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# STUDIA ALBANICA

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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**



# **STUDIA ALBANICA**

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LA FIGURE DE SCANDERBERG<sup>1</sup> DANS L'ŒUVRE D'ISMAIL  
KADARE  
- notes et impressions -

Ismail Kadaré s'est attaché au personnage de Scanderbeg dans trois genres d'écrits, à savoir, sauf oubli de ma part, le roman, avec *Kështjella*<sup>2</sup> (1970) — rebaptisé *Rrethimi* dans son ultime édition<sup>3</sup> — et *Kamarja e turpit*, la poésie, avec la pièce *Portreti i Skënderbeut*, incluse dans le recueil *Koha* (1976), l'essai historique et littéraire, enfin, avec *Mosmarrëveshja*<sup>4</sup>, largement consacré au héros national. On verra, cependant, que le changement de support n'entraîne pas une différence de fond dans l'appréhension du personnage : en prose comme en vers, priment la dimension lyrique et la portée symbolique.

N'étant ni historien, ni sociologue, ni politologue, je glisserai sur le dernier ouvrage cité : la charge affective que véhiculent les fictions en prose et en vers ne s'y perd certes pas, mais elle se manifeste dans le cadre d'un texte argumentatif et sur fond d'érudition, en quoi il me séduit moins que les figurations poétiques et romanesques. J'ai lu cet essai avec plaisir et parfois délectation, mais au regard surtout du styliste vivace qu'est Ismail Kadaré, d'autant que l'érudit se double

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<sup>1</sup> J'adopte pour ma part la forme originelle du surnom et titre du héros, celle sous laquelle il est entré, via le latin, dans le patrimoine de l'Europe chrétienne ; et de même pour son patronyme (Castrïote).

<sup>2</sup> Je me réfère au texte de la première série des *Vepra*, Naim Frashëri, vol. 4, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Onufri, *Vepra*, vol. 3, 2008. L'ultime édition Fayard (*Vepra / Œuvres*, vol. 2, 1994), maintenait le titre français initial (*Les tambours de la pluie*), comme équivalent de *Kasnecët e shiut*, titre albanais intermédiaire qui annulait et remplaçait *Kështjella*. Elle renferme également la version finale de *La niche de la honte*.

<sup>4</sup> Onufri, 2011, seconde édition, revue et augmentée, préface du professeur Matteo Mandalà. L'édition française (*La Discorde*, Fayard, 2013, traduit par Artan Kotro), fait l'économie de la préface et distribue les chapitres selon un ordre différent.

d'un polémiste, et j'avoue avoir été sensible, aux pages où derrière l'historien et le polémiste resurgit le poète, telles celles relatives à l'emblème national, ou le romancier, telles celles inspirées par l'assassinat de Ramize Gjebrea, qui ramènent le souvenir de *Nata me hënë*.

Je m'en tiendrai donc, à propos de *Mosmarrëveshja*, à ce timide constat général : tout comme certains ont pu exploiter autrefois l'évocation du personnage de Scanderbeg dans le sens de la résistance de l'Albanie à l'encerclement capitalisto-révisionniste, il participe aujourd'hui d'un débat sur l'identité albanaise et sa situation dans le monde. Les commentaires oscillent en effet entre ce que fut et représenta le prince albanais en son temps, devant l'Europe entière, et ce qu'il représente, aujourd'hui encore (ou doit représenter) pour les Albanais, question redevenue d'actualité au sein de l'intelligentsia, suite à la parution de la monographie d'Oliver Jens Schmitt<sup>5</sup>, historien suisse, outre la querelle qui opposa l'auteur, il y a peu, à l'intellectuel kosovar Rexhep Qosja, quant à l'héritage cultuel et culturel de la nation albanaise.

Tant dans *Kështjella* que dans *Rrethimi*<sup>6</sup>, Kadaré refuse, selon un principe théorique souvent affirmé, le biographique, l'aspect documentaire. L'image du héros procède d'une recreation personnelle : il le campe en pasteur de son peuple, pure incarnation de l'amour de la patrie. Il l'idéalise — littérature oblige — par la déférence que lui témoigne ce peuple, mais aussi par le choix qu'il fait d'épurer sa figure en écartant toute référence à sa naissance et à son passé.

Cette première évidence mérite quelques précisions quant à la mise en scène qui la sous-tend.

Religieusement réduit à son seul prénom — *Gjergi ynë* écrit plus d'une fois le porte-voix des assiégés — Scanderbeg s'offre bien comme

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<sup>5</sup> *Skanderbeg : Der neue Alexander auf dem Balkan* : l'édition albanaise (Tirana, éditions K&B, 2008, traduction d'Ardian Klosi), a même précédé l'édition originale, datée de 2009.

<sup>6</sup> La présente étude ayant pour objet le traitement littéraire du personnage de Scanderbeg, je n'y aborderai qu'incidemment la question de la technique narrative du romancier ; j'omets aussi la question corollaire des analogies, que suscita l'édition originale et qu'ont remise à l'ordre du jour le professeur Matteo Mandalà et l'auteur en personne, dans leur préambule respectif à *Rrethimi*, tout comme celle, en conséquence, de la raison et des modalités du passage de *Kështjella* à *Rrethimi*.

le père et protecteur de son peuple. C'est tout juste si une escorte marque son rang. Il contrôle, avant le siège, les préparatifs de la défense, distribue les consignes, et emmène ceux de son peuple qui sont inaptes au combat dans les hauts refuges de l'arrière-pays.

L'échec des assauts successifs des Ottomans et le retrait final de leur armada a certes sa justification historique dans la longue impuissance de la Porte à mater le rebelle, mais le tour épique et lyrique du récit donne à ressentir ce retrait comme une victoire définitive des assiégés, ou du moins comme le signe de leur caractère indomptable, quand bien même le pays devra subir, après la mort du prince, une colonisation militaire et religieuse : il n'est guère fait écho, si j'ai bien lu, à cette mort à venir, non plus qu'à ses conséquences. *Rrethimi* demeure, après *Kështjella*, le roman-poème d'une Troie albanaise sans le dénouement de la Troie homérique : l'Ilion-Albanie survivra, restera elle-même, comme si ce triomphe inaugural attestait de la capacité de ce peuple d'opposer une résistance morale, à tout le moins, à toute nouvelle épreuve.

S'établit ainsi une intime identification entre le héros albanaise et la terre patrie : il lui est poétiquement consubstantiel, il s'unit à elle comme en une alliance fusionnelle. Cela se perçoit d'emblée, quand les assiégés lui font une conduite puis le suivent des yeux, du haut des remparts, tandis qu'il s'éloigne, emmenant avec lui les enfants, les vieillards et les femmes dispensées du combat, et s'enfonce peu à peu, à la tête de son cortège, dans un paysage qui finit par l'absorber tout entier, comme au bout d'un « fading » cinématographique : « Pasi kontrollloi çdo gjë dhe dha udhëzime për gjithçka, në mbasditën e 11 qershorit ai doli nga kështjella bashkë me shoqëruesit, duke marrë me vete pleqtë, një pjesë të grave dhe fëmijët tanë, të cilët gjatë gjithë kohës së luftës do të strehohen lart në male. Ne i përcollëm ata një copë udhe në heshtje të plotë. Pastaj, si u ndamë dhe u kthyem në kështjellë, hipëm sipër mure e kulla dhe ndoqëm me sy për një kohë të gjatë varganin e tyre që largohej vazhdimisht. I pamë kur dolën te Pllaja e Dhenve, pastaj në të Përjetën e Keqe dhe, më në fund, te Gryka e Erës. Pastaj nuk i pamë më. »<sup>7</sup> Les lieux désignés sont typiquement

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<sup>7</sup> P. 6. L'ultime phrase de ce passage disparaît, dans *Rrethimi*, l'auteur ayant jugé à propos, sans doute, de gommer la répétition de « pamë » : c'est bien elle, cependant, qui, rythmiquement, parachevait l'effacement.

albanais en leur rustique et poétique appellation, par où ils évoquent ce que la terre albanaise a de plus emblématique : ses montagnes.

La citadelle se dresse elle-même comme une montagne, peu ou prou assimilée à une *kulla* qui rassemble et résume les *kulla* intérieures qu'enserrent ses murailles, voire les forteresses de l'arrière-pays, subrepticement évoquées — « Kështjella jonë ishte e para që do të priste dyndjen e tyre » (p. 18) — sans parler des retraites naturelles que ménage le relief, telle celle où Scanderbeg conduit la troupe des non-combattants. À peine plus localisée dans *Rrethimi* (par référence à l'ancienne via Egnatia) que dans *Kështjella*, cette citadelle des citadelles — qui est aussi bien une ville fortifiée, donc — ne porte pas de nom spécifique, ce qui en confirme le sens symbolique.

Le texte nourrit, dans son ensemble, l'impression d'un camp ottoman établi à la rigueur sur une haute plaine, mais non pas, en tout cas, en zone de montagne, du fait, surtout, de l'étendue hyperbolique de ce camp (comme le veut le genre épique) face à la verticalité de la citadelle. Un contraste des plus marqués organise le paysage. Pas plus qu'il ne localise très expressément la citadelle, l'auteur ne précise la disposition des lieux : on apprend seulement que le camp ottoman se situe sur une « plaine inclinée » (*pushë të pjerrët*, p. 34), indice destiné, semble-t-il, à réduire quelque peu ce contraste assez tranché, par raison symbolique, là encore, plutôt que typographique, entre le plan horizontal et le plan vertical, sans que l'on sache bien le rapport à cette frange limitrophe qu'elle a franchi avant de s'installer au pied de la citadelle : « Në mesin e qershorit kapërcyen kufirin. [...] Në mëngjesin e 12 qershorit, ende pa gdhirë mirë, një nga rojat, lajmëroi se në largësi po shihe një si mjegull të verdhë. »<sup>8</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 6) Et de ce très stylisé

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<sup>8</sup> Passage ainsi réécrit, dans *Rrethimi* : « Në mesin e muajit qershor, (ushtria e tyre) kapërcyen kufirin. [...] Në mëngjesin e 13 qershorit, ndaj të gdhirë, ra kambana e kishëzës. Roja e përgut lindi kishte pikasur në largësi një si mjegull të verdhë. » On se demande (tout comme à la lecture du chapitre final), si l'auteur n'a pas joué délibérément de ce flou topographique que crée la coexistence d'une zone de plaine, où pénètre l'armée ottomane, et d'une zone de montagnes qui commence avec la citadelle. (Et qui, par ailleurs, dira la raison du passage du 12 au 13 juin d'une version à l'autre : l'idée d'un jour plus maléfique ?!) *Rrethimi* n'ajoute à *Kështjella* que le fait d'un acheminement par l'ancienne Voie Egnatia, et suggère de même l'existence de forteresses intérieures, ce qui contribue à cette impression d'une place-forte qui est à la fois forteresse et ville fortifiée, limitrophe et peu ou prou reculée : « Kështjella jonë ishte e para që do të priste dyndjen e tyre. », lit-on dans *Kështjella*, phrase qui devient, dans *Rrethimi* : « [...] kështjellës sonë i ra fati të pengonte e para dyndjen e tyre. »

rapport géophysique entre le camp et la place-forte, procède une autre ambivalence fantasmatique : si l'inaccessible citadelle surplombe d'assez haut et loin le grouillement d'en-bas, elle n'en permet pas moins de suivre à l'œil nu plus d'une scène de la vie du camp.

Dans le contexte du roman, mais au vu aussi d'autres secteurs de l'œuvre de Kadaré, l'immensité de ce camp se charge d'une suggestion annexe : l'ennemi provient des steppes de l'Asie, il les transporte avec lui, cette ville de toile les préfigure en quelque sorte. Il a vocation, du reste, à laminer les terres conquises, à les convertir en zones *cra-cra*, comme il est dit dans *Kamarja e turpit*. Aussi promet-il aux assiégés de les laisser s'installer librement « dans la vallée », en cas de reddition, pseudo-libéralité qui trahit son intention non seulement de vaincre cet irréductible peuple des montagnes, mais de le dénaturer, d'abolir en lui son être génétique, ce qui est le dernier degré de l'asservissement : « Çdo kështjellari do t'i jepej leje të merrte tokë dhë të vendosej ku të donte në luginë. »<sup>9</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. 18)

Puisque émané de sa terre et puisque figure tutélaire de son peuple, Scanderbeg a le privilège, enfin, d'occuper la scène en tous temps et tous lieux : ses absences mêmes se commuent en présence. L'auteur ne l'assigne à aucun lieu clos — palais ou capitale — expressément désigné, ni ne spécifie le mode de son autorité. Il est le chef dans l'absolu, comme affranchi de l'espace et du temps, n'existe qu'en tant qu'il appartient à son peuple et à sa terre, n'est en somme que d'essence symbolique. La cité-citadelle-Albanie suggère elle-même, de par sa fixité de pierre, une présence constante du chef qui s'en absente<sup>10</sup>.

L'entoure ainsi, dans le temps même de sa vie, une aura légendaire. Il est dans toutes les bouches : on l'appelle à venger le sang versé comme on invoque le secours d'un saint, on parle de sa mystérieuse personne jusque dans le camp ennemi, voire, au chapitre final de *Rrethimi*, au sein du harem. Cet effet d'omniprésence s'illustre enfin, de manière très concrète, dans la menace qu'il fait planer à tout moment sur l'ennemi, par sa tactique de harcèlement.

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<sup>9</sup> Le texte de *Rrethimi* dit simplement : « [...] do të na lejonin të dilnim bashkë me armët, dhe të shkonim ku të donim. »

<sup>10</sup> L'étymologie de son patronyme l'associe du reste à une forteresse !

On a bien là, au total, un roman-poème qui se moque de la vraisemblance historique et de la précision géographique, ne tend qu'à la vérité humaine de l'affrontement et à sa signification nationale. (Aussi le chroniqueur n'a-t-il pas, soit dit au passage, à décliner le comment et le pourquoi de son témoignage, les conditions dans lesquelles il écrit.) Kadaré n'était pas homme à écrire un roman centré sur Scanderbeg, comme celui de son confrère et ami Sabri Godo, et s'il en a écrit un sur Ali de Tépélène, ce n'a été qu'en s'arrêtant à l'acte final, qui fait d'Ali le héros d'une tragédie shakespearienne, hors tout rapport, là encore, avec celui de Sabri Godo et le *Koka e prerë* de Kiço Blushi.

Kadaré s'est plu, comme on sait, à anticiper ou prolonger certaines de ses œuvres en prose dans une composition poétique, et une simple analyse linéaire de l'odelette *Portreti i Skënderbeut*<sup>11</sup> avère, en effet, une intime concordance avec l'évocation romanesque :

*Si ditë e plotë ai shtjellej  
Me re dhe erë mbi atdhe.*

La personne du héros tient là d'une essence à la fois matérielle et immatérielle, ce qui maintient une forme de présence-absence : tous les comparants sont choses que l'on ressent mais ne retient pas, comme impalpables, ce qui implique l'idée annexe d'une ubiquité.

Cette métaphore s'élargit, dans les deux vers suivants, en une métaphore cosmique qui institue — selon les raisons du cœur que la raison ne connaît pas — une équation entre le ciel sans borne et la terre patrie :

*Një emër, Gjergj, e kish si diellin,  
Tjetrin si hënë, Skënderbe.*

L'asyndète semble créer, au premier abord, une opposition entre le prénom chrétien, rattaché au soleil, et le surnom, rattaché au Croissant

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<sup>11</sup> J'en ai proposé une traduction dans le livre de mélanges *De Scanderbeg à Ismail Kadaré* (Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1997), avec le texte albanais en regard, tout comme de celui consacré à Ali de Tépélène, qui m'arrêtera plus loin.



ottoman, puisque reçu de son faux bienfaiteur, lequel ne croyait pas si bien dire en louant en lui un nouvel Alexandre<sup>12</sup>. Mais la mise en position forte de ce surnom l'accorde et l'égale au nom chrétien, subversion que conforte la suite du poème.

L'idée de plénitude et d'universalité qu'introduisaient les mots *ditë e plotë*, *shtjellej* et *me re dhe erë*, se trouve confortée, elle aussi, en ce double parrainage astral : la lune et le soleil ne sont plus que les deux lampes qui éclairent le monde et président à l'ordre des choses. Le fait même d'entrer dans une comparaison poétique, les rapporte, conjointement, à la tradition lyrique albanaise, où elles ont l'une et l'autre une place de choix. Et si nuages et vent il y a, en contrepartie, dans le signe zodiacal du *prijës*, c'est, peut-on conjecturer, que l'Arberie vivra, en son épique destin, des temps difficiles, mais par là-même grandioses.

La strophe 2 enchaîne sur d'autres dualités, mais infléchies en une équivalence et qui recouvrent une même action accomplie en deux temps, contre le même empire asiatique :

*Dy brirë dhie kish mbi krye,  
Emblemë e vjetër e çuditshme,  
Sikur ta dinte që mes brirëve  
Dy perandorë do të godiste.*

Le poète évoque là, sur un mode sciemment naïf, la tenue de combat du héros et la suprême prouesse de sa geste : mode sciemment naïf, dis-je, en ce que s'établit un rapport inouï entre ses victoires et la forme de son casque, le hasard des choses faisant entrer cet attribut distinctif du héros dans une des catégories structurelles qui ordonnent les visions et affabulations de l'auteur, comme le corrobore la strophe suivante. Et tout comme dans bien des « vies » de saints ou de héros, un signe ou une prémonition annonce plus ou moins clairement le destin de l'écu, le champion albanaise aura pressenti la vertu de ce casque, assez semblable en cela à d'autres armes magiques, comme l'épée de Roland ou le bouclier d'Achille, ce qui, au surplus, sous-entend de sa part une prise de conscience, une volonté de répondre à sa vocation.

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<sup>12</sup> Il n'est jamais, pour le porte-voix des assiégés, que *Gjergji*, ou le prince *Kastrioti*.

On est bien là dans le registre du légendaire et de la vieille poésie orale. En éminent connaisseur de cette tradition (il a commis un essai intitulé *Autobiografia e popullit në vargje*), Kadaré sait donner dans l'imitation artiste et respectueuse de la poésie populaire. L'anaphore initiale de la strophe participe elle aussi de cette imitation, en ses distributions binaires et ternaires (le chiffre 24 est le multiple de 2 et de 3, et l'on a 4 quatrains en octosyllabes, vers d'élection de la poésie populaire), façon stylisée de décliner le palmarès du héros<sup>13</sup> :

*Njëzet e katër luftra bëri  
Njëzet e katër vdekje theu.  
Çka mangut linte ditën Gjergji,  
Plotësonte natën Skënderbeu.*

Déjà amorcée, au plan orthographique, dans l'élision du *i* de *Iskander* (Alexandre) et le passage du *a* au *ë*, la subversion albanaise du surnom et titre hérités du Sultan se confortent là, à travers une sourde mais très probable référence à la légende du pont aux trois arches qui inspirera bientôt le romancier : dans et par ses actes, Skënderbeu invente comme une variante (*motërzim*) inédite de la fameuse ballade, puisqu'il conjure, lui, le mauvais sort en achevant de nuit ses œuvres diurnes. Je me demande, du coup, si le *ditë e plotë* du premier vers ne doit pas s'entendre dans le sens d'un *jour sans fin*, plutôt que, littéralement, *un jour entier*, l'épithète se trouvant reprise dans le verbe *plotësonte*, à côté du mot *ditën*. Et qui sait, par ailleurs, si l'allusion à la légende n'implique pas ces coups de main nocturnes que contenait le roman, six années auparavant.

La quatrième et dernière strophe réaffirme la conjonction de la multiplicité et de l'unicité, parallèlement à l'expansion du héros, par le relais des tombes, dans le temps et dans l'espace :

*Pas vdekjes eshtrat iu ndanë,  
Ne mijëra varre ato u shtrinë.*

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<sup>13</sup> Déjà présente dans la strophe précédente, cette combinaison arithmétique se veut donc, comme avancé plus haut, la signature codée, en quelque sorte, de l'écrivain-constructeur qu'est foncièrement Kadaré, tout en faisant référence, semble-t-il bien, au plan thématique, aux bipolarités et oscillations qui règlent les conduites humaines (à commencer par les balances entre l'ordre de la vie et l'ordre de la mort), jusqu'à la création même de l'écrivain.

*Gjithçka të shumtë ai e pati,  
Të vetmen kish veç Shqipërinë.*

On peut même parler d'une sorte de sanctification du héros qui le fait transcender le temps historique, celui de sa vie de mortel : dans le fil, là encore, du premier vers<sup>14</sup>, il demeure en sa mort même, source de vie, ses cendres devenant reliques fécondes : elles sacralisent chaque parcelle du territoire, et son être continue de s'épandre au-delà de lui-même<sup>15</sup>.

Curieuse coïncidence (peut-être voulue par l'auteur), chacun des deux héros albanais qui eurent à faire à la Sublime Porte pour s'être dressés contre elle après avoir été vassalisés, a inspiré un roman assorti d'un poème. Écrit en 1966 et inséré dans le recueil *Motive me diell* (1968), le poème voué à Ali de Tépélène a précédé le roman le concernant, *Kamarja e turpit*, à l'inverse de celui voué à Scanderbeg. Il est d'autant plus intéressant d'en proposer une analyse parallèle, qu'Ali, dans son roman, se trouve confronté non seulement au Sultan, mais aussi au fantôme de Scanderbeg, et que son poème crée d'emblée, auprès de celui de Skënder, un effet de repoussoir :

*Koka në Stamboll, trupi në Janinë,  
Të vranë, Ali Pasha, të grinë.  
Një varr i vetëm s'e nxinte dot lavdinë,  
Lavdinë bashkë me mizorinë.*

La figure d'Ali repose, là encore, sur une dualité, mais qui implique une contradiction, non une complémentarité, et d'emblée, sa biographie en raccourci a trait à sa mort bien plus qu'à sa survie. Si Ali déborde sa

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<sup>14</sup> Aussi avais-je cru bien faire en (sur-)traduisant le « Pas vdekjes » de la quatrième strophe par « Après sa vie », au lieu de respecter l'oxymore inhérent au texte, cette mort vivifiante niant son état de mortel, et de laisser, du même coup, le temps légendaire l'emporter sur le temps chronologique, la distribution des cendres survenant comme dans la suite immédiate du trépas... Et second remords, que n'ai-je traduit *eshtrat* par *ses ossements*, à tout le moins !

<sup>15</sup> Aussi écrirais-je aujourd'hui « sa native Arberie » au lieu de « le pays d'Arberie », l'épithète assurant une même scansion tout en restituant plus expressément le fond du poème, à défaut de rendre un mot précis ; car si l'Arberie était bien, au sens premier, son pays natal, elle apparaît aussi, dans un sens second et symbolique, comme le pays né de lui, de son Père fondateur et Saint protecteur.

tombe, ou si sa tombe se dédouble, ce n'est que par le fait d'une impossible cohabitation, le souvenir infâme de sa cruauté jurant trop avec le souvenir glorieux de sa révolte.

La tête gît à Constantinople, puisqu'il fallut la rapporter au Sultan, comme preuve de sa défaite, et parfaire le châtement du félon en l'exposant dans « la niche de la honte », mais aussi, peut-être, en un sens symbolique qui se tire du roman : ses manières étaient celles d'un *pasha* turc et non pas d'un *prijës* albanais. Aussi Janina ne garde-t-elle de lui que son corps, signe d'un faible attachement, que ne soutenait pas une véritable ambition et passion albanaise<sup>16</sup> : « [...] s'të thotë njeri që s'e ke dashur Shqipërinë, Ali, sepse shqiptar ishte edhe ti, por puna është se e ke dashur jo aq sa duhej. Dhe, ta doje atë jo aq sa duhej, në rastin tënd ishte sikur të mos e doje »<sup>17</sup>, lui souffle, dans le roman, une voix intérieure, confondue avec celle de la Nation personnifiée.

On retrouve, dans la strophe suivante, quelque chose de cette dimension spatiale du héros dont joue Kadaré dans le poème de Skënder, mais par référence aux appartenances contraires qui se disputent la figure d'Ali, à l'inverse de Skënder dont le choix européen fut sans ambiguïté :

*Midis dy kontinentesh, gjerë e gjatë i shtrirë,  
Si një mal ku era fryn e ulërin stuhia.  
Zbardh mjekër e rrallë si bora në brinjë,  
Si mjegull te koka të rri Vasiliqia.*

C'est bien la mort de l'un et l'autre héros, peut-on dire, qui, selon le fameux vers de Mallarmé (mais au prix d'une synonymie), « *tels qu'en eux-mêmes enfin les change* », soit selon un effet nul dans le cas d'Ali, sa cruauté tuant sa gloire, fécond, au contraire, dans le cas de Skënder. L'assimilation d'Ali à une montagne sous la tourmente qui s'étire d'un continent à l'autre, semble signifier que sa révolte — et jusqu'au châtement qu'il en reçut — esquissèrent bel et bien une épopée, mais vouée à l'échec, d'après ce que souffle le poème et explicite le roman : c'est déjà un mort que veille Vassiliki, elle-même réduite à une ombre,

<sup>16</sup> Ce thème de la double appartenance albanaise et ottomane se retrouvera, dans *Le palais des rêves*, à propos des Köprülü.

<sup>17</sup> Je tire mes citations de l'édition Fayard de 1994 (*op.cit.*).

comme s'il avait péri dès avant qu'on lui coupe la tête, et sa barbe éparse, comme assortie à la fumée de sa pipe, trahit l'âge d'un homme qui s'est réveillé trop tard, et dont les dernières années furent celles d'un amour sénile pour une favorite plutôt que celles d'une passion absolue pour son pays.

L'image du gisant qu'esquisse la troisième strophe s'impose plus par l'idée générale qu'elle suggère que par son détail :

*Trupi në Evropë, koka në Azi.  
Gjymtyrët po shqyejnë të shekujve jorganë.  
Dalin diku këmbët, dorë e ftohtë qiri.  
Në të çarat vitesh nxjerr tym lullë e gjatë.*

La dépouille d'Ali essaie en vain, à ce qu'il semble, de se faire comme un suaire du manteau de l'Histoire, de s'égaliser à l'Histoire qui l'attendait, les deux mondes inconciliables auxquels il s'assimile ne pouvant eux-mêmes coexister sous ce drap mortuaire. On peut imaginer encore, inversement, mais sans incidence sur la suggestion d'ensemble, que ses membres tirent alternativement à eux un drap pas assez large ! Ses membres couleur de cire sont ceux, en tout cas, d'un homme dont la mort ne laisse de lui, en définitive, que la dérisoire fumée de sa pipe, symbole de sa faillite. Et la reprise en écho (à la mode des vieux chants épiques), de la clause finale ne fait que confirmer le navrant constat d'un écartèlement entre deux pôles trop extrêmes pour être compatibles, l'un européen, l'autre asiatique :

*Koka në Stamboll, trupi në Janinë,  
Të shtrinë, Ali Pasha, të shtrinë<sup>18</sup>.*

C'est un peu cette idée d'une révolte pour rien qui ressort également de ces strophes de *Shqipëria dhe tri Romat*, dans le même recueil *Koha* :

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<sup>18</sup> Faut-il voir là un autre signe de dérision, interpréter ses funérailles, confondues avec sa mise à mort, comme une ironie du sort ? L'abattent, le couchent et le couvrent, littéralement, ceux-là mêmes qui le domptèrent, comme pour lui accorder, mais dans la mort seulement — et quelle mort ! — ce qu'il crut réaliser de son vivant ?!

*Si tigër në Jug  
Nxin Ali Pashai,  
Një e çmendur furtunë  
Dhe boshllëk pas saj.*

*Kokë e prerë e tij  
Me korrier në muzg.  
Ikën për n'Azi  
Nën në qiell pus.*

Le chapitre 5, en tout premier lieu, de *Kamarja e turpit*, est donc venu commenter et délayer, en 1978, sous le titre initial *Pashallëqet e mëdha*, le poème de 1966. Si Ali a raté sa révolte, c'est que ne la motivait que son orgueil, et que ses cruautés envers ses sujets les ont détachés de sa cause tardive : « Ai qe nisur kundër sulltanit vetëm me mërine e tij. [...] shqiptarët e kishin zemrën akull për të. Vite me radhë, ndonëse njëgjaks me ta, i kishte shtypur, si çdo vezir turk, madje më keq, i kishte varur, i kishte vënë te kërcenin mbi gjemba, i kishte pranguar, fyer e mbërthyer në hu. Ndaj, kur u ndesh ballë me sulltanin, dhe, nga e keqja, i thirri në ndihmë, ata nuk iu pergjigën. » Ali n'a jamais cherché qu'à régler des comptes personnels, et n'aspire qu'à sa seule gloire : il n'agissait pas au nom d'un idéal — refonder l'Albanie, lui conférer la réalité et la dignité d'un État — et sans doute en appelait-il à son peuple par pur opportunisme (il s'est mis à lire Machiavel), autrement dit poussé par la nécessité, sans bien savoir, en fait, comment cela se construit, un État : « Ashtu, me sa duket, duheshin tërhequr këto male, baltëra, shira, fjalë, njerëz, re, që të shndërroheshin, nga brumë i pergjithshëm i botës në atë që ai e quante « shtet shqiptar ». Por ai, me sa dukej, nuk e kishte ditur këtë magji. Ai kishte mundur të bënte çdo gjë, tmerre, pallate, ura, luftra, diplomaci, por, jo mëmëdhe. Vizatimet e flamurit e të stemës shtetërore ishin ende atje, në sallën e armeve, por shteti, me sa dukej, nuk fillonte kurrë andej. »

Aussi le romancier le rend-il jaloux de la gloire de Scanderbeg, sans qu'il conçoive davantage ce qui différencie de la sienne l'entreprise de son prédécesseur. Et soit par cette mauvaise foi à laquelle portent le dépit et la jalousie, soit par une de ces illusions qu'entretient la vanité, il se fait fort de surpasser, et de loin, la mort banale de son rival,

puisque naturelle, en une apothéose de sa façon, tel un roi Lear ou un Richard III balkaniques : « Ai kishte pasur vërtet një çerek shekull rebelim të lavdishëm, por në fund vdekjen e kishte pasur të zakonshme. [...] Oh, tjetër gjë d'o të ishte fundi i tij. [...] Ai do ta shestonte vetë monumentin e tij. I rrethuar, i plakur, i braktisur nga të gjithë, në netët dhe ditët e kursyera që i kishin mbetur, ai po krijonte ngadalë arkitekturën e vdekjes së vet. »

C'est de sa chute même, pour ne pas dire de son sublime suicide, qu'il entend, quant à lui, rester dans les mémoires. Il se flatte, en ce concours de gloire posthume, d'une trompeuse supériorité, car elle tient, en fait, d'un sophisme, l'usure des monuments pour cause climatique ne signifiant pas forcément l'oubli de celui dont ils perpétuent le souvenir ni la diminution de sa gloire<sup>19</sup> : « Çdo piramidë apo monument tjetër, sado madhështor të ishte, e hante dielli dhe era, kurse ngreha e një vdekjekje, vëllimet e saj, kupolat e zymta, afresket, portalet, perspektiva e moskthimit, të gjitha këto nuk gërryheshin kurrë nga asgjë. Të tillë do ta dërgonte ai vdekjen e vet në kohët e ardhshme dhe le të shemëronin pastaj me atë të gjitha vdekjet dhe varret e botës. » Il a beau faire et beau dire, le bas-relief que forme le prisonnier plaqué contre le mur de son cachot lui criera toujours « s'të vjen pas historia ! » Et Vassiliki a ce mot de la fin qui amplifie, en somme, ce que disaient plus haut les deux strophes tirées du poème *Shqipëria dhe tri Romat* : « Kjo është, vallë, vdekja jote, tha ajo me vete, kur koka e tij ra në shkallarën e dytë, dhe shpina dhe krahët ishin ende në të parën. Vdekja me të cilën ti doje të çuditje botën. »

Si héros épique il demeure, ce n'est que dans la démesure de sa cruauté mais aussi de cette folle et illusoire ambition dernière, de cet acharnement des vaincus dont la défaite est acquise d'avance, mais qui s'entêtent à l'ignorer : il en acquiert un peu le pathétique d'un *desperado*, en même temps qu'un aspect pitoyable, triste victime d'une adversité qu'il a lui-même excitée contre lui, jusqu'à se voir abandonné de ses propres enfants. Or cela ne saurait suffire, assurément, pour lui tailler un destin historique, celui du moins d'un vrai héros national, et lui qu'on appela d'abord « le lion de Janina », qui étonnait le monde

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<sup>19</sup> Le culte d'Alexandre a subsisté par-delà le pillage et saccage de sa tombe, et la mémoire héroïque, dans la tradition albanaise, réside moins dans les édifices que dans les chants qui éternisent les hauts faits.

par la prestance que lui donnaient sa crinière blonde et l'éclat de ses yeux bleus, n'aura mérité, à la fin, que l'accablant surnom, dont joue Kadaré, d'Ali le noir (*Kara Ali*).

La gloire qui, tout au contraire, fut celle, en son temps, de Scanderbeg, ainsi que le culte que lui vouent, aujourd'hui encore, les Albanais, n'ont guère d'équivalent dans d'autres pays, et je songe avant tout, ici, à la Jeanne d'Arc des Français, en considérant, comparativement, ce que des poètes et des cinéastes — le héros albanais ayant eu lui aussi les honneurs du grand écran — ont ajouté à sa légende. Seules les figures d'un Gandhi ou d'un Mandela ont joui, dans les temps modernes, d'un prestige comparable au sien, et les ont imités, peut-on dire, en leur combat patriotique, de nouveaux héros albanais, sans parler de l'apostolat de Mère Teresa. Et par la grâce, enfin, d'un chantre issu du pays tosque, son nom a repassé les frontières nationales, longtemps après le prêtre et historien issu du pays guègue qui, le tout premier, le célébra en latin sur le sol italien, par-devant l'Europe de la Renaissance.



**Ermal BAZE**

**THE SOCIAL STATUS OF ALBANIAN WOMEN  
IN THE XIV - XV CENTURY<sup>1</sup>**

It is of great interest to report a synthesized profile of the social status of Albanian women in the XIV – XV century, in the main civilization centers, such as Shkodra, Durrës, Ulqin, Tivar etc. In distinction from the data of the customary law, typical of the rural and mountainous areas of the Albanian local government, the documentary sources of the time give a significant information about the role and importance the woman living in the autonomous cities had, and also clarifies the judicial and penal protection of her personality, dignity and honor. The killing, the beating, the insults, the violations and raping of the women didn't spare nobody, whether be secular or religious men. The abuse or the misappropriation of the woman's dowry, her freedom to bequeath, or to represent the husband in a legal process, if the latter was not present, and also other situations and combination similar to these, prove that the respect and the protection of women's dignity in the Late Middle Ages was real and seriously taken. The general panorama of the social position of female citizen of the XIV – XV century in Albania was similar with the medieval municipal organization and practices of the Italian-Dalmatian cities and with those of the Western Adriatic of the Mediterranean realm. Also, the present paper informs about the political organization of the noble women in Albania during the end of the XIV century and the first half of the XV century and their privileges during this period, and their right to emigrate, mainly in the Queen of Adriatic (the Republic of Venice) and Southern Italy after the Ottoman occupation of the Albanian territories.

The present paper also informs about the social status, the rights and the privileges that woman in the Albanian civilization centers such as

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

Shkodra, Drishti, Durrësi, Ulqini, Tivari etc. of the XIV – XV century enjoyed. Neither the Albanian historiography, nor the foreign one has generally ever been involved in this single study subject.

The situation of the Albanian woman and their position has been of great interest for the foreign Albanologists and researchers, from the XIX century and onwards. Here we can mention François Charles Hugues Laurent Pouqueville,<sup>2</sup> Johannes George Von Hahn,<sup>3</sup> Edith Durham<sup>4</sup>, Roberto Morocco della Rocca<sup>5</sup> and Bernd Jürgen Fischer<sup>6</sup>. However, this issue has not been directly addressed to by them (with exception of Pierre Cabanes<sup>7</sup>).

Regarding the Albanian historiography, this aspect has been reported in many papers and scientific studies, (monographs) authored by historians,<sup>8</sup> ethnologists,<sup>9</sup> anthropologists, jurists and scholars of

<sup>2</sup> François Charles Hugues Laurent Pouqueville, *Voyage dans la Grèce* (Paris, 1820 – 1821).

<sup>3</sup> Johannes George Von Hahn, *Reise durch die Gebirge des Drin und Wardar* (Wien, 1867).

<sup>4</sup> Edith Durham, *Brenga e Ballkanit dhe Vepra të tjera për Shqipërinë dhe Shqiptarët*, reedition, (Tiranë: Naum Veqilharxhi, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Roberto Moroco dela Roka, *Kombi dhe feja në Shqipëri 1920 – 1924* (Tiranë: Elena Gjika, 1994)

<sup>6</sup> Bernd J. Fischer, *Mbreti Zog dhe përpjekja për stabilitet në Shqipëri* (Tiranë: Çabej, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Cabanes, "Vendi i gruas në Epirin antik", *Iliria* 2 (1983): 193 – 209. Neritan Ceka, *Ilirët deri te Shqiptarët* (Tiranë: Migjeni, 2015), 387 – 388.

<sup>8</sup> Injaz Zamputi, "Pozita shoqërore e gruas malësore shqiptare sipas Kanunit", në *Buletin i Universitetit Shtetëror të Tiranës*, seria: shkencat shoqërore, 2, (Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës 1961), 101 – 123. Beqir Sinani, "Lëvizja për emancipimin e femrës në vitet 1920 – 1924", *Studime Historike* 1 (1986). Pal Doçi, *Vetëqeverisja e Mirditës: vështrim etnologjik e historik* (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese Enciklopedike, 1996). Fatmira Musaj, *Gruaja në Shqipëri në vitet 1912 – 1939* (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë – Instituti i Historisë, 2002). Eduart Caka, "Disa të dhëna mbi rolin dhe të drejtat e gruas në Shqipëri gjatë shekujve XVII – XVIII", *Studime Historike* 1-2 (2015): 69 – 87. Gentiana Kera, Enriketa Papa, "Karakteristikat e familjes shqiptare sipas regjistrimit të popullsisë në vitin 1918", *Politika & Shoqëria* (Revistë shkencore e Institutit të Studimeve Politike e Sociale), vol. 5, nr. 1 (10) (2002): 83 – 96.

<sup>9</sup> Abaz Dojaka, "Karakteret e lidhjeve martesore para çlirimit", *Etnografia shqiptare* 11 (1981). Kahreman Ulqini, "E drejta zakonore përballë së drejtës kanonike dhe sheriatit", *Etnografia shqiptare* 16 (1989).

customary law,<sup>10</sup> sociologists<sup>11</sup> etc., — all focused mainly in the women of the Ottoman period during the XX century.

The information here reported has been collected from the Byzantine documents about the history Albania (VII – XV century),<sup>12</sup> The Statutes of Shkodra,<sup>13</sup> Documents about the history of Albania during the XV century (years 1400 – 1405; 1406 - 1410) and (1479 – 1506)<sup>14</sup>, and also the Cadaster and Concessions Register for the district of Shkodra 1416 – 1417.<sup>15</sup> The chronicle by Gjon Muzaka,<sup>16</sup> the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini<sup>17</sup> and the Canon of Scanderbeg<sup>18</sup> were used for complementary comparative purposes.

<sup>10</sup> Ismet Elezi, *E drejta zakonore e Labërisë në planin krahasues* (Tiranë: SHBLU, 1994). Aleks Luarasi, *Marrëdhëniet Familjare* (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese "Luarasi", 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Zyhdi Dervishi, *Gratë në syrin e ciklonit të sfidave dhe perspektiva: trajtesë sociologjike e problematikës sociokulturore të grave shqiptare në vitet '90 të shekullit XX*, (Tiranë: Dora D' Istria, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> *Dokumente të periudhës bizantine për historinë e Shqipërisë* (shek. VII – XV), prepared for publishing by Koço Bozhori (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH – Instituti i Historisë, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> *Statuti di Scutari della prima metà del secolo XIV con le addizione fino al 1469*, (a cura di Lucia Nadin, traduzione in albanese a cura di Pëllumb Xhufi, con saggi introduttivi di Giovan Batista Pellegrini, Oliver Jens Schmitt e Gherardo Ortalli), (Roma: Viella, 2002). (Hereinafter: *Statuti di Scutari*).

<sup>14</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1 (1400 – 1405), prepared by Injac Zamputi and Luan Malltezi (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH – Instituti i Historisë, 1987). *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë*, 2 (1406 – 1410), prepared by Injac Zamputi and Pranvera Bogdani, manuscript in Arkivi i Institutit të Historisë, file nr. A – III – 563, (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë – Instituti i Historisë, 1984). *Dokumenta të shekullit XV për historinë e Shqipërisë*, vol. IV (1479 – 1506), Part I (1479 – 1499), prepared by Injac Zamputi (Tiranë: Universiteti shtetëror i Tiranës – Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1967). *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë 1479 – 1506*, Part II (1499 – 1506), prepared by Injac Zamputi (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPSSH – Instituti i Historisë, 1979).

<sup>15</sup> *Regjistri i kadastrës dhe i koncesioneve për rrethin e Shkodrës 1416 – 1417*, prepared for publishing by Injac Zamputi (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH – Instituti i Historisë, 1977).

<sup>16</sup> Karl Hopf, *Chroniques gréco – romanes inédites ou peu connues* (Berlin: Librairie de Weidmann, 1873). Used for publication after the translation of Dhorë Qiriazi: Gjon Muzaka, *Memorje* (Tiranë: Toena, 1996) and after the translation of Pëllumb Xhufi from the Italian language at his monograph: *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt: Berati dhe Vlora në shekujt XII – XV* (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese "55", 2009), 380 – 456: Historia dhe genealogjia e shtëpisë Muzaka, written by Don Gjon Muzaka, Despot i Epirit.

<sup>17</sup> Shtjefën Gjeçovi, *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit* (Tiranë: Kuvendi, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Frano Ilia, *Kanuni i Skanderbegut* (Milot: Rosa, 1993).

In distinction from the customary law data, typical of the local government of rural and highland areas in Albania, the documentary sources give a quite significant information about the role and importance of woman in the Medieval autonomous cities, and also sheds light on the legal and penal protection of her personality, dignity and honor.

Earlier historic data about some important rights of the women in Albania are found in the Byzantine documents of the first decades of the XIII century and in the beginning of the second half of the same century. They inform about the women's right to ask for divorce,<sup>19</sup> to be custodian of the wealth, to bequeath,<sup>20</sup> and also other notary acts.<sup>21</sup> In a letter from the archbishop of Ohrid Dhimitër Homatjanoj<sup>22</sup> of May 1223, it is said "*...the so-called Kabasilina who was in the castle of Durrës, bequeathing without the presence of her sons and not mentioning them (her sons – E. B.) in the testament.*"<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the Byzantine sources, the Statutes of Shkodra<sup>24</sup> give a significant information about the western archetype of the role and

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<sup>19</sup>*Dokumente të periudhës bizantine për historinë e Shqipërisë* (shek. VII – XV), dokument nr. XXVI, 55.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, dokument nr. XXVIII, 60 – 62: "The testament is legal, when includes all those who enjoy the heritage right. A land owner in Dibra becomes peer".

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, dokument nr. XLV, 82 – 84: "February 1258 – The sale of vineyard near the city of Durrës".

<sup>22</sup>Dhimitër Homatjanoj concluded the studies for jurisprudence in Constantinople and around 1200 was envoy in Ohrid as chartophylax (*one of the most important aids of the patriarch*) of the bishopric, where he carried out this duty until 1216, year in which he became archbishop and continues this duty until 1234. Quoted from: *Dokumente të periudhës bizantine* (shek. VII – XV), 58.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, dokument nr. XXVIII, 61.

<sup>24</sup>The Statutes of Shkodra are also re-published on 2010 under the care of Albania's Ministry of Tourism, Culture Youth and Sports and "Wisdom" University, Tirana, and on 2017 with an anastatic edition of theirs (Tiranë: Instituti i Komunikimit dhe Dialogut). The Statutes of Shkodra were discovered on 1997 in the fund of the library of Correr Town Museum of Venice, from the Italian linguist Lucia Nadin and the Swiss Albanologist Oliver Jens Schmitt. On 2002, under the care of L. Nadin, accompanied in her studies, by the historians O. J. Schmitt and Gherardo Ortalli, the linguist Giovan Battista Pellegrini and with the translation in Albanian by the prominent medievalist Pëllumb Xhufi, were published for the first time in Rome, the Statutes of Shkodra. The Statutes of Shkodra contain 279 chapters, written in the Venetian language of the XV century, and as date of their drafting "*as terminus ante quem will be the year 1346*", according the opinion of O. J. Schmitt. The first 268 chapters belong to the first decades of the XIV century, 6 appendixes on 1391 – 1393 and also 5 provisions from the Venetian period 1457 – 1469.

importance of women in society. In a series of dispositions, a special place also occupied the penal action against the morality, which shows the legal and penal protection of the personality, dignity and honor of women. The law was very sensitive towards the denunciation of women for insults,<sup>25</sup> exercise of physical and sexual violence<sup>26</sup> against them. There were severe punitive measures equal to anyone, regardless his social position or status, religious affiliation or his secularity.

The fact that in the legal framework on this aspect there were included a variety of situations and a combination of such situations, prove that the respect of the women rights and dignity in that period was real and seriously taken. If a married woman complained about being raped, beaten or robbed by a cleric, she had to be trusted even without witnesses.<sup>27</sup> The cleric was immediately fined with fifty hyperpers, which half passed to the bishop, one fourth to the count (representative of the Serbian royal power in the city of Shkodra),<sup>28</sup> and one fourth was granted to the claimant woman.<sup>29</sup>

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(Indeed, only the 278 chapters are with complete texts, because the chapter 66 entirely lacks the content. Note by E. Baze).

The Statutes of Shkodra contain a strong European spirit, where since their first chapter you can find incarnated the medieval Western European known principle: "*the city's air makes you free*", proclaimed for the first time in the city of Goslar (south of Northern Germany) on 13 July 1219 from the Roman Holy Emperor of the German nation, Frederick II Hohenstaufen. (*Krestomacia e Historisë së Mesjetës*, translated by Sami Leka and edited by Zenel Minarolli, Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Fakulteti Histori – Filologji: 1965, 175). Indeed, the first chapter sanctions the right of granting protection asylum to every person, who entered in the commune of Shkodra to escape the persecutions of the feudal power. However, it's not the only chapter, that reminds the modern documents on human's freedom and rights. These freedoms and rights are sanctioned in a series of legal provisions of the statutes, where is treated the right of life, the right of property, the right of heritage, the right to defend oneself, the right to be elected and to elect, and the right of *privacy*. The Statutes dedicate a special protection of the most fragile strata of the society: children, women and elderly people.

<sup>25</sup> *Statuti di Scutari*, chapter 255.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 256: "*If it's proven that a secular person touches or beats a woman, or violates her home, this is condemned with a fine of eight hyperpers. If violates another woman in the same way, he had to pay eight hyperpers, half to the count and the other half to the claimant*".

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 200.

<sup>28</sup> *Acta et Diplomata Res Albaniae Mediae Aetatis Illustrantia*, (collegerunt et digresserunt Dr. Ludovicus de Thalloczy, Dr. Constantinus Jireček et Dr. Emilianus de Sufflay), volumen I, (Annos 344 – 1343 Tabulamque geographicam continens),

Also, the statutory norms also previewed the case of honest and unmarried women raped by a man. If the man was also unmarried, he was forced to legally marry her.<sup>30</sup> If both of them were married, the man was punished with a fine of fifty hyperpers, equally divided between the count and the woman.<sup>31</sup> In distinction from the first case, when the woman was believed even without witnesses, in this situation she had to give convincing evidences.<sup>32</sup>

However, in the coastal Albanian cities (Durrës, Lezha, Shkodra, Drisht, Ulqin, Tivar) at the time when these were administered by the Republic of San Marco (1392 – 1479), the question of respecting the statutes, rules and old customs from the part of the Venetian authorities started to cause dissatisfactions among the local population.<sup>33</sup> In the municipalities of Durrësi and Drishti, there are documented cases of abuse and trampling on the most elementary norms of morality towards the local women by the Venetian local governors: *"The governor of Durrës Pietro Arimondo, as its seen from the process against him on 29 October 1409, had made the inhabitant of Durrës, Kirana arrested to force her to perjure herself that the testament bequeathed by the chancellor of Durrës, Nicola Parma (with whom the Venetian governor had to settle old scores), was allegedly a fake testament. The governor exercised his menaces to force her to act as he wished, otherwise he would have tortured her with the most barbarian tools. And he hanged the chancellor of Durrës, after forcing Kirana to perjury... ." "Heustak Grioni, one of the unpleasant figures that the citizens of Drisht knew in 1401 – 1402, in the most banditry way that could ever be imagined, entered the house of the citizen Gjergj Varshi, when the latter was not there, to rape his wife. In front of the powerful anger that erupted in Drishti, the Seignory was forced to move away her citizen, before his*

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Vindobonae MCMXIII, reedition, Tiranë, Prishtinë: "Dukagjini" – Pejë, 2002, dokument nr. 527.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 201.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Luan Malltezi, *Qytetet e bregdetit shqiptar gjatë sundimit venedikas* (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë – Instituti i Historisë, 1988), 217.

*time of service being concluded to preserve somehow the discredited prestige of the state stained by its governor.*"<sup>34</sup>

The Statutes of Shkodra previewed severe punishment measures for the vicious women. They were neither allowed to wear hats, nor to live or share company with the noble ladies of the city. The women of no-good morality who were involved in forbidden activities were beaten with sticks and banished from the city within three days. *"If a woman is proved vicious by the testimony of two or three men, she is not to be allowed to wear a hat he, as our custom is, or share company at her will. She is not allowed to stay or dwell close to the noble ladies. If she infringes these orders, she will be punished with eight hyperpers that will be divided between the count and the claimant. If it's proven that a vicious woman makes dirty works or seeks to ruin the others, she has to leave our city within three days, and if this deadline is not respected, she will be punished with a fine of eight hyperpers, fustigated in the roads of the city and at the end to be evicted and never return to our land."*<sup>35</sup> Also, the vicious women and the prostitutes were excluded from the right to inherit the wealth of their family. *"...when the daughter ends up being a prostitute, and both parents have died, the brothers have the power to exclude their prostitute sister from the heritage; if this sister has not living father, mother or brothers, but only a sister that is a fair woman, then to the latter should pass the part of the above defamatory sister."*<sup>36</sup> These severe sanctions were certainly taken to stop promoting and developing the whoredom, as it was spread in the coastal cities of the Eastern Adriatic. *"In all the coastal cities,"* says Milan Šufflay, *"certainly existed brothels, as it could be proved by 'whores' mentioned in the Statutes of Budva (1350), and in 'battessa di bordello', which is mentioned in Ragusa (1400)."*<sup>37</sup>

The husband in general had to show respect towards the wife and should not abandon her because of dowry lack or her little wealth.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 220 – 222.

<sup>35</sup> *Statuti di Scutari*, chapter 87.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 171.

<sup>37</sup> Milan v. Šufflay, *Städte und Burgen Albaniens* (Wien und Leipzig, 1924). Used after the edition in Albanian prepared by Luan Malltezi, *Qytetet dhe kështjellat e Shqipërisë, kryesisht në mesjetë* (Tiranë: Onufri, 2009), 96.

<sup>38</sup> *Statuti di Scutari*, kreu 265: *"The man who enters his home a woman as a wife, cannot discard her out because she has not kept dowry in the house. The dowry must be by*

Her dowry should not be alienated or wasted by the husband,<sup>39</sup> because protecting wife's wealth was a right. Also, to him was not allowed to use his wife's dowry to liquidate the blood tax or the *urazba*. "*To no man was allowed to take something from the wife's dowry to pay a blood feud or urazba. The commune should protect the woman, while the husband who commits such a foolish action had to pay it himself.*"<sup>40</sup>

According to the statutes, the consorts should have mutual reciprocity towards one another, which was also reflected in the bequeathing process when one of them passes away.<sup>41</sup> Not only the husband, but also the wife had the right to draft a testament.<sup>42</sup> The wife has the right to keep her share from the father-in law and mother-in law, and also the right to bequeath. "*The daughter and the woman in general have the right to issue a testament, starting from the age of twelve years old and on.*"<sup>43</sup>

Also, the woman's right to file a lawsuit,<sup>44</sup> draft a testament,<sup>45</sup> inherit a testament and to benefit therefrom,<sup>46</sup> warrant,<sup>47</sup> have legal representatives on different issues of their wealth,<sup>48</sup> and to be church warden (*epitrope*) for the application of the dispositions of the testament<sup>49</sup> are all described in the archival documents of Shkodra and Durrësi and Dubrovnik (*Državni u Dubrovniku*), at the beginning of the XV century, and in the other Albanian coastal cities such as Ulqini and Tivari as well. The Dubrovnik and Venetian documentary report that

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*reason sought. He that banishes the wife is fined with eight hyperpers, half for the count and half for the claimant".*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 165.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 266.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 168.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 196.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 186.

<sup>44</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë*, 2(1406 – 1410), dokument nr. 374.

<sup>45</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1 (1400 – 1405), dokument nr. 24, 65, 121, 132, 160, 161.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, dokument nr. 295, 374, 403. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë*, 2(1406 – 1410), dokument nr. 214.

<sup>47</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1 (1400 – 1405), dokument nr. 274, 285, 377, 408, 428.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, dokument nr. 228: :27 June 1402 – The legal representative of a woman from Tivar withdraws in Dubrovnik what the daughter has left to her after death".

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, dokument nr. 410: "1 January 1404 – Vlash's daughter from Ulqin, epitrope in a testament".



there were women who possessed properties and assets<sup>50</sup> and had the right to administer,<sup>51</sup> donate<sup>52</sup> and sell<sup>53</sup> them for different economic puposes.<sup>54</sup>

In "the Cadastre of Shkodra and the Register of Concessions of 1416 –1417" drafted by the Venetian administration on the properties which possessed "the Queen of Adriatic " in the Albanian territories and on the fiscal system on the inhabitants living under her authority, it is often mentioned the term 'woman's right', when considering land possessions in the city of Shkodra and the surroundings that different woman inhabitant of Shkodra, including here even the widows<sup>55</sup> had in possession.<sup>56</sup>

In general terms, the woman inhabitant of Shkodra of the XIV – XV century had a status that even the successors in the later centuries would envy. The statutes show that the family's wealth is an equal property. *"Everything that husband and wife gain together is considered equal, viz half belongs to the husband and half to the wife."*<sup>57</sup> We hastily recall for comparison one article of the " Canon of Lekë Dukagjini": *"The woman is a bellows to carry as much as she can in her husband's home."*<sup>58</sup> *If the husband beats the wife, the canon does not blame him, and neither the parents can redeem the beating"*<sup>59</sup> or

<sup>50</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1 (1400 – 1405), dokument nr. 39, 84, 158, 173, 228. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë*, 2(1406 – 1410), dokument nr. 129, 366.

<sup>51</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1 (1400 – 1405), dokument nr. 428: "20 April 1404 – A woman from Tivar presents a general power of attorney to extract and administer the properties and the assets that has inherited in Tivar and surroundings".

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, dokument nr. 63: "6 September 1400 – The widow of a shoemaker from Durrës donates a house in Durrës". Dokument nr. 239: "4 August 1402 – The wife of Nikollë Spani from Driht distributes the assets of the husband in Albania".

<sup>53</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1 (1400 – 1405), dokument nr. 339. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë*, 2(1406 – 1410), dokument nr. 364.

<sup>54</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1 (1400 – 14005), dokument nr. 210: "28 April 1402 – The daughter of a man from Tivar in Dubrovnik has economic interests in the city of Tivar".

<sup>55</sup> *Regjistri i kadastrës dhe i koncesioneve për rrethin e Shkodrës 1416 – 1417*, fl. 2/a, 3/a, 20/a, 30/a.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9/a, 9/b, 10/b, 11/a, 19/b, 21/a, 25/b, 30/b, 35/a.

<sup>57</sup> *Statuti di Scutari*, chapter 166.

<sup>58</sup> *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*, node 29.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, node 28.

"the woman that leaves her husband home, has no right to take anything with her, but the only the coated clothes."<sup>60</sup> In this direction, in the family law there were some improvements and novelties brought by Scanderbeg, who changed the old customary law that allowed the husband in any case to divorce the wife without reason and without granting her any asset.<sup>61</sup> "The Canon of Scanderbeg" – ascertains Aleks Luarasi – *previewed only two legal causes to divorce the wife: stealing and the conjugal unfaithfulness (dishonest affairs).*<sup>62</sup> According to "The Canon of Scanderbeg" the wife could be divorced also for no reason, but the husband was obliged to give the wife her part in the conjugal wealth recognizing her contribution in the common wealth (home's wealth).<sup>63</sup> Also, in Scanderbeg's Canon it was previewed to divorce without reason the wife, but in this case she would get half of the land to secure her life.<sup>64</sup> However, the changes that Scanderbeg made to the customary law were partial and temporary.<sup>65</sup> After his death and Albania's occupation by the Ottomans, most of these rules were abolished.

In relation with the above-mentioned rules of the customary law, in the positive law,<sup>66</sup> that in this case is represented by the Statutes of Shkodra, the protection of the moral integrity of woman and right wealth's, prove somehow the respect towards her personality, as one of the principal indexes of the development and emancipation of the citizens of Shkodra and other coastal communes in the Albania of the Late Middle Age (XIV – XV centuries).

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, node 31.

<sup>61</sup> Aleks Luarasi, "E drejta në shtetin e Skënderbeut", in *Studime për Epokën e Skënderbeut*, 3 (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH – Instituti i Historisë, 1989), 51.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>63</sup> *Historia e shtetit dhe e së drejtës në Shqipëri*, fourth edition, (Tiranë: Luarasi University Press, 2007), 189.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>65</sup> Petrika Thëngjilli, *Historia e popullit shqiptar 395 – 1875*, (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, 1999), 169.

<sup>66</sup> Pëllumb Xhufi, "Statutet e Shkodrës mes së drejtës pozitive dhe së drejtës zakonore", in *Statutet e Shkodrës nga gjysma e parë e shek. XIV, me shtesa deri më 1469*, anastatic edition, (Tiranë: IDK, 2017), 27: In the case of Albania, and not only, the positive and the customary law have coexisted until the moment of the modern state establishment, each has had the proper action zone. The first mainly acted in the prosperous agricultural areas and cities, while the second was overwhelming in the hinterland mountainous areas.

The sources and the chronicles inform us about an important part of the noble Albanian women of the XIV – XV centuries. The dynasty marriages and marriage alliances in the Medieval Europe and further, were first a political act, through which were strengthened the political alliances with the neighbors, and also these led to the expansion of the territory of the principalities and different political formations in the Middle Ages and the spread of their influence. Such family alliances were established during the XIV – XV century and almost in all the noble families of the time e.g., Arianiti, Muzaka, Topia, Dukagjini, Zaharia, Kastrioti, Balshaj, Zenebishi, Gropaj from Ohrid and Dibra, the lords of the Prespa families etc.<sup>67</sup> There were cases of dynasty marriages and family alliances of political character between the Albanian nobility and the foreign nobility, mainly in the region and in the other side of the Adriatic coasts.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>For more see: *Historia dhe gjenealogjia shtëpisë Muzaka*, written by Don Gjon Muzaka, Despot i Epirit. Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 293.

<sup>68</sup>Among the first Albanian nobility marriages with foreigners is mentioned in the Byzantine sources that of Dhimitër, ruler of Albania's principality (on 1208 – 1216) with Komnena on 1208, the daughter of Serbia's great župan, Stefan Nemanja (1196 – 1227). As well, approximately at the same time is the marriage of the pansevast sevast Rigor Kamona, governor of Epirus Despotate with the daughter of Gjin Progoni, second ruler of the Albania's principality on 1198 – 1208. *Dokumente të periudhës bizantine* (shek. VII – XV), dokument nr. XXVI and XXVII, 54 – 60. The aunt of the chronicler Gjon Muzaka, Helena, was married with the Venetian noble Filippo Barelli, Ragusa citizen, former administrator of the Balsha family. Gjon Zenebishi, the ruler of Gjirokastra and of Vagenetia until 1418, gave in marriage his sister to the Italian Petrotto d'Altavilla, heir of the earlier Norman dynasty, who ruled Southern Italy during XI – XII centuries.

According to Gjon Muzaka, Komnen Arianiti was married with the daughter of a certain Nicolò Sacati, former baron of two cities in Sendia (according to Dh. Shuteriqi should be Serbia). Despina, the daughter of Ajdin Klope (ruler of Vrezda and of Helena Muzaka (sister of Andrea Muzaka, grandfather of the chronicler Gjon Muzaka) married with the sanjak bey of Ciorne, Ali Bey. In the beginning of the second half of the XIV century, Gjergj Balsha married the daughter of Vukašin Mrnjavčević (kral – ruler of the Western Macedonia and co-ruler with the king of Serbia Stefan Uroš V from 1365 - 1371), Olivera Mrnjavčević. Gjergj Arianiti in parallel of the first marriage with Maria Muzaka (sister of Gjin II and aunt of the chronicler Gjon Muzaka) nearly the end of the '40 of the XV century, married the Italian Pietrina Francone from the city of Lecce (in Southern Italy), the daughter of one of the vassals of Naples' Alfonso V, Oliverio Francone, "barone di Taurisano", governor of the city of Lecce. Around 1461 Angelina Arianiti (1440 – 1520) (daughter of Gjergj Arianiti from the first marriage according the chronicle of Gjon Muzaka, while according the scholar and German Orientalist Franz Babinger, is the daughter of Gjergj Arianiti from the second marriage) married the despot of Serbia, Stefan

It should be emphasized the fact that the outcome of these alliances was not always successful. There were reported cases of dissatisfaction and political and military disunion between the Albanian noble families in the beginning of the second half of the XV century. The chronicler Gjon Muzaka says that one of his sisters named Zanafina or Suina was married to Muzak Topia<sup>69</sup> around 1460, at the time when these two families didn't have the glory they once had.<sup>70</sup> But, even these relations didn't endure, because Muzak Topia and his wife divorced shortly after their marriage to marry Mamica Kastrioti, Scanderbeg's sister. "*Lord Scanderbeg ruined the marriage of the above-mentioned lord Muzakë Topia with the Lady Zanafinë Muzaka, without taking into consideration God and nothing else, even the children they had, and married him with his own sister, Lady Mamica.*"<sup>71</sup>

This event, that the chronicler Gjon Muzaka attributes to Scanderbeg's intervention and influence, exacerbated the relations among the Muzakas, Topias and Kastriotis. This is one of the reasons that little bit later Scanderbeg "grabbed from the Muzaka family after the death of Gjini II Muzaka (father of the chronicler Gjon Muzaka – E. Baze), *Tomonishta, viz. the small Myzeqe...*"<sup>72</sup> In the same line with the Muzaka family which was part of the group of people that was dissatisfied with Scanderbeg was also Moisi Golemi, an important character of the time, to whom the ruler of the Kastrioti family ceased

Branković (1458 – 1459), known as the "Blind Stefan" (son of Đurađ Branković, despot of Serbia from 1427 - 1456). The son of Scanderbeg, Gjon Kastrioti (1456 – 1502) married the third daughter of the despot Lazar Branković of Serbia (1456 – 1458) and Helena Paleologue (1431 – 1437), Jerina Branković. (Note E. Baze: There are plenty of other examples, which we are not mentioning here). *Historia dhe gjenealogjia e shtëpisë Muzaka*, 432, 433, 435, 436, 448. Milan Šufflay, *Serbët e Shqiptarët*, translated by Zef Fekeçi, Kal Gurakuqi and Zekeria Cana (Tiranë: Bargjini, 2001), 132. Dhimitër S. Shuteriqi, "Aranitët, emri dhe gjenealogjia", in *Studime për Epokën e Skënderbeut*, 2 (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH – Instituti i Historisë, 1989), 64, 68, 75. Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 292.

<sup>69</sup>*Historia dhe gjenealogjia shtëpisë Muzaka*, 450.

<sup>70</sup>Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 304; Researcher Pëllumb Xhufi.

The marriage of Zanafina or Suina Muzaka with Muzak Topia he stipulates around 1460, while the scholar Dhimitër S. Shuteriqi at the page 65 of his paper entitled, "Aranitët, emri dhe gjenealogjia", in *Studime për Epokën e Skënderbeut* 2, stipulates this marriage on 1445.

<sup>71</sup>*Historia dhe gjenealogjia shtëpisë Muzaka*, 451.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 453.

his possessions in Dibra.<sup>73</sup> Also, the marriage of Moisi Golemi with Zanfina or Suina Muzaka,<sup>74</sup> the divorced wife of Muzak Topia, exactly stated one of the causes that influenced the rebellion of the Albanian big feudal lords against Scanderbeg.<sup>75</sup>

The noble women of local or foreign origin whose social – political profile in the region and both sides of the Adriatic area played a significant role in the dynasty and family marriage alliances were characteristic of the European Middle Ages in general (also including here the Balkan realm).

It is very interesting to mention the relation of Nemanjas, a Serbian family with the Angevins. Uroš I (1243 – 1276) married around 1250 the French princess Helene, who *"was praised for her sharp way of speech, kindness, generosity and spirituality."*<sup>76</sup> This is why the administration of the Catholic enclaves of the Serbian Kingdom, first Dioklea (Žeta, Monte Negro) was set under her auspices.<sup>77</sup> *"The devout Helena had founded the Franciscan monasteries in front of the gates of Tivar and Kotorr."*<sup>78</sup> It is proved that she was the ruler in these territories until 1314, the year when she died. Her sister Maria de Chours has been the ruler of Ulqin since 1283, the year she appears with the title *"domina Ulcinii"*. *"Maria, the sister of queen Helena, was married to Anselm de Chours, who in 1273 is mentioned as the general captain of Charles I in Albania. Maria lived as widow (from 1281) in the country of her sister, where she was given a residence in Ulqin."*<sup>79</sup>

Under the disguise of protecting Catholicism by the French queen of the medieval Serbia, it is explicitly explained the reason why a considerable part of the coastal Albanian communes of East Adriatic such as Tivar, Ulqin and Shkodra, with an overwhelming population of

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Shuteriqi, "Aranitët, emri dhe gjenealogjia", 65.

<sup>75</sup> Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 304.

<sup>76</sup> Konstanti Jireček, *Historia e Serbëve*, Part I (until 1371), translated from the German language by Elda Gjana – Boriçi (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese "55", 2010), 356: *"His wife, we don't know, if the first one. the second or the third was the French Helene, approximately on 1250"*.

<sup>77</sup> *Acta Albaniae*, I, nr. 509. Pëllumb Xhufi, *Dilemat e Arbërit* (Tiranë: Pegi, 2006), 283.

<sup>78</sup> Konstanti Jireček, *Historia e Serbëve*, second part (1371 – 1537), translated from the German language by Elda Gjana – Boriçi (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese "55", 2010), 41.

<sup>79</sup> *Acta Albaniae*, I, dokument nr. 470. Jireček, *Historia e Serbëve*, first part, 357.

Catholic religion, enjoyed the status of the autonomy, viz., of communal self-governing and self-organization, but at the same time respecting the sovereign right of the Serbian crown.<sup>80</sup>

In the Albanian history of the second half of the XIV century, it is enthralling the political and diplomatic implication of Komnena Balsha, ruler of Kanina and Vlora and all the surroundings, (Komita the elder daughter of the despot Andrea II Muzaka was married in 1372 with Balsha II who was the third son of the founder of this dynasty, Balsha I, who died in 1367. Thanks to this marriage, Balsha II took the possessions of Vlora and Kanina)<sup>81</sup> and the widow of the Balsha II (died in the battle of Savër on September 18, 1385 against the troops of Karl Topia in alliance with the Ottomans)<sup>82</sup> with Venice before the May of 1386, while expecting an Ottoman expedition of the Sultan Murat I himself against Vlora.<sup>83</sup> Referring to the monograph "*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*" of the medievalist P. Xhufi, on May 1386, the Republic of Venice made its proposals to the lady of Vlora: "*in the first proposal, Venice sought Kanina and Vlora with surroundings to be given unconditionally to the Seignory and with all the rights and jurisdictions that Komnena herself had. If Komnena did not accept this solution, Venice was ready to make a second proposal, after which Komnena Balsha, as long as she lived, she would get all the revenues extracted from her possessions; but at the same time, she would face all the necessary expenses for their defense. Meanwhile, a unit of Venetian bowmen (ballistarii) had to be established immediately in the tower of Kanina and act under Seignory orders. That was the maximum of the*

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<sup>80</sup>Ermal Baze, *Një qytet me statute: Shkodra në gjysmën e parë të shekullit XIV* (Tiranë: Muzgu, 2013), 37 – 38.

<sup>81</sup>*Historia dhe gjenealogjia shtëpisë Muzaka*, 429 – 430. Peter Bartl, *Shqiptarët: nga Mesjeta deri në ditët tona*, translated from the German language by Afrim Koçi (Tiranë: IDK, 2017), 38 – 40.

<sup>82</sup>For more on the battle of Savër see: Marinus Barletius, *De obsidione Scodrensi* (Venetiae, 1504). Used after the translation in Albanian from the Latin by Henrik Lacaj: Marin Barleti, *Rrethimi i Shkodrës*, second edition, (Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1967), 36. Selami Pulaha, *Lufta shqiptaro – turke në shek. XV: Burime Osmane* (Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1968), 12 – 13. Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, (Tiranë: Toena, 2002), 304. Bartl, *Shqiptarët*, 40.

<sup>83</sup>Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 304.

*engagement that the Republic of San Marco promised for the defense of Vlora.*"<sup>84</sup>

Also, the Senate of the Republic of Venice warned the Venetian citizens that whoever marries lady Komnena Balsha of Vlora or her daughter will be punished by imprisonment.<sup>85</sup> This decision explicitly proved that the Seignory wanted for itself Vlora and Kanina when refusing a common Albanian-Venetian governance in the above-mentioned territory, as "the Queen of the Adriatic" might get involved in the problematic relations of the ruler of Vlora with other Albanian nobles and the Ottomans. With both parts, Venice wanted to build relations based on its own interests, and not based on others stories and grievances.<sup>86</sup>

Komnena Balsha would raise the curtain of a series of treaties with Venice about the question of her possessions, in February<sup>87</sup> and June 1389, when the ruler of Vlora took an extreme stance, by expressing her readiness to give Vlora and the castle of Kanina to the Venetian Seignory, but on some conditions.<sup>88</sup> But, even this time the Venetian authorities declined the her proposal, because in reality Corfu,

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 318 – 319: "Komnena Balsha demanded to the Senate of Venice to be issued at her favor a statement, where was to be proven that she and her subordinates to be placed under the protection of the Venetian authority, in a way that nobody could bother them. It was a pure act of vassalage, that would be also consecrated with the symbolic gesture of sending three nationals of Komnena Balsha, to fulfill the military service in the Venetian fleet of the Adriatic. At this time also erupted an internal conflict between Komnena and Nikolla Muzaka (relative of Komnena) on Dieval's tower, in the outlet of the Seman river. Dieval's tower together with the merchant emporin before August 1390, belonged to Nikolla Muzaka, who has fallen prisoner to the men of Komnena Balsha. The defenders of Dieval's tower wouldn't give it up without being released their ruler, Nikolla Muzaka. To extinguish the conflict intervened the Venetian bajlos of Corfu, Luigi de Priolis, who decided that after the liberation of Nikolla Muzaka, Dieval's tower to be given the Venetian authorities of Corfu. The Venetians granted the mentioned tower to Komnena Balsha, but from now on the ruler of Vlora would keep this tower only as Seignory vassal. As symbolic gesture of this vassalage, Komnena Balsha had to eternally offer three people of her own who would serve in the Venice's military ships".

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

Butrinti<sup>89</sup> and later Durrësi (1392) would be enough for Seignory to secure her possessions in the lower Adriatic and Northern Ionian sea. The last negotiation of Komnena Balsha with the Venetians dates in the autumn of 1395 (year, when she is mentioned for the last time as the ruler), when a delegation of her went to Venice to present the proposals of the ruler Vlora. Under the pressure of the Ottomans and the precarious health situation, Komnena Balsha accepted to surrender Vlora, Kanina and Pirg, from which were profited 9 thousand golden ducats per year, towards an annual provision of 7 thousand ducats, as long as Komnena and her daughter<sup>90</sup> lived.<sup>91</sup> Even this proposal was not at all taken into consideration from the Republic of Venice.

In September 1396, the ruler of Vlora and Kanina was mentioned Mrkša Žarković (1396 – 1414),<sup>92</sup> the son of the ruler Žeta and Rugina Balsha, daughter of Balsha II and Komnena (Muzaka – Balsha), who would rule these territories until 1417 (even after the death of her husband in 1414).<sup>93</sup> The marriage of Mrkša with Rugina<sup>94</sup> celebrated in 1391 reconsolidated the relations between the rulers of Vlora and Žeta, which were interrupted after the murder of Balsha II in the battle of Savër.<sup>95</sup> Also, the marriage between these two families in 1394 was

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<sup>89</sup> Roberto Cessi, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia*, volume primo, (Milano: Casa Editrice Giuseppe Principato), 350: Corfu and Butrint, the Republic of Venice succeeded to detach from the Angevins on 1386.

<sup>90</sup> Giuseppe Gelcich, *Zeta dhe Dinastia e Balshajve*, translated by Laura Leka (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese "55", 2009), 95: Balsha II, from Komnena Muzaka had no other children but one daughter, Rugina, which after his death, would rule together with her mother Vlora and Kanina, inherited from her ancestors.

<sup>91</sup> Constantinus Jireček, "Valona in Mittelalter", in *Illyrisch – Albanische Forschungen*, Zusammengestellt von Dr. Ludwig von Thallóczy. (München und Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1916). Used after the translation in Albanian by Mustafa Merlika – Kruja: Constantinus Jireček, "Vlora në Mesjetë", in *Vëzhgime iliro-shqiptare*, drafted by Dr. Ludwig Von Thallóczy. (Shkodër: Camaj-Pipa, 2004), 136. Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 323.

<sup>92</sup> Šufflay, *Serbët e Shqiptarët*, 25.

<sup>93</sup> *Historia dhe gjenealogjia shtëpisë Muzaka*, 441.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 324: Even after the murder of Balsha II in Savër, the Balsha family continued aftermath to be called rulers of Vlora. According to the Venetian chronicler and historian, Marin Sanudo Junior" (1466 – 1536), Gjergj II Strazimir Balsha pretended to rule the territories that belonged to his ancestors, nonetheless the Balshaj family possessions in his time were considerably corrugated.



interpreted and justified even by the Holy Synod of Constantinople, because of the kinship that the couple had: Mrkša's mother, Teodora (a Serb noble from Dejanović family) after 1371 had her second marriage with Gjergj I Balsha (1362 – 1378), who was the uncle of Rugina.<sup>96</sup>

Rugina Balsha, the only ruler of Vlora after Mrkša's death in 1414, under the pressure of a serious Ottoman threat, continued the series of negotiations and proposals for help and the protection of her possessions from Venice with a worthy humbleness of a woman ruler, as her mother Komnena Balsha has previously done. The Republic of San Marco would turn a deaf ear to the demands of her delegation at the beginning of February 1415 and end of January 1416<sup>97</sup> facing an indifferent and uninterested stance of the governing Venetian authorities. When the Ottoman commander Hamza bey Evrenoz conquered Berat, Kanina and Vlora in June 1417, Rugina Balsha along with her family and court, moved in the beginning to Corfu, while in 1421 to Ragusa, where her treasure was deposited.<sup>98</sup> After 1421, Rugina Balsha was not mentioned anymore in the historic sources.<sup>99</sup>

Another noble woman with political ambitions, progeny of the above-mentioned families was Evdokia Balsha, daughter of Gjergj I Balsha and Teodora, who was at the same time the cousin of the first grade (their fathers were brothers) of Rugina Balsha and sister of Mrkša by another father.<sup>100</sup> Around 1402, Evdokia married in the city of Vlora (in the territory where her brother ruled) the Italian despot of Ioannina Ezau Buondelmonte Acciaiuoli (1385 – 1411), after his divorce to the second wife, Irena Shpata, the sister of Gjini Bua Shpata, the ruler of

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Thus, even after the tragedy in Savër, Gjergj Strazimir Balsha considered himself "suzerain of the territories from Vlora to Berat".

<sup>96</sup> Jireček, "Vlora në Mesjetë", 135. Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 324: The Ottoman danger tolerated this marriage, which from the canonical view was illegal.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 332 – 333.

<sup>98</sup> Jireček, "Vlora në Mesjetë", 136.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Cronaca dei Tocco di Cefalonia di Anonimo*, Prolegomeni – Testo Critico traduzione di Giuseppe Schirò (Junior) (Roma: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1975), 277. *Burime tregimtare bizantine për historinë e Shqipërisë shek. X – XV*, prepared for publishing by Koço Bozhori and Filip Liço (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH – Instituti i Historisë, 1975), 277: Kronika e Tokove.

Arta and the surroundings (1359 – 1399).<sup>101</sup> The marriage of Evdokia Balsha it is mentioned in a document from Ragusa dating in 11 and 14 July 1402, according to which Council of Ragusa decided to send a gift of 100 hyperpers to Mrkša's sister, and also offer the latter an armed Ragusan ship, to escort his sister to her husband.<sup>102</sup>

After the death of the consort despot Ezau in 1411, Evdokia Balsha tried to govern alone Ioannina. She opposed the efforts of a good part of the city peers that wanted to surrender the city of Ioannina to Karl Toko, the nephew of the despot Ezau and count of Kefalonia.<sup>103</sup> Mainly supported by the lower and middle strata of the city, "Albania's Despina" entered negotiations with Gjon Zenebishi, something that put in action the supporters of Karl Toko.<sup>104</sup> After a complot organized by them, despina Evdokia together with her sons was forced to abandon the city and temporarily take shelter at Gjon Zenebishi in Gjirokastra.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. Constantinus Jireček, "Witwe und die Söhne des Despoten Esau von *Epirus*", in *Byzantisch – neugriechische Jahrbücher* 1 (1920): 5. For more see: Giuseppe Schirò (Junior), "Evdokia Balšić di *Gianina*", in *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 8 (1964): 383 – 391. Koço Bozhori, "Kronika e Tokove as source on the history of the national formation of Southern Albanians at the end of the XIV century and in the first quarter of the XV century", *Studime Historike* 3 (1976): 183, 187: With Irena Shpata, mother of Muriq Shpata ruler of Arta principality, the Italian despot of Ioannina, Ezau Buondelmonte Acciaiuoli, was married on 1396, but divorced on 1402 to marry with Evdoki Balsha. According the *Kronikës së Tokove*, after the death of Gjin Bua Shpata on 29 October 1399 at the head of the principality was established Muriq Shpata, who, as can be ascertained, has been nephew from the part of Gjin's sisters, consequently of Sguero Bua Shpata (Gjin's brother), from his sister, who was married with a French count, Mirsi Makazanin. After the battle of Ankara of 1402, Muriq Shpata improved the relations not only with the Ottomans, but also relaxed them with the despot Ezau of Ioannina, who was Muriq's stepfather. Moreover, Ioannina's Ezau asked the hand of Muriq's daughter for his son born from his marriage with the Albanian Evdokia Balsha, daughter of Gjergj I Balsha. A part of this note is taken from: *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, 283.

<sup>102</sup> *Acta et Diplomata Res Albaniae Mediae Aetatis Illustrantia*, (collegerunt et digresserunt Dr. Ludovicus de Thalloczy, Dr. Constantinus Jireček et Dr. Emilianus de Sufflay), volumen II, (Annos 1344 – 1406 Tabulamque geographicam continens), Vindobonae MCMXIII, ribotim, Tiranë, Prishtinë: "Dukagjini" – Pejë, 2002, dokument nr. 699. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1(1400 – 1405), dokument nr. 231, 234.

<sup>103</sup> *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, 286.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

"On 142," as P. Xhufi says, "*Evdokia and her two sons are ascertained in Ragusa. 'Albania's Despina' was now nearly 60 years old and her presence in Ragusa seems that caused inconveniences to the authorities of the city: Evdokia coveted the properties from the possessions of the Balsha family, on which existed a strong clash between Venice and Serbia with which Ragusa had problematic relations.*"<sup>106</sup> For this reason, the Ragusan government wanted Evdokia Balsha and her sons to move away from Ragusa and be carefully watched and protected.<sup>107</sup> A year later, in 1428, the Great Council of Ragusa approved to grant Evdokia the permission to settle towards the city of Modon<sup>108</sup> (Methoni – in Southwest of Peloponnese region).

Helena Topia (1388 – 1402/1403), daughter of Karl Topia (1359 – 1388),<sup>109</sup> heir of a part of the Topia principality after her father's death, became ruler of Kruja and the regions around together with her husband, the Venetian noble Mark Barbadico.<sup>110</sup> Through the agreement of 28 August 1393, Venice succeeded to convince Helena Topia and Mark Barbadico, to continue ruling Kruja on behalf of Seignory and as its vassals.<sup>111</sup> A year later (1394), the consorts Topia – Barbadico pledge alliance with the Ottomans and became vassals of the sultan Bayezid I (1389 – 1402), what caused the Venetians' dissatisfaction.<sup>112</sup> The husband of Helena Topia by the Ottomans approval tried to occupy all the territories to the outskirts of Durrës, and also to encourage the local population in rebellion against the Venetian

<sup>106</sup>Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 326.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup>Jireček, "Witwe und die Söhne des Despoten Esau von Epirus", 16.

<sup>109</sup>The other daughter of Karl Topia was also Vojsava or Vojsllava dead on 1394, which was married with Progon Dukagjini (son of Lekë I Dukagjini) and after with a Venetian noble "Kyr Izakun, Kursaka, as is said, with the head of the patrician Venetian families, Engjëll". Šufflay, *Serbët e Shqiptarët*, 134. *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, 311.

<sup>110</sup>Ludwig von Thallóczy, Constantinus Jireček, "Zewi Urkunden aus Nordalbanien", in *Illyrisch – Albanische Forschungen*, Zusammengestellt von Dr. Ludwig von Thallóczy. (München und Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1916). Used after the translation in Albanian by Mustafa Merlika – Kruja: Ludwig von Thallóczy, Constantinus Jireček, "Kruja e qarku i saj bërthamë e Shqipnis Mesjetore", in *Vëzhgime iliro-shqiptare*, drafted by Dr. Ludwig Von Thallóczy. (Shkodër: Camaj-Pipa, 2004), 72. Šufflay, *Serbët e Shqiptarët*, 134. *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, 291.

<sup>111</sup>Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, 316.

<sup>112</sup>Thallóczy, Jireček, "Kruja e qarku i saj bërthamë e Shqipnis Mesjetore" 72.

authorities.<sup>113</sup> In these conditions, on 6 September 1394, the Republic of San Marco decided to organize the occupation of Kruja and to arrest the rebel Barbadico and his wife Helena Topia, who according to the Venetians, inspired her husband in his political stances.<sup>114</sup>

Referring to Milan Šufflay, on 14 February 1395, Konstandin Balsha (the son of Gjergj I Balsha and Teodora Dejanović), the second husband of Helena Topia, "*had taken over Kruja as a Turk vassal. Konstandin Balsha who married Helena Topia had Kruja in possession. He became ruler of the entire region of Skuria near Durrës, and on 1401 became honorary citizen of Venice together with her wife and his children.*"<sup>115</sup> But, he didn't give up his old plans to conquer Durrës even with the help of the Turks. A little bit later, he ended up tragically: prior 22 October 1402 was also sentenced in Durrës his mother Teodora, and together with his wife were sent in Venice."<sup>116</sup> On 22 October 1402, the Venetian authorities proclaimed Helena Topia innocent, and also decided to give her the previously confiscated properties back.<sup>117</sup> The year 1403 would mark the end of the political activity of the noble Topia family, when the count Niketë Topia took the castle of Kruja from the hands of his cousin, Helena.<sup>118</sup>

Boksa Dukagjini (daughter of Lekë I Dukagjini), the wife of Kojë Zaharia, ruler of the castle of Shas, and then of Deja and of the straits of the road along Drin, played a significant role in the political activity of Zaharia family. The Dukagjini and the Zaharia family, which territorially bordered each-other, and not casually had marriage alliances between them, in general have had close cooperation relations.<sup>119</sup> After the death of Lekë Zaharia (son of Kojë Zaharia and Boksa Dukagjini) on 1444, because his son Koja II, was infant, his grandmother Boksa Dukagjini, became head of the family: she sought

<sup>113</sup> *Acta Albaniae*, II, dokument nr. 518, 522. Šufflay, *Serbët e Shqiptarët*, 134.

<sup>114</sup> *Acta Albaniae*, II, dokument nr. 524, 525. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1, dokument nr. 168, 169. Šufflay, *Serbët e Shqiptarët*, 134.

<sup>115</sup> About this issue also speak: *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1, dokument nr. 125.

<sup>116</sup> Šufflay, *Serbët e Shqiptarët*, 135. For more see: Thallóczy, Jireček, "Kruja e qarku i saj bërthamë e Shqipnis Mesjetore", 73.

<sup>117</sup> *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë të shek XV*, 1, dokument nr. 267. Šufflay, *Serbët e Shqiptarët*, 134.

<sup>118</sup> *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, 291.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

the Venetian support, by giving up to the Republic of San Marco, Deja and Shas, while the other territories of the Zaharia family were handed over to the Dukagjini family.<sup>120</sup>

A leading figure in the political life has also been the most important woman of the medieval Albania, Andronika Komnena (the elder daughter of Arianit Komneni or Gjergj Arianiti and Marie Muzaka), as it is mentioned in the Gjon Muzaka's *Memorandum*,<sup>121</sup> or as its widely known with the name Donika Kastrioti, wife of Gjergj Kastrioti – Scanderbeg (married him on April 1451).<sup>122</sup> In the majestic work of the prominent Albanian historian and humanist of international dimensions, Marin Barleti, *"Historia e jetës dhe e bëmave të Skënderbeut"*, published in Rome in 1508 – 1510, it is mentioned the primal role and importance of Donika Kastrioti in ruling Scanderbeg's state, while leading nearly 3 thousand warriors who landed in August 1461 in Southern Italy, in the city of Barletta, to aid the king Ferrante I of Naples (27 June 1458 – 25 January 1494), who was encircled with a part of his army.<sup>123</sup> *"With an army composed by the prime of youth and powerful, he quickly arrived in Dauni; but, before leaving his kingdom, he carefully and wisely agreed with Mehmet II, the ruler of the Turks and signed an armistice with him for a year. There is no doubt that he (Scanderbeg – E. Baze) fixed the agreement as he wanted to, and all the other questions of his power the lead and the defense left at the hands of his wife and to some friends peer to him."*<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Historia dhe gjenealogjia shtëpisë Muzaka*, 418 – 419, 432.

<sup>122</sup> Marinus Barletius, *Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi Epirotarvm principis* (Roma: Bernardinus Venetus de Vitalibus, 1508 – 1510). Used after the translation from the original by Stefan J. Prifti: Marin Barleti, *Historia e Skënderbeut* (Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës – Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1964), 291. Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu: jeta dhe vepra* (Tiranë: Toena, 2002), 181. *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, 416. Kasëm Biçoku, *Skënderbeu* (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë – Instituti i Historisë, 2005), 127, 149 – 150.

<sup>123</sup> Barleti, *Historia e Skënderbeut*, Ninth book: 353 – 417. Frashëri, *Historia e Skënderbeut*, 379 – 380. *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, 442 – 443. Biçoku, *Skënderbeu*, 179 – 180: As a sign of gratitude for this help, the king of Naples donated to Scanderbeg the feuds of Monte Sant' Angelo and of San Giovanni Rotondo, and also an annual pension of 1200 ducats.

<sup>124</sup> Barleti, *Historia e Skënderbeut*, 392 – 393.

Political privileges and rights, Donika enjoyed even after Scanderbeg's death on 17 January 1468. Referring to one of most interesting Italian scholars on the medieval Albania of the last decades of the XX century, Paolo Petta (1942 – 1999), "*Donika hasten to write on 24 February 1468 to king of Naples, Ferrante I, to inform him on her husband's death: and in that occasion the king immediately replied to her that Scanderbeg was to him like a second father and his death was not less hard than that of my honorable father, king Alfonso*".<sup>125</sup> Also, at the same day, – writes P. Petta – king Ferrante I wrote to the faithful noble, Jeronimo Caravigno, by ordering him to meet Donika and her son and to ascertain in case that they would be placed in his kingdom, "*they would have my attention and honors that every son is obliged to do to his mother and every father is obliged to his son*", and they would enjoy their feuds and also other benefits if necessary.<sup>126</sup>

Because king Ferrante I immediately offered them his protection, and also the possibility to enjoy the revenues from their possession in Monte Sant' Angelo and San Giovanni Rotondo (where Donika has previously stayed), she and her son decided to be settled in Naples, and not in the Republic of San Marco.<sup>127</sup> In these disadvantaged historic conditions, of serious political shocks of the Albanian territories, which majority of them were occupied by the Ottomans, Donika together with Gjon, her 13 years old son, escorted by a retinue, which after the narrations of the chronicler Gjon Muzaka, was generally made of women, widows and daughters of the Albanian noble families (among them also the two sisters of the chronicler), that had lost their fathers in the war, were included in the big Albanian exodus towards Southern Italy.<sup>128</sup> Donika Kastrioti passed the major part of her life in the Aragon

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<sup>125</sup> Paolo Petta, *Despotë të Epirit e princër të Maqedonisë: mërgata shqiptare në Italinë e periudhës së Rilindjes*, translated from the original by Pëllumb Xhufi (Tiranë: Botimet IDK, 2001), 32.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* Biçoku, *Skënderbeu*, 202: The Senate of Venice decided to send in Albania Pal Engjëlli, who since many years stayed there as Scanderbeg's representative. Just arriving to Albania, Pal Engjëlli talked with Scanderbeg's wife and son, and with relatives of Kastrioti family and asked them to give Kruja to Venice along the other possessions. When Scanderbeg's wife and son left Albania, Kruja passed at the hands of Venetians.

<sup>128</sup> *Historia dhe gjenealogjia shtëpisë Muzaka*, 419 – 420: His wife, lady Scanderbeg, after her husband death went in the Kingdom of Naples together with her son, lord Gjon, and together with the mentioned lady also travelled my two sisters, who have lost their

court of Naples, where enjoyed the growing authority and privileges,<sup>129</sup> and also the support and friendship of the queen Juana (Giovanna) of Aragon (1476 – 1494), the second wife of Ferrante I.<sup>130</sup> Also, the fate of other Albanian noble woman emigrated in the Kingdom of Naples was not that bitter; thanks to the above mentioned queen, who would had contributed in their dowry, they were accepted in the bosom of the royal aristocracy, shining in the mundane Neapolitan society.<sup>131</sup>

Albania's women during the second half of the XV century, carried not a small weight and played an important role in the protection of their cities from the Ottoman attacks and encirclements, especially when they intensified and accomplished. Barleti, in his first work entitled, "*Rrethimi i Shkodrës*" (De obsidione Scodrensi), published in Latin in Venice on 10 January 1504, described the courage, heroism and contribution of the Shkodra city women in the protection of their city, during the second encirclement (second half of the 1478 – beginning of 1479). *"The flags of the enemy a thousand times were raised on the top of the moats; there were held body to body fighting even at the heart of the city; no citizen of every age-group didn't escape without being wounded. Even the girls and the women were not second to the men for courage; watching the son dying at the mother's presence, the husband at the wife's presence dying, the brother laid close to the sister and again their eyes were not there, but always preparing to the strongest warriors the weapons against the enemy, carried every work that were told to do, replaced in many works the*

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husbands in war; one was lady Maria, wife of the lord Muzak Komneni, that the people called Danxhelin; the other was lady Helena, who was married with lord Gjergj Karles; lady Maria took with her a girl called lady Porfida the big one, while lady Helena took with her another girl called Vojsava. However, also arrived other ladies, which were welcomed well by the above-mentioned king.

<sup>129</sup>*Dokumenta të shekullit XV për historinë e Shqipërisë*, vol. IV (1479 – 1506), Part I (1479 – 1499), prepared by Injac Zamputi (Tiranë: Universiteti shtetëror i Tiranës – Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1967), dokument nr. 147: 18 August 1489 – The King of Sicily decides that to Donika Kastrioti to be sent an Albanian boy called Kolë.

<sup>130</sup>*Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë 1479 – 1506*, Second part (1499 – 1506), prepared for publishing by Injaz Zamputi (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPSSH – Instituti i Historisë, 1979), dokument nr. 180: 18 January 1501 – From the diaries of the Venetian Marino Sanudo (1466 – 1536). Scanderbeg's widow, Donika, is the companion of Naple's queen.

<sup>131</sup>Petta, *Despotë të Epirit e princër të Maqedonisë*, 137.

warriors, that were resting a little bit or tied their wounds. Nor the cannon, or the weapon or the death frightened them; all were committed to one purpose: to saving the city by even shedding the last drop of blood".<sup>132</sup>

After the fall of Drishti (1 September 1478)<sup>133</sup> and Shkodra and the surroundings at the hands of the Ottomans (25 April 1479),<sup>134</sup> there were pensions,<sup>135</sup> provisions,<sup>136</sup> privileges,<sup>137</sup> and the right of asylum<sup>138</sup> in Venice and Friuli<sup>139</sup> granted by the Venetian authorities to the widows and girls of Drisht and Shkodra, whose husbands and family members lost their lives in these wars.<sup>140</sup> Help and support the Venetian Seignory didn't give only to the widows of the commanders and other high military leaders of the army,<sup>141</sup> and the representatives of the local

<sup>132</sup>Marinius Barletius, *De obsidione Scodrensi* (Venetiis: Bernardinus Venetus de Vitalibus, 1504 – 1505). Used after the translation from the original by Henrik Lacaj: Marin Barleti, *Rrethimi i Shkodrës*, third edition, (Tiranë: Naim Frashëri, 1982), 154. Marin Barleti, *Rrethimi i Shkodrës*, translated by Henrik Lacaj and prepared for publishing by David Hosaflook (Tiranë: Onufri, 2012), 206 – 207.

<sup>133</sup>Lucia Nadin, *Shqiptarët në Venedik: mërgim e integrim (1479 – 1552)*, translated by Pëllumb Xhufi (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese "55", 2008), 162.

<sup>134</sup>*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, vol. I, 471.

<sup>135</sup>*Dokumenta të shekullit XV për historinë e Shqipërisë*, vol. IV (1479 – 1506), Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 24, 25, 60, 62, 146, 188.

<sup>136</sup>*Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë 1479 – 1506*, Part II (1499 – 1506), Appendix of the Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 43, 46.

<sup>137</sup>*Dokumenta të shekullit XV për historinë e Shqipërisë*, Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 57. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë 1479 – 1506*, Second part (1499 – 1506), Appendix of Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 33.

<sup>138</sup>*Dokumenta të shekullit XV për historinë e Shqipërisë*, Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 11, 12, 35. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë 1479 – 1506*, Part II (1499 – 1506), Appendix of Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 26.

<sup>139</sup>*Dokumenta të shekullit XV për historinë e Shqipërisë*, Pjesa I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 30, 31. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë 1479 – 1506*, Part II (1499 – 1506), Appendix of Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 24, 25.

<sup>140</sup>For more see: Lucia Nadin Bassani, *Migrazione e integrazione: il caso degli Albanesi a Venezia (1479 – 1552)* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2008). Nadin, *Shqiptarët në Venedik: mërgim e integrim (1479 – 1552)*. Edmond Malaj, *Historia dhe fizionomia e një qyteti mesjetar shqiptar: Drishti* (Tiranë: Qendra e Studimeve Albanologjike – Instituti i Historisë, 2015), 278 – 280.

<sup>141</sup>*Dokumenta të shekullit XV për historinë e Shqipërisë*, Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 35, 57, 62. *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë 1479 – 1506*, Part II (1499 – 1506), Appendix of Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 26, 33.



nobility, but also to the 80 families from Shkodra belonging to the middle and lower social class.<sup>142</sup>

The presentation, analyzing and description of the above-mentioned facts, explicitly prove that the general panorama of the status of the noble citizen woman in the XIV – XV century in Albania, regarding the rights, privileges, social-political attributions etc., is similar with the original medieval models and practices of the Italian-Dalmatian region and that of the Western Adriatic Mediterranean realm as a whole.

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<sup>142</sup> *Dokumenta të shekullit XV për historinë e Shqipërisë*, Part I (1479 – 1499), dokument nr. 29.



**Andi RËMBECI**

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL-LITERARY ASPECTS  
OF BERAT DURING THE XIV-XV CENTURIES,  
FROM THE CHRONICLES OF THE MANUSCRIPT CODICES  
FROM LONDON'S BRITISH LIBRARY AND OXFORD'S  
MAGDALEN COLLEGE**

In the Additional Fund of the British Library manuscripts in London, there are a considerable number of handwritten codices (nearly 451) of Epirote origin.<sup>1</sup> At this point, four codices from the British Library have been identified<sup>2</sup> that were written or used in the city of Berat: from the British Library, *Additional 37007* of the XIII-XIV centuries and *Additional 37008* from the year 1413; from Saint Mary Magdalen College in Oxford, *Magdalen College graecus. 9* from the XII century and *Magdalen College graecus 16* from the XIV century.

Aside from the importance of the historical chronicles for the history of the Albanians, these codices, together with others preserved in the Central State Archive in Tirana,<sup>3</sup> prove the presence of handwritten

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Richard, *Inventaire des manuscrits grecs du British Museum : Fonds Sloane, Additional, Egerton, Cottonian et Stowe*. Paris: Publications de l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, III, 1952. See also *Répertoire des bibliothèques et des catalogues de manuscrits grecs de Marcel Richard*, Troisième édition entière mentree fondue par Jean-Marie OLIVIER, Brepols-Turnhout 1995. J.-M. OLIVIER, *Supplément au Répertoire des bibliothèques et des catalogues de manuscrits grecs*, Brepols 2018

<sup>2</sup> Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti a Londra (British Library), ed a Oxford (Magdalen College)", *Codices Manuscripti* 20/21 (1997): 3-59 (3-18) [reprinted in Annaclara Cataldi Palau, *Studies in Greek Manuscripts (Testi, studi, strumenti* 24), 2 vols, Spoleto, 2008, vol. 2: 443-521 (449-472)].

<sup>3</sup> On the Italian-Byzantine codices that are preserved today in the National State Archive, see Andi Rembeci, "The medieval manuscripts of Albania, cultural bridges between east and west: the case of the Italo-Greek manuscripts", in Andi Rembeci (ed.) *Shqipëria mes Lindjes dhe Perëndimit (Albania between East and West)*, Proceedings of the conference (organized by the Department of History, Faculty of History and Philology, Tirana University, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013). Tiranë, 2015, 14-33; Sokol Çunga, "The manuscripts of Berat no. 14 and 31, and a palimpsest of St. John the Chrysostom at the Central State Archive, Tirana, Albania", in

book culture, which was cultivated in southern Italy, Epirus, and Constantinople during the XIV-XV centuries, even in the Albanian milieu.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper we will present data that deals with the history and the book production culture of Berat prior to and during the time of Skanderbeg based on data found in the above-mentioned codices.

## I.

The codex *Magdalen College gr. 9* (fig. 1) was written on parchment<sup>5</sup> during the second half of the XII century and contains the four Gospels (f. 3r-115v)<sup>6</sup>, the Acts of the Apostles (f. 116r-149r),

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*Shqipëria mes Lindjes dhe Perëndimit*, ibidem, 49-61; Andi Rëmbeci, "Italo-Greek Manuscripts from the Byzantine Collection of the Manuscripts in Albania", në Dejan Dželebdžić, Stanoje Bojanin (eds.), *Proceeding of the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies Belgrade, 22 – 27 August 2016*, Belgrade 2016, 123-124.

<sup>4</sup> On the Greek manuscripts of the Southern Italy, see the basic work of Robert Devreesse, *Les Manuscrits grecs de l'Italie méridionale: histoire, classement, paléographie*. Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, 1968. See also the papers of Poul Canart and Julien Leroy "Les manuscrits en style de Reggio. Étude Paléographique et codicologique" in: *La Paléographie grecque et byzantine*. (Paris: 1977), 241-261; André Jacob, "Les écritures de Terra d'Otranto", in: *La Paléographie grecque et byzantine*. (Paris: 1977), 269-281; Paul Canart, Santo Lucà, *Codici greci dell'Italia meridionale, Catalogo della mostra*. Roma: 2000; Αγαμέμνων Τσελίκας, «Παρατηρήσεις σε Πελοποννησιακά χειρόγραφα του 11<sup>ου</sup>, 12<sup>ου</sup> και 13<sup>ου</sup> αιώνας», in: *Πρακτικά Γ' Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Πελοποννησιακών Σπουδών*, Καλαμάτα, 8-15 Σεπτεμβρίου 1985, vol. II. (Αθήνα: 1987-1988), 486-498; For a more exhaustive bibliography see Canart P. *Paleografia e codicologia greca: una rassegna bibliografica*, Littera Antiqua 7, Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia, Diplomatica e Archivistica. Città del Vaticano: 1991, 45-48.

<sup>5</sup> For the description content, the author has referred to the digitalized form of the codex by Digital Bodleian: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/4907e5b4-7b8f-40ad-9759-c417d6169afb>, referred in August, 2019. See also, Henricus O. Coxe, *Catalogus Codicum Mss. qui in Collegiis Aulisque Oxoniensibus hodie adservantur. Catalogus Codicum Mss. Collegii B. Mariae Magdalенаe*, (Oxonii: E Typographeo Academico, 1852), nr. 9, pp. 4-5. Irmgard Hutter, *Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften*: Oxford College Libraries. (Stuttgart, Hiersemann 1997), Vol. V.1: fig. 252-259, 261-276, 278-289, 291, tab. 19; Vol. 5.2: nr. kat. 30, pp. 85-90. For a more palaeographic and codicological detailed description, see Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti a Londra (British Library), ed a Oxford (Magdalen College)", in: *Studies in Greek Manuscripts (Testi, studi, strumenti 24)*, 2 vols, (Spoleto, 2008), vol. 2: 482-485. Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "The Burdett-Coutts collection of Greek manuscripts: Manuscripts from Epirus", *Codices Manuscripti* 54/55 (2006): 31-64. [Reprinted in *Studies in Greek Manuscripts (Testi, studi, strumenti 24)*, 2 vols, (Spoleto, 2008), vol. 2, 523-584].

<sup>6</sup> The Gospel according to Mark begins acephalous and incomplete: f 35r, Inc. ἐκ τ(ῶν) ου(ρ)ανῶν· σὺ εἶ ὁ υ(ι)ὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητ(ὸς).

various epistles of the Apostles (f. 149v-231r),<sup>7</sup> the Psalms of David (f. 232r-284v), Odes and Prayers (f. 285r-288r) and some blessings (f. 288r-291v). It's a luxury production of Constantinople's scriptoria: the parchment is clean and white, and the ornaments are executed according to the *Blütenblattstil* style<sup>8</sup> on a gold background, with blue dominating the ornaments.<sup>9</sup>

At the beginning of the codex, a bifolio of low-quality parchment has been added from another book of smaller dimensions than the main body of the codex. The characteristics of the parchment, notes found inside, content, and paleographic analyses make us think that the bifolio most likely was written in Berat during the XIV century.<sup>10</sup> Taking into consideration the above, we can assert that this codex could have been brought from Berat to Constantinople, perhaps around the end of the XIV century.

The bifolio contains some notes<sup>11</sup> (fig. 2) among which one is written in a dark brown color in very small letters, which contains

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<sup>7</sup> More specifically: The General Letter of the Apostle Jacob (f. 149v-152v), The First Letter of the Apostle Peter (f. 153r-156r), The Second Letter of the Apostle Peter (f. 156v-158v), The First Letter of the Apostle John (f. 159r-162r), The Second General Letter of the Apostle John (f. 162v-163r), The Third General Letter of the Apostle John (f. 163v-164r), The General Letter of the Apostle Judas (f. 164v-165r), The Letter of the Apostle Paul addressed to the Romans (f. 165v-177r), The First Letter addressed to Corinthians (f. 177v-187r), The Second Letter addressed to Corinthians (f. 188r-195r), The letter addressed to Galatians (f. 196r-199v), The letter addressed to Ephesians (f. 200r-203v), The letter addressed to Philippians (f. 204r-206v), The letter addressed to Colossians (f. 207r-209v), the First letter addressed to Thessalonians (f. 210r-212r), The Second Letter addressed to Thessalonians (f. 213r-214r), The First Letter addressed to Timotheus (f. 215r-217v), The Second Letter addressed to Timotheus (f. 218r-220r), The letter addressed to Titus (f. 220v-221v), The letter addressed to Philemon (f. 222r-v), The letter addressed to the Hebrews (223r-231r).

<sup>8</sup> On the application of the *Blütenblattstil* style in the Byzantine miniature, see Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei des IX. und X. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1935 [anastatic edition: Wien 1996 (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 243; Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Schrift und Buchwesen des Mittelalters, Reihe IV, 2/1)], 22-32.

<sup>9</sup> Coxe, *Catalogus*, 4-5; Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 484-485.

<sup>10</sup> See also Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 484-485.

<sup>11</sup> The first, in the f. 1r, is a prayer note written in the XIII-XIV centuries: «Κ(ύρι)ε ο Θε(ός) μου μη ἀπορעיνης ημας ἰσχύος σου [...]» ("My God, My Lord, don't turn away your face from us"); the second, written in two columns in another hand, informs us that the codex contains the Tetraevangelion, Letters of the Apostles and the Psalms of David; the third, is written in a dark brown color and in very small letters and contains historical notes on Balsha, as mentioned here. For the notes' transcription, see Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 483.

historical data about Balsha's II death in 1385 at the battle of Savra, Lushnja, against the Ottoman troops of Hayredin Pasha. The note was published for the first time by Henricus O. Coxe,<sup>12</sup> and later with inaccuracies by Spyridon Lambros,<sup>13</sup> from whom later scholars kept borrowing the text.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, we are presenting here the transcription of the note in the original and in translation:<sup>15</sup>

<p>«+ Εσχωτώθεν· ὁ πανυψηλωτ(ά)του αυθ(έν)τ(ης) ἡμον πάλσας· ηπο  <sup>2</sup>των αγαρηνῶν· ἔθνων· μην(ι) σεπ(τ)ε(μβ)ρ(ι)ου ιη' ἡμε(ρα) β'  <sup>3</sup>Έτους ,ζωΰδ' τις ινδηκτηώνις τόσης»</p>	<p>"Our all-highest Lord Balsha was killed by the Hagarene's on Tuesday, the eighteenth day of the month of September, of the year 6894 (=1385), of that indiction"</p>
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## II.

The second codex, *Magdalen College gr. 16*,<sup>16</sup> dates from the XIV century. It is written on paper and contains the works *Introduction to Logic* and *Introduction to Physics* by the Byzantine scholar, Nicephorus Blemmydes (1197-1272).<sup>17</sup> On the blank pages of the codex, written at different times, are some important historical notes either about the origin of the codex or the local history. For example, in f.284v, at the end of the text there is an historical note<sup>18</sup> written in small letters in a greyish-brown color related to Balsha's II death in 1385:

<p>«ἐτελεύτησεν ὁ π(αν)υψηλωτ(α)τος αυθ(έν)τ(ης) ε(μ)ων καὶ δοῦξ Διραχειον Μπαλσα ὑπο τὸν αθε(ων) καὶ παρ(μ)β (...)»</p>	<p>"Our all-highest Lord and Duke of Durrës, Balsha, was killed by the infidels and....on Tuesday, the eighteenth day of the month of</p>
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<sup>12</sup> Coxe, *Catalogus*, 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> The transcription of Sp. Lambros: "Ἐνάρχη ἔσχωτώθην αὐθέντης ἡμέτερος Πάλσας ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀγαρινῶν ἔθνων μηνός Σεπτεμβρίου ιη' ἡμέρα β' ἔτους ,ζωΰδ'". Σπυρ. Π. Λάμπρος, "Ἐνθυμήσεων ἤτοι χρονικῶν σημειωμάτων συλλογὴ πρώτη", *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 7 (1910): nr. 77, p.145.

<sup>14</sup> Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt. Berati dhe Vlora në shekujt XII-XV*, (Tiranë, 2009), 312-313, reference 1. Pëllumb Xhufi, *Arbërit e Jonit. Vlora, Delvina e Janina në shekujt XV-XVII*, (Tiranë: Onufri, 2017), 218, where the inscription's transcription made by Lampros is faithfully repeated.

<sup>15</sup> For a more recent transcription, see also: Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 486-490.

<sup>16</sup> Coxe, *Catalogus* nr. 16, fq. 7. Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 486-490. Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "The Burdett-Coutts collection", 579.

<sup>17</sup> On Nicephorus Blemmydes and his work, see Steven Runciman. *The Last Byzantine Renaissance*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 54-58.

<sup>18</sup> Σπυρ. Π. Λάμπρος, "Ἐνθυμήσεων", nr. 78, fq. 145; Coxe, *Catalogus* nr. 16, fq. 7.

εν μηνι σεπρέμβρη των αστου ιη'ημερα Σεπτεμβριου, της χρονιας 6894 (=1385), της εννυς  
β'επι ετους ,ζωηδ' (i)νδ. θ'»<sup>19</sup>. "September, of the year 6894 (=1385), the ninth  
year of the indiction".

Comparing this with another historic note from the codex *Magdalen College gr. 9* on Balsha's II death, we note, on the one hand, the use of the same terms for Balsha (Lord, *all-highest*), while on the other hand, the note above offers more detail with the additional epithet "*duke of Durrës*". Also, the word "*Hagarenes*" is replaced with the word "*the infidels*".

In folio 113r (fig. 3), there is another chronicle from the year 1480, which tells of the mortal disease of plague, its spread, and the difficult situation caused by it not only in Berat, but "*in Illyricum and all Albania*".<sup>20</sup>

### III.

The codex *Additional 37007*<sup>21</sup> (fig. 4) dates from the XIII-XIV centuries. It is written on parchment and contains the four Gospels with ecphonetic *neumes*.<sup>22</sup> In a bifolio attached to it, there is an inventory that dates from 1399<sup>23</sup> (fig. 5) that contains priceless books and objects,

<sup>19</sup> Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 487.

<sup>20</sup> The inscription's content: "*The servant of God, Lemirosnat, died from sickness in 6998 (= 1480), on February 14, the Monday of Meatfare week, at 9 o'clock in the day. Remember him O Lord, now and always, that he might find mercy on the judgment day. There were so many deaths that the victims of the plague fed the animals the rodents, and the winter in Berat [is causing many victims], [as it is] also in Licinia and Illyricum and in all Albania. But where is it not happening? Thus, the distinguished people are gone and no one mentions them by name*". For the note's transcription, see Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 487. A similar chronicle can be found in 1455, see Peter Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. 1: Teil Eingetung und Text, (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975), 666.

<sup>21</sup> Marcel Richard, *Inventaire*, 68-69. *Catalogue of additions to the manuscripts in the British Museum in the years 1900-1905*, (London: The Trustees, 1907), 279.

<sup>22</sup> The examination of the codex has been made by the author through the digitalized form in Digitised Manuscripts-British Library:

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_37007](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_37007), consulted on August, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> The inventory has been published three times by Anthim Aleksudhi: Άνθιμος Αλεξούδης, "Επιγραφαι της εν Ήπειρω Απολλωνίας", Ό εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Έλληνικος Φιλολογικος Σύλλογος. Αρχαιολογική Επιτροπή, Παράρτημα του ΙΖ' τόμου (1886): 182-187; Άνθιμος Αλεξούδης, «Δύο σημειώματα εκ χειρογράφων υπό του Άμασειας Άνθιμου Αλεξούδη», Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρίας της Ελλάδος 4 (1892): 279-281; Άνθιμος Αλεξούδης, «Κώδικες έπαρχίας Βελεγράδων. Κατάλογος μετά περιγραφής χειρογράφων κωδίκων έκκλησιαστικής ύλης, εύρισκομένων εν Βερατίω και ιδίως εν ταίς ιεραίς

property of the Monastery of Saint Nicholas in Perondi (Pentarchondia) near Berat.<sup>24</sup> In this inventory two historical personalities connected to the city of Berat are mentioned, Theodore III Muzaka, described as "*Lord of Berat*", and Balsha II, who is listed as the donor of the silk curtain for the imperial door. The inventory also contains notes about the tumultuous period in Berat during the XIV(-XV) century due to the Ottoman incursions.

From paleographical and codicological examination, the codex contains all the particularities that characterize the Epirote codices. This means that, most likely, this codex has always been preserved in the place where it was copied. From the inventory, we learn that the codex belonged at that time (in 1399) to the Monastery of Saint Nicholas in Perondi (Pendarchondia), which is situated nearly 12 km north of Berat. The inventory was drafted by Daniel,<sup>25</sup> a hieromonk and abbot of the monastery, who was planning to give some of the priceless objects and codices of the monastery to Theodore Muzaka "*the city's lord*", to preserve them at Berat's castle, from fear of an Ottoman attack. At the time Anthimos Alexoudes published two descriptions of the manuscript in the years 1892 and 1900, the codex was preserved at the Church of St. Mary of Blachernae (Παναγία τῶν Βλαχερνῶν), in the castle of Berat, and was kept by the sons of Ioannes Paulos Oikonomou,

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ἐκκλησίαις τῆς συνοικίας Κάστρου, οἷον τῆς Μητροπόλεως Βελεγράδων τῆς ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῆς Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου τιμωμένης, τῆς Παναγίας Εὐαγγελιστρίας, τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Γεωργίου», *Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* 21 (1901): [23.02.1901] 71-72. A later edition of this inventory, with some text corrections and of the date of Aleksudhi's publication on 1892, has been made by Sp. Lampros: Σπυρίδων Π. Λάμπρος, «Διορθώσεις εἰς ἔγγραφον ἐκ Βελαγράδων», *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 7 (31 Δεκεμβρίου 1910, τεύχοςΔ'): 486-487. In the Albanian language the inventory has been published at Koço Bozhori, *Dokumente të periudhës bizantine për historinë e Shqipërisë: (shek. VII-XV)*, (Tiranë: Mihal Duri, 1978), 105. For other editions, with inaccuracies corrections, see Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 443-521 (449-472). Andi Rëmbeci, Sokol Çunga, "Greek Manuscripts in Albania: Book Circulation and Libraries. Preliminary evaluations from a catalogue in process", paper presented in: *Le livre manuscrit grec : écritures, matériaux, histoire*. IXe Colloque international de Paléographie grecque à la mémoire de Paul Canart, (Lundi 10 septembre – Samedi 15 septembre 2018) (forthcoming).

<sup>24</sup> On Saint Nicholas church, see Aleksandër Meksi, *Arkitektura e kishave të Shqipërisë (shekujt VII-XV)*, (Tiranë, Uegen, 2004), 152-155; Aleksandër Meksi, "Arkitektura dhe restaurimi i kishës së Perondisë", *Monumentet* 5-6 (1973): 19-42.

<sup>25</sup> Erich Trapp, Walther Rainer, Hans-Veit BEYER, *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 1976, nr. 5102.



inhabitants of the castle.<sup>26</sup> Later, the manuscript *Add. 37007* together with *Add. 37008* were owned for a very short time (1900-1904), by a certain Ioannes Eleuteriou in Corfu.<sup>27</sup> In 1904, the codices became part of a collection of twelve Greek manuscripts, *Add. 37001-37012*, possessed by Rev. John Samuel Dawes, vicar of Corfu during the end of the XIX century to the beginning of the XX century. The latter collection was bought in 1904 by the library of the British Museum in London.<sup>28</sup>

As we mentioned above, on folio 1r of the codex there is an inventory<sup>29</sup> of the properties of the Monastery of Saint Nicholas of Pendarchondia. The inventory's content<sup>30</sup> regarding the books of the monastery, is as follows:

<p>«Ἐγὼ Δανηὴλ ἱερομόναχος καὶ καθηγούμενος τῆς μονῆς τοῦ ἁγίου Νικολάου τὸν Πεντερχοντίον ἐξεβαίνω με τὸν αὐθ(έντην) [...] Θεόδ(ω)ρ(ον) τὸν</p>	<p>“I, Daniel, hieromonk and abbot of the Monastery of Saint Nicholas of Pentarchondia, went to my Lord Theodor Muzaka and took with me a fine ancient</p>
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<sup>26</sup> Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξούδης, «Κώδικες ἐπαρχίας Βελεγράδων», [23.02.1901] 71-72.

<sup>27</sup> Caspar René Gregory, *Textkritik des Neuen Testaments*, (Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1900), 428, nr. 459, 461.

<sup>28</sup> Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 446, 450.

<sup>29</sup> The inventory has been published three times by Anthim Aleksudhi: Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξούδης, "Ἐπιγραφαὶ τῆς ἐν Ἠπείρῳ Ἀπολλωνίας", *Ὁ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ἑλληνικὸς Φιλολογικὸς Σύλλογος. Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐπιτροπὴ*, Παράρτημα τοῦ ΙΖ' τόμου (1886): 182-187; Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξούδης, «Δύο σημειώματα ἐκ χειρογράφων ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀμασειᾶς Ἀνθίμου Ἀλεξούδου», *Δελτίον τῆς Ἱστορικῆς καὶ Ἐθνολογικῆς Εἰταιρίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος* 4 (1892): 279-281; Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξούδης, «Κώδικες ἐπαρχίας Βελεγράδων. Κατάλογος μετὰ περιγραφῆς χειρογράφων κωδίκων ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ὕλης, εὑρισκομένων ἐν Βερατίῳ καὶ ἰδίως ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς συνοικίας Κάστρου, οἷον τῆς Μητροπόλεως Βελεγράδων τῆς ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῆς Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου τιμωμένης, τῆς Παναγίας Εὐαγγελιστρίας, τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Γεωργίου», *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* 21 (1901): [23.02.1901] 71-72. A later edition of this inventory, with some text corrections and of the publishing date of Alexoudes on 1892, has been made by Sp. Lambros: Σπυρίδων Π. Λάμπρος, «Διορθώσεις εἰς ἔγγραφον ἐκ Βελαγράδων», *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 7 (31 Δεκεμβρίου 1910, τεύχος Δ'): 486-487. For other editions with additional corrections, see Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 443-521 (449-472). Andi Rembeci, Sokol Çunga, "Greek Manuscripts in Albania: Book Circulation and Libraries. Preliminary evaluations from a catalogue in process", paper presented in: *Le livre manuscrit grec : écritures, matériaux, histoire*. IXe Colloque international de Paléographie grecque à la mémoire de Paul Canart, (Lundi 10 septembre – Samedi 15 septembre 2018) (forthcoming).

<sup>30</sup> The previously printed forms of the inventory transcriptions present some slight changes with our transcription, mainly regarding the analysis of the abbreviations and the corrections of some words. Within the arch brackets are put the abbreviations' amplifications, meanwhile within the brackets are declared the letters that are lost due to the damage of the written surface.

Μουζάκ(ον)· καὶ ἐπέρνω με τὸν εμαυτὸν  
 ιερο)ν ἀρχ(αῖον) εὐαγγέλιον εὐλογάδην  
 ἐκοσμησμέ(νον) με στ(αυ)ρὸν  
 ἀργειρόχρυσ(ον) [...] τ[έ]σ[σε]ρας  
 εὐαγγελεῖστας δευραν(ον)· κ(αὶ)  
 τετραβαγγελον δευραν(ον)· ἐξαήμερος  
 κομάτια δύο τὸ πρῶτ(ον) κ(αὶ) το  
 δεύτερ(ον)· κατα Ματθαί(ως)· Θεολόγ(ος)  
 δεύρανο(ς)· Θεολόγ(ος) βαβήκηνο(ς)  
 δηερμηνευμ(έν)ος· Ἀναστάσιο(ς)  
 δεύρανο(ς)· Ζουηροῦν ὁμηνον  
 βαβήκηνο(ν)· μεκό[κ]ην(ον)· τομάριον·  
 Ἀντίοχο(ς) βαβήκηνο(ς)· Εὐφραῖμ  
 βαβήκηνο(ς)· Ψαλτ(ή)ρι(ον)· δεύραν(ον)  
 δηερμηνευμ(έν)ον· προφητία βαβήκηνο(ν)  
 ἡρμολόγ(ιον) βαβήκηνο(ν)  
 τὸνησμ(έν)ως· Κατήχησις βαβήκηνο(ν)  
 Τηπηκὸν δεύραν ο Ἱεροσολημητ(ικόν)·  
 Σχηματολόγ(ιον) βαβήκηνο(ν)· Μηναίων  
 καθημερηῶν ἐξαμηναιὸν δεύραν(ον),  
 ἡγουν σεπτέβριος, ὠκτόμβριος, νοέμβριος,  
 δεκέμβριος, ἱαν(ουά)ρ(ιος) καὶ [...]·  
 Εὐχολόγ(ιον) βαβήκηνο(ν)· ὁμου κομάτια  
 ἡκοση ... καὶ παραδίδω ... εἰς τὰς χεῖρας  
 τοῦ αὐθ(έντου) μου τοῦ Θεοδώρου τοῦ  
 Μουζάκ(η), νάην(εν) εἰς τὸ κελ(ά)ρ(ι) καὶ  
 νὰ τὰ ἐπηβλέπ(ει) ὀκελλ(α)ρ(ίτης) ὁ  
 Θεοτόκης ἀσφαλὸς... ἐξήβαλα ἐγὼ ὁ  
 Δανηὴλ καθηγοῦμ(εν)ος καὶ ἀμαρτωλὸς  
 ἱερομόναχος διὰτ(ὸν) φόβον τὸν Τουκὸν ἐκ  
 τὴν σε(βασμῖαν) μονὴν τοῦ ἁγίου  
 Νικολάου... ἐγρά(φη) ἐνμ(ν)ι νοεμβρίω  
 εἰς τὰς ὠκτώ... ἐπὶ ἔτους, ς, ςη΄  
 (6908=1399). »

gospel, decorated with a gold-plated silver cross [...]; the four Gospels on parchment; and [another] four Gospels on parchment; two volumes, the first and second, of the Hexameron, ; [the Gospel] according to Mathew; [the Gospel] according to John the Theologian on parchment; [the Gospel] according to John the Theologian with comments [written] on paper; of Anastasios on parchment; (the Nomocanon of John) Zonaras on paper [bound] with red leather; [book] of Antioch on paper; [book] of Efremon on paper; the Psalterion on parchment with comments; the Prophecies on paper; Hermologion on paper with notes; [the book] of Catechism on paper; the Typicon of Jerusalem on parchment; the Schematologion on paper; the daily Menaion of the six months on parchment, i.e., September, October, November, December, January and February; the Euchologion on paper; all together twenty pieces. ... and I consigned these...into the hands of my Lord Theodore Muzaka to be placed in the cellar and to be safely guarded by the cellar man Theotokis<sup>31</sup>.... I took them from the respected Monastery of Saint Nicholas, I, Daniel a sinner, abbot and hieromonk, for fear of the Turks... Written on the eighth of the month of November... in 6908 (=1399).”

The above-mentioned episode in the inventory seems typical of that time. Indeed, Berat was known for its fortified castle, with the Byzantine walls which had been rebuilt by the despot Michael Angelos Komnenos around 1205, when Berat was part of the territories of the Despotate of Epirus.<sup>32</sup> However, the Monastery of Saint Nicholas of Pendarchondia was unprotected outside the castle, "nearly one hour and

<sup>31</sup> Erich Trapp et al., *PLP*, no. 7561.

<sup>32</sup> Aleksandër Meksi, Apollon Baçe, Emin Riza, *Berati, historia dhe arkitektura*, (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 2011), 43-81. Gjerak Karauskaj, *5000 vjet fortifikime në Shqipëri*, (Tiranë: Pegi, 2015), 124-128.

a half" north of Berat.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, hieromonk Daniel was seeking to save the treasures of his monastery by entrusting them to the lord of the city, in order to protect them in the fortified castle. His concern "for fear of the Turks" seems to be fully justified because of the Ottoman incursions which had become more frequent since the end of the XIV century, during which time Berat fell into the hands of the Ottomans.<sup>34</sup>

The manuscripts mentioned in the inventory of the codex *Add 37007* are difficult to identify because of the unclear and very general description.<sup>35</sup> Anyway, we support the view of Annaclara Cataldi Palau, according to whom both codices *Add. 37007* and *37008* were preserved in Berat until the beginning of the XX century, encouraging us to think that other codices could have had the same destiny.<sup>36</sup> During our first effort, we managed to identify five codices of the *Add. 37007* inventory in the description that Alexoudes gave at the beginning of the XX century, as well as with those manuscripts that have survived until today and are preserved at the CSA.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξούδης, «Δύοσημειώματα», 279-280; Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξούδης, «Κώδικες ἐπαρχίας Βελεγράδων», 71.

<sup>34</sup> Aleksandër Meksi, Apollon Baçe, Emin Riza, *Berati*, 38. Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët*, 301-364, 349-352, for the relevant bibliography.

<sup>35</sup> The descriptions of the codices as the Four Gospels, Menaia, Psalterion etc., without any other more specific details, makes it difficult to match them to any other periodically printed catalogues. Codices of these types are found in almost churches, monasteries, and other church institutions' libraries.

<sup>36</sup> Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 467.

<sup>37</sup> On earlier efforts to build a concordance between the data published by Anthim Aleksudhi and the inventory *Add. 37007*, see Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 447, note 14 and 467-468. For a concordance between the codices of the Fond 488 in the AQSH and the manuscripts of the Catalogue Koder-Trapp (Johannes Koder, Erich Trapp, "Katalog der griechischen handschriften im Staatsarchiv zu Tirana", *Jahrbuch der österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 17 (1968): 197-214), see Andi Rembeci, Sokol Çunga, "The Byzantine and Post Byzantine collection of manuscripts at the Central State Archive of Tirana and a concordance between the Kodder-Trapp Catalogue of Tirana Manuscripts and their actual shelf-number" in: *Proceedings of the 22<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, Sofia, 22-27 August 2011, (Sofia: 2011), vol. III, 357. See also: *Greek New Testament manuscripts from Albania*, published in the series: New Testament tools, studies and documents, v. 57, Leiden 2018, where the authors Didier Lafleur and Luc Brogly have published on pages 58-60 and 523-543, as an appendix, a concordance table of Albania's codices, also including that of Koder-Trapp. For another, albeit inaccurate, effort in constructing such a concordance, see also: Sinani, *Kodikët e Shqipërisë në "Kujtesën e Botës"*, (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 2011), 66.

N r.	Inventory (Add 37007) 1399	A. Alexoudes 1898-1900	A. Alexoudes 1900/1901/19 02	CSA F. 488
1	Daily Menaion of the six months in parchment, i.e., September, October, November, December, January and February.	Codex no. 28	Codex no. 13	
2	Typicon of Jerusalem on parchment.	Codex no. 31	Codex no. 16	Codex of Berat no. 33
3	The Psalter in parchment with comments.	Codex no. 37	Codex no. 23	
4	(The Gospel) according to John the Theologian with commentary, on paper.	Codex no. 39	Codex no. 25	
5	Holy Lectionary, ancient, decorated with gold-plated silver cross.	Codex no. 4	Codex no. 32	Codex of Berat no. 6

#### IV.

The codex *Additional 37008*<sup>38</sup> (fig. 6) is a lectionary copied in 1413 on western paper of Italian provenance produced at the end of the XIV century - beginning of the XV century.<sup>39</sup> The codex is written in baroque style, in black ink, in large size letters. The paper contains

<sup>38</sup> The examination of the codex has been made by the author through the digitalized form in Digitized Manuscripts-British Library:

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_37008](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_37008), consulted for the last time in August, 2019. For more, the examination data are also compared with the existing bibliography: Marcel Richard, *Inventaire*, 69. *Catalogue of additions*, 279-280. Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξούδης, «Κατάλογος τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς συνοικίας Κάστρου, πόλεως Βερατίου τῆς Μητροπόλεως Βελεγράδων εὑρισκομένων ἀρχαίων χειρογράφων», *Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρίας της Ελλάδος* 5 (1900): 352-369, 357-359. Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξούδης, «Κώδικες ἐπαρχίας Βελεγράδων», *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* 20 (1900): [15.12.1900], 545, nr. 39. Caspar René Gregory, *Textkritik*, 428, 1268, 1287. Ioannis Spatharakis, *Corpus of Dated Illuminated Greek Manuscripts to the Year 1453*, (Byzantina Neerlandica 8), (Leiden 1981), 68, nr. 280. Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 472-482.

<sup>39</sup> Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 476-477.

different watermarks: a bell (f. 1-5, 8-15, 19-28), the capital letter B, a pair of half-unicorns, a half-dog, and a half-horse.

In folio 397r-v of the manuscript a codicographical note is found (fig. 7-8) which says that the codex was copied in the city of Berat by the copyist Georgios Siderokastrites («Γεώργιος Σιδεροκαστρίτης»)<sup>40</sup> at the expense of "the very respected, lord" of the city, Nichephoros Louvrios<sup>41</sup> and his wife, Maria Kyrikalena.<sup>42</sup> Both of these are also mentioned as *ktetors* (founders) of the Monastery of Saint Marina to which, apparently, they donated the codex. Both of the donors of the manuscript, Nichephoros Louvrios and his wife Maria Kyrikalena, together with the copyist Georgios Siderokastrites are known to us only from this codicographical note, and very little is known about them even now.

On folio 1r of the manuscript is another inventory<sup>43</sup> (fig. 9) with 28 handwritten codices, property of the Church of St. Marina in Berat. Even though the inventory was mentioned by A. Alexoudes in his edition of the catalogue of the codices of Berat, it was not published by him. In the beginning, before the inventory, there is a note<sup>44</sup> about the finding of something (codices, maybe) in the Church of Saint Marina and of their donor, or perhaps purchaser since money is mentioned. Following this note is the usual curse against those who would harm or alienate the codices. At the end is the signature of the man who found the codices, «ἀναξίου Στ(α)μ(ά)του τοῦ Καλατ(ιν)ου» (*the unworthy*

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<sup>40</sup> Marie Vogel, Viktor Gardthausen, *Die griechischen Schreiber des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, (Leipzig O. Harrassowitz, 1900), 84; Ernst Gamillscheg, Dieter Harlfinger, Herbert Hunger, *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800-1600*, Brand III/1A: Verzeichnis der Kopisten. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Byzantinistik, (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 61, no. 70.

<sup>41</sup> Erich Trapp et al., *PLP*, no. 15053; Marie Vogel, Viktor Gardthausen, *Die griechischen Schreiber*, 84. Σπυρίδων Λάμπρος, «Ενθυμήσεων», 276-277, no. 560.

<sup>42</sup> Erich Trapp et al., *PLP*, nr. 14007. Marie Vogel, Viktor Gardthausen, *Die griechischen Schreiber*, 84.

<sup>43</sup> Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξοῦδης, «Ἐπιγραφαι», 186-187. Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξοῦδης, «Κατάλογος», 357-359. Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξοῦδης, «Κώδικες ἐπαρχίας Βελεγράδων», *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* 20 (1900): [15.12.1900] 544-545. The note has been reprinted with corrections by Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 474-475.

<sup>44</sup> The note has been transcribed and published by Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 474-475.

*Stamati from Galata or Kalata*), keeper of the manuscripts.<sup>45</sup> Then following the inventory, written by another hand, but contemporary, with the following content:

« Τα βηλία τῆς ἀγίας Μαρίας (βας)· Παρακλητ(ι)κος, κομάτ(ια) β', ἐβανγγέλ(ι)ον ενκόσμεσ[μένον], <sup>2</sup> Πεντ(η)κοστάριν, Τριόδην, Απόστολ(ον), Μηνίο αὐγουστος καὶ σεπτέβρις· μηνὶ ὀκτώβρ[ι]ον <sup>3</sup> μηνὶ νεόβριος· μηνὶ δικέβριος καὶ γενάρης· μηνὶ φεβρουάριος καὶ μάριος <sup>4</sup> μηνὶ ἀπρ(ί)λιος καὶ μαίος· μηνὶ ἰούνιος καὶ ἰούλιος· βιβλίον δέβερνο λόγ(ων) τῶν ἁγίων, <sup>5</sup> Πραξαππό(στ)ο(λος), μην(ι) ἰουνηος δέβαρνος· βηλὴ εὐλόγ(α)δῃ· βηβλίον Ἀνδρέου τοῦ σαλου· <sup>6</sup> Λειτουργ(ία) β', μικρὸ βηβλὴ δεβάρ(νο), καὶ ἄλλο μικρὸ βαβήκινον, Πανηγυρικὸ βαβή(κινον) <sup>7</sup>, Ὁρολόγ(ιον), Ἀμαπανιμάρι· Τριαδικὸν· Ἀνθολόγ· Θεολόγος· Ἀκουλουθία τῆς <sup>8</sup> ομοῦ βηβλία κη' »<sup>46</sup>.

*The books of Saint Marina; Paraclitike, pieces 2; decorated gospel; Pentecostarion; Triodion; [Acts and Letters of the] Apostle[s]; Menaion of August and September; Menaion of October; Menaion of November; Menaion of December and January; Menaion of February and March; Menaion of April and May; Menaion of June and July; book in parchment with words of the saints; Acts of the Apostles; Menaion of June in parchment; book of euchologion; the book of Andrea the Fool (in Christ); two Liturgies; small book in parchment; and another small in bombycine; Panegyric in bombycine; the book of Hours; The book of Deceased; Triodion; Anthology; (the book of) Theologian; the books of Services; all together 28.*

The identification of the 28 codices in this inventory is even more problematic than in the previous one, taking into consideration the extreme uncertainty of every codex description. What can be said for certain is that there are two categories of codices: of parchment and of paper.

Aside from the above-mentioned inventories, information about the existence of these books in the Albanian milieu comes from the well-known note in the "Diptych" of the Monastery of Saint George in the castle of Berat, written in 1356.<sup>47</sup> The note and the description of the 26 preserved codices informs us as follows:<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Our transcription from the original Additional 37008, f. 1r. Compare: Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 475.

<sup>46</sup> The transcription of Annaclara Cataldi Palau, "Manoscritti epiroti", 474-475 has small differences with our transcription, on the orthography, use of accents and on analyses of the abbreviations. Within the brackets are put the abbreviations' explication.

<sup>47</sup> The note of Diptych, or the Chronicle of Skuripeki as is differently called, is published for the first time by Pierre Batiffol, «Les manuscrits grecs de Bérat d'Albanie et le Codex

Πατέρες ἅγιοι, οὗτος ὁ Σκουριπέκης ἐχάρισε τῆς Μονῆς τοῦ Μεγάλου Θεολόγου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Γεωργίου βιβλία κς' τὰ διαλεκτὰ καὶ τὰ κριτώτερα, ὅταν ἐκούρσεψαν οἱ Σέρβοι τὰ Βελάγραδα ἠνέταζαν, ἐκρεμνοῦσαν δεξιά καὶ ἀριστερὰ τὰς ρύμνας ἀπέσω εἰς τὸ Κάστρον. Ὁ παπᾶς Θεόδουλος δὲ ἐκεῖνος θαρρῶντας εἰς μικρὰν ἐνόραν ἐπαρακάλεσεν τὸν τοιοῦτον καὶ ἀπῆγε τον ἔως τὸν Πύργον εἰς τὴν μεγάλην πόρταν τοῦ Κάστρου καὶ ἀπογλύτωσαν τὰ τοιαῦτα κς' βιβλία καὶ ἐκουβάλησάν τα ἔσω εἰς τὸν Κουλὰν εἰς δ' ὁρὰς ὁ ἱερομόναχος ἐκεῖνος εἰς τὸν ὦμον του καὶ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας του ἀπὸ β'. Οἱ σύντροφοί του δὲ ἐκούρσεβαν καὶ ἀδιαφοροῦσαν... ἐν τῷ ,ζωζδ' ἔτει (= 1356)....

*Holy fathers, this Skuripekis donated to the Monastery of the Great Theologian and [to the Monastery] of Saint George 26 treatises and the most important books. When the Serbs sacked Berat, everything was turned upside down by them; they were hanging people on the left and right of the castle roads, Father Theodoulos, who was watching from a small distance, and summoned him [Skuripekis] and brought him to the tower [that is situated] at the big gate of the castle, and they saved these 26 books by carrying them to the inner part of the tower, the hieromonk and Skuripekis making 4 trips, carrying them on their back, and two books by hand, while his comrades robbed and remained indifferent. The brothers of the hieromonk left, as did all the inhabitants of the castle. ... [This occurred] in 6864 [1356]. [...]*

Subsequently, follows the description of 26 manuscripts:

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Purpureus Φ », *Archives des missions scientifiques et littéraires*, 3e série, Paris, 13 (1887), appendix 2, 437-556, 554-556. Later, is published by Aleksudhi in two of his articles: Ἀλεξούδης, “Δύο σημειώματα”, 275-279 and Ἀνθιμος Ἀλεξούδης, «Κώδικες ἐπαρχίας Βελεγράδων», *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* 21 (1901): [21.01.1901] 16. The note is also mentioned in Albanian by Sinani, *Kodikët e Shqipërisë*, 372, where is found the relevant bibliography in Albanian. By mistake, the author unifies (p. 372, note 280) and inaccurately transforms (p. 130, 405) its content with two other notes found in the Codex of Berat nr. 27. See also Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët*, 241-242, where the translation in Albanian is not true to the original.

<sup>48</sup> The note is brought here, with improvements in the Albanian translation, from Ἀλεξούδης, “Δύο σημειώματα”, 275-279.

Εἰσὶ δὲ τὰ βιβλία τὰ ὅποια ἀπεγλύτωσεν ὁ αὐτὸς Σκπουριπέκης τὸν Τερομόναχον Θεόδουλον ἐν πρώτοις οἱ ἑξαήμεροι οἱ β' ... [μηναιᾶ] κομμάτια ζ'. ἤτοι Σεπτέμβριος, Ὀκτώβριος, Νοέμβριος, Δεκέμβριος, Ἰανουάριος, καὶ ἄλλον κομμάτι Ἀνουάριον καὶ τὸ Καλοκαιρινόν. Συναζάρια βιβλία γ'. Θεολόγον. Στιχηράρην τὸ διπλοτονισμένον καὶ ἄλλον ἐν παλαιόν. Ἀπόστολος καὶ Πραξαπόστολος. Τριώδιον. Προφήτας. Ὀκτώηχος. Ἀγιογεωργικὸν τὸ Ρωμαϊκόν ... Μηναιᾶ κομμάτια ε'. ἤτοι Αὐγουστος Σεπτέμβριος, Ὀκτώβριος Ἀνουάριος, Φεβρουάριος τὰ καλλίτερα. Τὸ Ψαλτήριον τοῦ κτήτορος μὲ τὴν χρυσογραμμίαν. Τὸ σεντοκόπουλον μὲ τὰ δικαιώματα εὐρίσκονται ἐσήκωσεν ὁ παπ Θεόδουλος ἐπὶ τοὺς Σέρβους. Τετραενάγγελον Βουλγαρίας. Τετραενάγγελον τὸ οἰκειόχειρον τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου ἀσημόγραφον. Τὸν Πραξαπόστολον τὸν Πολίτικον. Ἀγιογεωργικόν. Ἐξαγόρασεν τὸ μέγαν Εὐαγγέλιον...

*The books, thus, that were saved by Skuripekis and the hieromonk Theodoulos were, firstly, two [books of] the Hexaemeron; six books of the Menaia, i.e., September, October, November, December, January, and another book for January, and the summer book; three books of the Synaxaria; the books of the Theologian [the gospel according to John or the Apocalypse]; a double-noted Sticherarion, and another old one; the book of the [Letters of the] Apostle and the books of the Acts of the Apostles; the book of the Triodion; the book of the Prophets; the book of the Oktoechos; the book of the biography of Saint George in Latin; [undeciphered] five good quality stamped books of the Menaia: August, September, October, January, February; the Psalter of the founder with gold letters; a small wooden chest with legal documents which were found in it, which was carried by father Theodoulos at the time of the Serbs; the four Gospels in Bulgarian; the four Gospels written in silver by the hand of St. John Chrysostom; the Acts of the Apostles from Constantinople; the book of the Biography of St. George; he bought the big Gospel....*

The historic context has been treated several times in the literature, starting with Konstantin Jireček who was the first to use this text to reconstruct the events of this time.<sup>49</sup> Without wanting to underestimate the historical significance of these efforts, we think that the value of the text is even greater for understanding the cultural context of the time. It expresses in direct language the people's concern for intellectual and spiritual assets, demonstrates social engagement during a period of danger, and gives the first evidence for the existence of the purple

<sup>49</sup> Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët*, 242-246, where is also found the respective bibliography.



codex *Beratinus I*, which would have been lost without the courage of the above-mentioned persons.

From these three inventories, we notice that in Berat there were at least three libraries belonging to the monasteries and churches of that area. In this context, the question naturally arises of how significant the number of the books and libraries in Berat were for that time. If we take a look at other libraries in different countries and at different time periods, we would see that their number varies depending on the number of the brotherhood or on the time when the monasteries were founded. Thus, from the data that are given by Prof. Peter Schreiner<sup>50</sup> we note that the Monastery of the Theotokos of Gabaliotisa in Vodena (Edesa)<sup>51</sup> possessed a library with 37 liturgical books in 1373. The Panoiktirmon Monastery (Christ the Merciful), founded in Constantinople by Michael Attaleiates about the year 1100, possessed nearly 50 codices, in spite of a limited number of monks.<sup>52</sup> The library of another monastery, that of Saint Peter and Paul in Pani from the XV century, whose location is not very clear, numbered 36 books.<sup>53</sup> The first Russian monastery founded on Mount Athos, the Monastery Xylourgou (today Skiti Bogoroditsa), had a library with 49 books in 1142.<sup>54</sup> In 1299/1300, the library of the Monastery of Grottaferrata, 200 years after its establishment, numbered 61 books.<sup>55</sup> The Monastery of Bachkovo or Petritsonis, south of Bulgaria, possessed a library with 31

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<sup>50</sup> Peter Schreiner, "Sorge um Handschriften. Zwei wenig bekannte Nachrichten zur serbischen Kultur im 14. Jahrhundert," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 41 (2004), 353-360, where is found the relevant bibliography. I wish to thank Prof. Schreiner for making available a copy of his article.

<sup>51</sup> About the foundation and the history of the Monastery of the Theotokos of Gabaliotisa, see Paul Lemerle et al. *Archives de l'Athos, Actes de Lavra: III. De 1329 à 1500*, (Paris, 1979), 100-104, nr. 146; 105-107, nr. 147; Ninoslava Rodoiević, Gojko Subotić, "Bogorodica Gavaliotisa u Vodenu (La Vierge Gaballiotissa a Edessa)", *Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'Etudes Byzantine* 27-28 (1989), 217-263.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Gautier, "La Diataxis de Michel Attaliat", *Revue des études byzantines* 39 (1981), 5-143, mainly 93-97. Also, Peter Schreiner, "Sorge um Handschriften", 353-360.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas William Allen, "Palaeographica", *Journal of Philology* 19 (1891): 62-68, especially on the books list: 66-67.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Lemerle et al. *Actes de Saint-Pantéléemôn*, *Archives de l'Athos*, 12. (Paris: P. Lethielleux 1982), 65-76.

<sup>55</sup> Stefano Parenti, "Manoscritti del monastero di Grottaferrata nel typikon dell'egumeno Biagio II", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 95 (2008), 641-672, especially on the books list: 645-669; Peter Schreiner, "Sorge um Handschriften", 353-360.

books at the time of its establishment (1083).<sup>56</sup> The Monastery of Eleousa in Strumitsa owned a library of 68 books in 1449.<sup>57</sup>

The comparative numbers show that the libraries of the three monasteries in Berat, with a total number of 75 books, owned an above average wealth of books for the time. Of course, the number of 75 codices represents only "*the treatises and the most important*" books and not the total number of the books in the possession of Berat's monasterial libraries. On the other hand, in the libraries that were analyzed in this paper, we notice that aside from the manuscripts of evangelical content and religious books, there are also two musical codices, one of legislative content, and another that can be defined as philosophical, although in the religious field: *Introduction to Logic* and *Introduction to Physics* by the Byzantine scholar, Nicephorus Blemmydes (1197-1272).<sup>58</sup> These books are not for daily use and demonstrate a special intellectual inclination.

The discovery of the new codices clearly originating from the Albanian milieu, as is the case of the codices presented in this paper, and the existence today in Albania of the codices that are part of this cultural environment, opens a new window to recognize not only the past creativity and civilization of the Albanian medieval territories, but also the strong evidence for the cultural orientation and the influence of the Albanians during that time.

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<sup>56</sup> This monastery, which still functions, is located in Bulgaria, near modern Bachkovo in the valley of the river Chaya surrounded by the Rodope mountains, south of Plovdiv (Byzantine Philippopolis). For more see, Paul Gautier, "Le typikon de la Théotokos Évergétis," *Revue des études byzantines* 40 (1982), 5-101, on the Typikon text: 15-95. [Re-edition "Evergetis: Typikon of Timothy for the Monastery of the Mother of God Evergetis", in: John Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero (eds.) *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 454-506.].

<sup>57</sup> Petar Miljković-Peppek, *Veljusa: manastir Sv. Bogorodica Milostiva vo seloto Veljusa kraj Strumica*. (Skopje: Fakultet za filozofsko-istoriski nauki na univerzitetot "Kiril i Metodij", 1981), 283-309, re-issue with the English translation of the inventory in: "Eleousa Inv.: Inventory of the Monastery of the Mother of God Eleousa in Stroumitza", in: John Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero (eds.) *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 1667-1678.

<sup>58</sup> See above, note 15.

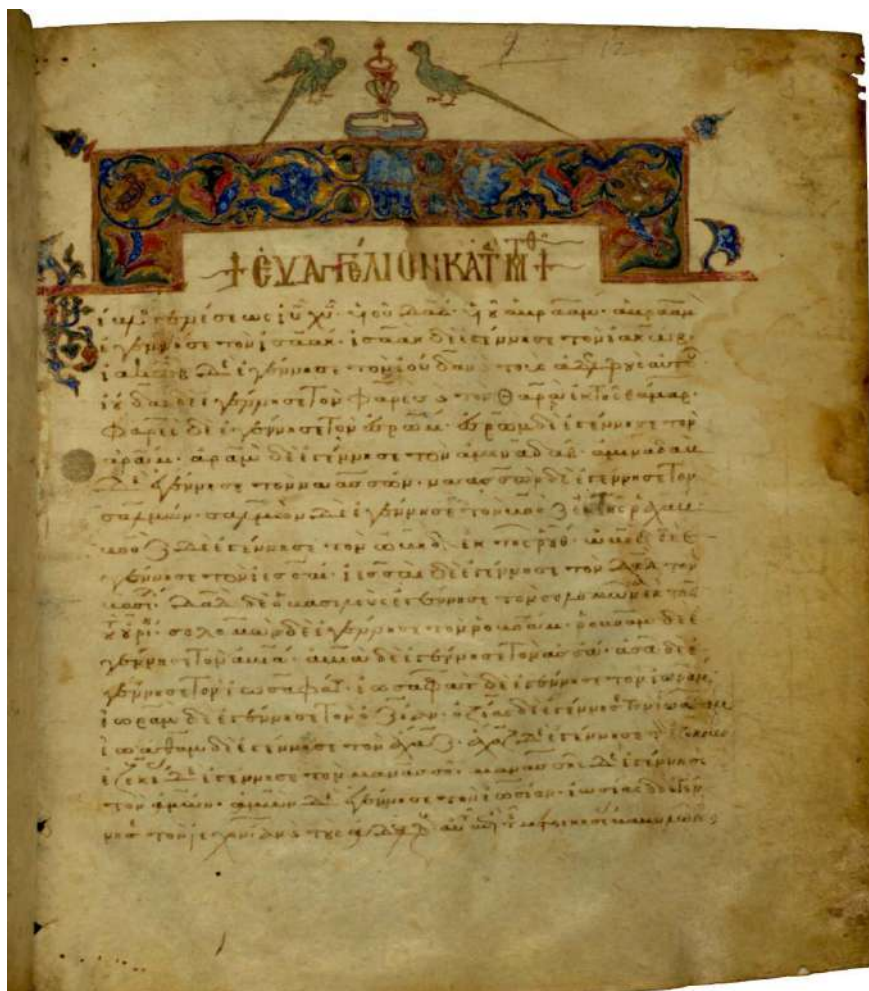


Figure 1. Magdalen College gr. 9, f 3r. The beginning of the Gospel of Matthew

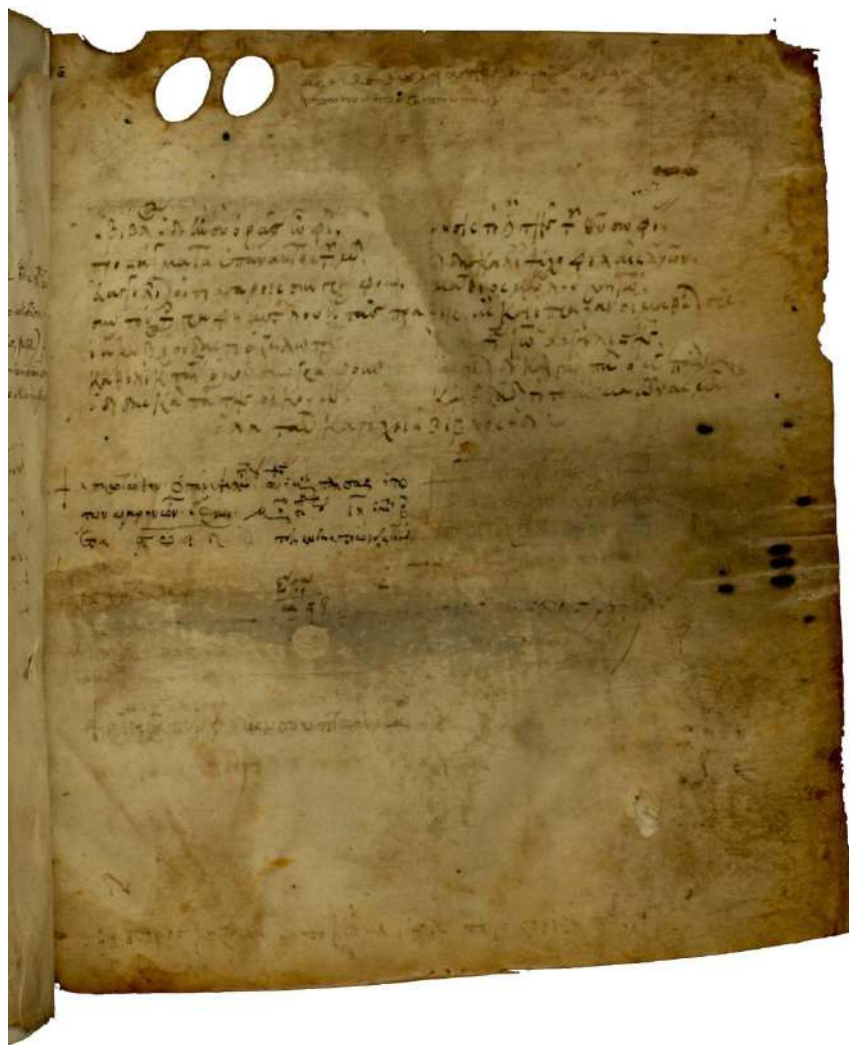


Figure 2. Magdalen College gr. 9, f 1r. Note about Balsha's II death in 1385

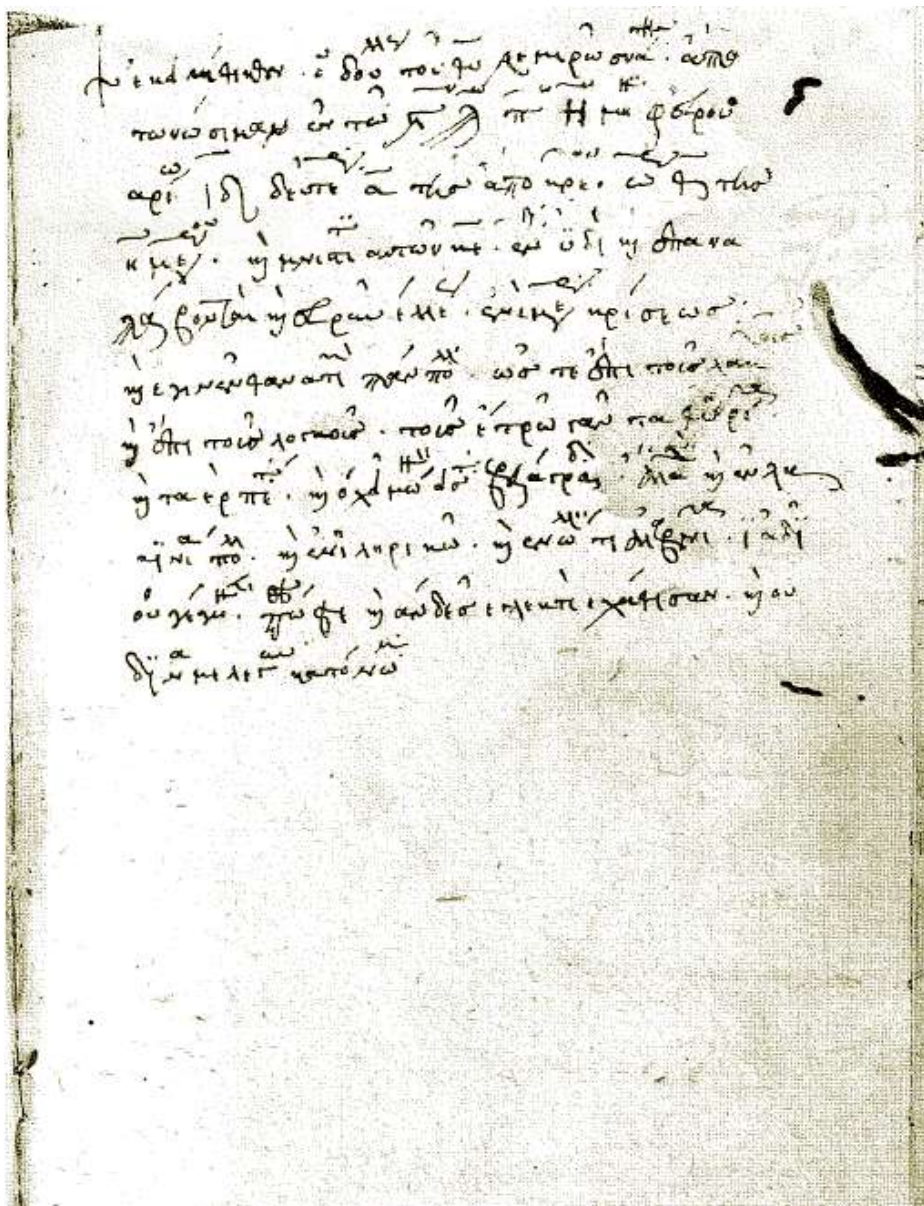


Figure 3. Magdalen College gr. 16, f 113r. Chronicle of the plague.





Figure 4. British Library, Additional 37007. The front cover of the manuscript.

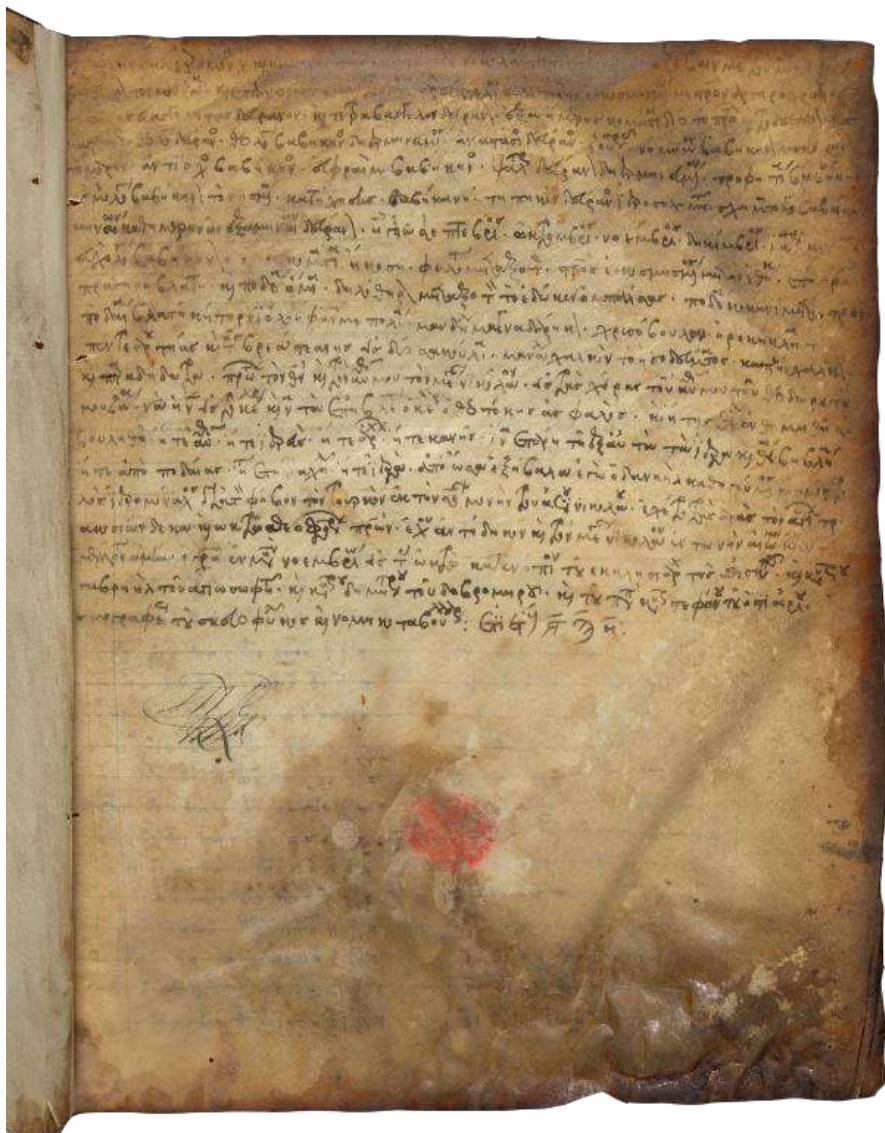


Figure 5. British Library, Additional 37007, f 1r. Inventory of the priceless books and objects of the Monastery of Saint Nicholas in Perondi (Pentarchondia) near Berat.

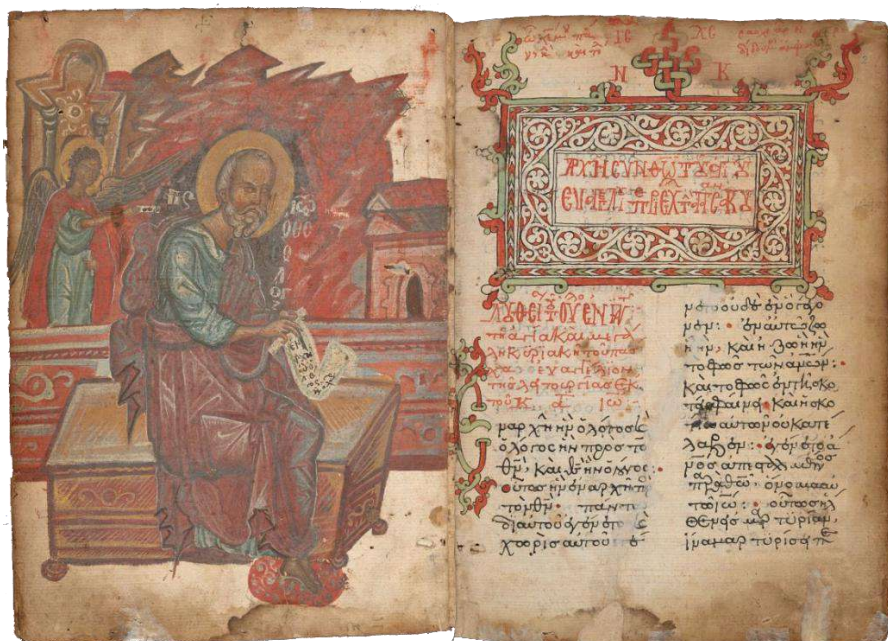


Figure 6. British Library, Add. 37008, fl 1v-2r. Left: miniature of the Apostle John the Theologian; right: the beginning of the Gospel readings.







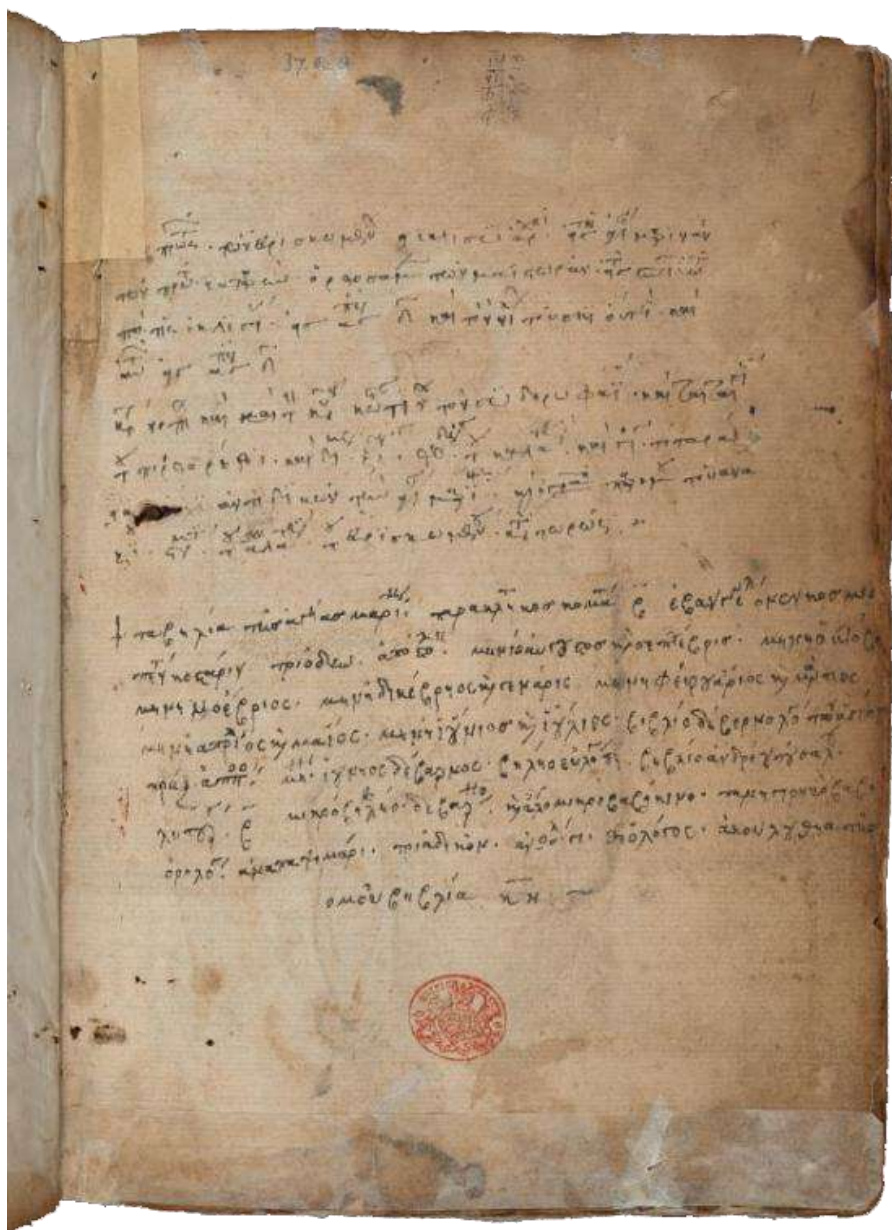


Figure 9. British Library, Add. 37008, fl. 1r. Inventory of the Church of St. Marina in Berat.





**Edmond MALAJ**

## **TWO PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN GERMAN MONOGRAPHS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE XIX CENTURY ON SCANDERBEG'S PERSONALITY<sup>1</sup>**

The present paper informs about two monographs on Scanderbeg, which belong to the German historiography. The first monograph is titled *Georg Skanderbeg, glücklicher Vorgänger des Ali Pascha in Janina* (Gjergj Scanderbeg lucky predecessor of Ali Pasha of Ioannina), and the second monograph is titled *Georg Kastriotto. Eine biographische Skizze der Vorwelt, Vergleichung mit der Gegenwart darbietend* (Gjergj Kastrioti, an outline presentation of the previous world offering a comparison with the today).

These monographs were written in the second half of the XIX century and are unknown to the scholars, and to Albanians in particular. The first information about the texts of these biographies was provided in 1969 by the German scholar Gerhard Grimm in his paper with the title, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien"<sup>2</sup> in which it is given a short content of these works. In addition, these titles are also mentioned in 1881 by Georg Petrović in his bibliography, "*Scanderbeg*"<sup>3</sup> and in the work entitled, "*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbegu. Bibliografi, 1454-1835*"<sup>4</sup>, authored by Jup Kastrati and Kasem Biçoku. The present paper introduces briefly for the first time these two monographs.

Gjergj Scanderbeg lucky predecessor of Ali Pasha of Ioannina  
Monograph of Gotfried Wilhelm Becker, 1821

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

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", in: *Studia Albanica Monacensia*. In Memoriam Georgii Castriotae Scanderbegi 1468-1968. München: Rudolf Trofenik 1969. (=Beiträge zur Kenntnis Südosteuropas und des Nahen Orients. Bd. VIII.), p. 87-121.

<sup>3</sup> Georges T. Pérovitch, *Scanderbeg (Georges Castriota)*. Essai de bibliographie raisonnée. Ouvrages sur Scanderbeg écrits en langues française, anglaise, allemande, latine, italienne, espagnole, portugaise, suédoise et grecque et publiés depuis l'invention de l'imprimerie jusqu' à nos jours. Paris: Ernest Leroux 1881, p. 108, 110.

<sup>4</sup> Kasem Biçoku/Jakup Kastrati, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu. Bibliografi, 1454-1835*. I. Tiranë: Biblioteka Kombëtare 1997, p. 323, 336.

### About the author

As to the author Gottfried Wilhelm Becker (February 22, 1778 in Leipzig– January 17, 1854 in Leipzig) was a German physician and simultaneously a translator, mainly from English and French languages.<sup>5</sup> He studied medicine at the University of Leipzig and received his PhD at the age of 25. His books and booklets inform about staying young and in good shape, while the pregnant women are given many advices and explanations. Also, he gives advices about alleviating rheumatism, curing the sexual diseases and the eye diseases. These booklets had been published regularly. He has translated many texts from English and French. He started writing texts with historic background in 1812.<sup>6</sup>

### The monograph

The monograph, *Georg Skanderbeg, glücklicher Vorgänger des Ali Pascha in Janina* (Gjergj Scanderbeg lucky predecessor of Ali Pasha of Ioannina)<sup>7</sup> by Gottfried Wilhelm Becker was partly published for the first time in 1813 in "*Der Freimüthige*", a Berliner magazine, and it is entitled "*Georg Skanderbeg und Amurath*" (Gjergj Scanderbeg and Murat). It was published some years later, in 1821, as a separate book with the above-mentioned title. The present paper addresses this second edition.

In this study, Becker tried to create a vision of the country and events, reading the travel descriptions of Pouqueville<sup>8</sup>, which at that time might have been also known in Germany. We have to emphasize here that the year of publishing coincides with the fall of the Greek revolution leader Alexander Ypsilantis in Moldavia in March 6, 1821.<sup>9</sup> So, the revolution already begun a long time ago. Although the monograph was written at a time when in the German speaking countries was spread a kind of Hellenism because of the war for freedom of the Greeks against the Ottomans. However, this work seems

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<sup>5</sup> Bibliography data by: G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 90.

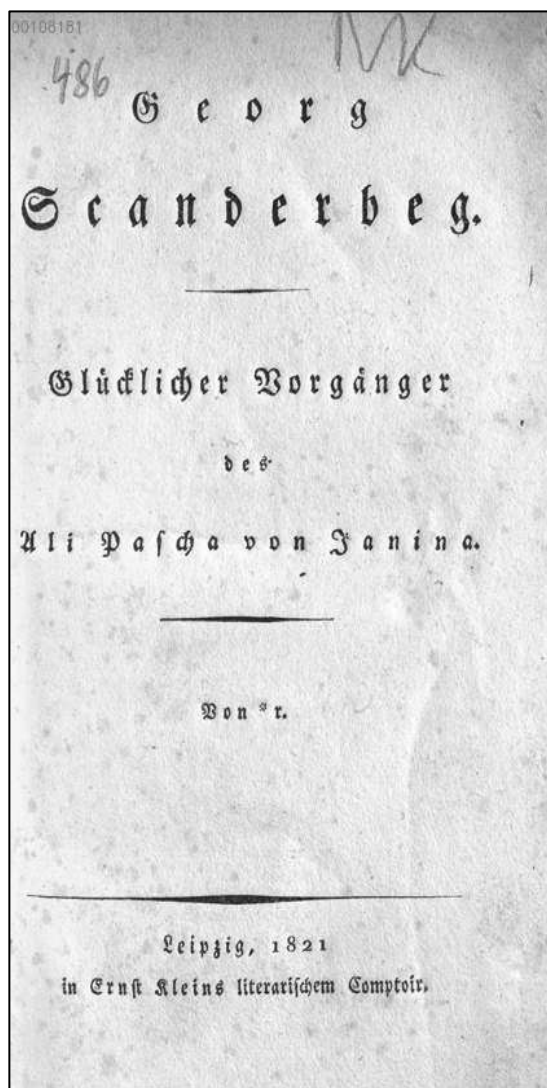
<sup>6</sup> Among other things we can also mention here the history of Frederick II of Prussia: Gottfried Wilhelm Becker, *Geschichte Friedrichs des Grossen*. Leipzig: Thomas 1846.

<sup>7</sup> Georg Scanderbeg. *Glücklicher Vorgänger des Ali Pascha von Janina*. Von \*r Leipzig: Erns Klein 1821. (Hereinafter quoted as: W. Becker, *Scanderbeg*..., p.).

<sup>8</sup> G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 119.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

to not be directly related to this issue. Apparently, Scanderbeg was introduced to the author by chance, and was found attractive to the point of writing about.<sup>10</sup>



**Fig. 1:** Front cover of the monograph, "*Georg Skanderbeg, glücklicher Vorgänger des Ali Pascha in Janina*" by Gottfried Wilhelm Becker

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Becker's work is 128 pages long, and it freely narrates Scanderbeg's life. This work is indeed similar with a historic novel rather than a genuine historiography work, and yet it could not be considered a genuine novel because the artistic style that might have aligned this work among the literary works lacks. However, the monologues, dialogues and the data coming from its own writing make this work complete. Except that, the different scenes of the battles and the descriptions are often detailed and colorful. What excludes this work from the genuine repertoire of the historic works, but aligns it among the literary ones is the lack of the dates of historic events. Dates are occasionally given as in the following lines.

There are many historic and geographic inaccuracies across the text. It is given that Mehmet II was born to the daughter of the Serb despot, with whom Murat II was already married at a very advanced age.<sup>11</sup> He also mentions a fortified castle of Scanderbeg called "Modaissa" situated in the borders of his territories.<sup>12</sup> This name, the author might have mistakenly read in another work, or it is a fruit of his imagination. Such a castle is not identified.

Even though the author does not mention the sources used in his paper, the influence of Marin Barleti's, whose work the author seems to have read from the many translations and elaborations already existing in the beginning of the XIX century, is clear. Among other things, Barleti's influence could be clearly noted through the battles' description, in which the small army of Scanderbeg had an outcome of few fallen, while the great Turkish armies were totally annihilated, with many prisoners, and the others fleeing away at full pelt.

Nevertheless, the author criticizes the stories written about Scanderbeg until that time, because of the many contradictions and dark points existing, and the writers who have written about his deeds are not in the same line.<sup>13</sup> As consequence, the author says to those readers, who in this draft can find many different things from what they

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<sup>11</sup> W. Becker, *Scanderbeg...*, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113.



have previously read, to be certain that the author has always tried to find the line basing on the reason out of the chaotic data.<sup>14</sup>

So, as conclusion we might say that this monograph stands between two genres, in a word, between the historic novel and a historic study monograph and should have had the proper importance especially for the ordinary reader, because it is reflected as published work in some magazines and time's lexicons of the first half of the XIX century.<sup>15</sup> Now let's have a look to the entire work, clearly concentrating at the end on Scanderbeg and Albanians' portrait and presentation.

The history of Scanderbeg starts with the first Ottoman invasions in Albania headed by Murat II, that according to the author occurred on 1413. Gjon, Scanderbeg's father foreboding the danger and because nobody would come to his aid, accepts the vassalage towards the sultan and achieves to preserve his kingdom, and as guarantee delivers his boys as hostages to the Turkish court. appears since the beginning as the king of Albanians.<sup>16</sup>

So, Gjergj grew up under different conditions, and later was called Scanderbeg (Iskenderbegi) meaning Alexander, as he was circumcised to become Moslem, and this happened because Murat has violated the given word. However, according the author, Alexander the Great himself has not given so much to his name as this Albanian boy.<sup>17</sup>

Scanderbeg's physical and spiritual qualities immediately caught the sultan's eye. Scanderbeg wins the sultan's heart, quickly becoming his trusty. Scanderbeg is described with rare epithets as "*schlank wie eine Tanne*" (slim as a fir tree), "*blühend wie ein Granatapfel*" (flowering like a pomegranate) and "*stark wie ein Herkules*" (strong as Hercules),

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113.

<sup>15</sup> *Leibziger Zeitung*. Beilage zu Nr. 73. Montags den 15. April 1822, p. 794; *Allgemeiner Anzeiger und nationalzeitung der Deutschen*. Der öffentlichen Unterhaltung über gemeinnützige Gegenstände aller Art gewidmet. Zugleich Allgemeines Intelligenz=Blatt zum Behuf der Justiz, der Polizey und der bürgerlichen Gewerbe. Einundzwanzigste Band. Jahrgang 1821. Gotha: Becker 1821, p. 1435; *Literarisches Conversations=Blatt für das Jahr 1825*. Erster Band: Januar-Juni. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus 1825, without page number; *Intelligenz=Blatt* Nro. 45, 1822, in: *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*. Sechszehnter Jahrgang 1822. Juli. Stuttgart und Tübingen: Gott'sche Buchhandlung 1822, p. 177; etc.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

and with ardent eyes but with soft view pleasuring Murat, which heart was open.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to these virtues, the author attributes to Scanderbeg intellectual abilities also. Scanderbeg was the one who saved the sultan from the difficulties in front of the envoys from Persia, Asia, Hungary, Italy and Greece, because was exactly Scanderbeg who was the translator "deciphering" their speeches and replied to them in their languages.<sup>19</sup>

Following sultan's advice, saying to Scanderbeg that "*be also a dexterous warrior*", he zealously starts to work, passing all the day riding the horse and training, showing that he was more efficacious than the others with different kind of weapons. According the author, Scanderbeg had in his arm a birth mark in the form of the sword, and said that "*I have been created by the destiny for war and victories*"<sup>20</sup> and very soon he truly started to win in games and also in true wars.

Before his 18 birthday, Murat appoints Scanderbeg sandjak-bey and head of an army of 500 knights and sends him in Anatolia's region first, and later across Asia to subdue the princes who might oppose him. From there, Scanderbeg returned with the flags of the countries he had subdued with peace or war, and with many assets whose the hero didn't hesitate to distribute, without taking into consideration his personal interest.<sup>21</sup> The author in his point attributes another virtue to our hero; the generosity.

As to his earlier youth in the Ottoman Empire, the author mentions some duels, whose data source might be Barleti, although the sources of information are not cited. Here he mentions the duel in Adrianople against the Tatar with whom Scanderbeg fights within a hole<sup>22</sup>, naked and armed with a dagger only. In addition, he describes the duel against two Persians, whose heads were place at the sultan's feet.<sup>23</sup>

The relations between Scanderbeg and the sultan broke after the death of Gjon Kastrioti, Scanderbeg's father, in 1432, as he was not granted his father territories and his throne by the sultan, because

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> "Ich bin zum Kampf und Sieg bestimmt". *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9-10.

according to the author that the sultan feared that this young brave man, there in a remote country, part of the empire was not going to stay faithful to him. Consequently, wining over those territories would have been difficult.<sup>24</sup>

The confidential relations between Scanderbeg and the sultan are also ruined due to the murder of Scanderbeg's brothers by the sultan who allegedly was heartbroken and comfortable towards Scanderbeg, who was forced to put the mask of faking and intrigues on, by pledging to the sultan his devotion and loyalty, both with deeds and expression such as: "*In you,*" he says to him by kissing his silk shawl (kaftan), "*I see again both my homeland and my brothers.*"<sup>25</sup> The chance of detaching from the sultan came with the war that erupted between the Turks and Hungarians in 1443. Scanderbeg benefits therefrom, and together with 300 warriors abandons the battle, takes by force from the sultan's secretary the decree that he needed to take the possession of Kruja's castle whose people joyfully welcomes Scanderbeg and helps him to take the city from the Turks.<sup>26</sup>

Here begins the Scanderbeg epopee against the Turks, which starts with Scanderbeg's war with 15.000 troops against Ali pasha's army made up of 40.000 men. It took to Murat six months to assemble and prepare his army, while to Scanderbeg, it took only 6 hours to beat and disperse the army as the wind disperses the straw yarns.<sup>27</sup> It is reported that Scanderbeg needed to eat and drink a lot throughout this battle, because according to him "*the courage and bravery are found in a full stomach.*"<sup>28</sup>

There is information about the war against Vladislav of Hungary, Scanderbeg's alliance with him and the Scanderbeg facing the bulwark of the despot of Serbia whose daughter was married to Murat.<sup>29</sup>

After two plundering wars of Mustafa Pasha and then after the war against the Venetians on Danja's castle, sultan Murat himself is presented against Scanderbeg with an army made up of 150.000 men,

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> "In dir", sagte er, ihm den Kaftan küssend, "finde ich Vaterland und Brüder wieder". *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16-18.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24-28.

<sup>28</sup> "Der Muth sitzt im Magen", *Ibid*. P. 27.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

and in the beginnings make the Scanderbeg's war against him appear as "*the war of a dwarf against a giant*."<sup>30</sup> The outpost of this army arrives on May 13, 1449 in front of Sfetigrad walls, while the sultan himself arrives with the other part of the army the next day. The war between the Albanians and the Turks becomes fierce, and Scanderbeg troops attack as they were not 10.000, but as if they were tenfold much. Nevertheless, the castle fell because of the poisonous water coming from the well due to a dead dog that an unfaithful citizen threw in. Even here, the influence of Barleti's story is unquestionable, because the author the presentation of these events is based on sources referring to the historian from Shkodra.

The Christian and superstitious defenders of the castle, regardless the vows of Porlat (Perlat), they preferred to rather die of thirst than to drink water, even though the well was cleaned.<sup>31</sup> The defenders' army, after giving up the castle, was free to go. The prince Mohamet (Mehmet) also participated in this war, and when he saw the small army of 100 warriors killing thousands of the best Ottoman troops, asks his father to put them all on the stake, but Murat not only keeps his word, but also praises his enemies for their bravery and gives them presents, because "*the violation of the given word, is the first tool that pushes the enemies' courage to the limit of desperation*."<sup>32</sup> Scanderbeg, retries to take Sfetigrad, by calling to his aid and paying French and German forces in gold, among which there were masters of manufacturing guns (*Büchsenmeister der Reichstädte*) coming from the imperial cities.<sup>33</sup> The city was besieged by his forces from 30 September to 23 October, but he didn't succeed in reconquering the castle and having it under his command.<sup>34</sup>

After these events Murat (Amurath) and his son Mehmet get ready for the conquer of Albania. The siege and the occupation of Kruja was part of their plan. The Ottoman troops arrived on April 1450, by first presenting a force of 40.000 Spahi (Turkish cavalry men), who in the beginning do not meet a fierce resistance. Scanderbeg attacks the camp

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 44-45.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51-52.

<sup>32</sup> "Wortbrüchigkeit", sagte er ist das erste Mittel, die Tapferkeit eines Feundes zur Verzweiflung zu bringen". *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54.

of the Ottomans at night causing them many losses. The description of this siege is several pages long, and sometimes takes the shades of a literary work, by adding even some dialogue. At the end, after five months of siege, Murat in his tent, tired of his senility and illness, dies under the walls of Kruja, aged 85, leaving to Mehmet his last will: *"Avenge me ... may it be an eternal war between you and Scanderbeg, until he is doomed, because until then, I will not enjoy the pleasures of the faithful. Learn from me to never contempt the courageous enemy, no matter how small he is. If someone near you stands against you, crush him immediately with all your power."*<sup>35</sup>

Kruja is liberated and Scanderbeg covers his warriors with presents. The news of the victory is spread all around Europe, which is delighted from his victories against the Ottomans and sends aids to him. A year later, Scanderbeg is married with the daughter of a vassal, and starts to fortify the country, a work that even his father has not previously done.<sup>36</sup> The author does not give the right importance to the description of Scanderbeg's marriage, and doesn't even mention the name of his father-in-law, Gjergj Arianiti. On the contrary, the author is mostly concentrated in describing the characteristics of the new sultan, Mehmet II, which he mistakenly describes as the son of Serbia's Despot, by attributing him the following characteristics: barbarian in the most complete sense of the word, uncouth and ignorant, a person that does not have any faith, but mocks both the Koran and the Gospel; with a small body and slim yellow face.<sup>37</sup> And this man now would fight Scanderbeg.

After Scanderbeg refuses to pay a modest tribute to him, in Albania is sent Ahmet Pasha, which is defeated.<sup>38</sup> For the first time Scanderbeg employs in this fighting a new company called *stratiots*, which thanks to Scanderbeg tactics in their preparation are famous in the following years, fighting among the Italian and French armies, and according to

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<sup>35</sup>"Räche mich ... ewiger Krieg sey zwischen Dir und Scanderbeg, bis er vertilgt ist. Ich werde nicht eher die Freuden der Gläubigen schmecken. Lerne von mir, keinen kühnen Feinde zu verachten; wenn er auch zu klein ist. Erwächst Dir einer, so erdrücke ihn gleich selbst mit Deiner ganzen Kraft". *Ibid*, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64.

the author were similar with the brigands.<sup>39</sup> Ahmet Pasha is captured and because of his good behavior is well treated by Scanderbeg, and set free towards a ransom of 150.000 zecche from the part of the sultan. After this he becomes an internal friend of Scanderbeg.<sup>40</sup>

A Sandjak bey from Serbia and of good reputation was sent to attack Scanderbeg. He demands from the sultan only 15.000 troops for this campaign. During the fight he is killed by Scanderbeg himself with a spear. The name of this Sandjak bey is not mentioned.<sup>41</sup>

In the book is also mentioned the siege of Berat by Scanderbeg and the two-week peace that he granted to the Turkish soldiers within the castle, one of the Scanderbeg mistakes, because at their aid the sultan Mehmet sent an army of 44.000 troops, something that surprised Scanderbeg's army, playing havoc on them.<sup>42</sup> Scanderbeg withdraws from this enterprise and achieves to save 2/3 of his troops.

The author presents in this work also the sultan's effort to win over Scanderbeg's fellow warriors, and thus wins over Moisi Golemi. Moisi betrays, arrives in Adrianople, where is welcomed by the sultan and appointed commander of an army of 15.000 troops.<sup>43</sup> On 23 February 1453, Moisi heads to Albania, to occupy his lands. Also, he promised sultan that if he didn't succeed, he would have paid the shame with his life. This is the year when Constantinople is conquered.

On Moisi arrival, Scanderbeg heartbroken prepares to fight against him. Once, he was one of his most faithful and closest friends, and now was leading the army of the greatest enemy. Using the old tactics (for example night or surprise attacks, etc.) was useless, because Moisi knew all the tricks. Bravery and courage were the only tools for a successful war. Even though the plan of Moisi was well thought and his troops divided into three groups, they are quickly attacked and lose the order formation. Nonetheless, a knight rushes against Scanderbeg and hits him at the belly part and he falls from the horse, but it's not killed because the armor protects him.<sup>44</sup> Because a Turkish soldier surmises that Scanderbeg is dead, exults and screams "Victory, victory,

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65, see the note.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 66-68.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 70-72.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 76.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78.

*Scanderbeg is dead!*"<sup>45</sup> This makes Scanderbeg stand up and continue this battle. In this battle Scanderbeg does not wear his helmet of gout head, but instead had a flock of feathers to notice him. As conclusion, the efforts to conquer Albania fail and the Turkish army withdraws by taking Moisi by force.<sup>46</sup>

This failure makes Moisi experience difficult moments in Constantinople. Those who called him friend, pity him. Those who envy him, hate him and call him traitor. This makes him come back to Scanderbeg, who together with his officers welcomes him with open arms. Becker makes this description to the situation: *"He kneels down regretfully. Weeping does not let him speak. Scanderbeg is surprised, asks and imagines, and his good heart forgives everything. No rebuke, no word for his action comes out from his mouth. He raises his old friend and embraces him"*.<sup>47</sup>

Later, Scanderbeg is betrayed by Hamza Kastrioti, his nephew, after his wife gave birth to a boy. Hamza deserted from the army and went to the sultan because he presumed that the throne was his. After the sultan welcomes Hamza with a great generosity trusts him an army of 50.000 troops, with the aim to become the ruler of the Albanian territories.<sup>48</sup> At the head of the army is placed Yousuf Pasha of Rumelia (in the text Romania), who comes to Albania with 40.000 troops. Hamza with his army is surprised by Scanderbeg killing 20.000 men and he is defeated.<sup>49</sup> Later Hamza, on Scanderbeg's knowledge escapes again in Constantinople, because there were his wife and child. There he dies poisoned.<sup>50</sup> Sometimes later, after the peace efforts between Scanderbeg and Mehmet fail because of the latter refusing to free Berat and Sfetigrad, Scanderbeg goes again in Naples, helping the son of the king Alfonso.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, the sultan puts Athens and its surroundings under bondage and forces Persia to a humiliating peace with him.

<sup>45</sup> "Sieg, Sieg, Scanderbeg ist todt", *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>47</sup> "Da warf sich der Reuige plötzlich zu seinen Füßen nieder. Vor Thränen vermochte er kein Wort zu reden, Scanderbeg staunt, fragte, erräth, und vergessen ist Alles in seinem guten Herzen. Kein Vorwurf, keine Frage nach der Ursache jenes Schrittes, fließt über seine Lippen. Er hebt den alten Freund auf und drückt ihn an seinen Busen". *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

After these events, in Albania marches again a Turkish army of 40.000 troops chaired by the officer Karassa, who is obliged to interrupt the battle against Scanderbeg and escapes annihilation thanks of a torrent rain that helps him run.<sup>52</sup> When Mehmet finds out that was impossible for Scanderbeg to be defeated, offers him peace and kindness with the only condition; Scanderbeg has to send his son to him. Scanderbeg from his side sends other conditions for peace, which Mehmet accepting and recognizing Scanderbeg as the legal king, gives up all his claims on Albania.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, this was not a long-term agreement, because the Pope and Venice were preparing for war against the sultan. Consequently Scanderbeg, an ally theirs, torn apart the peace agreement of 1461 in 1463, because to him is promised the leadership of a crusade.<sup>54</sup> The peace violation started with the incursion of Scanderbeg in the territories of Macedonia where he ransacked a lot.<sup>55</sup>

Delighted and with the most beautiful dreams that he had ever imagined, Scanderbeg impatiently was waiting for the Pope's herald, that was going to foreshadow him the news of the Papal army landing, but to his surprise, he is informed that the Pope Pious II suddenly died in Ancona aged 59, while getting ready to sail to Albania.<sup>56</sup> The army was assembled, and dispersed again, something that disappoints Scanderbeg, who was waiting for the moment to get Albania united with other countries, and even to renew the Greek kingdom.

Sultan Mehmet (Mohamet by the author) sends to Albania another army composed by 20.000 knights, this time under the leadership of the Albanian Bellaban (Ballaban) who showed his skills in the conquer of Constantinople and from the slave status was raised at the rank of a high officer.<sup>57</sup> After negotiations, which demands were ridiculed by Scanderbeg, the armies got ready for the war. Bellaban manages to escape from the battlefield, but during the battle he took Moisi as prisoner, and sent him in chains in Constantinople,<sup>58</sup> where he was

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 93.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 96.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 98.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 99.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.



peeled alive for 14 consecutive days to death.<sup>59</sup> So, this was Mehmet's revenge towards him and Scanderbeg, who was not conceding to defeat.

The Albanian renegade was once again sent to Albania with an army by the Sultan Mehmet who says to him, "*Albania's Pashalik is yours, if Scanderbeg is at my feet dead or alive.*"<sup>60</sup> Also, the end of this army is the same. Albanian wanted to revenge Moisi and play havoc on the Turks and force them to withdraw in Macedonia, taking from them a lot of stuff.<sup>61</sup> Bellaban, tries to justify himself in front of the sultan with the proposal of defeated that Scanderbeg by attacking him at the same time at both flanks with two different Ottoman armies.<sup>62</sup> This attempt also fails. Bellaban runs away for his life, meanwhile his army is dispersed.<sup>63</sup> The second army experiences a big defeat. The commander was killed with a spear throw at the lower part of the belly.<sup>64</sup> Even this time Albania escapes invasion.

The sultan decides to go himself and fight against Scanderbeg, but first he tries to achieve his goal by other means. He sends to Scanderbeg two renegades that allegedly have betrayed the sultan and wanted to put themselves at Scanderbeg's service. Then, when would be presented the occasion, they have to try to poison Scanderbeg. Suddenly, for something unimportant they start quarrelling unveiling the secret.<sup>65</sup> The tortures force them to reveal many other things, and at the end they die as they deserve. There was nothing left to the sultan, but the war for the placation of his revenge feelings.

The author dedicates to the siege of Kruja some pages and gives details that probably are due to his fantasy. The sources of information are not mentioned. The huge army is set on march, and Bellaban leads its vanguard. The Turkish army during its way does not meet resistance, and annihilates with sword and fire everything on its road.<sup>66</sup> Kruja is besieged and suffers cannon shots day and night. The

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 101.

<sup>60</sup> "Der Paschalik von Albanien ist Dein, wenn Scanderbeug todt oder lebend zu meinen Füßen liegt"! *Ibid*, p. 101.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 102-103.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 104.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 108.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 109.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 111.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*.

defensive army undertakes occasionally blitz attacks, while Scanderbeg has interrupted all the supply roads for the Turks. The siege was enduring and the sultan now feared that he might be forced to withdraw in shame and with damages.<sup>67</sup> He is upset and leaves the siege under the command of his pasha officers. The Turks this time were very attentive to the traps, and hoped to take profit from some imprudence of the defending troops within the castle.

Meanwhile Scanderbeg secretly travels from region to region and to the neighboring countries to secure support. Later, he arrives in Rome and begs Pope for mercenaries. In Rome he is welcomed, because is considered the defensive wall of Italy and all the southern Europe.<sup>68</sup> There he achieves to secure money, and through Venice he quickly comes back to Albania. On the way back, he meets the troops sent to his aid. Thus, the travel to Italy proved to be useful. The established army had 13.000 troops, and was assembled in the island of Lissa. We think that here the author refers to the Ishull Lezhë (Lezha's island).<sup>69</sup> The plan to save Kruja is prepared in Shkodra (Skutari), while in Durrës arrive other forces from Venice.<sup>70</sup> From the other side, the brother of Bellaban with reinforcements comes to aid to the Turkish army, but falls together with his son at the hands of Scanderbeg, who had a big quantity of gunpowder.<sup>71</sup>

Bellaban was feeling unsafe, and during an attack with the victory appearing on the side of Scanderbeg, plans the withdraw from the siege, before finding himself prisoner. Nevertheless, he plans a last surprise attack, that maybe would bring him at the last moment what he has not succeed till then, the victory. Meanwhile, in a high tower of the castle was standing Gjergj Aleksi (Georg Alexis), who watches Bellaban and gives order to be fired a falconetto\*. Bellaban falls from

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 112.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*. This toponym at the end of the book, the author writes it "Lyssa" and in the notes describes it as island, situated in front of the Venetian Dalmatia shores "*Insel, dem venetianischen Dalmatien gegenüber*". *Ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 114.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p. 115.

\* Falconetto was light artillery weapons firing cannon-balls of a chicken-egg size, with great precision and can be dangerous until to 12.000-18.000 steps. Perhaps has been used in the time of Scanderbeg, because is recognized as a weapon of the second half of the XV century. For more see: Louis Blesson, *Geschichte des Belagerungskrieges oder der offensiven*

the horse getting seriously wounded, while the attack begins to lessen.<sup>72</sup> Scanderbeg, already has broken the siege and breaks through more and more towards the gates of Kruja, which are opened to welcome the winners. After the complete debacle caused by the troops of Scanderbeg which were eager to get their war reward, a small contingent of Turkish troops escaped and entered the territory of Rumelia.

The news of Scanderbeg's victory was spread even in Constantinople, where his name begun to be mentioned with fear and admiration, because there considered Scanderbeg's quick voyage to Italy his escape.<sup>73</sup> Mehmet (Mohamet) was badly sad and angry, because now he feared his throne, and wanted to face once more Scanderbeg on 1466, to personally achieve what he previously hadn't. In the spring of that year he crisscrossed Albania bringing with him manufacturers of all kinds who constructed in *Fusha Farsale*<sup>74</sup>, at *Sommos* or *Sommini*<sup>75</sup> river bank a city, or a stronghold to be used as central station for all their military interventions.<sup>76</sup>

Sultan thought that with this fortification he would become lord of this country, but suddenly was spread the word that Scanderbeg himself had entered the city, something that panicked the lines of the Turkish army. However, the sultan noticing that his military glory was in danger, advanced with his army in front of Kruja walls, but after realizing that had been standing there in vain for entire months, without conquering it, decided to go towards Durrës where during his march was nothing left but destruction.<sup>77</sup> He also conquered there a small castle built by Scanderbeg. The unprotected fields around Durrës were forced to pay for the resistance of Durrës and Kruja. The villages were burned, and the screams of elderly people and women while burning

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*Befestigungen. Eine Skizze. Mit zwei Kupfertafeln.* Berlin: In der Schlesinger'schen Buch- und Muehandlung 1835, p. 156-159.

<sup>72</sup> W. Becker, *Scanderbeg*..., f. 115-116.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p. 117.

<sup>74</sup> Here the author confounds geography, and calles *Fushat e Krujës/Fields of Kruja* (*Fushë-Krujën*) and *Fushat e Elbasanit/Elbasan's Fields* as *Fushat Farsale*. Farsalas is not situated in Albania, but in Northern Greece...

<sup>75</sup> Here have to do maybe with a wrong reading of the Shkumbin river (*Scumpini*), which the author mistakenly presents as *Sommini*.

<sup>76</sup> W. Becker, *Scanderbeg*..., p. 118.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 119.

inside their homes, or running through by the swords of the Spahi were everywhere heard.<sup>78</sup>

Scanderbeg who never confronted the sultan, was chasing him uninterruptedly, provoked him and cut off all the supply ways. After five months there was an unexpected rupture of hunger and different epidemics within the Turkish army, and every day death was present to "its rich assets"<sup>79</sup> forcing the half of the world's terror (the sultan) flee in the beginning of winter from this small corner.

If once ago Greece defeated the Persian army, now it was Albania on the west, who was not even its tenth, but faced for twenty years the courageous Turkish armies leaded by the best officers and the sultans themselves who were victorious over kings and emperors and were the terror of Europe.<sup>80</sup>

In Lezha, which the author calls Lyssa and specifies as an island in front of Venetian Dalmatia, Scanderbeg calls an assembly made of his vassals, princes and Venetian envoys, aiming that the next summer to take revenge on the Turks for the past summer.<sup>81</sup> However, he feels that there was coming an enemy that was undefeatable, the death. He falls ill in bed, but calls the ambassadors of Venice and Naples in order to trust them the country and the family. Venice should protect his family after his death. There comes the news that the Turks have come close to the walls of Kruja once again, he jumps at his feet and orders to be brought his sword and armor, but the strengths are no more with him, and he again falls to bed and tired by the disease, dies aged 63, on 17 January 1467\*, and was buried in Lezha.<sup>82</sup>

After his death, Albania and Dalmatia were conquered by the Turks, who also occupied Lezha, where they found Scanderbeg's tomb. The janissaries opened his grave, took his rests and distributed them among them.<sup>83</sup> Very happy that possessed a part of the rests of this great warrior, they carried his rests in their chest as talisman within golden

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> "Der Tod hielt alle Tage eine überreichliche Erndte". *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

\* According to some historical works, the author gives the date of death Skanderbeg's on 17 January 1467. But, in reality Skanderbeg dies a year later, on 17 January **1468**. Barleti gives the date of Skanderbeg's death on 17 January 1466.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

and silver keepers to bring them luck in the war. They honored the rests of the hero as much as they feared and hated him while he was alive.<sup>84</sup>

### **The presentation of Scanderbeg's figure**

Here Scanderbeg takes on some dimensions'; he is a Christian hero "*Kämpen Christi*"<sup>85</sup> and a leader to his people. So, he can be defined as a national hero and extraordinary and courageous strategist. About his war in the defense of Christianity, the author at the end of his book writes that he had the conviction that was he fighting in the defense of Christianity, but in reality Albanians entered this war for their cities and fields, and to please their vice of plunder.<sup>86</sup>

Scanderbeg is presented as a communicative person; with both people and soldiers, and after the victories he is very generous and rewards his warriors with different stocks as furs, money and horses, etc.<sup>87</sup> Here we can mention the protection of Kruja from Murat II. He was modest with his vassals, something that is shown by his presence even for the less important of his soldiers.<sup>88</sup> Even though he is merciless during the fight, he is very correct and merciful and sometimes friendly with the Turkish prisoners and hostages, as in the case of Ahmet Pasha (Achmed Pascha) who is friendly treated, and in a such a way that it could be seen by all the prisoners (and an amount of 15000 zecche was paid by the sultan Mehmet II), and Ahmet remains a friend of Scanderbeg for the rest of his life.<sup>89</sup> Scanderbeg has shown himself merciful even with one of his closest officers Moisi (Moses), when the latter betrays him by putting himself at the sultan's service and fighting against him,<sup>90</sup> and then returns to Scanderbeg regretfully.<sup>91</sup> So, with the enemies Scanderbeg was sometimes so friendly and merciful that they would have preferred to find him more as a friend rather than as an enemy.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76-79.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Scanderbeg is mentioned in the book as a founder of a new cavalry, of *stratiots*, or the *Albanian cavalry* (*albanische Reiterei*), as the author calls it, which were similar with the hussars of the western European armies.<sup>93</sup> His war against the Turkish invader is seen as an act, which also the most powerful nations of the time didn't dare to undertake.<sup>94</sup> The author shows his ability as a strategist: he was tireless in this job, he minutely controlled the positions, received detailed information on the enemy, when during the night where all were asleep, he was preparing the battle plan, which he would personally lead.<sup>95</sup> On his way of fighting catches the eye the fact – writes the author – that Scanderbeg could resist with few means even to a great enemy power.<sup>96</sup> As about Scanderbeg's military art, the author also mentions his ability to make friends and allies whose arrived until within the sultan's seraglios and Divan, from whom he received information on the armies to be sent against him and was especially interested on their weak points.<sup>97</sup> Also, another positive side who helped his war was also his capability to find and multiply the money.<sup>98</sup>

As conclusion, according to Becker, Scanderbeg is listed among the most admirable men of his time, which through his courage and undertaking spirit achieved the limits of the impossible.<sup>99</sup> As about the hero's morality, the author adds that is difficult to value him if he was negative or positive, because the circumstances, the education, the iron law of necessity, time and place oblige to forgive many things and at the same time are an excuse.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless his nation owes so much to him.<sup>101</sup>

### **The presentation of the Albanians in Becker's work**

At the beginning of the book, Becker writes in Albanians courage and character, comparing it with that of the Swiss that defended the throne of almost Christian countries in Western Europe. Here, the

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 124.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 126.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 123.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 128.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*.

Ottomans have found "their Swiss", so Albanians or the Arnauts, which almost performed the same function. The author says that, "*everywhere he may go, at every pasha, would find the terrible bodyguards, which at only a hand move, and the person against whom is raised the knife immediately dies at the door-step of the palace.*"<sup>102</sup> So, the Albanian from Becker, is described as a savage warrior, which indeed is either Christian nor Moslem (Turkish), but his capability to kill equipped with an unbroken loyalty is unified with a fierce courage and a greedy envy to grab.<sup>103</sup> So, in the whole, this people was wild (*wildes Volk*).<sup>104</sup>

The homeland of the best and most fearful warriors (*besten, gefürchtesten Krieger*)<sup>105</sup> is described by the author as a wild country with rocky mountains covered in snow, and in the west wet by the sea waves, where they had come from the Caspian Sea because were banished from there.

According to Becker, still today (year 1821), the Arnaut is not a powerless slave, as the descendants of the noble Greeks are, but of him are afraid and try to have good relations with him.<sup>106</sup> He is considered a Turk, even though he is Christian.<sup>107</sup> If this population wouldn't have exercised the power at the time of Scanderbeg, so if it was aware of its ability perimeter, it would have been very difficult to escape from his grave fate, prepared either by himself or by all his neighbors.

## II

**Gjergj Kastrioti, an outline presentation of the previous world offering a comparison with the today. Monograph by Heinrich Gottlob Gräve, 1828**

*Two words on the author*

The second monograph was published in 1828. This monograph is a historic study, and it is entitled "*Georg Kastriotto. Eine biographische*

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<sup>102</sup> W. Becker, *Scanderbeg*..., p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> "[...] die grimmigen Krieger, die, nicht Christen, nicht Türken, nur Sinn für Mord mit unbiegsamer Treue vereinen, nur wilde Tapferkeit mit unersättlicher Raubgier mischen können". W. Becker, *Scanderbeg*..., p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, p. 124.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p. 128.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*.

*Skizze der Vorwelt, Vergleichung mit der Gegenwart darbietend*" (Gjergj Kastrioti, an outline presentation of the previous world offering a comparison with the today).<sup>108</sup> The author of this work in the foreword has put the initials "G. K. August 1827 (G., K. im August 1827)".<sup>109</sup> The author until some months ago was anonymous, and his name was Heinrich Gottlob Gräve<sup>110</sup> (or Gräfe). As the author's biography we are giving the following data. *Heinrich Gottlob Gräve* was born on February 7, 1772 in Budissin, Oberlausitz Duchy. He was a German jurist, historian and ethnographer. Gräfe was the son of a master tailor with a humanist formation, from the school bench of his birth place. From 1790 to 1797, he studied law in Leipzig, and some years later, in 1800, he became a lawyer of the superior office in Bautzen and later member of the council and senator in Kamenz. On 1821 (or 1822), he became member of the Oberlausitzischen Sciences Society (*Oberlausitzischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*). He was interested in ethnography and the history of his region, that was reflected in many editions, especially in the last 30 years of his life. He authored many monographs and papers. He died on April 30, 1847 in Kamenz.

### *The monograph*

The foreword expresses since the beginning the sympathy of the author for Greece, which is called a loving country blessed by God (*in diesem lieblichen und von Gott gesegneten Land*). Also, he describes himself as a supporter of the Greeks whose in those times were fighting for freedom, and thousands of them were in vain shedding blood. Meanwhile the Europe was still discussing the legitimacy of the rebellion, by putting on the political weight the question to help or not

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<sup>108</sup> *Georg Kastriotto*. Eine biographische Skizze der Vorwelt, Vergleichung mit der Gegenwart darbietend. Mit Kastriotto's Bildniß. Meißen/Leipzig: C. E. Klinkicht/ J. G. Mittler 1828.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, p. XVI.

<sup>110</sup> The biographic data by: Friedrich August Schmidt, Bernhard Friedrich Voigt, *Neuer Nekrolog der Deutschen*. Fünfundzwanzigster Jahrgang, 1847. Zweiter Theil. Weimar: Bernhard Friedrich Voigt 1849, f. 825-826; Brigitte Emmrich, Heinrich Gottlob Gräve, in: *Sächsische Biographie*. [http://saebi.isgv.de/biografie/Heinrich\\_Gottlob\\_Gräve\\_\(1772-1847\)](http://saebi.isgv.de/biografie/Heinrich_Gottlob_Gr%C3%A4ve_(1772-1847)) (19. 10. 2018). See also: *Neues Lausitzisches Magazin*. Im Auftrag der Oberlausitzischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften. Herausgegeben von Gustav Köhler. Band 34. Görlitz: Gustav Köhler 1858, p. 212.



this nation, like a Hamlet who stays and theologizes and philosophizes on the question, "*to be or not to be.*"<sup>111</sup>

The author considers this work as a warning about the Turkish danger: "*because who guarantees that – perhaps, for the last time – the Ottoman power would not renew and as a extinguishing flambeau, will now again spread its fire in a freaky way, and thus the Turk would be again dangerous for Germany?*"<sup>112</sup>. Because their empire has not weakened, as somebody believes, and nobody can tell us that these [the Turks] are wild and unformed hordes, because the ignorance and the lack of discipline along with the religious fundamentalism and savage desperation – from which the Ottomans have been more strongly nourished, especially their soul rather than the Christians by the Gospel – show their dangerous destructive forces.<sup>113</sup>

The author describes the Turks somehow as barbarians, like the once Gaul and Huns, who found it much easier to kill with their hands and destroy rather than build.<sup>114</sup> Except that the sultan Mahmut II has money and the capability to find new ways of support.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, there is no geographical and military obstruction between his empire and Germany that could prevent the German territories from being penetrated.<sup>116</sup>

He is against the annexation of Greece by a definitive power, e.g., Russia, because according to him, the Russians are destroyers of culture,<sup>117</sup> which is exemplified by the author by quoting a Tatar who was staying under the shade of a fig tree in a wonderful place but not viable: "*since the Russians became rulers here, those [the Tatars] have diminished, and everything that is sown, is eradicated from the face of the earth by them[the Russians].*"<sup>118</sup> So, the author concludes that in

<sup>111</sup> Georg Kastriotto, p. III.

<sup>112</sup> "Denn wer bürgt dafür, daß nicht jetzt – wahrscheinlich zum letzten Male – sich der Osmanen Macht noch einmal ermannen und gleich einer verlöschenen Fackel ihren letzten Glanz furchtbar verbreiten und der Türke noch einmal Teutschland gefährlich werden möchte", *Ibid.*, p. VI.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. VII.

<sup>114</sup> "Auch die Barbaren haben Hände, sie vermögen zu metzeln und zu verwüsten, und lechter fällt zu zerstören als aufzubauen". *Ibid.*, p. VII-VIII.

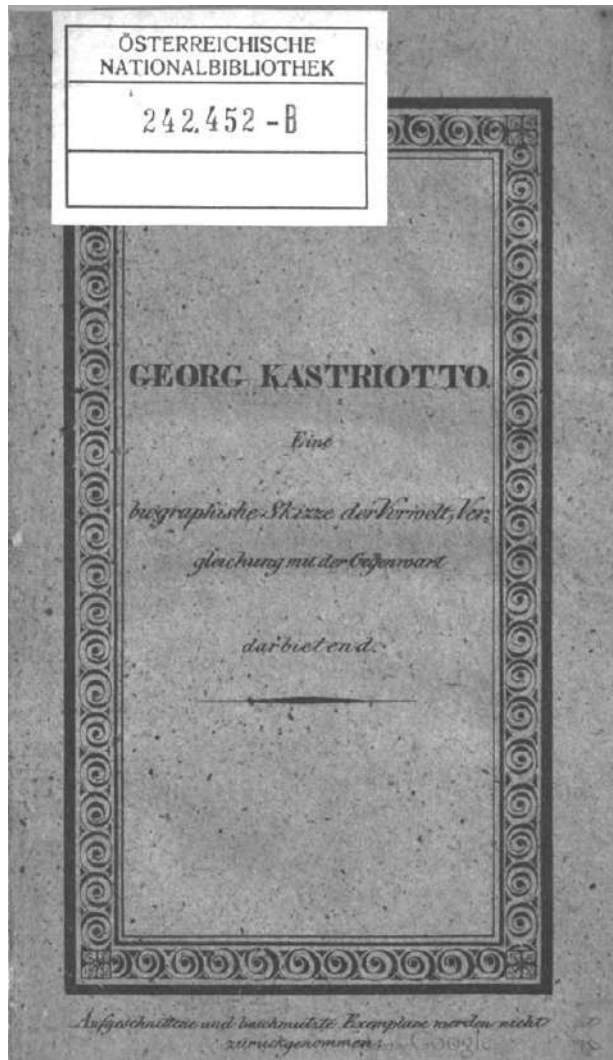
<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. VIII.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. IX.

<sup>117</sup> G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 96.

<sup>118</sup> "Seit die Russen Herren des Landes sind, haben sie sich verringert, und was ja noch angepflanzt wird, rotten sie aus!". Georg Kastriotto, p. XIV.

this case, "Turks' tyranny" would suit better to the Greeks rather than "the Russians' humanity", also quoting the words of a Montenegrin.<sup>119</sup>



**Fig. 2: Frontispiece** of the work "Gjergj Kastrioti, a presentation outline of the previous world offering a comparison with the today" by Heinrich Gottlob Gräve

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, p. XV.

The author is also against a British protectorate, because the Greeks would develop their national aspiration only in an independent state.<sup>120</sup> About the British protectorate, the author also quotes the saying of an educated mainioti, who when was asked by a British about Greek acceptance of the British protection, the latter replied: "*Better the Turkish skewer rather than the British protectorate*".<sup>121</sup> The preliminary condition on that already existed, because the majority of the warriors of freedom had fallen for their homeland, and through these heroic deaths was at the same time also extinguished the critic on Greek vices that had previously existed.<sup>122</sup>

Except for the introduction which is 16 pages long, the monograph is 128 pages. About the history of Scanderbeg, the author has set to himself the duty to present the hero since the beginning as more historical as it is possible, by leaving his pen to be ruled by the truth and free from by the romantic glorifications of the time.<sup>123</sup> However, since the beginning the author gives wrong information.

The author considers the Greeks and the Albanians (differently he calls them Arnauts) as the same people and draws Scanderbeg among the greatest heroes of this people,<sup>124</sup> and begins narrating on Scanderbeg by pretending that the Kastrioti family, have ruled in Albania since 710,<sup>125</sup> without referring to a given source on that data. So, Albania as in the case of Albanians, is presented as part of Greece. Scanderbeg's father, Gjon Kastrioti, as the head of the family ruling in Albania, makes him king, and the name of Scanderbeg's mother is wrongly given; as "Vorsava" and not Vojsava, which belonged to the tribe of Tribals.<sup>126</sup>

The author continues further with inaccurate data, when says that Gjon and Vorsava had in the beginning five daughters who were killed

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<sup>120</sup> G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 96.

<sup>121</sup> "Lieber am türkischen Spieß, als unter Englands Protektion". Georg Kastriotto, p. XV.

<sup>122</sup> G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 96.

<sup>123</sup> Georg Kastriotto, p. XVI.

<sup>124</sup> Georg Kastriotto, p. 1.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

in 1408 by the eunuchs\*, while their four sons Konstantin, Johann [Reposius], Stanislav [Staniza] and Gjergj, the youngest among his brothers, born in 1406, they were forced to surrender as hostages in the court of sultan Murat, after he conquered Greece.<sup>127</sup>

The history of Scanderbeg continues up to the page 86, where it is spoken about the Scanderbeg's death. There are brought again fragments from the hero's life and activity. On the above-mentioned work of Becker, there are certainly found entire parallels, but Gräfe is more accurate and continuously presents the dated events. Scanderbeg's death is wrongly dated, on January 17, 1467.<sup>128</sup> The author also mentions the opening of his tomb by the Ottoman soldiers in Lezha, but not as a sign of hate to disgrace him, but to take his rests which were divided among them as a fortune relic from the body of this warrior.<sup>129</sup> Also, the author mentions an Ottoman agha called Reis Efendi who lived in 1780 and had in his possession such a relic to be prevented from being stabbed on his back and protected from the war.<sup>130</sup> The author himself had met the son of Reis Pasha who told him that his father, indeed was not killed in battles, because he was protected by the bone of Scanderbeg, but was later executed by the sultan through a silk rope, and only in this case the bone had not the power to protect him.<sup>131</sup>

According to the author, the ruins of his grave on the hill became a pilgrimage place, where the *Greeks* continuously went until some decades ago.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, here the author makes Scanderbeg also a hero of the Greeks, and as we previously said, it was not clear to the author who the Albanians were, by confusing them with the Greeks. Shepherds, Christian pedestrians, Jews and Moslems (in the text Turks) pass by the tomb, and seriously say: "*Here it is the tomb of the great Kastrioti! – Ah, he was so good, so big, so brave and so right.*"<sup>133</sup>

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\*As its already known, the sisters were not murdered but married in different noble families.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p. 84.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p. 99.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, p. 99-100.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, f. 100.

<sup>132</sup> "Noch vor weniger, als einem Menschenalter, wallfahrteten die Griechen zu den Trümmern seines Grabhügels [...]", *Ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>133</sup> "[...] und mit erfurchtsvollem Schauer ging der Hirt und Krieger, der christliche, jüdische oder türkische Wanderer bei der heiligen Städte vorüber, sish die Worte: "Hier ist des

According to the author, the Turks definitively achieved breaking of the wonderful kingdom of Kastrioti (*dieses herrliche Königreich*) a year later (1468), and further economically destroying it by doubling the taxes.<sup>134</sup> The author shows here his lack of knowledge on the history of Albanian territories, many of which were conquered ten years after Scanderbeg's death, as in the case of Kruja which was occupied by the Turks on 1478.

### *Scanderbeg's figure*

Scanderbeg is presented in this monograph as a military leader with natural physical and spiritual characteristics, because "his courage was strong as the rock."<sup>135</sup> Except that force, the author describes the hero as a man with simple human characteristics, radiating kindness, softness and friendship, characteristics these that has made him a warrior winning over many hearts.<sup>136</sup> Even in this monograph, Scanderbeg is presented as a Warrior of Christianity (*Kämpfer des Christentums*)<sup>137</sup> and with spiritual qualities such as *goodness, greatness, courage and rightfulness*,<sup>138</sup> as was above mentioned by the author.

### *Conclusions*

According to Grimm, Gräfe is a better historian than Becker, because he is more careful with his references that in fact are the translated versions of the works authored by Barleti.<sup>139</sup> The sources that the author uses are:<sup>140</sup>

Großen Kastriotto's Grab! – wie gut, wie tapfer und wie gerchet war er! Bedeutungsvoll zuraunend". *Ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, p. 98.

<sup>135</sup> "Kastriotto war überhaupt von natur mit allen den Eigenschaften, welche zu einem großen Feldherr gehören, im reichlichen Maaße ausgestattet, indem er mit seiner ungeheurn Körperkraft einen felsenfesten Muth...", *Ibid*, p. 92.

<sup>136</sup> "jene Freundlichkeit, Gute und Milde, welche so leicht der Krieger Herzen gewinnt....", *Ibid*.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, p. 85.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>139</sup> G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 98.

<sup>140</sup> Georg Kastriotto..., p. 128.

1. The work authored by Marin Barleti, published in Strasbourg on 1535.<sup>141</sup> Translated into German by Johannes Pinicianus. Frankfurt am Main 1577 and Magdeburg 1606.<sup>142</sup>

2. A work authored by Samuel von Pufendorf entitled, "*The History of Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg*."<sup>143</sup>

3. The History of the Great Kastrioti, called Scanderbeg, king of Albania and archduke of Epirus. Translated from French in 1780.<sup>144</sup>

4. A history of Scanderbeg published in Vienna in 1784 entitled, "*Kastrioti the Great of Albania*".<sup>145</sup>

The data extracted from the sources are time after time commented and sometimes criticized. Here we can mention his critics towards the chronicler who says that in the battle of Dibra e Poshtme (Lower Dibra) only 26 of the Scanderbeg soldiers were killed, while there were 22 000 Turkish fallen soldiers.<sup>146</sup> The author distances himself when saying that in this case he was only presenting the sources he at his disposal, and such irrelevant losses could also be met in other authors, e.g., Caesar, who when speaking for his losses, gives a small number (*pauci de nostris ceciderunt*).<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> De vita, moribus ac rebus praecipue adversus turcas gestis Georgii Castrioti, clarissimi epirotarum principis, qui propter celeberrima facinora, Scanderbegus, hoc est, Alexander Magnus, cognominatus fuit, libri tredecim per Marinum Barletium Scodrensem conscripti, ac nunc primum in Germania castigatissime aediti. Argentorati Apud Cratonem Mylum. Mense Octobri, Anno M.D.XXXVII

<sup>142</sup> About this edition, the author gives us some other details. He mentions the other translator of Barleti, Gabriel Zschimmer from Dresden who translated the work on 1664. Grefe also mentions that the work was translated even in French, Italian and Portuguese languages. Also, he informs that a fragment from the work has been drafted by Georg Pontanus from Breitenbergu in Hanouiae 1609, which Poncet used in his work *Historie du Scanderbeg par Poncet*. a Paris 1709. See: Georg Kastriotto, p. 128.

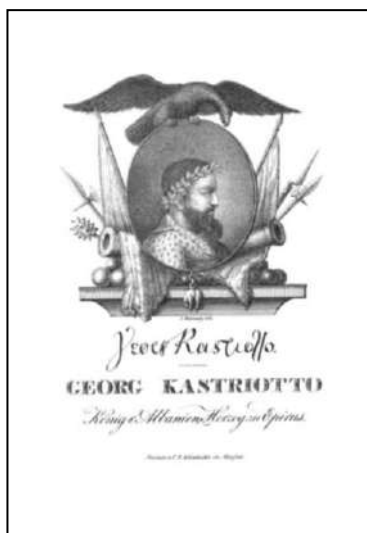
<sup>143</sup> Samuel von Pufendorf, Georgii Castriotae, Scanderbeg vulgo dicti historia compendio tradita. Stade 1684. See also for more the bibliography: G. Pérovitch, *Scanderbeg...*, p. 85.

<sup>144</sup> Geschichte des großen Kastriotto, genannt Scanderbeg, König von Albanien und Großherzog von Epirus. Aus dem Französichen. 1780. On this work we couldn't collect data. This work is mentioned on the bibliography: G. Pérovitch, *Scanderbeg...*, p. 100.

<sup>145</sup> Der Grosse Kastriotto von Albanien, eine Geschichte Wien, 1784. On this work we couldn't collect data. Its mentioned on Pérovitch's bibliography: G. Pérovitch, *Scanderbeg...*, p. 101.

<sup>146</sup> Georg Kastriotto, p. 11.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11-12, ref. Compare also: G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 99.



**Fig. 3:** Scanderbeg's protrait on Gräfe monograph

There are other cases where he appears inattentive and uncritical as when he quoting Barleti's the antiquity fragment, where Scanderbeg according the ancient Greece custom hangs his sword at his father's bust.<sup>148</sup> Another mistake to be mentioned is the Scanderbeg's bury, which is called pile of soil or burial mound (Grabhügel) that his fellow warriors cover with the flags they have captured from the enemies in war;<sup>149</sup> or when he mentions archbishop of Durrësi named Johann Mikrowick=Juanis, son of Petri Gardar from Pastor=Vecchio, Archbishop of Durrës (*Johann Mikrowick=Juanis, Sohn Petri Gardar von Pastor=Vecchio, Erzbischof von Durazzo*),<sup>150</sup> etc.

He is more accurate then Becker about the details by trying to give accurate data.<sup>151</sup> The Albanian events are strongly placed at European politics of the time, but without leaving behind the oriental

<sup>148</sup> G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 99; Georg Kastriotto, p. 71.

<sup>149</sup> "[...] die Krieger welche er oft zum Siege geführt hatte, pflanzten um seinen Grabhügel die den Feinden entrissenen Fahnen, und errichteten Trophäen von der iren Gegnern genommenen Beute [...] ". Georg Kastriotto, p. 86.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>151</sup> G. Grimm, "Deutsche Skender-Beg-Monographien", p. 99.

background.<sup>152</sup> He does not hesitate to present Scanderbeg's defeats and through that he becomes more credible.<sup>153</sup> The Gräfe's way of thinking politically is clear regardless the censorship of the press of the time. Influenced by Hellenism, the author presents the Greeks and Albanians as the same ethnic group. There are other mistakes found. His book on Scanderbeg is for sure better than the book by Becker, because it is more accurate, more critical and more closed the German scholar Gerhard Grimm has the same opinion.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*



**Ferit DUKA**

**ALBANIAN NOBILITY IN THE BEGINNINGS OF THE  
OTTOMAN ERA: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF A SOCIAL  
STRATUM\***

This year in Albania and abroad marks the celebration of the 600-birth anniversary of Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg. His place and role in the Albanian and European history are of an extraordinary importance. He organized and led for circa a quarter a century the Albanian people war against the Ottoman rule, a war full of sacrifices against the greatest military power of the time, becoming the brightest example of the centennial Albanians resistance to preserve the freedom and their national identity. Being an unequal war, but full of successes and victories, the Albanians resistance headed by Scanderbeg, turned their country into a powerful bulk walk for the defense of Western Europe by the Ottoman invasion. In this war, the Albanian people with his victorious sacrifices and wars, not only gave a priceless help for the protection of the western civilization values, but also became an inspiration source of hope for the entire Europe's peoples in their efforts for freedom and social progress.<sup>1</sup>

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\*This paper has been presented primarily as a lecture in the framework of the Nationwide Year of Scanderbeg (Pallati i Kongreseve/Palace of Congresses, Wednesday, 20 June 2018).

<sup>1</sup>About Scanderbeg and his time, among others, see: Athanas Gegaj, *L'Albanie et l'invasion turc au XVe siècle* (Louvain: 1937); Fan S. Noli, *Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu, 1405-1468*, (Tiranë: 1967); Selami Pulaha, Prep. *Lufta shqiptaro-turke në shek. XV-burime osmane*, (Tiranë: 1968); Aleks Buda, *Shkrime historike*, 1 (Tiranë: 8 Nëntori, 1986); Halil İnalcık, *Hicri 835 Tarihli Sâret-i Defter-i Arvanid* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1987); Stavro Skendi, "Mjedisi kompleks i veprimtarisë së Skënderbeut", in: Stavro Skendi, *Studime kulturore ballkanike*. Translated by Artan Puto (Tiranë: IDK, 2013); Kristaq Prifti, ed. *Historia e popullit shqiptar*, Vol. I (Tiranë: Toena, 2002); Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, jeta dhe vepra*, (Tiranë: Toena, 2002); Kasem Biçoku, *Skënderbeu* (Tiranë: Botim impex, 2005), Oliver J. Schmitt, *Skënderbeu*. Translated by Ardian Klosi (Tiranë: K&B, 2008); Ferit Duka, *Shekujt osmanë në hapësirën shqiptare* (Tiranë: UET Press, 2009); Aurel Plasari, *Skënderbeu* (Tiranë: Instituti Shqiptar i Studimeve "Gjergj Fishta", 2010).

It's clear that to be better understood Scanderbeg's epopee, his personality and work, it is required to be scientifically analyzed the constituent elements of the social and political background on which were developed the impressive events of the XV century. Of course, in these frames, an essential question that deserves to be examined with special seriousness, is the position of the *Albanian nobility* in front of the dramatic turn that was marked in the Balkans and Albania with the establishment of the Ottoman rule in these spaces.

There is no doubt that the Albanian feudal nobility was formed and developed in a very complex environment related to the political and social circumstances of a country, whose medieval history was indissolubly connected with the foreign rulers of the eastern countries (Byzantine, Bulgarian and Serb) or western (Norman, Anjou and Venetian).<sup>2</sup> Consequently, in the profile of this social class and of Albanian society as a whole, all influences -whether from the East or from the West - had left deep impressions. In other words, this was a product of prolonged interactions, sometimes laden with great tension, between eastern (state) and western (seigniorial) feudalism, between the Eastern (Orthodox) and the Western (Catholic) Churches, between eastern and western cultures.<sup>3</sup>

Cultivated in this problematic environment, full of contradictions and clashes, where the historical process was developed in the form of strong deflections and zigzags, the Albanian nobility appeared at the eve of the Ottoman rule unstructured and mostly dominated from the division culture rather than that of unification.<sup>4</sup> In these conditions, nevertheless who has the greatest merit that preserved the Albanian ethnicity, culture and identity from the annihilation danger, it has

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<sup>2</sup>On this issue see further: Athanas Gegaj, *L'Albanie*; Aleks Buda, *Shkrime*, 1; Kristaq Priti, ed. *Historia*, 1; Pierre Cabanes, drejt., *Historia e Adriatikut*, Translated by Arben Leskaj (Tiranë: Shtëpia e Librit & Komunikimit, 2005); Giuseppe Gelcich, *Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve*. Translated by Laura Leka (Tiranë: 55, 2009); Stavro Skendi, *Mjedis*; Oliver J. Schmitt, Oliver J. Schmitt, *Arbëria venedike, 1392-1479*. Translated by Ardian Klosi (Tiranë: K&B, 2007); Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*, (Tiranë: Shtëpia botuese 55, 2009); Aurel Plasari, *Skënderbeu*.

<sup>3</sup> See: Aleks Buda, *Shkrime*, 1, 68-69; Stavro Skendi, *Mjedis*, 188-189.

<sup>4</sup>Interesting sociological and anthropological analyzes about the position and role of the Albanian nobility in the Middle Ages and in the Ottoman period could be found in "Breviar i një kaste sunduese atipike: rendi i aristokracisë shqiptare në kohën e Perandorisë Osmane" by Thomas Frashëri. I thank the author for his readiness by putting at my disposal the above-mentioned study.

shown itself incapable to fulfill an essential objective of the medieval history: **the establishment of a unitary state and the unification of Albanians under the roof of this state**. Religiously and politically divided and as consequence, not having their own unified state, this was in a few words the overwhelming situation of the Albanians in the moments of the clash with the Ottoman state.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the Medieval Albanians established their tradition of the statehood, who found concrete expression with the foundation and the function of different state formations as meaningful evidence of the economic power manifestation and political emancipation of the local feudal nobility. Here is about the principality of Albania (Arbëria) that existed nearly two decades in the hurdle of XII-XIII centuries and also the Albanian principalities established in the second half of the XIV century. The first was established by a local prince named Progon and after him it was consecutively and successfully governed by his two sons Gjin and Dhimitër. Even though it was the first and powerful spark in the process of political and national developments of the Albanians in the Middle Ages, the principality of Albania was quickly vanished because of the conflicts and wars that included Byzantium and the Balkans during the first half of the XIII century.<sup>6</sup>

After the dissolution of Stefan Dušan's Serb empire in 1355, in the Albanian territories was marked a state revival proving through this establishment and the functioning of the new Albanian principalities governed by local big families from north to the south of the country.<sup>7</sup> Together with these new state formations, it was reborn the hope for a unique Albanian state. However, it was late now. These hope giving creations didn't evolve towards unification, not only because of quarrels and inner rivalries, but above all, of the appearance of the Ottoman danger on the horizon in more and more threatening manner.

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<sup>5</sup>Accordingly, Aleks Buda has put in evidence that our country both in antiquity and the Middle Ages, was found in the area of interference of the invading policies of "universal empires", of the Balkan medieval countries, and of the pressure of "universal cultures" represented by them, that hardened the consolidation process of a stable, unifying and independent political power. (Aleks Buda, *Ibid*).

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*; Kristaq Prifti, ed. *Historia e popullit shqiptar*, Vol. I (Tiranë: Toena, 2002), 228-230.

<sup>7</sup>About the political emancipation of the local nobility and Albanian principalities of the XIV-XV centuries, see also: Athanas Gegaj, *L'Albanie*, Kristaq Prifti, ed. *Historia*, II; Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët*.

The main problem now for the Albanian nobility more than the country's unification, became the redefinition of orientation in the new dramatic situation that was created to the country and the protection of its political and economic interests in front of the Ottoman invasions.<sup>8</sup>

In these circumstances, at the eve of the Ottoman period, Albania instead of a unifying country, it was manifesting a political mosaic composed by feudal principalities and possessions. The first direct contacts of Albanian feudal lords with the Ottomans date early, perhaps since the rule of Durrësi by Karl Topia in 1385, when he called them to come at his help against Balsha, his rival. Four years after this first "visit" of the Ottomans in Albania, who secured the triumph of the head of Topia family over his opponent, there occurred a decisive battle in Fushë-Kosovë/Kosovo Polje among the member countries of the Balkan coalition. Albanians and the Ottoman army were active part of this coalition. The latter, nonetheless saw falling in the battlefield the sultan Murat I, won a meaningful victory of determinative importance for the further destinies of the peninsula's peoples.<sup>9</sup>

These shocking events marked the starting of a new process related with the gradual loss of sovereignty of the Albanian nobility in the proper possessions and their fall in the position of *vassalage* towards the Ottoman sultans. The vassalage meant the payment of a regular tribute or sending more boys as hostages to the sultan's court, or participation with military forces at the side of the Ottoman army. The documentary sources inform us that the vassalage regime towards the Ottoman state was accepted many times by certain elements of the local nobility. Lekë Dukagjin had accepted the vassalage since December 1387. In a letter he wrote to Ragusa together with his brother Pal, he called on the nobles of this Dalmatian republic that they may come undisturbed in his lands, because he has made peace with the

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<sup>8</sup>In parallel of the growing Ottoman pressure towards the Albanian princes, Venice attempted to exploit this conjuncture at the benefit of its annexation interests. Moreover see: Aleks Buda, *Shkrime*, 71. About the Venetian policy at this time see: Oliver J. Schmitt, *Arbëria*, 223-231.

<sup>9</sup>About the battle of Kosova on 1389, among others, see: Selami Pulaha, red. *Lufta shqiptaro-turke në shek. XV-Burime osmane* (Tiranë: 1968), 77-90; Noel Malcolm, *Kosova-një histori e shkurtër*. Translated by Abdullah Karjagdiu (Prishtinë-Tiranë: Koha & Shtëpia e Librit, 2001) (second edition), 62-67.

Ottomans.<sup>10</sup> By the end of the XIV century and the first years of the XV century, a good part of the nobility peers that has been forced to accept this new status, and also some of them, such as Kojë Zaharia, Dhimitër Gjonima, George Dukagjini and Dushmani, participated with their military contingents in the battle of Ankara on 1402 between the Ottoman army led by the sultan Bayazid II (The Thunderbolt) and the Mongolian army led by Tamerlane.<sup>11</sup>

In 1410 the vassalage status was also imposed to Gjon Kastrioti, Scanderbeg's father. The Ottoman commander of Skopje, Yigit pasha forced John to recognize the suzerainty of the sultan. On January of this year, Gjon Kastrioti informed Venice that was forced to send as hostage to the sultan's court one of his sons and was under pressure to allow their armies to freely pass through his territory to attack the Venetian possessions.<sup>12</sup>

The Ottoman invasion heavily shocked the Albanian society of the time. There is no doubt that the most sensitive and more endangered was the nobility. Nevertheless, the experience, the reactions, the political orientations that were seen among this social class, were different in dependence of the specific views that these individuals or particular groups had regarding the defense of their country and interests towards the new established situation. Therefore, from the bosom of this class were distinguished not only the protagonists, the leaders of the Albanian resistance against the Ottoman rule, among which the principal was George Kastrioti-Scanderbeg, but also the collaborators, the employees and the dignitaries of the different positions of the Ottoman administration in Albania and abroad.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kristo Frashëri, ed. in chief, *Burime të zgjedhura për historinë e Shqipërisë*, Vol. II (Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1962), 190-191.

<sup>11</sup> Stavro Skendi, *Mjedisë*, 190.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 190-191.

<sup>13</sup> Many documentary evidences of the XV century, especially those of Ottoman origin, prove the incorporation of that time Albanian nobility in the Ottoman system of timar receiving different positions in the Ottoman administration. An important source on this issue is the Albanian Sandjak (Sancak-i Arvanid) register, whose detailed data would be further examined. The register of 1431-1432 it's not the first one compiled in Albania. The first registration is thought to have taken place at the time of sultan Mehmet I. During this time, the district of Gjirokastra was definitively placed under the Ottoman rule and was directly included in the timar system. Many notes in the register of 1431 have clear references by a previous register which should have been compiled after 1415. As its seen, even in the register of Përmet and Korça of the same year, the timar system in the southern Albania was established since the time

Scanderbeg himself, was the personality who marked the Albanian history of the XV century, is also one of the most interesting examples of the fluctuations that are seen in the political and social position of the upper stratum elements of the Albanian population in the beginnings of the Ottoman period. He was sent as *iç oglan* to the sultan's court (until now unclear when and in what circumstances) and there he was converted to Islam, receiving at the same time the high Ottoman title "*bey*". Basing on the Ottoman chroniclers Neshri and Hodja Sadeddin, the sultan had granted to Scanderbeg a timar in the paternal territories and has appointed him as the head of that Vilayet (the Vilayet of John Kastrioti-F.D.)<sup>14</sup>

From the notes written in the Ottoman register of 1431-1432, we learn that Scanderbeg on 1438 was carrying the post of subash of the vilayet of Kruja and as such, he had delivered authorizations to certain people appointed for timar possession.<sup>15</sup> The Vilayet of Kruja was bordering another administrative entity called "Jovan's land"(Jovan

of Bayazid I (Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-defter*, XV). On the bases conceived from the above-mentioned registers, are made interesting analyzes and assessments in important studies dedicated to the history of the Ottoman Albania. Among them can be mentioned: Selami Pulaha, *Pronësia feudale osmane në tokat shqiptare shek. XV-XVI* (Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë: 1988); Halil Inalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu-Toplum ve Ekonomi* (İstanbul: Eren, 1993).

<sup>14</sup>The Ottoman chronicler Neshri, among others writes: "*İsa bey* (İsa bey Evrenoz-F.D.) went, entered the unpenetrated Albanian territories, and from there attacked and fought. The infidels (like this were called the Christians by the Ottomans-F.D.) have been prepared and blocked the ways. The son of the ruler of Albanians, called *İskender*, who in deed has been *iç oğlan* of the padishah (sultan-F.D.) and to whom the padishah has granted that vilayet as timar, rebelled against the sultan, escaped and went there. He settled in that country, which in fact was his timar. But he blocked the paths to *akıncı*s which have arrived there with *İsa bey*. "While the other chronicler, Hodja Sadeddin, describes this moment of Scanderbeg's history as following: "*He* (Gjon-F.D.) sent *İskender* in the capital to confirm his subjugation. And the powerful padishah like Alexander the Great introduced *İskender* in the lines of the high court servants, which have the honor to do selected services. He was well treated by the sultan. When his father died, the sultan made him governor of that vilayet and granted him his father's throne." See: Selami Pulaha, *Lufta*, 91, 257-258; Ferit Duka, *Shekujt*, 16.

<sup>15</sup>In the above-mentioned register, it is stated that with Scanderbeg's authorization, to Jovan's son (in this form has been written the name of Gjon, Scanderbeg's father-F.D.), a part of the village of Mamurras was given as a timar to Uran (it can be also read "*Vrane*" or "*Vrana*" and as was mentioned above, he should be Count Uran or the Count Vrana). In the same register, according to another note, again Scanderbeg, this time together with the judge of Kruja, issued an authorization (mekkup) to Uran (Vrana) for the other part of the above-mentioned village with 17 houses.

ili).<sup>16</sup> The territories of Jovan (this was the original name of Gjon Kastrioti, because it's known that the Ottomans registered the names as they were spelled by the locals -F.D.) included the western part of the former possessions of Kastrioti family, mainly the settlements of Ishëm and Rodon areas, which formed the region known as Mysie. After Gjon's death, it seems that the Ottomans had left these lands as a zeamet to his son, Scanderbeg. Despite that, the latter on May of 1438, had been deprived from getting the timar with nine villages in the vilayet of Dhimitër Gjonima.<sup>17</sup> Even though he enjoyed these attributions in the Ottoman hierarchy, his territorial possessions were seriously narrowed compared with what his father once possessed.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, for the distinguished progeny of the big Kastrioti family, a position nevertheless important within the frames of the local Ottoman administration, was too little comparing with the position of an independent ruler of a new principality, but powerful, as has been in its near past John Kastrioti's principality. In a time when the traditional principalities of the second half of the XIV century were one after another destroyed, the above-mentioned principality in the beginnings of the XV century, became the main bearer of the political responsibility in the new relations that the medieval Albanians had to build with the Ottomans. These circumstances were enough to keep alive in Scanderbeg's person the idea of restoring the Principality and the return to the glory of his ancestors. The past was much clearer in his mind rather than of other Albanian nobles and therefore his inspiration and determination to liberate his possessions and after that all of Albania, would turn into a project for which he would fight until the end of his life.<sup>19</sup>

The project in word was too ambitious. Two were its main objectives: to free the country from the Ottomans, and to establish a unique Albanian state. Both these objectives were synchronized and conditioned to one another. This meant that the victories in the liberation war would increase the chances to build the new state.

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<sup>16</sup>Mistakenly, the scholars have presented in the form "Juvan". See e.g.: Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i Defter*, 113, 120.

<sup>17</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i defter*, 120; Selami Pulaha, *Pronësia*, 60; Ferit Duka, *Shekujt*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Selami Pulaha, *Pronësia*, 60;

<sup>19</sup>On Scanderbeg's capability and charisma see further: Oliver J. Schmitt, *Skënderbeu*, 111-124.

However, the impressive achievements in fulfilling these historic duties, Scanderbeg's death on January 1468, paved the way to the reestablishment of the Ottoman rule in the liberated territories and the inclusion within a short time of all Albanian lands within the Ottoman orbit.<sup>20</sup>

In these conditions for the wife of Scanderbeg, Donika and her only son, Gjon, began a new period of challenges and vicissitudes in the new conditions of exile in the Apennine peninsula. The members of the Kastrioti family were settled in the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>21</sup> Like Gjon, also one of his sons, Gjergj (Young Scanderbeg) made attempts to organize freedom rebellions in Albania, but these attempts failed because of the weak support of the Western countries, and because of the powerful Ottoman counteraction.<sup>22</sup>

The initiative of February 1501 undertaken by Gjergj Kastrioti was more serious. The latter landed in the vicinities of Lezha to organize a general Albanian rebellion, and gain the previous possessions of his family. As support from the Venetians was not the one promised by them, this project failed regardless of some victories in the territory Lezha-Durrës. So, on 1503, the Young Gjergj, passed in the Ottoman camp embracing Islam and starting a new way, differently from that of his ancestors.<sup>23</sup> The other son of Gjon, Ferdinand, who inherited the feud granted to the Kastrioti family by the monarch of Naples, it is mentioned on 1506 as the Duke of San Pietro.<sup>24</sup>

Also, the renowned Arianiti family<sup>25</sup> was in front of strong dilemmas in the new reality established by the Ottoman rule in the Albanian territories. The head of the family, Gjergj Arianiti, known otherwise as Arianit Komneni, was the man who suffered the most from the drama of this great political turn. According to the Byzantine chronicler Chalcocondyles, Arianiti remained poor because his

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<sup>20</sup> Kristaq Prifti, ed., *Historia*, I, 402-403, 425-435; 472-473; Oliver J. Schmitt, *Skënderbeu*, 139, 252-278.

<sup>21</sup> Paolo Petta, *Despotë të Epirit, princër të Maqedonisë*. Translated by Pëllumb Xhufi (Tiranë: Shtëpia e Librit dhe Komunikimit, 2001), 30-33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 34-35, 41.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*; Kristaq Prifti, ed., *Historia*, 472-478.

<sup>24</sup> Paolo Petta, *Despotë*, 42-44.

<sup>25</sup> Also is written and pronounced in the version "Araniti". We apologize to the reader that for specific reasons we couldn't take into possession the study of Prof. Dhimitër Shuteriqi on the Arianiti family.



possession in both sides of the Shkumbin valley to Elbasan, after the military expedition chaired by Isa bey Evrenoz, fell into the Ottoman rule, by leaving the Albanian prince expropriated. In these conditions, he went to the sultan's court in Edirne to demand the granting him of a timar, that would ease in a certain way his situation.<sup>26</sup> However, apparently, he didn't get a positive response, therefore just he came back from there, together with other Albanian chieftains, organized an anti-Ottoman rebellion which started with the killing of some timar holders. The dissatisfaction of the Albanian noble achieved its peak apparently after the Ottoman registration of 1431-1432 (Albanian Sandjak register), a document in which Arianiti does not figure as a timar holder. Therefore, the mentioned rebellion, should had started immediately after the end of the above-mentioned registration.<sup>27</sup> According the information of B. de la Broquière who traveled to Albania two years later (1434), and the notes of the Ottoman chronicler Oruj, in the winter of 1432-1433, sultan Murat II was settled in Serez to follow the Ottoman military expedition against the Albanian rebels. However, in that winter, the rebels headed by Arianiti, badly smashed the Ottoman army commanded by Ali bey.<sup>28</sup> As has written Prof. Inalcık, "in this time stands the origin of the Albanian resistance, which emboldened many of the western crusaders and the Ottoman state had to deal for a half a century with it."<sup>29</sup>

The chief of Arianiti family continued to remain a vivid member of the anti-Ottoman front in Albania and ally of Scanderbeg in this war until he died nearly 1461.<sup>30</sup> Groom of the Muzaka family and father-in-law of Scanderbeg, Gjergj Arianiti enjoyed special authority in the Albanian political space. As friend and ally to Scanderbeg, he also remained firm to preserve untouched his political independence and power. This is also reflected in his relations with the European

<sup>26</sup> Koço Bozhori, ed. in chief, *Burime tregimtare bizantine për historinë e Shqipërisë, shek. X-XV* (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPSH-Instituti i Historisë, 1975), 325-326.

<sup>27</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i defter*, XIV; Koço Bozhori, *ibid*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*. About the Arianiti family and especially on Gjergj Arianiti, among others, see also: Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i defter*, XIV; Franc Babinger, *Fundi i Arianitëve*. Translated by Nestor Nepravishta. (Tiranë: Plejad, 2004); Selami Pulaha, *Lufta*, 44; *Ibid*, *Pronësia*, 61; Paolo Petta, *Despotë*, 143-148; Kristaq Prifti, ed., *Historia*, 296-299; Oliver J. Schmitt, *Skënderbeu*, 150, 195-199.

<sup>29</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i defter*, XIV.

<sup>30</sup> The year of death on: Paolo Petta, *Despotë*, 145.

countries that had direct interests in that time Albania as were the Kingdom of Naples and the Republic of San Marco. With the first on 1451, separately by Scanderbeg he signed a vassalage agreement, but his vassalage relations with Alfonso, practically ended after the Albanian-Ottoman battle for Berat on 1455. After this event which turned useless the continuation of relation with the sovereign of Naples, Arianiti passed in pro Venetian positions by taking special titles and privileges from the Republic. On 1456, he was named from the Venice's doge "*Captain in the Albanian territories*", thus becoming representative of the Venetian interests in a space extending from Durrës to Shkodra.<sup>31</sup>

After Scanderbeg, Gjergj Arianiti is the most important personality of the Albanian history of the XV century. The distinguished scholar of the Ottoman history and especially of the Arianiti family, Franz Babinger, has put in evidence that the contribution of this personality in the liberation war of Albanians has been darkened by the fame of his groom and in true the Albanian noble has become popular for his deeds within and abroad the country. A number of personalities of the West including here the Pope, the king of Naples or the leaders of the Republic of Venice, didn't spare the praises on Arianiti.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to the predecessors of Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg, the predecessors of Gjergj Arianiti also exiled abroad. This occurred at the moment when the fall of the Albanian fighters' resistance in front of the devastating offensive of Mehmet II which started in the spring of 1466 and continued in 1467 became clear. The possessions of the Arianiti family around Shkumbin were totally placed under the Ottoman rule, and in Elbasan, their epicenter,<sup>33</sup> it was built the powerful castle symbolizing the new reality.<sup>34</sup> The main branch of this great family represented by the second wife Despina and three sons were settled first in the Seignory's possessions in Albania, and then moved to Venice.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Oliver J. Schmitt, *Skënderbeu*, 196-197.

<sup>32</sup> Franc Babinger, *Fundi i Arianitëve*, 22.

<sup>33</sup> The Ottomans called the city "**Ilbasan**" (something that violates, rules the country, by not taking into consideration by this the functions and the symbol of the new castle).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 199.

<sup>35</sup> Paolo Petta excludes the possibility that the Arianiti family may have lived in Puglia as Babinger thought (Paolo Petta, *Despotë*, 145)

If we follow the progress of Gjergj Arianiti's family male line, we could notice that two of his sons, Arianiti (in all probability, named Gjon Arianiti) and Kostandin, definitively connected their destiny with the Apennine peninsula. Gjon Arianiti is mentioned as one of the men who served with dedication in Rome's Holy See, and a regular pension was paid to him.<sup>36</sup> The other son, Kostandin, in fact the most important from the Arianiti family in Europe, had a quickly successful career in Italy. He became a smart and agile player in the European scene by masterly placing himself between the great powers of the time as the Holy Roman Empire, France, Papacy and Venice.<sup>37</sup> He kept this position to his death (1531), by making known everywhere the name of his family and that of Albania.<sup>38</sup>

Also, the Arianiti family after a certain time, it was affected by the process of converting to Islam. At least, one of the sons of Gjergj, Thoma, abandoned the Albanian cause in 1466 to join the Ottoman army. He converted to Islam with the new name "Mahmud" accompanied by the title "bey" and was integrated among the lines of the military class starting thus a new life at the service of crescent moon state.<sup>39</sup> The data we have at our disposal until now from the earlier Ottoman sources and also the information of the known scholars on this question, encourage us to affirm that differently from the other great families of the Middle Ages, the process of converting to Islam and the Ottomanization lightly affected the Arianiti family. Only one of the progenies of the mentioned family has been identified as an individual who embraced Islam.<sup>40</sup>

It should be also emphasized that even the presented narration in specific studies for the moment of conversion and career of Mahmud bey in the Ottoman state, is a version not without flaws. The scholar Franz Babinger says among the other things that the son of Arianiti

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<sup>36</sup> Petta thinks that for this person the word was about when on 1471 was mentioned as "the great lord" Arianiti from Albania (Petta, 152).

<sup>37</sup> About the political life and activity of Kostandin Arianiti see further: Petta, 155, 157-188.

<sup>38</sup> On the inscription in his grave by his son is read: "*After was banished by the Turks from the paternal possessions, with courage contradistinguished his wicked destiny*" (Petta, 188).

<sup>39</sup> We think that was Thoma who converted to Islam and not Arianiti, as Babinger affirms (Babinger, 21). Petta even why does not mentions the name of the converted person, insinuates that it's about Thoma (Petta, 155).

<sup>40</sup> Such a thing is made also clear by Babinger (Babinger, 21).

converted to Islam passed on the Ottoman side, became Moslem and until the moment of the violent death, he had secured the post of sandjak bey of Himara region.<sup>41</sup> Otherwise, Himara would have been a nahie and not a sandjak! According to the version presented by Petta, the passing of the Arianiti's son at the side of the Ottomans might have occurred in the '70s of the XV century,<sup>42</sup> that is in contradiction with the assertion (right, to my opinion) of Prof. Schmitt that Thoma Arianiti joined the Ottomans in 1466.<sup>43</sup>

Currently, it is difficult to follow the progress of the Arianiti family Moslem line in the Ottoman sources from the XVI century onwards. However, for the two first decades of the XVI century we have some interesting data on this issue. The nephew of Gjergj Arianiti, Ali bey, son of Mahmud bey (Ali bey bin Mahmud bey bin Aranid) it is mentioned in a note made in the summary register of Vlora's sandjak of 1506 as possessor of a zeamet in the village Dhivër (district of Saranda) of this sandjak.<sup>44</sup> He was also in 1526-1527 sandjak bey of Prizren and possessed a cambric of 263000 akçe of revenue.<sup>45</sup>

These are important data, they because show that the successors of the Moslem branch of the Arianiti family not only converted to Islam and entered at service of the Ottoman state, but had an impressive career in the army and administration. This fact allows us to affirm that the Christian successors of the Arianiti family who were settled in the West, and also those who remained in the East, were in complete harmony according to the success and career manifested by each part at their position.<sup>46</sup> Another interesting element that should be put in evidence is that, nonetheless positioned in two hostile camps to each other, the conscience of belonging to the same family triumphed over

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<sup>41</sup>*Ibid*; Indeed, Mahmud bey was Vlora's sandjak bey and as such, remained killed on 1486 in an attempt to crush the rebellion that has erupted in Himara (Selami Pulaha, *Pronësia*, 61).

<sup>42</sup> Paolo Petta, *Despotë*, 155.

<sup>43</sup> Oliver J. Schmitt, *Skënderbeu*, 199.

<sup>44</sup>T. C. Cumhuriyet Bakanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Osmanlı Arşivi (herein further: DAOA), *Tapu Tahrir Defterleri*, No. 34, H 912/1506, f. 13; Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Toplum ve Ekonomi* (İstanbul: Eren, 1993), 88; Selami Pulaha, *Pronësia*, 61.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>46</sup>We remember here the important duties of Kostandin Arianiti in the European courts and from the other side, the high positions of Mahmud bey and Ali bey in the Ottoman state (to the position of sandjak bey).

the first making them to established a communication line to each other.<sup>47</sup>

Of course, the conversion to Islam and the Ottomanization phenomenon didn't affect only the Kastrioti and Arianiti families, but almost all the big Albanian families of the Middle Ages. The Zenebishi, Dukagjini, Topia families, etc., experienced the division of the traditional Christian line and the new Ottoman-Islamic line. In the Zenebishi family, the above-mentioned phenomenon was present since the first generation of Gjin's successors. One of his sons was sent as içoğlan to the sultan's palace in Istanbul, where he was converted to Islam and was educated with the Turkish-Islamic life norms and rules taking the new name *Hamza*. Hamza had important posts in the Ottoman administrative-military hierarchy, achieving the high post of sandjakbey. We think that for this person it's about the talking when a certain *Hamza bey* is mentioned in the register of 1431-2 as a sandjak bey of Albania.<sup>48</sup> Hamza bey Zenebishi has also been in the post of

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<sup>47</sup>On this issue Paolo Petta writes: *"In the first months of 1486, one of the frequent rebellions of the Christian Albanians took the life of the young sandjak bey (it's about the brother of Kostandin Arianiti converted to Islam, Mahmud bey-F.D.). Years later, Kostandin, that meantime had become a close collaborator of the Pope, succeeded to find his sons' traces (Mahmud bey-F.D.) that were grown as Moslems and served the sultan, establishing with them cordial relations. They sent to him in Rome letters and precious gifts".* (Petta, 156).

<sup>48</sup>In the pages of the Albanian Register, Hamza bey is densely met as *"Arnavud-ili sancakbeği"*, *"sancakbeği-i vilayet-i Arvanid"*, etc. We are mentioning here some of the notes that are connected with the name of Hamza bey as the head of the Albanian Sandjak:

- the village Hundëkuq in the vilayet of Gjirokastrais given to Ballaban by the head of Arnavud-ili Sandjak (the sandjak of the country of Albanians, Albania-F.D.), Hamza bey (circa 1452).

- Hamza beygrants a part of the timar to a person from the place called "Vreshta e Zenebishit/The Vineyard of Zenebishi", in the vicinity of Gjirokastra (year H 845/January 1442).

- Hamza bey issues to the secretary Dhimo a possession document as timar of the Ardenica village in the region of Myzeqe.

- In the beginning of September 1453/beginning of the Ramadan 857, Hamza bey grants as timar of the village Floq in the district of Vlora to a person called Hasan.

- With the approval of the sandjak bey Hamza bey, nephew of Pavlo Kurtik, to Aliwere granted as timar on H 854/1450 the village of Shpolat in Myzeqe, and also the villages Vodica and Karkanjoz in the district of Berat.

- Hamza bey granted to Mustafa a timar that previously has been in the possession of Berat metropolis (January 1442).

- In the register are mentioned one by one as timar holders the brothers of Hamza bey: Iljas who possessed as timar the village Sopik of Saranda and Kasem, who cherished as timar

Mistra (Mezistra) sandjak bey in Peloponnesus.<sup>49</sup> Another progeny converted to Islam from the Zenebishi family, Hasan bey, on 1468 carried the post of Fanar's subash in the sandjak of Trikala.<sup>50</sup>

The other part of the Zenebishi family successors, differently from the above mentioned, kept the ancestors' religion and tradition by standing in opposition with the Ottoman power. The most prominent of them was Depa (Topia) Zenebishi, who became one of the chieftains of the Albanian resistance in 1433-1436, trying to liberate Gjirokastra and other paternal possessions. Although in synchrony with the liberation war of Gjergj Arianiti, Depa's rebellion and its protagonists had a tragic end.<sup>51</sup> However, the progenies of the Zenebishi family didn't pull back from their idea of liberating Gjirokastra. It's about Gjin Zenebishi (the Young) who in coordination with Scanderbeg's war, made two serious attempts (1444 and 1454) to regain Gjirokastra and other territories of Zenebishi principality. As these actions had unsuccessful outcome, the protagonism of the Zenebishi family in the Albanian scene of the XV century ended.<sup>52</sup>

The Topia family faced complicated, challenging, difficult and strong political shocks that accompanied the passing of Albania from pre-Ottoman to the Ottoman time. After the death of Karl Topia in 1388 and the giving up of Durrës to the Venetians in 1392, the principality entered the XV century weakened and divided, leaving behind the political prestige that once enjoyed in the '70-'80 of the past century.<sup>53</sup> A part of Karl Topia successors preserved the Christian religion and as such were incorporated in the Ottoman system of timar

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the village Malind of Skrapar (April 1452). See: Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i defter*, 5, 18, 25, 26, 37, 59, 73, 82, 96.

<sup>49</sup> Athanas Gegaj, *L'Albanie*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Osmanlı*, 77.

<sup>51</sup> Ferit Duka, *Shekujt*, 223.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Paolo Petta, Despotë, 211; Kristaq Prifti, ed., *Historia*, 287-290.

as Christian timariots (timar holders).<sup>54</sup> Generally, this category later joined Scanderbeg's war.<sup>55</sup>

On the Moslem line of Topia family the historic information is more limited, therefore our knowledge is restrained. In any case, according to the notes made in the Albanian Sandjak register of 1431-1432, a successor of the Topia family converted to Islam with the name Ali and possessed a timar with many villages in the vilayets of Pavlo Kurtik and of Kruja.<sup>56</sup> The mentioned person should have been the son of Karl Topia, and nephew of the famous Karl Topia, head of the Middle Albania principality in 1358-1388. It's not without interest to put in evidence that the above mentioned timar was previously possessed by his father Karl.<sup>57</sup>

Differently from the other medieval Albanian families, the big family of Dukagjini<sup>58</sup> north of Albania recognized a lighter stagnation from the pre-Ottoman to the Ottoman period. This was mainly related with the geographic position of its possessions. The latter, until the end of the '70s of the XV century, remained out of range of the Albanian-Turkish war. Therefore, their principality survived for a long time compared to others. However, the Dukagjini family has been actively involved in the Albanian politics scene — from the League of Lezha to the most important events related to the liberation war led by Scanderbeg. After Scanderbeg's death, many representatives of this family resolutely fought at the side of Venetians to defend the Albanian territories from the Ottomans. After the break of this resistance, those

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<sup>54</sup>According to the notes in the register of the Albanian Sandjak, Muzak (in original: Muzhaq) Topia possessed as timar the villages Korre and Cërujë (the area of Funar between Elbasan and Tirana) with revenues 6156 akçe, while to Andrea Topia (in the register is marked Andre Karlo) were given three villages in the vilayet of Kruja. The same (in this case is mentioned as: Andre, son of Karl) together with a certain Andre Beksi (Halil Inalcık, *Suret-i defter*, 89, 105, 107, 120).

<sup>55</sup>Andrea Topia together with his two sons, Komnin and Muzakë Topia, and also his nephew, Tanush Topia, were participants in the League of Lezha called by Scanderbeg on 2 March 1444. Muzakë Topia remained killed on 1455, during the battle for the liberation of Berat from the Ottoman forces, while Tanush Topia was one of the most prominent commanders of Scanderbeg's army (Kristaq Prifti, ed., *Historia*, 402, 406, 419, 429, 451, 455).

<sup>56</sup>Halil Inalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Toplum ve ekonomi*, İstanbul, 1993, p.87.

<sup>57</sup>Halil Inalcık, *Suret-i defter*, 92.

<sup>58</sup>More widely on Dukagjini family see: Athanas Gegaj, *L'Albanie*; Kristaq Prifti, ed., *Historia*, 307-312; Oliver J. Schmitt, *Skënderbeu*, 201-212.

who remained alive, exiled by finding shelter in the Apennine peninsula, mainly in the region of Marche.<sup>59</sup>

The others chose to be at the service of the Ottoman state by converting to Islam and integrating in the new system. Here we can mention the grand viziers (the prime ministers) of the empire such as Daud Pasha and Mehmed Pasha, the famous poets Dukaginzade Yahya bey and Dukaginzade Ahmet bey, etc.<sup>60</sup>

The Muzaka family, another family of princes of the Middle Ages, offer a better understanding of the Albanian nobility metamorphoses in the political and social realms under the new circumstances created by the Ottoman rule. Thanks to the high political and social position they enjoyed in the Albanian environment of the time, the Muzaka family had a dense net of marriage and kinship alliances with the country's aristocratic elite. Here we can mention the Balsha, the Arianiti, the Kastrioti, the Gropa, the Dukagjini, the Zenebishi families etc.<sup>61</sup>

A part of the family represented by Gjin II Muzaka and his successors, decided to preserve untouched the political integrity and the religious identity, aligning in the anti-Ottoman war under the leadership of Scanderbeg. To this line belonged the narrator of the family history, Gjon (Giovanni) Muzaka. By aligning at the side of Scanderbeg together with his father, Gjin II, he became one of the main actors of the Albanian-Ottoman war in the XV century. The efforts of sultan Mehmet II (Fatih) to win over him, and distract him from the way of resistance by offering different posts failed.<sup>62</sup>

Only when the hopes on Albania's freedom were annihilated and the final establishment of the Ottoman rule was beyond any doubt (it's about 1479 when even the city of Shkodra fell at the hands of the

<sup>59</sup> Paolo Petta, *Despotë*, 213.

<sup>60</sup> Zyber Bakiu, *Shqipëria dhe shqiptarët: hulumtime historike në enciklopedinë "Kamus'ul Alam" të Sami Frashërit*, (Tiranë: West Print, 2015), 319, 344, 346. At all odds, Daud Pasha could be the converted son to Islam of Nikollë Dukagjini and Kirana Arianiti, the daughter of Gjergj Arianiti. This information is received by the chronicler Giovanni Muzaka when writes: "The third daughter (of Gjergj Arianiti-F.D.), lady Kirana, was married with the lord Nikollë Dukagjini, as also were married to the Dukagjini family her sisters. From this lady were born two sons: one died, while **the other converted to Islam and became Pasha and Great Captain of the Sultan** (See on: Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët*, 433).

<sup>61</sup> On this issue see further: Giovanni Musacchi, "Historia e genealogia della casa Musacchia" in: Charles Hopf, *Chroniques Greco-Romanes inédites ou peu connues* (Berlin: Librairie de Weidmann, 1873), 282-288. See also: Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët*, 430-436.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 421.



Ottomans), Gjon Muzaka, alike his sisters Scanderbeg's family and many others fellow countrymen, escaped by seeking asylum in the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>63</sup> The forced escape also had dangers and surprises. Gjon Muzaka, his wife and children were first sheltered in the city of Durrës (still under the Venetian rule). Miraculously escaping from falling at the hands of the Ottomans that were chasing them, his wife Maria (member of the Dukagjini family), together with the daughter and two sons (one of them newborn), passed the Adriatic and joined Gjon, who had previously arrived in the Apennine peninsula.<sup>64</sup>

Gjon Muzaka was welcomed by Naples' authorities, which appointed the noble from Albania in important positions of Puglia. Among others, he also served as commander of the Brindisi harbor.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, a nephew of John Muzaka, son of his brother Gjin, served as castellan in Mezzana (Puglia's region), a service that was inherited by his son, Andrea.<sup>66</sup> Probably, also Teodor, one of John's sons, accomplished different administrative duties in Mezzana and in Castellaneta. While the other two sons of Gjon, Adrian and Kostandin, achieved to have a good military career inside and outside the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>67</sup> Adrian, a thin boy, but very vivid and joyful, was appointed commander of a military troop of 200 stratiots to fight against the French. Vexed by the quarrels of the Neapolitan army, he suddenly abandoned the camp and passed on the side of the French. Hereinafter he served as captain of the light French cavalry. During all this time he was individualized for courage and boldness, especially in the front of the war with the British in northern France and died poisoned in dubious circumstances (1526).<sup>68</sup>

The same thing did Gjon's younger son, Kostandin, who together with his brother passed at the side of the French. He achieved to save him from the annihilation of his platoon during the fighting and return him safe and sound to France. After that, with the help of an influenced family he could return again in the Kingdom of Naples, which he has

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<sup>63</sup>*Ibid*, 422.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid*; Paolo Petta, *Despotë*, 130.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid*, 131.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid*, 132.

betrayed years ago. In 1532, the king Charles V allocated to him a pension of 200 ducats.<sup>69</sup>

The other branch of the Muzaka family, represented by the successors of Teodor III Muzaka, found the compromise with the new ruler as a solution. They embraced the Islam and were included in the Ottoman military-administrative hierarchy, demonstrating one of the most typical cases of the Albanian aristocracy metamorphoses after the establishment of the Ottoman rule. The most remarkable representatives of the second orientation were Jakub Bey and Kasem Pasha, who were successful in their careers by quickly achieving the position of the head of Albanian Sandjak.<sup>70</sup>

The cases of Jakub Bey and Kasem Pasha surprisingly were not reported by Gjon Muzaka in his chronicles.<sup>71</sup> We cannot guess the reasons behind, but we want to put in evidence that this absence has been compensated by the status of these two progenies converted to Islam of the Muzaka family reported in the Ottoman register of the Albanian Sandjak during 1431-1432. This document has many notes on timar granting to different officials of the new Ottoman administration with special authorizations issued by Jakub Bey and Kasem Pasha in the respective periods that they governed the Albanian Sandjak.<sup>72</sup>

These two personalities and their brother Mehmed, also converted to Islam, were the sons of Teodor Muzaka. Jakub Bey represents one of the most interesting figures of the Albanian and Ottoman history of the first half of the XV century. However, his life and career were short. In 1441, he is presented in the historic sources of the time as Albania's Sandjak bey, and a year later he was killed in the battle between the

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid*, 133.

<sup>70</sup> Ferit Duka, *Shekujt*, 36.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid*. Otherwise, the chronicler of the house of Muzaka, didn't lacked to present a considerable number of other persons converted to Islam from this family during the XV century (see: Pëllumb Xhufi, *Nga Paleologët*, 435-436).

<sup>72</sup>In the summary register of the Albanian Sandjak (years 1431-1432) are found such notes as e.g.: With a letter of **Jakub Bey** 5 homes of the village Hotisht(?) of Vlora are joined to the timar of Sandal, son of Umur; with motion of **Jakub Bey** the village Cerkovinë of Vlora is given to the judge of Kanina; by order of **Jakub Bey**, a part of the revenues of the village Karavasta-Skelë with 21 homes, is given to Mustafa Bey, son of Pavllo Kurtiqi; **Jakub Bey**, sandjak bey of Albania gives Këlcyra to Aman Bey; in the presence of **Kasem Pasha**, the village Kuçovais given to Ali, son of Hamza etc. (see: Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i Defter*, 5, 30, 42, 47, 61).

Ottoman and Hungarian armies. He was considered one of the most distinguished military commanders of the sultan Murat II.<sup>73</sup>

The documentary data conceived from to date research, do not provide sufficient information about the successors of Jakub Bey. Nevertheless, from one note made in an Ottoman register on 1455, we learn that he had a son named Jusuf Chelebi, who possessed a timar in the vilayet of Tetovo (Kalkandelen), what meant that he also was included in the Ottoman state administrative-military hierarchy.<sup>74</sup>

The framing of the Muzaka family in the Ottoman system of timar was fulfilled through granting possession not only to the converted in Islam, but in the beginning to the Christian progenies of this family. Other notes from the Albanian Sandjak provide interesting information about the other members of the Muzaka family, who differently from the case of Jakub Bey were involved in the timar system by preserving the Christian religion, viz, being part of that transitional social category in the first centuries of the Ottoman rule known as "Christian timar holders". To this category belongs Andrea III Muzaka, the father of Gjini Muzaka, fellow warrior of Scanderbeg and grandfather of Gjoni Muzaka, and also the brother of Andrea of the above mentioned, Vlash Muzaka. Both brothers possessed in this framework as timar the village Hekal of Mallakastra (after a note made in the mentioned register), granted to them on 1453 which was removed on 1450.<sup>75</sup>

Although the chronicle of Gjoni Muzaka does not report about the typical cases of this phenomenon, it provides sufficient information to conclude that except the line of Gjini Muzaka, who ended up in political exile abroad after Scanderbeg's death, alike many others, all the successors of this family "melted" in the Islamic part of the Albanian population.<sup>76</sup>

However, here we have to note that the members of Muzaka family who converted to Islam, as as based on up to now research in the Ottoman documentation of the XVII-XVIII centuries, have not left a distinguishing trace that makes their identification possible. Apparently, they have erased every outer sign that could relate them

<sup>73</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i Defter*, XVIII; Paolo Petta, *Despotë*, 129.

<sup>74</sup> Kasem Biçoku, "Dibra dhe Koxhaxhiku në kohën e Skënderbeut", *Studime historike*, nr.1-2 (Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë, 2003), 21-22.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>76</sup> Ferit Duka, *Shekujt*, 39.

with their pre-Ottoman past, being satisfied by carrying their new titles of the Ottoman time, as "agha", "bey" or "pasha".<sup>77</sup>

The data conceived from the Ottoman sources of the '30s, XV century, help us to have a clearer view on Albania's political and social environment of the first decades of the XV century. The gap that the decline of the power of the once traditional principalities created was now filled with nobles of a second level who grew under the shadow of "the traditional" princes and empowered thanks to the fast involvement within the new Ottoman ruler by converting to Islam and maximizing their profits from the support of this new power.<sup>78</sup>

A typical example of the integration within the new above-mentioned system was the Kurtiqi (Kurtik) family, a big family of the Middle Albania. The most prominent individual of this family, Pavllo (it also written Pavli) Kurtik, who had in his possession a wide area within the line Tirana-Elbasan-Berat-Lushnja-Kavaja, and on its bases the Ottomans established an independent administrative unit in the framework of the Albanian Sandjak, called "Pavllo Kurtik's vilayet", which included a number of regions in the above-mentioned area.<sup>79</sup>

His sons were converted to Islam and were rewarded with timars from the Ottoman state not only in the territories of his father's vilayet, but also in other regions of the country. One of the sons, Mustafa, had long time granted with timars that included the specific villages of Mallakastra (among them also the villages Struman and Belishovë),<sup>80</sup> Përmet (among them also the village Odriçan)<sup>81</sup>. Also, by a note of the sandjak head, Jakub bey, the son of Teodor Muzaka, on H 841/1437, to Mustafa were granted as timar the villages of Bishqem, Mamël, Kozan (today: Kozaj), Krrabani (today: Kërrabë), Manës and Gjodelesh (today: Godolesh).<sup>82</sup> Part of Mustafa's timar also became some powerful economic sources as Karavasta harbor with revenues 220 golden coins and the village with the same name of revenues 9531 akçe.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 39-40.

<sup>78</sup> Selami Pulaha, *Pronësia*, 62-63.

<sup>79</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Suret-i defter*, 85-97.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 96.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

Apparently, the most important was the other son of Pavllo Kurtik converted to Islam, Isa bey, who possessed as timar a big space with 113 villages included in. The revenues that Isa bey secured from the taxes and obligations receiving from the cadre of this timar were:

Ispenja - 30793 akçe; wheat - 2000 kilos x 10 = 20000 (akçes-F.D); barley and rye - 1000 kilos x 6 = 6000; vineyards' tithe - 1600 medres x 5 = 8000; olive oil's tithe - 3000; Shën Jorgji's harbor - 150 golden coins x 33 = 4950 (akçes-F.D.); Shën Mari(Saint Mary) fair - 150; pigs' taxes - 1000; niyabet tax (revenues from the fines) - 3000; niyabet of Krraba - 8000 (?); ispenja - 3413. The amount of all the revenues together in the region of Krraba achieved the sum of 81306 (akçes). By sultan's decree, on August 1437, to Isa bey were granted as timar bonus also the villages Gracen, Bizhutë, Bradashesh, Petresh, Shën Gjergj and Jatesh.<sup>84</sup>

The Moslem heirs of Pavllo Kurtik had a distinguished career and wealth even outside Albanian territories. On 1460-1463, one of the sons of Isa bey, Ibrahim, is seen in Morea (Peloponnese) as holder of a zeamet with revenues 22.952 akçes. The mentioned zeamet included the city of Sandamir together with its surroundings. Except Ibrahim, Isa bey Kurtik has another son named Yusuf. On 1454-1455, both brothers, Ibrahim and Yusuf, possessed an even bigger zeamet with revenues of 42 399 akçes. The zeamet was in Thessaly, area of Trikala.<sup>85</sup>

As its seen by the above-mentioned data, Pavllo Kurtik was one of the most powerful man of Albania at that time. He belonged to that part of the Albanian nobility which since the beginning chose the way of obedience and compromise with the new Ottoman power, therefore not only preserved its privileges, but its successors converted to Islam and made career in the Ottoman administrative-military unit.

The possession of the timars in the XV century in Albania was conditioned by the regular participation in the Ottoman campaigns against Scanderbeg, or the so- called by the Ottoman authorities of the time "**Albania's war**", underling this way the true dimensions of the event. This means that in the Ottoman register we have a clear evidence

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 88-89.

<sup>85</sup> Inalcık, *Osmanlı*, 87; Levent Kayapınar, "Osmanlı arşiv kaynaklarına göre Dimitsana'nın demografik yapısı". Taken from: conference.arcadians.gr. In the document is said: "Zeamet-i Sandamiri, zaimmiş, İbrahim veled-i İsa Bey bin Pavllo Kurtik" (zeamet of Sandamir; was zaim, Ibrahim, the son of Pavllo Kurtik).

that the anti-Ottoman war under the leadership of Scanderbeg was not just a local rebellion within the territories of a specific principality, but a nationwide liberation war. Such a thing has found expression in some notes made in the register of Përmet and Korça.<sup>86</sup>

When it comes to the relations of the Albanian nobility of the Middle Ages with the Ottoman period, a special interest presents the other big family from Berat, the Zguro, whose members were converted to Islam, but differently from the Muzaka family, preserved their previous identity (family's name). The beginnings of the Moslem line of the Zguro family, can be identified since the first decades of the XV century. While in a note made in the Albanian Sandjak of 1431-1432, it is mentioned a Christian timar holder named Uzgur, groom of the known Albanian noble of the XV century, Dhimitër Prespa, to whom was granted as timar the village Divjaka and some other villages in the area of Berat and Myzeqe.<sup>87</sup> In another note of the same register, we learn that the village Babunë of Myzeqe, together with another village, was given to the son of Zguro, the Moslem Ahmet, showing that the successor of Zguro was converted to Islam.<sup>88</sup> This is one of the first cases that is mentioned the name Zguro and his progeny converted to Islam, perhaps the name that would belong later to the big Moslem Zguro family.<sup>89</sup>

The Moslem branch of the Zguro family was quickly empowered. Skillful and loyal to the Ottoman state, the progenies of this family newly converted to Islam, soon are reported in the Ottoman sources as

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<sup>86</sup> Thus e.g., about the village Verloçishtë is said that this village at the last year of shaban 858/July-August 1454, was seized as timar from Atmaxha and Avgjeden because the latter have stayed in their towers and have not fulfilled the military service. In another place of the same document is said that the village Biranji was previously removed to Isa, but was given again to him as timar with a part of the village Vashtëmi, at the end year of shevval 855 (November 1451), because the person in word have attested the participation in the war *against Albania* under the Pasha's command.

Also, about the village Poçestë of Korça is said that at the end of shaban year 859 (August 1455), the village in word was given as timar for common exploitation to Jakup and Sulejman with the condition that these must present themselves every year in **the near future military expeditions as those against Albania**, and also to participate alternately in distant expeditions (*DAOA, MAD*, No. 231, 75, 88).

<sup>87</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i Defter*, 95. Ferit Duka, *Berati në kohën osmane* (Tiranë: Toena, 2001), 47.

<sup>88</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i Defter*, 5.

<sup>89</sup> Halil Inalcık, *Sûret-i defter*, 5.

high national officials. According to the Ottoman chronicler, Oruc, Isa bey, the son of Zguro, was Anatolia's beylerbey in 1451-1454. Later, Mehmet II grants to Isa bey the high grade of Vizier and the title "Pasha".<sup>90</sup> It's necessary to mention in this case another note made in the Ottoman register of Përmet and Korça, in 1431-1432. It is said that the village Fratan in the district of Përmet in December 1451 was given as timar to the nephew of Isa bey Zguro, Ahmet, with the condition that the latter had to subdue and assemble the escaped population from this settlement and to take from them the tribute.<sup>91</sup>

In the first years of the XVI century, Murat Bey, a progeny of the Zguro family, was considered a holder of a big timar with revenues up to 64729 akçes.<sup>92</sup> Also, the son named Ali who was converted to Islam in the same year, possessed as timar the villages Vokopolë e Poshtme and Lurë in the kaza of Berat.<sup>93</sup> Two other progenies of the same family, Isa and Mustafa, sons of Mehmed Zguro who were converted to Islam, eminent personalities with a career in the Ottoman administration, possessed as timar the village Goriçan in the above mentioned kaza.<sup>94</sup> Even during the XVII-XVIII centuries, the Zguro family continued to be one of the most powerful Albanian families because also two neighborhoods of the city of Berat respectively carry the names "Mehmed bey Zguro" and "Ahmet bey Zguro".<sup>95</sup>

As aforementioned said, the Zguro family is the most meaningful case of the continuity and sustainability of the medieval Albanian noble families in the Ottoman period. Based on this finding, we conclude that the progenies of the Albanian nobility in the Middle Ages who the converted to Islam became one of the most main sources of the Albanian high-class formation at the Ottoman time. This means that a part of pashas and beys of the Ottoman Albania, have their distant origin from the medieval noble families. For sure, the latter were neither the only source, nor the main one. Other important sources was the obligation of devshirme (periodical sending of Christian boys to the

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<sup>90</sup> Ferit Duka, *Berati*, 47-48.

<sup>91</sup> DAOA, MAD, No.231, 22.

<sup>92</sup> Ferit Duka, *Shekujt*, 38.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Ferit Duka, *Berati*, 49.

Ottoman court),<sup>96</sup> and a range of mechanisms through which the Ottoman political and economic system generated endless possibilities for many distinguished Albanians renowned for their courage and ability, to have a career and wealth during the Ottoman period and to turn into important actors of the Ottoman Albania political scene. This is how the great Albanian families of this period were created and functioned. They were extremely empowered in the XVIII century centering the new political developments which caused the establishment of the Albanian pachaliks.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 9. cilt (İstanbul: TDV, 1994), 254-257.

<sup>97</sup> On this issue see further: Kristaq Prifti, ed., *Historia*, kreu IV; Thomas Frashëri, *Breviar*, 10-25.



**Gjon BERISHA**

**THE REPUBLIC OF RAGUSA STAND TOWARDS THE  
ANTI OTTOMAN WAR OF GJERGJ KASTRIOTI-  
SCANDERBEG**

Since the beginning of the Ottoman invasions in the Balkans, Ragusa served as a center of information for the Christian Europe related to the circumstances in Albania due to the wars against the Ottoman invader, and through Ragusa were kept the connections with the Hungarian king Sigismund.

Therefore, most of the Ragusan documents on Scanderbeg's forerunning period report about the information that Ragusa offered to Sigismund on the situation in Albania and Bosnia. The emperor himself and the Hungarian king would send to lord Andrea Topia and some other Albanian leaders' letters and instructions always through Ragusa. This communication way is also proved by Andrea Topia himself, who wrote to the emperor that we don't have your letters, but indirectly we are informed by Ragusa. Therefore, the Senate of Ragusa, which recognized the emperor's sovereignty on Ragusa, systematically informed him on the permeation of the Turkish armies, the liberation war of Albanians and their victories.

The present study is based on the special position and status of Republic of Ragusa relation with the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, we inform about the stands of Ragusa regarding Scanderbeg's anti-Ottoman war.

Exactly, the development of the trade relations with Albania and the stand of the Republic in relation with Scanderbeg, were also defined by this special status that Ragusa had with the great conqueror of the time, the Ottoman Empire. At least, since 1460, the Republic of Saint Blaise faced the complete Ottoman domination in the Balkans. At this time, the Turkish army was coming closer to Ragusa borders. On 1463, the Ottomans defeated the Bosnians, and also killed the last Bosnian king.

Two years later, the Ottoman invaders, almost conquered Herzegovina - a territory that has been a special political unit within the kingdom of Bosnia, since the first half of the XV century – becoming direct neighbors of the Republic of Ragusa. The Ragusans, as merchants they were, had realized much earlier that this would happen and had established diplomatic relations with the Ottomans. The first official contacts began on 1392, while the Ragusans efforts to negotiate the guarantee for their trade in the Balkans with the *Sultan Bayezid I* (1389-1402), were crowned on 1396. After that, the contacts continued. The Ragusans intensified their efforts for a *modus vivendi*<sup>1</sup> with the Ottomans after the battle of Varna on 1444.<sup>2</sup>

On 1447, the Ragusan authorities negotiated a treaty with the Turks allowing them the free trade in the Balkans, but 1458 marked a new and a very important event. The Ottomans insisted the Ragusans pay an annual tribute, while Ragusa tried to avoid this at all costs, because the it could place the city in the position of vassalage towards the Ottomans. Nevertheless, after the fall of Byzantium and the death of the despot Đurađ Branković on 1456, as well as with the new sultan's insistence and capability, Ragusa was forced on 1458 start paying the tribute to the Ottomans. In that time, this tribute consisted of a relatively small amount of money, only 1.500 ducats and presents for the Turks dignitaries, but during the future two decades the amount of the tribute gradually raised, and finally on 1481, went up to 12.500 ducats per year. With a short interruption in 1684 - when Ragusa hoped to have the protection of the Austrians - the Ragusans remained loyal to their obligations towards the Ottomans until 1808.<sup>3</sup>

The Ottomans allowed the Ragusans to continue their activities in the Balkan's conquered territories, and Ragusa gained a lot from these concessions. At the same time, the city established brilliant relations with the Kingdom of Aragon in Southern Italy at the second half of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Latin expression "*modus vivendi*" means "way of living", but in this case is used to undermine an agreement or a way that allows the opposite parts to co-live-in peace (a kind of compromise).

<sup>2</sup> Bariša Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries: A City Between East and West*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma 1972, p. 58; Bogumil Hrabak, "Dubrovnikasit dhe Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", *Përparimi*, Vjeti XIII, nr.4 (Prishtinë, 1967), 58.

<sup>3</sup> Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th centuries*, p. 59.

XV century; it observed sympathetically the efforts *Pope Pious II* made to organized a new crusade against the Turks, as well as the courageous war of Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg in Albania and that of the Hungarian and Croatian king, *Matthias Corvinus*, in the north against the Ottomans. However, seen from the political aspect, all these efforts, were considered by them very small to make an essential change in the Balkan's situation. They were convinced that by preserving their position in the Balkans through their agreements with the Ottomans, they were doing the only reasonable and positive thing that could be done in the present circumstances. Moreover, Ragusa itself was in a suitable geographic position from which the Ottomans could keep an eye in the western Christian world.<sup>4</sup>

Though Ragusa had served as mediator for informing the Catholic Europe on the circumstances in Albania since on 1433, while some Albanian territories were facing the Ottoman invaders and the rebels establishing connections with the king Sigismund through Ragusa, even though the Ragusans escorted to Albania the emperor's envoy to be informed about the situation in the Albanian territories on May 1435<sup>5</sup> and showed their interest about Gjergj Kastrioti in the first period of his war against the Ottomans, Ragusa was reflected only as observer of events in this neighboring country. On the other hand, the communications between Scanderbeg and *Janosh Hunyadi* and later with the king *Matthias Corvinus*, also were passing through Ragusa, which served as promoter of the Scanderbeg's intervention on the Neapolitan quarrels for the royal throne on 1461 as well, because the king Ferrante favored the Ragusan merchants.<sup>6</sup>

The connections between the Kastrioti family and Ragusa are presented early in the documents. On March 21, 1413, Gjon became citizen of Ragusa, after the decision of the Council of Senators

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62; 167-168.

<sup>5</sup> "*Que habentur ex Albanis cum Teucris nova reservavimus prefato domino Frussin, qui per litteras suas, quas deferunt harum latores, ad noticiam prefate Maiestatis ea deducit, que per nunc nostris exarare preterimus*", Hrvatska-Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku (hereinafter: HR-DADU), HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XI (1430-1437), fol. 244v; Jovan Radonić, *Durađ Kastriot Skenderbeg i Arbanija u XV veku: istoriksa grada*, Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija (Spomenik XCV, Drugi razred 74), 1942, no. 7.

<sup>6</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog. XVII* (1461-1463), fol. 7; 14r; Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 213.

(Rogatorum).<sup>7</sup> These connections were intensified on 1420,<sup>8</sup> with the trade agreement between Gjon Kastrioti and Ragusa in the bases of which, the Ragusan merchants would pay only a custom through Gjon's possessions, while he would guarantee them the safety of passing through his territory; to achieve a higher level on 1439, when the Republic decided to grant Gjon Kastrioti's sons the citizenship.<sup>9</sup>

When Scanderbeg returned to Albania in 1443, the Albanian noble Arianiti was granted the right of Ragusan citizenship by the Commune of Ragusa. Arianiti had urged Albanians into rebellions. Ragusa send also to Arianiti the flag, but turned down his demand to send a bombardarda for the rebellion necessities.<sup>10</sup> For the establishment of the close relations with the Christian Europe, Scanderbeg exploited Ragusa, the most suitable and the earlier channel. His demands addressed to the Pope and the Hungarian barons, on April 1446, were sent through Ragusa's diplomatic service.<sup>11</sup> A year later, Ragusa granted to the Albanian hero 500 pounds of bombardarda gun powder.<sup>12</sup> Responding to the call of Hunyadi to attack the Turks, on October 1448, Scanderbeg asked for a loan in Ragusa, but the Senate of Ragusa

<sup>7</sup> Since 21 March 1413, according the decision of the Council of Senators (Rogatorum), Gjon has become a citizen of Ragusa, *"on accepting the lord Gjon Kastrioti as our citizen and neighbor with all the privileges and immunities, that are granted to the honorable citizens"* (HR-DADU, *Reform.*, vol. XXXIV (1412-1414), fol.188r).

<sup>8</sup> HR-DADU, no.793; Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 2; *Zakonski spomenici srpskih država srednjega veka*. Peta knjiga / prikupio i uredio Stojan Novaković. Beograd : Štampano u Državnoj štampariji kraljevine Srbije, 1912, no. 10; Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma. Knjiga 1: Dubrovnik i susedi njegovi, II deo* (Srpska Kraljevska Akademija. Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i knjizevnost srpskog naroda; I odeljenje. Spomenici na srpskom jeziku. Knj. XXIV), Beograd-Sr. Karlovci, 1934, no.157; Tefik Geci, "Mbi sfragjistiken e Kastriotëve", *Simpoziumi për Skënderbeun – Simpozijum o Skenderbegu* (9-12 maj 1968), Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës 1969, p. 241.

<sup>9</sup> On this occasion it has to be mentioned another important moment, respectively that has to do with the Saint Blaise Senate verdict to grant to the sons of Gjon Kastrioti the citizenship of that city. (HR-DADU, *Acta Cons.Rog.*, vol. VII (1438-1441), fol. 76; *Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut*, vol. II, Tiranë 1989, p. 352).

<sup>10</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, vol. II, Paris: E. Leroux, 1899, pp. 395-396; Ivan Božić, *Dubrovnik i Turka u XIV i XV veku*, Beograd: Naučna knjiga, 1452, p. 100.

<sup>11</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. IX (1444-1446), fol. 238r; Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 13.

<sup>12</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. X (1446-1448), fol. 102r; Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no.14.

declared that couldn't grant him the required amount, but instead granted him 200 golden ducats.<sup>13</sup>

The advance of the Ottoman armies in the Balkans, their approach to the borders of the Catholic Hungary, their exit in the Adriatic shores, the scope of the sultans to enter the Central Europe and pass in the Italian Peninsula concerned Rome. The concern of the Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) increased even more after the Council of Florence (1439), because his project for a common crusade with the Eastern Church proved to be unsuccessful. Exactly in these circumstances, Scanderbeg's resistance against the Ottoman armies, gained a special strategic, political, military and religious importance for Rome, as church and state. Albania along with Hungary and Bosnia, was considered as *Basilio Pandzic* wrote, one of the three neuralgic points of the crusade, which the Pope Eugene IV have proclaimed on May 26, 1443.<sup>14</sup>

The one who considered Scanderbeg a factor in Rome's projects, was the successor of *Eugene IV*, the Pope *Nicholas V* (1447-1455), who once was crowned on Saint Peter's throne (1447), started to think about Albania, which represented the hope for the Christian Europe, menaced by the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, in 20 June 1447, the same pope sent the Franciscan *Antonio de Oliveto* as "*nunzio of the Holy See in Albania and Dalmatia's territories*" (ad partes Albaniae et Sclavoniae), who might be the first apostolic *nunzio* officially coming to Albania instructed to do the utmost to convince the Christian believers to support the war against the Ottomans led by Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg. He expressively said: "*let's give to our beloved son, the noble man Gjergj Kastrioti lord of Albania the support and aid against the Turks*".<sup>15</sup> However, the same *Antonio Olivento*, was nothing more

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<sup>13</sup> The Senate of Ragusa apologizes to Scanderbeg for not having the chance to grant him a loan for the war against the Turks. It decided to grant him 200 golden ducats – "*Prima pars est de donando dicto Scanderbech ducatos auri ducentos*", HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XI (1448-1451), fol. 14r.

<sup>14</sup> *Basilio Panzić*, "Frānçeskanët në shërbim të Shqipërisë gjatë epokës së Skënderbeut", *Hylli i Dritës*, Vjeti XXVIII, 4 (Shkodër, 2009), p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> In Breve among others was said: "... *nostrum et Sedis apostolicae Nuncium, ad praesens mittimus, cupientes illas tibi iacere concessionem, in quarum vim christifidelibus carum partium tu possis gratiorem reddere ac utiliore...* Caeterum, quia cupimus dilecto filio, nobili viro *Georgio Castrioto, Domino in Albania, a fidelibus christianis favores et praesidia praestari adversus Turcas...*", *Bullarium Franciscanum continens constitutiones, epistolas, diplomata*

but Father *Antonio de Napoli*, that the Pope *Eugene IV* had appointed pontific *nunzio* in Ragusa in 1443-1447.<sup>16</sup> Antonio's main duty according the papal letter was the collection of the assets from the believers, supporting the war against the Turks, led by Scanderbeg, whom is expressively mentioned. Perhaps Father Antonio took with him in Ragusa the pontific letters. Indeed, on July 1447 he is found in Ragusa,<sup>17</sup> and has likely addressed them to Scanderbeg immediately. In the following months, respectively on December 1447 we find him in the kingdom of Naples, as Scanderbeg envoy asking for help to Alfonso V, mainly for ships. Alfonso V, in replying to Scanderbeg, on 14 December 1447, praising his brave war against the Turks, promised to send some ships. At the same time, he pledges that would secure shelter to Scanderbeg and his family in case he was forced to leave his country.<sup>18</sup>

From what the documents reveal, Scanderbeg visited for the first time Ragusa on the second half of December 1450. In this occasion, he again demanded aids in money from the Ragusan government, but his demand was again turned down. Again, he was granted an amount as a gift of 500 ducats.<sup>19</sup> The Ragusans hesitation to loan money Scanderbeg, was again seen in the beginning of 1451, and we would speak in the following lines. In the established circumstances, the authorities of Ragusa asked the Pope their free from previewed annual tribute on the occasion of the jubilee 1450, justifying their claim that according to them, they have made great services to Christendom, especially supporting Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg.<sup>20</sup>

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*Romanorum pontificum Eugenii IV et Nicolai V ad tres ordines S. P. N. Francisci spectantia. Collegit et edidit Fr. Ulrichus Hüntemann O.F.M. lector iubilatus. Nova Series. Tomus I. (1431–1455). Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi), MCMXXIX, dok. 1071, p. 540; Panzić, "Frangëskanët në shërbim të Shqipërisë", pp. 48-49.*

<sup>16</sup> At Ragusa's documentes we also find the name father *Antonio de Giovinazzo (Juvenacii)*. Cfr.: B. Rode, "Documenti Francescani di Ragusa", *Miscellanea Francescana: di storia, di lettere, di arti*, vol. XIV (Foligno: Feliciano Campitelli Editore 1912), no. 49.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 57.

<sup>18</sup> Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 16.

<sup>19</sup> "*Prima pars est de eundo ad Maius Consilium pro donando sibi ducatos quingentos*", HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, Vol. XI (1448-1451), fol. 272r-272v; Jorga, *Notes et extraits II*, p.443 not. 2; Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Instruction of the brilliant doctor, venerable master Gjon Gazulli, who went to the Pope Nicholas V to demand on behalf of the Ragusan Senate to be set free from the previewed annual tribute on the occasion of the jubilee 1450, because Ragusa had great merits in aiding

There were many diplomats engaged in the Scanderbeg's diplomatic missions in Europe. Here we can mention the Gazulli brothers (Gjon, Pal and Andrea Gazulli). There are many documents in the National Archive in Dubrovnik informing about them.<sup>21</sup> Albania's leader, Gjergj Kastrioti, highly appreciating the role and the abilities of Gjon Gazulli (*Johannes Gazulus*) as savant and diplomat, charged him with a special mission in Rome. On February 1451, Kastrioti addressed the rector of Ragusa's church, the Albanian ambassador, Gjon Gazulli, with a special mission close to the Pope Nicholas V.<sup>22</sup> The Ragusans exploited Gazulli's visit to Rome, for their own interests. Gazulli was instructed to ask the Pope *Nicholas V*, on behalf of the Ragusan Senate, the free from the previewed annual *tribute*, in the occasion of the jubilee year 1450, because the *Republic of Saint Blaise*, according to them had great merits in the support and aid given to Scanderbeg in the war against the Ottoman Empire, and was always menaced by the Turks.<sup>23</sup> The Albanian humanist, Gjon Gazulli, successfully fulfilled his mission. The *Pope Nicholas V*, found a specific compromise solution to please both sides. On 13 April 1451, he proclaimed a decree, on which he decided that the aids from the *indulgences*, collected in the territory of Ragusa be divided in half between Ragusa and Scanderbeg: a part would be given to Scanderbeg for war purposes, while the other part to be preserved for the commune and the citizens of Ragusa.<sup>24</sup> However, the plague had just erupted in Ragusa. Found in

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and supporting Scanderbeg in the war against the Ottomans. Ragusa, 27 February 1451, HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XIV (1448-1449), fol. 63v-66r; József Gelcich, Lajos Thallóczy, *Diplomatarium relationum Reipublicae Ragusanae cum regno Hungariae: Raguza és Magyarország összekötteréseinek oklevéltára*, Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1887, no. 286; J. Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje - Acta et diplomata Ragusina* I/1 (Zbornik za Istoriju, Jezik i Književnost Srpskog Naroda, Treće odeljenje; knj. III), Beograd: Mlada Srbija, 1934, pp. 522-527.

<sup>21</sup> On Gazulli family, Cfr.: Š. Jurić, "Prilozi biografiji Ivana Gazulića", *Anali Historijskog instituta u Dubrovniku*, VIII-IX, Dubrovnik, 1962, pp. 447-479; J. Drançolli, *Gjin Gazulli astronom dhe diplomat i shek. XV*, Rilindja, Prishtinë 1984.

<sup>22</sup> HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XIV (1448-1449), fol.63v-66r.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> "...ad subuentionem et auxilium dilecti filii nobilis uiri Georgii Castrioto alias Scandebergh, domini Croye et Arban, qui, sicut accepimus, perfidis Teucris uiriliter et animose resistere ac eos pro posse impugnare non cessat, eorundem posteriorum litterarum serie deputauimus prefato Georgio, seu acie id per eum deputandis personis tradere et assignare tenerentur, prout in posterioribus litteris predictis plenius continetur.", HR-DADU, *Acta Sancta Mariae Maioris*, F.I. 1451. no. 31.

difficult situation, the government begged the Pope to take into consideration the situation and to postpone the selling of the *indulgences* brought by Gjon Gazulli. In the summer of 1451, the Pope was also informed by the bishop of Kotorr, *Bonino de Tollentis*, about the situation in the city and the selling of the *indulgences*.

Nonetheless in the second half of the 1451, was temporarily suspended the selling of *indulgences* (because of the plague, of the Ragusans conflict with the Herzog *Stjepan Vukčić Kosača*, and because of Gazulli's travel to meet Scanderbeg),<sup>25</sup> the payment was done. On 18 March 1452, authorized by Scanderbeg, to Albania's bishop, Andrea Suma, were granted 4.893 perpers from the *jubilee year* revenues,<sup>26</sup> while the other half, in bases of the Pope's *bull*, was granted to the Republic.

Scanderbeg didn't stop asking financial means from Ragusa, even though he was turned down, being satisfied only praising him for his merits in defending Christendom against the Turks.<sup>27</sup> During 1453, Scanderbeg received letters,<sup>28</sup> then were carried negotiations with his collaborators, also to *Vladislav Hercegović* was given a boat to be sent to Scanderbeg.<sup>29</sup> To Scanderbeg envoy, Pal Gazulli and another representative, were given 100 pound of silver, that were banked in Ragusa.<sup>30</sup>

On 25 September 1453, the Ragusan Government granted to Pal Gazulli approximately 35 kilos of silver. In this occasion, Pal Gazulli was escorted by *Teodor Jafeti*.<sup>31</sup> This shows how much the government

<sup>25</sup> The envoy of Ragusa demands to the Pope that because of the prince Stefan diseases and hostilities, to postpone for some time in the territory of Ragusa the collection of indulgencies, part which should be given to Scanderbeg. (HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XV (1449-1453), fol. 166r).

<sup>26</sup> "...dominus Andreas Suma, Dei et apostolice sedis gratia dignissimus totius Albanie episcopus procurator, et procurator nomine magnifici et illustri domini Georgii Castrioti... fuit confessus et contentus se dicto procuratorio nomine habuisse et recepisse et sibi dicto... inter ducatos et monetas et raubas ipperperos quatuor mille octingentes nonaginta tres ipsi domino Scandarbecho spectantes...", HR-DADU, *Div. Notariae*, vol. XXXVI (1451-1452), fol. 88r.

<sup>27</sup> HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XV (1449-1453), fol. 109r; Jorga, *Notes et extraits* II, p. 460; *Ibid.*, *Acta Con. Rog.*, vol. XIII (1452-1453), fol. 53v.

<sup>28</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Con. Rog.*, vol. XIII (1452-1453), fol. 168v; 234v

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 170r.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 240.

<sup>31</sup> "Prima pars est de dando domino Paulo Gazulo et Theodoro Jafet, ambassiatoribus de Scanderbech, de argento domini despoti, quod est in depositum in comune nostrum", *Ibid.*



believed in the Gazulli brothers. The same data we meet in the other old Ragusan historian, *Giovanni Marino Gondola*, according to whom this event dates in September 1453, without specifying the date of departure of the mentioned missionaries. Except that, the mentioned chronicler, informs Scanderbeg sent in Ragusa the Albania's bishop first, and then Pal Gazulli and *Teodor Jafeti*, whose mission had partial success.<sup>32</sup> Based on a document of 8 February 1453, Pal Gazulli went in Ragusa as missionary of the prince *Vladislav Hercegović*. At this time, Ragusa was involved in the war with the Herzegovinian duke *Stjepan Vukčić Kosača* (1451-1454), while his son, *Vladislav*, was in alliance with Ragusa. From this data, comes out that Pal was a famous personality in the Ragusan and Bosnian diplomatic circles.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the mentioned monetary amounts that Ragusa have granted time after time to Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg, the documentary sources found to this day, do not permit to calculate the general amount that Scanderbeg has taken from the *Republic of Saint Blaise*.

The Popes efforts and plans to turn Ragusa into a focal point of distributing the money for the crusade in the Balkans, and as a bases for the attacks against the Turkish invaders, were a permanent concern for the careful Ragusan merchants. Therefore, calculating its status comparing to that of the sultan, Ragusa hesitated to become the basis of open financial support for the anti-Ottoman war, but this thing was done by her with diplomacy, sometimes approving, at other times withdrawing and entirely turning down this policy. Again, carefully and with diplomacy, it allowed that within her walls, with Scanderbeg or his people, to realize plans or agreements, to have deposits or financial transactions in favor of the anti-Ottoman war.

The relations between Ragusa and Scanderbeg, also from the end of the '50s of the XV century, had mainly to do with the financial assets for the anti-Ottoman war in Albania. The aforementioned economic relations affected fields of great importance to Scanderbeg: money was

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<sup>32</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii (ab origine urbis ad annum 1451) item Joannis Gundulae (1451-1484), Digessit Speratus Nodilo* (Scriptores, 2; Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium, vol.25), Zagrabiae: In taberna libraria eiusdem societatis typog., 1893, p. 340.

<sup>33</sup> HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di Lev.*, vol. XV, fol. 51r.; HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XIII, fol. 148r.; S. Ćirković, *Herceg Stefan Vukčić - Kosača i njegovo doba*, SAN, knj.48, Belgrade 1964, pp. 190-191.

missing along with a proper banking system because of the political circumstances in his country. From the other side, to buy the necessary armament, occurred considerably amount of money, and for this reason were useful the banking services. Exactly a part of the documents, were dedicated to this problematic. The affiliations of the big Florentine banks in Ragusa, mainly performed such transaction with the proper restraint – because was about arm trade in a city which officially was partial and paid tribute to the sultan. Scanderbeg kept close relations with the banks *Pazzi*, *Strozzi* and *Albizzi*, which had interest for the wood commerce of Albania.<sup>34</sup> *Gjergj Kastrioti*, also had bank services in Ragusa, where he possessed a deposit, that according to the documents was about 2400 ducats, in the same bank where also *Durađ Branković* had his own deposits.<sup>35</sup>

A document of 1463, where Shufada is mentioned as the first export point, informs us about Scanderbeg revenues and his deposits that were gained from the grain trade. This document mentions Scanderbeg's representative, *Teodor*, who took at his service in Ragusa a ship with veils and six sailors, to send a grain load from Shufada to the harbor of *Trani*, respectively *Barletta*.<sup>36</sup> As in the times of Gjon Kastrioti, in the mouth of Ishmi River was sold to the Ragusans timber, e.g., to the merchants *Radoje Milošević* and *Antun Radeljić* from Korcula (Croatia) that was under the administration of Venetians.<sup>37</sup> Considerable amounts of money that were gained from the trade, are proved by a grain purchase done by three members of *Gonduli* family from Ragusa on 1464 through two representatives: from this disposition, the amount of 1450 ducats was owned by Scanderbeg.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the Ragusans, in the small harbors of Scanderbeg also traded merchants from Northern Italy, as for example a certain *Baidesar de Rexina* from Milan, which bought grain, barley and

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<sup>34</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVIII, fol.133v, 150r; *Diversa cancellariae*, XLVI, fol.78r.

<sup>35</sup> "...*Raian Celnicho a domino Paulo de Gazulis nunciis illustris domini Georgi Castrioti diti Schenderbegh in depositum in comune 35 nostrum ducatos auri duo milia quadrigentos...*", HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XV, 214v.

<sup>36</sup> HR-DADU, *Div. Notariae*, vol. XLVII, fol. 22; Kasem Biçoku, "Rrugët nëpër vilajetin e Krujës në shek. XV dhe lokalizimi i Shufadasë", *Monumentet*, 1 (Tiranë, 1982), 41-62.

<sup>37</sup> HR-DADU, *Div. Notariae*, vol. XLVII, fol. 32r.

<sup>38</sup> HR-DADU, *Div. Notariae*, vol. XLVIII (1464-1465), fol. 34r.

millet.<sup>39</sup> Scanderbeg was selling cheese also to his allies in the poor highlands, as e.g., to prince *Vladislav* of Herzegovina or *Stefan Crnojević* from Zeta, who took from him 140 half a bushel through the Venetian harbor of Kotorr.<sup>40</sup>

The revenues from the trade of grain and timber, customs were not enough to secure all the necessary money. He was forced in some occasions to ask for help from abroad, especially from Ragusa. However, the merchant Republic of Ragusa wouldn't dare to openly support the Albanian prince. Ragusa belonged to the Hungarian crown and as was previously said, paid tribute to the sultan. Ragusa's convoys travelled enormous territories of the Ottoman Empire; Ragusans high aiming was the security of the convoys with precious stocks. Though the city was protected by his powerful walls, where within were deposited their treasures and a number of the Balkan princes, again the representatives of the Senate, wouldn't test the fortification durability. Ragusa was situated between the West and the Ottoman Empire. She would not only please the noble leaders and lords of the neighboring countries, in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Albania, but lately it had to defend herself from the Venetian competition at sea. Scanderbeg demands for help in money and armaments has put in a very unpleasant situation the *Republic of Saint Blaise*.<sup>41</sup> Ragusa wouldn't like to risk the profitable trade in Albania. They were happy that there was a ruler (Scanderbeg) who fought against the Ottomans, but they feared the Ottoman spies that could be in the city and the danger that was threatened to their merchants in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the stand of Ragusa changed continuously, according to the political developments in the Balkans: in 1446 and 1447,<sup>42</sup> the Republic helped Scanderbeg by diplomatic mediation and weapons. But, when Scanderbeg asked in 1448 a loan for the attack in the *Second Battle of Kosova*, the gentlemen of the Small Council were afraid in front of a

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<sup>39</sup> HR-DADU, *Div. Notariae*, XLVII, fol. 3v-4r.

<sup>40</sup> O. J. Schmitt (avec la collaboration de G. Saint-Guillain), "Actes inédits concernant Venise, ses possessions Albanaises et ses relations avec Skanderbeg entre 1464 et 1468", *Turcica* 31 (1999), p. 260.

<sup>41</sup> Božić, *Dubrovnik i Turska*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>42</sup> "...donando libras quingentas pulueris bombarde... donando libras quatourcentum...", HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. X (1446-1448), fol. 102r; Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 14. During these years, Scanderbeg was granted some powder gun units.

such challenge towards the sultan. However, they gave to Scanderbeg a symbolic amount of 200 golden ducats, we mentioned above. With 500 other ducats, Scanderbeg was assisted by Ragusa on 1450, on the occasion of the Ottoman attacks on Kruja, but this time, from the side of Ragusa, was discretely proceeded limiting only spelling praises. The government of Ragusa valued and glorified Scanderbeg merits in defending Kruja, that according to her constituted the defense of the Christian values from the Turkish invasion.<sup>43</sup>

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The monetary assets, Scanderbeg was also forced to secure through common international gatherings in the war against the Turks. About the Pope *Callixtus III* action for war against the Turks, on 5 May 1456, in Ragusa came as the Pope's *nunzio*, an archdeacon from Kotorr to ask for help.<sup>44</sup> The authorities of Ragusa declared that because of their exposure towards the Turkish attacks, they could do nothing, first of all because the Turks have occupied a good part of the Serb Despotate, reducing in this way a great source of revenues.<sup>45</sup>

The apostolic preacher of the crusade in Dalmatia and especially in Ragusa, was *Mariano da Siena*. He was appointed from the Pope's representative, the cardinal *Francesco Condulmer*, who has received from the Pope specific assignments. Mariano, on October 1456 was in Kotorr, waiting the permission from the Republic of Ragusa, which he was granted on 29 October of the same year.<sup>46</sup>

On March 1457, when *Marianum de Senis* (*Mariano da Siena*) started to preach the establishment of a crusade, there were enough volunteers from Ragusa, which volunteered to participate in the war and to pay the indulgencies amount of three ducats. Thus, Ragusa has found itself even in a more difficult situation than a year before. For not troubling the Pope, to Ragusa's inhabitants was allowed that for a specific timeline to make propaganda at crusade's favor. The reply was big enough, and now on March 1457 the cash collectors would achieve to collect until 4000 ducats only in Ragusa.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XV (1449-1453), fol.109r; Jorga, *Notes et extraits* II, p.460.

<sup>44</sup> HR-DADU, *Cons. Rog.*, vol. XV (1456-1458), fol. 1v.

<sup>45</sup> HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XVI (1454-1460), fol. 148r.

<sup>46</sup> Rode, "Documenti Francescani di Ragusa", no. 79.

<sup>47</sup> HR-DADU, *Cons. Rog.*, vol. XV (1456-1458), 102v.

The Pope *Callixtus III* previewed the start of a great war against the Turks on March 1457. To achieve this aim, his ambassadors and crusade warriors spread all over Europe. However, meantime the Republic of Ragusa was convinced that the ground army in that time was important and for this, the revenues would be saved for it. In these conditions, on 16 March 1457, she send to the king of Hungary a special envoy: the Franciscan *Alessandro da Ragusa*, to ask that the money collected in Ragusa by *Mariano da Siena* were to be sent for the ground army.<sup>48</sup> Ragusa's merchants, were afraid that the presence of the crusade preachers in their city would cause the intervention of the Turkish authorities and therefore, tried that as soon as possible they should leave the city. Until the Pope has delivered an order to preach the crusade in Hungary, now on April 1457, Ragusa advised that these preachers should leave their country.<sup>49</sup> On 17 September 1457, through a *breve* addressed to the cardinal of Saint Angel's church, *Juan de Carvajal*, the Pope behest to him Gjergj Kastrioti, on whose war he hoped the most, by instructing the cardinal on tithe revenues collected by the papal collectors to be divided between the kings of Hungary and Bosnia and "*the noble son and not less beloved - Scanderbeg, lord of Albania*."<sup>50</sup> A day after, in September 18, the Pope Callixtus III addressed two orders to the city of Ragusa. On one he instructed to be granted to the trade agent *Martin Clarini*, representative of the Florentine merchants bank "*Petri et Jacobi de Pazis et sociorum*" in Ragusa, 10.000 ducats from the revenues collected for the crusade, which should be return to the above-mentioned bank (from which they were loaned by), while the other part to be divided on three equal parts and from them, two to be given to the kings of Hungary and Bosnia, while the other part to Scanderbeg. The Ragusans proposed to their sovereign, the Hungarian emperor, to ask for this money. The Pope threatened the Ragusans that would exclude them from the church "*tanquam sacrilegos et bonorum esslesiasticorum occupatores*", if they did not immediately pay the specific amount.<sup>51</sup> As the Pope's *nunzio*,

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<sup>48</sup> Rode, "Documenti Francescani di Ragusa", no. 76.

<sup>49</sup> HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XVI (1454-1460), fol. 122r, 119r.

<sup>50</sup> A. Theiner, *Vetera monumenta Hungariam sacram Illustrantia. Maximam partem mondu edita ex tabulariis Vaticanis*. Tomus II (1352-1526), Romae: topis Vaticanis 1860, p. 304.

<sup>51</sup> Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 155.

*Navarri*, arrived in Ragusa together with the Papal *breve*, the Senate of the Republic was informed that the Hungarian king wanted for the payment to be delayed, nonetheless the threat of excommunication, until he would decide what to do with the money. For this, they wanted the advice of two cardinals, *Siena* and *Piccolomini* (the future Pope), how to reply to Pope's reaction, when their sovereign, the king of Hungary won't release the money. These excuses of the Ragusans, the Pope *Callixtus III* considered vane "*vanas excusationes*" and on December he threatened again them with excommunication.<sup>52</sup> On December 1457, the Pope changed his decision. He decided the whole amount to be deposited in the bank, while to Scanderbeg to be promised the aid for the following year.<sup>53</sup> However, fifteen days later, the Pope returned to his previous decision that the remained amount of 10.000 ducats to be divided into three equal parts: to the Hungarian king, to Bosnian king and to Gjergj Kastrioti.<sup>54</sup> The letters of the Pope *Callixtus III* show the Pope's desire to help Scanderbeg, and at the same time the impossibility to grant him the amount he needed. He also manifested this concern in relation with the Ragusans which as were previously mentioned, were threatened with excommunication. The Ragusans on 7 February handed over to *Navarro* the money and demanded that their delay should not be interpreted as disobedience towards the Pope, but as outcome of the king's forbiddance.<sup>55</sup>

Anyway, these promised assets (Scanderbeg didn't achieved to take even one third of the amount), on 6 February 1458, the Pope informed his representative that Scanderbeg has received the aid as he has asked in the amount of 5.000 ducats of gold from the apostles means.<sup>56</sup>

Finding themselves between two fires, between the Turks and the Venetians, the careful merchants of Ragusa, tried to not break the relations with none of the parts, and even to not harm their relations with Scanderbeg. During all this time, the citizens of Ragusa tried to not attract the Turks' suspicion on their activity. During the stay of Navarra in the city, Ragusa didn't gave him the boat to go to Scanderbeg. They turned down every request of the Pope's

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 159.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, no.160.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, no.161.

<sup>55</sup> Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 166-167.

<sup>56</sup> Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 168; Božić, *Dubrovnik i Turska*, pp. 146-148.

ambassadors to participate at Pope's fleet, in the military operation against the Turks. On this, they presented a lot of reasons.<sup>57</sup> When on May 1458, they agreed to draw from the bank as gift 2.400 ducats deposited for Scanderbeg and the Senate of Ragusa asked that for this amount not to be given any kind of receipt from Ragusa's *notary*, fearing that such a document could fall at the Turks hands and this could serve as a pretext for revenge against its merchants.<sup>58</sup> However, this high level of vigilance didn't prevent the Republic from recommending to the Pope and to the archbishop of Ragusa, Scanderbeg, when the latter collaborators went in Rome. As a small but important service, was the welcome of the Kotorr's envoy, Stupko (Stupchus de Nandoralba), who was sent to Scanderbeg by the Hungarian king, and to whom the Ragusans gave a boat to sail through the Adriatic.<sup>59</sup>

On 9 June 1460, the Senate of Ragusa replied to the ambassador Scanderbeg that the Republic would offer to the ruler of Albania the necessary sailing boats when he travelled to Puglia (far from the eyes of the Turkish spies), but on Scanderbeg's charges.<sup>60</sup>

Scanderbeg's envoy, Pal Gazulli, stayed in Rome from the end of March 1461, where he was given the reply about his demands. The Ragusans were convinced that in relation with Scanderbeg should be paid particular attention, because the Pope considered him a warrior against "*infidels*". Therefore, since April 1461, the Senate wrote to Scanderbeg, through which, without hesitation, offered shelter in Ragusa to his family, if the Turks wouldn't leave him in peace "*si accideret eum vexari a Turcis*". Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg asked to be placed in the island of *Mrkan* in front of Ragusa, but the representatives of Ragusa decided that from the end of April, Scanderbeg's shelter to be found in another Ragusan island.<sup>61</sup> We do not possess the papers proving that Scanderbeg and his family went to

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<sup>57</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, p. 152.

<sup>58</sup> "...non dando ipsis nunciis aliquam scripturam", HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.* vol. XV (1456-1458), fol. 222v; *ibid.*, vol. XVI (1459-1461), fol. 26v.

<sup>59</sup> HR-DADU, *Lett. et Comm. di. Lev.*, vol. XVI (1454-1460), fol. 73; Gelcich - Thallóczy, *Diplom. Ragus.*, no. 365; Jurić, *Gazulića.*, no. 27.

<sup>60</sup> D HR-DADU, *Acta Cons.Rog.* XVI (1459-1461), fol. 146r.

<sup>61</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons.Rog.*, vol. XVI (1459-1461), fol. 241r; 243v; 251r.

take shelter at that time in Ragusa.<sup>62</sup> Also, on August 1461, when Scanderbeg was preparing to travel with army in *Puglia*, to help the King *Ferrante*, the son of King Alfonso, to not lose the throne, Gjergj Kastrioti was solemnly welcomed in Ragusa. According to Pope's order, he was given there the money and the silver coins, deposited in the national coffer of Ragusa to organize the crusades, and except that it was decided that his troops to be supplied with hard toasted bread on their return from *Puglia*. Nevertheless, to him was not granted a *fast boat*, that he was looking for. On the first days of February 1462, after some months of staying in Italy, Scanderbeg returned and stayed again in Ragusa. He was begged to return there; he was offered money and grain for his troops still staying in Trani.<sup>63</sup> The honor suite should sail with him to sea until Budva. From there he wanted to pursuit the voyage by land. Because of the big storm at sea, Scanderbeg was forced to return and stay for some other days in Ragusa. The first days of the visit, Scanderbeg protested because of some boats, but the Ragusan government immediately sent a noble, who demanded him to withdraw the protest, rewarding him with 100 perpers. It was well noticed that the Ragusans, in the occasion of this visit "*were not frightened by the Turkish protests at all due to their welcome to Scanderbeg, because all his action this time had to do with the inner conflicts in Italy, which were seen with sympathy by the sultan.*"<sup>64</sup>

Though alike the Republic of Ragusa, Scanderbeg had problems with the Venetians, in April 1463, Venice did not only suite to Scanderbeg, by allowing him to pass through her territory to meet his ally the Herzog *Stjepan Vukčić*, but in this direction he took measures also about Ragusa.<sup>65</sup> However, the Republic of Ragusa negatively replied to the envoys of the king of Bosnia and of Herzog *Stjepan*, who on March 1463 were on the way to meet Scanderbeg, thus they were forced to go back. Even though the Ragusans were ready to do small services, after the opinion of these merchants, at that time these services were great. Ragusa from her part, excused that was in conflict

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<sup>62</sup> Tadić, *Promet putnika*, p. 288.

<sup>63</sup> D HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVII (1461-1463), fol. 50v; Thallóczy - Gelcich, *Diplom. Ragus.*, p. 754.

<sup>64</sup> Božić, *Dubrovnik i Turska*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>65</sup> Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 242; Hrabak, "Dubrovnikasit", p. 455.



with Turks because of Scanderbeg coming to Ragusa.<sup>66</sup> In the fall of that year, the Ragusans were identified in Rome with Scanderbeg's Albania as belonging to the suitable conditions for the initial military actions against the Turks. Because, as Ragusa and also Scanderbeg, could secure the harbors until the landing of the troops could become operative.<sup>67</sup> Just in June 1464, the *Republic of Saint Blaise* in Budimlja (municipality of Montenegro) was identified with Scanderbeg's Albania as facing to the Ottoman threat.<sup>68</sup> Being directly endangered from the wave of the Ottoman invasions, Ragusa and Scanderbeg, in those years, kept a very close bilateral relation. On October 1463 one of the nobles of Ragusa sent to Scanderbeg some ship constructors from Ragusa.<sup>69</sup> From the other side, from Ragusa were also secured masters of castle constructors. These constructions were undertaken by Scanderbeg at the eve of the great offensive of 1463. On December of the same year, his trusted man from Ragusa, *Pal Marini de Gondola* assembled construction masters and some bricklayers for two months in Rodon, certainly for building the fortifications. The Ragusans workings in construction of Rodon lasted some years, because on 9 February 1465 in the Cap of Rodon were send to work other bricklayers.<sup>70</sup> This castle, from which are still preserved some walls, has similarities with the castle and the towers of Ragusa.<sup>71</sup>

Although on February 1464, the merchants of Ragusa were not allowed to travel through Turkey, they were granted special permission to send fabric at Scanderbeg's country, on one condition: that they should not be spread on the Turkish territory.<sup>72</sup> On 5 November 1466,

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<sup>66</sup> *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii.*, pp. 363-366.

<sup>67</sup> Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 257.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 271.

<sup>69</sup> On 15 October 1463, is contracted a Ragusan carpenter called Andrea Thomasi de Zuppana to build a boat in Albania on Scanderbeg's needs (HR-DADU, *Div.Cancellariae*, vol. LXXI, (1463-1464), fol. 91v.).

<sup>70</sup> HR-DADU, *Div.Cancellariae*, vol. LXXI, (1463-1464), fol. 117r; *Ibid.*, vol. LXXII (1464-1465), fol. 75v.

<sup>71</sup> Schmitt, *Skënderbeu*, p. 183.

<sup>72</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVIII (1463-1466), fo. 25v, 30v, 39r; Božić, *Dubrovnik i Turska*, p. 253.

the Ragusans gave again hard toasted bread to Scanderbeg's soldiers.<sup>73</sup> At that time, was planned again the visit of Scanderbeg in Ragusa, respectively the shelter of his family in Ragusa's islands. On April 1464, Scanderbeg demanded to the Republic to shelter his family. The Republic replied positively, offering as shelter the island in *Mljet* (Adriatic islands of Dalmatia). Apparently, Scanderbeg has not exploited the offer even this time, because in the summer of the same year he made known that was going, while the government of Ragusa replied about this on 9 August.<sup>74</sup>

In the summer of 1465, the Turks tried to divide the Christian allies, which at that time fought against them. For this purpose, the Turks offered peace to Venice. In this action was engaged *Jakov Bunić* (Jacabus de Bona) from Ragusa. This engagement, of course also included Scanderbeg, because the Turks were sending peaceful offers even through him. Venice didn't immediately react, but tried what point-of views had Budimlja towards this offer.<sup>75</sup> The Hungarian king *Mathias Corvinus*, refused these combinations. Watching that his junior Albanian ally was directly in danger, he sends in the south his delegate through Ragusa.<sup>76</sup> On 13 November 1466, the Senate of Ragusa helped to escort *Paladino Gondola* in Hungary, where he went to present Gjergj Kastrioti's request. However, at the same time, it postponed the reply that should be given to the Hungarian king envoy who was going to meet Scanderbeg,<sup>77</sup> and so were prolonged the negotiations and the preparations. The old friendship and the similar position requested by the Ragusan senators, draw Scanderbeg's attention for the trap that were preparing the Ottoman invaders. By trying to not be exposed to the Turkish danger, the Ragusans at those times, were frightened by the dynamism of the Hungarian king. It's not excluded the possibility that they might be also frightened from the Venetians intrigues.

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<sup>73</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XIX (1466-1467), fol. 136v; Gelcich-Thallóczy, *Diplom. Ragus.*, p. 780.

<sup>74</sup> Tadić, *Promet putnika*, p. 290.

<sup>75</sup> Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 289; 296; 305; 309-310.

<sup>76</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVIII (1463-1466), fol. 198v-199r; *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, p. 372.

<sup>77</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XIX (1466-1467), 138r;150r; Thallóczy-Gelcich, *Diplom. Ragus.*, pp. 780-781.

Scanderbeg, from his part, the possibility to buy weapons saw in Ragusa, which since on 1447 has granted him a priceless quantity of gunpowder.<sup>78</sup> However, the Ragusan merchants, as in the case of the financial assets, paid attention to not be seen by the Turks. During the years of February and May 1466, in the moments when Scanderbeg was threatened to be defeated by the Turks and they were dangerously coming closer to the city, the Council of Ragusa allowed the sale of a considerable quantity of gunpowder. However, not only the gunpowder was requested from Ragusa, Scanderbeg was in need for qualified soldiers who knew how to use the artillery. On 1466, Scanderbeg incessantly demanded in Ragusa the permission to secure in there the artillery masters (bombardiers), but this request was turned down.<sup>79</sup>

On 2 November 1466, Scanderbeg addressed again to the first and constant closest friend – Ragusa. However, the Senate of the Republic delegated a noble with the demand that he should not come to Ragusa because they feared the Turks (who by the time had conquered the eastern part of Herzegovina and were close to Ragusa). The Senate sent to Scanderbeg foods, and granted the permission to his boat to sail in Ragusa's harbor.<sup>80</sup> On 18 April 1465, on the eve of Scanderbeg's war against the Ottoman armies, the Senate of Ragusa with their initiative offered to his family members shelter in Ragusa, in the *Mljet* island.<sup>81</sup> So, in November 1466, the situation worsened even for Ragusa. Therefore, it is understandable that they first of all were taking care of their security, because they were frightened that the sheltering of an invincible warrior like Scanderbeg would make the Turkish armies invade the *Republic of Saint Blaise*. It's not known what Scanderbeg did at those days in front of Ragusa, but it's known that he went close to this city, by 1 April 1467, and the government of Ragusa sent *Junius de Gradi, Jacobus de Gondola and Nicola de Bona*, three Ragusan nobles to welcome him.<sup>82</sup> Some months later, on 15 December 1467, it

<sup>78</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. X (1446-1448), fol. 102r; Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 14.

<sup>79</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XIX (1466-1467), fol. 13r.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., fol. 134r-134v; Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 338.

<sup>81</sup> "...de offerendo illustri domino Schenderbegho receptaculum pro familia sua in insula nostra Melite, prout alias fuit", HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVIII (1463-1466), fol. 150v. Radonić has mistakenly read the year, as 1466. It should be 18 April 1465 (Cfr.: Radonić, *Skenderbeg*, no. 314).

<sup>82</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Min.*, vol. XVII (1466-1469), fol. 71r.

was chosen the delegation to welcome Gjon, his son,<sup>83</sup> but it is unknown whether he entered Ragusa.

As it is aforementioned said, Ragusa encouraged Scanderbeg to intervene in the Neapolitan's quarrels for the throne. On 9 June 1460, the representative of Scanderbeg presented the Small Council the request for support to pass through the Adriatic into *Puglia*.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the problems aroused about the naval operation of Scanderbeg, to transport his 2000 warriors towards Puglia, a thing that should be done through Ragusa. There, Scanderbeg on 21 July 1461, bought in the presence of the city's chancellor *Ksenofon Filelfo* (Xenophon Filelfo), for forty ducats a fast boat for oarsmen. Because these were late, Scanderbeg rented a ship in Ragusa.<sup>85</sup> Only at the end of August, Scanderbeg and his troops arrived in Ragusa, to be escorted in Puglia. In Ragusa he was welcomed by cheering and with all the honors of a national and church hierarchical structure, belonging to a sovereign. This small state (Ragusa) with a great tradition about the close interests and relations, of financial aspects, could secure to him all what he needed the most. The Ragusan nobility opened the gates by free will to him, because they wanted the victory of King Ferrante and from the fear of the Turks, they had just asked grain from Albania. The gentlemen of the Council took care in 17 August 1461 of the Albanian leader being welcomed as he deserved.<sup>86</sup>

This voyage protocol was also described by Barleti, where among others he writes: "*When Scanderbeg arrived in Ragusa, the whole city came out to acclaim him with a great joy. Escorted by them, he entered the city and was welcomed with honors and benevolence. The day after, once celebrated according to the official and religious celebrations custom, he crisscrossed the city, while the next day he visited the naval arsenals, the castle and the fortifications of the city...*".<sup>87</sup>

To welcome the Albanian prince, a commission made up of the nobles *Paladino de Lukari*, *Paul de Pozza* and *Nikola de Palmota* was

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<sup>83</sup> "Ser Marinus Ben. de Gondola, ser Andreas Fran. de Sorgo electi ad eundum obviam filio domini Schenderbeghi", Ibid., fol. 109v.

<sup>84</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.* XVI (1459-1461), fol. 146r.

<sup>85</sup> HR-DADU, *Div. Notariae*, vol. XLV, fol. 96v; *Ibid.*, vol. XLIV, fol. 137v.

<sup>86</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVII ((1461-1463), fol. 2r; 5r.

<sup>87</sup> Marin Barleti, *Historia e jetës dhe e veprave të Skënderbeut* (third edition), Prishtinë: Rilindja 1989, p. 394.

established, as it's said in the document, to honor and welcome the famous lord Scanderbeg, who will come to Ragusa. The house where Scanderbeg was going to stay was also specified. In Ragusa, Scanderbeg also met *Giacomo De Parpagniano*, a *Ferrante's* envoy who had sailed with a special ship by the order of Ferdinand to meet and encourage Scanderbeg to come. However, Parpagniano arrived also for another purpose, on which informs us the Ragusan chronicler, Resti. He was coming after the negotiations that were held in Naples by two Ragusan ambassadors, Bartolomeo Gozze and Nicola di Marino Gondola about the possibility of releasing from prison a person that had committed murder and was sentenced to death. While in another document it is said that both intervened in the Small Council to free the sentenced for murder *Nikola Risinović*. During the stay in Ragusa, Scanderbeg was granted "*money and silver*" from the fond collected for the crusade, and given 2000 hard toasted bread for the soldiers' necessities.<sup>88</sup>

After the conclusion of the mission in Puglia, on January 1462, Scanderbeg decided to go back to Albania, leaving behind a good part of his military troops. His return at the end of January 1462, would be again through the city of *Saint Blaise*. The council of the *Saint Blaise* city was impressed by his deeds in Italy, therefore were made spectacular preparation compared to those of 1461. According to the document, the Council put at his disposal for returning his troops and horses a *balonerio* ship.<sup>89</sup> In this occasion, catches the eye the Ragusan detailed protocol scrupulosity. Was defined the itinerary of his journey in the territory of Ragusa, where Scanderbeg was to be allowed to freely pass from *Konavle* to *Cavtat*, while from Ragusa he would be escorted from the sub-count of Breni with the men of the region to *Cavtat* (village in the Dubrovnik) where would be welcomed by the country's representative, which would escort him with 100 men until he

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<sup>88</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Min*, vol. XV (1459-1462), fol. 201v; HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVII (1461-1463), fol. 6v-7r.; *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, pp. 359-360.

<sup>89</sup> Balonerio, is a kind of merchant ship also used by the Italian merchants, and also in Ragusa. Except in the above-mentioned documents, this kind of ship is often mentioned during the XV century, in the Ragusan documents: HR-DADU, *Lamenta de Foris*, Vol. XXXVII, fol. 24; HR-DADU, *Diversa Notariae*, vol. LV, fol. 6v.-7; HR-DADU, *Diversa Notariae*, vol. LVII, fol. 70-70v; HR-DADU, *Cons. Minor.*, vol. XIV, fol. 44, HR-DADU, *Cons. Minor.*, vol. XV, fol. 234, etc.

reached out of the city's jurisdiction.<sup>90</sup> Also, at least three nobles were at his service and would stay with him in every place to pay his expenses until in *Luštica* or *Budva* (until the southern borders of Ragusa), being allowed to spend nearly 50 perpers per day to honor Scanderbeg during his stay. After a while, Scanderbeg arrived in Ragusa from where he tried to continue his journey to his homeland, but the bad weather made to him impossible to do so. The Ragusans advised him that having in mind that the weather was precarious and, in those conditions, he could not sail, to accept staying in Ragusa. For this, the Council of the city took over the securing of the food, in *Cavtat* would be put into the market the necessary supplies, and if Scanderbeg was not be ready to return in Ragusa, was decided to be escorted by the Ragusan nobles equipped with 50 perpers for expenses and hard toast breads as much as they considered it sufficient.<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile, on 9 February 1462, the representatives of the Council discussed with Scanderbeg about the developments in the Balkans in front of the Turkish invasions, as they were informed from the Ragusan representative who had just returned from the Sublime Porte. Two days later, Scanderbeg, asked the Council to liberate the five persons that were captured by the fishermen in the Ragusan waters.<sup>92</sup> During his stay in Ragusa, on 26 February 1462, Scanderbeg possibly met his rival Lekë Dukagjini, who was also in Ragusa. The documents do not inform when did Scanderbeg return home, but the registers of the Council of Ragusa show that in May 1462 he was interested in securing food for his troops returning home.<sup>93</sup>

When Scanderbeg wanted to go to Naples, at the end of 1464, again he had to ask for a galley from Ragusa.<sup>94</sup> Also on 1465, when the

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<sup>90</sup> The documents speak on preparations to welcome and escort Scanderbeg in Ragusa. Starting from 29 January until 11 February, are recorded 7 decisions of the Republic of Saint Blaise Senate dedicated to welcoming and escorting Scanderbeg in Albania.

<sup>91</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVII (1461-1463), fol. 33r, 51v, 52r, 56r, 62v.

<sup>92</sup> As part of the protocol was also previewed the charity act: Five persons that were captured by the Ragusan fishermen in Lagosta island and were in prison, would be released on Scanderbeg instruction. All this, has been a sign of the high prestige that a leader did exclusive actions that skipped the court verdicts. After the charity act, followed the act of welcome quality "conformation". On this was instructed the noble Jakob de Gondola, to beg Scanderbeg that the latter should deliver a document with his personal sign and seal, on which withdrew the charges made towards the Ragusan "ships".

<sup>93</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVII (1461-1463), fol. 33r, 51v, 52r, 56r, 62v, 91v.

<sup>94</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVIII (1463-1466), fol. 7v.

relations with Venice were worsened again, Scanderbeg took a national Ragusan ship.<sup>95</sup> Not only he, but also *Stefan Radojević*, his envoy, rented in Ragusa two Budva ships for a voyage towards *Šibenik* and *Split*. In the efforts to build his own fleet of ships, Scanderbeg on 1455 took at his service a Dalmatian ship repairman, called *Blasius Ostojich*,<sup>96</sup> while the official *Ninac*, on October 1463 was asking the permission in Ragusa to buy two boats and to take four masters for each boat to build the ships in Albania. The Council of Ragusa, frightened from the occupation of Bosnia by *Mehmet II* and with high hopes for the crusade, approved the demand of Scanderbeg's representative.<sup>97</sup> On 15 October 1463, Scanderbeg's representative, *Paladino de Gondola* took at his service the woodworker *Andrea Thomasi de Zuppana*, who is previously mentioned.<sup>98</sup>

Kastrioti during all the time continued to keep contact with both Ragusa, which on 9 February 1465 sent him masters to conclude the building of Rodon castle and the king of Hungary, *Mathias Corvinus* who in the middle of the summer 1465, sent the friar Alexander as representative to Scanderbeg. In the document it is said that by royal order, *Alexander* should pass through Ragusa, and from his part (*Mathias Corvinus*) asked by the Republic to also send from her part an ambassador who would contact Scanderbeg. Ragusa, from its part supported this appointment, and on 12 August of the same year charged the noble *Paladino de Lukarin*, to escort the friar towards Albania in a Ragusan ship, while *Nicola de Bona* was sent as her representative to Scanderbeg.<sup>99</sup>

Nonetheless it's not exactly known the content of his *expedition*, from the registers of the Small Council comes out that the *Republic of*

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., fol. 133v.

<sup>96</sup> HR-DADU, *Div. Cancellariae*, vol. LXV (1455-1456), fol. 133r.

<sup>97</sup> The Senate of Ragusa answers to *Ninac*, ambassador of Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg, offering him facilities to buy two boats and to take until four craftsmen for each boat. (HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVII (1461-1463), fol. 276r-276v).

<sup>98</sup> HR-DADU, *Div. Cancellariae*, vol. LXXI, (1463-1464), fol. 91v.

<sup>99</sup> HR-DADU, *Div. Cancellariae*, vol. LXXII (1464-1465), fol. 75v.; Radonić, *Skenderbeg.*, no. 29; *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, p. 372; HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XVIII (1463-1466), fol. 198v-199r.

*Saint Blaise* accepted Scanderbeg demand to send on 13 November 1466 the Ragusan noble, *Paladino de Gondola* as Scanderbeg's envoy to *Mathias Corvinus*. The Council of the Republic, showing prudence in relation with the Turks, instructed him to not transmit anything on Ragusa's behalf. Also, knez *Stjepan Radojević*, another representative of Gjergj Kastrioti, allowed his journey towards *Šibenik* or *Split*, from where he would continue to *Mathias Corvinus*,<sup>100</sup> nonetheless at this time couldn't be expected too much from Hungary.

When in the fall of 1466 Scanderbeg decided to travel himself to Italy to ask for help in the war he was waging, again he travelled from Ragusa, when he was once welcomed with acclaims. But now the situation had changed. The representatives of the Council demanded to be selected three Ragusan nobles to meet Scanderbeg and to ask him to not go to Ragusa for some good reasons as the document informs us.<sup>101</sup> In true, in a previous decision (November 2, 1466)<sup>102</sup> Scanderbeg was granted the welcoming by an appointed a delegation, but at the same day, this decision was overthrown. Instead, Scanderbeg was supplied with food, allowing his boat to enter within the harbor chains.<sup>103</sup> Apparently, again Ragusa kept a *modus vivendi* stand by not risking her profitable trade in the Balkan and the position of her merchants under the Ottoman conquered cities to help Scanderbeg. Despite the known stand of Ragusa, she tried to stand by Kastrioti. On 1 April 1467 was appointed a delegation to meet Scanderbeg. Also, on 15 December, during Gjon's return (Scanderbeg's son) from Venice where he had travelled to seek for help, the Council of Ragusa had taken the decision

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<sup>100</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XIX (1466-1467), fol. 136v, 138r; Thallóczy-Gelcich, *Diplom. Ragus.*, p. 780.

<sup>101</sup> "...faciendi tres ex nobilibus nostris, qui vadant ad obviandum illustri domino Schenderbegh et eum rogent, quod non veniat Ragusium ob bonum respectum", HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XIX (1466-1467), fol. 134r-134v; Radonić, *Skenderbeg.*, no. 338.

<sup>102</sup> During the first week of November, Kastrioti's ship was at the entrance of Ragusa's harbor. On 2 November 1466, the members of the Small Council, the nobles, *Ser Nicola Marino de Gondola*, *Ser Aloysius de Georgio* and *Ser Helias Pe. De Bona*, were instructed from the Senate of Ragusa to take measures to welcome his Excellency, lord Scanderbeg, and thus to get informed that if it was appropriate for him to not land at all in Ragusa (HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Min.*, vol. XVII (1466-1469), fol. 40v).

<sup>103</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XIX (1466-1467), fol. 134v-134r.



to send two nobles to pay a visit to Scanderbeg's son, and to honor him with food supplies.<sup>104</sup>

The last information obtained from the Ragusan documents about Scanderbeg dates in March 1<sup>st</sup> 1468, three months after his death. This is a second version which does not coincide with the first version, "the official version" of the Venice's Republic. The second version of our hero death, comes from *Mantua's* diplomat and ambassador in Ragusa, *Joannes Franciscus de Maffeis*. On Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg death. He informed his marquis in Ragusa that "*Scanderbeg died in the battle from an arrow*". This made that in Ragusa and everywhere else to be spread the news that Scanderbeg was allegedly killed by an arrow.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, the Byzantine historian *George Sfrantzes* who was once a friend of the last Byzantine emperor, informs us that the hero died of "natural causes".

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<sup>104</sup> HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Rog.*, vol. XIX (1466-1467), fol. 292r. The Senate of Ragusa appointed the delegation of the following composition: Marinus Ben de Gondola and Anndrea Sörgo, which had to meet with Gjón, Scanderbeg's son. (HR-DADU, *Acta Cons. Min.*, vol. XVII (1466-1469), fol. 109v.).

<sup>105</sup> Radonić, *Skenderbeg.*, no.391.

**Adem BUNGURI**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA ON SOME FORTIFICATIONS  
OF SCANDERBEG'S PERIOD IN DIBRA'S REGION<sup>1</sup>**

An adequate correlation between the historic and archaeological sources would help us to obtain new data about Scanderbeg epopee.

This thing requires archaeological research in castles, fortresses or other structures, that chronologically refer to the period taken into examination. As it is only a 25-year period (1443-1468), which is very limited in archaeological terms, the solution is a detailed study of archeological sources and historic geography and the cooperation among the archeological scholars involved in medieval history. This collaboration is necessary when it comes to archaeological-historic monuments, chronologically connected to Scanderbeg's period and to subjective and voluntarism viewpoints, sourcing from the lack of this cooperation and ignorance of terrain<sup>2</sup>. The archaeological research on Scanderbeg's fortifications has been limited only in some castles of this period or in structures within them. From 1964 to 2018 archaeological excavations were carried out in the town of Stelush (1964-1966)<sup>3</sup>, in the town of Lissos (1968-1970)<sup>4</sup>, in the castle of Kruja (1977-1980)<sup>5</sup>, in Scanderbeg's secret castle in Daula, Kurbin (1983-1985)<sup>6</sup>, in the castle of Matrica in Rubik (2016)<sup>7</sup>, and cleaning works are carried out at the fortifying system of Petralba castle (Gur i Bardhë) from the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented in the scientific conference dedicated to the 550-death anniversary of Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg, Tirana, 01-02. 11. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Biçoku 2002, 410-411; Biçoku 2003, 7-29; Biçoku 2005, 68; Biçoku 2006a 61-82; Biçoku 2006b, 79-82; Biçoku 2016, 89-121; 122-133; 163-168.

<sup>3</sup> Anamali, 1967, 105-112.

<sup>4</sup> Prendi 1969, 241-247.

<sup>5</sup> Komata 1982, 221-228.

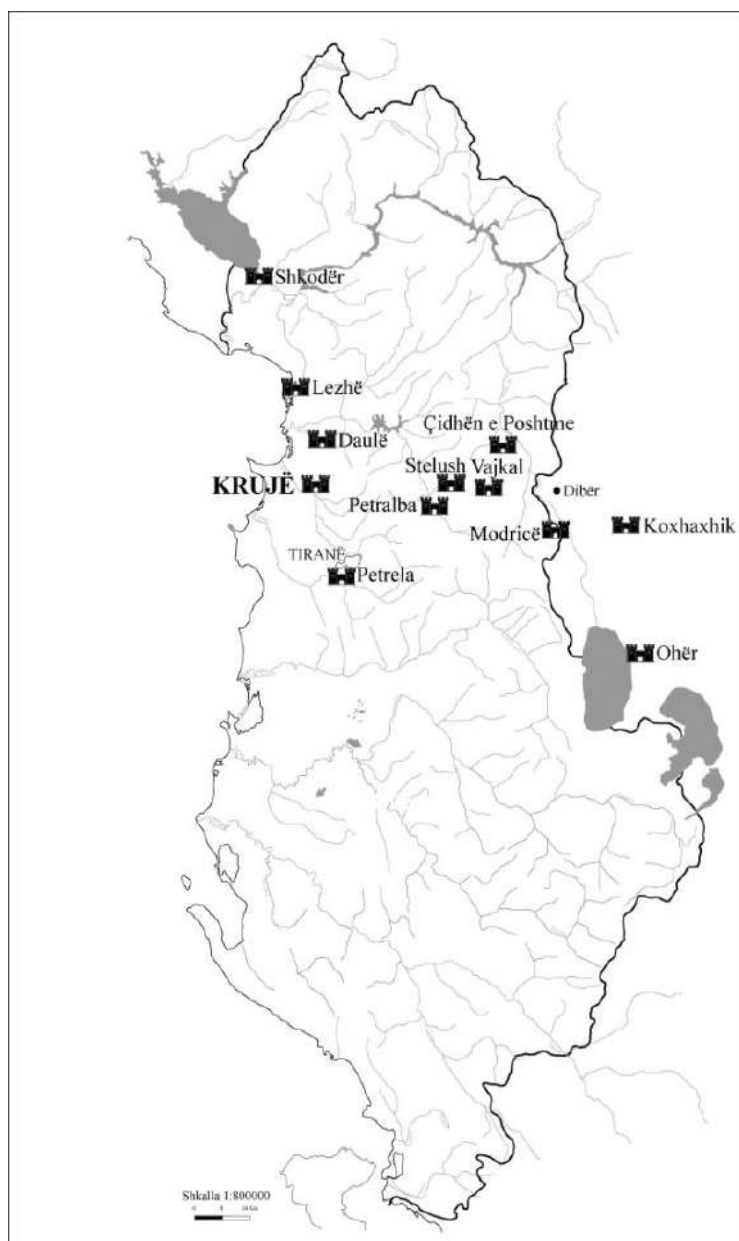
<sup>6</sup> Saraçi 1987, 203-214.

<sup>7</sup> Hoxha 2016, 151-171.

The present paper informs about the outcomes of superficial observation carried out from the author in some fortifications of this period, topographically localized in Dibra's region, to clarify the historic truth. Since the beginning we have to put in evidence our finding in complete accordance with Barleti's writing with the topography of Scanderbeg's castles on the terrain, as often to remain surprised from their details and accuracy. The castles and the fortifying structures that are related with Scanderbeg's period in Dibra's region are: the castle of Koxhaxhik (Zhupa-Dibra), the castle of Modriçi (Dibra), the castle of Skudrina (Lower Reka-Dibra), Scanderbeg's secret castle in Çidhna e Poshtme (Lower Kidhna), the town of Stelush (Qafë-Murrë) in the border between Dibra and Mat districts, the town of Valikardha (Bulqiza) as well the Tower of Scanderbeg (Vajkal-Bulqiza), and could be chronologically classified into two categories:

- a. Earlier prehistoric fortifications of late and medieval antiquity, responding to Scanderbeg's period.
- b. Fortifications exclusively related to the Scanderbeg's period.

The first category includes the castle of Koxhaxhik, the castle of Skudrina, the town of Valecarda, the town of Stelush. The second category includes the castle of Modrica, the secret castle of Scanderbeg in Lower Kidhna and the tower of Scanderbeg in Vajkal (fig. 1). This paper provides a brief information about these monuments.



**Fig. 1:** Scanderbeg's period fortifications map.

## 1. The castle of Koxhaxhik (Dibra)<sup>8</sup>

(x-41°44', y-20°59', z-1160m).

The castle of Koxhaxhik is situated in the region of Zhupa, between Dibra and Struga, at the right side of Drini i Zi River, at the eastern edge of Dibra region (North Macedonia). It has been established on a rocky ridge with absolute height of 1160m and relative of 360m, that is raised in the valley between the villages Koxhaxhik in southeast and Breshtan in northwest, mount of Stogova in east and the torrent of Koçista in the north. (fig. 2-4a-b). The castle has a favorable strategic position in possession of the road Ohrid-Dibra. From its surface is easily controlled all the Drini i Zi river's right side, from Zhupa's hills in the south to the town of Dibra e Madhe in the north, from where was passing the ancient and the medieval road Koxhaxhik-Dibra. The road of Drini i Zi united both important arteries of the trans-Balkan roads of the Roman period: via Egnatia on the south (Ohrid) and Lissus-Naissus on the north (Kukës). Being the northern branch of via Egnatia, the road of Drini i Zi valley represents a very strategic corridor for all the prehistoric and historic periods. The topographic position of Koxhaxhik castle completely matches with Barleti's description on the town of Sfetigrad, as looks like its photocopy. He describes the town as "*a country heavily protected and nearly inapproachable*,"<sup>9</sup> and shows that, "*...the place over there was that thick that were not place to walk and nowhere to hold, except with a strong rope*"<sup>10</sup>, and that: "*around the walls there was nothing but a narrow stripe that was a square, while the other part of the mountain that was right away, was tremendous scarp*"<sup>11</sup>. He says: "*The town (of Sfetigrad) was mountainous and constructed on the top of a very high rock, with no water source within, and also no river close by for use. There was only a well inside, opened and built in the middle of the city,*

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<sup>8</sup> The author owes a debt of a special gratitude to his friends and collaborators for accompanying him during his visits in this castle: 1993: Prof. Selim Islami (Tirana), Fisnik Cami, Nazif Tominaj and Naim Fetahu (Dibër); 2006: Moisi Murra (Peshkopi), Pëllumb Naipi (Tirana), Hysen Prapadniku, Qeram Lleshi, Sazan Prapadniku and Bardhyl Skara (Dibër); 2007: Sazan Prapadniku, Bardhyl Skara and Atli Dema (Dibër).

<sup>9</sup> Barleti (1537) 1964, VI, 235.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, V, 198.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, VI, 237.

*from the old care of the people for personal and people's benefit, and for war necessities in particular ...The guards were all soldiers from Dibra region"*<sup>12</sup>. According to Barleti, the castle of Sfetigrad (Koxhaxhik) had similar the size with the Stelush castle and a topographic position totally similar to it, which is confirmed from the archaeological excavations.<sup>13</sup> The castle of Koxhaxhik preserves the traces of its inhabitancy during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, the late antiquity period and medieval age, as well as parts of the fortification system of both last periods.



**Fig. 2:** Southern view of the Koxhaxhik castle.

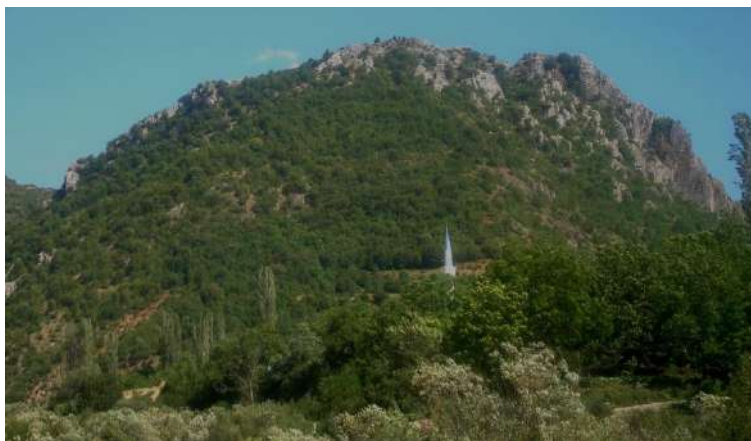


**Fig. 3:** View of the interior surface of the citadel.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, V, 220.

<sup>13</sup> Anamali 1967,105-110.



**Fig. 4a:** Western view of the Koxhaxhik castle.



**Fig. 4b:** Northern view of the Koxhaxhik castle.

#### **a. The period of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (XII-IX centuries BC.)**

Some fragments of vessels, which date in this period, were found in the castle's surface and in its southern flanks. Three of them are worked with red clay stuff, mixed with sand granules and small pebbles, with uniform baking but not complete, on a par polished aspect, and brown color to reddish, while are met also those on brown

stuff to beige. They represent the type of the double-handed vessels, with raised handles on the edge (fig. 4, 1-2, fig.5,1-2), a very spread type in the Late Bronze Age and that of the transition from Bronze Age to Iron Age, as in the territory of Albania (Maliq III<sup>14</sup>, Nezir VI (Mat)<sup>15</sup>, Gajtan III<sup>16</sup>, Zagorë II (Shkodra)<sup>17</sup> and of Kosova (Vlashnje, Hisar)<sup>18</sup>, also in that of Pelagonia (Pelagonia group)<sup>19</sup> etc. Only the walls preserves the stripes décor in form of plastic sides, decorated with fingerprints and forked deepening (fig. 5, 3, fig. 6, 5), a decoration technique very characteristic on the pottery of Bronze age in Albania<sup>20</sup> and in a very wide Balkan realm<sup>21</sup>. Nonetheless few, the castle of Koxhaxhik is considered a hilly inhabitancy of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron age. Such inhabitancies constructed on the top of the hills and fortified with prehistoric walls represent a usual type of fortification of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age<sup>22</sup>, where also should be included Koxhaxhik. However, the lack of prehistoric fortification, due to the powerful natural protection, seems that has not been necessary.

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<sup>14</sup>Prendi 1977-1978,13, tab. VIII, 2, IX, 5; Prendi 1966, pl. XVII, 1, 6; Prendi 1982, pl. IV, 9; Prendi 1974, 107, tab. VIII, 1-5, IX, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea 1990, 38, tab. XVI, 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> Jubani 1972, tab. X, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Andrea 1996, 31, tab. VII, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Bunguri-Gashi 2004, "AiA", Tiranë, Prishtinë; Bunguri-Gashi 2006, "AiA", Tiranë, Prishtinë.

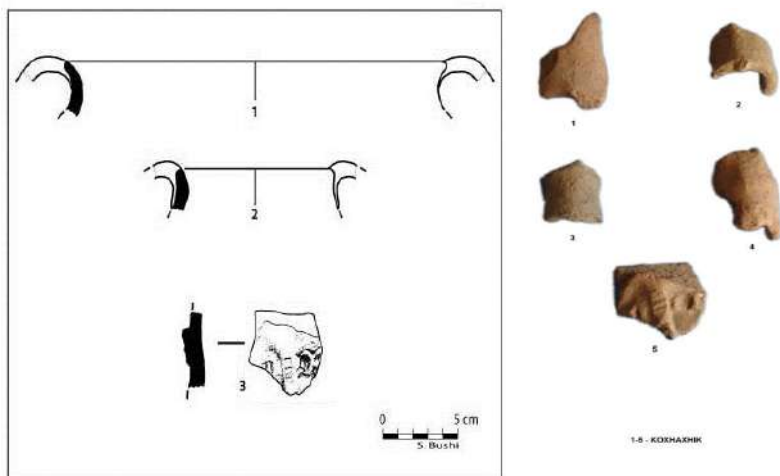
<sup>19</sup> Garašanin 1983b, 788, tab. CIX, 1-2.

<sup>20</sup> Prendi 1977-1978, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Garašanin 1983a, 463-470, fig. 33, II, 1, 4 and III, 1, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Islami- Ceka 1965, 448-449.





**Fig. 5-6:** Fragments of Late Bronze Age pottery (drawings and photos).

### **b. The late antiquity period (V-VI centuries AD.).**

The castle preserves a simple fortifying system, dating in the late antiquity and medieval age. This fortification is found in the highest part of the rocky ridge and is compound from the encircling wall, a square tower and the entrance near it. The castle's ridge is closed with a flat platform approximately polygonal, with smooth passages in the corners, that within the walls has dimensions 58x34m, perimeter 145m and the enclosed surface around 1600m<sup>2</sup>. This fortified platform, known as "the citadel", has completely rocky roots from the southwest, west and northwest, while from the other side its slopes are very high and almost impossible to climb. The only path that makes the climbing into the castle possible, is found in the northwestern side of the citadel, where is realized the communication with the outskirts and the territories around. The citadel's walls line follows the ridge bordering line, except the southern side, where they includes within the protected surface also two narrow terraces, suitable for inhabitancy. The wall exploits the protection capability of the ground, including within high natural rocks, when they are found in the wall's line, and is interrupted where there are fallings of impossible to climb edges and there was no

need for protection. There are 7 tracts of encircling walls are preserved today that are nominated after the alphabet letters: A, B, C, D, E, F and G, with respectively length 2.00m, 3.50m, 6.00m, 2.10m, 9.00m, 6.00m and 22m and readable perimeter 50.60m (fig. 7-9). Their current dimensions are in the following table given:

Tracts	Wall A	Wall B	Wall C The Tower	Wall D	Wall E	Wall F	Wall G	Sum
Length	2.00m	3.50m	6.00m	2.10m	9.00m	6.00m	22m	50.60m
Height	1.50m	1.20m	1.50	0.50m	3.00m	3.00m	0.40m	0.40-3.00m
Width	?	?	1.40m	?	1.70m	1.60m	?	1.40-1.70m

In the conditions of the superficial observation, is difficult the selection of the late antiquity and the medieval typological walls, because the walls of the first period are more covered than those of the later one, and crumbled or damaged. Nevertheless, basing on safer technical elements, we think that the first external wall of the tract C, with general longitude 6m, dates in the late antiquity period belongs. We are referring here to the outer wall of the only fortification tower, on which are preserved two wall façades that sheathe each-other, connected with the late antiquity and the medieval periods, respectively. The detached traces of the southern wall, more within the establishment rather than the medieval wall might date in this period. Cleaning excavations were made to clarify the dating period required, however. The wall is built up with fluvial and ground stones, connected with abundant lime mortem, according the technique *opus incertum*. The mortem is of good quality, mixed with fine river sand and few lime seasoned in advance. The height of the wall preservation varies from 0.40 to 0.80m, while the precise width is immeasurable, because the inner side is covered by the soils. Currently, the earlier fortification of Koxhaxhik castle dates in late antiquity age, as also confirmed by other researchers<sup>23</sup>. Nevertheless in some cases, this castle has been described also as "*urban agglomeration of the Illyrian halshat*,"

<sup>23</sup> Микүљич 1999, 404.

*fortified with quadratic stone blocks.*"<sup>24</sup> Traces of fortifications of the earlier Illyrian periods or the urban ones were not found, in addition to vessel fragments of the late antiquity period.

### c. The medieval period (XIV-XV centuries AD.)

1. *The fortifying system.* The caste was almost re-fortified entirely during the medieval age; the damaged walls were repaired, and new tracts of them were rebuilt. They are in the major part of the perimeter imposed in the line of the late antiquity walls, completed in their collapsed parts, and in the best case, reinforced with outer sleeves, as in the southern façade of the only tower of the castle. With this period are connected all the preserved tracts, A-G, 50.60m long, including here also the second outside wall of the above mentioned tower. The *opus incertum* technique using fluvial and ground stones, tied with abundant lime mortem, of a good quality was applied to build up the walls. In addition to the fine river sand, the mortem contains very seasoned lime, also. It has been widely used, and except the whirligig 2-3cm wide, it covers a part of the outer side of the stones. The stones do not create horizontal lines, and are not leveled with pieces of broken stones. The outer stones of the wall often have fallen in the slopes of the ridge and the wall is not entirely preserved.



**Fig. 7a-b:** Southern wall tracts E.

<sup>24</sup> Bitrakova – Groždanova 1966, 199.

The preservation of the wall height varies from 0.40 to 2.50-3.00m, while its thickness, with difficulties measured only in three points is 1.40-1.70m. It should be emphasized that the wall's thickness is difficult to be accurately measured, because its internal side is covered by the soils of hill's sloping.



**Fig. 8-9:** Southern wall tracts F and D.

An approximate thickness of the encircling walls could be met in other medieval castles in Albania. Here we can mention Kruja (0.80-1.50m), Shurdhah (1.30-2.60m), Daula, Kruja (0.75 m, 0.90 m, 1.10m, and 1.80m)<sup>25</sup>, Stelush (1.50-1.80 m), and Petralba (Gur i Bardhë)<sup>26</sup> etc.

The only southeastern tower, 6.00x6.00m in dimensions, clearly seems to be re-fortified in the medieval age, because the wall of the late antiquity is protected in this period on the outer southern side from a secondary enforcing wall with 1.40m of thickness (fig. 10-11).



**Fig.10-11:** The external wall I and II of the tower-tract C.

<sup>25</sup> Saraçi 1987, 205; Adhami 1971, 87; Spahiu - Komata 1974, 263.

<sup>26</sup> After the author's observations in the castle of Stelush and in castle of Gur i Bardhë (Petralba).

The entrance of the castle should be at the left side of this tower, because there passes the only path that connects the castle with the varosh/outskirts. In the external side of the southern wall, in the segment E is seen a cylindrical hole with 6cm diameter and readable depth 1.00m, which belongs to the metallic remnants of the construction scaffold (fig. 12). Such scaffold holes, in circular forms and same dimensions (6x6cm), that permeate the wall in all its thickness, are also seen in some other Albania's medieval fortifications, as in the city of Stelush<sup>27</sup>, the castle of Ndroq etc. Their similar section in all the wall thickness, proves that iron tubes, a technique introduced in the construction of the castles by the byzantine architects, were used for the scaffolds.



**Fig.12:** Perforation view of the scaffolding construction.

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<sup>27</sup> After the author's observations in the second encircling wall of Stelush castle.

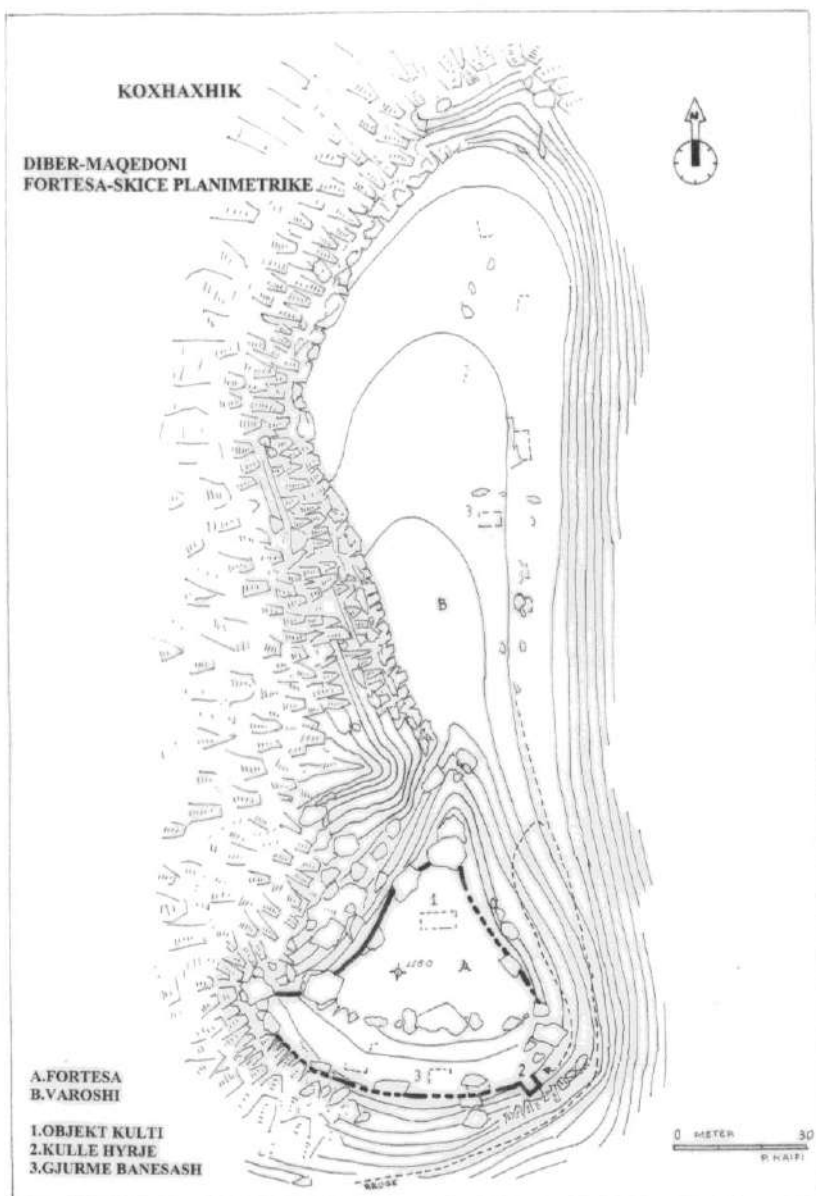


**Fig. 13:** Tract of a building within the citadel.

In the northern internal part of the "citadel" are found the ruins of a building, from which can be seen only a wall tract of 1.70m length, and 1.10m height of the external side. The width cannot be precisely measured because the internal side is covered by the soils, but it's not higher than 1.00m. The technique *opus mixtum* of its construction changes from that of the encircling walls. In its structure, except the stones, are also rarely found bricks with 4cm thickness, of the late antiquity age, used against without any rule, connected with lime mortem and a lot of lime and less sand (fig. 13). In advance, it can be supposed that the construction might be connected to any cult object, perhaps with the church of Saint Mary<sup>28</sup>. Here, further excavations would be needful. In the southern side of the castle, in its lowest part, and at the same time the most protected from the winds, are found substructures of buildings, 0.60m wide and apparently of military character (fig. 14).

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<sup>28</sup> Barleti 1537 (1964), IV, 192. "Perlati (Pjetër Perlati-commander of the Sfetigrad-AB) took the precautions....then from a small gate, named "Dibrane", welcomed the barbarians in the town. Was welcomed only the purpurati (one of the sultan Murat II's advisors-AB) together with three soldiers and two servants, which through the town square, escorted them in the sanctuary of Shën Mëri (Saint Mary), where, after calling on the elders of the town, ordered to start the meeting".



**Fig. 14:** Plan of the Koxhaxhik castle.



Also in the southern half of its topside of the castle everybody can see in situ, close to each other two big natural stones, of flat surface, preserving in their middle a cylindrical hole of 0.30x0.30x0.20m and 0.20x0.16x0.15m dimensions, used as pounders to pestle the powder<sup>29</sup> (fig. 15), identical with a stone lately discovered in Scanderbeg's Tower in Vajkal (Bulqizë).



**Fig.15:** Pounder stone nr. 1-2.

Chronologically, we believe that the medieval fortification of Koxhaxhik castle is connected with the period of Scanderbeg and is at the same time simultaneous with the fortifications made by him in castles such as Kruja, Petrela, Guri i Bardhë (Petalba) and Stelush<sup>30</sup>. With this period coincide the technique of encircling walls construction which we mentioned above, their small thickness, the disuse of the bricks in building the walls, mortar's technical qualities, that are distinguished because of lime overuse comparing with the sand, the use of iron tube scaffolds, and also the majority of the fine ceramics material found in this castle. In the medieval age, the castle is thought to have been equipped with two underground passages in form of secret tunnels, an element that was present in many medieval fortifications.

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<sup>29</sup> LLESHI 2005, 205, fig. 8.

<sup>30</sup> KARAISKAJ 2016, 155: "The fortifications on which Scanderbeg worked were first of all: Kruja, Petrela, Guri i Bardhë (Petalba), Stelush and Sfetigrad".



2. *The Varosh.* On the northeastern side of the castle, after a narrow corner, in a disparity of quota of nearly 20m, is opened a wide terrace with very suitable conditions for dwelling, known as the "varosh", discovered by us for the first time. It's been discovered for the first time from the author of this paper. In this terrace with a surface of nearly 0,7 ha (diameter north-south 145m, the diameter east-west 47m) was found the medieval city, organically connected to the castle. Also, the Varosh has a brilliant natural positions and very strategic one. Protected from the west and north by the rocky roots of its sides, it has a light eastern tilt. (fig. 16a). In Varosh are found many traces of dwellings square forms, oriented to the east, usually based on natural rocks. In the most visible central part of it, are seen the substructures of square building with 7.00 x 4.50 m of external dimensions, marked by big stones, of 0.90m width (fig. 16b).



a: View of Varosh.



b: Foundation of a building in Varosh

**Fig. 16**

The eastern side of the Varosh is bordered by the traces of a long terrace wall, that has served as track for the square road of the chariots climbing to Varosh, which is clearly visible (fig. 17).



**Fig.17:** Varosh route traces.

Tracts of this road could also be seen in the field lawn in the south of the castle, meanwhile their unification through the slope side of the hill, still has not been found. Dwelling traces or different buildings are also preserved in the southern foot of the castle's ridge, outside varosh, there where does begins the big lawn of some hectares. Seems that they are constructed there at the time of city's blossom, the time when it experienced its highest growth. According to some scholars, the city has been supplied with potable water from the spring "*Kërmzesu*" (in Turkish-red water) of the *Byk-Duruk hill*, only 4km east of the castle<sup>31</sup>. The water supply was of ceramic shafts, fragments of which are found time after time from the local inhabitants, but unattended for their chronological assessment. The supply of the medieval castle with water from external sources was realized by ceramic shaft pipes, while its preservation was made through carefully constructed shores within the military area<sup>32</sup>.

3. *The cemetery.* In the great hilly level laying south of Koxhaxhik castle, exists a big cemetery with a surface of over 2ha. Its compound of lower cemeteries in the south and the above one in the north, with clear distinctions between them, as in the architectonic aspects also in the conceptual, religious and chronological one. According a

<sup>31</sup> LLESHI 2005, 200; MURRA 2005, 134.

<sup>32</sup> KOMATA 1982, 225-226, fig. 6-7; KARAISKAJ 1985, 59 vv, fig. 5.

preliminary assessment, they seem connected in two different periods of use, that chronologically refer to the XV and XVIII centuries AD. To the first period of the XV century, we think that belongs the lower cemetery, in the southern part of the tombs lawn. It is compound from hundred of tombs with the same construction and east-west orientation. The tombs are contoured with stones all around, without special bordering stones on the top and bottom. (*fig. 18a*). In parallel of the individual tombs, there are a lot of massive tombs. They have rectangle or tetragonal shape and change only in their dimensions, some of them are: 2.00x2.90m, 3.50x4.00m, 4.00x5.50m, 4.00x6.00m, 6.00x4.50m, 5.00x8.80m etc. (*fig. 18b*). Nonetheless unstudied in the archaeological point-of-view, the lower tomb paves the way for discussions and needs archaeological excavations<sup>33</sup>. The second period of the XVIII century, belongs the above tomb, established in the eastern part of the tombs lawn, where is used the type of the individual grave with bordering stones only on the top and the bottom, and in some of them are found epitaphs in the Ottoman language.



**a-** Partial view of the lower cemetery

**b-** Partial view of the massive graves

**Fig. 18**

<sup>33</sup> The hypothetical possibility of the lower cemetery in the middle of the XV century AD is not archaeologically confirmed and it was based only on the construction type of the graves and in the logic principle that the massive graves were used only in the case of wars, epidemic diseases or natural disasters, as well as in the historical sources. So, according to Barlet, in the two battles of Sfetigrad, within 5 months of 1448 (June-October), 2272 soldiers and captains from both war camps had been killed and about 1000 others had been wounded. Krhs. BARLETI 1537 (1964), VI, 231.

4. *The pottery.* The pre Ottoman medieval age (XIV–XV centuries AD.) belong the fragments of most of the vessels, gathered in the castle and varosh's surface, as on the eastern and southern sides of its ridge. In the chronological view, are separated two group of vessels:

a. The vessels of the first group, that prevail, are worked with beige clay in grey and grey in black, cleaned from the external materials, and have a good decrepitating and refinement. Are mainly kitchen vessels, used for boiling and often preserve the stains of the smoke and fire.

b. The vessels of the second group are of open pink ocher, are more rare. They have clean dough on pink, good decrepitating and refinement and garnished presence of white pastry. Belong to the table and drink vessels. The main forms of the first group vessels are the jars met in two versions: jars of conical neck and profiled edges for tightly fitting the lid, on wider use (*fig. 19a, 1-5; fig. 19b, 1-5, 7-8*) and jars on conical neck with opened edges at the sides (*fig. 19a, 6; fig. 19b, 6*). Both versions are based on flat ends or light concave (*fig. 20a, 1-3*). They are equipped with vertical strip loom, under the neck, in some case embellished with knife deepening (*fig. 20a, 4-5*). A part of the jars are presented decorated with engraved stripes of wheel, that horizontally encircle the vessel (*fig. 20a, 6-10; fig. 20b, 1-4*). In a single case is met the old wheel combination and of a fork deepening line, a known décor in our medieval cultures of the XII-XIV centuries<sup>34</sup>. (*fig. 20a, 11; fig. 20b, 5*) and also the plastic stripe decorated with finger pressure (*fig. 20b, 6*). Similar jars, decorated with these motives, are also discovered in Scanderbeg's castles in Stelush (Qafë-Murrë)<sup>35</sup>, in Guri i Pishkashit (Prrenjas), in the castle of Petrela (Tirana) and in the town of Shurdhah<sup>36</sup>, in the castle of Kruja<sup>37</sup>, in the secret castle of Scanderbeg in Daulë of Kruja<sup>38</sup>, in Symyza's ruins (Korça)<sup>39</sup> etc, dated on the XIV-XV centuries AD. In the second group

<sup>34</sup> KOMATA 1969, 222-226, tab. VII, 1-7, 10-14, VIII, 16-17, 20-23; KARAISKAJ 1979-1980, tab. IX, 3.8.

<sup>35</sup> ANAMALI 1967, 4, 106; ANAMALI 1969, 249 – 253

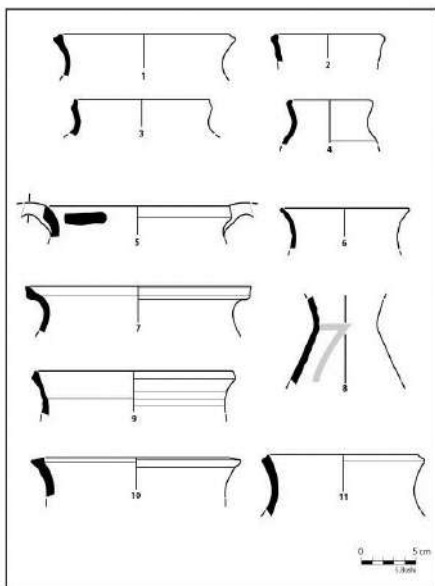
<sup>36</sup> KOMATA 1969, 222-226, tab. II, 1, 4, 6, 7; IV, 1, 3, 7; V, 1-4; VII, 1-4, 8, 10, 11; VIII, 4.

<sup>37</sup> KOMATA 1982, tab. V, 1-4, 7, 9-10.

<sup>38</sup> SARAÇI 1987, 211-212, tab. II, 1-7, III, 1-7, IV, 1-6.

<sup>39</sup> KARAISKAJ 1979-1980, tab. IX, 3.

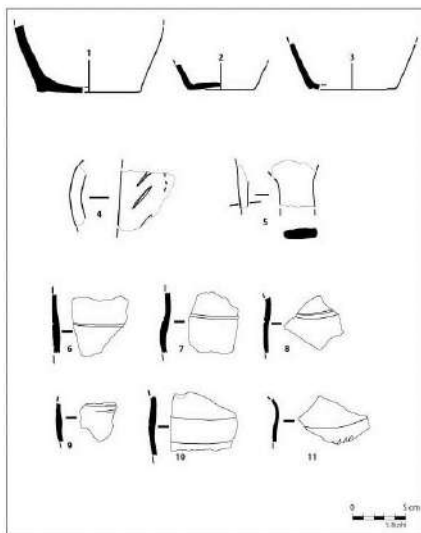
of pottery with ocher dough in pink, we mention the conical neck of a jug, with clean pink dough, decorated with white mat of horizontal and vertical stripes (fig.20a, 8; fig. 20b, 9).



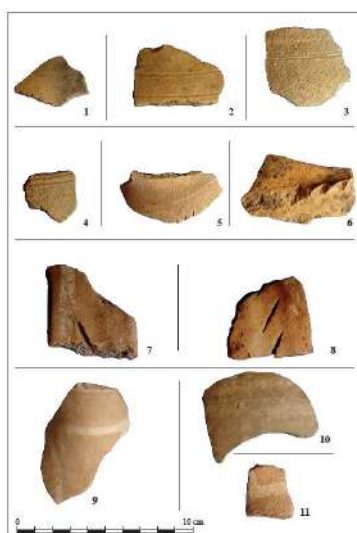
*Fig. 19a- Medieval vessels fragments*



*Fig. 19b- Photo of medieval vessels*



*Fig. 20a- Bases, handles and vessels decorated fragments*



*Fig. 20b- Photo of medieval decorated vessels fragments*

The type of jug long neck continues from the late antiquity ceramic in the medieval one which is met in the castle of Stelush, Pishkash and Petrela<sup>40</sup>, in the castle of Kruja<sup>41</sup>, as in other regions of the Balkans<sup>42</sup>. From the dough and the analogies, represents an import on Eastern Mediterranean origin, likely from Cyprus ceramic workshops and is dated after the XIV century<sup>43</sup>. To the same period also belong two fragments of decorated vessels with white stripes painting (*fig. 20b, 10-11*) and also two vertical stripe ribbon loom, with deep knife decoration in center and embellished with lateral bands painted with white pastry (*fig. 20b, 7-8*).

The above presented archaeological data, prove that the castle of Koxhaxhik represents an Illyrian castle of the Late Bronze and Earlier Iron. In the late antiquity period it is fortified for the first time with defense walls, and re-fortified in the medieval age during the XIV-XV centuries AD. This is the most intensive period of life in this castle, where we think that is totally possible the localization of the medieval town of Sfetigrad<sup>44</sup>, a question that has been treated in a previous paper<sup>45</sup>. These archaeological data refute the false assertion of K. Biçoku that: *"Close to this village is high rock that has served as observation point. It is said that there has been the castle...In Koxhaxhik there are not traces of castle build with stones and couldn't be raised a castle in such a high place. In Koxhaxhik the castle has been of wooden"*<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> KOMATA 1969, 226.

<sup>41</sup> KOMATA 1982, 1, 227, tab. II,1-2.

<sup>42</sup> KOMATA 1969, 226, note nr. 21.

<sup>43</sup> STERN 1997, 48-50, fig. 9, a-b.

<sup>44</sup> HYSA 2005, 103-117; MURRA 2005, 133-134; BISLIMI 2005, 167-170.

<sup>45</sup> BUNGURI 2009, 27-56.

<sup>46</sup> BIÇOKU 2003, 26-27, 29. With this inaccurate affirmation, he continues to defend it even in a recent paper when writes: *"Near this village in the north is a high rock (when watching in the western side), which, when is seen from the east, can be individualized the pointed top of a foothill, which can be climbed only by the alpinists and in it there are not construction traces "* (Krhs. BIÇOKU 2016, 89), this conclusion is repeated again in the following lines: *"There are not stone traces in the castle of Koxhaxhik, even why it has been mentioned until the beginning of the XVIII century, what shows that it was not build with stones".* (Krhs. BIÇOKU 2016, 91-92). Nevertheless such anti scientific assertions, the castle of Koxhaxhiku is there and preserves a part of the once fortifying system, that can be seen from anybody who wants to study this castle. The identification or not with Sfetigrad, nonetheless for me is out of any doubt, is a secondary question and controversial among the scholars. What is important and compulsory for the scholars is the accurate presentation of the monument we are referring, because the

## 2. The castle of Modrica (Dibra) (x-41°36', y-20°57', z-996m)

The castle of Modrica<sup>47</sup> is situated on the top of a rocky ridge of 996m height, close to the homonymous village on the left side of Drini i Zi and the torrent of Modriça (Northern Macedonia). Upraised in front of Koxhaxhik castle, with which has a visible communication, the fortress has a strategic position and controls the valley of Drin and the road Ohrid-Dibra. (fig. 21). The ridge where the fortification is found has strong natural protection, a small surface of nearly 300m<sup>2</sup>, perimeter 102m, diameter north-south 50m and that east-west 45m. It has been fortified with walls, whose ruins can be followed only in the eastern side and the northeastern one, in a length of 26m. The wall has exploited the ground defensive capability and has filled the opened gaps between the natural rocks. (fig.22, 24). The best preserved tract, of length 2.00m, height 0.80m and width 1.00m is found on the northeastern side close to the shore. The wall has been build according the technique *opus incertum* with fluvial and ground stones, tied with lime mortem mixed with unsifted river sand pebble, of a very poor quality, that has influenced in the non preservation of the wall's line. This technical particularity shows the precipitancy of its building (the lime has been immediately used after the quenching), which coincides with the historic sources, after which, this fortress was build in hurry by Scanderbeg, after the fall of Sfetigrad, to control the line of Drini i Zi, that for Scanderbeg had strategic importance<sup>48</sup>. The description of this castle by Barleti is actual and complete: "*It was a mountain, the inhabitants called it Modrisë, a slope, which because of its height, observed the land of the Turks in a big space. There he decided to*

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opinion's freedom is relative and is required to be in complete coherence with the archaeological and historic facts.

<sup>47</sup> The fortress of Modrica has been visited by Jastrebov (Krhs. JASTREBOV 1904, 125) and later from H. Sharofi, who writes the following: "*Scanderbeg to face the danger that caused him the loss of Sfetigrad, quickly founded and established the stronghold of Modrici, at the right side of Drin, face to face with Sfetigrad, that was at the right side of Drin. This fortress closed to Drin outfall and controlled the movement of the Turkish army and informed the other castles through the cannon shots*".(Krhs. SHAROFI (1968), 2003, 49) etc.

<sup>48</sup> By showing on the movements of Scanderbeg's army against the enemy camp in Ohrid, after the fall of Sfetigrad, Barleti writes the following: "*he (Scanderbeg) at nighfall of that day travelled with more than 1000 knights to Ohrid, by carefully leading the armies through the forests and unsuitable places, for not being encircled by the enemy between Sfetigrad and its guards*" (Krhs. BARLETI (1537) 1964, IX, 383).

*establish a castle, and to fill it with warriors, which on the stone-throwers shoot informed when the enemies were coming. There would find shelter everyone in the vicinities"*<sup>49</sup>. In the following lines he adds that the building of the castle "*started and concluded on great tranquility, nothing happened during that time from the side of the enemies*"<sup>50</sup>. On the northeastern side of the fortress, was found a water tanker of rectangular planimetry, with angle 1.80x2.50m, measurable depth of 3.30m<sup>51</sup> and volume over 14,85m<sup>3</sup>, with a capacity of water-collecting around 15.000 liters. (fig.23). The width of the shore walls is nearly 1.00m. Its internal space has been plastered with whitewash waterproofing mortar, made of dust tiles, very strong and impenetrable from the water, that has created a very strong strata of granite form, in red. In context with the fortifying system, this shore has been prepared with all the possible care. Such a thing is explainable, if we remind that this fortress served to Scanderbeg as observation point, where the necessity of potable water was permanent. In this castle, according to historic sources, was installed for the first time by Scanderbeg the system of cannon intercommunication, or as Barleti calls it "*stone-thrower*"<sup>52</sup>. Also for the localization of this castle, is proposed an unlocalized toponym in the region of Tetova<sup>53</sup>, that does not responds neither to historic geography nor Barleti's descriptions.

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<sup>49</sup> BARLETI 1537 (1964), VII, 293.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem*, VII, 293. The researcher Gj. Karaiskaj thinks that the castle of Modrica has been build immediately after the first siege of Kruja, around 1451-1452. He points out that the castle of Modrica, wa ssituated in the eastern border of Albania, still unidentified. Krhs. KARAISKAJ 2016, 157.

<sup>51</sup> The shore's floor is occupied by rockfalls and soils.

<sup>52</sup> BARLETI 1537 (1964), VII, 293.

<sup>53</sup> Is mentioned an unlocalized toponym in Tetova's region "*approximate with the form of the name Modrishë of M. Barleci*", "*that can be read: Mdrushte, Modorishte, Morovishte and Medrovishte*". Krhs. BIÇOKU 2016, 130, note 407.





Fig. 21. View of Modrica castle



Fig. 22. Traces of the eastern wall of Modrica castle



Fig. 23. View of the water tanker of Modrica

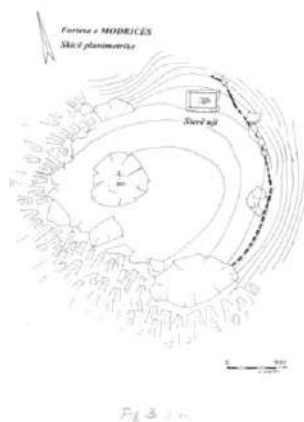


Fig. 24. Plan design of Modrica stronghold

### 3. The castle of Skudrina (Lower Reka)<sup>54</sup> (x-41°57', y-20°59', z-1180m)

The ruins of the castle of Skudrina are found in the eastern side of the Kërçini mountain, near the village Skudrina of Lower Reka in the area of Dibra (Northern Macedonia). The castle is build up in a slopery rocky ridge established between two deep brooks coming down from the mountain of Kërçin and bordered it from the northwestern and

<sup>54</sup> I thank my friends and collaborators for coming along with me in the visit of 2009 in this castle during the years: Jakup Markja, Dashamir (Dibra), Moisi Murra (Peshkopia), Pëllumb Naipi (Tirana).

southeastern side. It has been previously visited by the Macedonian scholars, that mark as its absolute height of 1180m and the relative of 500m<sup>55</sup>. The castle enjoys a brilliant natural defense and a very dominant control of the valley of Radika in the area of Lower Reka, connecting the basin of Dibra with that of Pollog and Vardar's valley. (fig.25). The crest of the castle is closed with a flat surface approximately polygonal, with smooth paths on the corners. It has a length of 55m and width moving from 29-40m and a surface around 2200m<sup>2</sup>. In the southern side and the eastern side is comes down with slopery rocky sides of 500 m high on the gradishta torrent. Also in the northern side, the slope is very high, while in the western one, establishes the only communication path with a suitable terrace for inhabitancy, and also with the ground around. The castle preserves traces of its fortification, chronologically connected with three different phases, respectively referring to the Late Bronze Age, of the late antiquity<sup>56</sup> and of the Medieval Age. The last period, we think that is chronologically connected with the XIV-XV centuries AD, and mainly with Scanderbeg's age. In the fortifying system it is represented by a circular tower established in the highest point of the internal surface of the castle. The tower of circular shape, has an external diameter of 7.80m, and internal 3.00m and walls' width 2.40m. The walls of the tower were builded with normal stones tied of lime mortar, with thickness of the mortar grout 2-2.5cm. The plaster is made of unseasoned lime, mixed with fluvial sand sifted, and of poor quality moldered by the friction. In topological view and topographic position, this tower is completely similar with that of the medieval castle of Daule in Kurbin, and as such towered of XIV-XV centuries

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<sup>55</sup> MIKULČIĆ 1999, 410.

<sup>56</sup> The was of the late antiquity who encompasses the northern and the western side with small interruptions achieving 82.5m perimeter. It is preserved in all the northern side, with longitude 57m and height 0.30-0.50m. Its build with medium stones tied with good quality limestone mortar after the technique *opus incertum*. It exploits the defensive capabilities of the ground, by being placed on the natural rocks of the ground, while in some cases even being superimposed on the prehistoric wall. The western wall, of general longitude 25.5m, in the southwestern corner, at the only incoming path, creates an interruption with longitude around 4-5 m, that should have served as entrance in the castle. The castle is registered by the Caesarea Procop in the list of the rebuild fortresses by Justinian in the middle of the VI century AD, with the name "*Skydreon polis*". Krhs: Proc. Ceaz. *De Aedificis (On constructions)*, IV, 4, 39). We think that the today name *Skudrine* of the castle and village eponym close to it, is directly inherited from the name *Skydreon* of this late antiquity period.

fortification of Kruja, Stelush, Rodon, Durrës, Preza, Shkodra<sup>57</sup>, Petralba<sup>58</sup> etc. To this period we also think that belongs a water tanker situated in the southwestern side of the castle. It has rectangular form of angles 7.00x4.50m and readable depth 2.20m. The particularity of this shore is that on its three sides, respectively in the eastern, northern and southern, is carved on a rock, and only its western side is occupied by a wall of 4.50m length, build with normal stones tied by lime plaster. The internal side of this wall was found crumbled and were not ascertained plaster traces with roof tiles dust, usually used for the shores' waterproof, which role apparently was played by the rocky sides of the three part of it. The castle has served as defense fortress of the traditional road Dibra-Pollog-Skupi, passing through the Radika river valley.

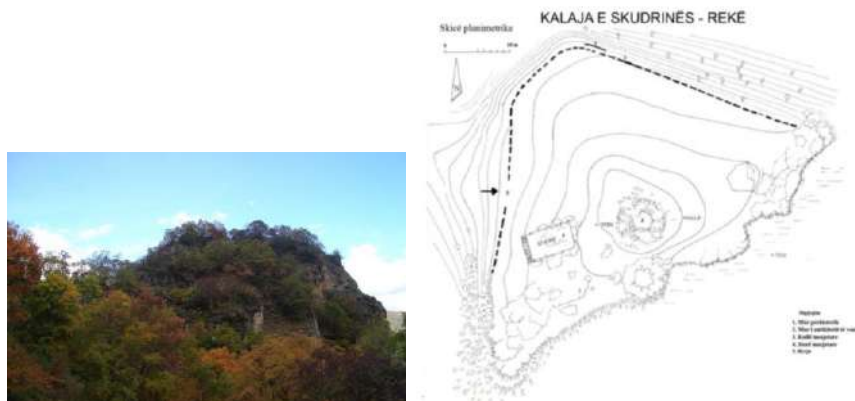


Fig. 25. General view and plan design of Skudrina castle (Lower Reka)

#### 4. The secret castle of Scanderbeg (Kidhna) (x-41°75': y-20°24', z-1205m)

The ruins of Scanderbeg's secret castle<sup>59</sup> are found in a rocky ridge of 1205m height, in depth of the Seta valley, in the southeastern side of

<sup>57</sup> SARAÇI 1987, 207, note 16.

<sup>58</sup> Individual observations on the ground.

<sup>59</sup> The castle is otherwise called of the "*Sheu i thatë*" (of the dry brook). The name "*Sheu*" has the meaning "*brook*" and is kept as an old word of the Albanian lexicon in that area. Other

Xharxhisht mount, part of Pllaja pastures, heightening in the west of Çidhna e Poshtme and Gjalica canyons. It has a small surface and possessing position, very protected by nature, in control of Çidhna e Poshtme and secondary roads connecting this area with Lura (the medieval city of Livadh i Xharrit), the castle of Stelush (Qafë-Murra) and that of Guri i Bardhë (Petalba) in Mat (*fig. 26*). The only path to enter the castle passes through the castle's track, on the southwestern side. In the highest part of the castle are preserved the remnants of a circular tower. Detached tracts of medieval walls are seen only in the eastern and the southeastern side, of nearly 72m of length. They surround "the citadel" with a limited surface, around 500m<sup>2</sup>. The wall is build with *opus incertum*, normal and small stones, tied of weak lime plaster. The wall achieves 1.30-1.50m of thickness. An approximate thickness has been ascertained in other medieval castles of our country as in Shurdhah (1.30-2.60m), in Kruja (0.80-1.50m) and Daulë of Kruja (0.75m, 0.90m, 1.10m, and 1.80m)<sup>60</sup>, in Stelush and in Petralba of Mat (1.50-1.80m)<sup>61</sup>, in Koxhaxhik of Dibra (1.40-1.70m)<sup>62</sup> etc. In the northeastern side of the castle, is preserved a water shore of quadrangular form, with angles 1.80 x 2.20m, measurable depth of 2.90m and volume water over 11.484m<sup>3</sup>. (*fig. 27*). The internal sides have been plastered with waterproofing lime, prepared of roof tiles which crumbled leaving its traces of brick color on the wall sides. In the surface of this castle have been also found some fragments of medieval vessels, mainly jars and bowls, of similar form and décor with those of Stelush, Koxhaxhik castles, etc, connected to the XIV-XV centuries AD.<sup>63</sup>. This castle served as observation and information point through signals and shelter in case of danger. Is thought that through has passed the road of Scanderbeg connecting Lura with Stelush. In the XV centuries AD., Çidhna e Poshtme, together with Çidhna e Epërme (today Grykë-Nokë) and the villages of Sinjë e Epërme and Sinjë e Poshtme, Gurrë, Arras, Shashari i Ruse, part of the famous medieval

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toponyms related to this castle are: "*Qafa e kalasë*", "*Arat e kalasë*", "*Gurra e Skënderbeut*", "*Rrafsha e Topit*" etc. Krhs. HOXHA 1979, 236; HOXHA 1989, 571.

<sup>60</sup> SPAHIU-KOMATA 1974, 263; ADHAMI 1971, 87; SARAÇI 1987, 205.

<sup>61</sup> According the author's observations on the ground.

<sup>62</sup> BUNGURI 2009, 31.

<sup>63</sup> ANAMALI 1967, 95-112; BUNGURI 2009, 34.

Kidhna<sup>64</sup>, played an important role in the Scanderbeg epopee against the Ottoman power<sup>65</sup>.



Fig. 26a. General view of the ridge



Fig. 26b. Traces of the medieval wall



Fig. 27. View of the water tanker

## 5. The valley of Bulqiza and Vajkal

The valley of Bulqiza geographically extended in all the space from Qafa e Buallit (844m) in the west to Ura e Qytetit (609m) in the

<sup>64</sup> In the Middle Ages this region was known with the name "*Kidna*" (Krhs. BARLETI 1537 (1964), XIII, 469; İNALÇIK 1969, 188). We think that this denomination sources from the Illyrian onomastics, respectively from the castle "*Kithinas*" of the VI century AD, at the center of this area, which the Caesarea Procop, included it in the 32 castles build by Justinian in the province *Epirus Nova* (Krhs. Proc. Caes. *De Aedificis*, IV, 29; BUNGURI 2011, 197, 208).

<sup>65</sup> In August 1466 its people faced the inhuman massacre of the sultan Mehmet II, who after failing in the second siege of Kruja, during the retreat to Istanbul, returns to Elbasan and kills 8000 men, women, elderly people and children sheltered in Lower Kidhna as revenge against Scanderbeg and the men of his lands. (Krhs. BARLETI 1537(1964), XII, 469; NOLI 1962, 111 ).

east, in both sides of the Bulqiza river (the river "Ebu"), between the mount of Dhoksi in the south and that of Allamani in the north. According to our opinion, the name of Bulqiza derives from the medieval name "Ebu"<sup>66</sup> of Bulqiza's river, which passes through the same valley. It has been established in a valley of glacial origin of washtub form with length 25km, 3-5km of width and altitude 600-800m. The geo-morphological configuration is defined by Bulqiza pebble valley (46.5km) and by the bordering mountains in south and north, known for the big supplies of chrome. In this valley are extended from the west to the east these residential centers: the city of Bulqiza, the old and the new and the villages Duriçaj, Dragu, Koçaj, Vajkal 1 and Vajkal 2, Fushë Bulqiza, Dushaj and Lepurak, the latter known as neighborhood of the Dushaj village. The valley of Bulqiza has a favorable geographical position and free communicating posture with the neighboring and far away regions. It is run through by the most important corridor connecting Dibra with the Adriatic, known as "The Arbër's Road". For the working out of this road corridor that in prehistory and especially since the XI century BC., are brought as evidence the archaeological findings that would be mentioned in the following lines, and also the two bronze helmets of the Illyrian type of the V-IV centuries BC<sup>67</sup> and the vessels with black varnish<sup>68</sup> found in Sofraçan, in the track of "Arbër's Road" on 2008. The eastern part of this valley, from "Gurët e Skënderbeut" in the west to the Ura e Qytetit (of Valikardha) in the east, is known with the name Fusha e Vajkalit. Only in the eastern corner of it, are preserved the archaeological-historic monuments, chronologically connected with the late antiquity age (the town of Valikardha) with the medieval one (the town of Valikardha, The Tower of Scanderbeg and the church of Kojzak). (fig. 28).

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<sup>66</sup> BUNGURI 2018, 241.

<sup>67</sup> BUNGURI 2010, 261-264, tab.CX, 1-2, CXI, 1-4.

<sup>68</sup> *Idem*, 265-267, tab. CXIII, 1-6.



*Fig. 28-View from the Tower of Scanderbeg, the town of Valikardha and the church of Kojzak*

**5a. The town of Valikardha** (x-41° 30' 32", y-20° 18' 53", z-609m)

The name of this town has been known for the medieval ages, as is proved by a document of 1464, where is mentioned the camp of Scanderbeg with the name "*Vale Carda*"<sup>69</sup>. Has been visited on 1951 from H. Ceka and J. Adami, that have put in evidence that the city was found in the eastern side of the valley of Vajkal, in a foothill, with mortar wall remnants, in front of the Tower of Scanderbeg<sup>70</sup>. In the later years, the monument has been also visited by other scholars<sup>71</sup>. The town is established on the right side of the Bulqiza's river and Arbër's

<sup>69</sup> PALL 1965, 202-204 (quoted after BIÇOKU 2006, 81, note 65).

<sup>70</sup> CEKA-ADAMI 1951, 3. "*The valley of Vajkal in the eastern side has a low hill with wall remains of mortar, that is called "town", while in front of it is the unclimbed rock called "Scandederbeg's tower"*".

<sup>71</sup> SADIKU 1971, 222; KACA 2003, 114; KACA 2012, 69; BUNGURI 2014, 297-299.



Road, on a rocky foothill of absolute height 609m close to the "Ura e Qytetit" ("Bridge of the town") (fig. 29).



Fig. 29-northern and internal view of Valikardha town.



Fig. 30a-Track of the western wall.

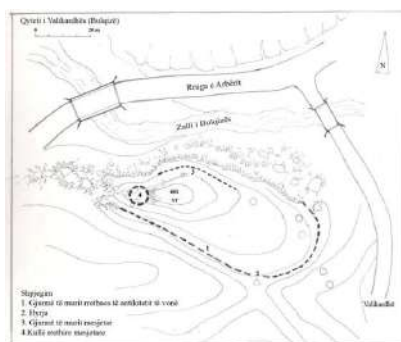


Fig. 30b-Plan design of Valikardha town

It has a favorable strategic position and in a certain degree, protected by the natural point-of-view. In the northern side it's entirely rocky sloping on the pebble of Bulqiza, separating it from the Rock of Scanderbeg. With rocky sides it also slopes on the near field. City's area smoothly slopes towards the east and south, while its entrance, considering from the topographic view, should have been on its southern side of it. City's area has approximately an elliptic form, of 82.5m northwest-southwest diameter and 25m north-south. (fig. 30a) The city preserves traces of fortifying system of the late antiquity and of medieval age. The walls of the first period surround an area of nearly 0.2ha and follow the isobaric line of the hill in elliptical form. Today it can be spoken only for detached traces of it, in the southwestern,



northeastern and northern side. The best preserved tract of this wall, of 1.50-1.60m length, 0.80-1.00m of height, is found in the southwestern part, but its external side is damaged. The wall is build with normal ground and fluvial stones, tied of lime plaster, with the technique *opus incertum*. The plaster contains many unsifted fluvial sand, it's not so strong and does not have good quality. The traces of this wall can be also seen in the northeastern side, in the spaces between the natural rocks. To the medieval age we think that belong traces of the northern side surrounding wall, that could be followed in line of 22m, and also a square tower which traces are found in the highest part of the town's northwestern extreme, chronologically connected with the XIV-XV centuries AD. (*fig. 30b*). With this period are also connected with the ruins of a medieval church, preserved till late down town, on the left side of the Bulqiza river<sup>72</sup> and also the ruins of the Kojzak's Church<sup>73</sup> in the southern suburb of Valikardha town. The town of Valikardha controlled the main road connecting Dibra with Durrës, known as "Arbër's Road". On the southern side of the city is found the today village of Valikardha, which inherited the name of the medieval town *Vale Carda*, while 2-3 km in the west the Vajkal village, very known names of our medieval history. We agree with the previously opinion that exactly here should be localized the medieval town of *Getie*, that according to the historic sources was found near the road Sfetigrad (Koxhaxhik)-Kruja, a name that later was appropriated by the village *Godvi* near this town<sup>74</sup>. In supporting this localization are the historic sources of the medieval age<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> SADIKU 1971, 222.

<sup>73</sup> CEKA-ADAMI 1951, 6.

<sup>74</sup> The publishers of the Byzantine sources have said that for the localizaation of the town of Getie in the village Godvi of Bulqiza, which is found near the road from where were passing the Turkish armies against Kruja, and is found nearly 50km in the west of this city. Krhs. BOZHORI-LIÇO 1975, note 76, 330.

<sup>75</sup> According to L. Chalkokondyles "*Murat by advancing, first of all encircled the city of Sfetigrad (in original: Sfeti) and offered to the besieged to surrender it and each of them would go their homes. They refused. Therefore (Murat) attacked with jainassaires and completely occupied and enslaved the city; he killed all the men. Then advancing he in agreement with *Getie*, and after turning to slavery those who were found within the city, led the army towards Kruja*". Krhs. Chalkokondyles, *The war of Sfetigrad on 1448*, Quoted by BOZHORI-LIÇO 1975, 330.

**5b. The tower of Scanderbeg<sup>76</sup> (x-41°30'47'', y-20° 18'46'', z-978m).**

The rocky ridge known as "*The Tower of Scanderbeg*" with absolute height 978m, is positioned in front of Valikardha's town, on the left side of Bulqiza's river (medieval "Ebu" river) (*fig. 31a-b*).



*Fig. 31a- View of Scanderbeg's tower rock;*



*Fig.31b- View of the western ridge of Scanderbeg's tower*

On 1951, H. Ceka-J. Adami have noted that "*The Tower of Scanderbeg*" is found on an unclimbed rock in front of Valikardha "town"<sup>77</sup>. It has a very protected natural defense, of full control on Vajkal's field, all the valley of Bulqiza and "Arbër's Road", passing beneath it. The platform of this ridge of polygonal plan, of 16x65m east-west and north-south diameters, and exploitable area of nearly 1000m<sup>2</sup>, it has a light southern sloperry. The rock of Scanderbeg's tower has rocky sloppery precipices on three sides, the southern, western and eastern, while on the northern side, is divided from the highest part of it, by a rocky canyon with depth 3.50-4.00m and width 10-12m. Further

<sup>76</sup> I thank my friends and collaborators for coming along with me in both visits realized at this monument: (August 2018): Gazmend Sejdi (Director of the primary school "Sh. Tançi" Bulqiza), Sami Curri and Geri Emiri (journalists), Lulzim Hupi (owner of the gesthouse "Hupi") as well as Ma. Ervin Kujtila (archaeologist); (September 2018): Gazmend Sejdi (Director of the primary school "Sh. Tançi" Bulqiza), two students of the Middle School in Bulqiza, Renis Isufi and Bleon Zogu and also Dr. Elio Hobdari-archaeologist (IA-Tirana) (*fig. 40a-b*).

<sup>77</sup> CEKA-ADAMI 1951, 3.

north is heightened "Maja e Tëmlave" under which is found "Çardaku/the Balcony" (of Scanderbeg), a small square, with a very big view space. The ridge where is found "The Tower of Scanderbeg" has a very dominant position. From there is easily controlled the whole valley of Bulqiza, from Qafa e Buallit in the west (844m) till the valley of Drini i Zi and the city of Dibra in the east. The visual communication is visible not only for the town of Valikardha on "Ura e Qytetit" and "Vajkal's Field" near it, but also the cities of Krajka and Sofraçan, at the left side of the pebble of Bulqiza and Gurra's Field (Strikçan) on the right side of this river valley. The climbing on "The Tower of Scanderbeg" starts from the village Lepurak of Vajkal, from when you have to walk in a slopery path for nearly 1.5-2 hours, until on "The Secret road of Scanderbeg", nearly 200m under the rocky ridge platform where the tower is situated. This secret road of 50-60m length and 2.00-2.50m width, has a strong slope around 30-35°. It starts from "The stone of pounder" and achieves the western side of the ridge. The secret road has been opened in the rock and has been paved of stone tiles (*fig. 32a*).



*Fig. 32a. View of the secret road of Scanderbeg's Tower;*

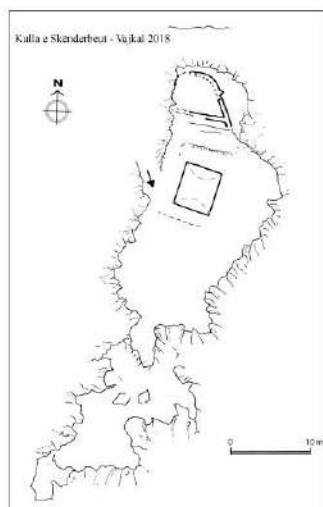
*32b. Pounder stone*

The pounder's stone is found nearly 200m under the western side of the tower, in a landing close to "*The secret road of Scanderbeg*". It's about a natural rock with flat sides, of 2.20x1.10x0.70m dimensions, which central part is carved a cylindrical cavity of 23x23cm diameter, depth 5.6cm and with polished sides. It's identical with both pounder

stones of Koxhaxhik castle and is thought that has served to gunpowder suppression (*fig. 32b*). The rocky ridge known as "*The Tower of Scanderbeg*" has an approximately polygonal surface (*fig. 33a-b*).



*Fig. 33a-General view of Scanderbeg's water tanker and Tower;*



*33b.Plan design of Scanderbeg's Tower*

During the survey of August and September 2018, were noticed two construction structures, as the integral parts of the medieval monument:

**a. The observation tower.** In the highest and extreme part of the Tower of Scanderbeg rock, are found the ruins of a defensive tower. The tower has rectangular form of arched forefront, adapting to the ground form and included in the type of form "U" towers or of horseshoe form. The tower has northern orientation, 5.50m length and 6.70m width. (*fig. 34a-b*). The walls build with lime plaster stones, are preserved in ruin situation, with readable width of 0.40m. In the eastern side of the tower, is preserved a wall tract of 2.00m length and 0.40m width, vesting the external side of the natural rock, which before this has a vertical cut (*fig. 34c*). In the length of 5.50m, the southern side of the tower is closed through a transversal wall east-west. The traces of this fortification eastern wall, in form of ruins, continue towards south

and are followed until the length of 10m. On the western side of the ridge, traces of ruin forms of this defensive wall, can be followed till 16m of length, only at the entrance path of the Tower of Scanderbeg rock's ridge. The preserved traces of the defensive wall traces, show that the fortification has been partial and has very good exploited the defensive characteristics of the ground. This architectonic situation, implies us to believe that the essence of this fortification is represented by a tower of "U" or horseshoe form, where could be sheltered a small group of soldiers, of mainly watching and signaling duties. (watching tower). The tower of "U" or half circular form are an usual plane type in the medieval fortifications, also including those exclusively connected with Scanderbeg's time. The type of the half circular tower is met in the castles of Petralba<sup>78</sup>, Petrela<sup>79</sup>, Kruja<sup>80</sup>, in the lower stronghold of Durrës' castle<sup>81</sup>, while the towers in U form protect the upper city's entrance of Shurdhah's castle (Sarda)<sup>82</sup> etc.



*Fig. 34a-b-View of the northern and eastern wall of Scanderbeg's tower*

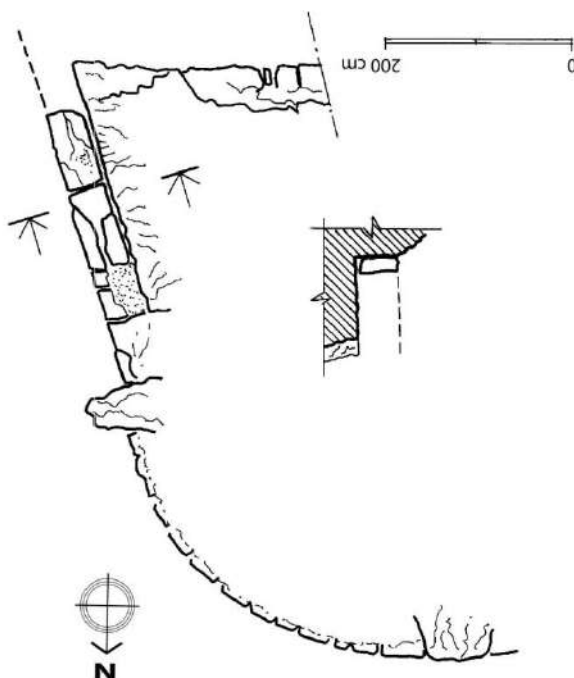
<sup>78</sup> Seen on the ground by the author.

<sup>79</sup> KARAISKAJ 2016, 118, fig. 128.

<sup>80</sup> *Idem*, 141, fig. 157.

<sup>81</sup> *Idem*, 161, fig. 185.

<sup>82</sup> *Idem*, 129, fig. 140.

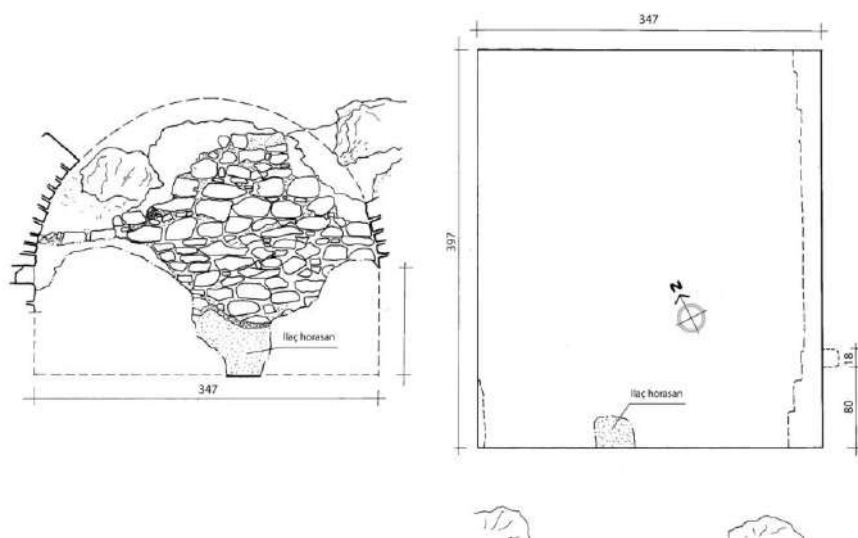


*Fig. 34c-Plan design of the northern wall of Scanderbeg's tower*

b. The water tanker. In the half of the southern rocky ridge, are preserved the underground structure of a water tanker, build with stone walls tied of lime plaster. The shore has been covered with lengthwise cylindrical arch, today almost totally destroyed by clandestine treasure hunters. It's about a structure of rectangular plan, of northern orientation, of  $5^{\circ}$  eastern deviation from the northern axes. The internal dimensions of it are  $3.97 \times 3.47 \times 2.50\text{m}$  ( $4.00 \times 3.50 \times 2.50\text{m}$ ). The approximate volume of the shore is  $35\text{m}^3$ , with 35.000 liter of water-collecting (*fig. 35a-b*).



*Fig. 35a-General view of the water tanker*



*Fig. 35b- Water tanker's plan & section*

The internal space of the shore has been plastered with tiles dust wall-plaster of waterproof resistance. Remnants of this mortem of well refined surface and in reddish ocher, today are preserved only the flat and the terminal parts of the shore, respectively in the southern and



eastern wall, while the upper parts of the walls, nonetheless is fallen, this mortem has left in the stones sides, the ocher color of its, easily readable. The floor of the shore has been paved with mortar plaster prepared of tiles dust of waterproof characteristics, the same with that of the internal side of the collateral walls, which surface is tight enough and strong. In the terminal parts of the shore, is preserved the waterproofing plaster's layer of 2.5-3cm thickness and reddish ocher, that has plastered its internal walls (*fig. 35c*).



*35c- Details of water tanker's waterproof plaster*

The width of the collateral walls is 0.60m, while the width of its southern wall is 2.00m. This southern external wall might have served as amplifier of the shore's structure or accessory of the excess water removal. The shore's walls are build with ground lime stones, tied with abundant lime mortar, plenty of lime and few river sand. While the southern and northern walls have vertical sides, the eastern and western walls are lightly arched to form the cylindrical or half circular archway. The arch-line starts in the 0.98m altitude(1.00m) on the flat level. The preserved altitude of the arch in the eastern side is 1.00m and in the western side 0.45m, while the arrow of the arch proves to have been 1.40m. All the internal part of the structure, is full of wall lime stones and of sandy arch crust stones. The latter are carved, with flat sides and light in weight, in accordance with their use at the arch vault. Stones of both kinds are also found in the western and northern side of this



structure. The water shores have been necessary and indispensable organic part of the medieval fortification in general, also including the fortifications build at Scanderbeg's time. Knowing that the utmost physiological necessity for a person are 2 liter of water per day<sup>83</sup>, it can be counted that the shore of Scanderbeg's tower, with a general capacity of 35.000 liters of water-collection, could fulfill the necessities of group of 50-60 soldiers for 30 days, even without a single rain drop. In the planimetric and typological view, shore of Scanderbeg's tower is similar with that of Scanderbeg's secret castle shore in Daulë of Kurbin<sup>84</sup>, with that of Modriça<sup>85</sup>, of Skudrina<sup>86</sup> in the lower valley of Radika (Dibra), with the shore of Scanderbeg's secret castle<sup>87</sup>, in Çidhnë e Poshtme, with the small shore of crust stones in the city of Stelush (Mat)<sup>88</sup>, with the shore nr. 1 of cylindrical arc of Shkodra's castle<sup>89</sup> (build before the first siege of Shkodra)<sup>90</sup>, with the shore of cylindrical archway of Matrica castle<sup>91</sup> in Rubik etc. Both the above mentioned structures of this monument, the tower of horseshoe form and the water shore, in the chronological point-of-view, are exclusively connected with Scanderbeg's time. Except the technical characteristics and their above mentioned analogies, we can also mention two medieval objects connected with the Tower of Scanderbeg, respectively a pounder stone (fig. 32b) and a millstone grinder (fig. 38c).

In conclusion we have to put in evidence a particularity of the fortifications build or rebuild at the time of Scanderbeg. It's about the similarities of the topographic and planimetry scheme of the castle of Koxhaxhik with other castles genuinely accepted as refortified or build by Scanderbeg, as the castles of Stelush (Qafë-Murrë), Petralba (Mat), Kruja, Daule (Kurbin), Petrela (Tirana)<sup>92</sup> etc. Needless to say that the all above-mentioned castles of Scanderbeg are found on mountainous regions, protecting the internal strategic roads from where the armies

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<sup>83</sup> KARAISKAJ 1985, 66.

<sup>84</sup> SARAÇI 1987, 210.

<sup>85</sup> BUNGURI 2009, 47, fig. 32.

<sup>86</sup> BUNGURI 2014, 297, fig. 8.

<sup>87</sup> BUNGURI 2011, 215, fig. 11.

<sup>88</sup> ANAMALI 1967, 106.

<sup>89</sup> KARAISKAJ 1985, 60-61, 66-67, tab. I.

<sup>90</sup> *Idem*, 67.

<sup>91</sup> HOXHA 2016, 163, fig. 8b.

<sup>92</sup> ANAMALI 1967, 108 ; SARAÇI 1987, 205-206.

were passing. The main part of these castles, some of which were at the same time medieval cities, was compound the most fortified area or "the citadel", that is found at the top of the hill and plays the role of "acropolis" and the "varosh" or the city out of the surrounding walls, the outskirt, where are found the dwellings if inhabitancy and the social and craftsmanship ones. The citadel had modest dimensions, of size from 0.1-0.2ha. As integral element it always possessed the well or the water shore, usually equipped with ceramic shafts from external springs, and in some cases also by rain. The citadel's small dimensions are in accordance with Scanderbeg's military art, who never concentrated its forces within. He left there a small garrison, while with the main forces trapped the enemy, by surprisingly striking, at night, or during the camping or march, by piece by piece annihilating it. As illustration, we are bringing this table on the altitude heights of some of Scanderbeg's castles in the Dibra, Mat and Kruja regions:

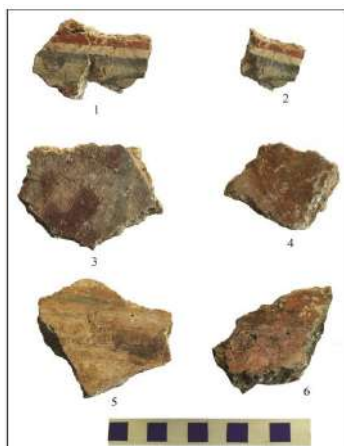
Nr.	Castle or fortification	Region	Absolute height (m)
1.	The city of Stelush	Qafë-Murrë/Dibra-Mat	1225
2	The castle of Çidhnë e Poshtme	Çidhën/Dibra	1205
3.	" Koxhaxhik	Zhupë/Dibra	1160
4.	" Modrica	Golloborda/Dibra	996
5	" Skudrina	Reka/Dibra	1180
6.	Scanderbeg's Tower	Vajkal/Bulqiza	978
7.	The castle of Petralba (Guri i Bardhë)	Gur i Bardhë/Klos	878
8.	" of Kruja	Krujë/Kruja	610
9.	" Daule	Kurbin/Kruja	527
10.	" Petrela	Tiranë/Tirana	329

### 5c. The church of Kojzak (x-41° 29' 49"; y-20° 18' 32"; z- 843m)

The church of Kojzak, known as "Kisha e Kodrës së Gjelit/The Church of the Rooster's Hill", is found at the top of a conical foothill, nearly 1 km in the south of Valikardha town (*fig. 36a*). Established between the torrent of Valikardha in the east connecting it with Tërnova in the west, the foothill has a dominant position and controls a very wide space. The hill is leafed with a dense vegetation of oak and other bushes. In its topside are found ruins of lime plastered walls, that the people calls them "church". The monument has been firstly visited by the scholars H. Ceka-J. Adami<sup>93</sup>. During our visit, we noticed that it's about the ruins of a medieval one side church of small dimensions, unfortunately destroyed by the clandestine treasure hunters. In its ruins were found some fragments of polychrome plaster that have decorated the internal sides of naos. The remained fragments of the plaster, preserve geometric motives of linear belt painted of reddish brick, dark grey and white (*fig.36b*). On its dominant position, it's not excluded the possibility that during the Ottoman period, after the conversion to Islam, the church maybe have been turned to any military barracks controlling the short road Dibra-Tirana, in the line Valikardha-Tërnovë-Martanesh-Bizë-Shëngjergj-Tirana.



*Fig. 36a. View of the hill of the church of Kojzak*



*Fig. 36b. Polychromes plaster of the Kojzak*

<sup>93</sup> CEKA-ADAMI 1951, 6.

## 6. Archaeological objects:

According to the archaeological data, the earlier traces of the valley of Bulqiza inhabitancy belong to the XII-IX centuries BC. and topographically connected with the territory of the Vajkal village (x-41°31'9", y-20°17'13", z-750-800m). Except them, in the vicinities of Vajkal are found other objects, proving the inhabitancy of this area, in the following prehistoric and historic periods:

a. The transitional period from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age (XII-IX centuries BC.) To this period belong two prehistoric objects, respectively a bronze spearhead and pseudo-Mycenaean cantharis, that represent the inventory of a destroyed Illyrian grave of the sub-Mycenaean period (1125-1050 BC.) or proto-geometrical one (1050-900 BC.).

a1. Bronze spearhead. Found at the "Suka e Lepurit" foothill of the Vajkal village near Bulqiza town. Is preserved in the Historic Museum of Peshkopia (hereinafter: HMP), nr.inv.1472, fig. 36a, 1. It has a narrow sheet of willow leaf size of pipe form tail and of circular cut. The whole sheet is permeated by a pipe-like conical crest, of also circular cut. It has round shoulders, while the pipe-like very close to the sheet, is horizontally permeated by two perch holes. The general length is 20.5cm, while the sheet length is 10cm, the maximal width of sheet is 2.4cm, weight-90gr. It's a version of spear top with sheet at leaf form. Its similar with analogue spears of the tumulus IV of Pazhok<sup>94</sup> etc. The most possible dating: sub-Mycenaean period (1125-1050 BC.) or proto-geometrical (1050-900 BC.)<sup>95</sup>.

a2. Double-handled canthar. Found together with the uppercited spearhead, at the "Suka e Lepurit" foothill of the Vajkal village near Bulqiza town. It is restored and preserved in the HMP. Nr.inv.1471, fig. 37a, 2. Height 9cm, the edge diameter 6cm and of body 11cm, weight-240gr. Has stressed double-conical body, short neck, right edges and concave end. The vertical handles of elliptical section, raising above the rim, join at the shoulder level, above the very stressed line of carrination. It's been working with cleaned clay dough, few quartz

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<sup>94</sup> BODINAKU 1982, 79, pl.V,3.

<sup>95</sup> BUNGURI 1989, 67-69, pl. I, 1; BUNGURI 2010, 253, pl. CIII, 1.

motes, with good decrepitating and refinement. The lack of décor and the stressed byconical body, give to the vessel of Vajkal, local characteristics in relation with the analogue vessels of Illyrian culture of this period. It is dated in the sub-Mycenaean or proto-geometrical period, from its accompanying with the spearhead mentioned above<sup>96</sup>.



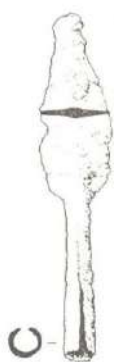
*Fig. 37a1-2. Vajkal: Illyrian bronze spearhead and doublehandled vessel*

#### **b. The developed period of the Iron age (VIII-VII centuries BC.)**

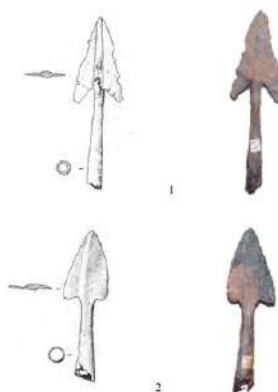
b1. Iron spearhead of leaf form. Has been found in Qafa e Buallit, in the western edge of the valley of Bulqiza (x-41°28'54", y-20° 11' 43", z-844m). Its preserved at MHP. Nr.inv.1471, fig. 37b. The general

<sup>96</sup> BUNGURI 2010, 253, pl. CIII, 2.

length is 19cm, the length of the sheet is 11.5cm and the length of the thick edge 7.5cm. Is included on the spear type of poplar leaf form, of maximal width 4.2cm, permeated by the lengthy back of rhombic cut, pipe-like thick edge of circular cut and maximal diameter of 2cm, weight-93gr. In the external side, respectively at the 1/3 of its length, the thick edge is opened. The raport between the thick edge with the general length of the spearhead is 1:2.5. It was dated in the period of development phase of the Iron Age, VIII-VII centuries BC.<sup>97</sup>



*Fig. 37b. Iron spearhead point  
(Qafë Buall);*



*36c. Medieval arrowheads  
(Vajkal)*

### **c. The pre-Ottoman medieval period and Scanderbeg's period (XIV-XV centuries AD).**

c1. Iron arrowhead. Discovered from the agricultural workings in the field of the Vajkal village. Are preserved at the MHP, nr. inv. 44, fig. 37c, 1. Dimensions: general length 8.5cm, sheet's length 4cm, sheet's width 2cm, conical tail length 4.2cm, tail's diameter 0.6-0.8cm, weight-9gr. It's of leaf form type, of raised doubles, of pipe-like conic tail. The leaf of triangular cut, is permeated by a lengthy back of oval cut in all its length.

<sup>97</sup> BUNGURI 2010, 256, pl. CVI, 12.

c2. Iron arrowhead. Discovered by the agricultural workings in the field of the Vajkal village. Are preserved at the MHP, nr. inv. 45, fig. 37c, 2. Dimensions: general length 7.2cm, sheet length 3.2cm, sheet's width 1.7cm, conical tails length 3.6cm, tail's diameter-0.8-1cm, weight-9gr. It's of leaf form type, without doubles, of pipe-like conical tail. In distinction by the nr.1 spear point, has sheets of extended triangular cuts and of very light lengthy crest. Similar forms of arrows are known in the early medieval ages, discovered in the Albanian grave cultures of Kruja<sup>98</sup>, Lezha<sup>99</sup>, of the Dalmace castle<sup>100</sup>, Pogradec castle<sup>101</sup> etc, and continue to be used even during the XIV-XV centuries AD.

c3. Valikardha (x-41° 30' 24"; y-20° 19' 8", z-625m). Vessel of oinoche type. Discovered by the agricultural workings in the Valikardha village of Zerqan near Bulqiza town (x-41° 30'24"; y-20° 19' 8", z-625m). Its preserved at the Archaeological Museum, Tirana, nr. inv. 16478. Dimensions: height 13.5cm, body's diameter-9cm, last diameter 7cm, weight 290gr., fig. 38a. The vessel has three-ply mouth of 5.5cm diameter, diluted neck at the top, spherical swollen body, that is separated by the throat by a light profile, flat ending and broken biforate handle. It was worked from well levigated clay of light brown colour and was baked very well. It is colored with slim reddish in pink angobe-slip and is decorated with polychrome glaze of the type "*maiolica arcaica*"<sup>102</sup>. The decorated area includes the whole body of the vessel, from the bottom to the top. The motives of geometric character are represented by two stripes of the letter "U", alternated with vertical waved stripes between them, all these realized of green paste. The stripes field of "U" form, is full of white paste, which from the decrepitating in some areas has gained orange vitrification. It's an expensive import vessel, perhaps brought from the Italian shores, where such vessels are found in Puglia, Bari, Venice etc., and are dated between 1350-1450 AD.<sup>103</sup>. Its discovery in the vicinity of the Valikardha town, proves for a relatively high economic and cultural

<sup>98</sup> ANAMALI-SPAHIU 1979-1980, 57, tab. IV, 7.

<sup>99</sup> PRENDI 1979-1980, 131, tab. XVII; 1-3.

<sup>100</sup> SPAHIU 1964, 82.

<sup>101</sup> ANAMALI 1979-1980, 231, tab. XI, 5.

<sup>102</sup> CRESCENZO 1992, 38-49.

<sup>103</sup> *Idem*.

standard of its users. Similar vessels decorated with "*sgraffito polychrome*" continue to be also used during the XV century and in the beginning of the XVI century AD., where mark a very wide spread in all the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean<sup>104</sup>. Its discovery near the town of Valikarda, proves for a relatively high economic standard of its users.



*Fig. 38a-Oinoche (Valikardha)*

c4. Millstone grinder, fragmented. Found during the survey of 2018, at the crest of "The Tower of Scanderbeg". Dimensions: diameter 52cm, thickness 6cm and the axes hole diameter -5cm (fig. 38b). Such

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<sup>104</sup> VROOM 2005, 143, tab. 2.3.



grinder millstones are usual in the medieval localities all over in Albania and wider.



Fig. 38b-millstone grinder (Scanderbeg's tower)

## 7. Once again on Vajkal localization

On the Vajkal field within five months during 1465 are fought two bloody battles between the Albanian army led by Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg and the Ottoman armies. In the first battle (April 1465), the Sultan Mehmet II, sent against Scanderbeg an army of 15.000 knights and 3000 foot-soldiers, under the leadership of Ballaban Pasha (Badera)<sup>105</sup>, while Scanderbeg's army was compound of only 4.000 knights and 1.500 foot-soldiers<sup>106</sup>. According to Barleti, Scanderbeg *"had chosen all the veterans and the prime of youth, on which courage he trust the most"*<sup>107</sup>. Also according to Barleti, *"The camp of Scanderbeg soldiers was in a pleasant and opened valley, that extended forward and was named Valkali"*<sup>108</sup>, while the Ottoman army *"had raised its tents on the other side of the valley, near a mountain, which ended Valkalia and through which could be passed across mountain*

<sup>105</sup> BARLETI (1537), 1964, XI, 449.

<sup>106</sup> *Idem*, 449.

<sup>107</sup> *Idem*, 449.

<sup>108</sup> *Idem*, 450.

*gorges and straits.*"<sup>109</sup>. The battle was severe and bloody. Scanderbeg won, even why with great losses. Except hundreds of soldiers, from Scanderbeg camp fell in the battlefield the general commander of the army, Moisi Golemi or "Dibra's Moisi, *the most beloved and most faithful to Scanderbeg*", and seven other distinguished commanders, respectively "Vladan Gjurica, *which has blood relations with Scanderbeg*, Muzaka of Angjelina (Muzakë Arianiti), *nephew of Scanderbeg from the side of his sister*, Gjin Muzaka, Gjon Perlati, Nikollë Berisha, Gjergj Kuka and Gjin Maneshi, *which with their death made Albania shed more tears than ever before*"<sup>110</sup>. In the second battle of Vajkal, August 1465, the Ottoman army had 20.000 knights and 4.000 infantrymen and that of Scanderbeg 8.000 knights and 4.000 infantrymen<sup>111</sup>. Some of the commanders of Scanderbeg army cohorts in this war were: Tanush Topia, Zaharia Gropa, Pejko Manuelli etc. We are presenting here some lines from Barleti on this battle: "*Between Scanderbeg and Ballaban began a very big clash. The carnage from both sides was becoming unusual. ....Finally, when he realized that the victory was beyond any doubt at the side of the Epirotes (Albanians) and that couldn't face it anymore, he (Ballaban) rode the horse and run as fast as he could and all the army in all its lines was dispersed here and there, mixed and confused, fled in the valley, in the field and through the mountains. Few were them who....could come out alive...all the barbarians (the Turks) were either killed or captured alive*"<sup>112</sup>. This battle ended with the victory of the Albanian army and the defeat of the Turks and of the renegade B. Pasha (Badera) and reconfirmed Scanderbeg's invincibility and the continuation of Albanians' anti Ottoman resistance.

Vajkal's localization was made by Barleti himself, when he writes on the first battle of Vajlkal, between Scanderbeg and the renegade B. Pasha (Badera): "*Scanderbeg's camp soldiers was in a pleasant and opened valley, that extended forward and was named Valkali*" while the Ottoman army "*had raised its tents on the other side of the valley, near*

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<sup>109</sup> *Idem*, 450.

<sup>110</sup> *Idem*, 451.

<sup>111</sup> *Idem*, 458-459.

<sup>112</sup> *Idem*, 462.

*a mountain, which ended Valkalia and through which could be passed across mountain gorges and straits".<sup>113</sup> (fig. 39).*



*Fig. 39. View of the Vajkal valley (Bulgiza)*

In our time this localization is supported by H. Ceka-J. Adami<sup>114</sup> and in the linguistic point-of-view as been also argued by E. Çabej, that has noted that *"the oldest form of his should have been Valkal, Valchalia (on Marin Barleti (1537), the name of a valley in the region of Dibra, constituting a passage", name as "valley, path, passage", that might derive from the Latin "vall(is) callis "valley, road"*<sup>115</sup>. Meanwhile, O. Schmitt establishes it in the village Valikardha, eastern neighbor of Vajkal<sup>116</sup>. A totally different viewpoint has manifested K. Biçoku, who thinks that Vajkali should be located somewhere on the

<sup>113</sup> BARLETI (1537), 1964, XI, 450.

<sup>114</sup> CEKA- ADAMI 1951, 3: "Valchalia. Completely responds to Vajkal. The strait on one side has a low hill with wall remnants of mortem, that is called "town", and in the other side the unclimbed wall "Scanderbeg's tower".

<sup>115</sup> ÇABEJ 2008, 587.

<sup>116</sup> SCHMITT 2014, 171.

east of Ohrid town, a hypotheses which also had been reflected in the History of Albania(edited on 2002)<sup>117</sup>. According to him, the name *Valkal-Vajkal* derives from the union of the names "val" and "kal" meaning "*luginë e kuajve/valley of horses*", toponym that it had to be located somewhere east of Ohrid, where "*was plenty of grass to nourish the animals*"<sup>118</sup>(!), which is a repeated opinion, even in a recent publication<sup>119</sup>. An incontestable argument of the Vajkal's battle localization in Vajkal, its beyond any doubt the Vajkal village itself and Fusha e Vajkalit/The Field of Vajkal, as their complete match with Vajkal described by M. Barleti. "The Tower of Scanderbeg" build on the Vajkal's valley, in control and defense of Vajkal valley and of "Arbër's Road" passing through it, it's beyond any doubt a new argument enforcing the identification of Vajkal in Vajkal. At the best of this identification, also speak a series of toponyms from the geographical history, as "Vajkal", "Fusha e Vajkalit", "Valikardhë", "Fusha e kalasë/Castle's field" (Valikardha), "Shkëmbi i kullës së Skënderbeut/The rock of Scanderbeg's Tower", "The Tower of Scanderbeg", "Çardaku i Skënderbeut/Scanderbeg's balcony", "Liqeni i Skënderbeut/Scanderbeg's lake", "Përroi i Skënderbeut/ The Brook of Scanderbeg", "Gurra e Kuqe/The Red waterspring", "Gurët e Skënderbeut/Scanderbeg Stones"<sup>120</sup> etc.

<sup>117</sup> BIÇOKU 2002, 449-450. The presentation of a researcher individual and subjective viewpoint, as official and institutionalized opinion of the Albanian historiography, is according to our opinion wrong and not compatible with the scientific criteria and institutional publishing. In an official edition, at least is required to be presented two different hypotheses on the localization of a battleground or a historic location, and not to be presented as authentic one of them and ignoring the opposite opinion, as has happened in this case, moreover, when the second alternative is, according to our conviction, completely true.

<sup>118</sup> Moreover we are quoting the author of this hypotheses: "*When describing Valkalin, M. Barleci shows that was a valley near the mount Bigë (Furkë), mountain and ridge name in the east of the city of Ohrid....M. Barleci himself has shown that Valkali was a valley, therefore the latinized toponym is compound by two words (Val and Kal), from which, the first for sure is translated into Albanian "luginë/valley" and the second is related to the word "kalë/horse". Both are analyzed in Albanian "Lugina e Kuajve/The valley of horses". This names proves that in this valley the armies' horses rested and there had abundant grass to feed the animals*". Krhs. BIÇOKU 2006a, 81-82; BIÇOKU 2006b, 82.

<sup>119</sup> BIÇOKU 2016, 163.

<sup>120</sup> In the place called "Scanderbeg's Stones", in the southern side of Vajkal valley, on 27.05. 2017 has been inaugurated the monument of Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg, in the memory of two Vajkal battles leaded and won by our National Hero. The monument of Scanderbeg has height of 3.00m and width of 2.50m. It has been worked by the student of sculpture from Vajkali's village (E. Balja) (fig. 41).

The above mentioned medieval fortifications and the archaeological data presented, prove that during the epopee of Scanderbeg, is sensitively grown the number of the military localizations and fortifications, a phenomenon that matches with the historic sources, according to which Dibra turns in this period in a strategic region of the liberation wars of the Albanian people, under the leadership of our National hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg. The future archaeological researches, would beyond any doubt bring more complete data on the fortifications of Scanderbeg period even in the Dibra region.



*Fig. 40a. Archaeological team at the top of "Scanderbeg's tower"(August 2018)*



*Fig. 40b. Archaeological team at the top of "Scanderbeg's tower"(September 2018)*



*Fig. 41. Scanderbeg's monument in Vajkal*

#### Abbreviations

AiA:	Arkivi i Institutit Arkeologjik
Bark:	Buletin Arkeologjik
BSHSH:	Buletini i Shkencave Shoqërore
Candavia:	Revistë arkeologjike
Iliria:	Revistë arkeologjike
KSA (I):	Konferenca e Parë e Studimeve Albanologjike

KSA (II):	Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike
KSI:	Kuvendi i Studimeve Ilire
Monumentet:	Revistë e Institutit të Monumenteve
PJZ:	Praistorija Jugoslavenkih Zemalja
SSHSH:	Seria e shkencave shoqërore.
StAlb:	Studia Albanica
StHist:	Studime Historike

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