through violent demonstrations. Many poets were committed to fostering the campaign against the King Otto. These poets became later known because of their affiliation to the Romantic School of Athens. This school, who dominated the Athens's cultural environment in the years 1840-1880, is characterized as it's known by a severe purified language (*καθαρεύουσα*), that the representatives of this School used in their poems. These poems could be distinguished by their pessimism, eroticism, patriotism and evocation of the past and history.⁵⁰ I. Karasútsas is one of those poets who accepted the influences of this school by joining it.

This poet, still at a very young age, tried to teach the Greeks "the virtue" as he wrote, at a time when everyone in Athens protested against the absolutism of the King Otto, while the "purified" poets of Athens had meantime started to strike him (whereas the kid Karasútsas follows them and is influenced by them). At the same time, the enslaved Greeks were waiting for the liberation and chasing out the Turks, for the destruction of which the romantic poets of Athens often wrote about. Karasútsas, inspired by some verses of P. Sútso and probably the biography of the hero published in Moscow, wrote the poem "*Σκενδέρβης*" ("Scanderbeg"), *seeing in the face of that warrior the model of the man winning over the tyrants and also against "the illegal kings."* The latter could be considered as the camouflaged critique against the absolutism and despotism of king Otto. This poem clearly shows that this young poet was influenced by the Romantic School of Athens, but also by political environment of his time.

As are talking about the political environment of Athens in the middle of the XIX century, of course we could not ignore the vision of

⁵⁰ Κ. Δημαράς, *Ποιηταί του XIX αιώνας* [Βασική Βιβλιοθήκη 12], Αθήνα 1959.

"the Great Idea" ("Μεγάλη Ιδέα"). This dream of resurrection the Byzantine Empire, a dream that the "pure" poets of Athens had, didn't remain a simple poetic inspiration. This policy of Great Idea was finally embraced by king Otto, either to coddle the popular feeling, or to keep his sangfroid about the issues of complete renewal of the nation. The premier Kolettis, who endorsed a program agreeable with the king's Great Idea, turned his attention to Epirus and Albania. First, he assisted Zejnel Gjoleka who rebelled (1847) in Kurvelesh against the Turks. The great expectations Albanians and Greeks had were soon extinguished by the enemies. However, before that rebellion was extinguished, all the beys and agha of Toskëria came together in Kurvelesh to call on king Otto and Greece's Parliament and ask for the unification of the country with the Kingdom of Greece.⁵¹ This was not the first time that Albanians wanted the unification with Greece. At this moment some politicians and militaries of Greece, were actively working on the establishment in Athens of a society involved in the unification of Greece with Albania. "A part supported the racial affinity between Albanians and Greeks, while the others supported the idea of the Greek origins of the Albanian language. It is interesting that they didn't have a clue about the question, but did whatever they could to support the national interest, as it was the union between Greece and Albania."⁵²

From this spirit was passed on the second Scanderbeg's biography in Greek authored by A. Papadópulos-Vretós. Scanderbeg is presented by Vretós as the hero of the "Epirotes", who victoriously fought throughout his life against the Turks. Therefore, it is an example to be followed by the Greeks and Epirotes in general. Of course, when Vretós published biography of Scanderbeg in Athens (1848), the free Greece was still a small country. However, the war had not finished yet, and perhaps Greece needed a figure to be inspired by more than ever. And this figure couldn't come from the Revolution of 1821, because some of the heroes were fallen martyrs, while some others were hated from the opposition groupings, which unfortunately were divided because of the personal passions and ambitions. Except that,

⁵¹ Τ. Γιοχάλας, «Ανέκδοτα κείμενα περί Αλβανίας, αλβανικού αλφαβήτου και ελληνο-αλβανικών σχέσεων», *Μνημοσύνη* 2(1969), p. 430-431.

⁵² Τ. Γιοχάλας, *ibid*, p. 432.

what is more important, the heroes of Twenty-One ('21) had not entered in the legendary sphere yet, because of their short activity. The "myth" of the Twenty-One Revolution ('21t) had not appeared yet, while myth of Scanderbeg was already cultivated due to the first biographer. Especially the Epirotes didn't have a figure more suitable than Scanderbeg to be put in evidence. Exactly for this reason, A. Dándolos didn't find voice a more suitable than that of Gjergj Kastrioti, to encourage the Epirotes in rebellion against the Turks. This Dándolos's poem entitled *Μία φωνή του Καστριώτη* (=A voice of Kastrioti) was printed and circulated in Epirus, after the explosion of the rebellion of 1854. Therefore, this poetry was not addressed only to those who rebelled, but to all Epirotes. The poet individualized in Scanderbeg's face the symbol that could lead in rebellion against the Turks in all the Epirus space.

Definitively, the enemies drowned the rebellion in Epirus in blood, causing dissatisfaction towards king Otto. The politics in Greece was at a delicate juncture. The poets of Athens continued to encourage the king to apply the warmongering plans. Piraeus was occupied during the Crimean War (1854-1857) by the Anglo-French fleet. The contradiction between the king and the people became clearer during the union of the Ionian islands, because the hostility between England and Otto was allegedly presented as an obstruct of the solution to the question. Again, Scanderbeg is symbol of the national unity and patriotism. The biography of Scanderbeg authored by Vretó was republished, and biography of Scanderbeg authored by N. Dragúmis was edited three years later. The latter would typically emphasize in the introduction:

"In the current situation, no study has been more didactic than the life and the deeds of those two Greeks (viz Alexander the Great and of Gjergj Kastrioti). Therefore, I repeat that the destiny is in our hands, but we need to have spirit of national unity, that under Alexander the Great, who victoriously lead the Greek Arms to remote areas of Asia, and the invincible patriotism or the denial of the personal interest in the name of the common interest, typical of Gjergj Kastrioti, something

that made him the savior and beneficent of the homeland...."⁵³ And Dragumis makes his choice:

"Aiming to empower this national and pan Hellenic thought, I'm publishing Gj. Kastrioti's history. I hope that the reading would give wings to this withered thought, and fill the chest of our sons with that noble voice of their fathers, who in 1821 proclaimed Greek anyone who believed in Christ and spoke Greek."⁵⁴

The biography by Paganeli which was translated into Greek by Dragumis, took Scanderbeg for a Greek and also "the posture of a real man who was the last of the demigods, and of the most prominent predecessors of the Modern Greece... ." This point-of-view found echo in many Greeks, especially in the circle of the savants, who embraced it with no reserves. This opinion was inculcated among the Greeks, because otherwise it cannot explain the strong reaction against Paparigópulos, which based on a then just published chronicle of Hopf, supported as we have seen the Slavic origins of Gj. Kastrioti. Paganeli's biography would have been widely spread within Greece even because its content, totally military, responded to the public wishes of that time. Then, Romantic School of Athens, didn't stop to openly use the warmongering speech, and daily turn to the question of "war". Except that, the poetic competitions held from the middle of the XIX century, dedicated a special attention to the works on national question, by leading in a certain way the inspiration of the poets towards "the war".

Therefore Stavrídhis, exactly expressed the Athenian spirit of his time through its epic poem *Σκενδέρμπεης* (=Scanderbeg). Taking the material from Vretós's biography, with a very "pure" language (καθαρεύουσα), the multifarious Homeric influences and in general considering the "type" of his poetry, his work seems to be bounded not only with the Athens Poetic School of the middle XIX century, but also with the political situation of the time, while the elaboration of his work almost coincides with Dragúmis's biography publication.

Meantime, there were new political developments inside and outside Greece. On 24 April 1877 Russia declared war on the Ottomans. Problems started to appear from the side of Albanians. The Greek-

⁵³ Ν. Δραγούμης, *Ιστορία Γεωργίου του Καστριώτου του επιλεγμένου Σκεντέρμπεη, επεξεργασθείσα κατά Παγανέλ, εν Αθήναις 1861*, p. VI.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. VI.

Albanian, union which has been supported since 1829, started to take a different direction. As the national conscience of the Albanians grew, they began in 1877 to speak about the establishment of a dual state, with a relative autonomy of both countries, like Austro-Hungary and not about a complete union of Greece with Albania. H. Trikoupis developed then (1877) a vivid camouflaged diplomatic activity in Ioannina, Corfu and Constantinople.⁵⁵ Although Trikoupis failed in his mission, the Albanians demanded in a memorandum addressed to lord Wisconfield the federative union of Albania with Greece.⁵⁶ The manuscript about Scanderbeg's authored by Dragúmis was published two years later, and the biography of Scanderbeg authored by Vretós was republished.

Turkey reacted to the Greek policy by supporting the opinion by propagating that Epirus is mainly inhabited by Albanian Moslems, because of Epirus not to be eventually ceded to the Greeks. The case becomes more complicated with the implication of the foreign diplomacy, mainly the Italian one, diametrically opponent and hostile with the Greeks' national request. Epirus was a continuous problem for the Greek government. Daily magazines and newspapers, and special studies inform about for the liberation of the Epirotes brothers, opposing the foreign propaganda. The Greek printing-houses were once again involved in the Scanderbeg issue. At this moment, A. Antoniadis writes his tragedy, characteristically entitled *Σκεντέρμπεης, Ο βασιλεύς των Ηπειρωτών* (=Scanderbeg, king of Epirotes). *Scanderbeg has now become the unifying hub between Greeks and Albanian "brothers" against the common enemy, the Turks.* Then we have the story entitled *Ikona* written by Kostas Krystallis and with the same impact. The last words of the "arvanitas" addressed to the people from Ioannina: "We are brothers old man, although we have two religions, and let the poisonous mouths of the enemies say whatever they want." Without any doubt, the author alludes the Turkish policy of the time, which according to Kryistallis, couldn't divide the peoples of Greece and Albanian, the two "friendly" countries, who have to show their predecessors like "the Epirotes" Scanderbeg, who heroically fought against the Turks.

⁵⁵ Μ. Σπυρομίλιος, «Ελλάς και Αλβανία», *Ο Νέος Κουβαράς*, Αθήναι 1962, p. 140-177.

⁵⁶ Ν. Καζάκης, *Ελληνοαλβανική συνεννόησις*, εν Αθήναις 1907, p. 51.

I. Karasútsas republished his poem in 1895, two years after the publication of *Ikona* (the Icon) by Krystallis.

Turkey continued to follow its policy line, and so did Greece. On 1899 circulated in Athens "*Proklamata e Lidhjes Arvanite të Athinës drejtuar vëllezërve arvanitë të Shqipërisë* (*The Proclamation of Athens Arvanites League addressed to Albanian Arvanites brothers*).\" This proclamation demanded the help of the Albanian "brothers" for the establishment of the "Greek-Albanian Kingdom."⁵⁷ Synchronously were written plenty of short studies in Greek, even by Albanians. These studies supported the union between Albania and Greece, because it is about the peoples of the same race.⁵⁸ The last biography about Scanderbeg by I. Ikonómopulos came out as a result of the policy "inclination". Perhaps this publication aimed to share the deeds and activity of this Epirus "Greek" who continued to wail under Turkey's oppression with the wide masses. The idea of a common state was definitively abandoned, regardless the political contacts of the Theotokis's government established in Athens with the Albanian beys Ismail Qemali and Xhafer bey for the union between Albania and Greece.⁵⁹ Now, an Albanian independent state was of great interest for the prevention of Greece from the Slav danger.⁶⁰ The new situation that was created in Epirus after 1912-1913 distanced the two peoples from each other. No other publication in Greek on this hero has never been made since then.

As a conclusion, we notice that the military physiognomy of the hero Gjergj Kastrioti attracted the attention, and moved and inspired the Greeks only during the XIX century, viz at the eve of the Greek Revolution and during the coronation of the Greeks' war against the Turks. He was considered Greek, or source of inspiration for Greeks and Albanians, especially those of Epirus to jointly fighting against the common enemy. All the biographies in Greek, except the biography by Paparigópulos, indirectly take us to the first biography on the hero, published in Rome by the priest from Shkodra M. Barleti. All the

⁵⁷ See the magazine *Ελληνισμός* 1889, p. 195-202.

⁵⁸ T. Γιοχάλας, *ibid*, p. 436.

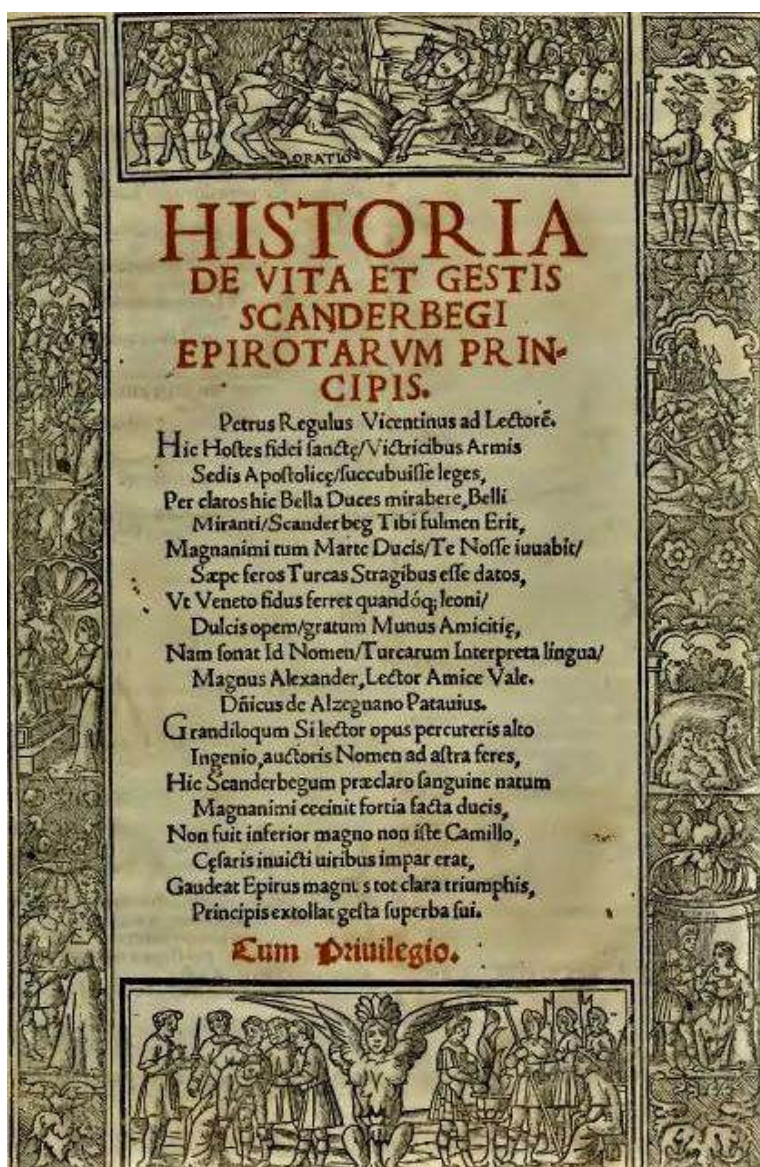
⁵⁹ T. Γιοχάλας, *ibid*, p. 451.

⁶⁰ M. Σπυρομήλιος, *ibid*, p. 138.

Greek literary works on Scanderbeg are directly connected with his biographies in Greek and take a lot of facts from them.

These examined Greek works, prove the way the personality of Gjergj Kastrioti affected the Greeks, who by no doubt has been a glitter warrior of freedom. This is why many scientific enterprises were organized and run in his honor Tirana, Prishtina and Palermo and also this year in Albania. Many very interesting archival sources published from 1875 onwards informing about his life and deeds prove that how much he is appreciated. And the many victorious wars against the Turks have made him be called in his time *Milles et atleta Christi invictus* (=Invincible soldier and Athleta Christi).⁶¹

⁶¹ M. Schiambra - G. Valentini - I. Parrino, *Il "Liber brevium" di Callisto III*, Palermo 1968, p. 167, nr. 298 and p. 180, nr. 325.



Marin Barleti, *Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi Epirotarum principis*, Rome 1508 (?)

HISTOIRE
DE
SCANDERBEG
ROY D'ALBANIE.

Par le R. P. DUPONCET, de la
Compagnie de JESUS.



A PARIS,
Chez JEAN MARIETTE, rue S. Jacques,
aux Colonnes d'Hercules.

M. DCCIX,
AVEC PRIVILEGE DU ROY.

ΕΠΙΤΟΜΗ
ΤΗΣ
ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ
ΤΟΥ
ΚΑΣΤΡΙΩΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΠΟΝΟΜΑΣΘΕΝΤΟΣ
ΣΚΕΝΤΕΡΜΠΗ
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΒΑΝΙΑΣ

Μεταφρασθεῖσα ἐκ τῆ Γαλλικῆ.

ΜΕΤΑ
Προσθήκης τοῦ γεννεαλογικῆ καταλόγου τῶν
Ὀθωμανῶν Σουλτάνων Συνεραμισθέντος;
ΠΑΡΑ
ΤΟΥ ΣΟΦΩΤΑΤΟΥ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ
ΕΥΓΕΝΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΒΟΥΛΓΑΡΕΩΣ.

ΕΝ ΜΟΣΧΑ,
ΕΝ ΤΩ, ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΙΩ Ν. Σ. ΒΣΕΒΟΛΟΖΣΚΗ.

1812.



Summary of Gjegj Kastrioti's history, nicknamed Scanderbeg
Moscow 1812

ИПЕЧКЪПТАПЕ ДИН ИСТОПЕА

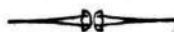
ЛУИ

GEORGE KASTRIOTULU,

numitū

SKENDER-BEI

PRINȚULU ALBANIEI.



Tradusa



DE

I. BILCIURESKU.

A doua ediție.

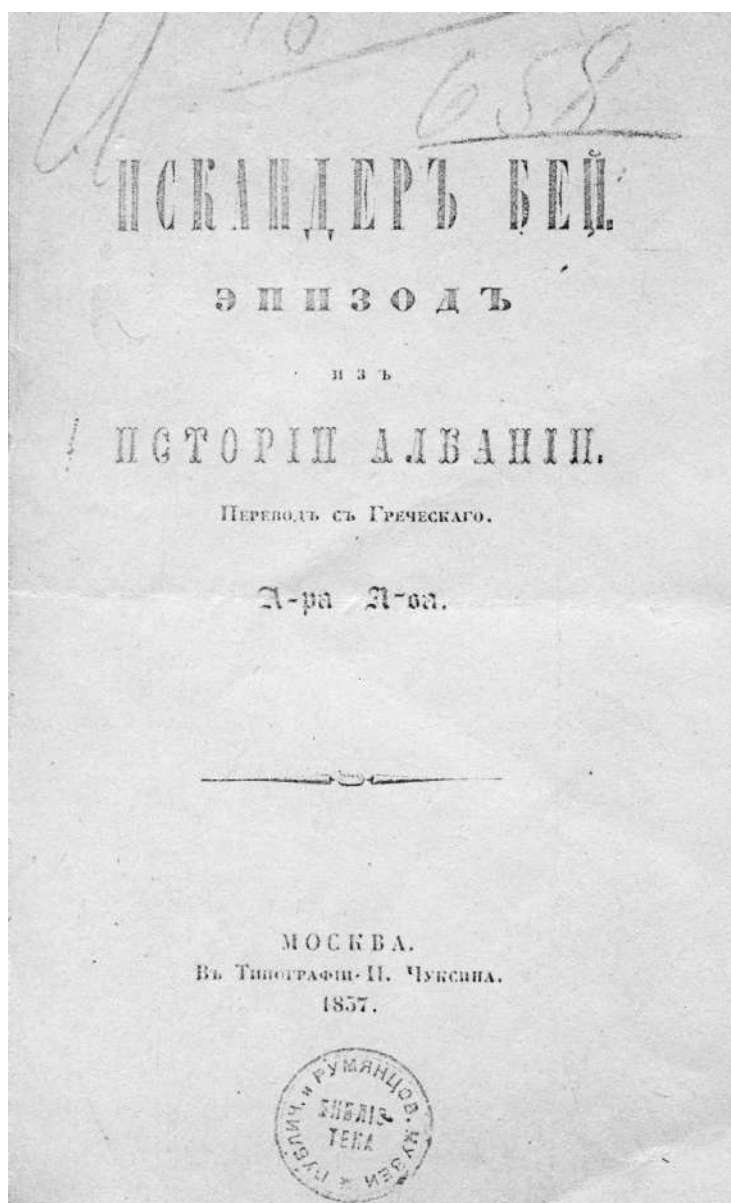


BUKUREȘTI.

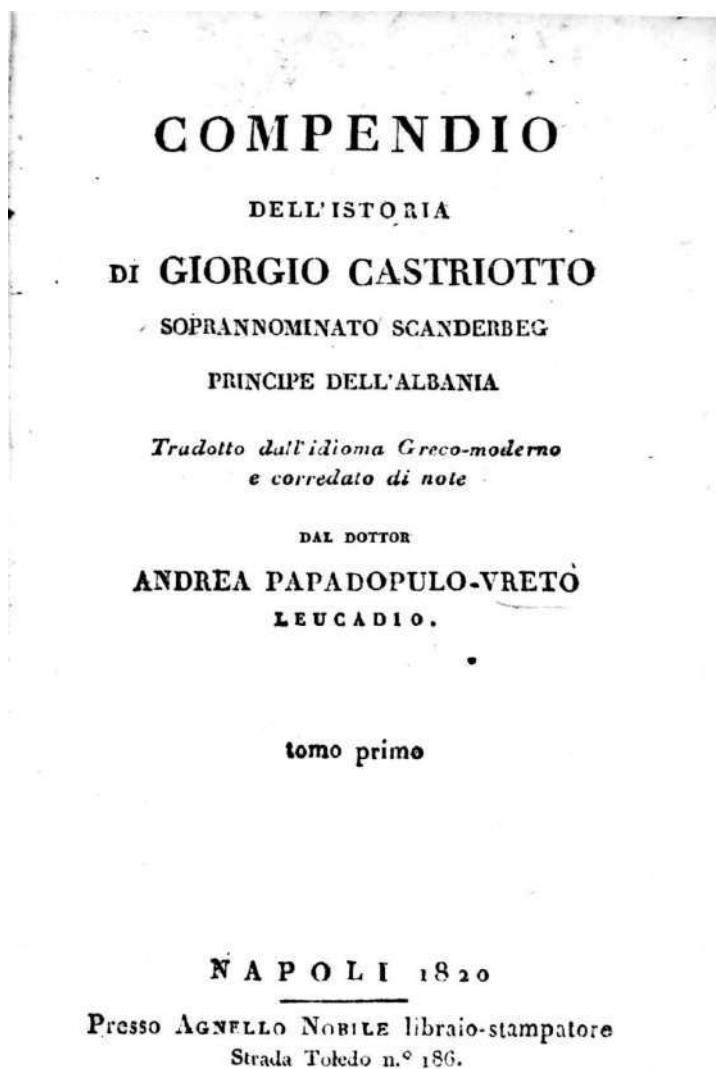
A. Daniilopolu, libraru-EDITORU

Strada Mogosovaiei.

1857.



Reprint of the History of Scanderbeg, summary translated into Russian
Moscow 1857



Publication of the History of Scanderbeg, summary translated into Italian
Naples 1820

CORREZIONI.

ED

AGGIUNTE

ALLA PREFAZIONE

DEL

COMPENDIO DELL'ISTORIA

DI

GIORGIO CASTRIOTTO

SOPRANNOMINATO SCANDERBEG

*Tradotto dal Greco-moderno e corredato
di note dal D.^r A. PAPADOPULO - VRETÒ
Leucadio.*

*Con note critico - bibliografiche su varj
celebri Autori dello stesso Traduttore.*

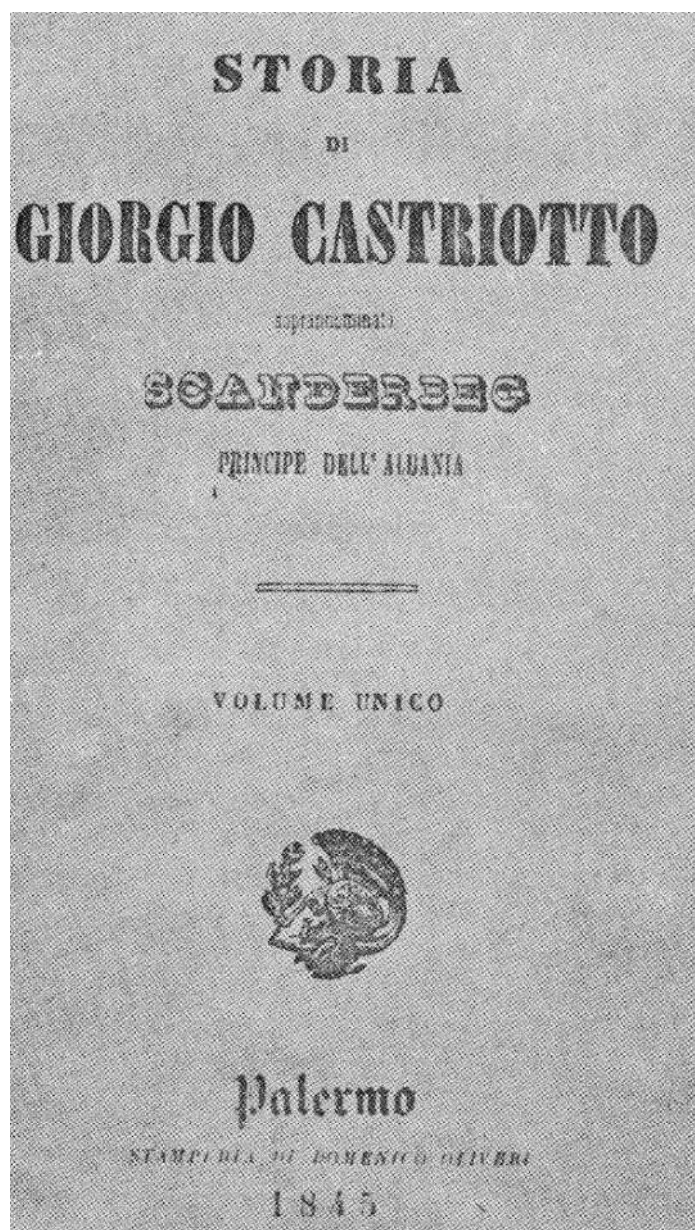
*S'honorer des critiques, mepriser
les Satyres, corriger ses fautes, et
faire mieux.*

GREPPET.

CORFU'

1829.

Some corrections and observations in the Italian translation by A. Papadopoulos – Vretos
Corfu 1829



Reprint of A. Papadopoulos– Vretos translation into Italian
Palermo 1845

STORIA
di
GIORGIO CASTRIOTTO
SOPRANNOMINATO
SCANDERBEG
PRINCIPE DELL'ALBANIA

VOLUME UNICO.



PALERMO
Tipografia di Domenico Oliveri
1847

Second edition of A. Papadopoulos–Vretos translation into Italian
Palermo 1847

ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ
ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΚΑΣΤΡΙΩΤΟΥ
 ΤΟΥ
 ΜΕΤΩΝΟΜΑΣΘΕΝΤΟΣ
ΣΚΕΝΤΕΡΜΠΗ
 ΗΓΕΜΟΝΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΒΑΝΙΑΣ.

Μεταφρασθεῖσα ἐκ τοῦ Ἰταλικοῦ· μὲ πολλὰς σημειώσεις. Προπετέθη
 δὲ καὶ ἐκθεσις τῶν συμβάντων μετὰ τὸν θάνατον τοῦ Σκεντέρμπεη καὶ
 τῶν ἐν τῇ Βασιλείᾳ τῶν δύο Σικελιῶν Ἀλβανικῶν ἀποικιστῶν.

ΕΚΔΟΘΕΙΣΑ ΔΑΠΑΝῇ Α. ΓΚΑΡΠΟΛΑ.

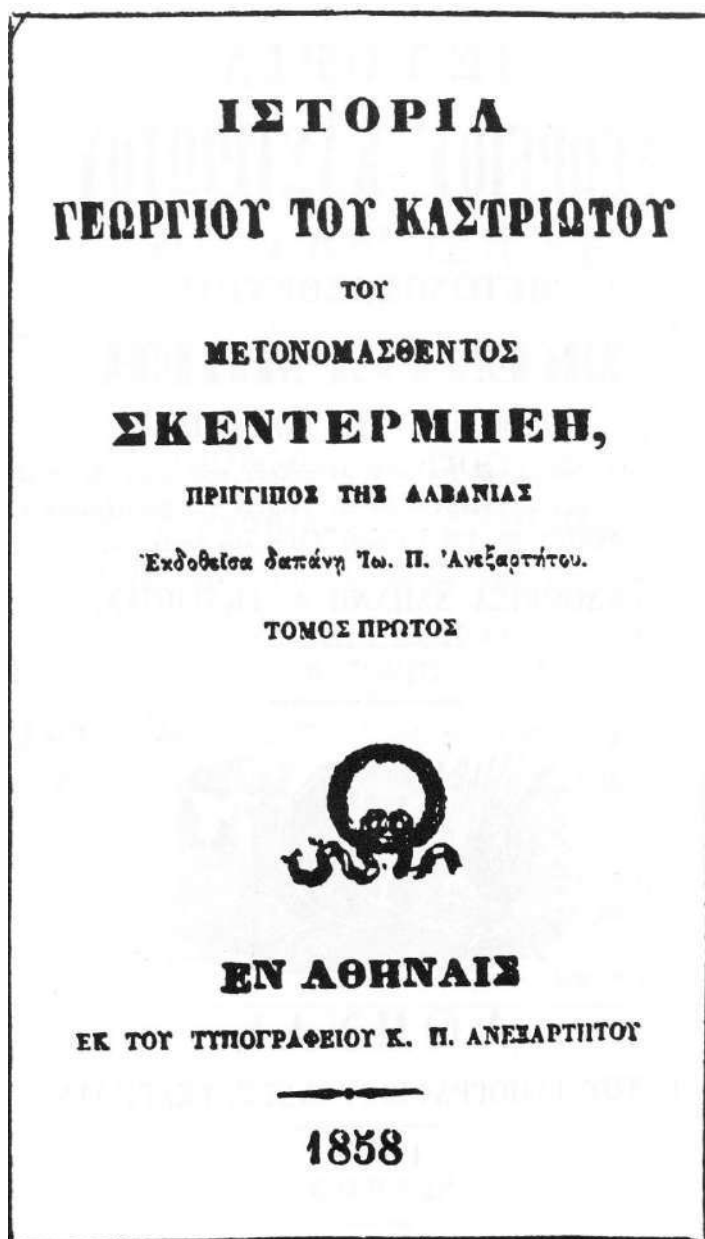
~~~~~  
 ΤΟΜΟΣ Α΄.  
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ΑΘΗΝΑΙ,
 ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΙΟΥ ΑΛΕΞ. ΓΚΑΡΠΟΛΑ.

1848.

History of the Gjergj Kastrioti nicknamed Scanderbeg prince of Albania
 Anonymous (in true adapted by A. Papadopoulos - Vretos)
 Athens 1848



First edition of the History of Gjergj Kastrioti (translated by A. Papadopoulos – Vretos)
 Athens 1858

ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ
ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΚΑΣΤΡΙΩΤΟΥ
ΤΟΥ
ΜΕΤΩΝΟΜΑΣΘΕΝΤΟΣ
ΣΚΕΝΤΕΡΜΠΗ

ΗΓΕΜΟΝΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΒΑΝΙΑΣ

ΕΚΔΟΣΙΣ ΝΕΑ



ΕΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ ·

ΠΑΡΑ ΤΩ ΕΚΔΟΤΗ
Ν. ΜΙΧΑΛΟΠΟΥΛΩ

ΒΙΒΛΙΟΠΩΛΕΙΟΝ
ΥΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΝ ΟΙΚΙΑΝ ΜΕΛΑ

1884

Second edition of the History of Gjergj Kastrioti (translated by A. Papadopoulos – Vretos)
Athens 1884

ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΚΑΣΤΡΙΩΤΟΥ

ΤΟΥ ΕΠΙΛΕΓΟΜΕΝΟΥ

ΣΚΕΝΤΕΡΜΠΕΗ.

Ἐπεξεργασθεῖσα

ΚΑΤΑ

ΠΑΓΑΝΕΛ

ΥΠΟ

N. ΔΡΑΓΟΥΜΗ.

Καὶς δὲ πάλιν καὶ λόγῳ καὶ μαχρῇ
παρὸς ἑκάστης ἡμερᾶς ἑκατὸν ἑκατὸν
ΕΥΡΩΠΑΙΩΝ.



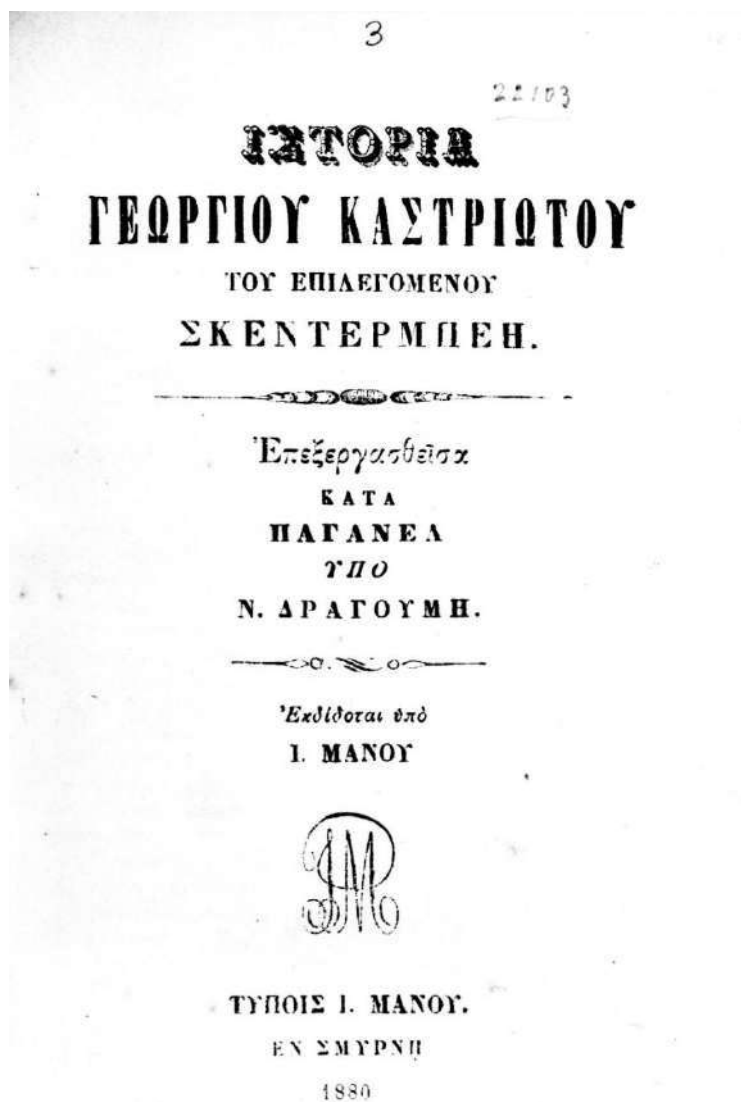
ΕΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ,

ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΙΟΥ Κ. ΑΝΤΩΝΙΑΔΟΥ,

ΟΔΟΣ ΠΕΡΙΚΛΕΟΥΣ, ΑΡΙΘ. 226.

1861.

The history of Gjergj Kastrioti nicknamed Scanderbeg (elaborated after Paganelli by N. Dragoumis), Athens 1861



Reprint of the History of Gjergj Kastrioti nicknamed Scanderbeg
 (elaborated after Paganelli by N. Dragoumis)
 Smirna 1880

Οι Ἀλβανοὶ ἠγέρθησαν κατὰ τῆς ἀδικίας καὶ κατὰ τῆς Εὐρώπης τῆς δικτατορικῆς βουλομένης νὰ πωλήσῃ αὐτοὺς εἰς τοὺς ἐξ ἐλλείους ἐθνικῶν ζώντας Μαυροβουνίους. ἠγέρθησαν κατὰ τῆς Εὐρώπης τῆς θελησάσης νὰ καταστραφῇ καὶ ἐκμηδενίσῃ — ἔπως ἔκαμε τοὺς Πωλονοὺς — ἐν τῶν εὐγενεστέρων καὶ γενναιοτέρων ἐθνῶν τῆς Εὐρώπης ἀριθμούντος, κατὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἀμερολήπτου περιγητοῦ τοῦ 4,000,000, φυγῶν, διὰ νὰ εὐδαιώσῃ καὶ μεγαλώσῃ ἐν πενήτρῳ καὶ πειναλέῳ Μαυροβούνῳ περιέχοντος μόλις 200,000 ψυχῶν! Ὅποια παράλογος ἀντίστασις καὶ διπλωματικὴ ἀνάπειρα! Νὰ ὑπαχθῶσιν οἱ πολλοὶ εἰς τοὺς εὐλίους, οἱ ἱσχυροὶ εἰς τοὺς ἀδυνάτους, οἱ ἄλλοτε εἶχον ὑποτελεῖς καὶ ὄργον τιλούντας. Δικαίως οὖν ἀνέστη ῥήτωρ τις Ἀλβανὸς ἐν τῇ μουσικῇ συνιδρύσει τοῦ Ἀλβανικοῦ Συνδίσκου ἐκτρανεύοντος κατὰ τῆς τοιαύτης ἀδίκου καὶ ἐξευτελιστικῆς ἀπορώσεως τῆς Εὐρώπης. «Μενόμῃ πρᾶ» ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, «πηρεστέ θάνατον με νὰ βῇνη ζοτρητῖν νη κητ δες τ' Ἀρβήνισι»; «Ἀκούσατε, παρακαλῶ διατί ἐπιζητοῦσι διὰ τῆς βίας καὶ μεθ' ἐπιμονῆς νὰ ἐπιβάλλωσιν ὡς διστοπίας καὶ κυριάρχας τοὺς Μαυροβουνίους ἐν τῇ γῶρᾳ ταύτῃ τῆς Ἀρβήνισι; Μήπως ὑπολαμβάνουσιν ἡμᾶς γῆνια δυνάτα ἀνὰ δὲν θάνατον νὰ βαδίσωσιν ἀνὰ ὑποστηρίγματος; Τί δὲ πρᾶττει ὁ Σουλτάνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; Μήπως προστατεύει τὴν ζῶην τὴν ὑπέληψιν καὶ τὴν ἰδιοκτησίαν ἡμῶν; Οὐδαμῶς. Μήπως στεγάσει τοὺς ἀστέγους ἡμῶν ἢ τροφοδοτῇ τοὺς πεινῶντας ἡμῶν; Οὐδαμῶς. Τί γίνονται, λοιπὸν, οἱ ὄργον τοὺς ἰσχυροὺς πληρώνομεν, — ἡμεῖς, οἱ ἔχοντες τόσον ὀλίγα χρήματα ὥς ἀποτισώμεν; Καταπαταλοῦνται δικὴν λαφύρῳ. Πῶς εἶναι, λοιπὸν, ἡ περιλήπτος αὕτη δλωμανικὴ ἔξουσία καὶ προστασία; Ὅχι μόνον δὲν ὑπάρχει ἀλλὰ ζητοῦν καὶ νὰ πωλήσῃν ἡμᾶς δικὴν δορυλαῶτων εἰλότων. Κά-

τω, λοιπὸν ἡ τοιαύτη ἔξουσία. Ἐρρίτω ἡ τοιαύτη προστασία». Ἐν τῷ ἅμα δὲ κατακοπέει ὁ ἱστέος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ ἐκμαρτύειν ἡ ἡμισέληνος, ἀντ' αὐτοῦ ὑψώθη ἕτερος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ ἀνητῆρ ἡ ἀλβανικὴ σημαία καὶ τοιοῦτοτρόπως ἐληξεν ἡ δυναστεία τοῦ Ὀθμᾶν ἐπὶ τῆς πατρίδος τοῦ Σκενδερβέτη.

Ἐξακολουθούντες τὴν σύνταξιν τῆς «Φωνῆς» τῆς Ἀλβανίας» κατ' ἐπιμονὴν παράκλησιν τῶν ἡμετέρων συνδρομητῶν παραλαβόντες δὲ καὶ νέον βοήθην ἐλπίζομεν εἶναι θὰ εὐχαριστήσωμεν τὰς προσδοκίας τῶν ἡμετέρων φίλων ὡς περὶ πολλοῦ ποιοῦμεθα.

Συνάμα δὲ πρὸς ἰδιαιτέρην τέρψιν αὐτῶν θὰ ἐκδώσωμεν εἰς μικρὰν ἐπιφυλλίδα καὶ τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ Camille Paganell ἱστορίαν τοῦ Σκενδερβέτη μεταφρασθεῖσαν ὑπὸ Ν. Δραγοῦμη καὶ ἐπεξεργασθεῖσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν ὡς χρησιμωτάτη; καὶ ἀναγκαιοτάτη ἐν τοῖς παρούσι καιροῖς.

Ἡ ἀνακήρυξις τῆς ἀνεξαρτησίας τῶν Ἀλβανῶν.

Ἡ Tagblatt ἔλαβε παρὰ τοῦ Παύλου Σαντόκα καθολικοῦ ἀνέκτορος κατὰ τὴν ἐφημερίδα ταύτην ἐν ταῖς τάξεσι τῶν προκρίτων τοῦ Σκουτάρους καὶ κατέχοντος διακεκριμένην θέσιν ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησιαστικῇ ἱεραρχίᾳ λεπτομερῶς ἐξέστιν τῶν ἐν Ἀλβανίᾳ. Ἡ κυριαρχία τοῦ Σουλτάνου ἔκαυεν ὑστειμένην, καὶ ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ Συνέλευσιν τῆς 19 Ἀπριλίου τῇ συγκροτηθείσῃ ἐν Σκουτάρῳ ἀνεκλήρῃ ἐπιστάτῳ ἡ «Ἐλευθερία Ἀλβανίας». Ἰδοὺ ἐν τῶν χαρακτηριστικωτέρων τῆς συνεδριάσεως ταύτης ἐπεισοδίων. Ὁ «Ὁδὸ βέας εἰς τὸν ἀρχηγὸν ἀπήγγειλεν Ἀλβανίαν τὸν κατὰ τὸν λόγον. «Ἐντιμῶν ἀδελφῶν τῶν Σκεπτεμένων! Οἱ ἐν Βερολίνῳ συνελθόντες πληρεξούσιοι ἐνέγραψαν ἐν ἀληθινῇ προσποτικῇ μὲν ἀγνοίᾳ ἐπὶ τῶν τῆς χώρας ἡμῶν καὶ τῶν κατοίκων

ΕΠΙΦΥΛΛΙΣ

ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ

ΤΟΥ

ΣΚΕΝΔΕΡΒΕΗ

ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ.

Μεταξὺ τῆς 15^{ης} ἑκατονταετηρίδος τῆς εἰσέτι ἐπιπολαζούσης μεθ' ἡμᾶς ἀλλ' ἔχουσιν τὴν πίστιν ἀδάμαστον, καὶ τῆς 15^{ης} ἥτις ἔμελλε νὰ καθιερώσῃ οὖν τῇ εἰσαγωγῇ τῆς θλευθέρως ἐρένης καὶ τὴν ἐποχὴν τῆς φιλοσοφικῆς καὶ θεοσοφικῆς τολμῆρας, ἡ 15^η ἑκατονταετηρίδος ἀνακύπτει ὡς τις τῶν μέλλον ἀδιομνημονεύτων περιόδων τῆς ἱστορίας. Καὶ πνευματικαὶ νίκαι, καὶ ἀνδρες, καὶ γεγονότα, πάντα ὑπῆρξαν ἰσχυρά, γόνιμα, δραματικά. Κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦτον τῆς σπουδαίας μεταβάσεως ἐν τῷ μέσῳ λαμπροὶ φωτισμοὶ καὶ σκοτεινὰ βαθυγόνου, καὶ ἔργον ἀνδρίας τεραστείαν, καὶ πολυδακρύων συμφορᾶν, ὁ κοινωνικὸς βίος πᾶσι καὶ ἐξελπίσθαι καὶ ἐλπίσθαι ἔτοιμος οὕτως εἴπειν νὰ ἐκχειλίσθῃ. Μόγα γεγονότος παρεκκενδρῶν καὶ ἡγῆται νὰ γεννηθῇ. Ὁ

ἀνθρώπινος νοὺς συνταραχθεὶς ἐξ βάρων κραδαίνει τοῦ μεταίωτος τὰ δεσμά, καὶ συντρίβων αὐτὰ ὅρμη ἀκαταχέτους πρὸς νέας τύχας.

Μετὰ τὴν πτώσιν τοῦ Ῥωμαϊκοῦ κράτους πολλοὶ πόλεμοι δὲν ἔγένοντο, μεταξὺ τῶν πολυκλιθῶν αὐτοῦ ναυμαγίων, ὥς οὗ ἔλαστος λαὸς ἀνέστη τὴν αἰκίαν θέσιν· μόλις ἐγνωρίσθησαν ὁρατὰ τινα ὅρια διαχωρίζοντα αὐτοὺς, καὶ αἱ φρονεῖς ἐξετάσθησαν τὰ τοῦ κόσμου.

Μετὰ μικρὴν ἡ Εὐρώπη, ὡς κατακλιθῆσαι ὑπὸ τοῦ χυροῦ, ἔδραμε δι' ἀγνώστων ἀνελκῶν πρὸς γοήτιδας νέας χώρας· τὰ δὲ βλήματα τοῦ ἰσπανοῦ μονάρχου περιεπληθύνθησαν, ὡς εἰς ἀπείρητα καλῶν, κατὰ τὰ νέα αὐτοῦ κράτη. Χάρις τῇ θρησκείᾳ, τῇ ἐμπορίᾳ καὶ τῇ πολιτικῇ νείαι ὅλοι ἠνεώχθησαν, καὶ σπριγῶν χυμὸς ἀναπτύσσεται ἀνεκίεζε πάσας τὰς δυνάμεις τοῦ κοινωνικοῦ σώματος. Χριστοφόρος ὁ Κολόμβος διέβηκε τὸ παραπέτασμα, τὸ τῶς κρύπτειν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέρος τῆς λαμπρᾶς αὐτοῦ κατοικίας.

Περὶ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον ἀνεκαλύπτετο ἄλλος κόσμος ἀσυγκρίτως εὐρυχωρότερος, ὁ τῆς τυσογραφίας, ὅστις ἔμελλε νὰ καταστήσῃ τὸν ἀνθρώπινον νοῦν κυρίον ἑαυτοῦ. Ἡ θαυμασία αὕτη τέχνη ἤρχιστο ἀπὸ τοῦ 926 ἔτους ἐν τῇ Σινικῇ, ὅπου δὲν μετεχειρίσθητο χαρακτηριστικῶς, ἀλλὰ σπινδαί, ἐφ' ᾧν ἐκτραπέντο ἀνάγκαι καὶ ἀνεστραμμένα τὰ γράμματα· ἡ δὲ τύποις ἔγινετο, ὡς καὶ σήμερον, τυπούσης τῆς χειρὸς. Καὶ τῶντιν, τοσαῦτα ἡ πηλὸς τῶν σπιν

Anonymous, History of Scanderbeg published in the "Η φωνή της Αλβανίας"
(=Voice of Albania) newspaper
Athens 1880

ΠΑΤΡΙΩΤΙΚΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΗ

ΗΛΙΑ Ι. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΚΑΣΤΡΙΩΤΗΣ
Ο
ΣΚΕΝΔΕΡΜΠΕΗΣ

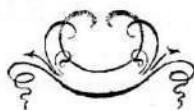


ΕΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ
ΕΚΔΟΤΙΚΟΣ ΟΙΚΟΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ Δ. ΦΕΞΗ
1904^α

I. Oikonomopoulos, *Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg*
Athens 1904

ΟΛΙΓΑΙ ΛΕΞΕΙΣ
ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΚΑΤΑΓΩΓΗΣ
ΤΟΥ
ΣΚΕΝΔΕΡΜΠΕΗ

Υ π ό
Α. Μηλιαράκη



ΕΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ
ΤΥΠΟΣ "ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΝΕΞΑΡΤΗΣΙΑΣ,,
—

1876

ΚΡΙΤΙΚΑΙ ΕΡΕΥΝΑΙ
ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ
ΚΑΤΑΓΩΓΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΘΝΙΚΟΤΗΤΟΣ
ΚΥΡΕΡΤΟΥ ΕΚΔΟΘΕΝΤΟΣ
ΤΟΥ ΣΚΕΝΔΕΡΜΠΗ

ΥΠΟ

ΜΑΡΓΑΡΙΤΟΥ Γ. ΔΗΜΙΤΣΑ.

Καθηγητοῦ καὶ Διευθυντοῦ τοῦ Ἑλλ. Ἑκπαιδευτηρίου.

ΑΙΣ ΠΡΟΣΗΡΤΗΤΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΒΛΕΓΧΟΣ ΤΟΥ
ΥΠΟ ΚΥΡΕΡΤΟΥ ΕΚΔΟΘΕΝΤΟΣ ΕΘΝΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΟΥ
ΠΙΝΑΚΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΤΟΥΡΚΙΑΣ.

ΑΘΗΝΗΣ

ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΙΟΥ ΒΙΛΛΑΡΑ

1877.

Margaritis Dimitzas, *Researches on Scanderbeg's origins and nationality*
Athens 1877

ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΥ ΙΩ. ΑΝΤΩΝΙΑΔΟΥ

πρώην γυμνασιάρχου

ΣΚΕΝΤΕΡΜΠΕΗΣ

Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΗΠΕΙΡΩΤΩΝ

ΔΡΑΜΑ

ΕΙΣ ΜΕΡΗ ΠΕΝΤΕ

ΒΡΑΒΕΥΘΕΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΟΝ ΔΙΑΓΩΝΙΣΜΟΝ

ΤΟΥ ΑΟΙΔΙΜΟΥ

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΔΑΣΣΑΝΗ

ΤΗ 25 ΜΑΡΤΙΟΥ 1889



ΕΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ

ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΙΟΥ Κ. ΑΝΤΩΝΙΑΔΟΥ

Ὁδὸς Περικλέους ἀρ. 40.—Ὁδὸς Ῥόμης ἀρ. 16

—
1889

Antonios I. Antoniadis, *Scanderbeg king of Epirotes*, Drama in five acts
Athens 1889

Η ΑΝΑΒΑΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΣΚΑΝΔΕΡ

ἢ

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΚΑΣΤΡΙΩΤΟΥ.

ΔΙΗΓΗΜΑ

ΣΥΓΓΡΑΦΕΝ ΥΠΟ

BENIAMIN ΔΙΣΡΑΕΛΗ

νῦν

ΚΟΜΗΤΟΣ ΒΗΚΟΝΣΦΗΛΑ

ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΘΕΝ ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΓΛΙΚΟΥ

ὑπὸ

Π. ΛΑΚΚΙΩΤΟΥ.



ΕΝ ΠΑΤΡΑΙΣ

ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΙΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΠΩΛΕΙΟΝ «Ο ΚΑΔΜΟΣ»

Β. ΣΕΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ

(Ἐπὶ τῆς διασταυρώσεως ὁδοῦ Μαιζώνος καὶ πλατείας Γεωργίου τοῦ Α΄.)

1880



ΜΙΑ ΦΩΝΗ

ΤΟΥ

ΚΑΣΤΡΙΩΤΗ.

Τὸ φεγγάρι ξεπέπτει, ἀσκωθῆτε,
Ἐπειρῶται, τὸν Ἥλιον νὰ ἰδῆτε
Ποῦ λαμπρὸς σᾶσε δείχνει τὸν δρόμο
Νὰ νικῆτε· φωνεῦτε τῷ ἐχθρῷ.

—=—

Τὸ φεγγάρι ξεπέπτει, ἀσκωθῆτε,
Διὰ Χριστὸν σὰ θεριὰ πολεμῆτε.
Ἐνωθῆτε σὰν κύμα μὲ κύμα
Ποῦ νικᾷ καὶ σκεπάζει τὴν γῆ.

—=—

Τὸ φεγγάρι ξεπέπτει, ἀσκωθῆτε,
Ἐγχειρίσθε σπαθὶ μὲ χαρά·
Καὶ τοὺς Τούρκους τυράννους χαλάσθε
Διὰ τιμὴν καὶ διὰ Ἐλευθερίαν.

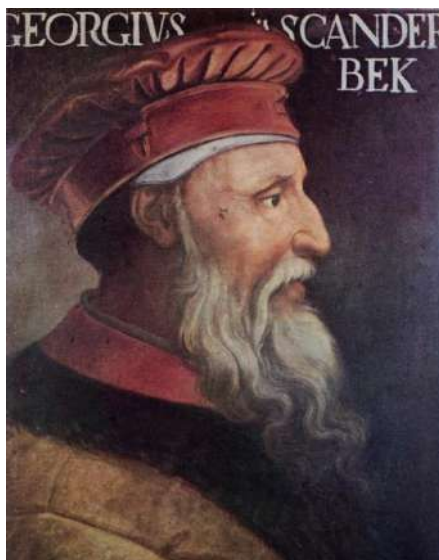
Κερκύρα, τῇ 16 Μαρτίου 1854. Ὑ. Ἐ.

Ἀ. Δάρδολος

Τυπογραφεῖον ΣΧΕΡΙΑ.



Xylography of Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg reproduced
after the History of Scanderbeg by Barleti



Scanderbeg's painting, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence



Scanderbeg's painting, Pinacoteca Seminario Monreale, Palermo



Sotirios Christidis, *Scanderbeg, national Hero and King of Albanians*



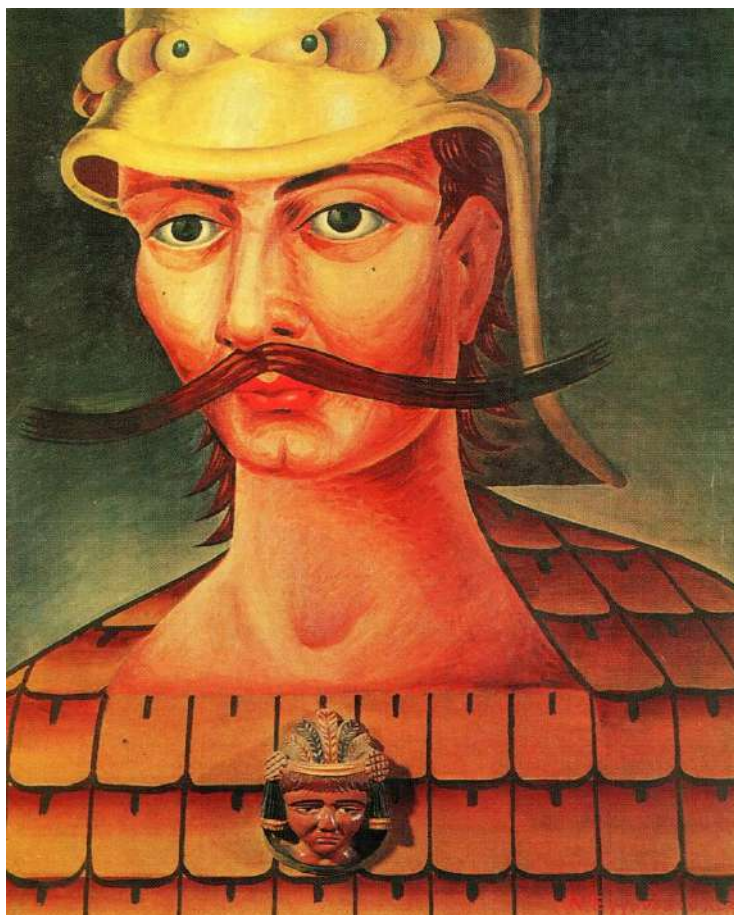
Scanderbeg on the horse, Historical and Ethnologic Museum of Greece
Athens



A. N. Ballamaçi, Scanderbeg on the horse 1889
National Gallery, Tirana



Th. Géricault (1791-1824) senior officer on the horse,
model for the anonymous painting of Athens,
of Ballamaçi and Spiridhon Xega



Nikos Engonopoulos (1907-1985)
Scanderbeg, oil color 1951

David HOSAFLOOK

**MARIN BARLETI'S *HISTORY OF SCANDERBEG*
IN ENGLISH, 1560–1596***

If the history of a particular figure is not recounted across multiple languages, then that figure is destined to remain obscure beyond the geographical boundaries of his or her own ethnic group. In 1968, at the Second Albannological Conference dedicated to George Castriot Scanderbeg, on the 500th anniversary of his death, various scholars highlighted world literature as a primary factor spreading Scanderbeg's renown. The three papers that emphasized this were: "Scanderbeg in World Literature" (Androkli Kostallari), "Scanderbeg in Italian Literature" (Henrik Lacaj) and "Scanderbeg in English Literature" (Skënder Luarasi).¹ Building upon these foundational works, this paper shall examine in greater detail the English translations of Marin Barleti's *History of Scanderbeg*. This is of particular importance because of the role English plays today as the world's foremost language, due to the spread of the British Empire in the nineteenth century and the growth of America's culture influence in the twentieth. In particular we shall present several impressive details that do not appear to have been treated before in Scanderbeg studies related to English literature.

It is widely accepted that among the earliest authors who wrote about Scanderbeg, Marin Barleti had the greatest influence, especially on the spread of Scanderbeg's fame in Western Europe and beyond. In Barleti's first book, *De Obsidione Scodrensi* (*The Siege of Shkodra*), Scanderbeg is mentioned only four times; but this work prepared the way for his second work, *Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi*. *The*

*This presentation is part of the lectures segment run from 1-2 November 2018.

¹ *Konferenca e dytë e studimeve albanologjike: me rastin e 500-vjetorit të vdekjes së Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeut, Tiranë 12-18 Janar 1968*, Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1969.

Siege was written not later 1501² and was published as a book in 1504. Since Barleti was an eyewitness of the siege, he wrote with the authority of a historian and the pathos of an author: that is, we have both history and literature together in one book.

Barleti's second book is much more voluminous and widely-known. It was published several times in Latin (first in 1508–1510) and was translated and published in German (1533), Italian (1554), Portuguese (1567), Polish (1568) and Spanish (1582, from Portuguese). These translations were republished several times.³ This a testimony to the impact of the work in Europe, feeling itself threatened, as it was, by the expansionism of the Ottoman Empire. The book was also published in French by Jacques Lavardin in 1576, but it was not a direct translation from Barleti's account. It drew from nineteen sources, all named by Lavardin, but the translator clarifies that "the most part of this history is drawn word for word [from Barleti]."⁴ As such, Lavardin's French translation has been considered a translation of Barleti, a characterization that is acceptable so long as it comes with the appropriate caveat.

The existence of such publications in the chief languages of Europe, from the sixteenth century, illustrates why Latinist Henrik Lacaj wrote: "The figure of George Castriot extended well past his own borders and became an international figure ... who fed the aspirations of poets,

² In 2018 Prof. Dr. Lucia Nadin discovered an unknown original manuscript at: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc65216f>). In cooperation with Prof. Dr. Aurel Plasari, they studied the document and noted that it was dedicated to Doge Agostino Barbadiago, unlike the published version of 1504, dedicated to the subsequent doge, Leonardo Loredano. This discovery sheds further light on Barleti as a historian and writer, as well as on the context in which he wrote *The Siege of Shkodra*.

³ Prifti, Stefan, in: Barleti, Marin. *Historia e jetës dhe e veprave të Skënderbeut*. Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1964, 10.

⁴ Lavardin cites these 19 authors/works as the basis for his French version: "Marin Barleti (Marinus Barletius), priest of Shkodra in Epirus, from whom the most part of this history is drawn word for word; The life of Scanderbeg, of an uncertain Author; Volaterrane; Eneas Silvius, alias Pope Pius the Second; P. Callimachus, experient of the battle of Varna; Paulus Jovius; André Thevet, in his *Cosmography*; Peter Perondin; Bartholomew Facius; Theodore Spandugin, a Gentleman of Constantinople; Andrew Cambin; Leonardus Chiensis, Archbishop of Mytilene (Lesbos), of the siege and sack of Constantinople, at which he was present, and taken prisoner; Isidore Ruthenian, Cardinal; Christopher Richier; Wolfangus Chronicle; Francesco Sansovino; Melanc-thon his *Chronicle*; Pandolph Callenucius of Pesaro, in his *Neapolitane histories*; Bonfinius, in the *History of Hungary*".

writers, and the masses, all of whom saw in this hero a defender and savior not only of his own motherland, but also of the Balkans and Europe, from a great invading power.”⁵

There is no doubt that Barleti's works have historical problems, especially if they are judged by today's standards of scholarship. They must be studied within their complex geopolitical and social contexts. For this reason, when Henrik Lacaj published his masterful Albanian translation of *De Obsidione Scodrensi* (*Rrethimi i Shkodrës*) from Latin, it was enriched with a lengthy historical introduction by historian Aleks Buda. It is a key to interpreting the work. Buda acknowledges the criticisms of the work but also presents convincing arguments for a mature, scientific, and contextual posture in the evaluation of the details, discerning where artistic creativity is inserted into the text, for example the statistical estimations and exaggerations (which also exist in the Ottoman chronicles about the same event) and the long, flowery speeches, some from the camp of the besieging army—speeches Barleti himself could not have heard from his position in the parapets of the besieged Rozafa fortress of Scutari.

If Barleti is criticized for exaggerations in his first work, he is criticized all the more in his second. *Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi* is far more voluminous than *De Obsidione Scodrensi* and Barleti was neither a witness of the events nor an immediate contemporary of Scanderbeg (Barleti was born in c.1450–1460; Scanderbeg died in 1468). Thus, he had to rely on the testimony of others. For this reason, his work has been criticized, sometimes harshly, and his reputation as a historian has been undermined, some going so far as to suggest his work is more a novel than a history. This is an unfortunate overreaction. One must not forget that Barleti grew up at the end of the Scanderbeg era and in the immediate post-Scanderbeg years, and heard multiple accounts of his life and deeds. He was a young Albanian living in a context of castle sieges and a perpetual threat by Ottoman invaders. Later, as a more mature man, he consulted with eyewitnesses. He was well informed and one of history's most important links to the age of Scanderbeg.

Just as Aleks Buda wrote an introduction for the Albanian translation of *The Siege of Shkodra* (*Rrethimi i Shkodrës*), so Stefan

⁵ Lacaj, Henrik. “Figura e Skënderbeut në letërsinë italiane”. *Konferenca e dytë*, 445–446.

Prifti wrote an introduction for the Albanian translation of *The History of the Life and Deeds of Scanderbeg* (*Historia e jetës dhe e veprave të Skënderbeut*), wherein “Barleti’s value as a historian” is evaluated and in which Prifti debunks some of the more extreme efforts to invalidate Barleti. Certainly Prifti acknowledges Barleti’s imprecision in chronology, his tendency to exaggerate in order to produce a more aesthetically pleasing book, etc. But on the other hand, Prifti gives concrete examples of Barleti’s efforts to write with the responsibility of a true historian. Barleti himself conveys his desire to portray truth. He cites sources (e.g. discussions with Pjetër Engjëlli). He uses qualifying terminology (“it *seems* to me”, “I *perceive*” etc.). These devices show that Barleti writes with a researcher’s bent and does not claim to be giving the final word to every issue he treats. He critically considers the testimony others have given him. He gives explanations for facts which seem to contradict each other. He rebuts arguments presented by other writers, due to the lack of supporting evidence and documentation. He refers to “the laws of history,” etc.⁶ As such, we observe in Barleti the elements of a true historian, despite his works’ shortcomings, errors, and the intermixture of strict historical data with artistic literary license.

The Albanian scholar Aurel Plasari, in his treatment of the work of Francesco Pall, notes that over the course of time it has been discovered that some of the statistics and details given by Barleti, long judged as impossible, have more recently been confirmed to be absolutely precise, after the publication of archival documents from Venice, Ragusa, Aragon, etc., “sometimes defying the very bounds of the incredible.”⁷ This kind of discovery is instructive to scholars, discouraging hasty prejudgments and dogmatic conclusions. Our purpose here is not to evaluate Barleti as a historian, but merely to propose that without studying Barleti, one may not become an expert in Scanderbegian studies. This will remain true whether or not future archival discoveries confirm factual accuracies or inaccuracies in Barleti’s histories, because hundreds of historiographic and artistic works are already built upon them, sometimes unwittingly, to one

⁶ Prifti, Stefan, te: Barleti, *Historia*, 13–22.

⁷ Plasari, Aurel. *Skënderbeu: një histori politike*. Tiranë: Instituti Shqiptar i Studimeve “Gjergj Fishta”, 2010, 24–27. See also: Pall, Francisco. *Marino Barlezio: uno storia umanista*. Bucaresti: Imprimeria nationala, 1938, 65–105.

degree or another. Without knowing Barleti, it is impossible to distinguish whether or not a particular historian is following Barleti's historical depictions and chronology as a foundation, even subconsciously.

Here we may cite an example: the distinguished German scholar Franz Babinger (1891–1967), an Ottoman and Balkan historian. In his work *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, Babinger calls Barleti “untrustworthy,” then builds the greater part of his chapter on the sieges of Kruja and Shkodra upon Barleti's work.⁸ This kind of contradiction is not unique to Babinger. It is distinguishable in many scholars treating Scanderbeg. On one hand, a Scanderbeg scholar feels obligated to disclaim Barleti as a historical authority, lest he be perceived as a naïve scholar, but on the other hand, he is obliged to consult Barleti (or more modern but eminently Barletian authors), because of the sheer volume and influence of Barleti's work, and his proximity to Scanderbeg's life and times.⁹ A careful historian must find a way to walk this tightrope without falling into one or the other extreme.

If it is true that the study of Barleti is *essential* for knowing and researching Scanderbeg, or if it is merely *important*, then, naturally, it is essential that his works become available in the languages of those studying his life. (If a scholar can understand the nuances of Barleti's original Latin, all the better.) Naturally, the majority of interest and research on Scanderbeg is by Albanians. For this *The Siege of Shkodra* was published in Albanian in 1961; whereas, *The History of Scanderbeg* was published in Albanian in 1964, both from Latin.¹⁰

When were English speakers first introduced to Barleti? And what is the condition of English-language versions of Barleti today? This consideration is important because English is now the world's lingua franca and because more and more people around the world are being

⁸ Babinger, Franz (trans. Ralph Manheim). *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*. Princeton University Press, 1978, 359–368.

⁹ For this, see also the introduction of David Abulafia (University of Cambridge) in: Hodgkinson, Harry. *Scanderbeg: From Ottoman Captive to Albanian Hero*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

¹⁰ Barleti, Marin (trans. from Latin Henrik Lacaj). *Rrethimi i Shkodrës*. Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1961; Barleti, Marin (trans. from Latin Stefan Prifti). *Historia e jetës dhe e veprave të Skenderbeut*. Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1964.

introduced to Scanderbeg. Albania and Kosovo have an increasing number of foreign tourists, and Scanderbeg's bust stands in or near prominent English speaking cities such as Detroit and London (the latter unveiled in 2021).¹¹ In the above-mentioned articles by Skënder Luarasi and Androkli Kostallari, we are introduced to three English works, published in 1560, 1562 and 1596, but we are not provided many details. In fact, we are left with the impression that Luarasi and Kostallari may not have seen these works personally, but rather only indications and titles. Luarasi wrote, for example: "Fortunately, we finally have a photocopy of the sonnet"¹² (the sonnet of Edmund Spenser about Scanderbeg, 1596, treated below). Whereas, Kostallari wrote that these books were not available in Albanian libraries and were difficult to find in European libraries. The absence of access to these materials led them to make several errors. For example, Kostallari wrote that Lavardin based his work *only* on Marin Barleti's work (see footnote 3 for the list of nineteen sources Lavardin actually used).¹³ If they had had these English works readily available, they might have treated them more exhaustively, an effort that remains to be done.

The first English work was published in London in 1560, with this title: *Orations of Arsanes agaynst Philip the trecherous kyng of Macedone: of the Embassadors of Venice against the prince that vnder crafty league with Scanderbeg, layed snares for Christendome: and of Scanderbeg prayeng ayde of Christian Princes agaynst periurous murdereng Mahumet and agaynst the old false Christian Duke Mahumetes confederate: with a notable example of God's vengeance vppon a faithlesse Kyng, Quene, and her children.*¹⁴ Luarasi provided only the name of the publisher, John Daye, not the name of the author/translator, Thomas Norton (1532–1584). Nor does he mention that in this publication, there are only two orations translated from Barleti's second work: one from the ambassador of Venice and the

¹¹ See <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/albanian-national-hero-commemorated-in-bayswater-8367625.html> (accessed January 23, 2021).

¹² Luarasi, Skënder. "Skënderbeu në letërsinë angleze", *Konferenca e dytë*, 433.

¹³ Kostallari, Androkli. "Figura e Skënderbeut në letërsinë botërore", *Konferenca e dytë*, 375.

¹⁴ <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A21541.0001.001>. The spelling here is indicative of the English spelling of the times, and is why the 1596 version needs to be republished with updated English spelling.

other from the archbishop of Durrës. In addition to these translations, Norton presents a speech by Scanderbeg to Christian princes, but this he has not translated. Rather, he has invented it himself on the basis of Barleti's history. Norton's self-described purpose was to present a speech "as [Norton] *thought he might* then aptly have said" (emphasis mine), in order to transmit needed lessons and warnings to his readers. We are unaware of any earlier writings in English about Scanderbeg and certainly no earlier translations of Barleti, even portions, previous to Norton's. Who was Norton?

Thomas Norton had an impressive cultural and social profile. He was a politician, barrister, poet and playwright, educated at Cambridge.¹⁵ He was married to the daughter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, the chief theologian and leader of the English Reformation. Norton is most distinguished for his English translation of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), the magnum opus of French Protestant theologian John Calvin. Norton's English translation from Latin was published in 1561 and contained approximately 3,000 pages. This work is among the most important works of Protestant theology, a work with wide circulation and significant influence even today.¹⁶

In Norton's introduction, he acknowledges that the speeches he translated from Barleti should not be viewed as verbatim quotations, but as literary creations based upon historical facts, speeches recreating what might have been said, for the readers' benefit and instruction. This literary device in historical works of the times, Norton believes, is "both pleasant and profitable." Here, therefore, we see the importance of reading Barleti's text in light of the context in Europe. That is, in the sixteenth century, readers expected such authorial interventions. They expected embellished speeches and did not reject the historical integrity of a work because of such intervention.

The second English publication about Scanderbeg mentioned by Luarasi is from 1562, a translation by John Shute, titled: *Two very notable commentaries the one of the original of the Turks and Empire*

¹⁵ Lee, Sidney, ed. *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XLI, 221–225 (Norton, Thomas). Online te: <https://archive.org/details/dictionaryofnati41stepuoft>.

¹⁶ This work is also published in Albanian, as: Calvin, Jean (trans. Mirgin Dobruna ; ed. Ledia Ikonomi). *Institutet e fesë së krishterë*. Tirana: Vernon, 2011.

*of the house of Ottomanno, written by Andrew Cambine, and the other of the wars of the Turks against George Scanderbeg, prince of Epiro, and of the great victories obtained by the said George, as well against the Emperur of Turkey, as other princes, and of his other rare force and virtues, worthy of memory, translated out of Italian into English by John Shute.*¹⁷ The work has approximately 250 pages, 90 of which concern Scanderbeg. Shute does not cite the name of the author, but Luarasi tells us it is Dhimitër Frangu. In the introduction, Shute explains that it “is a commentary written also in the Italian, by whom, I know not, for that the name of the author is suppressed but whatsoever he be that did it, he hath deserved to be well thought of for his travail, for it is well worth the reading.”

The final translation we shall treat and by far the most significant was published in London in 1596 and contains more than 500 pages. The title is: *The History of George Castriot, surnamed Castriot, king of Albania, contaning his famous acts, his noble deeds of arms, and memorable victories against the Turks, for the faith of Christ, comprised in twelve books by Jacques Lavardin, lord of Plessis Bovrrot, a nobleman of France*¹⁸. It was translated and prepared by Zachary Jones (born ca. 1558). As mentioned previously, the book was not translated directly from Barleti’s Latin, but from Lavardin. It was “a history out of French into English”. Insofar as Lavardin translated his French work chiefly from Barleti’s Latin, Jones’s translation from the French may be considered the first and, currently, the only translation of Marin Barleti’s *History of Scanderbeg*. It was the work that made Scanderbeg known to the English-speaking world.

Jones’s translation was published in the Elizabethan Era at the zenith of the English Renaissance, an era known for two of the most distinguished English writers, William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser. Additionally, this time period is known for the famous Bible translation project under King James. No work may automatically be considered good or significant because it is published in a country’s golden age of literature, but the elegance of Zachary Jones’s work, with

¹⁷ <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A17733.0001.001>

¹⁸ Përkthyer shqip: *Historia e Gjergj Kastriotit, mbiquajtur Skënderbe, mbret i Shqipërisë, me të bëmat e tij të famshme, veprat e tij fisnike ushtarake, dhe fitoret e tij të spikatur kundër turqve, për besimin e Krishtit.*

approximately 365,000 words, reflects his times and stands on its own merits. It is a masterful translation in the Elizabethan English used by Shakespeare.

The work is significant not only for its length and beauty, but also for the reputation of its translator. Zachary Jones, long known only by "Z. I. Gentleman" (not Z.J.), had connections with the literary elite of England. He was a member of Edmund Spenser's literary circle¹⁹, and possibly knew Shakespeare personally.

As presented more than fifty years ago by Kostallari and Luarasi at the Second Conference of Albanological Studies, Edmund Spenser himself wrote a sonnet about Scanderbeg that was published in Jones's English translation.²⁰ This shows not only Spenser's faith in the translator, but also his evaluation of Scanderbeg's importance as a hero with international significance. Scanderbeg, according to Spenser, is on the same level with the greatest heroes of world history. Both Androkli Kostallari and Skënder Luarasi translated the sonnet into Albanian²¹, as compared with the original below:

¹⁹ Williams, Franklin B., Jr. "Spenser, Shakespeare, and Zachary Jones". *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3 (Summer, 1968), 205.

²⁰ In an article for www.telegrafi.com, titled "Figura e Skënderbeut në letërsinë angleze" (The Figure of Scanderbeg in English Literature), Refik Kadija claims a significant fact, should it ever be verified. He writes: "Spenser's sonnet was composed before the translation and was published on October 12, 1593; then it was used as an epigraph in the Gentleman's translation" (April 14, 2018, <https://telegrafi.com/figura-e-skenderbeut-ne-letersine-angleze>, accessed October 30, 2018). Unfortunately, the author of the article did not provide publication details for 1593, and we have not discovered any other source evidencing the existence of the sonnet before 1596 (see, for example: Morris, R. *The Complete Works of Edmund Spenser*, London: MacMillan, 1897, p. 608 and 703, which gives 1596 as the year of its publication). The sonnet itself seems to claim its composition specifically for *The History of Scanderbeg* ("Thy acts, o Scanderbeg, *this volume* tells," emphasis mine). This suggests it was not an existing publication appended to Jones's text. Therefore, until Kadija's claim is verified, we maintain 1596 as the date of its first publication, not 1593.

²¹ *Konferenca e dytë*, 387 (Kostallari), 433 (Luarasi).

Edmund Spenser (original)	Androkli Kostallari (a more faithful translation)	Skënder Luarasi (a more elegant translation)
<p><i>Wherefore doth vain Antiquity so vaunt Her ancient monuments of mighty peers, And old Heroes, which their world did daunt With their great deeds, and filled their children's ears?</i></p> <p><i>Who, rapt with wonder of their famous praise, Admire their statues, their colosseums great, Their rich triumphal arcs which they did raise, Their huge pyramids, which do heaven threat.</i></p> <p><i>Lo! one, whom later age hath brought to light, Matchable to the greatest of those great; Great both by name, and great in power and might, And meriting a mere triumphant seat.</i></p> <p><i>The scourge of Turks, and plague of infidels, Thy acts, o Scanderbeg, this volume tells.</i></p>	<p><i>Pse mburret koha e lashtë kaqë fort Me monumentet e moçëm të zotërve të fuqishëm Të heronjve, që me veprat pa mort Mahnitën botën, dhe fëmijët i lexojnë të etshëm</i></p> <p><i>Kushdo me lavdinë e tyre habitet, Admiron statujat, kolosetë e tyre të lartë Harqet e pasur të triumfit, që ngritën Piramidat vigane, që kërcenojnë qiejtë.</i></p> <p><i>Por ja ai, që kohë e vonë e nxori në dritë, Që me më të mëdhenjtë ndër ta matet, I madh në emër, në forcë e në vetitë; Vend i triumfit atij i përshtatet.</i></p> <p><i>Kamzhik për turqit, rrufë për të pafetë, Për bëmat e tua, Skënderbe, ky libër flet.</i></p>	<p><i>Pse mburret Koha e lashtë kaqë fort Me monumentet e moçëm burrash trima, Heronj që përmes veprave pa mort Mahnitën botën, dhe në prrallë e rima</i></p> <p><i>Çdo foshnjë i nxën? Njerzimi i admiron Statuët e tyre, kolosej të lartë, E beret triumfore që i përshkon E bukura me madhështit' e narta.</i></p> <p><i>Ja një, që Kohë e vonë e nxorr në dritë: Ndër të mëdhenjt krah më të madhit shkon, I madh në zë, pushtet e në vetitë; Triumin e vërtetë meriton.</i></p> <p><i>Kamzhik për turqit, për armiqët rrufë, – Ky libër flet për Ty, o Skënderbe!</i></p>

* * *

In addition to this sonnet, Zachary Jones wrote an “epistle to the reader” in praise of Scanderbeg, reproduced here:

Epistle to the Reader (1596)

Gentle reader, I have here presented you with a history out of French into English, containing the life and glorious acts of Scanderbeg, king of Epirus, a prince no less admired in his life than memorable after his death. I need not commend unto you either the excellency of the history or the worthiness of the party, for both the one and the other are sufficient to commend themselves and the shadow of my praises will but eclipse the brightness of their deserts. Notwithstanding—because it may be expected that I should say

somewhat—give me leave to speak what I think, though I cannot think what I ought to speak. First therefore, touching Scanderbeg, so exquisite was his skill and experience in the military art and science, so excellent and heroic was his carriage and government amongst his soldiers, amongst his subjects and towards his very enemies, so amiable and lovely were his virtues, so unspeakable and unmatchable were many of his qualities, so honourable and glorious were all his actions, and so extraordinary was his fortune in the multitude and rareness of his victories, that it may be a question whether his virtue or his fortune was greater. The one was rare, the other admirable, and both together have exempted him from comparison, insomuch that if Hannibal the Carthaginian, the scourge of Rome, and Scipio the Roman, the plague of Carthage, were now living to revive their old disputation—who should be reputed the best captain—I doubt not but each of them would give Scanderbeg the garland, at leastways they would acknowledge him if not superior to all, yet inferior to none, and equal to the worthiest. If we compare his small means with his mighty exploits, you will say they were wonderful. If you consider his policies and fine stratagems, you will say they were singular. If you respect his corporal gifts and ornaments, nature herself will say she was prodigal in gracing him, having made him as comely as Edgar Aetheling, who was called England's darling, and as impenetrable as Achilles, whom no weapon could fasten on. If you regard his fortune, fortune herself will tell you that she was fond over him. For in him only she shewed a change of her nature, which being usually changeable and inconstant to all men mortal, yet to him continued constant and unchangeable. As for his virtues, oh how they shine most glorious as the sunbeams, dazzling the eyes of the beholders with the excellency of their object. Look into his life and let this history be the glass to show you his perfections. You shall find that for wariness and prudence he was comparable to Fabius Maximus, who by temporising repaired the estate of Rome almost ruined. For love to his native country he was another Camillus, who being exiled by his ingrate citizens, yet rescued them from the Gauls. For discipline he was equal to Manlius, whose severity to his own son hath made him ever famous. He was courageous as Hector who never turned back to his enemies; bountiful and courteous as Caesar, who by giving, forgiving, and relieving, made

himself way to the Roman Empire; merciful as Trajan, who never signed a bill for the execution of malefactors but he bedewed it with his tears; and dear to his subjects and soldiers as Titus, who was termed the delight and the jewel of the world. Alexander the glory of Macedon got the name "Great" amongst the Greeks because he overran the Orient like a tempest. Pompey the joy of the Roman nobility had the name of "Great" given him by the Romans because he purged the seas infested with pirates and because he stood for the common liberty. Charlemagne the honour of the French was entitled "Great" because he brake the force and power of the Saracens. Gonzalo the pride of the Spaniards and Italians was called the "Great" captain because he extorted the kingdom of Naples from the Frenchmen. As justly may the Epirotes vaunt of their Scanderbeg to be the glory, the honour, the pride and the joy of Albania, seeing the Turks themselves, his sworn and mortal enemies, have given and attributed the name of "Great" unto him, and seeing the greatness of his exploits do testify that the name and title of "Great" is no greater than his deserts. Nay, all Europe may worthily acknowledge him to be as great as the greatest, seeing his conquests in Asia and Europe under Murad and seeing the strange recovery of his kingdom and of the liberty of his country, which he purged from the infidels. His often and wonderful victories achieved against infinite and huge armies and the continual course of his life and of all his actions do show apparently that he was the glory and only stay of his own country, the sole protector of the common liberty, a bulwark to Christendom, a champion for the religion, the paragon of that age, the wonder of posterity, a terror to his enemies whilst he lived, and adored by them after his death. Pardon me (my masters) if I be somewhat immoderate or superstitious in admiring his excellency, for what almost can there be in any man that was not abundantly in our Scanderbeg? So many were his perfections and so few his imperfections, as it may justly be imagined, that God created him as a mirror for the world rather to wonder at than any way possibly to be matched, and yet, most worthy of all men to be imitated.

Now by the excellency of the person here represented, the worthiness of this history may easily be imagined, for where the subject is so rare and notable, the estimate of the history must needs be made correspondent and agreeable. I will not compare it with the best that

have been written, but this I dare aver, that therein is little or nothing wanting which in a history is thought needful. The ornaments of an history are elegance of the style, truth of the reports, variety of the discourse and profitableness of the matter. For the style, howsoever this history may seem defective, it is not much material, for though it want the grace of elegant and fine phrases to make it pleasant to curious ears and to dainty appetites, yet for all other the accomplishments of a good and perfect history I think it may go beyond the most. If it compare not with the best touching the truth thereof, diverse circumstances and arguments do prove it to be without controlment: the age and time wherein it was first written, the consent of succeeding times which have received it without reproof, and the testimonies of sundry authors who have recorded the most notable and strangest accidents contained in this history. For the variety thereof to procure delight, I appeal to your own judgements when you have read it. And I doubt not but you will confess that you have found few histories or none more copious, more delectable and more delightful. For profit, likewise: in many points it will show itself to be excellent and you can turn to no part thereof but you shall find matter of benefit. Hence may the sage philosopher and prudent poletist derive all or the most precepts of the military art and science. Herein may both the expert martialist and the simple soldier see the excellency and perfection of his calling and profession, the benefit of good order and martial discipline; and out of the idea of Scanderbeg his actions, may they behold (as it were) the anatomy and shape unto themselves, the image both of an expert general and an absolute soldier. Here may princes and great persons behold the bright, shining lustre of many royal and heroic virtues, making their names glorious in the eye of the world, their power fearful and terrible to their enemies and their persons dear and gracious to their subjects. Here may they take a view of those pernicious vices and enormities of those rash and inconsiderate affections which make them odious to God, hateful to men, discontented their estates and most wretched and miserable even in the greatness of their fortunes. In sum, such is the variety, the verity, the profit and the excellency of this discourse, that there is no estate, degree or calling, but may find therein somewhat to admire at, much to delight in and most things to imitate and to put in practice and execution.

It resteth now (my masters) that you make that estimate and account of it, which both the excellency of Scanderbeg his virtues and the worthiness of the history do require and merit, and that you measure the goodwill and painful labours both of the authors and of the translator by their dispositions affecting your good and benefit, and not by any sinister singularity of your misdeeming conceit. For if you be not too ingrate and injurious to the memory of a prince so well deserving, if you show not yourselves more than barbarous in condemning a monument of so great reckoning, or if you be not too austere and rigorous in your censures, you cannot but graciously accept the acquaintance of this history. You will friendly welcome the rare example of Scanderbeg, his peerless virtues and his surpassing fortune. And last of all, you will cover the imperfection of this work (if you find any) with the veil of your self-gracing courtesy.

* * *

Insofar as in 1560 there emerged a partial translation of Barleti's *History of Scanderbeg*, from a translator (Norton) with close connections with eminent figures of the Protestant Reformation (such as John Calvin) and the English Reformation (such as Thomas Cranmer), and insofar as there emerged a nearly complete translation of Barleti's work in 1596, with such grand introductory material from figures such as Edmund Spenser and the translator himself, Zachary Jones, it should therefore come as no surprise that the fame of Scanderbeg continued to spread in the West.

With such a distinguished heritage of English translation behind us in the sixteenth century, and considering the development of the English language in the centuries following, and acknowledging the role of English as the global lingua franca of our day, and recognizing Marin Barleti as the *de facto* father of Scanderbeg studies, we hereby welcome intensive scholastic reviews of the extant English (and Albanian) translations and, where needed, corrected and modernized versions.²²

²² As of this writing, a project is ongoing to republish Zachary Jones's 1596 translation, in modernized spelling and punctuation, scheduled to be published in 2021 as: *The History of George Castriot Scanderbeg, King of Albania* by Marin Barleti and Jacques Lavardin, translated by Zachary Jones, adapted by David Hosaflook.

Ardian MUHAJ

**THE ECONOMY OF THE ALBANIAN TERRITORIES IN THE
CENTURY OF SCANDERBEG AND THE EUROPEAN
ECONOMIC CRISES DURING THE LATE MIDDLE AGES¹**

Political events contribute a small part of the historical context when describing and analyzing the political history of any period. The science of history is a set of specified relationships encompassing different historic matters that focus and organize inquiry to describe, explain, and predict different events and behaviors. The territorial possessions of the Kastrioti family and their metropolis Kruja experienced an economic development during the XV century, from the moment the Kastrioti family became the rulers of Kruja to the annexing by Venice after death of Scanderbeg. During the Scanderbeg era, these territory possessions had the highest economic evaluation rate. Scanderbeg's behavior towards Venice, Ottoman Empire and Aragon gave a strategic first-hand role to Albania in general, and Kruja, the metropolis of Albania during the Scanderbeg era, in particular, and caused a clear economic growth compared with the previous period. In addition, we have a new administrative approach addressing the greater influence of man over the territory, expressed in a different territorial organization and effective exploit of his natural sources. Moreover, this paper analyzes and compares the economic and demographic indexes of the Albanian territories with the Europe's economic situation, in the framework of the European crises in the Late Middle Ages, as it is known by the Albanian historiography.

There is a new approach of history discipline of scientific research due to the political changes of the second half of the XX century. So, at the same time, we have an intertwine of the scientific character of historiography as an approach to historical truth with the search for new

¹ This presentation is part of the lectures segment run from 1-2 November 2018.

vectors through which the past can be more clearly grasped. As aforementioned said, historians have begun to look away from the narrow confines of the history and antecedents of the nation-state toward economic history, social history, cultural history, and, subsequently, other new branches of historical inquiry as well.²

In the today discourse, the debates on the hero are displaced in a dominant discourse of bulwark myths. There is a long history of the efforts of Balkan people to show up as bulwark christianistic, or defenders of Christianity. Many of these “soldiers and athletes,” stood face to face, especially in the innumerable crusades of the European Christians against the north European pagans or other European Christians.³ Regardless the fiery rhetoric, as Alain Ducellier says, only 14 years after the proclamation of the Orthodox Patriarchate under the rule of Rome, Constantinople fell into the hands of Mehmet II.⁴

The political configuration of the Balkans, in general, and the Albanian territories makes the XV century distinctive from the previous centuries. Venice and the Ottoman state were the two main actors during these two centuries. None of these overwhelming actors of the politics in the centuries was present in the previous centuries dominated by Byzantium, Serbs, Bulgarians and the French or the Catalans. In the XV century, the political map of the Albanian territories was also simplified by a great number of unstable local powers and became a territory with four units that for simplification are called Albania, so Albania under the Venetian rule, or Northern Albania, Albania under the Ottoman rule or the Southern Albania, Albania under the Serb rule or Kosova, and the Albania under the rule of Albanian noble families. The latter was ruled in the two first decades of this century by the Balshaj family, and from 1440-1470 by the Kastrioti family.

² Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999); Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³ The crusades of the Catholics against each-other culminated especially during the One Hundred years War and the Schism in the second half of the XIV century. Caroline M. Barron, “The Reign of Richard II”, in Michael Jones (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History: c. 1300-c. 1415*, vol. VI, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 308.

⁴ Alain Ducellier, *Le drame de Byzance. Idéal et échec d’une société chrétienne*, Paris: Hachette, 1997, p. 7-8.

During the XV century the number of Albanian noble families increased also, allowing us create a complete idea about their role in the society of the time. The destruction of the Serbian state after Dušan's death and the gradual change of the Byzantine state, from a glorious empire into a city, or as is affirmed by some authors, in a capital without a state, gradually puts in evidence the importance of the Albanian local element.⁵

The stability of the dominant political factors, caused the stability of the Albanian political factor. In this aspect, the Albanian noble families that are affirmed in the XV century, continue to be consolidated, nevertheless the sporadic transfer of the political overpower from one overwhelming factor to another. Also, it can be said that they benefited from the rivalry of this pair of political actors, to strengthening their positions, in the shaft of extending their power and influence in the Albanian territories. The Scanderbeg case reflects clearly the great political influence he had in the Albanian territories and in direction of gaining more and more autonomy from the rivalry of the great political actors. It's not by chance that Scanderbeg as Albanian leader succeeded in this century more than any other noble leader to affirm his Albanian local power, and this he did it in a territory strategically important, where were clashed their political rivalries, a situation which Scanderbeg understood and exploited with capability and vision.

Also, in the area of the Venetian dominion, the local nobility was formed and profiled. However, the character of the political power in the Venetian state, was different from that of the Ottoman state. The Venetians did not need to be politically served by the local aristocracies. Venice was a republic of aristocrats, where the power was by centuries at the hands of a dozen big aristocratic families and in the tens of other less important Venetian families. For this reason, the Albanian local nobility under the political influence of the Venetian

⁵Also, in the second half of the XV century when the Balshaj family was politically destroyed, and Venice had taken all their previous possessions. Scanderbeg aimed to present himself during the confrontation with Venice as the legal descendant of Balshaj. Certainly, this was not pretended by Scanderbeg by being based upon the family origin heritage, but upon the political legitimacy. The long showdown between Balshaj and Venice to rule the coastal area of Northern Albania is widely described by Pranvera Bogdani, *Lufta e Principatës së Balshajve dhe e sundimtarëve të tjerë shqiptarë kundër Venedikut në 20 vjetët e para të shek. XV*. Tirana, 1984, PhD theses.

domination faced the fact of the total exclusion from participating in any connection of the political power.⁶

Indeed, this exclusive approach towards the Albanian local nobility was not typical of the Venetian Albania only.⁷ It was also a characteristic of the Venetian Aegean, Venetian Corfu, and of all the Venetian colonies in the Mediterranean.⁸ Certainly, this, in the short-term aspect was at the detriment of the Albanian nobility, because the exclusion from the political power undermined the economic exclusion too. However, in the long-term aspect, turned out with the same consequences for Venice itself, because Venice did not exploit the power of this nobility in its own interest, and as consequence went alone losing political territory facing the Ottoman rival.

Also, the Ottomans, regardless the different approach and inclination to integrate the higher strata of the Albanian society in the local political power administration, had also their political mechanisms to limit and keeping under control this power of local influence.⁹

Structurally, we have to do two phenomena of different origins. The Albanian aristocracy of the XV-XVI centuries is part of a negotiation history and local adaptation, with a political power in expansion and continuous enforcement, in which the Albanian aristocracy is integrated, following at the same time the dynamics of this political enforcement. Of course, this is also due to the Ottoman policy focused on the uprooting of the local aristocracies through establishing them in

⁶The Senate ordered that Albanians to be excluded by the high military positions in Albania. *Acta Albaniae Veneta Saeculorum XIV et XV*. Josephi Valentini S. J. Labore reperta et Transcripta Ac Typis Mandata. Pars Prima: Saeculum XIV complectens. Tomus Primus (1): Ab initio ad usque annum MCCCCLXXXIV. Centro internazionale di Studi Albanesi Palermo/ Istituto Universitario Orientale Napoli/ Istituto di Studi Albanesi dell' Università di Roma/ Fondazione Giorgio Cini Venezia/ Ponteficio Istituto di Studi Orientali Roma I/3, Munchen: Rudolf Trofenik, n° 1909, p. 156; See also Freddy Thiriet, *Histoire de Venise*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1976, 5.

⁷According to Giuseppe Valentini, "Rezultate e fundme te studimeve Kastrotjane. (Bashkëfjalim me At Valentinin)", *Shejzat*, 1968, nr. 3-4, repulished in *Skënderbeu dhe Papati. 1442-1467. (Studime dhe tekste historike)*, translated by Ilirjana Angoni, Plejad, Tiranë, 2013, p. 51, Venediku, "nuk duronte kend me çue krye n'afërsi të zotnimeve të tija" sepse nuk e shkelte "traditën politike qi kishte mos me u dhanë kurr të huejve vendas as sundim as komandë".

⁸None of the important positions in the area of Venice's Albania was not allowed to be hold by Albanians throughout the Venetian rule starting from the end of the XIV century until the end of the XVI century. National State Archive/Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit, (AQSH), F. 132. D. 5.

⁹See S. Pulaha, "Shpronësimi i klasës feudale", p. 139-165.

the state's social hierarchy, but at the same time through the circulation of the aforementioned elite in different areas, aiming to obstruct their settlement in a specific territory.

During all the XVI century, also previously in the XV century, the Ottomans had already under application a well-defined system of circulation and elites' calendar, compounding an important element of the social control in the Ottoman state. The circulation or the recycling of the officials, multiplied the state power over the society. The Ottoman state detached the local networks of the social solidarity that were likely to become political contradictory by continuously moving and transferring their elites. Through this destruction of the local connection, the officials and the population were concentrated towards the central power as a determinant source of authority. Thus, the national structure had consolidated due to the social calendar control, by limiting the chances of the local elites for autonomous political action. These expectations in the most of cases fulfilled, while the Ottoman state enlarged. The register of the Albanian sanjak of 1431, as one of the earliest registers known to us, proves that the system of Timar was immediately applied, transforming the feudal property situation in these areas, majority of which was Christian.¹⁰ The necessity to enlarge more and more the national property on the land, pushed the state to encourage in different ways the Christian feudal to abandon their property rights in exchange of accepting the new system. Part of this compromise, was also the feudal lords who turned to timar-holders, but could continue to keep the Christian belief.¹¹

Mehmet I had to make big compromises with these local dynasties, because his authority had weakened during the inter-regnum period. His rule was characterized by clashes and dissatisfactions who exploded in the middle of the epigone, members of feudal class and Mehmet II about this circulation policy. There where the state faced the opposition of the powerful feudal elites, was forced to compromise, by sharing the revenues of these properties with the local lords, but there

¹⁰ Halil İnalçık, *Hicrî 835 tarihli Sûret-i defter-i sancak-i Arvanid*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1954.

¹¹ İnalçık, H., "Arnaëutluk", p. 654; İnalçık, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınlan, Ankara 1954; Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale në tokat shqiptare*, shek. XV- XVI, p. 44. In Mat's area (vilayet-i Mat) on 1467, the majority of those who are holders of Timar, were Christians. Dritan Egro, phd, p. 190-191.

where the state was strong and the local elites less settled, the double property was not applied.¹²

This circulation system prevailed in most of the Balkan countries and Anatol, by making the autonomous elite with inherited properties part of the national administration or state's servants, although in most of the cases with enlargement of properties.¹³

If we analyze the action or the reaction of the Albanian nobility towards such a policy of periodic elites' circulation, we notice that their possibility to challenge this was less and unfruitful. Here makes an exception that figure, which not in vain has attracted the attention and the interest of different authors in the later centuries, but also of the contemporaries; Scanderbeg.

It was impossible to define the appropriate rate of the economic development of a society or territory in the Middle Ages, because reliable statistical data on the main economic indexes are missing. However, we can have an idea about the trend of the economic development during this period.¹⁴

Under Scanderbeg's rule, Albania was economically and demographically was the less developed unit, but its role remains strategically fundamental for the military, trade and economic affairs. Political stability is one of the most important indirect indexes of the economic development. Scanderbeg is the longest-reigning ruler in the Albanian territories. His capability to maintain his power stability depended first on the possibilities to feed, provide security, and reward his supporters, the followers, and his subjects. If Scanderbeg were not able to guarantee the security and the life of his people, his power would not have lasted so long. There are many other indirect, but concrete indexes of this economy with positive development trends. It

¹² Karen Barkey, "In Different Times: Scheduling and Social Control in the Ottoman Empire, 1550 to 1650", *Comparative Studies in Society and History. An International Quarterly*, volume 38, 1986, Cambridge University Press, pp. 460-483. See also Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

¹³ S. Pulaha informs us that the Ottoman power after "prepossessing in this was the children of the great lords converted to Islam, putted them in high positions in their country or in the Ottoman national apparatus, granted to them big feuds, and other privileges". S. Pulaha, "Shpronësimi i klasës feudale shqiptare nga toka dhe rrugët e integritit", p. 259.

¹⁴ Steven A. Epstein, *An Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe, 1000-1500*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, p. 3.

is enough to compare the desperate situation of the last pre-Ottoman rulers of Vlora, the marquis Zharko and his wife Rugina Basha threatened by the Venetians by taking hostage their possessions because of the debts they had with the Venetians merchants and the Senate with Scanderbeg's situation. The latter could send the ambassadors beyond the Adriatic, except Ragusa. Also, we can compare the continuous reports of the Venetians officials that constantly show the miserable situation of the strongholds and the incapability to obtain the funds for their repair and enforcement with documents reporting about the stronghold of Kruja that was well kept and fortified. Although the taxes were partly issued by the Venetian administrations in Albania, they were spent for the fortification of the strongholds and the Venetian defense system. Here, we can mention the wine's tithe used for the maintenance of Shkodra's stronghold.¹⁵ Scanderbeg's investment for the security of the coastal area also proves the priorities of his economic policy. Rodon's fortification, so close to Kruja, and the guarantee of Shufada harbor also so close to his capital, clearly shows his policies. On the other hand, we do not have any urban center in the area from Kruja to Skopje that could serve as a unification and connection point among people.¹⁶ Kruja and Rodon had different economic development and their economic development differed from the other Albanian cities under the Venetian rule. The crises of the city had also affected the northwestern Albania, which was the most developed area. So, Balëza that once was the archbishopric center, in the cadaster of Shkodra of 1416 is now mentioned as a simple village with 25 homes. The city of Svaç that in the XIV century has its own coins was found in 1406 in a desperate situation. The bishop of Svaç asked the Venetians to help to rebuild it. In 1443, Svaç was a simple village, and in 1476 it is mentioned as "villa de Suazzo" - the village of Suaçi.¹⁷

¹⁵ B. Cecchetti, *Degli stabilimenti politici della repubblica veneta nell' Albania e delle sollevazioni in Oriente: fino al secolo XVI*, Venezia, Grimaldo, 1874, pp. 1-22.

¹⁶ In bases of the 1455 register, also Tetovo is mentioned as a village with few Albanian families based on the name. However, Tetovo, during the XVI-XVII centuries, changed from a developed city into an important trade center.

¹⁷ Milan Šufflay, *Serbët dhe shqiptarët*, Botim i Drejtorisë së Përgjithshme të Arsimit, Tiranë 1926, p. 70-71.

The fact that Scanderbeg except the maritime communication through the Shufada harbor, succeeds in the fortification process by bringing masters from Ragusa in the Rodon's castle is meaningful for his financial means. It is not true that Scanderbeg plundered the merchants in his territories or in the neighboring Albanian territories.¹⁸ It was the security that Scanderbeg guaranteed to the merchants what convinced them to trade, may they be Ragusans through maritime roads or may they be Albanians merchants by land, challenging and avoiding this way the Venetian monopoly.¹⁹

The access of the Kastrioti Principality to the sea was essential for their independence from the Venetian monopoly. Around 1417, Gjon Kastrioti advanced from Mat towards the Adriatic where apparently obtained the consent by the Balshaj family for the Shufada, a strategic harbor, which was attractive for the Ragusan and Italian merchants. The latter were angry by the continuous vexations of the Venetian monopoly in Lezha and Durrës.²⁰ Therefore, it is interesting that the Kastrioti family obtained access to the sea without taking Kruja. For this reason, the taking of Kruja by them, that was carried out by Scanderbeg, except for strengthening this vital communication with the sea, also unified the territory where he exercised his power, from the Adriatic to the Drini i Zi valley. Scanderbeg, like his father did, followed a policy that was contrary to the Venetian customs duty administration in Lezha and in Durrës.²¹ Venice tried to have its monopoly in trade. Around 1425, the Ragusan merchants were banned from Shkodra,²² while on 1431 was totally forbidden the import of the foreign drapery from Dalmatia and Venetian Albania.²³ The confiscation of the Ragusan ships, loaded with Albanian grain, without respecting the Venetian customs duty sovereignty in the rivers' estuaries, aimed the protection of this monopoly. The grain and the salt

¹⁸ A. Greif has widely treated the foundations of society's institutions influencing in the economic growth. Avner Greif, *Institutions and the path to the Modern Economy. Lessons from Medieval Trade*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, p. 3.

¹⁹ "It is permissible to transform the evidence of town walls into a tentative description of broad demographic trends". R. S. Lopez and H. A. Miskimin, *The Economic Depression of the Renaissance*, p. 414-416.

²⁰ AAV VII 1972; 2014; 2017; 2021; 2049; 2054; Schmitt, Arbëria, p. 251.

²¹ Schmitt, Arbëria, p. 263.

²² AAV XII 2965.

²³ AAV XIV 3467.

were the two most important stocks in this trade policy. "*Major utilitas Durrachi est sal*", was said in a Senate decision.²⁴ At the same time, Venice blocked in its influence area all other salt-pans by forcing the Albanian merchants, to not trade salt in Shufada, but the salt of Durrës.²⁵ The cape of Rodon has not been densely inhabited. Deeply situated in the bay of Drin, this cape had a very good position to attack the merchant convoys coming from Dalmatia. This also explains the reason why it shows in history as a pirate hideout.²⁶

However, the Kastrioti family kept its own salt-pans and sold their salt in Shufada to the Ragusans and Italian merchants (1424).²⁷ Venice tried by also asking the collaboration with the Ottoman commanders of Kruja to force Gjon Kastrioti buy Venetian salt (1428), but of course without achieving the complete abeyance of Shufada. Keeping off the Venetian monopoly became more and more difficult because Shufada was used as an intermediary harbor for the Ragusan ships in their sailing towards Vlora under the Ottoman rule as trade place of grain and salt in the area. Vlora during the '30 and '40 of the XV century became the most important generator of salt in the Albanian space.²⁸ The relations between Ragusa and the Ottomans increased. The Ragusans start to be supplied with grain more and more from the Ottomans.²⁹ The Ragusan ships carried stocks even through Albania shores and Puglia.³⁰ For this reason, the Seignory couldn't totally avert the local competition.

Scanderbeg, not only wasn't ready to give up his salt-pans, but also enforced more their security and the harbor of the foreign trade.³¹ The

²⁴ AAV II 474.

²⁵ For example, the Jonima family in 1409. AAV III 1028; 1190; 1201; V 1661.

²⁶ Alain Ducellier, "Gjendja e kepit të Rodonit në fillim të shek. XV sipas disa dokumenteve raguzane", *Studime historike*, 1/ 1977, p. 123-132. The inhabitants of Shën Athanas of Rodoni had twice attacked the Ragusan ships. The first attack was in January 23, 1324, and the second attack was in March 9, 1335. *Monumenta Ragusina*, I, p. 106; *Acta Albaniae*, I, nr. 694, p. 207.

²⁷ AAV XII 2944.

²⁸ Hocquet, *Sel I* 243: "Affaiblir Durazzo entraint donc dans la politique des Turcs...", Hrabak, *Promet* 257 v.

²⁹ Momčilo Spremić, *Dubrovnik e gli Aragonesi (1442-1495)*, Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti, Palermo, 1986, p. 151.

³⁰ Momčilo Spremić, *Dubrovnik e gli Aragonesi (1442-1495)*, Accademia Nazionale di Scienze Lettere e Arti, Palermo, 1986, p. 155.

³¹ AAV XXII 5967.

construction of Rodon's stronghold was a well-conceived step to protect the harbor of Shufada from the pirates and the Venetians, unless being a window of communication with the other coast of Adriatic. As A. Ducellier emphasizes, there are few data on the Cape of Rodon prior to XV century, and we should not have the conviction that even before and at least for XIV century, the Cape of Rodon has densely been inhabited. This cape had a very good position to attack the merchant convoys coming from Dalmatia. This also explains the reason why in the beginning it comes out in history as a pirate hideout.³²

The effects of this economic policy militarily protected were very soon felt. Thus, in 1455, it was said that Scanderbeg had fill the market of Lezha with cheap salt.³³ In the following years, he improved the relations with the Seignory by showing his readiness to buy the Venetian salt in Lezha (1460).³⁴ However, Scanderbeg was very careful when making these trade concessions, not harming his economic interest. Also, in exchange of that, he added the annual subsidiary measure taken by Venice and since 1451 was considered by the Venetians themselves as too big and over passed the capability of Lezha's coffer to pay.³⁵

Scanderbeg's Albania served as a shelter place also for those Albanians who were in danger in the Venetian or the Ottoman Albania, and the case of Andrea Engjëlli's sons clearly proves this. So, the descendants of this family represent the "diaspora" of Drishti in the area of Scanderbeg possession. Their antagonism towards the foreclosed policies followed by Venice, was openly manifested for the first time in the case of Scanderbeg's war against Venice because of Danja, when the father of Pal and Pjetër, Andrea Engjëlli was accused for conspiracy against the Venetian rule. According to the charges, he together with some others tried to do a military coup through which would surrender the stronghold of Drishti to Scanderbeg. The fact that the father of the future archbishop of Durrës died in prison from the

³² The Ragusan ships were twice attacked from the inhabitants of Rodon, on 23 January 1324 and on 9 March 1335. *Monumenta Ragusina*, I, p. 106; *Acta Albaniae*, I, nr. 694, p. 207.

³³ AAV XXIII 6330.

³⁴ AAV XXIII 6450; XXIV 6938.

³⁵ AAV XXI 5701.

Venetians tortures, proves the gravity of the established situation.³⁶ However, the career of his sons would be tied to Scanderbeg and will be developed since then and in the following years out of the Drishti area.

Neither the fact that Scanderbeg passed the Adriatic and undertook a nearly two years campaign in Southern Italy, aiding and supporting Ferrante of Aragon, did not compromise his position. In the Middle Ages, we have many cases of feudal lords which possessed geographically detached feuds from their country of origin or residence, even many of them enjoyed the titles over such feuds without never visiting them. The English king as we know, was a vassal of the French king, because he possessed a feudal possession in France's southwestern part, with its center in Bordeaux. On one hand he was the sovereign of England. On the other hand, he was a vassal in France.³⁷

It can be said that except the allocentric outlook that prevails today, it is aimed to illustrate Scanderbeg as destructor of his homeland for the protection of Dante's homeland from the danger coming from Mehmet II homeland. Scanderbeg didn't destroy his homeland. On the contrary, he is a grand patron of his territory.

³⁶ "[...] fuit tormentatus, et ob tormenta mortuus est in carceribus." AAV XXI, nr. 5763; E. Malaj, *Drishti. Historia dhe fizionomia e një qyteti mesjetar*, p. 158.

³⁷ There is a wide bibliography on this situation and the dynasty problems that caused the explosion of the so-called Hundred Years War is wide. We have summarized this bibliography in our paper Ardian Muhaj, *Portugal e a Coroa de Aragão nos séculos XIV-XV. A Guerra dos Cem Anos e a sua influência na decadência da Catalunha e na expansão de Portugal*, (Master Theses), Lisbon: University of Lisbon, 2006.

Evalda PACI

**RECEPTION OF SCANDERBEG'S HISTORY IN SOME
ESSENTIAL WORKS IN THE WRITTEN ALBANIAN
LITERATURE¹**

The chronology of the written Albanian literature is above all related to the patchy texts and unique works from the content point-of-view, as each initial definition and of the presence in them of some textual elements defining the particularity and also the common thematic that makes possible a generalizing classification that characterize these works.

In general, in the logical publications compiled by groups of authors and with a thematic that describes historiographically in details the works of the year 1500 and with written records about that time, we find them in line and treated with the right attention of elaborated fulfillments mainly at the beginning of this providential century, in which would be eternalized at the same time the concrete periods that encaptured the historical developments in our country, mainly the political personalities of the European dimension that influenced in the development of the time's historic events, among which beyond any doubt and the most impressive one remains Gjergj Kastrioti, Scanderbeg.

Such a strategist, has been retaken since the period in which he lived and worked and has been given the characteristics of the hero, the military man and also of the personality acted as equal at international level. Not few works of the historic and documentary character result to have been realized and retaken in the European circles of literature and culture, each with particularities connected with the formation of the respective authors and with the motivation that they had in the aspect of celebrating such a special figure as that of our Kastrioti.

¹ This presentation is part of the lectures segment run from 1-2 November 2018.

The beginning of 1500 would be marked among others things from the publishing of one of the editions of *Rrethimi i Shkodrës/The siege of Shkodra (De obsidione Scodrensi)*, one of the most well-known books of Marin Barleti, an author with a remarkable cultural preparation concretizing in the fact that his book has widely treating the figure of the Albanian leader, has been written in a cultivated Latin, fraught with not inconsiderable assets of usages, forms and evocations in searching the expressed perfection and in the wording that are collected in the content of his work. Classified among the publishing of our written historic literature in parallel of Gjon Buzuku's book and other books following it at that time, Marin Barleti's work marks another achievement of the Albanian scripture and of the possibility to eternalize a work of mainly historic profile with characters, contexts and figures of a reality that breaths through the person of Gjergj Kastrioti, an Albanian prince that had among other things an unusual perspicuity as for the vision on the territorial integrity, on the connection among the Albanian communities in our lands, on the relations with the time's nobility, on the relations with the neighboring regions and especially with those of the Italian Peninsula.

Not less interest presents the fact that the echo of his deeds doesn't delays to reach the regions of the other side of the Adriatic and more precisely, in the territory of a consolidated state by land and also by sea, and in the context of different circumstances didn't presented itself coherent in the relations with the Ottoman power of the time. Venice or the Serenissima wasn't indifferent towards the concrete achievements and goals of our hero, meantime attentively followed every development that might happen during the processes that have been an encouragement among other things for considerable waves of migration from one coast of the Adriatic to the other. It should be said again that such a period is marked by typical migration movements towards the Italian shores and from such a typical consolidation for the time itself of a relation that would be long marked during the history of both countries.

The perpetuation of Scanderbeg's figure also in these regions is believed that has happened through reflecting it in architectonic and artistic reflections that are still found today in monumental churches in specific regions and thus continue to evoke un undeniable relation

between the two countries, a connection which served as a bridge and medium precisely the history of the achievements of this unique and unrepeatable hero, legendary in the sense that made possible to intertwine even in the fantasy of his contemporaries narrative forms which are particular because of the fact that were outlined in specific historic circumstances.

Gjergj Kastrioti's figure was impetuous to draft the chronicles that still today are found in the most important archives of Europe. Not less, this figure was inspiring on the works of another nature, mainly glorifier, that of course didn't exclude at all the documentary component, important even in the today view, meanwhile that the historic research is inclined to be presented more objectively about the characterization of the period taken into consideration on the concrete role that this hero has played in history.²

Scanderbeg as personality has continued to draw the attention of the scholars who since the early years have emphasized the necessity of identifying indices of his biography that should be specified, by not diminishing the weight of his role on the time's historic developments. In the optic of a critical view, the data offered by Marin Barleti are again seen from the successors or Barleti's scholars themselves, causing inconsistencies in the latter narrations.³

In assistance of this objective view, are added the remarks that Fan Noli has put forward at the time when he dedicated himself to the study of Scanderbeg's history, remarks that are brought in the presentations on which the scholar Stefan Prifti accompanies the translated version fixed up with notes of Barleti's work. Noli himself, saw it reasonable to clarify the contextual differentiation and in the critical apparatus view to be contained in the re-edition of his work, which he introduces by

² What is transmitted in works that were predestined to have a historiography nature, has been further made an object of attention from the part of scholars of the period taken into examination, that no doubt includes the historic and political conditions that prepared the more and more insistent invasion of the Ottoman power in the Balkan with a clear aim on Europe. See Sirdani M. O.F.M., *Kontribut për historinë e kulturën shqiptare*, Botime Françeskane, Shkodër, 2017, p. 8.

³ See also Pall F., *I Rapporti italo-albanesi intorno alla metà del secolo XV (Documenti inediti con introduzione e note storiche-critiche)*, Estratto dall'Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane, Terza serie, Vol.IV, Società Napoletana di storia patria, Napoli, 1966.

doing the role belonging to him as author and scholar of this complex argument and with interest for the history of the nation.⁴

Out of these facts, rightfully can be brought to attention some study remarks in the actual celebrations on the death anniversary of our national hero, Marin Barleti's work continues to present an object of interest, especially for a very objective reason: his work was written in a culture language with great importance for his time, a language which actually and especially for the accomplishments of that time includes Barleti as a factor that can be considered a bearer of remarkable characteristics on the writing view, of the possibility to use expressive elements and also stylistic performance. Meantime, is clearly seen that the author himself in the works written in the Latin about *The siege of Shkodra* and on *The life and deeds of Scanderbeg* has described a kind of not casual journey in the process of their preparation, by putting competencies to work, among which his writing, a mastery that continues to classify him one of the renowned biographers of Gjergj Kastrioti, Scanderbeg.

Certainly, the author has recognized the artifices and the time's procreations, has used useful means possible to him, because he had knowledge of antiquity on some most renowned personalities of it, but this fact doesn't corrupt at all the other accomplishments of his, that from the scholars and in particular the translator of his work are put in evidence in a concrete way, with translation examples or orthography of specific constructions. In the view of a detailed analyzes on the content elements and of texts based on Barleti's work, cannot remain out of the attention details that are connected with the local places nominations, with the typical weapons characteristics of each bellicose part, with the modalities of the besieged people way of fight, also of the attackers, a clear trace that the besieged part, the Christian faith, as inspiring force in parallel of the love for the homeland, a very strong component in the psyche of the characters that are the leading figures in these works.

⁴ Particularly see *the Foreword* through which Noli has equipped the second publishing of his work on Scanderbeg (Boston, 1950), written on April 1949 in Boston. Indeed, in this work Noli first of all clarifies how important remain the premises of an objective recognition of the events that have forerun the birth of a historic period of its own as was that of Gjergj Kastrioti's personality development, the leader of the Albanian regions.

The drafting of Marin Barleti's works in the Latin language proves among other things the benefit of his formation in a deeply cultural and European context, which has also left his traces in the adapted mental forms reflected in the writings of this author, and in the stand he seems that carries meanwhile describing the events that were an inspiring motive for drafting the mentioned works. The degree of his cultural preparation seems that has been closely followed by men of learning and time's patrons, renowned people for affirming the cultural and of bibliophilic aspect, as is lately emphasized from researchers of his working at best of further clarifying the indices that have to do as with the hero's figure, also with the data that prove how are intertwined the historic destinies of that time peoples, thanks to circumstances and events on which Gjergj Kastrioti plays an indisputable role.

Barleti's narration remains an object of interest in two directions: it can be observed as in the edited texts in the Latin language, also in the drafted ones by the translators of the book, among which as more interesting versions on our observations will consider those in the Albanian language, edited by the classicists and good connoisseurs of philological knowledge: Henrik Lacaj and Stefan Prifti.

Each of the translators into Albanian contributes in his way in reading Barleti's work, meantime that can be spoken for a continuity in using lasting usages in its content, in the meaning of the usages that take exceptional value exactly for the fact that are references towards the main scribes in it; toponomastic, onomastics, special linguistic registers that are exactly cultivated when are undertaken such fulfillments that are not lost from the attention in the documentary aspect on which is based the narration that makes possible the reader's approach with the content. And in the usages view that makes possible to be felt a typical spirit for a work of those dimensions, it's clearly visible the author's influence towards analogue works that were written at that time and reflecting beyond any doubt a political inclination in understanding and presenting the enemies and the image of the rulers of the time.

In case of battle scenes, the descriptions that have to do with preludes or pre military situations, in case of episodes that are explained in the context of a battle between two opposing sides, by no doubt the narration also takes characteristics which by not having as

purpose the aim to move away from this documentary aspect, brings towards the reception of a different contextual nature of the work, comparable with their similar fulfillments, not far in time of Barleti's corpus. This approach can be clearly felt even in the case when this work is presented in a different dimension as is the translation one, but is clearly presented during the reading process in the Latin language version, by making possible to us the renewed acquaintance of some mental and textual schemes proving that the author was aware of many artifices that were used when such works were drafted.

The critic that has found an excuse from the reading of the work, with reason emphasized on a more suitable method of its reading, especially about the usages that the archaeology knowledge specifies after making the territorial recognition and verification, having in mind the closest location of the regions mentioned in the work. This aspect should be taken into consideration if Barleti's work can have a functional value, out of its reception in literary circles and in the writing history.

The fact itself that among the main Barleti's accomplishments is classified the history of life and deeds of Scanderbeg with editions and re-editions, making on his personality to be laid hypotheses, to be asked for more about the issue of authorship of other similar works, of the presumed possible impacts and on all others biographers of Gjergj Kastrioti.

A useful clue about the attention to be drawn in this direction remains the textual and ornamental that accompany his known volumes, elements that are presented richer in content and data transmit if compared with the book of Gjon Buzuku. Meantime, such elements serve to put in evidence the time's editions similarities and affinities, that could be approached with the works that we take into consideration in different views, mainly thematic ones.

Remains all this period an object of interest for the researchers of the work, and also to the contexts that cannot be easily detached from anything that was happening in a geographical and political realm with clear connection to the Albanian territories and their history.

Barleti is considered a relatively good connoisseur of the events that have to do with the Turkish occupation in our territories, is presented as a biographer of Scanderbeg's life and deeds, facts these that help in a

certain way to deduce his relation with the country of Albania and perhaps the related age that he might have had when was living such events. There are scholars that emphasize with surety the issue of the direct recognition from Barleti's side of the Albanian territories written in his works, while others which have a more objective interest in studying the author's work and personality, relativising such cognitions in dependence of facts that still remain to be further clarified or verified. Indeed, this compounds a line that distinguishes a clear inclination in the research precisely directed on Barleti's person and seems that has cherished the interest of many scholars of that period in which the latter was living on.

Barleti will be reexamined not far in time if we consider the apologetic elaboration and not at all casual of a opusculum with Kastrioti's figure in the center, who was published after a year as an important work on the history of the old Albanian writing, *Latin-Albanian Dictionary* of Frang Bardhi, published in Rome on 1635. A modest work concerning the volume, but well originated and reasoned since its beginnings and naturally attached to all the arsenal of the works that are known to us in the writing tradition with our studies in the Albanian language. Its equipment with dedicating texts and introductive explanations, also gives the right textual characteristics to approach the time's models point-of-view constructions, approximate in thematic and substantial point-of-view.⁵ The celebrative attributes on which is glorified the figure of the Epirotes prince, since the introductory pages of this work, also go along with the spirit of the time on which were drafted the works of this nature, and with all the context who saw the character of Gjergj Kastrioti as hero. The name of this Albanian writing history prelate is also therefore connected with a work of this nature, except that with reports that shed light on the church history of our country, with approbatory that prove his active presence on researching of catechism and liturgical editing progress in the Albanian language, or on works of lexicographic nature that remain unique in the history of the Albanological studies. The philological devotion of Stefan Prifti towards the content and its essential elements, remains a factor not without importance on considering and treating the

⁵ Bardhi F., *Skënderbeu (Apologji)*, translated from the Latin by Stefan Prifti, second edition, Tiranë, 1967.

responding version in the Albanian language of this small work, that read on the language in which was elaborated, also remains a prove of author's engagement on questions that have to do with the patriotism (our national hero's "Albanianhood", to use an expression of S. Prifti)⁶ and in searching the right on a principled point-of-view.⁷

Meantime, it should be put on evidence that such an important motive for the national identity and the question of its continuity, made possible that on important periods of the writing of the history has to be retaken a lapidary figure as Gjergj Kastrioti, by adding value through works that of course took what was necessary from the historiography, but outlined in an exceptional genre of research. Particularities carry Noli's compilations, traceable on a content view, in a system of careful word formation, of their selection, of the characteristics and details that are connected with the author's formation himself and of his preferences on building a major edifice that shelters such a major history as that of Scanderbeg. Certainly, Fan Noli has been referring to many sources, has sought to find even better solutions in the new editions of his work on Scanderbeg, has considered with a critic eye the

⁶ Prifti S., in *Skënderbeu (Apologji)*, quoted edition, Tirana, 1967, p. 4: *Indeed, this work of Bardhi, rare and precious for all our literature, written in the Latin language, is a "song" on Scanderbeg, but a song composed not in verses, but in prose, with the style and the pen of an ardent apologist, that deeply loves the homeland and the nation and defends them with all the power of his spirit and mind the national rights. After "The Dictionary", "The Apology" on Scanderbeg, is Bardhi's second important work with emphatic patriotic character. Bardhi defends here a national question with capital importance: Scanderbeg's nationality, our Hero's "Albanianhood" against Jan Tomk, that claims him for himself.*

⁷ Prifti S., in *Skënderbeu (Apologji)*, op. cit., Tirana, 1967, p. 6: *However the power of Bardhi's mind and pen becomes greater because he is completely convinced on the righteousness of the case he stands for. He openly speaks that "these we have put it aside until now, because this issue is to be examined with the greatest attention, without scattering in many directions, and of course having more in mind the truth rather than the fatherland." (p. 68, note nr. 145). This shows that Bardhi wouldn't serve the country on fake bases, to give it something that don't belong to it, but doesn't allows either to be taken what belongs to it. In this war, he defends with more vigor his fatherland, because the right is invincible, always triumphs. And the figure of this Albanian, nonetheless a bishop, that protects the rights of his nation with the power of the truth, takes an incomparable luster and moral weight, his love for the fatherland is ennobled higher as the feeling of the truth. Therefore Bardhi, on which the love for the fatherland, nourished by the feeling of the truth, compounds the gist, the essence of the soul, of his character, by saying: "I would never crush the desire to write, except if I wanted on shame betray myself and my fatherland." (page 22).*

objective sources and creations that are exclusively dedicated to his history.⁸

Noli's work differs from the above-mentioned ones and from other papers similar in object for many reasons: was written in another historic atmosphere and its author had a distinguished devotion of researcher on facts and events that traditionally are connected with the history and the deeds of Kastrioti, the son of Gjon Kastrioti. The details that are pursued in Noli's work compound an undeniable asset in the publishing arsenal that were elaborated on Kastrioti, meantime the writing of the latter and the transmitted method through his notes and summaries are a thesaurus of the Albanian writing. Noli dedicates a special attention on the reconstruction context that brings us closer the typical Middle Ages that accompanies all the progress and he episodes that are connected not only with Gjergj Kastrioti himself, but also with every element that supports in biographic point-of-view on this framework that later draw the attention of many scholars, especially the European ones.

Are quoted and mentioned also these scholars in Noli's work, meanwhile is clearly received a feeling of critical view of the scientific researcher on facts and details in which the latter are halted and concentrated. The pursue of a logical progress on historiography point-of-view and focusing on meaningful elements that clarify the real relation between the principdoms of that time, the attention towards the emphasizing of period not at all calm for the Albanian territories, for the European countries themselves that felt threatened from the progress and the continuous empowerment of a political and military

⁸ See in particular *Historia e Skënderbeut, kryezotit të Arbërisë(1405-1468)*. Written by bishop Fan S.Noli; published by Federata Panshqiptare Vatra, Boston, 1950, p. 56: Exactly that day, the Sultan Murat II, in a general attack against the stronghold, lost 7.000 soldiers except the wounded. Until the end of July, the Turkish losses achieved 20.000, and was visible that Sfetigrad couldn't be taken by force. However in this mess, the Turks have found the pipe, from where was getting water the only well of the stronghold, cut it and finished the job by getting thirsty the defenders. Remained without water, the besieged sent an envoy to the Sultan and offered him to give up the stronghold with the condition that he had to let them go with their weapons and stocks. Murat II accepted their conditions, and on 31 July, the besieged with their commander got out, and the Turkish army entered in Sfetigrad. The cutting of the water, as is shown to us by the Turkish chroniclers, seems that has been the true cause of the stronghold surrender. The dying dog, who allegedly was thrown into the only well of the stronghold by a traitor, from which the besieged refused to drink water, as Barleti says, sounds more like a popular legend, which shouldn't be taken seriously.

force coming from the East, the clear conscience that the pursue of a respective historic documentation was necessary on reconstructing this very important history for the nation and the Albanians, remain elements to be put in evidence meanwhile is treated and interpreted this work of Noli. Being descriptive and analytical doesn't averts him from the art of writing, meanwhile the reader follows involved in the episodes that mark sensitive fluctuations in the political and economic equilibriums of Albania's princedoms, on which geography convincingly lives again in the chapters of Noli's work. We find again in these descriptions and situations, not always linear in the relations of Albania's princes with the closer European powers, among which Ragusa and Venice are the most interested in forging alliances and agreements. The evoking of the sporadic victories achieved with not small sacrifices from figures that are mentioned in the history of the Albanian nation as defenders of our patriotism and national identity, that in any case mark meaningful episodes in the mosaic of Scanderbeg's history, naturally precede to the consolidation of the leader's profile that would be distinguished from his predecessors and who was aware that the lack of an organized mobilization was not honoring the progress and the security of his country.⁹

This remains a theme line that would be widely treated by Noli in specific chapters of his work, meanwhile seems that has outlined a specific terminology that helps to be better understood the differentiation from his point-of-view and among Scanderbeg's biographers and historians, a role that is proved that is not a lukewarm ambition of his inclinations. The reading and the interpretation of his work on Scanderbeg's life and deeds, convincingly emphasize this distinction, meanwhile the words notably chosen by him prove again such a fact. Indeed, in case of analyzing such works, but also the reading in a point-of-view that passes not only from the eye of the researcher in their content, but at the denomination mosaic, the diversity of the applied forms that bring closer to the time of events development, are the factors that will make possible to read again the

⁹ See in particular *Historia e Skënderbeut, kryezotit të Arbërisë (1405-1468)*. Written by bishop Fan S.Noli; published by Federata Panshqiptare Vatra, Boston, 1950, p. 19-21. See also the author's reasoning about the impetus Scanderbeg had about reflecting on an organized action against the Turks, *ibid*, *op. cit.*, p. 24-25.

work by the reader and the scholar, searching a far distant world in the chronological view, and so close about the indissoluble that the described context carries our national identity and conscience.

The disposal of many editions that have in the center of their discussion such a lapidary figure and unrepeatable of the Albanian Middle Ages, compounds a priceless asset also for the history of the written literature in Albanian. The archival documentation and not only the European one, remains another evidence of the fact that this figure involved in the interest and expectations view not few European countries of the time, also political powers that overwhelmed at that time projects and visions on the longevity and future of a religious belief that played an undisputable role on the European civilization, the Christianity. Such version fulfillments remain useful in the philological research proving that how involved have been the above-mentioned authors in the research of glorifying this character that belongs above all to our history and national memory.

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Lulëzim LAJÇI

THE NATIONAL – ALBANIAN AND STATE FORMING DIMENSION OF GJERGJ KASTRIOTI SCANDERBEG*

"... not only you have to love and always keep in mind the fatherland and the country, where everybody was born and educated, but also to protect and to save it even by shedding blood... All these definitively have been in my heart and for them I have engaged all my aptitude and my body and soul efforts..."¹

Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg

Introduction

Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg (1405-17.01.1468) is the most important national hero and the greatest strategist and statesman of Albanians who led the war for freedom against the Ottoman occupation for the political-national union of the Albanians.²

The many frequent military victories glorified Scanderbeg at a national level, and he was revered even outside Albania. He became famous abroad as in his fatherland, because when Scanderbeg came out victorious in front of the big Ottoman attacks, the West itself experienced great and frequent losses in the wars against the same enemy.³ In these wars, Scanderbeg had not only protected his interests and the interests of his people, but also merely manifested a feeling of relevance, of the civilizing supremacy against a military horde that he had somehow despised. It's almost unexplainable how a leader of a small population with so much arrogance could ever challenge the greatest military and economic power of the time.⁴ Skanderbeg's obstruction of the Ottomans' entry into Italy allowed the refinement of European cultural heritage. So, Renaissance blossomed and

* This presentation is part of the lectures segment run from 1-2 November 2018.

¹ Marin Barleti, *Historia e Skënderbeut*, "Infobotues", Tiranë, 2005, p. 484.

² *Fjalori enciklopedik*, Tiranë 1985, p. 963-964.

³ Mr. Lulëzim Lajçi, *Letërkëmbime të Skënderbeut I*, "Fjala jonë, Prishtinë 1995, nr. 4, p. 14.

⁴ Arbën Xhaferi, *Kodi Kastriotan*, Gjergj Kastrioti – Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 133.

reformations occurred. The printing press was invented and later developed (1456). Commerce expanded and provided some impetus for exploration and colonization of the Western World where hundreds and thousands of his descendants found shelter.⁵ Consequently, Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg was crowned as a hero of the western civilization, and by excelling at military actions against the enemy, he comes first in the list of the Western prominent military leaders of the time.⁶

From many experts, his military genius has been compared to Alexander the Great. The Brigadier James Wolfe, commander of the British army at the siege of Quebec in Canada, wrote to Lord Sidney : *"Scanderbeg overtook all the officers, ancient and modern with a small defensive army. That I have read in the Turkish history and nowhere else"*. In the book titled, *"The rise and fall of the Roman Empire"* authored by the historian Edmund Gibbon it is said : *"In the list of the heroes, Janosh Hunyadi and Scanderbeg have drawn our attention, because their military art delayed the destruction of the Byzantine Empire ...the Albanian prince rightfully can be distinguished and praised as a champion of his national independence. His enthusiasm of knight and religious defender have ranked him alongside the names of Alexander the Great and Pyrrhus...."*⁷

Scanderbeg, a genius warrior and strategist, has been so much glorified that Napoleon Bonaparte in his memories in St. Helena calls the Albanian formidable hero as one of the greatest military man of all times.⁸

According an Italian called Petrucci, in a letter sent to the Senate of Venice, are given some previously unknown characteristics of the Albanians' hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg. According to Petrucci, a Scanderbeg's contemporary, who has seen him in many battles: *"Kastrioti has a big stature, more than the usual man's size, powerful, muscular... with gifted and noble from birth ..."* *"During the night, his*

⁵ Edwin Jacques, *Historia e popullit shqiptar nga lashtësia deri në ditët e sotme*, Lajmi i mirë, Tiranë, ?, p. 213.

⁶ Mr. Lulëzim Lajçi, *Letërkëmbime të Skënderbeut I*, "Fjala jonë, Prishtinë 1995, nr. 4, p. 14.

⁷ Joseph DioGardi, Gjergj Kastrioti "Skenderbeg - Skënderbeu", *Skënderbeu - shok me të mëdhenjtë e më të mëdhenjve*, "Matchable to the greatest of the great"- Edmund Spenser (poet of Elizabethan time). <https://www.aacl.com/post/alb-vatra-symposium-on-skenderbeg>.

⁸ Moikom Zeqo, *"Lirinë s'e solla unë, atë e gjeta midis jush"* - *Skënderbeu*, published in ZP, 25 February 1994.

sword stays always close to his bed. On peacetime, he often goes wearing national clothes... He is extremely careful on eating and drinking... while on the morally he could be considered an example ... Pure, devoted, gentle, orator and noble... He possesses unimaginable memory in a way that he like Pyrrhus his great ancestor, almost recognizes all the names of the warriors ..."⁹. Except the mother tongue, Petruzzi have said that Scanderbeg totally possesses the Turkish, Tatar, Slavic, Latin, Persian and Celtic languages and also has good knowledge on the ancient Greek and Roman history.¹⁰

Joseph J. Dioguardi says *"In short, Gjergj Kastrioti is an unrepeatable military genius, with great belief and courage, a philosopher who kept alive and nourished like no one else the personal freedom and the national independence. Today, his majestic figure, with the sword in his great saddle horse, vests full of grace the capitals of Italy, Austria and Hungary."*¹¹

The League of Lezha, March 2, 1444 - A European innovative idea

Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg appeared in the national and international scene after the Ottomans' defeat in the Battle of Nish (Zlatica), on 3 November 1443. He returned to Kruja three weeks later, and on 28 November, 1443 raised the flag of freedom, the red and black with the two-headed eagle. Regardless the difficult conditions that existed in the beginning of the '40es, Scanderbeg knew how to find the links he needed for a good start of the liberation rebellion. As Barleti informs us, Scanderbeg just had manifested in the stronghold of Kruja, the red and black flag with the two headed eagle, travelled region to region explaining the peasant masses the character of the liberation war inviting them to take on the arms against the foreign oppression, convincing them to fight not for his feudal possession, but for their

⁹ http://shqiperiaebashkuar.al/?p=23400&fbclid=IwAR0xzaeR_S0C1LbpRrob3y6ajM3NQtp8mrs5nqWyYIE_FX0U08jUngvLhvE.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Joseph J. Dioguardi – President i LQSHA, *Evropa i përulët Skënderbeut edhe 600 vjet më pas "Matchable to the greatest of the great"* - Edmund Spenser (poet of Elizabethan time) <https://www.parajsa.com/forum/t/evropa-i-perulet-skenderbeut-edhe-600-vjet-me-pas>.

freedom, to liberate not a special region, but the entire oppressed country.¹²

After succeeding in convincing the feudal chiefs, demoralized by the previous failures, to leave aside the disagreements among them and to unite in a single front against the Ottoman rule, he called up the first Albanian League in Lezha, at Shën Koll church, on 2 March 1444.¹³ Although the meeting was held in a Venetian possession, the Venetians' stand was a typical one. They were present during the meeting, not as friends, but as observers with specific espionage goals. This is because the Republic of Venice did not want to ruin the good relations with the sultan. Therefore, each promise made to Albanian was nothing else but empty words.¹⁴

The League of Lezha which is known in the history as the Albanian League, represents the first union of the Albanian feudal lords at a national level.

Scanderbeg as "*primus inter pares*" was elected General Captain ("*Capitaneus generalis*"). The Albanian princes established with him that kind of relation that Dhimitër of Albania had when calling the nobles of the XIII century "*homines mei*". However this relation, because of the war's dimensions, would continuously glorify Scanderbeg as Lord of Albania ("*Domines Albaniae*"). The idea of unification is the idea of converging, of establishing the national states, a very innovative idea that characterized European Middle Ages and European Renaissance. Moikom Zeqo wrote that before Machiavelli's theory of the national states for Europe, the League of Lezha had already carried the proper message, by making the two-headed eagle of Scanderbeg the heraldic symbol of the entire Albanian nation. Let's not forget that the unification of Italy and later of Germany respectively by Garibaldi and Bismarck aspired to be fulfilled some centuries later, in the XIX century. The League of Lezha was innovative idea at a European level. This international aspect of his should not be denied. At a Balkan level, only the Albanians assembled such a productive league, something that the other Balkan countries failed to organize, with the exception of

¹² Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, themelues i shtetit kombëtar shqiptar mesjetar, Studime për Skënderbeun*, 3, Tiranë, 1989, p. 29-30.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Zef Mirdita, *Lidhja Shqiptare ose Lidhja e Lezhës*, Gjergj Kastrioti – Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 6.

Hungary etc.¹⁵ At an international level, the League of Lezha, as in the cases of the State of Arbër ancestors and of Regum Albaniae that between the European West and the Byzantium East chose an accurate and vital and strategic path, viz the West, because in the East Byzantinism was replaced by Ottomanism, wildly powerful and fatal. Scanderbeg and his contemporaries brilliantly confirmed Albania's European status and left to the descendants the real example of the final integration in Europe.¹⁶

The undisputed European vector of the League of Lezha empowered Albania's resistance and survival, established the great relations with the European civilization in the cultural, humanist and in the Christian religion aspect, because the Albanians' titanic war for freedom was also the clash between Christianity and Islam, though it never became a fundamentalist war.

This explains the metaphorization of Scanderbeg as "Athleta Christi", and still today is the Albanian name that connects Albania with Europe more than any other name. The League of Lezha remains a guiding path for Albania. It can be said that without the League of Lezha we wouldn't have the Albanian nation today. The League of Lezha is the perfect example institutionalized national agreements and consensus.¹⁷

In the League, participated almost all the Albanian nobles, especially those who lead the previous rebellions against the Ottomans, such as Gjergj Arianiti, Andrea Topia, Nikollë Dukagjini, Teodor Korona Muzaka, Stefan Cernojević, from Zhabjak of Montenegro, together with his sons and other chieftains from Northern and Southern Albania.

Although there were divergences among the Albanian nobles because of their personal interests especially related to their properties preservation, the decision to unite in the common war against the Ottomans was taken. It marks at the same time the starting point of the great political deed that lies in the great military victories: the establishment of the unified Albanian state, which marked from its side a big step forward compared with the previous situation when Albania

¹⁵ Moikom Zeqo, "*Lirinë s'e solla unë, atë e gjeta midis jush*" – Skënderbeu, published in ZP, 25 February 1994.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

suffered from the political mincing and the feudal anarchy. This big historic step is closely related with the name of Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg, a distinguished prominent military commander, a genius strategist in battle and a talented political leader who knew how to break the centrifugal inclinations of the feudal lords and to combine their particular possessions into a unified Albanian state.¹⁸

Milan Šufflay, analyzing this historic event of the Albanian people, says that "under Scanderbeg rule the Albanian nobility unified in the war against the Turks. It was established the true Albanian state, after the fall of Constantinople, Serbia and Bosnia, the last biggest state in the Balkans."¹⁹

Scanderbeg, the founder of the Albanian state

The foundation of the Albanian medieval state headed by Scanderbeg was the most important step of the political unification of Albanians, although it didn't succeed to include in all the medieval Albanian territories. Scanderbeg's Albania-Arbëria, was not the "ethnic Albania". It was neither the Albania who forms the Albanian State. Scanderbeg's principality was only a small part of Albania, let's say one fourth.²⁰

Referring to the documents, Scanderbeg presented himself as descendant and follower of the war for unification undertaken at the end of the XIV century by the Albanian rulers such as the Balshaj. Scanderbeg takes pride in the fall of this dynasty, which is precisely connected with the battle of Savër in 1385 and the Ottoman invasions in the Balkans.²¹

In the beginning, this state indeed was a federation of nobility, whose were declared allies to one another and with equal rights. Although Scanderbeg was elected chairman of the Albanian League and general commander of the allied armies, didn't have any right on

¹⁸ Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, themelues i shtetit kombëtar shqiptar mesjetar*, Studime për Skënderbeun, 3, Tiranë, 1989, p. 30.

¹⁹ Zef Mirdita, *Lidhja Shqiptare ose Lidhja e Lezhës*, Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 36.

²⁰ Dhimitër Beratti, *Evropa në kohën e Skënderbeut*, Skënderbeu 1468-1968, Vatra, Boston, 1968, p. 50.

²¹ *Fjalori enciklopedik*, Tiranë 1985, p. 966.

their possessions. He was first among equals (*primus inter pares*).²² Scanderbeg, 39 year old, was elected chief general.²³ "The League's Army," writes Noli, "was made up of nearly 18000 men, half cavalry and half infantry, three fourth of which belonged to Scanderbeg's paternal principality, Kruja, Mat, Mirdita and Dibra regions."²⁴

With such a political basis, the war against the Ottomans that was predicted to be long, had little chances for success. The feudal lords particularism undermined the strength of Albanians. The right of integrity that they dared to fight for, obstructed the military actions.

However, the necessities of the defensive war forced Scanderbeg and his collaborators to overcome these inner difficulties. This was done willy-nilly at the detriment of the personal power of the feudal lords. This endeavor started with the strengthening of the army. The majority of the soldiers were recruited from the Kastrioti's territories. Thus, Scanderbeg decided for a total war against the common enemy feeling strong by the unlimited support of the people of his country, started to not consider them when the interest of war required such action against the separatist privileges.²⁵ During the military actions against the enemy, Scanderbeg entered the possessions of the feudal nobles and established there loyal military garrisons, and undertook additional security measures that violated their autonomist rights of inviolability. In addition, he begun to strip time after time the suspicious nobles of their feudal possessions, distributing them to his distinguished military fellows.

This process caused obviously dissatisfaction among the nobles who jealously asked to preserve their separatist power. Their dissatisfaction was growing, but at the same time Scanderbeg's national authority had much more increased.

When the authority of "the Lord of Albania", as Scanderbeg was called - had increased even more, some nobles, including some of his

²² Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, themelues i shtetit kombëtar shqiptar mesjetar*, Studime për Skënderbeun, 3, Tiranë, 1989, p. 30-31.

²³ Edwin Jacques, *Shqiptarët – Historia e popullit shqiptar nga lashtësia deri në ditët e sotme*, Lajmi i mirë, Tiranë, ?, p. 204.

²⁴ Zef Mirdita, *Lidhja Shqiptare ose Lidhja e Lezhës*, Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 36.

²⁵ Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, themelues i shtetit kombëtar shqiptar mesjetar*, Studime për Skënderbeun, 3, Tiranë, 1989, p. 30-31.

closest collaborators, openly betrayed him by joining the Ottomans in the war against their homeland. These betrayals worsened the situation in Albania, by hampering the war of Albanians, who had to face at the same time the enraged campaigns of the sultans, Venice's refined provocations and the desperate strikes of the nobles. Nevertheless, under Scanderbeg's leadership, Albanians continued to have victories in their epic war, and parallel to them to defeat the feudal division.²⁶

The empowerment and the consolidation of the concentrated Albanian state made it an important political and military factor in the international relations. Scanderbeg's war was part of that war for freedom which the peoples of Southeastern Europe, and among them in the first line the Albanians, became a barrier to the Ottoman expansion, enlargement that endangered the destinies of the European civilization in general.

Scanderbeg's diplomatic activity

Scanderbeg was clearly aware that the anti-Ottoman war in Albania required the cooperation with the outer forces, interested in the common war against the Ottoman rule.

As every Medieval statesman, Scanderbeg had his special chancellery office continuously dealing with his relations with the foreign countries and special personalities inside and outside the country. This kind of state body had already existed before him in the medieval Albania. Almost all the rulers of the feudal states had their chancelleries, either in the form of a simple secretariat or with more secretaries, whose primary responsibility was drafting or editing the acts, the notes, the political letters, the diplomatic and financial ones of their principality or possession after the dictate and orientation of their lord. Usually, their official acts, the secretaries had to edit in both languages of the European medieval culture: in Latin with the countries of the West, in Greek with the Eastern Byzantium territories. If the acts or the letters were addressed to the neighboring western or northern rulers or institutions, it was used the Latin or the Medieval Slavic language.

The date when the chancellery was established is unknown. However, there are two hypotheses about its establishment date. The

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 30-32.

first hypothesis relates to the beginning of the liberation war in 1443. The second hypothesis relates to the fact that this chancellery office, either as an office with one official might have been inherited from his father, Gjon Kastrioti, who has had his own chancellery since the first years of the XV century. Nevertheless, Scanderbeg's chancellery had a wider correspondence activity than his father Gjon Kastrioti, or of any other medieval Albania's prince or lord. During the age of Scanderbeg, chancellery sent many letters signed by Scanderbeg himself, most of which are lost without a trace. Also, many other letters are lost, but their traces are found in the responses that Scanderbeg received from their senders. The authentic letters written by Scanderbeg or the chancellery and signed by him are few.²⁷

It was Scanderbeg who opened the way of Episcopal correspondence between the four Popes of Rome and Ragusa, Venice, Hunyadi, Alfonso, etc. This is due to his powerful chancellery and resourceful and skilled ambassadors who were sent to fulfill their role whenever it was needed.²⁸

In all this diplomatic activity, Gjon and Pal Gazulli were two of the most important "travelling ambassadors" of Kastrioti. The latter represented the chief lord of Albania to Rome, and also was "adviser" of Gjergj. Gjon, as would be demonstrated by the not far end of his life, retired gradually from his diplomatic responsibilities due to his health and age. However, there are many historians who agree that he retired because of his ardent will to conclude his scientific studies.

Pal Gazulli, from the early '50es to the day our Nation's Hero died, was involved in keeping the relations of Albania with Hungary, Ragusa and the countries of the Apennines Peninsula. Barleti says: "...so, it was this Pal Gazulli the mind of our Gjergj who filled his heart with courage to continue the war against the infidels..."²⁹

²⁷ Kristo Frashëri, *Letrat e Skënderbeut*, shih në: Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut 3, Tiranë 1989, p. 191-202; Lulëzim Lajçi, *Përplasjet e Skënderbeut me sultanët*, Koha ditore, 20 June 2015. <http://arhive.koha.net/?id=1&l=62918>.

²⁸ Faik Konica dhe Guillaume Apoliner, *e vërteta e një miqësie*. http://www.GazetaExpress.com/arkiva/faik-konica-dhe-guillaume-apoliner-e-v-235-rteta-e-nj-235-miq-235-sie-130917/?arch_tb=temp;http://www.nacionalalbania.al/2014/01/faik-konicadhe-guillaume-apoliner-e-ver-teta-e-nje-miqesie/.

²⁹ <https://www.voal.ch/gjon-gazulli-astronom-e-diplomat-shekulli-xv-nga-daniel-gazulli/> Daniel Gazulli, *Gjon Gazulli, astronom e diplomat i shekulli XV*, <https://www.voal.ch/gjon-gazulli-astronom-e-diplomat-shekulli-xv-nga-daniel-gazulli/>.

Thus, in addition to his commander and strategist skills in the fight against the Ottoman Empire, Gjergj Kastrioti, commander of the Albanian army and lord of Albania, developed a wide diplomatic activity. He had continuous correspondences with the most distinguished lords of the time, e.g., the Popes Eugene IV (1431-1447), Nicholas V (1447-1455), Calixtus III (1455-1458), Pious II (1458-1464), Paul II (1464-1471), the king of Naples and Two Sicilies, Alfonso of Aragon, and later with his son Ferdinand, the duke Francesco Sforza of Milan, the count Gonzaga, the prince Lorenzo de Medici of Florence, the kings of France and Hungary, the doge of Venice, the king of Spain, the king of Poland etc.

His first diplomatic enterprise dates on 1443-1444, and further on 1448-1456 when Scanderbeg established connections with Hunyadi also to set a common front. Scanderbeg paid attention especially to the collaboration with the Republic of Venice, the Kingdom of Naples, Rome's Papacy, taking into account that this collaboration would be at the interest of those countries. However, these countries, with some exceptions, only aimed benefit from Scanderbeg and Hunyadi's war, by leaving them all the burden and only sending good words and congratulations.

Because Scanderbeg was aware for these stands, and this is better understood especially in the difficult situation of the second and third siege of Kruja (1466-1467) when stated that: *"he wouldn't believe that could exist such a malice as these priests have demonstrated"* and that *"he had to fight more against them rather than against the Turks"*.³⁰

From the field of the archive documentation, the earlier traces of Scanderbeg's correspondence date in 1445. The letter is lost, but based on the replay from the Venice's senate we learn that in the first months of 1445 (perhaps even in the last months of the previous year) Scanderbeg and his brother Stanish asked the Republic of San Marco to confirm them those concessions and chapters that the Republic had agreed with their father, Gjon Kastrioti, when he was alive. Also, from the answer that the king of Naples, Alfonso V, sent to Scanderbeg on 14 December 1447,³¹ we learn that the hero in his letter expressed his

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Skënderbeu-Alfonsi V, letërkëmbimi "vjen" në Tiranë. <http://www.arkiva.lajmeve.com/Skenderbeu-Alfonsi-V-leterkembimi-vjen-ne-Tirane.134206/>.

determination to fight against the Ottomans.³²

From two decisions that are taken in Venice, we also learn that Scanderbeg sent to the Senate of Ragusa at least two letters; in 1448 and 1449. There are continuous archival data on Scanderbeg's letters. An earlier document is the letter-credential delivered by Scanderbeg, with his sign and seal. Through this letter-credential, Scanderbeg orders Ninci, one of his chancellors, to represent him in the financial actions with the commune of Ragusa.

The letter-credential is partially damaged, and is edited in this way:

"Honorable lords, nobles and wise men in all views, to lord Knez and Vlastela, rulers of the city of Dubrovnik, many greetings.

Lords, you have shown me ... (?) on which reasons I sent my chancellor Ninci, which would address you on our behalf, you lords in general trust him and give him ... (?) May God please you. Scanderbeg (signature):

(Month) Çerëshinar, day 7, in Lezha (the small seal).

The document dates in 1450. The month *çerëshinar* is written in Albanian, because so it was called in the Middle Ages from the Albanians the month of June. Scanderbeg kept the small seal in his ring.³³

The letter addressed to "the Commune of the city of Siena" dates on 8 August 1451,³⁴ and it is written in Latin (the address of the receiver

³² Kristo Frashëri, *Letrat e Skënderbeut*, see in: *Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut* 3, Tiranë 1989, p. 193.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 194.

³⁴ *"Magnificent nobles and wise men, after the obligatory greetings, I inform You that the past year, the Empire with four hundred thousand Turks, kept a place called Kruja, in the territories belonging to Albania besieged, and couldn't take it and was developed a great battle from which on the side the Christians, perished and taken prisoners were sixteen thousands. Therefore, you as faithful Christians and commons with great authority are pleased and obliged from the part of the omnipotent God and from our side to protect this country of Kruja and to condescend to help as much as you please and is appropriate to you. And for this, please lay your faith and trust to the abbot Lazër, our chaplain, the bearer of this letter as if it was here our person himself. Written in Kruja on the 8th day of the month of August indication XIII...*

Appreciated on you about everything - Gjergj Kastrioti, lord of Albania"

In the Archive of the State of Siena, is found the original letter of Gjergj Kastrioti – Scanderbeg (Lord of Albania), who on 1451 sent this letter to the noble citizens of the Assembly of Siena (at that time the Republic of Siena), through which informed them on the victory against the Ottoman invaders, which had surrounded Kruja. See: Lutfi Alia: *Letër e Skënderbeut - drejtuar fisnikëve të Kuvendit të Sienës*, Itali [https:// web. Facebook. com/ Arena Dard](https://web.facebook.com/ArenaDard)

and two paragraphs exactly the introductory part with the greetings and the conclusive part prior of signing the letter), while the text has been correctly written in Italian.³⁵ The letter was written in Kruja, some months later after the majestic victory of Albanians under Scanderbeg's leadership against the Ottoman armies that under the command of sultan Murat II and his son, the future sultan Mehmet II, kept the capital of Albania besieged for more than five months. The letter expresses the enthusiasm of the glorious victory. Scanderbeg aimed not only to announce the sensational victory, but also encourage the Italian states to wake up and participate, at least with financial aids in the vital of Albanians against the Ottoman invaders, if not with military forces, as this was of mutual interests. The dimensions of the Albanians' war had subsequently excessively increased. To show the greatness of the Albanian resistance, Scanderbeg also speaks about the damages his fellow countrymen had.

Enrico Bolletti writes about the echo of this great victory of Albanians against the Ottomans and the contribution of the Assembly of Siena: *"The nobles and the people of Siena responded to Gjergj Kastrioti's demand for a considerable financial aid, to be used for buying weapons and to organize military campaigns against the Ottomans. These collected aids, the people of Siena gave to the friar Lazër"*.

This friendship relations of Gjergj Kastrioti with the people of Siena, has diversified during another special event. On 1460 -1461, Gjergj traveled different times to Rome. In 1461 he went to Siena as a guest at the wedding of Antonio Piccolomini (nephew of the Pope Pious II) with the daughter of the king Ferdinand II of Naples and two Sicilies. At this time, Pious II consecrated Catherine of Siena (Saint from Siena), Europe's patron saint and Doctor of the Catholic Church.

During the wedding days in Corsignano-Val-d'Orcia of Siena, Scanderbeg also met with Giovanni Bellini (known with the name Giam-Bellino), one of the most prominent painters of the Italian Renaissance of the XV century, who made a portrait to Gjergj Kastrioti, which is rightfully considered the first portrait. In parallel of the

ane/posts/451354211572642?_rdc=1&_rdr. Shenim: -Lutfi Alia, is a medic in Centro Prevenzione Oncologica di Siena – Italy.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

compliances in events and time, the author in this portrait has painted the scar of a wound at Gjergj's temple, coinciding with a historic fact. Months before, Gjergj was wounded exactly at the temple during a fierce battle against the Ottomans. This portrait of Gjergj Kastrioti, named by the author "GIORGIUS SCANDER BEK" is exposed at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence.³⁶

The lord of Albania sent these kind of letters also to other states of the Italian Peninsula. Before coming to Siena, the friar Lazër who seems to be the personal chaplain of Scanderbeg, has consigned a letter of Scanderbeg to the Venetian administrator of Danja, Augustin de Renerio, to present it to the Senate of the Republic. While visiting the municipality of Siena, he went in Milan, where consigned to the duke Francesco Sforza a letter signed by Gjergj Kastrioti, Lord of Albania. The letters are lost, but their content is known due to the response letters sent to Scanderbeg. The Senate of Venice didn't promised any help but notified him that was ready, if Scanderbeg wanted, to become intermediate to reconcile him with the sultan. The Duke of Milan is more flexible in his reply. He says that he admires the war that Scanderbeg has made in the defense of Kruja, and admits that it is everyone's duty to halting the march of the Turks, but also remove them as far as possible. However, he added that it was impossible for him to grant this help because he didn't possess any "ship" to bring the soldiers in the Balkans, and the duchy of Milan was economically ruined from the plague that had stricken the country. The duke Francesco Sforza writes at the end of the letter that he had charged the duty to the friar Lazër to widely verbally explain Scanderbeg the difficult situation of his and the promise that he will send the demanded aids once the situation improves. From the last word of the duke of Milan, it comes out that the friar Lazër, although in the letter sent to the Commune of Siena he is not described as ambassador, orator, or nuntius, but portatore (bearer of the letter), whose mission is considered as much important as that of a regular ambassador.³⁷

The necessity to expand the war against the Ottoman invaders is also described in the letter that Scanderbeg sent from Lezha on 8 April

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Kristo Frashëri, *Letrat e Skënderbeut*, see in: *Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut* 3, Tiranë 1989, p. 195.

1456, to Domenico Capranica, Fermo's Cardinal (Italy).³⁸ We can also mention another letter written by Scanderbeg in Kruja, on 18 July 1456, addressed again to the duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza. The original letter is found in the State Archive in Milan (Archivio di Stato di Milano) and carries the seal of Scanderbeg, a round seal on wax, presenting the Albanian two-headed eagle. Based on its content, the letter is a protocol message with acknowledgments and congratulations that Scanderbeg sent to Sforza. However, the importance of the letter does not lie in the words written, but in the message it carries. It is understood from the prehistory of the theme that it treats.

The mission was charged to Pal Gazulli, one of his closest collaborators. Before coming to Milan, Pal went to the duke of Burgundy (Bourgogne), Philip III, in Dijon (France) by Scanderbeg order to bring as a gift six Ottoman prisoners. Through the symbolic gift, a known practice this in the Middle Ages, he invites the French sovereign to participate in the war against the Ottomans invaders. During the return from Burgundy to Albania, Pal stopped in Milan to meet Francesco Sforza. The meeting might have been held in the spring of 1456. After returning in Albania and after being reported about the negotiation with Sforza, Scanderbeg sent the letter to the duke of Milan.³⁹

The letter was sent to Milan by Gjergj Pjetri, an employee of the Scanderbeg's chancellery, and it begins with the greeting expressions. It says that Pal Gazulli was in charge that after finishing the job in Burgundy to return to Milan and to express F. Sforza " *the most intimate heart feelings with the highest devotion* ", his considerations towards " *the most brilliant prince* ", as it is described by him the duke of Milan. The real content of the letter begins with Scanderbeg saying to Sforza that he has wanted to show him his affection for a long time, but had no possibility because of the wars that Milan was waging to Venice and the enmity he had with Naples, with which "the lord of Albania" had special relations. So, as long as Milan was at war with Naples, Albania's ally, Sforza couldn't be a friend of Scanderbeg. Now that Milan is at peace with Venice and Naples, it is high time for him, wrote Scanderbeg, to express to Sforza, more than ever his "affections"

³⁸ "Ylli", nr. 1, Tiranë, 1967, p. 16-18.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 196.

and expected from Sforza that he like Naples to be engaged in the war against the Ottoman invaders. There is a phrase in the letter explains that Scanderbeg proposed Sforza to send a "solemn" ambassador, viz, plenipotentiary in Milan, that in case of no objection. The ambassador's duty was expressing to the duke his opinion. It seems that Sforza didn't respond to the invitation. Differently acted the duke of Burgundy. The return of Pal Gazulli in Kruja, was subsequently followed by the arrival in Albania of a French knight named Montreal who was the *arlad* of the duke of Burgundy together with 50 soldiers ready to fight at the side of Albanians against the Ottoman armies. We do not know if they fought or not against the Ottomans, but there is an archival data showing that in the fall of 1457, immediately after the battle of Albulena, in the beginning of September, the French soldiers returned to their homeland. On this occasion, Scanderbeg sent to the duke of Burgundy as gift an Ottoman prisoner, perhaps one of the many prisoners who were caught in Albulena.⁴⁰

In this framework of these international reports, there is also a letter of the Pope Calixtus III addressed to Scanderbeg, on 9 June 1457:

"Dear son...

From both your letters, which were received at the same time, we're informed for the coming of the wicked Turks that want to occupy your cities and how much efforts you have put to face all this enemy, that is unleashed against you, not because you lack of courage, because you have decided to face the enemy with all your strength. We, dear son, have always had a very good opinion about your nobility and we know with how much patience and courage there was in your resistance in those places, alone, to the wild Turks, who in a great number unleashed against your lands to harm and destroy Christ's believers. Your glorious name is widespread in all the Catholic peoples for all these good works that you have done, for this brilliant victory. Therefore we request you to continuously preserve your previous courage, to break the attacks of the barbarians and make a good use of soldier's power and Christ's defenders...

Nevertheless, we don't have the intention to abandon you; because, no matter how big and hard missions charged to our fleet sent in Orient might be, and no matter how big our obligations towards the protection of the faith might be, yet again, at the highest speed, we are sending in aid of your

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 196-197.

nobility an armed ship, and we will try to send other aids in the future..."⁴¹

Many letters concerning the financial issues of the state have also been sent by the Scanderbeg's chancellery. There is no doubt that the main financial sources used for his epic war were secured within the country. As the war deepened, and the great damages that the country suffered and with the needs of an unequal war became evident, the country's sources turned to be scarce. The determination to continue to the end the liberation war, forced Scanderbeg to address for financial assistance to the countries that were directly threatened by the Ottoman invasion.⁴²

In parallel to the financial support requests, in a letter of 1457, Scanderbeg ordered his prothonotary, Gjergj Pelini, to demand from the Senate clarifications, why wasn't allowed the Albanian army to pass through the territories of Zeta (the today Montenegro), to free them from the Ottoman rule. He instructed his prothonotary to say to the Venetian gentlemen on Scanderbeg behalf the following:

"If you will grant me the permission I shall pass. If you don't, I'll act as I see appropriate."

In its response, the senate begged Scanderbeg to give up this demand, because this would give to the sultan the pretext to attack Venice's possessions in Albania, a thing that the republic wanted to avoid at all costs.⁴³

Even in another letter addressed to Venice on 1459, is reflected Scanderbeg's strong character. This letter has the character of a protest against the Venetian captain of the Adriatic Bay, Laurent Mauro, who in a meeting having with Scanderbeg on 4 June 1459 in Lezha's stronghold, accused Scanderbeg that he has grabbed the land of Shat from the Venetians hands, while indeed Scanderbeg has liberated it from the Ottomans. In the letter addressed to Seignory, Scanderbeg stated the following:

"On 4 June 1459, in the castle of Lezha, Laurent Mauro, captain of Bay and ambassador of the Venice's Seignory, basing on the information taken

⁴¹ Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu 1468-1968 (prepared for publishing by Edward A. Licho, Pan Albanian Federation of America, Vatra, Boston, Massachusetts (1968), p. 125-127.

⁴² Kristo Frashëri, *Letrat e Skënderbeut*, see in: Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut 3, Tiranë 1989, p. 197.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 99.

*from her rector in Albania, that allegedly me Scanderbeg have grabbed the land of Shat from the hands of that Seignory with the help of the count of Shkodra. As it's not true that I have grabbed from the hands of Venice's Seignory, I don't accept that accusation and I state that I have grabbed it from the hands of the enemy.'*⁴⁴

In the series of Scanderbeg's letters there are also two known letters written at the eve of the military expedition undertaken in the fall of 1460 in Italy to help Ferdinand of Naples, his ally, who was in a very difficult situation because of the rebellion of the feudal barons in his kingdom.

One of the most powerful adversaries of Ferdinand, the prince Giovanni Antonio Orsini of Taranto, sent a letter on 10 October 1460 to the lord of Albania, trying to convince and advise Scanderbeg to give up the Italian expedition to avoid the great shame:

10 October 1460⁴⁵

"Honorable, magnificent and valuable loving courageous friend of ours.. Now, we have heard that you have sent in Puglia your infantry and cavalry men, and they are robbing and harming the lands of His Majesty the King Ranier and ours; ...you with the you Albanians are neither enough to help don Ferrante , nor attack those powerful enemies he has, and therefore we are begging and encouraging you to give up on what you have decided, and through a better road to withdraw your men... And anyhow, if you always have the desire to fight, you have your endeavor, against the Turks, which can give you more glory and honor rather than involve in a lost cause, which does not belongs to you and in which will have only losing without any reward, putting in danger all those you have send and will send.

*From the castle of our happy king, near Agrolamo, day X of October
Johanes Antonius de Orsinis, prince of Taranto.*

Immediately, on 31 October 1460, Scanderbeg responded from

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 200-201.

⁴⁵ Skënder Blakaj-Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 54-57; *"Burime të zgjedhura për historinë e Shqipërisë"*, Vol. II, VIII-XV Centuries, (Tiranë, 1962) prepared by Aleks Buda, Injac Zamputi, Kristo Frashëri and Petraq Pepo, editor Kristo Frashëri, published by Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise.

Kruja to the letter of the Prince of Taranto. The letter contained a series of long and very interesting arguments and reasoning which enlighten Gjergj Kastrioti's political platform and his moral norms:

31 October 1460

Very lucid and honorable lord.

I received the letter of Your Lordship, which surprised me more than afflicted me, considering the way you are writing it... And, after saying that you are surprised that our men are robbing and harming your lands and the lands of the King that you have made your own.⁴⁶ ... but I'm replying to you: if on this matter the king Ferrante is found in a difficult situation, the fault is yours for all the bad things that would come as a consequence, and also for the shame of the infamies you did acting like the whores who have become whoremongers as they grew old, and with sweet words attract the others to do what they have previously done, just as you did by attracting barons and people like the cattle in the butcher-house... And after you saying that with Albanians I cannot help nor protect or harm his powerful enemies, here my response: the situation has changed, and if our chroniclers⁴⁷ do not lie, we are called Epirotes, and you have to now that in other times, our ancestors (clear reference to Pyrrhus - L. Lajçi) passed in the country you hold today

⁴⁶ Instead of Ferdinand of Aragon, the rebel nobles have proclaimed king René of Anjou.

⁴⁷ Here is about for our old chronicles, unfortunately vanished in the waves of our troubled national history. These chronicles mentioned by Scanderbeg, and also by the annals and books mentioned by G. Adae in 1332 (*"The Albanians have a total different language from the Latin nevertheless they use the Latin alphabet (litteram latinum) in their books"*), Barleti in 1501 (*"Lately I come to possess annals, that can be better called fragments rather than annals, which report based on the legends of our ancestors, about the reconstruction rather than the construction of this city. It is written in the language of the people (in vernacula lingua)"*). And which language might have been the language of the people in Shkodra at the time of Barleti if not the Albanian – L. Lajçi, Gj. Muzaka in 1510 (Gj. Muzaka, when he complains to his sons, to whom he writes the *"Memory"* says that he does not know the first memories of his tribe, because *"they are lost with the country's chronicles"*), present a new literature in the spirit of humanism secularism, fruit of the intellectual work of men of science and knowledge in studying the country's ancient history, a literature that was not destined only to fulfill the intellectual necessities of a close circle of learned people, but for the interest of a wise society. Barleti and Gj. Muzaka say that although the wide coverage of this literature unknown along with the topics, as it was destroyed in the troubled waves of our national history, those few evidences directly or indirectly spoke about its essential content, and allow us to conclude with them were thrown the first steps of the Albanian historiography. As such it served as a precious tradition on forming a prominent legion of writers, historians and humanists of the XV century as Andrea Alesi, Gjon Gazulli, Leonik Tomeo, Marin Barleti, Marin Beçikemi, Viktor Karpaci, Martin Segoni etc. Mr. Lulëzim Lajçi, *Letërkëmbime të Skënderbeut* 3, "Fjala jonë", Prishtinë 1995, nr. 6, p.14.

and fought hard against the Romans, and we know that in the most of the time parted with honor rather than with shame; however I would engage all my greatest powers, my qualities and all my friends and allies to help my lord King Ferrante..."

Sent from Kruja, the last day of October.

Gjergj Kastrioti called Scanderbeg.

Except the historiographic data, correspondence of Scanderbeg shows us norms of excellence of character. *"Everything that might happen,"* writes Scanderbeg to his ally Naples' Ferdinand in 1460, *"I will be a friend of virtue and not of destiny."* Through this phrase of deep morality, philosophical and political content, our hero wanted to say that he is not going to leave himself to the chance, but will stay faithful to the word given, an Albanian traditional faith, regardless the cost. While when his ally, Giovanni Antonio de Orsino, prince of Taranto, advised him to give up on the alliance with Naples' Ferdinand because his cause is already lost, our hero replied: *"by keeping the given word we have overcome so many perils that cannot be counted, and many times we have seen death in the eye, because the violation of the faith will bring us the humiliation of ourselves and will cover us with the shame of dishonesty and ingratitude."* Among the brilliant norms of virtue, Scanderbeg included above all the respect of the human justice and the impartial stand towards the allies. *"If for this work the king Ferrante is now found in a difficult situation,"* Scanderbeg writes to Orsino, *"the fault is yours of all the bad things that would come and also for the shame of the infamies you did by acting like the whores who have become whoremongers as they grew old, and with sweet words attract the others to do what they have previously done, just as you did by attracting the barons and people like the cattle in the butcher-house."*

Also, in parallel to the data that speak on the complex personality of our national hero, from this correspondence, of not minor importance, are also those pieces that talk on our culture, ancient as those of our peoples. In the letter that Scanderbeg sent to Orsino (1460) writes: *"If our chroniclers do not lie, we are called Epirotes, and you have to now that in other times, our ancestors (clear reference to Pyrrhus - L. Lajçi) passed in the country you hold today and fought hard against the*

*Romans and we know that in the most of the time parted with honor rather than with shame.*⁴⁸

The same day, Scanderbeg addressed a letter to king Ferdinand himself, where informs him that he has felt himself because anybody asked him what to do, and he has fulfilled his duty by helping his ally.⁴⁹

Also the correspondence with the sultan Murat II, his former master-emperor, and with the sultan Mehmet II the Fatih, conqueror of Constantinople, we clearly discover as much as the strategist and also the natural hero he is manifested with. It should be admitted that today this correspondence seems nearly absurd in first view, without first learning the written truth.

In one of these occasions, the sultan Murat II sent to Scanderbeg standing now as an insurmountable barrier in the way of the Ottoman Empire to Europe, a menacing letter on 15 June 1444.⁵⁰ In that letter, the sultan Murat II pledges revenge to punish Scanderbeg for his betrayal towards the Ottoman Empire.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Mr. Lulëzim Lajçi, *Letërkëmbime të Skënderbeut* 3, "Fjala jonë", Prishtinë 1995, nr. 6, p. 14.

⁴⁹ *Holy Royal Majesty*,

My Lord: it seems to me that this is a very bad nature of those people that see their lords, kinship or friends in bad shape or from a necessity and wait to be called or begged. I know for sure that to Your Majesty is remembered that, immediately after the attacks and the erupted rebellion in Your Kingdom, I, to fulfill my duty, sent myself, the assets and everything that I possessed. Your Majesty, because thought or believed that it wouldn't be the case, or I wouldn't come or put in action what I have said, didn't asked my for anything. But I, from the information I hear that the affairs of Your Majesty are worsening every day, without any further consultation with Your Majesty, with those few ships that I possess, sent in Puglia some men, infantry and knights, at service of Your Majesty. I have not heard if they were useful until now; but only the prince of Taranto writes me a letter, which copy and my reply I'm sending to Your Majesty, and I am surprised that his lordship believes that me, from his severe words, will change opinion. Therefore I want to say a thing: May God guard Your Majesty from the evil, from the harm and danger and anything that might happen I shall be a friend of virtue, not of fate. Let your Majesty see that in the people I have sent, have they properly served and if I need to send more and how; I am informing that are many days since I have properly prepared two hundred knights, for the will of Your Majesty, with conviction I am begging if You see any threat for your country, please inform me because I will be there myself with many people as I could bring even if no one else is left, I have the courage to replace my men and with the faith that I want to die with all of them at service and in the state of Your Majesty, on whose feet I am humbly posing myself.

Issued in Kruja, the last day of October, 1460.

Servant and vassal of Your Majesty,

Gjergj Kastrioti, called Scanderbeg.

⁵⁰ Skënder Blakaj - Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 52-54.

⁵¹ Skënder Blakaj-Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka

After receiving sultan's letter and after carefully listening to the words of the ambassador of sultan Murat II, Scanderbeg thanked and honored the ambassador, and after five days escorted him with a strong letter in the Albanian style openly challenging the sultan Murat II. The letter dates on 14 August 1444, and since the beginning of it Scanderbeg presents himself as Christ's Athlete and prince of Epirotes.⁵² In the letter, Scanderbeg rejected all the insults and the threats of the sultan by openly challenging him.⁵³

In his reply, Scanderbeg, nonetheless was very well known to the sultan for staying for some decades at his service and comes out as a perfect strategist at the right time, writes to him with clear messages the he [the sultan] was the invader, and for himself writes that was a freedom winner.

Also, exists a correspondence between Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg and the sultan Mehmet II.⁵⁴ The sultan with the impossibility to defeat "the brother" as he addresses him in the letter, offers him some conditions in exchange of peace. The letter of the Sultan Mehmet II has been written in Constantinople on 7 May 1463⁵⁵.

Gjergj Kastrioti, with finesse and courage, by not doubting for a

"Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 52-54. Ibid, see: Musa Ahmeti: The original is preserved in the Secret Archive of Vatican, Fond: Miscellanea: ARM.H. Vol. 2. F.397. The letter has been written in parchment, has a round lead seal. The parchment is sprinkled with gold. The dimensions 59.5 x 96cm. The original is written in Ottoman language and is attached with the official translation of the time, in the Latin language. We have used the text in the Latin language to do the translation of this document.

⁵² Skënder Blakaj - Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 54-57.

⁵³ The letters have been discovered, translated and prepared by: Musa Ahmeti. Scanderbeg's letter has been written in the Latin Language. It's the original and carries Scanderbeg's signature. In none of the letters are preserved the seals, even why in both exists the seals' traces, and has been preserved only the rope. From the letter is seen that Murat II and Scanderbeg have had correspondence even prior these letters. Scanderbeg writes to him that "your separated me from my brothers", that means they were not poisoned. Now it's known that Reposh died in the monastery of Hilandar, Stanish we see many times as fellow warrior of Scanderbeg, while Konstantin is found as Scanderbeg's ambassador at Alfonso V in Naples. Skënder Blakaj - Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 52-54.

⁵⁴ In the book of the French author, Camille Paganel, entitled "Historie de Scanderbegh au Turks et Chretiens au XV siecle" of 1855, is also found the correspondence between the sultan Mehmet II and our national hero Gjergj Kastrioti (p. 302-305). [http:// www. gazetadita. al/leterkembim-mes-sultan-mehmetit-dhe-gjergj-kastriotit/](http://www.gazetadita.al/leterkembim-mes-sultan-mehmetit-dhe-gjergj-kastriotit/).

⁵⁵ Skënder Blakaj-Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 65-67.

single moment on Mehmet trickery, replies to him the deserved answer, and even treating him as a prince and not a sultan and emir. Scanderbeg letter is dated on 25 June 1463.

Conclusions

These few fragments on Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg by no doubt manifest the personality that through him synthesized an entire epoch in our national history, the centennial war against the Ottoman rule (1380-1479) for the protection of the Albanian territories, war which established a stable foundation of that national-state and spiritual building that generations of Albanians fought and sacrificed during the centuries. Scanderbeg is: "*the most divine creature of this terrifying race of warriors, who since was alive was glorified with different legends from the Western Europe*", writes on 1925, the known historian Milan Šufflay.⁵⁶

The reasons of this special glorification derives because Scanderbeg leading the Albanians, faced innumerable Ottoman forces in a time when Europe was living one of the most critical moments of her medieval history. The armies of the Ottoman Empire, equipped with inexhaustible military energy, chaired by two ambitious sultans, after concluding the occupation of the Balkan Peninsula, invaded Hungary, to head on the Central Europe and Albania and from there to pass in the Italian Peninsula. In front of this serious danger, the European powers, especially the Italian states, were deeply divided. Instead of uniting to face together the great danger, they fought each-other mitigating this way the invading vigor of the Ottoman army. As consequence, the role of Albania in this dramatic situation was equal with that of Hungary. Both parts, Hungarians chaired by Hunyadi, and also Albanians led by Scanderbeg, with their historic resistance obstructed for some decades the advance of the sultans, the first towards the Central Europe, the second towards toward the Italian Peninsula.⁵⁷

This is proved by the king of Hungary, Matthias, in the letter he sent to the Pope on 1464 where explicitly writes the reason of the Ottoman campaigns against Albania: "*I know that Your Holiness, is informed on*

⁵⁶ Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu dh Evropa*, see: Gjergj Kastrioti - Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 171.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 19-20.

what the sultan did during the past days in Albania. Nobody puts in doubt that he doesn't wants to stop in the Epirus mountains, but through them, he seeks to prepare a passing bridge to crush all of Europe."⁵⁸

A laconic appraisal on Scanderbeg in protecting the European civilization is given by the knight Newport, who came from the far away England to fight under the flag of Scanderbeg in Albania. During his return, he stated in Rome, on February 1458 the following: "*If the Albanian stronghold falls, the conquer of Europe by the Turks is certain, because there is not any other power to do that resistance*".⁵⁹

Scanderbeg himself was conscientious that in Kruja was played not only Albania's destiny, but also that of Europe. This is written by him in the letter addressed to the prince of Taranto G. A. Orsino, on 31 October, writing the following: "Had I been defeated, of course also Italy would have felt the consequences, and in that case, that possession that you say it's yours, would belong to the Turks."⁶⁰ From all these, is clearly shown that Scanderbeg gave not only a heroic spirit but also a national and international character to the Albanian resistance against the Ottomans.

Therefore, Scanderbeg's death on 17 January 1468, 550 years ago, has been a great loss for Albania and for the western world. With his death, Albania lost her independence, while the western world lost one of its most prominent defenders. The only who enjoyed the death of Scanderbeg, was the sultan Mehmet II, conqueror of Constantinople, who reportedly called out: "*Scanderbeg's death is a heavy loss for the Christendom, who lost in this way its sword and shield.*"⁶¹

"...Therefore, convincingly, we may say, writes Arbën Xhaferi, that his historic role is great and decisive, not only because he became Christ's Athlete, but on the fact the he didn't became Sultan's champion. Had he chosen the second role, Europe's history would have been totally different."⁶²

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 22.

⁵⁹ Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu dhe Evropa*, see: Gjergj Kastrioti - Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 22.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 20.

⁶¹ Anton Athanasi, *Njeriu dhe heroji, Skënderbeu 1468-1968*, Vatra, Boston, 1968, p. 12.

⁶² Arbën Xhaferi, *Kodi Kastriotan*, Gjergj Kastrioti - Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 133-134.

*He was the greatest leader of the Balkan who gave to his country a clear orientation towards Europe till the day he died. He was the first testament of Albanians' orientation.*⁶³

To conclude the question on Scanderbeg's love for the motherland, we are giving here an appraisal from Fan S. Noli, on August 1960 where is emphasized the following:

"...sometimes I ask myself,
surprised, if we have among us
somebody that is that alive today,
as Scanderbeg!"⁶⁴

⁶³ Ismail Kadare, Köln, 12.12.2010.

⁶⁴ *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu 1468-1968* (prepared for publishing by Edward A. Licho, Pan Albanian Federation of America, Vatra, Boston, Massachusetts (1968) p. III.

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