

**Islam in Albanian Lands during the First
Two Centuries of the Ottoman Rule**

**The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Bilkent University**

by

137647

DRITAN EGRO

137647

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**DR. YÜSEF KÖRERİN KUTULU
BİLGİ YANTASYON MERKEZİ**

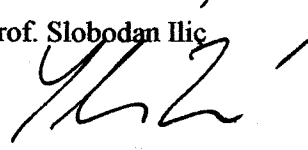
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Prof. Dr. Halil İncılık
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

Ass. Prof. Slobodan Ilic



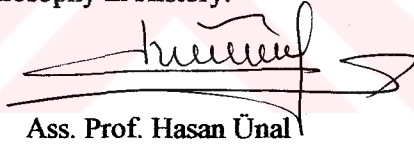
I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

Ass. Prof. Selçuk Akşin Somel



I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

Ass. Prof. Hasan Ünal



I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

Assoc. Prof. Mehmet Öz



Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences.



Prof. Dr. Kürşat Aydoğan
Director

ABSTRACT

ISLAM IN ALBANIAN LANDS DURING THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES OF THE OTTOMAN RULE

Dritan Egro

Ph. D., Department of History

Supervisor : Prof. Dr. Halil İnalçık

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This dissertation provides a detailed picture of the religious situation in Albanian lands before the Ottoman conquest and analyzes the conditions upon the establishment of Ottoman rule and the initial stages of Islam/Islamization in that area.

A complex approach is necessary to find the roots and to understand the phenomenon of the massive conversion of Albanians to Islam throughout the Ottoman period.

The lack of a “national” church, the weak organisation of the Christian churches after the Ottoman conquest, and the establishment of Ottoman rule with a great measure of finality, were the most important factors which caused the gradual process of massive conversion to Islam.

Keywords: Albanian, Islam, Christianity, conversion

ÖZET

OSMANLI DEVLETİ'NİN XIV.-XVI. YÜZYILLARINDAKİ İSLAMİYET'İN ARNAVUT TOPRAKLARINA YAYILMASI

Dritan Egro

Doktora, Tarih Bölümü

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Bu çalışma, Arnavut topraklarındaki Osmanlı öncesi dini durumun geniş bir tablosunu sunup İslamlaşma'nın ilk aşamalarda gerçekleştirildiği şartları ve sebepleri incelemiştir.

İslamlaşma sürecinin köklerinin bulunması ve Osmanlı dönemi boyunca kitlesel karakterin anlanması kapsamlı bir yaklaşım gerektirmektedir.

Bir 'milli' kilisenin mevcut olmaması, Osmanlı fethinden sonra Hristiyan kiliselerinin teşkilatlarının zayıflanması, hatta kimi bölgelerde ortadan kalkması ve Osmanlı hakimiyetinin kalıcı hale getirilmesi, XV. ve XVI. yüzyıllarda Arnavut topraklarında ortaya çıkan İslamlaşma sürecinin birkaç önemli faktörlerindendir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Arnavut, İslam, Hristiyanlık, İslamlaşma

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

After half a century of absolute silence, as a result of the communist regime in Albania, the question of the penetration of Islam and the islamization is once again on the agenda of historians as a significant issue to deal with. Of course, being prohibited politically and insufficiently explored scientifically, this is an issue of not only local importance but for all the region, still remained an attractive one.

The aim of this dissertation is to present the history of the clashes between Christianity and Islam in Albanian lands during the early stages of the Ottoman domination. I hope that in this work all the main threads: military, theological, political and economic can be followed. During my work I did not intend to create a repository of facts, names or dates, but to analyze and interpret the phenomena in their progress. In fact, this dissertation is largely the outcome of my efforts during the past five years to understand and explain the roots of the massive conversion of Albanians to Islam.

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Introduction

The conversion of the majority of Albanian people to Islam is one of the most important processes in their history. It was a long and complex phenomenon, which started with the Ottoman appearance in Albanian lands and lasted until their ultimate withdrawal from western Balkans.

The massive islamization of Albanians was in reality a long process of religious conversion from Christianity to Islam, whose reasons changed from time to time. The inquiry of factors, which stimulated Albanians to convert, constitutes the most attractive aspect of this issue.

I. The Critique of Historiography

A. The Works on the Penetration of Islam and the Islamization Process

The penetration of Islam and the islamization process among Christian Albanians has been the subject of different researches not only by Albanian, but also by non-Albanian scholars. Although it is a key issue of Albanian history with importance and consequences for all Balkan Peninsula, until now it has not taken the deserving place in Albanian historiography. It has not yet been the subject of a comprehensive monographic study, as far as the state of the Catholic and Orthodox churches and their legal position within Albanian society during the Ottoman period has not been the subject of a special research.

The purposes of the researches made by Albanian and non-Albanian scholars differ greatly. While for non-Albanian scholars this question has been a research topic of curiosity and intellectual preference, Albanian scholars have conceived it as an historical phenomenon of national interest with enormous consequences for the

social and religious structure of Albanian society during the Ottoman period and later on. This is the reason why I will take the studies made by Albanian scholars as a base for classification strongly connected with the historical periods through which Albania passed in the 20th century.

The works done until today can be classified into three major periods:

1. the turn of 19th century to the end of World War II (Nationalist period)
2. 1945 to 1990 (Communist period)
3. 1990 until today (Post-Communist years)

1. The first considerations on this topic initiated along with the emergence of Albanian national movement in the second half of the 19th century. Investigating the roots of Albanians in history the well-known Ottoman encyclopedist of Albanian origin **Sami Frasheri**¹ (Şemsettin Sami) believes that the islamization process in Albanian lands started after the establishment of the Ottoman rule.² The author considered it as a mark of loyalty of Albanians to the Ottoman regime in order to improve their social and fiscal position. S. Frasheri argues that there is in the character of Albanians to change master and to accept the rule of the strongest. So, Albanians converted because they wanted to benefit from the opportunities offered by the Ottoman State.³

In his work on the peoples living in Macedonia written at the beginning of the 20th century, **H. N. Brailsford**⁴ devotes a chapter to Albanians and their material and spiritual life. Although he provides only a superficial description of the Albanian character based on personal contacts and opinions, being the special envoy of English government in this region, he helps us with some interesting observations

¹ *Shqiperia ç'ka qene, ç'eshte dhe ç'do te behet* ?, Rilindja, Prishtine 1978, p.34

² *ibid.*, p. 34

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Brailsford, H. N., *Macedonia, Its Races and Their Future*, Methuen & CO, London 1906

about the place and the role of religion in Albanian life.⁵ According to Brailsford, Albanians, unlike Slavs, had no church bound up with their sense of nationality. Concerning the massive conversion of Albanians to Islam, he said, “this act was either the hope of gain or the fear of loss, having an enormous consequence politically, ... but its effects on their habits of thought and even on their social life have been of the slightest”.⁶

Ndoc Nikaj,⁷ an Albanian Catholic priest, has the merit of being the only Albanian historian of Catholic background, who accepts the fact that Albanians were islamized not only by force, but also to gain material advantages. Although only a few paragraphs in his book are devoted to the problem of islamization of Albanian people, he argues the differences in the proportion of converted population according to the native people lived in the high or lowlands.

Jovan Hadživasiljević's extensive essay⁸ on the islamization of Kosovo and Macedonia (called South Serbia) is an anthropological survey of this area during the years of Balkan Wars and the World War I. Although the writer systematically addresses to the problems of the islamization, it is not systematic in terms of its chronology. Hadživasiljević defends the idea that the Ottoman State was tolerant in respecting of other religions within the borders of the Empire. Hadživasiljević pays attention to the Crypto-christianism as an expression of loyalty of indigenous people to Christianity. He views the widespread process of islamization as a dichotomy, realised by force and by desire, in massive proportion or as individual act. In Kosovo he thinks, the islamization was a massive and forceful process.⁹

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 239-48

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 240-1

⁷ *Historia e Shqipërisë që nga Antikiteti dhe deri në Ditët Tona*, Shtypshkronja “Nikaj”, Shkoder 1917, p. 96

⁸ *Muslimani Naše Krvi u Južnoj Srbiji*, Beograd 1924

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 3-4

The pages devoted to Albania and Kosovo in **Thomas Arnold's**¹⁰ well-known book on the spread of Islam and the article of **Ettore Rossi**¹¹ on the establishment of Ottoman rule in Albania and the penetration of Islam into Albanian society, can be considered as the first scientific introductory works on this complicated problem. These works not only served as reference for scholars coming next, but they also were the first texts to highlight successfully this issue using Western sources.

In his anthropological study of Albanians, **Jakov Milaj**,¹² examining the place of faith in the Albanian social life, considers Albanian society as a society with strong pagan remnants. Thus, he believes that Christianity and Islam had only a superficial impact without a significant effect on the pagan beliefs of Albanians. The author attempts to explain the spread of Islam among Albanians as a result of the specific social and historical conditions in a particular segment of time.¹³

In general, the works of the first period are of modest scope. Sometimes, they are limited to a few paragraphs in books written on the history of Albania or the Balkan Peninsula. Based on personal observations or opinions, they sometimes were written just for political goals. Nevertheless toward the end of this period we see some advance in terms of preparing the terrain for scientific introductory works. We can say that only in the years before the World War II the penetration of Islam in Albanian lands and the process of islamization became a real and independent topic of study .

¹⁰ *The Preaching of Islam - A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, New Impression, Darf Publishers Limited, London 1986, pp. 177-197

¹¹ "Saggio sul dominio turco e l'introduzione dell'Islam in Albania", *Rivista d'Albania*, XXI, anno III - fasc.IV, dicembre 1942, pp. 200-213

¹² *Raca Shqiptare - Studim Anthopologjik e Historik*, Botonjes "Ismail Mal'Osmani", Tirane 1944

¹³ *ibid.* pp. 73-78

The Italian historian of Catholic background, Giuseppe Valentini, considered insufficient the works made on the religious history of Albania up to World War II.¹⁴

According to Valentini, there was an enormous work to do in order to gather the primary sources belonging to the Ottoman period, mainly in Turkish and Italian archives, and the documents of churches and monasteries situated in Albania.

2. The end of the World War II sealed the fate of Albanians. In Albania was established communist regime, which lasted until 1990. Following the Soviet model even in scientific researches, the indisputable methodology for research in whole fields of sciences was the Marxist (materialist) methodology. We should make clear that Marxist methodology dictated only works produced in Albania and other communist countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

In the **official History of Albania**,¹⁵ only two pages in a book of more than 500 were devoted to the islamization process. Islamization is presented as a negative, regressive and a forced process realised through direct and indirect methods. The group of authors (Aleks Buda, Selim Islami and Kristo Frasheri) claim that the conversion of Albanians to Islam was a well-planned process, especially toward the end of the 16th century when the Ottomans launched a policy of force in order to break down the long Albanian resistance. According to this text, the conversion of Albanians to Islam was intended to create a human mass ideologically bounded to the Empire's interests and psychological preparation of a military contingent that would always be ready to participate in the Ottoman army.¹⁶ An indirect incentive for Albanians to convert to Islam was discrimination against Albanian tax-payers by

¹⁴ *Ma i Pari Kuvend i Studimeve Shqiptare / Il Primo Convegno di Studi Albanesi*, Tirana 9-13 aprile 1940, *Instituti i Studimeve Shqiptare i Themelates "Skenderbeg"*, Tirana 9-13 Aprile 1940 -XVIII, p. 38

¹⁵ *Historia e Shqiperise*, vol. I, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tiranë 1959, pp. 366-68

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 366

means of the *cizye*, which was arbitrarily increased in Albanian territories.¹⁷ Although the fiscal pressure was very strong, Albanians made efforts to protect their former faith. Conversion to Islam among the Albanians was a more effective process in the lowlands, but a more difficult process in the highlands.¹⁸

Albanian scholar **Stavro Skendi**¹⁹ considers the conversion of Albanians to Islam as a means to benefit from numerous opportunities and advantages provided by the Ottoman state, since the ideologic/political base of the Ottoman Empire was religion, not nationality. So, he claims that the desire of Albanians to escape from the taxes was the principal motive of their conversion to Islam.

Hasan Kaleshi's²⁰ article is one of the most important articles published on this topic, although it is not free of some exaggerations. Although the author relies on his academic experience, he gives some fascinating ideas worth of testing. According to Kaleshi, on the eve of the Ottoman conquest, the Albanians were facing the danger of Slavic assimilation.²¹ He argues that among Albanians religious feelings are not in general profound, which made them disposed to accept Islam, but Kaleshi provides no explanation of why this fact constituted a strong factor in explaining this complicated question.²² Although he takes into account the fact that a tribal system prevailed in the social organization of Albanians, he does not deem necessary to analyze this fact.²³ The author thinks that the conversion of Albanians to Islam was a phenomenon which guaranteed the survival of Albanians from the slavization

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 367

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 368

¹⁹ "Religion in Albania During the Ottoman Rule", *Südost - Forschungen*, Band XV, München 1956, pp. 316-7

²⁰ "Türkler'in Balkanlar'a Girişi ve İslamlaştırılma - Arnavud Halkının Etnik ve Milli Varlığının Korunmasının Sebepleri", *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. X-XI (1979-1980), pp. 177-194

²¹ *ibid.*, p.180

²² *ibid.*, p.181

²³ *ibid.*, p.186

coming from the North, and hellenization coming from the South.²⁴ The author adds that the acceptance of Islam by Albanians was a motivated step forward in order to benefit the advantages provided by the Ottomans.²⁵

Muhamet Ternava is the first Albanian scholar who tried to examine the islamization process within a limited region.²⁶ Using a database from the Ottoman cadastral registers of the Vilçitrin Sancağı in the 15th and the 16th centuries, Ternava identified the second half of the 15th century as the time when Kosovo's population began converting to Islam.²⁷ The author claims that only Albanians embraced Islam, not the Serbian population of Kosovo, which remained under the influence of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Pec (*Peja* in Albanian, *Ipek* in Turkish).²⁸ Albanian upper class in Kosovo accepted Islam not because of their belief in the Islamic doctrine, but simply because of their interest to protect their well established rights of the time before the Ottoman conquest.²⁹ He also believes that the historical data indicate that the Ottomans generally did not use force to convert Albanians to Islam.³⁰ Ternava concludes that the main cause for the islamization of Albanians was economic rather than religious, but he did not venture to investigate why Albanians did not resist Ottoman "pressure" as did the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians.

The German expert of Albanian history, **Peter Bartl**,³¹ devotes the first chapter to the islamization process during the early Ottoman rule in his book on the position of Muslims in Albania during the period of Albanian nationalism (1878-1912). Bartl

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.185

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.189

²⁶ "Perhapja e Islamizimit ne Territorin e Sotem te Kosoves deri ne Fund te Shekullit te XVII", *Gjurmime Albanologjike - Seria e Shkencave Historike*, IX (1979), Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtines, Prishtine 1980

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 69

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 61, 64

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 46

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 67

³¹ *Milli Bağımsızlık Hareketleri Esnasında Arnavutluk Müslümanları, 1978-1912*, Bedir, Istanbul 1998

gives some interesting details related to the context of this process, but this part of his book was rather a compilation of facts gathered from secondary sources.

Bosnian Muslim expert of the Ottoman history, **Nedim Filipović**'s long essay³² on the islamization process in Bosnia and Albania during the first centuries of Ottoman rule is the most complete and analytical work ever done on this topic. Filipović follows Marxist methodology, though he does not neglect new methods, especially the quantitative one. Filipovic has the merit of devoting much to analyzing pre-Ottoman situations in respective countries and of trying to compare the diversities existing among them before dealing with the concrete aspects of islamization. He takes into account all elements and factors that likely played a role in the process. Clearly approaching the question within a geopolitical context, the author attempts to analyze conversion to Islam in economic, social and politic terms. He approaches this problem as a phenomenon with two protagonists: 1- the native people and 2- the Ottomans. Filipović's article constitutes a good introductory model of analysis, of its problematics and of complex approaches.

Another scholar using Ottoman sources is **Skender Rizaj**.³³ In his short article he formulates some general opinions, not systematic. Rizaj argues that in the second half of 15th century half of the Albanian people living in the cities were islamised. Later in the 17th century, Islam became the prevailing religion even in villages.³⁴ Albanians' actual indifference to religion, the author believes, relates to their strong

³² "A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkans under the Ottoman Rule", *Ottoman Rule in the Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, pp. 305-358

³³ "The Islamization of the Albanians During the 15th and 16th Centuries", *Studia Albanica*, no. 2 (1985), pp. 127-131

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 128

sense of identity,³⁵ but he does not give any explanation why this sense of nationality played such a role in the process.

Although **Safete Juka's** article³⁶ is not pretentious, the author has the merit of understanding that in order to detect the process of Albanians' conversion to Islam it would be necessary to go back in time. But, she does not make an adequate anthropological and sociological analysis of Albanians' life and social organization in her explanations.

Antonina Zeljazkova's book,³⁷ published in 1990, constitutes the most comprehensive work on the islamization of the Western Balkans (Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo and western Macedonia). Zeljazkova, like Filipovic, writes in accordance with the principles of Marxist methodology. She considers the Ottomans as ultimate responsible for the islamization of the Western Balkans, without taking into consideration local factors. The author regards the islamization as a political tool in the hands of Ottomans in order to fulfil their own empirical ambitions.

With the establishment of the communist regime in Albania, for the first time in Albanian history, historical studies were institutionalised and the job of historian was professionalized. From that time onwards, the main questions of Albanian history started to be systematically and scientifically researched.

As long as the communist regime was gradually preparing the terrain for the physical and spiritual elimination of religion, the study of the Islam in Albanian lands remained in the shadow of political and economic studies, though it was of great importance for Albanian national history. The systematic policy for the oppression of

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 129

³⁶ "Islamizzazione dei Balcani. Alcune Osservazioni sull'Islamizzazione dell' Albania", *Islam, Storia e Civiltà*, 11, anno IV, no. 2, aprile-giugno 1985, pp. 101-111

³⁷ *The Spread of Islam in the Western Balkan Lands Under Ottoman Rule (15th - 19th Centuries)* (in Bulgarian), Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia 1990.

the clergy that communist regime began in 1945, was enough to reflect this atmosphere in historical studies and later on a gradual ceasing of researches on religious history. On the other hand, the professionalizing of historical studies increased the number of studies being conducted on aspects, which indirectly contributed to the religious history of Albania. Studies on the demographic situation of the 15th and 16th centuries on the Albanian city and hinterland and studies on other aspects of Albanian life during the first centuries of Ottoman rule have made genuine contributions to understanding the history of this Ottoman province and, at the same time, have provided a good base to begin preliminary work on Islam in Albanian lands.

The articles of Albanian scholars living in Kosovo or particularly outside communist Albania reflect a more liberal approach, far from being locked in ideological and methodological frames. On the other hand, we should notice that the methodology of research removed the question of national diversity among scholars. There is no essential differences among the works of Selami Pulaha (Albanian), Nedim Filipovic (Bosnian) and Antonina Zeljazkova (Bulgarian), because they all operated adopting the principles of Marxist methodology; meanwhile, there are a lots of methodological similarities among Western scholars and Albanian writers living in Western countries.

3. The collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in 1990's changed many things also in the methodology of study of social sciences. Since that time the study of religions and, in this framework, of Islam and islamization was no longer a taboo, but a challenge, an open question for research.

In his papers, Albanian ottomanist **Ferit Duka**³⁸ provides his arguments on the data from Ottoman sources. These papers are useful because they offer rich statistical evidence, which are very important in order to follow step by step the islamization process in Albanian lands during the first centuries of Ottoman rule. Duka defends the idea of **Selami Pulaha**³⁹ that it was only Albanians who converted to Islam and not the Slavic population in Kosovo. Consequently, the islamization process created a religious and cultural line of demarcation between Albanians and their Slavic neighbours on an ethnic basis.⁴⁰

The monographic work of **H. T. Norris**⁴¹ is an unsystematic study, though he tries to enlarge the dimensions of research on this topic. The author does not use primary sources and, what is more important, he uses the secondary sources uncritically. This book is full of unsystematic information about the spread of Islam in the Balkans during the Ottoman period. The focus of research is primarily Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo.

Edvin Jacques⁴² understands well the place and importance of the conversion to Islam in Albanian history, devoting a considerable number of pages to this phenomenon. Nevertheless, Jacques's approach is of narrative character rather than a problematic one. However, he is cautious about drawing a context for international

³⁸ "Momente te Kalimit ne Islam te Popullit Shqiptar ne Shekujt 15-17", *Feja, Kultura dhe Tradita Islame nder Shqiptaret*, Simpozium Nderkombetar i mbajtur ne Prishtine me 15-17 tetor 1992, Prishtine 1995, pp. 119-125; the Turkish version of this papers is presented in 11th Congress of Turkish History: "XV-XVI yy.'da Arnavut Nüfusunun Islamlasmasi Sürecinin Gidisati Üzerine Gözlemler", XI. Türk Tarih Kongresi, TTK-Ankara 1994, pp.1691-1700; idem, "Etnia Shqiptare ne Kosove dhe Procesi i Islamizimit ne shek. XV -XVI", *Çeshtja e Kosoves - Nje Problem Historik dhe Aktual*, Simposium mbajtur ne Tirane, 15-16 April 1993, Instituti i Historise (Prishtine)-Instituti i Historise (Tirane), Tirane 1996, pp. 87-92

³⁹ "Aspekte te Demografise Historike te Trevave Shqiptare ne Burimet Shqiptare Gjate Shek. XV-XVI", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 54

⁴⁰ idem, "The Albanian Ethnicity in Kosova ...", p. 89-91

⁴¹ *Islam in the Balkans - Religion and Society Between Europe and the Arab World*, Hurst & Company, London 1993

⁴² *The Albanians : An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (we have used its translation in Albanian), Shtepia Botuese 'Karte e Pende', Istanbul 1996

events that occurred during the period under consideration and emphasizes the religious character of relations between Albanians and Western Powers.⁴³

According to **Muhamet Pirraku**,⁴⁴ the islamization of Albanians was politically motivated: conversion to Islam marked the fulfillment of an historical Albanian dream of ethnic integration and compactness, which was not realized by other religions.⁴⁵ The author expresses the opinion that the islamization of Albanians was not a result of direct Ottoman oppression, but a way for Albanians to distance themselves from Orthodox Serbs and Greeks, just as Orthodox Serbs and Greeks used religion as an ideological tool in their nation-building process,⁴⁶ Albanians accepted Islam for the same reasons, i.e. to create a religious frame of Albanian ethno-cultural and political identity.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Pirraku thinks that the waves of islamization were generally the consequences of the central authority's policy toward the different churches and religious orders.⁴⁸ Islam was spread in the areas where the Albanian was the primary language of the resident population or among some Illyrian-Albanian-Vlach enclaves where Albanian was being lost.⁴⁹ The author regards Islam not as a Turkish, but a universal religion. This is the reason why he thinks that Islam, as much as a Turkish, was the religion of the other peoples, which accepted it during the Ottoman period.⁵⁰

An interesting suggestion of M. Pirraku is that the study of Islam in Albanian lands and the early period of islamization process needs to take into account the curve of

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 353-58

⁴⁴ "Roli i Islamit ne Integrimin e Shqiperise Etnike dhe te Kombit Shqiptar", *Feja, Kultura dhe Tradita Islame nder Shqiptaret*, Simpozjum Nderkombetar i mbajtur ne Prishtine me 15-17 tetor 1992, Prishtine 1995, pp. 41-57

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 42-45

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 45

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 46

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 46-7

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 47

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 51

evaluations of religions, i.e. the political power and spiritual position of Islam, Orthodoxy and Catholicism considered both singly and in comparison to each other during the period under research.⁵¹

The more recent, **Nuray Bozbora**,⁵² is the first scholar who attempts to apply theoretical schemes to Ottoman-Albanian relations. Despite using a new approach, the author commits many errors by using only secondary sources. Although quoted sources are generally serious works the absence of primary sources related to the early centuries of Ottoman rule (Ottoman documents and other original documents from the archives of relevant Western countries) opens the way to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Nevertheless, the attempt to explain the islamization of Albanians by emphasizing anthropological and sociological aspects of Albanian life is a good starting point of her monographic work. Bozbora regards Albanians's primitive tribal culture as the main reason for their elasticity toward religion. The author thinks that the islamization process did not result from an official or well-planned Ottoman policy, but from the pragmatic character of Albanians. Moreover, she considers this pragmatism as a characteristic feature of tribal communities.⁵³

The third period is a very important one, because, particularly for historians of Albania and former communist countries, it brought the freedom of research far from the limitations of Marxist methodology. But Albanian historians are enforced to pay the consequences of long-term self-isolation. This phenomenon prevented Albanian historians from becoming acquainted with modern scholarship.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 46

⁵² *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, Boyut Kitapları, İstanbul 1997

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 37-69

B. *The Works on the State and Erosion of Christianity*

There is another category of works written by Albanian and non-Albanian scholars, whose approach is different from those works commonly deal with the question of Islam in Albanian lands: they make present and analyse the erosion of Catholicism and Orthodoxy in favor of Islam. It is interesting note that these scholars articulate their arguments without relying on Ottoman sources, but exclusively to non-Muslim ones (Western and Byzantine-Greek sources).

While the comprehensive studies of **Ivan Snegarov**⁵⁴ on the Orthodox Patriarchate of Ohrid (*Ohri* in Albanian and Turkish) and of **Olga Zirojević**⁵⁵ on the Orthodox Patriarchate of Peć provide information on the situation of Orthodoxy in some parts of Albania, **Fulvio Cordignano**⁵⁶ wrote a useful article on the situation of the Albanian Catholic population mainly living in Central and Northern Albania, giving a general view of the state of Catholic church and its activity during the 14th - 16th centuries.

The paper of **Osman Myderrizi**,⁵⁷ though it is not very systematic, includes interesting and useful information. Myderrizi defends the opinion according to which the Catholic Church in the 16th century was transformed in an Albanian national religious institution.⁵⁸ From this point of view, he regards the conversion of

⁵⁴ *Istorija na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija-Patriarshija ot Padaneto i Pod Turcit do Nejnoto Unishcozenije (1394-1767)*, Sofia 1932

⁵⁵ *Crkve i manastiri na području Pečke Patriaršije do 1683. godine*, Istorijski Institut u Beogradu, Beograd 1984.

⁵⁶ "Geografia Ecclesiastica dell'Albania dagli Ultimi Decenni del Secolo XVI alla Meta del Secolo XVII", *Orientalia Christiana* vol. XXXVI-4, no. 99, Roma 1934, pp. 229-294

⁵⁷ "Meshari i Gjon Buzukut i Shikuar ne Aspektin Fetar dhe Politik", *Studime Historike*, no. 3-4 (2000), pp. 37-45

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.37: Myderrizi regards this religious text of Catholic liturgical ceremony, which is the oldest document of written Albanian (1555), as a successful attempt to transform the language of Catholic church and its liturgy in Albanian in order to make it understandable for Albanian Catholics.

Albanians to Islam as a protest of the people against the churches, whose liturgy and ritual services were conducted in an incomprehensible language for lay people.

Stavro Skendi,⁵⁹ in order to explain the reasons for the conversion of Orthodox Albanians to Islam, pays considerable attention to the relationship between the Orthodox Patriarchate and the Ottoman State. According to Skendi, the traditionalism of Orthodoxy did not need a rational theological culture, and this traditionalism of Orthodox Church was a great force against conversion to Islam.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the author emphasises that it was in the interest of the Ottoman State to keep the Orthodox and Catholic worlds separated.⁶¹

The pre-Ottoman religious situation in Albanian lands has been the subject of limited researches. The ideological reasons have made of the major obstacle of studying this important topic in Albanian historiography. This is also the reason why the research on this topic are made by non-Albanian scholars. While the long essay of **Milan Sufflay**⁶² deals only with the clashes of Catholicism and Orthodoxy in the Late Middle Ages, and with the changes in the religious geography in accordance with the oscillations of political and military power, the voluminous work of **Alain Ducellier**⁶³ treat almost all aspects of Albanian life before the Ottoman invasion.

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⁵⁹ "The Millet System and Its Contribution to the Blurring of Orthodox National Identity in Albania", in: B. Braude & B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London - New York 1982, pp. 243-257

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 248

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 244

⁶² Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien. Die Orthodoxe Durchbruchszone im Katolischen Damme", in : *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, pp. 188-282

⁶³ Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Age*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki 1981

Having completed this review of the relevant literature, it is now time to take a brief look at how the cited authors contextualize their works in space and time, what kind of sources they used, what thesis they constructed and to what conclusions they reached.

Since the turn of the 19th century, Islam in Albanian lands has not been studied as a historical process in the Medieval Albania. Generally, writers prefer the area, which corresponds with the territory of the contemporary Albanian State. Thus, they miss the dimension of territorial compactness. We also do not have any comprehensive study related to the islamization of a particular region of Medieval Albania, which would than serve as a comparison for other regions.

As to the time, the period of study comprised several various Ottoman centuries, and the penetration of Islam and islamization process were viewed as a phenomenon accomplished during whole Ottoman period. It is not possible to understand the reasons of this event as far as we deal only with the centuries when the islamization process was going on; i.e., we cannot reach the roots of the problem, but we can give just some judgements on the religious situation after the establishment of Ottoman rule. So far concrete examples of conversion have been the base of analyses and logic articulations. No one has attempted to find the pre-Ottoman roots of the conversion. Except for a short essay by M. Sufflay, written at the beginning of 20th century, we have not had a comprehensive study of the religious situation in Albania prior to the Ottoman conquest, which could serve as a basis from which the islamization process could be studied. I think this is the reason why a large part of these works remained superficial, had an only narrative character and relies mainly on quantitative data.

Another aspect, which has been neglected, is the necessity to integrate various events and processes in the context of international developments. This neglect has deprived researchers the fact that Albania was in the international arena during the resistance against the Ottomans in the 15th century, and even later when the process of islamization was already going on.

Variety in the treatment of this topic indicates that the nationality, educational background and ideological approaches played a major role in the approaches of above mentioned scholars. Albanian Catholic writers and Marxist scholars viewed the Ottomans state as ultimately responsible for the massive conversion of Albanians to Islam, without paying attention to the material and spiritual life of the Albanians themselves who were the direct subject of this process; they also left unanswered the question why the same thing did not happen to Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks. According to them, the conversion to Islam was a forced process well-planned by the Ottoman authorities in an effort to break down the Albanian resistance. On the other hand, the Serbian scholar, J. Hadživasiljević, viewed the islamization of Albanians as the starting point for the Serbian national disaster and as the first step to the Albanization of Serbian people.

Intimately connected to the educational background of the authors is the question of the source they used. There are very few works taking into account sources coming from mediaeval chancelleries. I think, this is one of the most important deficiencies of the works we have discussed above. The use of sources from a single side, as the Albanians Catholics did, doubtless will lead to a fetishism of Catholic values, of the role of the Catholic church and of the Catholic orders' aims.

The educational background of scholars is important in an another aspect. The amateurism of the authors engaged in the works written before World War II and the

ideological frame of the communist period until the 1990 deprived them of obtaining an adequate vision of the events in both regional and world-wide contexts; as a result, it prevented them from applying contemporary methods, which is very important if one is to compare the situation within the Albanian territories, among the Balkan regions and to search for the similarity between communities sharing the same social organisation and facing the same issue.

Two are the prevailing theses,⁶⁴ which A. Popovic has defined as *turchophobes* and *turchophiles* attitudes,⁶⁵ because they express the extreme opinions concerning the islamization in the Balkans. Indeed, these theses share the same opinions as those formulated until now in the studies made on the same topic pertaining to other Balkan states. Until now the attitude toward islamization, to great extent, reflects the national identity and ideological background of writers:

1. The islamization of Albanians was the result of a well-planned policy of Ottomans in order to destroy Albanian resistance. Consequently, the side responsible for the conversion of the Albanians were not Albanians themselves, but the Ottoman state and its oppressive apparatus. The transformation of Albanian society's structure and the massive conversion to Islam during the Ottoman period led to the separation of Albanians from Christian Europe and its civilisation.
2. The conversion of Albanians was a means Albanians used to escape heavy taxation and to obtain the privileges Ottomans offered to non-Muslim people. On the other hand, it must be considered as an attempt of Albanians for survival, because they were the smallest community in the Balkans. So, the islamization

⁶⁴ We can find these theses in a synthesised way in articles of A. Buda, "Mbi Disa Aspekte te Njesise dhe te Ndryshueshmerise ne Historine e Popullit Shqptar dhe te Popujve te Tjere Ballkanike", *Shkrime Historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1986, p. 54; idem., "Vendi I Shqiptareve ne Historine Evropiane te Shek. VIII-XVIII", *passim*, p. 78

⁶⁵ Popovic, A., "L'Islamisation dans les Balkans, mythes et realites", *Mesogeios*, no. 2 (1998), p. 10

was seen as a step forward to gain social prestige. Concerning the conversion in the borderlands, this act was appreciated as a way to protect Albanian national identity against the pressure of Slavisation and Hellenisation on behalf of Orthodoxy; in other words, it marked a sort of reaction toward the religious and political oppression of Serbian and Greek Orthodoxy. Thus, the islamization of Albanians was not a consequence of Ottoman conquest and its policy, but of Albanian pragmatism.

Some scholars emphasize that the conversion of Albanians to Islam should not be seen as a question of spiritual adherence; it was not an internal (spiritual) question, but an external (pragmatic) one, which open the door of penetration towards the high ranks within the Ottoman bureaucracy to Albanians.

II. Some Remarks on Boundaries and Geo-Political Features of Albanian Lands in the Late Middle Ages

“It is very difficult to definite the proper boundaries of medieval societies, whereas an institution as a demarcated boundary line never existed clearly, though the tribes or tribal confederations controlled a well recognized area. Generally, primitive boundaries of Middle Ages are characteristic of tribal territories and states just emerging from tribal status”.⁶⁶ The definition of the *ethnic boundaries* of a certain ethnic community during the Middle Ages is, rather than a reality, an hypothetical creation of scholar, who wish to draw such imaginary borderlines in order to facilitate own work. So, the definition of an abstract notion such as boundaries in Middle Ages is a matter of study rather than a question of reality. While the reality of

⁶⁶ Fischer, E., “On Boundaries”, *World Politics*, vol. 1, issue 2 (Jan., 1949), p. 217

Albanian ethnic boundaries constitutes a theoretical or abstract concept, mostly defined by academics or politicians, ethnic symbiosis is a concrete notion reflecting a very medieval reality: different ethnic groups sharing the same territory or marches together.

In Middle Ages, ethnic groups were not organized in such political formations founded on ethnic bases. All medieval political formations spread without taking into consideration the ethnic diversity of a territory. Thus, the reality of *ethnic symbiosis* fits and justifies well ethnic and political feudal mentality. The reality of ethnic symbiosis was particularly distinctive for the lands that Albanians shared with Slavs in the North - East and with Greeks in the South - East territories. We should add that in Albanian maritime cities (Durrës, Vlorë and Shkodra), as the points of contact between Western and Eastern worlds and important centers of Adriatic trade, had a considerable number of Ragusians and Latin people lived alongside Albanians. In this framework, we can conclude that during the feudal period, boundaries were points of separation as well as of contact among various ethnic groups and social environments. On the other hand, we should add that this symbiosis occasionally led to varying degrees of acculturation and cultural exchanges between different ethnic communities living together.

Prior to beginning an examination of Albanian ethnic borders in the Late Middle Ages, we must make clear that we will consider as Albanian lands only those areas where Albanians were a majority of living population and where Albanian was the prevailing language in use. In other words, the territories called *Albanian lands* in relevant medieval sources.

The first tentative to define the ethnic boundaries of medieval Albania was made by the well-known Balkan medievalists, I. Thalloczy and K. Jirecek at the turn of 19th century.⁶⁷ Croatian medievalist M. Sufflay complemented the thoughts of aforementioned concluding that *Medieval Albania* consisted in the territory of the quadrangle Antibarium (Bar in Serbian, Tivar in Albanian) - Prizren (Prizrin) - Ohrid (Ohri in Albanian) - Vlore (Avlonya in Turkish).⁶⁸ This definition has been perceived wrong by Albanian historians, especially during the period of communism, when, following the pace of daily politics, Albanian historiography extended obviously the boundaries of territories inhabited by medieval Albanians. Sufflay determined the Antibarium - Prizren line as the North Albanian borderline, but he asserts that the compactness of upper Albanian lands was ethnically cut off from the Slavic pockets, wedged in territories traditionally inhabited by Albanians. So, Sufflay implies that in the 14th century there was a considerable Albanian population living in the territory between Kotorr and Ragusa (Dubrovnik), but it was not the majority of living population there.⁶⁹ Today we also possess indications pointing out that Albanians lived even east of the Prizren – Ohri line. There are Slavic sources, which bear witness to the Albanian presence in territories, so called, ‘Slavic’.⁷⁰

Sufflay was right when he determined as the eastern border the line Prizren – Ohrid. The publication of the first Ottoman register belonging to the territories known at that time as Albanian land (Arvanitia)⁷¹ contradicts the Sufflay’s definition of the

⁶⁷ Thalloczy, L.- K. Jirecek, “Zwei Urkunden aus Nordalbanien”, *Archiv für Slawische Philologie*, 21(1899), p. 88

⁶⁸ Sufflay, M., “Die Grenzen Albaniens im Mittelalter”, in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, pp. 288-93; in general, the Sufflay’s border definition is not understood well by Albanian scholars. Sufflay, providing his definition on Albanian ethnic territories, determined as Albanian lands only the territories where Albanians consisted of the majority of living population.

⁶⁹ idem, *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p.169

⁷⁰ Novakovic, S., *Zakonski Spomenici*, Beograd 1912, pp. 620, 660

⁷¹ Inalcik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Basimevi, Ankara 1954

Southern Albanian boundary. This register also contains today's region of Çameria (Çamlık),* which was left out the border definition of the aforementioned medievalist. On the other hand, a Ragusian document written in 1390 tells that Kostur (Kesriye) was considered part of Albania (Castoria in partibus Albaniae).⁷² Moreover, the Albanian Gj. Muzaka, a member of the Albanian aristocratic family of *Muzakaj*, in his chronicle written in 1510, argues that the Perister mountain in the east of Kostur constituted the natural border between Albania and Bulgaria.⁷³

Wherever the term *Albania* is quoted in medieval sources, it has in general an ethnic meaning; when it has been used as a geographic term, it generally presupposes South Illyria or what in Latin is called *Illyricum Proprium*. If we have a brief look at the territorial extension of the term *Albania* during the Middle Ages, we will witness a dynamic spread of the term through time. Sufflay says, "Albanians, protected by mountains, are magnificent relics of old times. They are not frozen remnants at all, but a vigorous community with clear ethnic characteristics, mostly centered around Kruja (Akçahisar)".⁷⁴ The territorial spread of term *Albania* constitutes a long process, but it is by no means a result of the Albanian conqueror policy. Since Albanians did not manage to create a stable state during the Middle Ages, the spreading of this term reflects the ethnic compactness of Albanians, which was a direct result of the intensification of internal relations.

Here is necessary to differentiate the concepts of *ethnic* and *political/religious* boundaries. While the definition of ethnic boundaries or symbiosis is mainly a question of the relationship between Albanians and their neighbors, the definition of

* Çameria is a regions in the North-West of today's Greek state.

⁷² Bozhori, K., "Vezhgime rreth Shtrirjes se Emertimit Arbanon ne Kohen Bizantine", *Studime Historike*, nr. 4 (1972), p.139

⁷³ Musacchio, G., "Breve Memoria de li Discendenti de Nostra Casa Musachi", in: Hopf, Ch., *Chroniques greco-romanes, inedites ou peu connues*, Paris 1873, p. 281

⁷⁴ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p.108

internal and external political and religious boundaries is a question primarily pertaining to international politics managed by regional and universal political powers and world - wide religious centers. The long conquests by universal empires and ecclesiastical clashes determined to a great extent the political configuration and religious boundaries of Albanians lands till the eve of Ottoman conquest.

After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, almost all territories of Southern Illyria administratively passed under the control of the Eastern Roman Empire. Later on, the Byzantine province of Prevalitania was rejected and it was replaced by a new province called *Nova Epirum* whose administrative center was Durres (Draç in Turkish). The territories of the Dardania province comprised the most important lands of today's Kosovo.⁷⁵

The Slavic invasion weakened the Byzantine hegemony in the Balkans, while the formation of the Bulgarian and Serbian states changed radically the political configuration of the region. The Albanian lands conquered by the Bulgarian State in documents are registered as *Bulgaria*.⁷⁶

In the second half of the 13th century, the French royal family Anjou proclaimed the formation of an *Albanian Kingdom*. For a period of 104 years, Albania once again politically and administratively belonged to Western world. The Serbian states, which reached their zenith during the reign of Stephen Dushan in the mid-14th century, extended their territories throughout Albanian lands. It was the Ottoman conquest, which put an end the feudal fragmentation, a legacy of the Byzantine and Serb Empires. In the second half of 14th century, Albanian nobility looking for

⁷⁵ Frasheri, K., "Trojet Shqiptare Gjate Mesjetes se Hershme", *Konferenca Kombetare per Formimin e Popullit Shqiptar, te Gjuhes dhe te Kultures se Tij*, 2- 5 korrik 1982, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise, Tirane 1988, pp. 48-52

⁷⁶ idem, "Trojet Shqiptare ne Shek. XV", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, pp. 8-9

political emancipation was not able to manage the whole Albanian territory and thereafter to play any role in the determination of political boundaries. The internal boundaries of that time were both of feudal and political, but not of ethnic character. Political and religious boundaries are opposite sides of the same medallion. Whether political power favored the extension of its church's influence, there was the church, which, in return, legitimated ambitions of political power. In this context, the increase of the church's influence generally followed the course of politics. Here is worth noting that ecclesiastical boundaries within Albanian lands like the political ones were shaped under the pressure of forces outside Albania. The ecclesiastical boundaries generally do not agree with ethnic borders, because even in peaceful times the ecclesiastical division of respective church units was determined and changed only in the accordance with decisions taken by supreme authorities in the Vatican and Constantinople. The course of border oscillations between the two churches (Catholicism and Orthodoxy) in Albanian lands during the Late Middle Ages was in fact a panorama of the rise and decline of the political and military powers which lie behind the respective churches.*

The collapse of Dushan's Empire, as wherever in Balkan Peninsula, opened the way for the rise of feudal principalities. From now on, on the neglect of imperial authority, Albanian aristocracy managed to be an active protagonist in shifts to the internal religious boundaries. The native aristocracy frequently changed religion and accordingly the internal religious borders of Albania.

To sum up, in the feudal period, a man had in some cases to obey the summons to arms of one prince, but go to a court appointed by another prince, and give homage

* The question of ecclesiastical boundaries and organization of two Christian churches in pre-Ottoman Albania is one the most important issues, which will be treat in the first chapter.

to the ecclesiastical sovereignty of yet another.⁷⁷ So being part of such a reality, all categories of Albanian boundaries described above were diverse. Ancient boundaries were never, so to speak, linear; more often they were zones.⁷⁸

The history of Albanian boundaries during Middle Ages, seen from an Albanian point of view, is a history of land restriction and extension. Albanians did not succeed in shaping a stable feudal state, which would be able to determine its political destiny. Therefore, the external and internal political and religious boundaries of Albania were shaped as a result of conflicts of great political and religious powers. "Boundary changes are indications of a shift in the balance of forces, caused by an increase in driving force on one side of the frontier".⁷⁹ Consequently, the history of Albanian boundaries during the Middle Ages evidently reflects the story of the rise and decline of great powers and their changing borders.

The Ottoman conquest of Albania politically regenerated once again the boundaries existing between Byzantium and Venice. Politically, the Balkan Peninsula, after the Ottoman conquest constituted a unique space. Since that moment, Catholicism faced Islam in Balkans.

Since the first half of 15th century the Ottoman sources testify that the term "Arvanit" and "Arvanitia" had an *ethnic* connotation meaning a distinguished community living in Balkans. The usage of such a term by Ottoman Turks shows clearly that they accepted the fact that Albanians were a distinct ethnic community in this region.⁸⁰ The usage of terms "Yuvan ili" or "Ashtin ili" for a while, especially during the 15th century, are only some reminiscences of feudal period.

⁷⁷ Fischer, E., "On Boundaries", *World Politics*, vol. 1, issue 2 (Jan., 1949), p. 217

⁷⁸ Febre, L., *A Geographical Introduction to History*, Routledge 1996, p. 305

⁷⁹ Spykman, N.J., - A.A.Rollins, "Geographic Objectives in Foreign Policy, I", *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 33, issue 3 (Jun., 1939), p. 392

⁸⁰ Thengjilli, P., "Disa Aspekte te Kombesise Shqiptare ne Burimet Osmane te Shek. XV-XVI", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 75

The Ottoman conquest put an end the inner borders of political character derivated from the political reality of different feudal units. At outset, it conserved the religious boundaries between Catholic and Orthodox zones of influence, even the Ottomans stimulated the ecclesiastical extention of Orthodox Church of Ohrid to threat the Catholic presence in Kosovo and Albania. Later on, Islam was spread eroding Catholicism and Orthodoxy.* So, shifts in the centers of world power may well seal the fate of a small and mountainous country with a considerable measure of finality.⁸¹

Hence, in considering the phenomenon of Ottoman conquest in a context of the Braudelian time perspective (*longue durée*), we can conclude that Albania once again was a victim of its geopolitical location.

Albanian lands, situated at the most western part of the Balkans, constitute a space with double access: sea and hinterland. The German historian G. Stadtmuller makes clear that the reason for permanent struggle and subsequent foreign conquests of Albanian territories is twofold:

- 1: The Albanian coastlands guarantee the control of the Otranto Strait, therefore of the Adriatic world.

* This issue will be treated in the next chapters.

⁸¹ Spykman, N. J., "Geography and Foreign Policy, I", *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 32, issue 1 (Feb., 1938), p. 44

2- From Albanian coastal cities begin the main terrestrial roads oriented from sea (Adriatic) to sea (Black Sea) in the horizontal axis throughout the Balkan Peninsula.

In other words, Albania has a double geopolitical importance. F. Braudel says, "the power that acquires under its control the Otranto Channel is the superpower of the Adriatic".⁸² The leading cities of the Adriatic on the Balkan side, apart from Ragusa (Dubrovnik), are all situated all in medieval Albanian territories. Shkodra, Durres and Vlora were starting points of the famous *Via Egnatia*, "the unique road built by the Romans from sea to sea".⁸³

How important the city of Durres was for the vertical and horizontal axes of politics and communications can be shown by the fact that from the 11th to 14th century it changed hands more than thirty times.⁸⁴ Doubtless, Durres constitutes one of the most important starting points of a pathway between West and East where pulsed the pulse of communication in the Balkan Peninsula. When the Byzantine central authority started to decline, generals and pretenders to the Byzantine throne would proclaim themselves 'emperor' in this city and start their march against Constantinople.⁸⁵

Albania, as a natural frontier region from an international point of view, is an expression of a relative power relationship and the line where conflicting pressures become equalized.⁸⁶ From the point of view of an individual state, it is the starting point for the next wave of expansion if viewed in terms of an offensive policy or the

⁸² Braudel, F., *Il. Felipe Donemi'nde Akdeniz ve Akdeniz Dunyasi*, vol. I, Imge Yayinevi, 1993, p. 155

⁸³ *L'Albania : Nozioni Geografiche Statistico-Amministrative*, Scutari d'Albania 1911, p.52

⁸⁴ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p.121

⁸⁵ Jirecek, K., "Die Lage und Vergangenheit der Stadt Durazzo in Albanien", in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L.Thalloszy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, pp.160

⁸⁶ Spykman, N. J.- A. A. Rollins, "Geographic Objectives in Foreign Policy", *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 33, issue 3 (Jun., 1939), p.395

first bulwark if viewed in terms of a defensive policy.⁸⁷ The destiny of the people living under such an unchangeable geo-political location, N. Bonaparte explains in a very concise but excellent manner: “constant danger made me a fatalist rather than a believer”.⁸⁸

Being for a long time part of universal Western or Eastern Empires, it is quite normal to perceive and consider Albanian lands as a province or periphery* of these states. N. Filipovic says that from this point of view, Albania shares the same position as Bosnia, situated on the periphery of the Orthodox Balkan world, in respect to geopolitics and culture. Both, Albania and Bosnia, are a kind of zone of transition between the Balkan Peninsula and the Mediterranean.⁸⁹

There is no human group or society without a territorial basis, which effects the social life of the people and has a considerable impact on the character of individuals. The environment has a transformative power, which not only affects insects or any animals whatever, but also affects human beings both physically and morally.⁹⁰ It is necessary always to keep in mind that geopolitical location and geographical reality do not argue; they simply are.

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⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Baron, S. W., “Impact of Wars on Religion”, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 67, issue 4 (1952), p.453

* Perhaps it is more appropriate to talk about the periphery, as a more neutral term with fewer implicit value judgments: Castelnovo, E. – C. Ginzburg, “Centre and Periphery”, *History of Italian Art*, vol. I, Polity Press 1994, p. 29

⁸⁹ Filipovic, N., “A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkan under the Ottoman Rule”, *Ottoman Rule in the Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, pp. 320-21

⁹⁰ Febre, L., *A Geographical Introduction to History*, Routledge, London 1996, p.14

Albania constitutes a geographical unit,⁹¹ with two faces: one looks to the sea and the other to the mountains. The terrestrial boundaries on all sides are ringed by mountains. At the beginning it is necessary to stress that mountains dominate the Albanian landscape; this is the reason why Albania is called by travelers *Le Pays des Rochers*.

Mountains are a natural obstacle, and, at the same time, an excellent refuge for survival. They constitute a world remaining apart from the waves of civilizations, which are mostly the product of cities and lowlands. In mountains, civilization has no trusted or constant value.⁹² Otherwise, they are very difficult to take maintain under control in order to integrate them within the circles of civilization. Highlands must be considered as museums of ancient people.⁹³

In the Middle Ages Albanians called themselves *Arber* and their living territory *Arberia*. While the rest of the world always called them *Albanians*, from the beginning of 18th century Albanians called themselves *Shqiptar* and their place *Shqiperia*.⁹⁴

Albanian geography may be separated in two main geographic- ethnographic regions:

- 1- Ghegeria and
- 2- Toskeria.

The boundary between these two regions is the river Shkumbin, which passed in the midst of Albanian lands.

Ghegeria or *Ghegnia* is made by some smaller ethnographic regions:

⁹¹ Cabej, E., *Shqiperia midis Lindjes dhe Perendimit*, MCM, Tirane 1994, p. 8

⁹² Braudel, F., *Il. Felipe Donemi'nde Akdeniz ve Akdeniz Dunyasi*, vol. I, Imge Yayınevi, 1993, p. 46, 52

⁹³ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 163

⁹⁴ Zojzi, Rr., "Ndamja Krahinore e Popullit Shqiptar", *Etnografia Shqiptare*, no.1 (1962), p.19

- 1- Malesia (or Malcija e Veriut) the Albanian Alps situated North of Albanian lands,
- 2- Dukagjini or Leknia, which includes the mountainous region between Drin and Mati rivers.
- 3- Ghegnia is the central mountainous region of Albania, from the Shkumbin river in South to the Mati river in the North, from the Black Drin in the East to the coastal plain of Adriatic in the West.
- 4- The coastal line along the Adriatic Sea shapes the lowlands of Northern Albania.

The landforms, the climate, the geographical position away from main routes of travel and migration, all combine to make the mountains and forests of Ghegnia (the general name of the Northern half of Albania from the Shkumbin river to the Alps) one of the most marginal and isolated regions of Europe. Although the length of the highlands of Ghegnia on the map is just 75 miles and its width 55, these dimensions fail to convey the vertical distance.

The mountainous area of Ghegnia lies outside the Mediterranean climate area. The low temperature prohibits the growth of many Mediterranean crops, such as olives, which soon disappear as one leaves the coast. In Kosovo and western Macedonia the climate becomes continental.

Here it is interesting to note that the altitude of terrain determines the forms of social organization. While in the *Albanian Alps* and *Dukagjini* sub-regions (highlands) a tribal organization prevailed, in the *Ghegeria* sub-region Albanians live in smaller families; in lowlands and cities Albanians live in families of various kinship origins.

From the ethnic point of view, the majority of this people living in this region is Albanian. The small non-Albanian minorities were assimilated in the first centuries of Ottoman rule.⁹⁵

The main rivers of Albania rise in the high mountain zones and, passing through narrow gorges and steep beds, emerge on the plains and discharge into the Adriatic Sea. These rivers and their watersheds form the usual boundaries between tribes. The rivers of Albania must be viewed as a natural frontiers *par excellence* and had the obvious advantage of being clear lines of demarcation. These rivers serve more often as tribal boundaries than as routes of travel.

The *Toskeria* or *Toskenia* region is made up by these sub-regions:

1. Toskeria situated in the South-East of today's Albanian state,
2. Myzeqeja is called the plain in the west of Albania, close to the Adriatic Sea,
3. Laberia is the region below Myzeqeja, between Vlora and Gjirokastra,
4. Çameria, the Southern part of Albania, which surpasses the southern boundary of today's Albanian state.

These fields are the chief areas of agricultural production, especially of crops.

Although Albania is considered geographically a mountainous territory, during the Late Middle Ages Albanian crops were exported to Venice and Ragusa (Dubrovnik).⁹⁶ Albania was also the main exporter of crops to other Dalmatian cities.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Coon, C. S., *The Mountains of Giants*, Published by the Museum of American Archeology, Cambridge Mass., 1950, p.22

⁹⁶ Hrabak, B., "Eksportimi i Drithit nga Shqipëria në Shekujt XIV e XV", *Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike*, 12-18 Janar 1968, vol. I, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës-Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhës, Tiranë 1969, p.157. See also remarks of F. Thiriet, *passim*, pp. 600-1. For more information on the Albanian economy during the Late Middle Ages, see Hrabak, B., "Privreda Albanije u XIV i XV vjeku", *Simpoziumi për Skenderbeun*, Prishtinë 1969, pp. 260-74

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.160

These obstacles to communications and the fragmentation of the landscape, which have so often turned back hostile armies, have operated powerfully against the growth of a centralized Albanian state.⁹⁸ In this framework the expression of L. Fevre that "the *plateaux* are of supreme importance in the history of mankind"⁹⁹ takes on special importance. "The olive tree is the symbol of peace; it always reminds the peaceful man".¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the mountainous terrain always offers a certain degree of security, along with a great deal of isolation. "The place with thorns and brambles ... destroy whole personal happiness and economic-cultural activities; it always reminds violence and the fire of war and conquests".¹⁰¹ Albanians, conditioned by long foreign conquests, regarded mountains as a stable territory, where resources of life were insufficient, but where they felt safe.

These ethnographic sub-regions constitute small economic and social formations that were shaped during the 13th-15th centuries.¹⁰² The natural boundaries of these sub-regions follow the lines of mountain chains or river valleys and in general converged with the geographical zones.

In places that share diverse religions, the language is the strongest binding element, even more effective than religion.¹⁰³ Albanian had been the common language of Albanians in the Late Middle Ages.¹⁰⁴ Afterward, two main dialects appeared which along with the other cultural diversities constitute the differentiation between Ghegs and Tosks.

⁹⁸ Emery, J., *Sons of the Eagle*, Macmillan & CO.LTD, London 1948, p.6

⁹⁹ Fevre, L., *A Geographical Introduction to History*, Routledge, London 1996, p.194

¹⁰⁰ Hehn, V., *Zeytin, Üzüm ve Incir, Kültür Tarihinin Eskizleri*, Dost Kitabevi, Ankara 1998, p. 18

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² Zojzi, Rr., "Nenndamjet e Vjetra Krahinore te Popullit Shqiptar", *Konferenca e Pare e Studimeve Albanologjike (15-21 nentor 1962)*, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhës, Tiranë 1965, pp. 554

¹⁰³ Rossi, E., "Saggio sul Dominio Turco e l'Introduzione dell'Islam in Albania", *Rivista d'Albania*, XXI, anno III - fasc.2, dicembre 1942

¹⁰⁴ Cabej, E., *Shqiptaret midis Perëndimit dhe Lindjes*, MÇM, Tiranë 1994, p. 20

The level of contrasts between ethnographic regions and their respective sub-regions depend, firstly, on the topography and, secondly, on the intensity of contacts and level of communication. The differentiation does almost not exist in lowlands; meanwhile, they are evident in the regions where the inter-contacts are weak.¹⁰⁵

It is also altitude that determined the economic activity of Albanians. There is a traditional division of economic occupation of Albanian people: agriculture for lowland peasants, and livestock for the highlanders. In other words, in the lowlands prevailed wine and olive oil, while in highlands butter. Strabon tells that Ligurians* exchanged olive oil and wine for cattle and leather from Illyrians.¹⁰⁶

A representative of the German geo-political school, G. Stadtmuller, says that looking briefly at the history of Albania is enough to identify the powerful role of geographic factor in the destiny of Albanians.¹⁰⁷ Although the French sociolog G. Le Bon says "... le sens de son orientation fixera sa destinée",¹⁰⁸ we don not consider the geographic reality as a *determinant*, but a *conditional* factor in the history of a certain people. Accordingly, V. de la Blache argued, "la civilisation est faite de la lutte contre les obstacles dressés par la nature pour éprouver le génie humain".¹⁰⁹

Here is necessary to remember the fact that geo-political location and geographic reality do not change; they are unchangeable factors, which must be taken into consideration in order to study the history of a community and place. Not only the shifts of world power, but also the geo-political location and landscape may well seal the fate of a country with a considerable measure of finality. Nevertheless, we should

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 552

* Ligurians are an ancient population lived in the Apennine peninsula. The region of Italy where this people have lived, today is called *Liguria*.

¹⁰⁶ Hehn, V., *Zeytin, Üzüm ve Incir, Kültür Tarihinin Eskizleri*, Dost Kitabevi, Ankara 1998, p.52

¹⁰⁷ Stadtmuller, G., "Influksi i Vendit mbi Historin e Shqipnis", *Leka*, no.4 (1935) p.140-41

¹⁰⁸ Le Bon, G., *Lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples*, Libraire Felix Alcan, Paris 1927, p.13

¹⁰⁹ Ancel, J., *Peuples et nations des Balkans*, Collection Armand Colin, Paris 1926, p.5

not forget that “geographer never explain more than a part of history, but its explanation is a good one, men do the rest”.¹¹⁰ The scope for the disposition of history is determined by men.

III. The traditional Attitude of Albanians toward Religion

While the urban population generally is influenced to a large extent by the changing modes of production under the effect of subsequent conquests and contacts, the rural population is more isolated and thus remains more conservative and silent. The mountainous-pastoral area constitutes a religious geography, which remains beyond or very little influenced by the waves of civilizations. Thus, owing to the morphology of terrain, Albanian rural population is isolated and it preserves, either the ancient forms of life and social organizations or ethnically purer national characteristics than Albanians living in the lowlands and cities.

Such an approach leads naturally to “the study of mentalities, considered as that which changes least in historical evolution”.¹¹¹ The notion of *mentality* as a history of “visions of the world”, leads back, in a vital way, to memory and to forms of mental resistance; in a word, the force of inertia of mental structures.¹¹² Individually and collectively, men are in the first place determined by their heritage and by the attitudes they adopt toward them.¹¹³

The belief in God constitutes the substance of religion. Religion is part of human nature, a spiritual possession, which implies also a certain subjective relation to God; in other words, an attitude of life. Religions, though are determined by names and

¹¹⁰ Febre, L., *A Geographical Introduction to History*, Routledge, London 1996, p.13

¹¹¹ Le Goff, J., “The Historian and the Ordinary Man”, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, The University of Chicago Press 1980, p. 229

¹¹² Vovelle, M., *Ideologies and Mentalities*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1990, p. 8

¹¹³ Le Goff, J., *op. cit.*, p. 229

doctrines, gain various color from the soil to soil, as far as they assume many colors on the same soil conditioned by types of landscape. Only the religious inspiration and its universal morality of religion remain uncontaminated.

The primitive forms of religious conduct concerned itself with forces of nature and life. We have a great deal of information, which shows that among Albanians there are forms of *pagan* beliefs even today. The old beliefs in sun, moon, and light, darkness, and death, birds are only some of pre-Christian believes.¹¹⁴ Superstitions, as forms of old beliefs, are also very common: hair belief, evil eye etc.¹¹⁵ These old beliefs are spread and respected both among Christians and Muslim Albanians. Besides, there are scholars who the origin of Albanian superficial obedience to various religions have demanded in the strong fundament of pagan beliefs well-conserved in mountains of Albania.¹¹⁶

The *oath* (be, besa) played also an important part in the life of Albanians. An Albanian as a rule kept the oath when formally sworn with rigid fidelity. A man forsworn was universally condemned. It is interesting to note that the priest and hodja have succeeded in adding respectively the *Cross* and *Allah* to his oath, but an Albanian remaining loyal to old beliefs still says “per gur e per kryq” (by the stone and the cross). A reason suggested for this custom is that the penitent transferred his sin to the stone and so got rid of it.¹¹⁷ Therefore, old beliefs make up the greater part of the emotional life of Albanians. It is no wonder that Albanians say that they are

¹¹⁴ Durham, M.E., *Some Tribal Origins Laws and Customs of the Balkans*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1928, p. 106, 108-115, 127, 131, 225

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 171, 303: this book is particularly useful for a detailed information on pre-Christian believes, oath and superstitions among Albanians. On the pagan elements in Albanian Oriental Culture see, Tirta, M., “Prania e Kultures Arabo-Islame ne Mite, Rite e Besime Popullore Shqiptare”, *Feja, Kultura dhe Tradita Islame nder Shqiptaret*, Simpozjum Nderkombetar i Mbajtur ne Prishtine me 15-17 tetor 1992, Prishtine 1995, pp. 179-183

¹¹⁶ Milaj, J., *Raca Shqiptare - Studim Anthopologjik e Historik*, Botonjes “Ismail Mal’Osmani”, Tirane 1944, p. 73-4

¹¹⁷ Durham, M. E., *Some Tribal Origins Laws ...*, p. 282

not “religious”. These customs are psychological means of reinforcing the habits of behavior by which the mountain people maintain their adjustment to their environment.¹¹⁸

Among Albanians the local law of mountains (*kanun*) has historically won over the law of civilization and religious norms propagated by churchmen. Besides, the religious norms were not respected if they do not agree with the norms of the law of mountains. Societal needs and kinship are stronger than religious norms and rituals. If the hope of advantage tempted the leader of tribe to change his religion, then the rest of the tribe followed his example; his retainers yielded him obedience.¹¹⁹ The power of kinship is one of the reasons why religion among Albanians takes *flexible* forms, being far from religious conservatism and fanaticism.

The *kanun* is respectful either among Muslims or Christians. This is another sign showing that links of blood and kinship were stronger than religions among traditional Albanian society. “The catholics of Albania ...are the only Christians in Europe who have a Canon Law that is not ecclesiastical”.¹²⁰

Every mental and spiritual product of Albanians was destined to be close within the narrow bounds of tribes or mountainous zones. Because the exchange of values and ideas is difficult to reach the highlands. In this context it is wrong to require the idealism and trends for mysticism among Albanians. Lady Montagu describes in this manner the capabilities of Albanians for mysticism: “Albanians are not able to discuss of which religion, Christianity or Islam, is the best for them. They do not reject any, but on Friday go to mosque and on Sunday to church. So, they believe

¹¹⁸ Coon, C. S., *The Mountains of Giants*, Published by the Museum of American Archeology, Cambridge Mass., 1950, p.38

¹¹⁹ Bozbor, N., *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, Boyut Kitapları, İstanbul 1997, p.70

¹²⁰ Hasluck, M., *The Unwritten Law in Albania*, ed. J.H. Hutton, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954, p.15

that after death one prophet – it is not important who will be he - will defend them”.¹²¹

Albanians, before declaring their religious confession, say their national or regional identity. This is a well-known fact, which has attracted the attention of foreign travelers.¹²²

No people in Europe is as tolerant as Albanians:¹²³ “The thousand year clashes between Papacy and Byzantium at no time had taken extremist forms in Albanian lands. During the Middle Ages, religious fanaticism was a phenomenon which appeared very rarely in Albanian lands.”¹²⁴

The Crypto-christianism is a well-spread phenomenon. Especially in mountainous areas, people use at the same time two names, one Christian and one Muslim. They do it not as the proof of their faith, or for a logical reason, but because “they wish to”, and because “they always do”.¹²⁵ Such a situation is illustrated well even in Albanian folklore, where the name of a central figure in a famous legend is *Gjergj* (George) *Elez* (Albanian version of Ilyas) *Alija* (Ali).

It is not an extraordinary event to see Albanian Catholics to take an oath in a mosque on the Kuran, or for Muslims to take one in church on the Gospel.¹²⁶ The sharing of the same religious rituals between Muslims and Christians is another fact showing the Albanian lack of religious fanaticism and of any doctrinal base of religions among Albanians. In Albania even today the marriages between people belonging to different religions is not an anomaly.

¹²¹ Konica, F., *Shqipëria – Kopshti Shkëmbor i Evropës Juglindore*, in: *Vepra*, eds. N. Jorgaqi – Xh. Lloshi, Shtëpia Botuese ‘Naim Frasheri’, Tirane 1993, p.493

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 418-19

¹²³ Baldacci, A., *Studi Speciali Albanesi*, vol. I, Anonima Romana Editoriale, Roma 1932, p. 223

¹²⁴ Sufflay, M., “Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien. Die Orthodoxe Durchbruchzone im Katolischen Damme”, in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, pp. te plotësohet

¹²⁵ Durham, M. E., *Some Tribal Origins Laws ...*, p.290

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p.178

For Albanians accustomed to the freedom of the highlands and wild nature it was easier to embrace heterodox religious orders rather than to respect the norms and canons of universal religions that demanded devotion. The great freedom offered by mystic orders was very attractive to Albanians, whose temperament dislikes discipline. In this framework, the penetration and establishment of *bogomilism*¹²⁷ and *bektashism*¹²⁸ in Albanian lands should be seen.

It is a general opinion of experts that religions represented traditional loyalties rather than living creeds to the Albanians. Accordingly, the diversity of religions among them has contributed enormously to the shaping of different political alliances supported by various foreign powers. Due to this religious performance by Albanians, the foreigners saw in religions not the mystery of the incarnation but the mystery of material life. However, the belief that the usage of religion assured the complete reconciliation of Albanian people with foreign conquerors is not a valid judgement. On the contrary, only the acknowledgement of the material and mental components of Albanian life and its landscape makes possible the understanding of the Albanian micro-universe and its special attitude toward religion. M. Sufflay defines Albania as the Leibnizian monad in which the whole Late Medieval Balkans meets its reflection.

¹²⁷ Shuteriqi, Dh., "Shenime mbi Herezite Mesjetare ne Shqiperi", *Studime Historike* 2 (1980), pp. 199-220

¹²⁸ Birge, J.K., *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, Hartford Seminary Press, USA 1937

Chapter II: Religious Situation in Albanian Lands Before the Ottoman Invasion (14th century)

I. Albanian Society and Religion

Albanians in the 14th century constituted a clearly distinct ethnic community in the Balkan Peninsula, and were identified as such in the annals of Western and Eastern chancelleries. According to Aleks Buda, such a development marked the “triumph” of internal tendencies towards the economic and political unification beyond the feudal separation.¹ Although Albanians did not create a centralist feudal state, they did maintain ethnic unity, because they did have a common ethnic history due to a compact territory,* and a common language.

Religion, language and political community were three components determining the man's identity in the Late Middle Ages.² As these components were also salient aspects of ethnic and cultural differentiation, it is by their definition that the religious, ethnical and cultural character of Balkan Peninsula can be best described. A careful assessment of medieval sources indicates that **religion** is the key element of person's identification during the Middle Ages.

During the Middle Ages church and society were one.³ Medieval Western Christianity stressed the positive image of human beings as a divine being. If there

¹ “Vendi i shqiptareve ne historine evropiane te shekujve VIII-XVIII”, *Shkrime Historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Shtepia Botuese “8 Nentori”, Tirane 1986, p. 62

* In the 14th century territories inhabited by Albanians were called *Arbanon* or *Arbanum* by Albanians, *Raban* or *Arbania* by Slavs, *Albanon* and *Albanum* in Latin version and, in the 15th century, *Arvanit ili* by Ottomans, who borrowed this term from Greeks.

² Frasheri, K., “Trojet e shqiptareve ne shek. XV”, *Studime per epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 8, 12

³ Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, Penguin Books 1970, p. 16

were a human type who had no place in the panorama of medieval man, it was the unbeliever.⁴ Likewise, even in Byzantine/Orthodox society “the individual was a theological animal”.⁵ The order of society was, as in the West, divinely ordained. Orthodox society was divided usually on an ecclesiastical basis. Everybody who comes from the West must be Roman Catholic, a Latin, not Orthodox, and vice versa; no real case is made of their nationalities; their common relation to the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches make them Catholic or Orthodox believers, therefore a non-Albanian nationality.⁶

Time of people was punctuated by church bells. Medieval time was clerical because the clergy was, through its education, the master of time measurement. Only clergy needed to compute time for liturgical ceremonies.⁷ So, there were the points of reference for economic life what made medieval Christian pay keener attention to the feasts and what definitively fixed them as dates was that religious ceremonies which marked them out. They were the dates for paying agricultural dues and holidays for craftsmen and workman.⁸

Even though Latin, Greek and Slavic languages were the official languages of medieval states and high class culture, they had not yet conquered the countryside. As the Albanian language did not arise in the position of an inter-state instrument of communication and therefore of a canonical language of native church, Albanian people did not find themselves in a morally superior position in relation to other Christian Balkan people. Albanian during the Middle Ages remained an instrument

⁴ Le Goff, J., “Introduction”, *Medieval Callings*, ed. J. Le Goff, The University of Chicago Press 1990, p.3

⁵ Nicol, D., *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium*, Cambridge University Press 1979, p.6

⁶ Le Goff, J., *op. cit.*, p. 14; Papadopoulos, Th. H., *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People*, Bibliotheca Graeca Aevi Posterioris, Brussels 1952, p. 129

⁷ Le Goff, J., “The Framework of Time and Space (Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries)”, *Medieval Civilization, 400 – 1500*, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.181

⁸ *ibid.*, p.180-1

of private communication for all strata of Albanian society.⁹ We should always keep in mind the fact that, the linguistic apparatus is a fundamental part of the intellectual and mental equipment of medieval people and is therefore embodied in the social context profoundly colors that equipment.¹⁰

After all, Albanians had culturally much in common with Serbs, Bulgars and Greeks a *formal culture* derived from Byzantium. As a part of the Adriatic basin, Albania was strongly influenced by Catholic/Latin world; the *popular culture* with a significant admixture in monasticism, commercial life, crafts, and popular arts was present as everywhere.

The economic and social conditions of the Middle Ages were expressed in the tripartite schema of medieval society:

1. *bellatores* (nobility),
2. *oratores* (clerics),
3. *laboratores* (workers).¹¹

The very idea of “community/strata” conceived not as an original and primordial reality, but as a historical construction and the result of constant interaction has been challenged by a more complex view of relations. The medieval communities continued to exist with their functions and autonomies based on a persisting contractual system; the authority of the prince was strong, guaranteed by efficient

⁹ A Ragusian document of 1284 is the first historical source mentioning the existence of the “lingua albanesca”: Krekic, B., “Albanians in the Adriatic Cities: Observations on Some Ragusian, Venetian and Dalmatian Sources for the History of the Albanians in the Late Middle Ages”, *The Mediaeval Albanians*, National Hellenic Research Foundation – Institute for Byzantine Research, Athens 1998, p. 211. While the other foreign voyagers of 14th century testified that the language used by Albanians in the first half of the 14th century was quite different from Latin, Greek and Slavic: “Dy Pershkrime te Shek. XIV mbi Shqiperine”, *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (shek. VIII-XV), Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës-Instituti i Historise dhe i Gjuhesise, Tirane 1962, p.110-2

¹⁰ Le Goff, J., “Clerical Culture and Folklore Traditions in Merovingian Civilization”, *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages*, The University of Chicago Press 1980, p. 153

¹¹ Le Goff, J., “Trades and Professions as Represented in Medieval Confessors’ Manuals”, *passim*, p.110

instruments of control and wide-ranging government influence.¹² In the pre-Ottoman Balkan society, power, as the most significant factor in the social stratification of medieval societies, was expressed in the dichotomy rich/poor, which reflected the promotion of wealth as the source of consequence of power.

The phenomena of social differentiation and state-formation in Albanian lands had own regional and inter-regional peculiarities. During the 14th century the patriarchal institutions, like the *clan* and *tribe*, were already in decline or disappearing under pressure from the *process of territorialization*, i.e. the establishment of the small territorial units (*župa*) and the emergence of the territorial state.¹³

This stage in the formation of feudal state gradually into being following the line of least resistance. New territories were conquered and served as starting point for new advances. Feudal formations include spaces larger than the surrounding castles and villages already under the jurisdiction of the cities.

The co-existence of powerful Albanian families alongside an archaic ethnic organization of mountainous tribes was of special significance. The expansion of individual feudal families was impeded with the assistance of mountainous people, which, as a result of the feudalization of Albanian society, recognized the primacy of these powerful families.* However, the formation of feudal principalities in the second half of the 14th century depended, to a great extent, on the disintegration of Dushan's Empire.

¹² Guarini, E. F., "Center and Periphery", *The Journal of Modern History*, issue supplement: The Origins of the State in Italy (1300-1600), vol. 67 (1995), p. 90

¹³ Hehn, P., "Man and the State in Serbia from the 14th to Mid-19th Century: A Study in Centralist and Anti- Centralist Conflict", *Balkan Studies*, vol. 27, no.1 (1986), p. 10

* The famous Albanian family of the Arianiti appeared in the historical annals in the second half of 13th century as the head of a peasant community in a mountainous region, where later (in the 15th century) it will be the dominant power: Shuteriqi, Dh., "Aranitet – Zoterimet", *Studime per epoken e Skenderbeun*, vol. II, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS se Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 85

Principalities in Albanian lands were founded in most cases using the inherited feudal property of powerful Albanian and non-Albanian family-clans. In Western Europe, imposing of the *fief** marked the beginning of the feudal hierarchial system. The Serbian State helped the quick turning of the *pronoia*** in West and Southwestern Balkan lands into an inheriting and increased the relative share of hereditary property, *baština****. These changes resulted from the declining influence of the official Byzantine legislative tradition and the increasing prevalence of the "Serbian custom" to grant a large number of *baština* to feudals in Romania.¹⁴ While political factors played a decisive role in the formation of a certain feudal property, the new owners usually relied on the patrimonial conception, which granted them the right to regard their vassal territory as their property or to seek kinship ties with the former local owners. This, according to medieval belief, ensured a certain legitimacy of power.¹⁵

After the decline of Serbian Empire the relation between centralism-decentralism was established as an antithesis of the big centralized states. In some cases, this trend developed towards *local centralization*. For example, the Balshic family during the second half of the 14th century made considerable efforts to centralize its power pursuing the Dushan model and attempted to expand its territories. The course of political events in Albanian lands from 1371/2 to 1385, H. Matanov has argued, indicates that the periods of centralization and decentralization of the Western Balkan lands follow each other chronologically.¹⁶

* Hereditary landed property characteristic of Western Europe during the Middle Ages.

** Landed property of Byzantine origin, granted in return of military service.

*** Private landed property of Slavic origin in medieval Balkans. During the classical period of Ottoman rule this term can be identified as commonplace in Ottoman cadastral surveys for the timars under the usage of non-Muslims.

¹⁴ Matanov, H., "Problems of the State Structures in the South-West Balkan ...", p.119

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 121

After the collapse of the Serbian Empire, Albanian lands faced a new political reality. This reality constituted a new quality leading to the abolition or decrease in the influence of the norms of a centralized state established in Byzantium during the former periods and accepted in general by the South-Eastern medieval states; it is clearly seen in the field of titulature and diplomatic. This period constitutes a natural stage in the development of European feudal communities as they pass with different rates and characteristic features into developed feudalism.¹⁷ An interesting case is the principality of Vlora-Kanina, whose state structure and high culture contained elements adopted from Orthodox Serbia with the traditions of the communal structure of Valona and a certain Venetian influence in the ruling system.

The reality where the destiny of place and people was in the hands of high class, C. Jirecek characterized as the *time of nobility and rulers*; these are the prominent 'protagonists' of Middle Ages history.¹⁸

A. Nobility

The decline of Byzantine centralist power, from the 11th century onwards, opened the way for the emergence of the native noble caste. The Albanian aristocracy, as a peripheral power remote from Constantinople, was shaped by a difficult process of political emancipation. While the Byzantine, Venetian and Serb legal rules left their complex traces in the Albanian lowlands, the situation was different in the highlands, where the influence of conquerors remained limited.

The big schism of Christianity in 1054 separated Albanians nobles in two camps:

1- noble families oriented toward the Catholic West, and

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 123-4

¹⁸ "Mbi shqiptaret e trevave veriore dhe verilindore ne kontakte me popullsite sllave", *E verteta mbi Kosoven dhe shqiptaret ne Jugosllavi*, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1990, p. 135

2- noble families oriented toward the Orthodox East.

Albanian chieftains and nobles, at the outset of mixed origin, were probably incorporated in the Western and Eastern circles of politics and culture only so far as to gain foreign support in order to consolidate and later to increase their political and economic power.

The most striking feature of the Middle Ages was the parceling out of sovereignty among a host of petty princes or even village lords.¹⁹ At first, the nobles engaged in constant efforts to augment their own power at the expense of the state and dynasty. They were short-sighted people, thoroughly selfish without any notion of head to create and maintain a strong state, since they were occupied only with their family and caste interest. Every region had a chief, who was subject to no one else, but was always ready to protect or enlarge his territorial proprieties.

After the collapse of the Serbian Empire, the Albanian nobles saw themselves no less as heirs to the emperor Stephen Dushan than did the Lazarevic and Brankovic families or other Serbian lords in these troubled times.²⁰ Possessing a vast estates and high official position in the provincial administration and military, these princes were largely responsible for the social and economical development of Western Balkans. Most of the families rose to power and eminence through the army and by using force, and then gradually by consolidating their position. A clear sign that the Albanian nobility was becoming politically emancipated and economically

¹⁹ Bloch, M., *Feudal Society*, vol. I, Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, London 1975, p. XVIII. The process of social and economic differentiation amongst Albanian society had already advanced when Western Albanian lands entered under the reign of the French royal family of Angevines (1272). The French rulers address the Albanian nobility as: "comites et barones (et feudarii) regni Albanie": Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p. 222-3. By saying that we can not claim that the process of social and political differentiation among Albanian society was already completed until the beginning of 14th century: *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (VIII-XV centuries), p. 159

²⁰ Rozman, A. K., "Sources Concerning the Conflict Between Balsha and Venice (1396-1421)", *The Mediaeval Albanians*, National Hellenic Research Foundation -- Institute for Byzantine Research, Athens 1998, p. 261

strengthened, was the conflict with Venice and the giving of trade privileges to Ragusa in the second half of the 14th century.²¹ This nucleus of families gradually expanded their territories creating independent mini-states and transforming themselves into local dynasties. From then on, Albanian feudal society was similar in its legal structure to Western Europe. Since the collapse of Dushan's Empire landed property was perceived as "noble inheritance". The territorial extension and the increasing strength of native nobility was expressed in the usage "terra de' Ducagini" or "terra de' Zacharia" (territory under the full possession of family).²² Landed property became the main source of the family's honor and power in Albania, as in Bosnia and other mountainous Balkan areas, where because only small percentage of the soil was arable, even under the best conditions, land became of particularly high value.²³

Albanian nobility used extensively a titulature* of Byzantine, Latin and Slavic origins accompanied by the golden seal and a throne embroidered with the imperial emblems in pearls. Albanian nobility was totally integrated in the regional dynastic marriages.²⁴ Local principalities gradually took on the character of a feudal dynasty using Greek, Latin and Slavic as the official languages of correspondence in their

²¹ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (VIII-XV centuries), p. 180-2, 184-8

²² Sirdani, M., "Pulti e Dukagjini", *Hylli i Drites*, no. 4 (1934), p.189

²³ Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia Under the Influence of Turkish Rule*, Duke University Press 1990, p. 18

* Due to long Byzantine rule native aristocracy used titles of Byzantine titulature like *despot*, (Balsha and Gjin Bue Shpata), *sevastocrator* (Gjin Zenebishi) and *comes*. During the Norman and Angevine reigns, Albanian nobles used titles of Latin origin, like *barones*, *nobiles* and *feudatarii*. Later, under the influence of Serbian court they used titles such as *zhupan* and *vojvoda*: Qirkoviq, S., "Pasqyre e marredhenieve Serbo-Shqiptare prej ardhjes se sllaveve deri ne fund te shek. XV", *Perparimi*, no.1 (1956), p. 21

²⁴ Musacchio, G., "Breve memoria de li discendenti de nostra casa Musachi", in: Hopf, Ch., *Chroniques greco-romanes, inedites ou peu connues*, Paris 1873, pp. 270-340: these marriages were made purely for the purpose of political-military alliances or in order to protect the balance of power in the region. In other words, they were entirely feudal/aristocratic in character, and were one of the most important signs showing the level of feudalization of Albanian nobility and its integration in the inter-regional feudal life.

courts.²⁵ These languages enjoyed the *prestige* attendant upon Albanian; they were used almost exclusively by governmental, ecclesiastical institutions and in commercial intercourse.

Albanian aristocracy had fallen under the influence of Italian humanism. In the first sources written by Albanians, as in the Latin tradition, the family roots of Albanian nobility needed to be connected to famous classical Hellenic/Greek or Roman families or distinguished historical personalities.²⁶ For example, Karl Thopia was very proud of his family links with the French imperial family (*domo Franciae*).^{27*}

In Christianity there were always two main forces, the spiritual and the temporal.²⁸ The emperor was the God-appointed ruler and protector of the Christian world, while powerless secular rulers completed their feeble resources with the power of the churches and saints. All feudal authorities had relics in their crowns and around their necks. In their relic collections lay the safety of the state; thereby compensating for their powerlessness before man and nature.²⁹

Even in the Late Byzantine period the Orthodox Church apparatus was closely intertwined with the political life in the peninsula. As Byzantium declined, the Bulgarians (Ohrid) and Serbs (Pec) created states and acquired their own patriarchates. Actually in the Balkans there existed three political entities and Orthodox Patriarchates, which were national-political churches.³⁰ The relationship

²⁵ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p. 234-5

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 235; Buda, A., "Pse flamuri yne e ka shqiponjen me dy krere", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. III, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 72

²⁷ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (VIII-XV centuries), p. 183

* I think that it would be enough to mention the names of the famous Albanian families *Dukagjini* and *Arianiti-Komneni* in order to show the powerful links between Albanian aristocracy and Western/Eastern nobility.

²⁸ Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, The University of Chicago Press 1988, p. 2

²⁹ Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church...*, p. 30-1

³⁰ Vryonis, S. Jr., "Religious Changes and Patterns in the Balkans, 14th –16th Centuries", *Aspects of the Balkans Continuity and Change* (Contribution to the International Balkan Conference held at UCLA, October 23-28, 1969), eds. H. Birnbaum - Sp. Vryonis, Jr., Mouton 1972, p. 153

between relevant states and churches were the same as the relationship between state and church in Byzantium. The Byzantine emperor in the Eastern Christendom held total political and juridical power, and he was considered the leader of the spiritual life of the empire. The high ecclesiastical authorities were merely a part of the state bureaucracy.³¹ In this way, the Orthodox churches in the Balkans in the pre-Ottoman period were gradually integrated into the relevant states, becoming indivisibly united to them.

Albanian landlords managing their principalities independently often changed the official religion not because they were going consciously to modify their belief, but because doing that they awaited help from West in order to strength their fragile political positions. But if the international political situation changed, Albanians lords could easily revise their religious position in accordance with pragmatic interests. In the first half of the 14th century they asked the Pope for Western aid against the Serbian Empire.³² Such a request should not be interpreted as indicating that the Albanians were completely devoted themselves to Catholic faith; rather, they were against the centralist authority of the Serbian Empire, whom they consider a serious obstacle to political emancipation.

The laity did not feel themselves injured by the intellectual superiority of the clergy. Mostly, the lay and clergy acted together in substantial harmony, because they needed each other. The lay authority needed divine support to legitimize its power in the eyes of the common people. Nonetheless, the substantial harmony between lay and religious men had limits, especially in the issues of the sharing authorities and

³¹ Hadrovics, L., *Le peuple serbe et son eglise sous la domination turque*, Les presses universitaires de France 1947, p. 37-8; Grabianski, A., "Due chiese, due destini. Saggio di sintesi della storia delle Chiese Ortodossa e Cattolica Romana nei Balkani Occidentali", *L'Europa Orientale*, no. 5-6, Roma 1939, pp. 245-68

³² Xhufi, P., "Heretike shqiptare ne mbreterine mesjetare serbe", *E verteta mbi Kosoven dhe shqiptaret ne Jugosllavi*, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1990, p. 106-7

checking powers. The Papal excommunication deprived nobles of the wordly means of salvation and sending them off to a place where sacrality and the church were ineffective.³³

“...şöyle bilersiz ki, sizden Rim Papa’ya şikâyet edüb sizi kâfir dîninden çıkartmağa sebep olurum deyüb ...”³⁴

This was an extreme case of spatial and religious marginalization.

In the 14th century, the hinterland of Albanian lands was separated between two Orthodox churches:

1. The Orthodox Church of Ohrid, founded by Bulgarian kings, and
2. The Orthodox Church of Peç established by Stephen Dushan.

While the Albanian coastlands, especially after 1204 (the interregnum in Byzantine Empire) Orthodoxy entered in the Venetian rule and remained strongly influenced by the Papacy. Conversely, the authority of native lay power was emancipated politically and economically in hard circumstances from long foreign rules. Although for common people the identification of an outer spiritual and religious ruler was not so indispensable, the native seigneur was fighting to gain political strength in order to acquire the position of God-crowned ruler.

Admittedly, we should remember that there was the religious authority that acknowledged the power of native seigneurs over local churches and common people as part of the divine order of things. In the documents concerning pre-Ottoman Albania, the high provincial religious authority, like an Orthodox metropolitan or a Catholic archbishop, always held second place after the king or the local seigneurs.³⁵

³³ Le Goff, J., “Introduction”, p. 24

³⁴ Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han (Izladi ve Varna Savaşları (1443-1444) Üzerinde Anonim Gazavatname), yayına hazırlayan H. İnalcık - M. Oğuz, TTK 1989, p. 40

³⁵ *Burime te zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (shek. VIII-XV), p.108, 144

The Albanian nobility made an amphibious life; it was religiously and culturally the most unstable stratum of Albanian society. It was a protagonist of a double religious and cultural emancipation. Its position changed in accordance with the political and military situation in Albania. Their "faith" followed the vicissitudes of political interests. Albanian local lords tried to adapt themselves to temporary international situation. Such spiritual/religious oscillations, which in fact were of political character after all, prevented the Catholic-Orthodox clashes from taking a violent form.

One of the first acts of the Balšić brothers after detachment from the rule of king Urosh, was converting to Catholicism and institutionalizing a direct communication with the Pope and the entire Catholic world.³⁶ The Balšićs converted to Catholicism (1369), because the majority of population living in their territories was Catholic. Suddenly, they demanded the Pope to send his representatives to Catholic bishoprics in Albania.

In the second half of the 14th century the most important part of the Albanian aristocracy were favorable toward Catholicism. The same phenomenon can be seen in Bosnia.³⁷ Every political step found its reflection in the religious field. But how much the Albanian lords were followed in their political maneuvers by common people? We have to argue that common people are conservative and only under very strong oppression and in a long run they could change religion. On the contrary, nobility was very elastic. To differentiate themselves from the Serbian dynasty the Balšićs left Orthodoxy in favor of Catholicism. What the Balšić brothers had done

³⁶ Lenormant, F., *Turcs et Monténégriens*, Didier & Ce, Libraires – Éditeurs, Paris 1866, p.11: in the pages 279-80 of this book is found the letter of Pope Urban V addressed to Balsha brothers due to their conversion to Catholicism. In this letter the Pope recommends the Balshas to protect the native Catholic people of the region under their rule.

³⁷ King Stjepan Kotromanic, even though was himself an Orthodox, endorsed the spread of Catholicism by Franciscans. Tvrtko I converted from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, while Stjepan Tomas accepted the Catholic faith in 1444: Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia ...*, p. 5-6

was a pragmatic step in order to adapt their belief to that of the majority of native population.

Secondly, the positions of the Orthodox Church in Kosovo was seriously damaged under the reign of Balšić. Duric Balšić I in 1375 and his nephew Duric Balsic II in 1385 were the lay authorities who presided the Orthodox congregations in Prizren.³⁸

The strong relationship between lay and religious authorities tells the fact that in the pre-Ottoman period we see members of noble families, who had dedicated themselves to religious life.³⁹ The members of native Albanian nobility, who dedicated themselves to religious life and attained to penetrate in the high ranks of clerical hierarchy in Albania, have a special mission. Firstly, their election was a direct consequence of growing political power of Albanian noble families, so in return they might be ready to justify the political ambitions of their families, conducting some action unacceptable with their status. Secondly, sometimes they carried the thoughts of lay authority to the religious doctrine in order to be more understandable for believers.⁴⁰ One of the brothers of Skanderbeg, Reposh, was delivered monk and, after his death, was buried in a monastery of Athonite Mountain.

After the collapse of Stephen Dushan's empire and rise of Albanian principalities, we observe some tentatives to build religious buildings in order to create a Christian church, which would reflect the national characteristics of Albanians.⁴¹ It must be an

³⁸ Bogdani, P., "Kosova ne shtetin feudal shqiptar te Balshajve", p. 114

³⁹ Dominic Thopia was enrolled in the Dominican Order of friars in 1360: Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p. 217-9. Pjeter Zacharia, a member of the noble family of Zacharia was elected bishop of Sapa (Sabatensis) and Dagna (Dagnensis) in 1390. He was probably the mediator in the establishment of relations between the Pope and the Zacharia family. The Hermolaj family gave six bishops to the Sapa bishopric: Gurakuqi, G., *Dieçezi i Sapes (1291-1941)*, Shtypshkonja "Zonja e Paperlyeme", Shkoder 1943, p. 21, 38

⁴⁰ Xhufi, P., "Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate mesjetes", p. 7

⁴¹ Drançolli, J., "Popullsia shqiptare e Kosoves dhe trojeve te tjera etnike ne ish-Jugosllavi", *Gjurmime Albanologjike* (Seria e Shkencave Historike), no. 22 (1992), p.

enterprise similar to the one that Serbs and Bulgarians had done centuries before. Such an initiative testifies to the level of political and economic emancipation of the Albanian aristocracy. The most distinguished step was undertaken by Karl Thopia. He rebuilt the Orthodox monastery of Saint John Vladimir* near Elbasan between 1381-1383.⁴² John Vladimir is the only lay ruler of non-Albanian origin reigning in Albanian lands, who is canonized by the Albanian Christian Church in pre-Ottoman times.⁴³ Such an act is well-known particularly among Serbs, but Serbs always sanctified own historical personages of their history.⁴⁴ Such examples reflected not only the historical consciousness of the Balkan people, but also the guidelines of moral behavior. The traditional Balkan societies determined the relationship with God throughout the death and religious devotion. Such a religious and philosophical idea in the Balkans meant that without death there is no resurrection and that without suffering and destruction there cannot be freedom, personal or national.⁴⁵ These kinds of cults absorbed by national churches served as an institution that played a

* Saint Gjon Vladimir (died 1016) has been a Serbian prince of Duklja (a medieval region, which involved Shkodra region and Montenegro with city of Shkodra as a permanent center). In 1215, his bones were taken from despot of Epirus, Michail Comnen, from a church near Shkodra and brought them to Durrës. Later they were buried again in a place near the Shkumbin River. In the 14th – 15th centuries this figure was canonized and took an important place in the religious life of Albanians, Slavs and Greeks. Until fifty years ago the church near Shkodra was visited by Catholic, Orthodox people and Muslims (they are native population islamized during the Ottoman period). For details on the events how this political figure was converted to a saint, see Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p. 196-8

⁴² Popa, Th., “Materialet epigrafike kishtare te vendit si burime per historine e kultures se popullit tone”, *Konferenca e Pare e Studimeve Albanologjike (15-21 nendor 1962)*, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës – Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhës, Tiranë 1965, p. 568: Karl Thopia, according to the inscription founded in this monastery, had enlarged this building compared to its state before the earthquake. For a translation in Albanian of this interesting inscription written in three major languages of that time (medieval Latin, Byzantine Greek and medieval Slavic) see the critical edition, Popa, Th., *Mbishkrime te kishave ne Shqiperi*, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqiperise – Instituti i Historisë, Tiranë 1998, p. 50-52

⁴³ Xhufi, P., “Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate mesjetes”, p.10

⁴⁴ The Serbian prince Lazar Hrebljanovic, who was murdered in the battle of Kosovo in 1389, one or two years later, was sanctified by high ranks of Serbian Orthodox Church and started an organized work to spread his cult. His bones were transported from Priština to the Monastery of Ravahica built by Lazar himself: Malltezi, L., *Beteja e Fushe-Kosoves dhe Shqiptaret, 1389*, Eurorilindja, Tiranë 1998, p.19

⁴⁵ Samardžić, R., “Some Thoughts about the Historical Destiny of Serbs”, *Scholar, Patriot, Mentor: Historical Essays in Honour of Dimitrije Djordjević*, eds. R.B. Spence – L. L. Nelson, East European Monographs, Boulder, New York 1992, p. 150

crucial role in unifying territories inhabited by people with a common language and ethnic past.

To conclude we can say that the religious attitude of the Albanian aristocracy was conditioned by two important factors:

- 1- The *geographic* location of principalities. It means that if these political formations were near Adriatic Sea and in the periphery of Eastern empires, than these principalities were probably Catholic and vice versa.⁴⁶
- 2- The religious attitude of an Albanian principality varied according to the *international political affairs*. Albanian nobility embraced the religion of their lord or of that power which could threat on its political existence. From this point of view, the Albanian nobility was ready to cooperate and make alliances with those political and religious powers, which allowed them more and more space of liberty and self-administration.

The 14th century was a period of political emancipation for the native aristocracy; religion was only a tool used successfully by Albanian landlords to fulfill their political ambitions. Albanian noble families preferred the alliance with the Catholic world when the centralist authority of Byzantine and Slavic empires was oppressive. But they did not hesitate to enter in every kind of affairs with their former masters (Orthodox Serbs), who promise more *feudal* liberty than the Ottomans.

Such a reality reveals the position of lay authority compared to clergy and what kind of relationship exists between them when political reasons necessitated. Particular upper-class feudal groups decided about the behavior and destiny of the churches and the rest of population, being guided by their own interest. We should always bear in

⁴⁶ The *Gropa* family, in the 13th century, was Catholic, while in the 14th century it converted to Orthodoxy. The reason must be the geographical position of its growing estates and political influence in the east of Albanian lands, where the cooperation with the Orthodox Church of Ohri was indispensable.

mind that the 14th century was a period of violent social change as well as intellectual ferment.⁴⁷ The feudal seigneur, to whom the peasant belonged or the tribe was bound up, is another important factor deciding the medieval identity of common people.⁴⁸ The rule and dominion of a class whose formal culture differed from the formal culture of the ruled was of great importance in an age of mutually exclusive, monolithic religio-political structures.⁴⁹

B. Peasantry and Tribes

The peasant was primarily a worker always threatened by poor yields and agriculture's fragility before the threats of nature. In that time of nobility, the peasant seldom appears in texts and documents.

The *village* population in pre-Ottoman Albania was not obviously bound by kinship, i.e. blood connections. It has been inhabited by people of different tribal origin. So, the peasant's fiscal and social life was strictly depended on his lord and the rural community. The demographic situation of the rural population changed radically moving up from lowlands to highlands. In mountainous villages, called *katun*, the kinship ties of people were more visible.

The earliest form of rent in Albanian lands, like in the other regions of the Balkan Peninsula, was a rent paid in the form of manorial labor, the *corvée*. The medieval peasant, in general, owed labor service to lord, but he was also burdened by dues in coin and by other feudal obligations. *Paroikos** must achieve a *corvée* service with

⁴⁷ Setton, K. M., *The Papacy and The Levant (1204-1571)*, vol. I (13th –14th centuries), The American Philosophical Society, 1976, p. 173

⁴⁸ Bertrandon de la Broquiere, *Denizasıırı Seyahatı*, Eren, Istanbul 2000, p. 310

⁴⁹ Vryonis, S. Jr., "The Greeks under Turkish Rule", *Byzantina kai Metabyzantina* (Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks and Ottomans), vol. II, Undena Publications, Malibu CA, 1981, p. 46

* The Greek name for peasant in the Byzantine Empire.

own oxen, which took often two or three days a week. This form of rent* had been kept in force until the fall of the Balkans into the hands of the Ottomans.⁵⁰ Interdiction in the law code of Stephen Dushan against participation in or the organization of peasant assemblies as a crime punishable by branding on the face or ear lopping probably, according to Jirecek, refers more to assemblies of commoners meeting to conspire against the nobility.⁵¹

Albanians, conditioned by long occupations, regarded mountains as a stable territory, where resources of life were insufficient, but where they felt safe. "The growing physical isolation of a people who were scattered enough ... could not have remained without consequence for the cultural and moral development of any person".⁵² Although each tribe had its territory, it was not land that bound the members of a tribe but the link of blood. Kinship instinct tended to be far stronger than law.⁵³ The forms of Albanian tribal conservatism are more evident in the geographically closed mountainous areas.

The smallest nucleus unit of Albanian society is *family*.⁵⁴ The term "land", as property of a family, might be define as all territories which must be divided up when the brothers separate. These remained undivided, common property for the common use of the brothers.⁵⁵ Separation ruins a family. In the course of time *families* split up and a number of new *brotherhoods* (*vellazeri*) were formed. The

** For more on the corvée (*angharia*) and the taxation of Albanian rural population under the Venetian rule in the second half of the 14th – the beginning of the 15th century see, G. Valentini, "Appunti sul Regime degli Stabilimenti Veneti in Albania nel Secolo XIV e XV", *Studi Veneziani*, vol. VIII (1966), pp. 257-60

⁵⁰ Filipovic, N., "A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkan under the Ottoman Rule", *Ottoman Rule in the Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak - Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, p. 330.

⁵¹ Hehn, P., "Man and the State in Serbia ...", p. 7

⁵² Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia ...*, p.25

⁵³ Durham, M.E., *Some Tribal Origins Laws and Customs of the Balkans*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1928, p.15

⁵⁴ Zojzi, Rr., "Fisi si njesi politike : fisi shtet", *Hylli i Drites*, no.5 (1944), p.60

⁵⁵ Hasluck, M., *The Unwritten Law in Albania*, ed. J.H. Hutton, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954, p.54

agglomeration of brotherhoods then constituted a *kin* (gjini). Several kins united to form a *tribe* (fis).⁵⁶

The head of a family was not the absolute owner of land, but the chief member of his family. A man could be an elder not only in the literal sense, but also as a legal personage. In each family there was a *patriarchal* system of government, with one-man master of the house and everybody else subordinate to him.

The governing bodies in tribal areas were the General Assemblies and Partial Assemblies. In non-tribal areas were regional or village assemblies.⁵⁷ The tribe is a group of persons related by blood who unite voluntarily for mutual aid and protection. So necessary is some sort of tribal discipline that in tribe-law the tribe is the unit and the individual almost nothing. Each member of a household or tribe was encouraged to regard everything in the tribe and everything said and did in it as his own. The close relationship between individual and community was also a curb to internal dictatorship. The weakness of centralist power of conqueror states marked a good opportunity for Albanians to abandon their kin, so they could live a freer life with less moral burdens and strong restrictions. The elders voiced, but did not dictate, popular sentiment.⁵⁸ Although in its primitive way it was really a government of the people, by the people, for the people,⁵⁹ the geographic isolation bred a fierce individualism in each community-tribe. Tribal officials, particularly the elders (house-lord) had more authority to act for their community than had the temporary headmen in non-tribal district.⁶⁰ These were all of one blood. Such an organization on the bases of blood left the individual in the second place.

⁵⁶ Zojzi, Rr., *op. cit.*, pp. 89; Hasluck, M., *The Unwritten Law in Albania*, p.131

⁵⁷ Hasluck, M., *op. cit.*, p.154-56

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.11

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.165

In this context, the *tribe* in the highlands and *family* in the lowlands constitute a social unity, which, to a great extent, replaces the concept and vacuum of state formation for Albanians.⁶¹

Society in Albanian soil is patrilineal, because 'a man has blood, and a woman kin'.⁶² In other words, a man has a pedigree, and a woman comes from everywhere and has no pedigree. Woman cannot inherit land. A married daughter has no right to anything whatever of her father's property; she no longer belongs to his "house".⁶³ The marriage was arranged by the head of the house.⁶⁴ The child is the descendant of his father. Since the Unwritten Law (qanun) forbade her to have any dealing with the outside world until she was old, she stayed at home to work while her husband realized contacts with the outer world. Women in most lands cling more tightly to old beliefs and practices than do the men. They have had less opportunity for contact with the world outside their house and with new ideas.⁶⁵ So, women, as usual in the highland Balkan regions, constitute a conservative force. Women, during medieval time, were defined as "wives, widows, or maids". While she was enforced to be faithful to her husband and living under his authority, she found only limited compensations in love for her children. Woman was the victim of constraints that kinship and family had imposed upon the emergence of women as individuals gifted with a juridical, moral and economic personality of their own. In documents of the Middle Ages, which were products of a male-dominated society, women's voices are seldom heard, and the few that come through are usually limited to the upper reaches

⁶¹ Konica, F., *Shqiperia – kopshti shkëmbor i Evropës Juglindore*, in: *Vepra*, eds. N. Jorgaqi – Xh. Lloshi, Shtëpia Botuese 'Naim Frasheri', Tirane 1993, p.436

⁶² Hasluck, M., *The Unwritten Law in Albania*, p.25

⁶³ Durham, M.E., *Some Tribal Origins Laws ...*, p.74

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.148

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.164

of the uppermost social levels. We have to emphasize that women were an object of fundamental importance in marriage alliances among the feudal aristocracy.

The *fis* is a mobile unit, never completely static. "Politics Albanians understood instinctively. Besides, where there is no law, all human relationships are understood in terms of the struggle for power, which underlies them and which is the stuff of politics. The life of clans was indeed a great school of *realpolitik*".⁶⁶

The kinship-tribal organization in the highlands of Albania, Montenegro and Herzegovina is conserved and elaborated on the principles of high morality and profound ethnic traditions. This special form of Balkan patriarcalism was a developed or perhaps perfect stage of patriarchal society".⁶⁷

While in the villages in the lowlands there are feudal relations, in the highlands there is a set of traditional unwritten rules and customs (later under the pressure of Ottoman terminology it was called *kanun*), particularly influenced by the Byzantine and Serbian codes, which arranged the life of mountaineers. It is interesting to note that the number of *kanuns* in use converges with the number of mountainous-ethnographic zones in Albanian lands. These *kanuns* were modified in different zones, but were in force through all the North Albanian Mountains for both Moslem and Christians.

Consciousness of a common past, after all, is a powerful supplement to other ways of defining who "we" are. An oral tradition, sometimes almost undifferentiated from the practical wisdom embodied in language itself, is all people need in a stable social universe; in-group boundaries are self-evident. Group solidarity is always maintained, at least partly, by exporting psychic frictions across the frontiers, projecting animosities onto foes in order to enhance collective cohesion within the

⁶⁶ Emery, J., *Sons of the Eagle*, Macmillan & CO.LTD, London 1948, p.11

⁶⁷ Cvijic, J., *La péninsule balkanique, géographie humaine*, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris 1918, p.30

group itself.⁶⁸ Therefore, the landscape, which has made almost impossible the opportunity for state formation, forced Albanians to take a hostile attitude toward the conquerors.⁶⁹ We should always remember that the conflicts do not emerge from differences, but from pretensions of superiority.⁷⁰

In this time when land was the most valuable element of life, from which almost the whole society made its livelihood, the chief chronological point of reference was a rural one.⁷¹ In this context, the religion of common people (peasant or tribe) labeled “popular” but that the church qualified as “superstitions” was primarily common people’s piety. This meant that the peasant, numerically in the majority in a society anchored to the land, was marginal in respect to the dominant culture and ideology.⁷²

Albanians were “ne pure latini, neque pure scismatici” (Albanians are not entirely Catholics, nor entirely Orthodox),⁷³ says an anonymous Western traveler, who passed through Albanian lands in 1308, but there is another Western traveler who, in 1332, considered Albanians so Catholics, as Orthodoxies.⁷⁴

“Le contraste entre une Albanie de culture latine et une Albanie de culture mixte, contrastant elle-même avec une Albanie netement hellénophone au Sud, est du reste l’image même de la situation religieuse du pays”.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ McNeill, W., “Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, issue 1, Supplement to vol. 91 (Feb., 1986), pp. 4,7

⁶⁹ The key image is the design of houses according to the geographic conditions and their defense. For that reason, the comfort of *kulla* (the house of mountaineer) remains secondary. In general, it is fortified and is built at an altitude that makes it difficult for enemies to reach: Çabej, E., *Shqiptaret midis Perendimit dhe Lindjes*, MCM, Tirane 1994, p. 25

⁷⁰ Tekeli, I., “Tarihyazıcılığı ve Öteki Kavramı Üzerine Düşünceler”, *Tarih Eğitimi ve Tarihçe “Öteki” Sorunu*, 2. Uluslararası Tarih Kongresi, 8-10 Haziran 1995, İstanbul, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998, p. 5

⁷¹ Le Goff, J., “The Framework of Time and Space ...”, p.177

⁷² idem., “Introduction”, p. 14

⁷³ Gorka, O., “Anonymi Descriptio Europae Orientalis”, *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (shek. VIII-XV), Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës-Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Tirane 1962, p.111

⁷⁴ Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime de l’Albanie au Moyen Age*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki 1981, p. 436-7; for more details on the chronicles and rapports of Westerners on the religious situations in Albania and the conflict between Serbian Orthodoxy and Papal Catholicism, see Xhufi, P., “Heretike Shqiptare ne Mbreterine Mesjetare Serbe”, *E verteta mbi Kosoven dhe shqiptaret ne Jugosllavi*, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1990, p.100

⁷⁵ Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime de l’Albanie ...*, p. 437

Although in the Late Middle Ages the tensions between Catholicism (the Vatican) and Orthodoxy (Constantinople) apparently increased, among the Albanians it never took radical forms. It is not possible to talk in medieval Albania about religious fanaticism and intolerance. In contrast, there are a lot of facts, which testify to the religious symbioses of two churches.⁷⁶

Religion in Albanian lands drew its strength from folk songs and epic narration rather than from church canons and books. In a traditional society, such as Albanian society, the former was more deeply rooted in the people's heart than the latter. The performance of religious duties was matters of habit, tradition social custom or superstition. Even in the 15th century the religious and cultural life of Albanians was nothing more than a local/ regional heritage and continuity of the Middle Ages, where a clear demarcation line existed between "high" culture/*canonical* religion of native aristocracy and a "low" culture/*popular* religion of common people.⁷⁷ Religious belief or creed in the spirit of commoners never caused tension. It was more or less a kind of acceptance of a set of traditions. The absence of a speculative theology and of a rational explication of religious dogmas is another consequence in the spiritual life of Albanians like in the other Christian peoples of the region. If Albanians did not developed an original theological literature this happened because they did not need it; on the contrary, since the end of the 15th century Albanians wrote a hagiographic literature, which filled their epic needs better describing the life of famous historical personalities. The level of traditionalism in the religious life of a given people depended on the distance of peripheral territories from the world

⁷⁶ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p.192

⁷⁷ Hadrovics, L., *Le peuple serbe et son église sous la domination turque*, p. 18

centers of the respective religions.* On the other hand, the strength of centralized authority of medieval empires, to which was enclosed the churches power, and the geographic landscape which ensures the level of contacts and communications, are only some of the factors, which determined the level of cultural and religious traditionalism in a medieval society.

Nevertheless, in the 14th century classic patriarchal institutions like tribe and their urban centers (katuns) were seriously rescued from the pressure of territorialization, urbanization and the formation of the territorial feudal principalities.

C. Cities and City-Dwellers

The Medieval City was an important urban and economic center for the surrounding territory, but strictly depended on the economic resources of the hinterland.

Due to the geographical features of the hinterland we do not see such big cities as in the Adriatic coastland, except for some urban centers enjoying special geopolitical and commercial importance, like Prizren. Durres (Drač in Serbian, Dıraç in Turkish), thanks to its location on the axe of the Rome – Constantinople road, was a healthy and important urban centre of the Adriatic basin; having a population of 25.000 inhabitants, it was one of the biggest cities of Middle Age.⁷⁸

A medieval city was made up of two main parts: 1. civitas (part of city within the walls) 2. districtus (parts outside the walls). Its heart was the marketplace. The city changed medieval man. It restricted his family environment, but it enlarged the network of communities in which he participated. The city-dweller learned

* We cannot claim that the attitude toward religion of an orthodox individual living in Constantinople and of an Albanian living in the periphery of the influence of Orthodox Patriarchate would be the same. The same thing could be said of an Italian and an Albanian Catholic believer. Potentially, religious conscious could not, however, be the same.

⁷⁸ *History of Albania*, vol. I, eds. S. Islami – K. Frasheri, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës – Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tiranë 1959, p. 217

dependence upon the local market and international trade. The new world of trade had no place for the sacred world of chieftains or seigneurs.

The urban population of the cities was a complex of small cells, of family nuclei of limited numbers. The city-dwellers lived primarily among neighbors and friends. The people of cities had a number of meeting places, among which the parish church was a strong pole of attraction.

The city-dweller benefited from a wide range of opportunities for integration offered by the city. For example, he enjoyed full right of being the citizen of city, in accordance with the city's statutes. Before the Ottoman invasion, at the beginning of the 15th century, almost all whole Albanian cities of the coastland administratively were communes (municipalities)* and possessed their own statutes.⁷⁹ The city-dwellers considered themselves and demanded from foreigner rulers to be recognized as *free citizens*.⁸⁰ In Albanian cities slavery and servitude did not exist.⁸¹ City-dwellers also wanted to regain the liberty of emigration and immigration enjoyed before the Venetian rule.⁸² Venice officially recognized such rights. These conditions were very attractive also to Albanians living in hinterland regions. Because of this, the littoral Albanian cities were transformed into refuges for all people fleeing from Ottoman attacks or regions already under the Ottoman rule.⁸³

* Communes (or municipio) are forms of city organization in medieval West.

⁷⁹ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (VIII-XV centuries), p. 176; The statutes of cities played the same role as the qanun had among highlander Albanians: E. Rossi, "Saggio sul Dominio Turco e l'Introduzione dell'Islam in Albania", *Rivista d'Albania*, XXI, anno III - fasc., dicembre 1942, p. 210. Indeed, Stephen Dushan's law-book (zakonik) is largely based on the statutes of Budva and other Adriatic coast-towns: Miller, W., "The Medieval Serbian Empire", *Essays on the Latin Orient*, Cambridge at the University Press 1921, p. 451-2

⁸⁰ G. Valentini, "Appunti sul Regime degli Stabilimenti Veneti in Albania nel Secolo XIV e XV", *Studi Veneziani*, vol. VIII (1966), p. 235

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 236

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 235

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 236

The foreign rules had always recognized the immunities, liberties of emigration, exemptions from taxation and other privileges of Albanian cities. Moreover, they recognized the status and privileges of several cities or the protection and privileges of an Albanian noble in his territories.⁸⁴ The littoral cities because of their strategic, commercial importance and prosperity, during the second half of the 14th century and the 15th centuries, constituted a potential subject for hostility between Venice and local seigneurs,⁸⁵ including even Skanderbeg in the middle of the 15th century. But, after the establishment of Venetian rule in the 90's of the 14th century, the Venetian documents witness a kind of shared power between the Venetian and communal authorities or native seigneurs.⁸⁶ Almost all the Venetian conquests of Albanian cities have the character of agreements.⁸⁷

In the midst of 14th century Albania was totally integrated in the economic orbit of Adriatic world, commanded by two strong commercial city-states: Venice and Ragusa.⁸⁸ The economic prosperity of Albanian cities in the second half of the 14th century, especially of those located along the Adriatic coastland, transformed these cities into centers of local intelligence with a considerable number of teachers, clergy, architects, musicians, and painters. Some of them were known too in different

⁸⁴ *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (VIII-XV centuries), p. 108-9

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-71. For more details on the attitude of Venice towards the Albanian littoral on the eve and during the Ottoman invasion, see G. Valentini, "Appunti sul Regime ...", p. 224-6

⁸⁶ G. Valentini, "Appunti sul Regime ...", p. 224-6

⁸⁷ Thiriet, F., "Disa Mendime rreth Politikes se Venedikut ndaj Skenderbeut", *Konferenca e Dyte e Studimeve Albanologjike*, 12-18 janar 1968, vol. I, Univ. Shteteror i Tiranes - Instituti i Historise dhe i Gjuhesise, Tirane 1969, p. 60: Albanian seigniors managed to protect an important part of their territorial properties, and some special rights in the coast cities, actually under the protection of Venice. They obtained the right to take refuge in these Adriatic cities or Venetian territories if they were seriously threaten by Ottomans, and took considerable money subvention. Venice gave also large guaranties to the Albanian people of hinterland that it would protect them from Ottoman attacks. The clauses of agreements determined exactly the limited competencies of Venetian authorities in the solution of fiscal and juridical issues; additionally, Venice recognized the local statutes, and the freedom of native population for migration and trade.

⁸⁸ On the integration of Albanian cities in the Adriatic world and the economic and intellectual exchange between Albania with the other city-states of Adriatic coastlands, see Krekic, B., "Albanians in the Adriatic Cities ...", pp. 209-233, especially pp. 213-5 and Ducellier, A., *La façade maritime de l'Albanie au moyen age*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki 1981

city-states of Italy and the Adriatic world. It was the level of economic prosperity that determined the intellectual productivity of the medieval city.⁸⁹

It was the Catholic Church that played an important role in the unification of religious conscience across the Adriatic world. The Church in the city also contributed to the coherence of behavior by elaborating a body of canon law and a theologico-moral theory of usury.⁹⁰ We should not ever forget that the city-dweller was a member of one or more confraternities/brotherhoods, organizations, which patched up quarrels and protected their members. These organizations, called *guilds*, meant such professional formations, where the professional consciousness of its members was shaped under the pressure of the corporate spirit and the confraternital/religious spirit. The guilds magnified their occupations by having their saintly protectors portrayed in the practice of a given profession with its tools and other symbols of the trade.⁹¹ This was quite normal since the members of guilds formed conceptions for their work through the meditation of religion. One of the important functions of the saints was to protect this professional organization from natural destruction or competition, as the saints of city* had the mission to protect cities from the devastating invasions of various foreign states. Usually the saint was the possessor of the town, and the inhabitants of that town considered the saint almost as their co-citizen, and they naturally conceived of him as being partial to their city. On the other hand, the saint established a contact between heaven and earth. Because his name was given to ordinary people, he was also a personal patron

⁸⁹ Although the Prizren was a bishopric center in the 14th-15th centuries, it was Novo Brdo, the city of silver mines, leading intellectual center of Kosovo producing native clergy, writers and scientists. Drançolli, J., "Monumentet e kultit katolik gjate mesjetes ne Kosove", *Krishterimi nder Shqiptare*, Simpozium Nderkombetar, *Tirane 16-19 nentor 1999*, Shkoder 2000, p. 149

⁹⁰ Le Goff, J., "Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Middle Ages", *Time, Work, & Culture in the Middle Ages*, The University of Chicago Press 1982, p. 38

⁹¹ *Historia e Shqiperise*, p. 218

* Saint George was the protector of Durres, while Saint Stephan was the protector of Shkodra.

for men and women of the Middle Ages. The shrines of saints, as indeed the whole of the ecclesiastical Christian institutions, were intimately involved in the economical and social life of the Balkans.

Professional organizations (guilds) appeared the first time in Durres in the 13th century.⁹² Later, in the 14th-15th centuries, they spread to Prizren, Shkoder, Drisht, and Kruje. Here were called *scuola* or *frataglia*. The names indicate the strong influence of Italian corporations, owed especially by Venice.⁹³ The intensive contacts with Italian and Dalmatian cities and after, at the turn of the 14th century, the Venetian conquest of main Albanian coastal cities increased the impact of Italian corporations on Albanian homologues. After the Ottoman conquest only in some cities, in the southern and north-eastern part of Albanian lands, did such professional and religious organizations survived. In the following centuries they were transformed to similar Ottoman institutions (*lonca*), without changing chief function, but taking an Oriental character.⁹⁴

In the Late Middle Ages most cities served as ecclesiastical centers. For example, Drishti (Drivastum),* an important city near Shkodra, since 9th century, was an important Catholic bishopric;⁹⁵ while, in the 14th century, it was an important exporting center of Catholic clergy to other Albanian cities or to other cities of the Adriatic basin.⁹⁶ Antibarium (Bar in Serbian, Tivar in Albanian) was elected by the Roman Curia to be a center for Catholic actions and propaganda against the Serbian

⁹² Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet Shqiptare*, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1973, p. 8

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 9

⁹⁴ *ibid.*: the question of corporations during the Ottoman period and their impact on islamization of Albanian lands and society will be treated in detail in the third chapter.

* This important medieval city and, at the same time, a Catholic center of the Adriatic world, was definitively destroyed by Ottomans during the second siege of Shkodra, in 1479.

⁹⁵ Adami, J., *Rruge dhe Objekte Arkeologjike ne Shqiperi*, Shtepia Botuese '8 Nentori', Tirane 1983, p. 51

⁹⁶ Xhufi, P., "Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate Mesjetes", p. 7

Orthodoxy in the middle of the 13th century.⁹⁷ On the other hand, it was Ohrid which seemed to be the closest center of Orthodoxy to Albanian lands.⁹⁸ Interesting is the ecclesiastical position of two other cities: Durres and Prizren. Both were Catholic as well as Orthodox ecclesiastical centres, but, while Durres was nearer to Papacy,⁹⁹ Prizren depended administratively on the Orthodox Church of Ohrid.¹⁰⁰

In the territories under Byzantine rule the concept of *polis* (city) became inseparably associated with the presence of a bishop; wherever there was a bishop, there had to be a city.¹⁰¹ The presence of the bishop in a town, his staff and of a saint's shrine was of great significance for any settled area.

Throughout the 14th century, the Catholic and Orthodox Churches had begun to take over many functions in the cities, such as the juridical functions (notary works).¹⁰² There were representatives of the Catholic clergy, who undertook diplomatic missions on behalf of Albanian cities into the Serbian Empire or Italian states.¹⁰³ Episcopal authority became a refuge of the last vestiges of urban autonomy. As the Eastern Orthodox bishops, because of the authority of the centralized Orthodox states, never attained the power of the Western Latin bishops.¹⁰⁴

To sum up, we should say that in the 14th century since the conflict between the local aristocracy and foreign conquerors to control Albanian cities was a permanent event,

⁹⁷ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien. Die Orthodoxe Durchbruchszone im Katolischen Damme", in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, p. 212

⁹⁸ During the Middle Ages Ohri was the political and ecclesiastical center of Bulgarian states and perhaps the most important ecclesiastical center of the Orthodox Church in the western part of the Balkans: *Burime të Zgjedhura për Historinë e Shqipërisë*, p. 29; The city of Berat (Arnavud Belgradı) since 1373 was an Orthodox bishopric: Ducellier, A., *La façade maritime de l'Albanie...*, p. 555-6

⁹⁹ Drançolli, J., "Marredhëniet e Raguzës me Durrësin prej Shek. IX deri në Vitin 1501", *Studime për Epokën e Skenderbeut*, vol. III, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historisë, Tiranë 1989, p.

¹⁰⁰ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", p. 243

¹⁰¹ Vryonis, S., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh Through the Fifteenth Century*, University of California Press 1971, p. 9

¹⁰² Sufflay, M., *op. cit.*, p. 237

¹⁰³ *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë, të shek. XV (1400-1405)*, eds. A. Buda, I. Zamputi, L. Malltezi, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë - Instituti i Historisë, Tiranë 1987, p. 601

¹⁰⁴ Vryonis, S., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor ...*, p. 9

it was the clergy, the intellectual caste of Albanian society, that assumed the representative tasks fulfilling the vacuum left by lay authority.

II. Religions, Clergy and Ecclesiastical Geography

A. The Place of Religion and Clergy in Albanian Society

The church was one of the most important and influential institutions in pre-Ottoman Balkan society, as everywhere in West and East. Especially the Catholic Church for its hostile attitude toward Ottomans remained one of the most influential institutions in Western Balkans even during the first centuries of Ottoman rule.

In the extensive sense the church was not only an institution, but a state with all the organizative and human apparatus of a state: laws, courts, hierarchy, taxes and tax-collectors, a great administrative machine. "The church was not only *a* state, it was *the* state; it was not only *a* society, it was *the* society".¹⁰⁵ The chief strength of Western civilization, at least in its ideal form, lay in its integration under the Church. It was the Catholic Church that had kept alive education and learning through the Dark Ages. In the East, too, the Orthodox Church was a powerful social and economic force, controlling the destinies of people who granted privileges to it or paid taxes to it.¹⁰⁶ The intellectual predominance of the clergy and the response that this stratum gave to the spiritual needs of people gave to it the creative nature of the time.

Throughout the Middle Ages, *litteratus* was the person who, more or less, knew the official language of the state in which he lived. They were mostly clerics, because they had the privilege of education. The clergy was the sole stratum of medieval

¹⁰⁵ Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church* ..., p. 22

¹⁰⁶ Nicol, D. M., *The End of the Byzantine Empire*, Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc., London 1979, p. 56

society, which had learning a substantial part of its daily activity. Due to this, the universities, centers of education and intellectual life, of that time had a largely “clerical” character.¹⁰⁷ The Church had an ambiguous position as both a *temporal* and a *spiritual* power. The best example of clerical/scholar Albanian personality was Gjon Gazulli, who reached a high position in Ragusa. Gjon Gazulli (Johannes Gazulus), member of the Gazulli family from Shkodra, which emigrated to Ragusa. He was the most interesting and the most significant man of Albanian provenance at any time in Dubrovnik. Gazulli got his education in Ragusa. In 1426 he became a Catholic priest and four years later obtained a doctorate of philosophy from the University of Padua. Ecclesiastical personality, scholar, astronomer and diplomat, he played an important role in Dubrovnik’s international and internal affairs, especially in that city’s intellectual history for, when he died in 1465, he left his books for the creation of the first public library in Dubrovnik. During his life he served as ambassador of Ragusa and Skanderbeg in delicate diplomatic missions in Hungary and Italy.¹⁰⁸

The church possessed the force to legitimize the dynasties in the eyes of the common people. But it needed the political and economic support of laymen. The churchman was an important part of the superstructure of a feudal state formation. Both churches, Catholic and Orthodox, represented a relevant partner of the secular component of the feudal class, by ownership of feudal estates. The battle for the safety of the land was closely associated with the battle for the safety of the benefactors’ soul. The relations between *layman* and *clericus* could not be reduced to a series of temporally crises and struggles; instead, both partners mutually supported

¹⁰⁷ Le Goff, J., “The Universities and the Public Authorities in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance”, *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages*, The University of Chicago Press 1982, p. 13

¹⁰⁸ Krekic, B., “Albanians in the Adriatic Cities ...”, pp. 222-4

and sustained each other, and their relations were marked by reciprocal services and mutual respect which triumphed over fundamental and circumstantial divergencies; ecclesiastical and civil officials were often indistinguishable.¹⁰⁹ It was a medieval tradition to appoint high clerics to diplomatic positions. Thanks to their high level of education, they were effective mediators in resolving of complicate political issues or exchanging messages. Examples of this aspect are massive for Albanian and other Balkan areas. Following this tradition, Skanderbeg in the 15th century widely used members of the local clergy, Catholic and Orthodox, as his ambassadors in the West and East.¹¹⁰

The monastic clergy, who supplied the bishops and patriarchs, constituted the clerical *upper class*. The clerics, who served in the parishes and often shared the common lot, constituted the *lower class* of the clergy.

The common people respected the parish priest in provinces, because he was one of them. In Late Medieval Albania, the learned were what might be called 'bi-cultural'. They had their learned culture, but they also participated in popular culture.¹¹¹ This contingent of priests, both Catholic and Orthodox, who were very influential among ordinary people, supplied some of the 'moral strength', which later enabled Balkan Christendom to resist the islamization pressure. But living a hard life, like the people in the province; many parish clergy were corrupted or did acts which did not suit their social status and religious position. The clergy serving in Albania, remote from the spiritual and administrative centers of the great religions had sometimes an "unorthodox" religious life. Churches and monasteries were sacred places, but sometimes they were also *refugium peccatorum* (refuge of evil). In 1160, Muzaka,

¹⁰⁹ Le Goff, J., "The Universities and ...", p. 139,141

¹¹⁰ For detailed information and significative examples, see: *Burime te zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, pp. 213, 218, 225

¹¹¹ Burke, P., *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London 1978, chapter 8

an Albanian Orthodox monk, was called to Constantinople to tell about his illegal acts. He shocked members of the Synod when came dressed like an Albanian warrior. Besides, he was accompanied by a woman, his wife.¹¹²

In Albania where the kin and tribal links were very strong, the authority of the Pope and of the Synod of Constantinopol was very difficult to bear. The authority of a chieftain or the lay authority recognized by the head of territorial units had a great influence over ordinary people: "we do not recognize the authority of the Pope; the king (it means the lay authority) is our Pope".¹¹³

It is very difficult to determine the nationality of the members of Christian clergy serving in Albanian lands during the Middle Ages. However, it could be said that until the 13th century they were mostly non-Albanians. Remarkably, in the period 1250-1370, Albania was full of foreign bishops. They were mostly Latin, Greek or Slavic speakers and their activity and influence were conditioned by the future in Albania of the foreign powers staying behind them.

Since 1370, the representatives of high clergy were mostly members of Albanian noble origin. They remained in these high positions even in the first centuries of Ottoman rule.¹¹⁴ The statutes of city of Kotor indicate that among clergymen in the city, Albanians were the most numerous.¹¹⁵ The pressure of Serbian/Orthodox Empire over Catholic areas and, on the other hand, the growing intensity of trade and intellectual contacts of Albanian areas with Ragusa made possible an exodus and thereby a huge presence of Albanian clergy in Ragusa, in other Dalmatian cities and

¹¹² For further documents on this aspect of clergy's life, see: *Burime te zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 59; Xhufi, P. "Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate mesjetes", p. 12

¹¹³ Xhufi, P. "Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate mesjetes", p. 13

¹¹⁴ Suma, Dushmani, Dukagjini, Zaharia, Jonima, Skuraj, Spani and Thopia families gave their members to high ranks of the Catholic clergy serving in Albanian lands. Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", p. 239

¹¹⁵ Krekic, B., "Albanians in the Adriatic Cities: ...", p. 232

in Italy.¹¹⁶ This was not a new phenomenon, but just a remarkable growth of Albanian Catholic clergy in non-Albanian lands. A considerable number of them became friars of Catholic orders (Dominicans and Franciscans) and were very active even in the 15th century.¹¹⁷ Noble life in monasteries and churches could be accepted as a spiritual as well as a social ideal.

The only permanent links between the world centers of Christianity and local churches in Albania were the bishops. The institutions of Catholic bishop and Orthodox metropolitan were the local/provincial deputy of the Pope and the Orthodox Synod. They were the secular rulers that became the residuary legatee of ecclesiastical power. As we tried to indicate above, from the second half of the 14th century onward the majority of bishoprics were in the hands of the most powerful families of Albania.

The appointment of diocesan clergy had been in the hands of the bishops, but the supreme authority in the center always wished to restore its authority and competence of appointments as far as it was possible. The representatives of clergy in provincial regions were ambiguous, because they were the ministers of the church and, on the other hand, they were representatives of the communities for whom they served and acted.

In the course of the 14th century the papal administration reached a level of activity which would have been unimaginable centuries before. It had everywhere reached the limits of its medieval effectiveness. But this century displays also a growing disproportion between the growth of papal administration and the effectiveness of

¹¹⁶ On the over-production of Albanian Catholic clergy in 14th century and their exodus to Dalmatian cities and Italy, see: Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", p. 265-6

¹¹⁷ Ducellier, A., "Aux frontières de la Romanité et de l'Orthodoxie au moyen âge: le cas de l'Albanie", *L'Albanie entre Byzance et Venise, X - XVe siècles*, Variorum Reprints, London 1987, p. 7-8

papal leadership.¹¹⁸ The nomination of clergy in Albania was always a reflection of Western political interests. Particularly Venice intervened with Pope in order to nominate in Albania its citizens,¹¹⁹ or Albanians whom considered loyal.¹²⁰ When the Serbian power reached its peak in the mid-14th century, the conflict between Orthodoxy and Catholicism reached its zenith in Albania. This time the Papacy was careful to send to Albania the most devoted missionaries to work hard against political and religious pressure from Serbian Orthodoxy, for the paragraphs of Dushan's code concerning the attitude toward Catholics were very clear.¹²¹ On the other hand, there were Catholic archbishops of Tivar, who worked hard to soften the conflict between the two churches of Christianity. Furthermore, they worked for the unification of the two churches and prepared common projects for a crusade against the Turks.¹²²

The internal political conflict found reflection in the relations between local clergy. The representatives of the clergy, who were able to obtain the support of noble families, saw themselves in better positions than without such a political support. Jealousy, slander and rivalry for high posts in the ecclesiastical hierarchy were important aspects of the life of Christian clergy serving in Albania.¹²³

Until the eve of the Ottoman invasion none of the two churches in Albania were superior one over the other. Likewise, owing to the position as double buffer region it was not so strange to see some members of Catholic and Orthodox clergy applying the rites of two faiths, and writing as easy in Latin as in Greek. At the beginning of

¹¹⁸ Southern, R. W., *Western Society and ...*, p.168

¹¹⁹ *Dokumente per historine e Shqiperise, te shek. XV (1400-1405)*, p.159

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 620-1: Friar Francesku from Shkodra of Minorits Order helped Venice to conquer Shkodra at the turn of the 14th century. In response to this act of devotion, Venice intervenes at Pope office to nominate him *episcop* of Drishti, in order to be a good example for other Albanian members of Catholic clergy in Albania.

¹²¹ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", p.. 275

¹²² *ibid.*, p.276

¹²³ *ibid.*, p.277

14th century, a small Catholic parish was under Orthodox ecclesiastical administration.¹²⁴ The consequences of such propaganda were fixed in reports of Western missionaries.¹²⁵

B. Eastern Heresy (Bogomilism)*

The closer the alliance between the church and the state had been, and the deeper went the disaffection of the masses with the established order, the more did the ensuing revolutionary movements repudiate the church along with the powers of the state.¹²⁶

A medieval heretical movement was a revolt against the church and its spiritual universe that almost always took on a somewhat hyper-religious character, a form of mystical religiosity of dualist character.¹²⁷ The heretic, being both inside and outside the church, threatened the ideological, institutional, and social foundations of the

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.278

¹²⁵ Xhufi, P., "Krishterimi roman ne Shqiperi, shek. VI-XVI", *Krishterimi nder shqiptare*, Simpozium nderkombetar, Tirane 16-19 nentor 1999, Konferenca Ipeshkvnore e Shqiperise, Shkoder 2000, pp. 94-5

* On Bogomil activity in Albania, see: Shuteriqi, Dh. S., "Shenim mbi herezine mesjetare ne Shqiperi", *Studime Historike*, no. 2 (1980), p.199-220; Xhufi, P., "Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate Mesjetes", *Studime Historike*, no. 1-4 (1994), p. 5-14; On the special importance and the role of Bogomilism in pre-Ottoman Bosnia, see: Solovjev, A., "Nestanak Bogomilstva i Islamizacija Bosne", *Godisnjak Istoriskog Drustva Bosne i Hercegovine*, godina 1 (1949), Sarajevo, pp. 42-79; Fine, J. V. A., Jr., *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation*, East European Quarterly, New York-London, 1975; *idem*, "The Medieval and Ottoman Roots of the Modern Bosnian Society", *The Muslims of Bosna-Herzegovina -Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, ed. M. Pinson, Harvard University Press 1993, pp.1-21; Filipovic, N., "A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkan under the Ottoman Rule", *Ottoman Rule in the Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, pp. 346-8 and, Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia Under the Influence of Turkish Rule*, Duke University Press 1990, pp. 9-13. For some information on the place of heretical movements and Bogomilism in the Code of Stephan Dushan, see, Spinka, M., *A History of Christianity in the Balkans*, Archon Books, USA 1968, 146-7

¹²⁶ Baron, S.W., "Impact of Wars on Religion", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 67, issue 4 (1952), p. 563

¹²⁷ Le Goff, J., "Trades and Professions as Represented in Medieval Confessors' Manuals", *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages*, The University of Chicago Press 1980, p. 109

dominant religion as well as the faith, the religious monopoly, and the authority of the church.¹²⁸

Albania, like Bosnia, was, firstly, a peripheral and mountainous region of the Byzantine/Orthodox world, and secondly, a double buffer zone where conflict between Catholicism and Orthodoxy was always potential. Having such a geographical location, Albanian lands possesses appropriate conditions where the heretic could find a suitable environment to take refuge, to continue his work and to receive the fruits of his activity that the center no longer wanted and never permitted.

Dh. S. Shuteriqi believes that Albania and Macedonia had been epicenters of Neo-Manichaeism* in the Balkans.¹²⁹ Since the beginning of the 11th century among the heretics Albanians had been rebelling against the Byzantine State. The leader of a heretical rebellion against Byzantium (1078-9) which burst out near Sofja was an Albanian, Leka, who in the second half of the 11th century was recognized as one of the most important leaders of Bogomilism in the Balkans.¹³⁰ In 1096, when the crusaders passed through Albania to reach the Holy Lands, they burned several 'pavlican villages' in Southern Albania.¹³¹ The Bulgarian king Ivan Asen II (1218-41) allowed Bogomil propaganda in the territories of his kingdom. In this period Bogomolism reached the peak of its development in the Balkan Peninsula, and strengthened its relations with partisans in Italy and Europe.¹³²

¹²⁸ idem, "Introduction", p.16

* On the Paulician origin of Bogomilism in Anatolia see: Vryonis, S., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor ...*, p.60-3. For more details see, Obolensky, D., *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, Cambridge 1948

¹²⁹ "Shenim mbi herezine mesjetare ne Shqiperi", *Studime Historike*, no. 2 (1980), p. 201: Due to the fact that Albanian lands for the greater part of Middle Ages had been under the Slavic rule, the heresies of eastern origin had arrived in Albanians with Slavic names, even though sometimes they were called by Latin names, like *novacione*, *masaliniane*; sometimes it was called *albaneze* specifying the space of extension, not the origin of heretical movement.

¹³⁰ Shuteriqi, S. Dh., "Shenim mbi herezine mesjetare ...", p. 210-1

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p. 212

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 204-5

Since the 11th – 12th centuries, Albanian lands constituted the shortest and the easiest road for heretics, who in order to escape pressure from Orthodox states (Byzantine, Bulgarian and Serbian), left the Balkans in order to reach Italy.¹³³ In addition, Albania was the territory from where Balkan heretics met those from Western Europe, via Italy.¹³⁴

From a Papal letter at the turn of the 13th century, we learn that bogomolism was present and still active in the archbishoprics of coastland and hinterland (Durrës, Antibarium and Epirum), and its supporters in Albania were in regular contact with bogomils of Bosnia.¹³⁵

The last traces of bogomilism in Albanian lands remained until the 17th century, when the Catholic archbishop of Durrës, Albanian Mark Skurra, converted to Catholicism two villages with heretical population in the district of Elbasan (1640).¹³⁶

The spread of Bogomilism in Albanian lands could be traced following the diffusion of the toponymes, such as *Babun*, *Terbaç*, *Ermen* and *Bulgri*, which are names used by bogomils. The spread of these names to the whole Albanian territories indicates that bogomilism had a considerable number of followers among Albanians.¹³⁷

The attitude of the Albanian nobility toward Bogomolism, as in the other aspects of religious life, depended on the political situation and was closely connected with the

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 218

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 215, 218: medieval annals from the first half of the 13th century describing heretical 'churches' in Western Europe mentioned the *Ecclesia Albanese* in Northern Italy (Bergamo, Verona), while its believers were called *Albanesi* and were established in the whole Apennine Peninsula.

¹³⁵ Shuteriqi, S. Dh., "Shenim mbi herezine mesjetare ...", p. 213; Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime de l'Albanie...*, p. 553: "... les habitants de Kotor, placés alors 'parmi les hérétiques' (1367)"

¹³⁶ In these two villages (Miraka and Polis) inhabited nearly 1050 people. They lived 'al modo grecoriano': Shuteriqi, S. Dh., "Shenim mbi herezine mesjetare ...", p. 219. The last Bogomil (Pavlicans) in the Bulgarian areas of Danube were converted to Catholicism in the first half of 17th century thanks to the intensive activity of the Catholic archbishops of Albanian origin: Duicev, I., *Il Catolicesimo in Bulgaria nel secolo XVII*, Roma 1937, p. 19; Zamputi, I., *Relacione mbi gjendjen e Shqipërisë Veriore dhe të Mesme në shek. XVII*, vol. I (1610-1634), Tirane 1963, p. 175

¹³⁷ Shuteriqi, S. Dh., "Shenim mbi herezine mesjetare ...", p. 206-8

temporary level of relations between Albanian nobles and the Byzantine State.¹³⁸ Bogomilism could find easily followers among the Albanian aristocracy, if the non-Albanian forces, which supported this heretical movement could offer to them more political emancipation.

The general reason why certain native social groups participated in heretical movements and supported them should be sought in the discontentment of these groups with their social and economic situation. One scholar argues that Bogomilism facilitate the spread of heterodox Islam into Balkans. As the key point for this opinion this scholar emphasises the *syncretic* character of Bogomilism and heterodox Islam.¹³⁹

It is a well-known fact that the Ottoman invasion put an end to the heretical movements in Byzantium and the Balkan Peninsula. However, for the moment it is necessary to clarify the differences between Albanian and Bosnian "Bogomolism".

J. Fine explains why Bogomilism spread extensively in Bosnia by pointing out that pre-Ottoman Bosnia had competing faiths, and that these did not exist one dominant form of Christianity. Hence, no faith in Bosnia was able to establish an efficient territorially based organization that could bind believers to its church, be it through belief or through a sense of community.¹⁴⁰ The Bogomilism in Bosnia was spread to the extent that it, along with Catholic and Orthodox churches, managed to create a church of independent dimensions that we today call the "Bosnian Church". This church had a great mass of believers; it was a constitutive component of Bosnia's

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 212-3

¹³⁹ Melikoff, I., "Les voies de pénétration de l'hétérodoxie Islamique en Trace et dans les Balkans aux XIVe-XVe siècles", *The Via Egnatia Under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, A symposium held in Rethymnon 9-11 January 1994, Crete University Press, Rethymnon 1996, pp. 164-5

¹⁴⁰ *idem.*, *The Bosnian Church ...*, p. 386

religious life, and in the 14th – 15th centuries was so powerful as could challenge the traditional rule of Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

We can trace the presence of Bogomilism in almost the whole of Albanian territories, although it is difficult due to lack of direct historical records, thanks to topographic data and indirect indications. In spite of this, it is not possible to claim that this heretical movement was as much enjoying extension as it had in Bosnia. In Albania it managed to infiltrate almost all levels of Albanian society, whose interests temporally clashed with the interests of the Byzantine State and the two traditional Christian churches. But here it looks more as a *spontaneous* reaction of individuals, rather than a mystical movement that would take roots in the Albanian Mountains. The Albanian highlands look more like a refuge rather than a space available for mystic propaganda.

Historical records contain only a few details related to the presence of “Bogomilism” in the upper rank of Albanian society. Only a few Albanian princes and those only for a limited amount of time considered themselves ‘patarin’.* Albanian princes in general remained faithful to one of Christian faith or played between them. We do not yet possess sources indicating a massive support of Bogomilism in Albania as there was in Bosnia. As we will see below, Catholicism and Orthodox churches in Albania had their ecclesiastical organization. Bogomilism did not take roots in Albania, but remained mostly a *transitory* phenomenon, which was not organized as an independent church, even though Albania lacked an independent church of national dimensions. Albanian Bogomilism was a religious phenomenon, but not at all a constitutive component of religious life being able to challenge the traditional influence of Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

* Another name used for bogomils.

C. Western Catholic Orders

In the eye of medieval Christians, the only true adventurers were the missionaries and merchants.¹⁴¹

The Catholic missionaries, members of the orders, were known as *viri religiosi*: 'the religious men' were in contrast to all other men of that certain time, whether secular or clerical. They had all taken life-long oaths and vows, which set them apart from ordinary members of the church.¹⁴² Religious orders were associations founded as a protest against the secular and clerical world, against property, the honor of noble families, political connections, and the opportunity which they offered to their members for advancement to the highest positions in the existing social system.

These religious communities had two principal features:

- 1- a strong grasp on the things of the existing world and
- 2- an ardent desire for the rewards of eternity.¹⁴³

The religious orders differed not only in size and wealth, but even more strikingly in the purposes for which they had been founded. The Rule of St. Benedict emphasized *obedience*, the Dominicans *academic discipline supported by a universal organization*, and the Franciscans *poverty*.¹⁴⁴ Although the religious orders and organizations had their own constitution, which were widely different in type and aim, all grew under papal protection and direction.

The states of minds and aspirations of such religious organizations expressed in the Rules of Founder were quite different from the situations that members of these

¹⁴¹ Le Goff, J., "The Framework of Time and Space ...", p. 137

¹⁴² Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church ...*, p. 214

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 216

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 281

Orders faced in the frontier territories of Catholicism or in the buffer zones, where the ecclesiastical situation oscillated depending on world-wide political situation.

1. The Benedictins

In Western Europe the period of the Middle Ages before the 12th century is called *the Benedictine age*.¹⁴⁵ By the early 8th century it was driving all rivals from the field, and by the middle of the 11th century its hold on the minds and affections of the whole people seemed to be completed. The Benedictine monasteries were the symbol of stability and changeless society; they were the Gate of Heaven, the replicas of Heaven on earth.¹⁴⁶

In the period of the great expansion the Benedictine monasteries were founded and filled for political, social and religious aims. These purposes altered according to the religious geography where they were found. The Benedictine monasteries were generally built in the Albanian highlands where the Orthodox/Byzantine influence was feeble. Here we should remember that the spread of Benedictine abbeys followed, in the short term, the political circumstances of inter-state conflicts and, in a long run, the international balance of powers.

The Benedictian center in Albania is considered the abbey of Shen Shirgji (Saint Sergius et Bacchus)¹⁴⁷ situated 18 miles from the delta of the Buna river* and 6 miles from Shkodra. The space of Benedictine influence in general involved the territory from Antibarium in the North to the mountainous regions of Mat and Mirdita in

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 28

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 28

¹⁴⁷ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 202

* The Buna River in Ottoman sources from the 15th century is written in the Slavic version *Boyana*.

Central Albania.¹⁴⁸ Especially strong was the impact of this order of Catholic monks among the Albanian highlanders of the Mirdita region even in the 15th century.¹⁴⁹ The Benedictine monasteries were important holy/religious centers, particularly in the mountainous regions, where it was relatively difficult even for Catholic clerics to penetrate.¹⁵⁰ They considered themselves 'leading soldiers of Jesus Christ'. They were the contingent, which was always ready to work in hard conditions and to sacrifice themselves on behalf of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of the 13th century, the Benedictine monks replaced the Catholic clergy, and fulfilling the vacuum of secular clergy they regenerated the Catholic influence in the diocese of Durres, which at that time had fallen under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox bishop.¹⁵¹ Here it should be emphasized the fact that the monks of Benedictine order did not spread their activity in the lowlands of Albania. This fact could be explained by pointing out the influence of Orthodox Church, which had the support of the Byzantine State behind it. In general Benedictine monks were established in rural areas avoiding urban centers, where the administration of the non-Catholic conquerors was solid. In the 13th-14th centuries, the Albanian and non-Albanian monks of Benedict Order contributed greatly to protecting the Catholic faith in the highlands of Albanian and guaranteed the survival of Catholic enclaves in a territory politically under Byzantine/Orthodox rule.¹⁵² Thanks to the intensive activity of the Benedictine friars the population of Albanian highlands retained its Catholic faith until the eve of the Ottoman conquest.

¹⁴⁸ Jirecek, K., "Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mietteleralter", in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, pp. 117, 120; Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien ...", *passim*, pp. 267-7 : idem, *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 202-4. In these pages can be found a description of the Benedictine ecclesiastical geography in pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Albania.

¹⁴⁹ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p.115, 155

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 115

¹⁵¹ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", pp. 280-1

Despite some Benedictine monks, who, in the second half of the 14th century, had acquired the head position of diocese of Sarda (near Shkodra),¹⁵³ by the second half of the 14th century the Benedictine impact had declined. The 15th century was the epilogue to their activity. As the Benedictine monks had been very active in their attempts to stop the advance of Orthodoxy in Albanian lands, they also participated actively in Albanian resistance against the Ottomans. Sources say that an Albanian Benedictine abbot from the Mati region was responsible for the defense of Sfetigrad Castle (Kocacik kalesi).¹⁵⁴ Some of them assumed diplomatic missions in order to coordinate the relations between Holy See and Skanderbeg against the Ottomans.¹⁵⁵ The Benedictine order of monks was the only Catholic order of monks in Albanian territories during the Middle Ages. In the 13th century they were replaced by friars from the Dominican Order.¹⁵⁶

2. The Dominicans

The Dominicans aimed at combating heresies through preaching reinforced by a primitive simplicity of apostolic life. As its main tool in this work it used academic discipline supported by a universal organization. Furthermore, the members of this Catholic order, thanks to their proficiency in Greek and closer contact with Greek culture and literature, were employed by Byzantine emperors as ambassadors to the West and counted some of their personal acquaintances.¹⁵⁷ With the first general

¹⁵² Serbian conquests of Albanian lands in the Late Middle Age destroyed many Benedictine monasteries: Degrand, A., *Souvenirs de la Haute-Albanie*, Paris 1901, p.82

¹⁵³ Gurakuqi, G., *Dieçezi i Sapes (1291-1941)*, Shtypshkronja "Zoja e Paperlyeme", Shkoder 1943, p. 30

¹⁵⁴ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", pp.. 257-8

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.. 246

¹⁵⁶ Konica, F., *Shqiperia : kopshti shkembor ...*, p. 483

¹⁵⁷ Nicol, D. M., *Church and Society ...*, p. 79

chapter at Bologna in 1220 this movement began its triumphant career as a new universal Order in the Catholic Church.¹⁵⁸

Since the first half of the 13th century, Italian representatives of this Catholic order began to arrive and establish themselves in Albania.¹⁵⁹ The first representatives of this Order coming to Albanian lands were from the contingent of Hungary and other Northern territories of the Balkan Peninsula. In Patarin Bosnia the Dominicans were the first Catholic missionaries.¹⁶⁰

The goal was to stop the advancement of Orthodox influence and to conserve among Albanian Catholics the "true" (Catholic) faith.¹⁶¹

After 1272 the activity of Dominican monks in Albania was endorsed by the Angevine rule. The monks of this order were mainly stationed in Durres and its district.¹⁶² In 1336 even a member of the native noble family of Thopia (Dominic Thopia, the brother of Albanian prince Tanush Thopia) joined the order.¹⁶³ It is interesting that, at the outset, the Dominican monks were of non-Albanian origin; later, in the 14th century, most of them were recruited from Albanians or people of other Balkan areas. This trend made possible the shaping of strong connections between the Dominican Order and Albanian aristocracy.¹⁶⁴ Dominic Thopia, gaining the support of his family and of the French king of Hungary, Ludovic I (Angevine)*

¹⁵⁸ Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church...*, p. 280

¹⁵⁹ The Dominican monks were established definitively in Dulcignium (Ulcinj in Serbian, Ulqin in Albanian, Ülgün in Turkish) in 1258 and in Shkoder, in 1345: Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 204-5. While Sufflay gives the year 1278 as a date of definitive establishment of Dominicans in Durres, A. Ducellier says that Dominicans were installed in this city in 1283: Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Age*, p. 432

¹⁶⁰ They soon were replaced by the Franciscans: Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life ...*, p. 39

¹⁶¹ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 204; Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime ...*, p. 432

¹⁶² idem., M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", pp. 196-7

¹⁶³ idem., M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 205; Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", p.

¹⁶⁴ idem., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", pp. 200-1

* Louis d'Anjou.

because of family relations, dreamed of great political plans and high religious positions in the Catholic hierarchy.

Since their establishment in Albania, the activity of Dominicans was often interrupted by pressure coming from Byzance and Serbs. During the reign of Pope Clement VI (1342-52) and later in Albania a very intensive activity of Dominicans and Franciscans was observed. They advanced remarkably close to the frontiers regions threaded from Serb Orthodoxy.¹⁶⁵

During their activity in Albania the monks of the Dominican Order enjoyed the full support of the Pope, especially in the district of Durres, where clashes between Catholicism and Orthodoxy were evident. They were also provided with special competencies from the Pope to put in order the matters existing within Catholic Church of Durres.¹⁶⁶ Being a double buffer zone between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, by the 13th century till the Ottoman conquest, Albania remained in the eyes of the Papacy an avant-garde and geographically available place for the missionary activity of Dominican and Franciscan friars. In between 1350-70 almost all the representatives of the Holy See who came to serve here were members of the Dominican and Franciscan orders of monks. Some of them reached important position within the Catholic hierarchy in Albania.¹⁶⁷ The Ottoman invasion in the 15th century caused the departure of Dominican monks leaving behind only the monasteries and traces of their propaganda. In Ottoman Albania only the friars of St. Francis of Assisi remained.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 235

¹⁶⁶ Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime de l'Albanie* ..., p. 433

¹⁶⁷ Sufflay, M., *op. cit.*, p.

¹⁶⁸ *Schizzo storico sull'opera dei Franciscani in Albania*, (pro manuscript), Tipografia Francescana, Scutari 1930, p. 4

3. The Franciscans

This Order got its name from a cloth merchant from the Italian city of Assisi, who in 1210 went with eleven followers to Rome to promote a new way of life before the Pope. When this Order can be reconstituted, it seems to have consisted mainly of a call to total renunciation: giving everything to the poor, giving up every form of worldly glory, wealth, comfort, "to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel,....., to live literally the life of Christ".¹⁶⁹

The Franciscans came first in 1283,* and were installed in Kotor, Antibarium, Dulcignium (Ulcinj, Ulqin, Ülgün) and Durrës. This first mission in Albania was under the custody of the Franciscan mission of Ragusa.¹⁷⁰ On the eve of the Ottoman invasion the Franciscan vicariate of Bosnia¹⁷¹ included almost all of modern Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia (Ragusa) and parts of Albania and was subdivided into eight jurisdictions (rectories and monasteries).¹⁷² Only when the Ottoman threat became immediate did the Franciscans decide to create their own administration (*custodia Duracensis* with four dioceses - Shkodra, Antibarium, Kotor, Dulcignium).¹⁷³ The heads of Dominican and Franciscan missions in Albanian were Pope's credible people; their opinion was very important in the Catholic developments in Albania.

¹⁶⁹ For more detailed information on the Franciscan doctrine and the differences between Franciscan and other Catholic Rules, see: Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church*..., p. 281-6

* According to some legends, during his return from Syria to Italy, St. Francesco laid in Lezhe (Lez/Alessio) and he personally founded the first Franciscan convent. But it is historically documented that the first Franciscan friar nominated officially by Pope as the archbishop of Antibarium (Bar) was Giovanni de Plano Carpini, in 1248: *Schizzo storico sull'opera dei Franciscani in Albania*, (pro manuscript), Tipografia Francescana, Scutari 1930, p. 2

¹⁷⁰ In Shkoder and Dulcignium the establishment of the Franciscan friars was endorsed by the Catholic queen Helena, the wife of the Serb king Urosh I (died 1288), who erected for them an monastery and a church (respectively Saint Maria and Saint Marc) near Shkodra: Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p. 205

¹⁷¹ The Franciscans in Bosnia replaced Dominicans. Franciscan vicariate was already in existence in Bosnia by about 1340: Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life* ..., p. 39

¹⁷² *ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Dokumenta per historine e Shqiperise te Shek. XV*, vol. I (1400-1405), p. 357

The friars of St. Francisco are basically a Mediterranean and urban movement. They always preferred to stay in towns where they could find the people for whom they had a message, from whom they drew their earliest recruits, and on whom they depended for their means of life. When their number grew they had to move away from the urban centers, but their life depended on their association with the town, and this determined the direction of their later developments.¹⁷⁴

In order to fulfill successfully their mission, the Franciscans were forced to learn the language of the country where they worked and from the very start had to be concerned for their successor generations among the native population. Gradually as a consequence of the friars activity in Albania we can see many Albanian people who joined these Catholic Orders and served not only in Albania, but even in the neighboring places of Adriatic basin, particularly in Ragusa.¹⁷⁵ Franciscan friars informed in detail the Papacy and Venice about the course of the political situation in Albania and ensured the political and religious contacts of Albanian nobles with the Western world.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, we do not know if the message which missionary wished the Albanians to receive and the meaning which *traditionalist* Albanians actually understood were the same. However, the Dominicans and Franciscans were very firm in their battle against heresies (bogomils)/schismatic (Orthodox people) of Eastern origin. They worked hard to convert the Orthodox or heretical Albanians to Roman Catholicism.¹⁷⁷ The restoration of Catholic ecclesiastical organization with a great contribution of Orders aimed to transform pre-Ottoman Albania into “un forte centro del cattolicesimo in terra albanese”, and further in Balkan Peninsula.

¹⁷⁴ Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church...*, p. 287

¹⁷⁵ Sufflay, M., “Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...”, p. 256

¹⁷⁶ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 138; *Burime të zgjedhura për Historinë e Shqipërisë*, p. 218

¹⁷⁷ Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Âge*, p. 435

During the Albanian resistance of Skanderbeg in the 15th century, Catholic friars were regular ambassadors of the Papacy at Skanderbeg and maintained high the spirit people propagandizing the values of Western Christendom against the Islam.¹⁷⁸ Two Albanian Franciscan friars were within the castle of Shkodra during the Ottoman besieges in 1478-9. They were source of courage for the people in Castle to resist the Ottomans.¹⁷⁹

Sufflay thinks that the Franciscan Order of friars was the unique factor in the struggle for protection of Catholicism during the long Orthodox and Islamic periods.¹⁸⁰ Going forward, Sufflay makes an important generalization, which is worth testing, saying that as the Benedictine friars saved untouched the Albanian Catholic nucleus from the long term Byzantine – Slavic Orthodox pressure, it was the direct contribution of Franciscan friars which kept alive this Catholic nucleus during the Ottoman period.¹⁸¹

D. *The Ecclesiastical Geography of Albanian Lands* *

While the collapse of the Western Roman Empire politically legalized the superiority of the Byzantine Empire in the Balkans,¹⁸² it was the Byzantine emperor Leon I (Isaurien) who separate Albanian lands from the Papal ecclesiastical organization

¹⁷⁸ *Schizzo storico sull'opera dei Franciscani in Albania*, p. 23

¹⁷⁹ As one of two Franciscan friars was Albanian, Padre Pali from Mati, the second was Padre Bartolomeo from Venice: *Schizzo storico sull'opera dei Franciscani in Albania*, p. 24

¹⁸⁰ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", p. 281

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.

* On this topic see the monumental works of Milan Sufflay, "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien. Die Orthodoxe Durchbruchszone im Katolischen Damme", in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, pp. 188-282; *idem*, *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p.180-92. The last researches to shed light on this topic are: Kamsi, W., "Kisha dhe kuvende te Shkodres me rrethina ne mesjete", *Krishterimi nder shqiptare*, Simpozjum Nderkombetar, Tirane 16-19 nentor 1999, Konferenca Ipeshkvnore e Shqiperise, Shkoder 2000, pp. 120-30; Drançolli, J., "Monumentet e kultit katolik ne Kosove gjate mesjetes", *passim*, pp. 145-52; Luli, F., "Veshtrime historike rreth perhapjes se kishave dhe emrave te shenjtoreve nder zonat e Mirdites", *passim*, pp. 188-208; Ziu, T., "Krishterimi dhe mjedisi gjeografik", *passim*, pp. 513-521

¹⁸² Since that time the official language in use was a symbol of the state or sphere of culture to which an individual or community belonged. Albanian territories in the North of Lezha and the valley of

and joined it to the Patriarchate of Constantinople (ca. 732).¹⁸³ In 813, we see the traces of the iconoclast conflict in Durres.¹⁸⁴

The Great Schism of Christendom (ca. 1054)* separated Albania in two religious areas: Catholicism in the North and Orthodoxy in Central and Southern Albania. The Great Schism was not a result of a theoretical discussion about metaphysical truths or controversy about meaningless words, but it constituted the starting point of reflection over profound differences, social, political but also psychological, subsisting between the two groups generally distinguished by reason of their attachment to these two churches.¹⁸⁵ The Pope's aim was to replace the lost authority in Eastern Christian area where the authority of Orthodoxy was still unchallenged. However, Orthodoxy remained dominant in that Albanian space where the Byzantine centralist authority was still strong. Since that time the bishopric of Berat and Gllavenica had passed forever to the Orthodox world.¹⁸⁶ The union of the churches, that is to say the reconciliation of Byzantium with Rome, probably remained on the agenda almost continuously in the Late Middle Ages.

The Crusades caused a new expansion of Catholicism in Albanian lands minimizing the attempts of Byzantine emperors to protect the positions of Orthodoxy in the

Drin river used Latin, while the territories in the South passed under the political and cultural influence of Greek language: Cvijic, J., *La péninsule balkanique - géographie humaine*, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris 1918, p. 89

¹⁸³ Meksi, A., "Monumentet mesjetare te kultit dhe rrenjet e tyre ne antikitetin e vone", *Konferenca kombetare per formimin e popullit shqiptar, te gjuhes dhe te kultures se tij*, Tirane 2-5 korrik 1982, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise, Tirane 1988, p. 386: The regular participation of many bishops from Albanian episcopates (Durres, Tivar, Ulqin, Shkodra, Dioklea, Drishti, Pulti, Cerniku, Gllavinica, Berat, Vlora and Gradec) in Orthodox councils held in the 10th century shows clearly that Orthodoxy had extended its sphere of influence even in territories traditional known as Catholic territories of Albania. This rise of Orthodoxy is strongly related to the strength of Byzantine rule in the Balkans. In the 11th century, the Papacy managed to grasp the episcopates of Drisht, Shkoder and Pult from the Orthodox Church.

¹⁸⁴ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II (VIII-XV centuries), pp. 27-8

* For more information on this topic, see: Runciman, S., *The Eastern Schism - a Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches During the 11th and 12th Centuries*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1956

¹⁸⁵ Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, Bibliotheca Graeca Aevi Posterioris, Brussels 1952, p. 19

¹⁸⁶ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", p. 8

Western Balkans.¹⁸⁷ Thus, Albania remained in the midst of schism: "... sperare in la Santa Trinita (Orthodoxy) et nella sua Santissima Madre (Catholicism), ...".¹⁸⁸

Along with the gradual fall of the political and military centralist power of the Byzantine Empire, the Papacy elaborated its strategy of action. The Catholic Church in the Balkans was a strong bastion of Western interests in this region. The Papacy managed to protect the defensive position in the highlands of Albania and gradually undertook an offensive in Central Albania in the middle of the 13th century. The Catholic archbishop of Tivar, John de Plano Carpini, made a tentative to regain the Orthodox territories of central Albania.¹⁸⁹ We should add that the spread of influence of a certain church as far as it depended on the political might lying behind, it also depended on the devotion and capabilities of provincial churchmen.

The Angevins, who conquered central Albanian lands and created the "Albanian kingdom" (ca. 1272), planned to convert the Balkan Orthodox believers to Catholicism and to capture Constantinople. In this framework they brought to Albania many French knights and friars of the Dominican/Franciscan Orders, who worked hard to convert the Albanian Orthodox population to Catholicism and, to some extent, were successful in enlarging the Catholic space of influence. In fact gradually, since the 11th century, Catholicism grew considerably.¹⁹⁰ Almost all Catholic bishoprics of Albania passed in the hands of selfish Catholic monks from the Southern France.¹⁹¹ The decline of Byzantine authority caused the passing of

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.189; Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", *Vepra 4 (Shkrime Historike)*, Akademia e Shkencave, Tirane 1989, pp. 220-1

¹⁸⁸ Musachi, G., "Breve memoria de li discendenti de nostra casa Musachi", in: Hopf, Ch., *Chroniques Greco - Romanes inedites ou peu connues*, Bruxelles 1966, p. 277

¹⁸⁹ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien...", p. 262

¹⁹⁰ Frasheri, K., "Trojet e shqiptareve ne shek. XV", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p.11; Buda, A., "Vendi i Shqiptareve ne Historine Europiane te Shekujve VIII - XVIII", *Shkrime Historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1986, p. 69

¹⁹¹ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p.127

Durres and its hinterland to the Latin/Catholic sphere of influence; from that time the Albanian coastland established strong relations with Venice and Ragusa. In the first decades of the 14th century the alliance between the Angevins of Hungary and those of Napoli under the lead of the Pope was directed against the “schismatic” peoples of Serbia, Bosnia and Bulgaria. Under the protection of the Angevin’s kings the Franciscan friars were zealously pursuing their conversion efforts in the Balkans.¹⁹²

In the Late Middle Ages Albanian lands were full of churches and monasteries belonging to the two churches. The great concern of Popes and the Synod of Constantinople in the 14th century was to provide the parishes of Albania with priests. The city of Durres is the best example of ecclesiastical symbiosis between two churches. On the eve of the Ottoman invasion in this city situated many Catholic and Orthodox buildings.¹⁹³ Such a fact is a good indicator of the *political/religious conflicts* and *co-existence* of two churches in Albanian lands.

In the second half of the 14th century, Durres was not involved in the lists of Orthodox Church administration in Albania; the closest center was monastery of Saint Vladimir, near Elbasan (1381).¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, the presence of a Latin bishop in Durres (1393) indicates the existence of the Catholic ecclesiastical organization, while at the same time the presence of an Albanian bishop along with the Latin one indicates the process of Albanization of this city.¹⁹⁵

The fate of an ecclesiastical unity often was determined by the political/religious preference of the lay power. In the 14th century the rulers of the revived Bulgarian and Serbian Empires proclaimed the autonomy of their Churches and appointed their

¹⁹² İnalcık, H., “The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1329-1451;1451-1522”, ed. K. M. Setton: *A History of the Crusades*, vol. VI.: “The Impact of the Crusades on Europe”, The University of Wisconsin Press 1989, p. 243; Buda, A., “Vendi i Shqiptareve ne Historine Europiane ...”, p. 69

¹⁹³ Jirecek, K., “Die Lage und Vergangenheit der Stadt Durazzo in Albanien”, in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, p.165

¹⁹⁴ Ducellier, A., *La façade maritime de l’Albanie au moyen age*, p. 554-5

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 558

own Patriarchs. This title was not considered fully canonical and was accorded grudgingly by Constantinople. Both Patriarchates faded out with the Turkish conquest of the region in the 14th century, but each church remained autocephalous under the nominal suzerainty of Constantinople. We should not forget that the Orthodox Churches in the Balkans were protectors of state conscience to which they belonged and served.

The Orthodox Church had modeled its ecclesiastical administration along the lines of the civil administration. The high Orthodox clergy along with high ranking Orthodox provincial authorities were the lords of respective provinces, not only in the spiritual domain, but also in the sphere of administration and in the courts.¹⁹⁶ The determining factor in the formation of a Metropolitan* diocese is the geographical distribution of the Orthodox population, and not merely the geographical limits physically considered.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, the rank of ecclesiastical unity depended, originally, on the tradition of the forming church and the position of the main city in the provincial administration of the Byzantine Empire.¹⁹⁸ In addition, when the other alternative political powers within the Orthodox world extended their territory, the contours of Orthodox ecclesiastical units changed their borders in accordance with the degree of the political power that supported them. For example, when the Bulgarian Kingdom expanded its territories conquering Albanian lands, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Ohrid increased its territory and administrative authority to the disadvantage of the Orthodox authority of Durres bishopric supported by Constantinople.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Vryonis, S., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor* ..., p. 34-5

* Metropolitan can be characterized as an archbishop. The archbishops of Ohrid, Peć and Cyprus, by reason of their jurisdictional independence, stand higher than a metropolitan. For more details on Orthodox hierarchy, see: Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents relating to the History* ..., p. 92

¹⁹⁷ The emergence or the decline of a diocese depended on the population movements or invasions coming from outside: Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents relating to the History* ..., p. 92

¹⁹⁸ Vryonis, S., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor* ..., p. 305

¹⁹⁹ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien. ...", p. 267

The most important Orthodox center close to Albanian lands was the archbishopric of Ohrid. Meanwhile, it was the strongest obstacle for the spread of Catholicism in the central Balkans. This archbishopric enjoyed some privileges granted by the Byzantine Emperor Basile II and later also recognized by the emperor Michail Paleologos (1272).²⁰⁰ During the first half of the 14th century under the Serbian Empire, the Archbishopric of Ohrid acknowledged the most important territorial restriction in its history. During the reign of S. Dushan in Albania it comprised only the region of Devoll.²⁰¹ The territorial restriction of the Archbishopric of Ohrid was a process developing in parallel with the process of political emancipation of the Serbian kings and territorial extension of Serbian State.²⁰² The Council of Skopje (Shkup, Üsküp) (1346), arised the status of the Orthodox Archbishop of Peć to a patriarchate. Due to the fact that the archbishopric of Pec was the national see of the Serbian State, the political and territorial priority, naturally, was given to Peć. Peć Patriachate was a Serbian See, while Ohrid retained its Greek character. Regardless of that, the archbishopric of Ohrid was not deprived of its independence and Dushan confirmed its privileges.²⁰³ Shortly after the death of Dushan (1356), the archbishopric of Ohrid and the Devoll region remained under the territories of king Urosh. Even Kostur, the second largest city of this archbishopric and its surroundings remained under the control of Urosh and archbishopric of Ohrid.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 20 2

²⁰¹ Grozdanov, Cv., "Ohrid i Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija vo XIV vek", *Istorija*, no.1 (1980), p. 167-8

²⁰² In 1345 Dushan determined to assume formally the imperial title "Tsar of the Serbians and the Greeks" (in Greek: Emperor of Greeks and Romania"). To make such a crucial step forward he had to secure patriarchal cooperation, since in accordance with Byzantine legal norms no one but a patriarch could crown an emperor. Since the patriarch who might be induced to grant Dushan's claim did not exist, he decided to create one of his own. The Great Council held in Skoplje in 1346 decided to bow to the will of the mighty Serbian ruler and to raise the rank of the Orthodox Archbishopric of Pec to that of patriarchate. This step marked a distinguished act in the course of Dushan's challenge directed to the oecumenia of Constantinopolitan Orthodox Church. Eventually, within Dushan's territories two Orthodox Churches co-exist: Ohrid and Pec: Spinka, M., *A History of Christianity in the Balkans*, Archon Books, USA 1968, p. 141

²⁰³ Spinka, M., *A History of Christianity in the Balkans*, p. 142

²⁰⁴ Grozdanov, Cv., "Ohrid i Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija ...", p. 172

In general it is difficult to draw the boundaries between dioceses. The collapse of Dushan's Empire and the rise of local principalities created an unstable situation concerning the church's ecclesiastical organisation. Actually churches and dioceses recognized this unstable situation often changing hands between local princes. In these unclear political moments churches in Albanian lands preferred to remain aloof from local conflicts rather than to become engaged in political conflicts whose end was not clear and with great consequences for religious authority.

In the Orthodox world the dioceses of Durres, Kruja and Stefaniaka also remained despite the enormous attempts of the Papacy to spread their authority in central Albania.²⁰⁵ However, the Catholic bishoprics spread from Tivar to the Shkumbin river in central Albania.²⁰⁶ The Catholic Church possessed great estates; but their real economic power was shaped due to donations of lay authority and, therefore its economical potential was directly connected to shifts in the political and military balance of local powers.²⁰⁷

By the end of the 14th century the ecclesiastical authority of the Papacy had reached the Ohrid region. On the other hand, the authority of Orthodoxy remained of secondary importance in North Albania when compared with Catholicism.²⁰⁸

All explanations given above indicate that a clear and definitive line of demarcation between Catholicism and Orthodoxy did not exist in pre-Ottoman Albania, because the political situation was fragile and fraught with difficulties. But if we try to create an imaginary line based on authentic documents, then this line would be as follows: North of Vlora region - across Muzakija (Muzeqeja) field – north of Berat – the Shkumbin river – the region of Cermenika and Diber toward Prizren.

²⁰⁵ Sufflay, M., "Die Kirchenzustände im Vortürkischen Albanien.", p.8

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 189

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 53

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.189

Here it is necessary to mention that some Albanian regions, like Durrësi dhe Kruja (Akçahisar), although belonging to the Catholic ecclesiastical organization, had strong Orthodox remnants.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, in pre-Ottoman Albania we should talk about the reality of *religious enclaves*. Sufflay also offers data, which show that in the 14th century in the big village of Koplik near Shkodra a large Serbian Orthodox community lived. Until 1416 this village was full of Orthodox priests. This fact surely indicates the existence of an Orthodox enclave within a Catholic region, known as 'Albanie Venitienne'.²¹⁰

Additionally, in Kosovo²¹¹ and around Skoplje,²¹² there were many Albanian Catholic enclaves in territories where Orthodoxy was the dominant faith. These examples do not indicate the impotence of the Orthodox Church organization, but political and military shifts and oscillations that are characteristics of feudal system. These facts clearly show the variability of religious borders and the existence of religious pockets inside areas of the dominant religion. Seen from the Albanian-wide perspective, Albania constituted a Catholic island surrounded by the Orthodox world. While, during the Ottoman rule Albania would constitute a Catholic island surrounded by the Islamic world.

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²⁰⁹ Ducellier, A., "Aux frontières de la romanité et de l'orthodoxie au Moyen Âge: le cas de l'Albanie", *L'Albanie entre Byzance et Venise, X - XV^e siècles*, Variorum Reprints, London 1987, p. 7; idem., *La façade maritime de l'Albanie au moyen âge*, p. 555.

²¹⁰ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p.191; Ducellier, A., *La façade maritime de ...*, p. 436

²¹¹ Ternava, M., *Popullsia Shqiptare e Kosoves Gjate Shekujve XIV-XVI*, Prishtine, pp. 177-181

²¹² Frasheri, K., "Trojet Shqiptare ne Shek. XV", p.19

The political and ecclesiastical shifts in the Late Medieval Balkans were a direct reflection of the political relationship between lay and religious powers inside or outside Albania. The local lay authorities were responsible for such an unstable situation, because they demanded further political emancipation from regional or world-wide powers. The fate of ordinary people was determined by the will and preferences of the native nobility or conquerors coming from outside.

It was not easy to coerce common people to convert in accordance with the noble's political preferences, which were mostly transitory phenomena. Even though in the short term religion reflected to some extent the hegemony of masters,²¹³ in the long run it set firm limits to that hegemony. It was not easy to convert ordinary people even by using force, because it meant modification of traditional forms of life. Religion in the mentality of the common people, first of all, was a traditional form of life, which had been going on for centuries. Religion, in the early modern period, meant 'continuity' and 'traditionalism'. Ordinary people were *members of traditional society*; but, if this group of people was even an inhabitant of highlands, then they really were *conservative*.

Especially, during the Dushan reign pressure from the Serbian Orthodoxy over Catholic regions of Albania and Kosovo reached its zenith. The Catholic people might convert to Orthodoxy, which is the 'true faith'. The Tsar should destroy every sort of 'heretical' (Catholic) trace within the Serbian empire. Roman Catholicism called 'Latin heresy' in the code of S. Dushan was tolerated in regions where its adherents were the majority of the population, but to prevent the 'Latin heresy' from

²¹³ Thanks to the political and military pressure of Dushan, the people of Montenegro, though historically and ethnically linked strongly with Albanians since 14th century were slavised and definitely had embraced Orthodoxy: Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 211

spreading from the infected foci, the patriarch was instructed to appoint special archpriests to instruct those who had fallen into 'heresy' in order to regain them to the true faith.²¹⁴ If a Roman Catholic priest tried to convert Christians to the Latin faith, then he was to be punished.²¹⁵ The population under the Serbian rule faced a total Orthodoxisation of daily life empire-wide.²¹⁶ The Orthodox believers are called 'the real citizens', while the Roman Catholics 'half believers'. These ten 'anti-heretical' articles of Dushan's code reflects a state policy of Serbian Orthodoxy against the Catholic population (even Albanian Catholics).

The reports of Catholic missionaries, from the beginning of the 14th century, testifies to this policy of persecution of Albanian Catholics by the Serbian state.²¹⁷ Such an oppressive situation is corroborated by a report of an apostolic legate, Giudo de Padova, who wrote in 1350 that S. Dushan compelled Catholics to convert to the 'true faith'.²¹⁸ In this period Petrarque sent a letter to Pope Urban V (1362-380) mentioning the hostile climate existing between Catholics and Orthodox people: "only the Ottomans are our enemies, while the scismatics (orthodox people) are worse than enemies; they are scared of us and, at the same time, they hate us".²¹⁹

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²¹⁴ Novakovic, S., *Zakonik Stefana Dusana*, Beograd 1898, pp. 153-4

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

²¹⁶ Pirraku, M., *Kultura kombetare shqiptare deri ne Lidhjen e Prizrenit*, Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtines Prishtine 1989, pp. 46-7

²¹⁷ In 1332, Father Brocardus (Gulielmus Adae), a French Dominican, archbishop of Tivar, remarked that "the Albanians are oppressed under an intolerable and very hard servitude of the most hateful and abominable lordship of the Slavs; because they are overburdened with taxes, their clergy is lowered and humbled, their bishops and abbots often imprisoned, their monasteries and priests lost and destroyed, their nobles deprived of their possessions". For more details on this interesting document, see: "Dy Pershkrime te Shek. XIV mbi Shqiperine", *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, pp.111-2

²¹⁸ Jirecek, K., *Istorija Srba (prva knjiga do 1537 godine)*, Beograd 1925, p. 33

²¹⁹ Aktepe, M., "XIV-XV asırlarda Rumeli'nin Türkler Tarafından Iskanına Dair", *İÜ Türkiyat Mecmuası*, X (1953), p. 299

In the 14th century religious unity could scarcely be thought of apart from political unity, if only because religious unity depended on some ultimate power of coercion. Hence, all future medieval plans for territorial enlargement of a Christian church are fundamentally plans for political expansion.

Nevertheless, between lay authority and clergy there existed 'cordial' relations. A great family or a dynasty had to make donations to the monasteries, which performed an essential service by providing the children of the noble families with a reasonable level of legitimacy during their childhood's aristocratic life and prepared them to be the legal heirs of families.²²⁰ In return for the donation, a ruler, practically, needed cooperation in government, spiritual aids in war, an honourable livelihood for unendowed members of the family and the hope of eternal salvation for all. In other words, the religious centers guaranteed the quality of soul as well as body of the lay authority.²²¹ The battle for the safety of the land and political rule was closely associated with the battle for the safety of the soul of their benefactors.²²²

One of the first duties of Balkanic rulers was to visit the religious centers situated within the boundaries of his principality.²²³ The great support for a monastery came from the benefactions of the founder, his family and their associates.²²⁴ Land was the most widespread form of lay donations. Over centuries lay magnates had built and endowed many churches; therefore, lay patrons had assumed the right of appointing

²²⁰ "Mbishkrimi i mbretereshes se Rashes Helena ne kishen e Shirgjit", *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 193

²²¹ Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church* ..., p. 230

²²² Popa, Th. *Mbishkrime te kishave ne Shqiperi*, p. 330

²²³ Novakovic, S. *Zakonski Spomenici Serpskih Drzava Srednjega Veka*, Beograd 1912, p. 419

²²⁴ Popa, Th. *Mbishkrime te kishave ne Shqiperi*, p.151

clergy and their fiscal status,²²⁵ or to exercise their authority concerning the nomination of local clerical apparatus in their own lands.

There is a great number of documents from the period of the Dushan domination, indicating that there were granted various tax exemptions and territorial privileges to the monasteries and churches within his empire. They were freed from all kinds of duties.²²⁶ Because Kosovo was the region where were situated the centers of Serbian states, it was full of monasteries and endowments to Orthodox churches and monasteries built by Dushan or former Serbian rulers.

Fairs were regularly organized close monasteries, because the cult objects were built in strategic places where the traffic of people and trade were intensive. The income from the fair tax levied during the days of this activity was granted to monasteries.²²⁷

Dushan granted often to Orthodox monasteries his private lands together with the population that worked it, and in relevant documents of donations was determined even the fiscal status of peasants, except for the fiscal status of land and monastery.²²⁸ Sometimes were granted the Catholic churches to Orthodox institutions with their proprieties.²²⁹ Due to the fact that within the territories of Dushan's empire had many regions populated by Catholics, it is possible to see discordance between the religion of the ordinary people (Catholicism) and the ruling church, which was the constitutive part of the superstructure of the Serbian state (Orthodoxy).

²²⁵ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, pp. 153-4

²²⁶ Often the exemption of churches and monasteries from taxation was, at the same time, an act of recognition of the status granted to these institutions by ancestors, and benefactors ordered his descendants to recognize the status of religious centers after their death: *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 31. Interesting is the fact that the special status of Orthodox churches and monasteries was retained even by Albanian princes, who began to act independently after the death of S. Dushan: Jirecek, K., "Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mienttelalter", p.122

²²⁷ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 125

²²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 151

²²⁹ *ibid.*, p.152

As the Turks overran the monastic settlements in Asia Minor and due to the consequences of the battle of Marica (1371),²³⁰ the 'république monastique' of the Holy Mountain (Athos) was still the *capitale spirituelle de l'Orient chrétien* in the Balkan Peninsula²³¹ and it became still more important as the greatest surviving spiritual powerhouse of the Byzantine Empire.²³² The donators played an important role in the political and ecclesiastical history of Mount Athos. The acceptance of the title of *donator* to Holy Mountain meant almost always a motive of political character, especially an act made by lay authority to legitimize its political might,²³³ an expression of desire to ensure the continuity of personal/feudal dynasty,²³⁴ or a tentative to take place among the strong families of Orthodox nobility.²³⁵ Such a tradition was followed even by Albanian nobles. The prince Gjon Kastrioti (father of Skanderbeg), assuredly a powerful lord, in 1426 bequeathed a village and a church to the Athonite monastery of Hilandar, for, being lord of Kosovo, he naturally comported himself as the successor of Serbian sovereigns.²³⁶

During Dushan's time Antibarium was a bulwark against the expansion of the Serbian Church toward the Adriatic Sea. While after the battle of Çirmen (1371) the

²³⁰ Matanov, H., "Le mont Athos et les rapports politique dans les Balkans durant la deuxième moitié du XIV^e siècle", *Etudes Balkaniques*, no.2 (1981), p. 91. Only after the Ottoman occupation of Thessalonica in 1430 was Mount Athos obliged to admit the suzerainty of the Ottoman sultan: Runciman, S., *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press 1968, p. 157

²³¹ Its role was particularly important in religious life, literature and the arts: Matanov, H., "Le mont Athos et les rapports politiques ...", p.69

²³² Nicol, D. M., *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium*, CUP 1979, p. 19; Matanov, H., "Le mont Athos et les rapports politiques ...", p.

²³³ At the turn of the 12th century the Serbian king Stephan Nemanja granted some estates to the Hilandar Monastery of Mount Athos. Among them even some territories in Kosovo (Prizren) and today Albania (Pult) were included: *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 79-80

²³⁴ At the turn of the 13th century the Serbian king Sephan Urosh recognized the estates accorded by his father and grandfather to the Hilandar Monastery: *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 136

²³⁵ At 1347, Stephan Dushan, in order to expand his political influence in the Balkans, granted to the same Orthodox monastery large estates; among them were even some territories inhabited by Albanians (Prizren, Pult, Tetovo, Shirgi): *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 132

²³⁶ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 233-4; Ducellier, A., "Genesis and Failure of the Albanian State in the 14th and 15th Centuries", *Studies on Kosovo*, eds. A. Pipa – S. Repishti, East European Monographs – Boulder, Columbia University Press 1984, p. 14

ecclesiastical geography changed radically. Most territories of Kosovo passed under the rule of the Balšić's family. The relationship between the dominant Orthodox Church in Kosovo and the Balšićs, who in 1369 declared publicly to Pope their conversion from Orthodoxy to Catholicism,²³⁷ is interesting. They had weakened Serbian Orthodoxy, as the Catholic Church, the church of Ohrid and the Byzantine metropolitan church of Durrës were ready to regain the privileges grasped by Serbian rulers.²³⁸ In 1375, the Balšićs carried the center of the Serbian Patriarchate from Peć to Prizren. Because the Balsics had weakened the rule of Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, the Synod in Constantinople was inclined to see it not as a patriarchate, but an archbishopric.²³⁹

A considerable part of the religious institutions of pre-Ottoman Albania were the products of the religious "devotion" of the Albanian nobility. The level and forms of donations to religious centers were in accordance with political/economical power. While strong princes had given estates or had built churches,²⁴⁰ ordinary people had given what they considered precious and useful for churches.²⁴¹ Although seldom in pre-Ottoman Albania, there were cases when an Albanian noble destroyed a religious institution.²⁴²

Land donations and church building in Albanian lands are not only characteristic activities of Albanian and non-Albanian²⁴³ local authority, but even of Byzantine

²³⁷ Lenormant, F., *Turcs et Monténégriens*, Paris 1866, p. 279

²³⁸ Bogdani, P., "Kosova ne Shtetin Feudal Shqiptar te Balshajve", *E verteta mbi Kosoven dhe Shqiptaret ne Jugosllavi*, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1990, p. 117

²³⁹ Bogdani, P., "Kosova ne Shtetin Feudal Shqiptar te Balshajve", p.118-9

²⁴⁰ Gjergj II Strazimir (Balsha) had given some pasture land to the monastery of Vranina, in the Shkodra lake: *Dokumenta the shek. XV per historine e Shqiperise*, p. 331. While the Skurraj and Muzakaj had built Orthodox churches, respectively, the first churches of Saint-Georg in Berat and Saint Klement in Ohri and latter the Saint Athanas (Orthodox) Church in Kostur: Malltezi, L., *Beteja e Fushe-Kosoves.....*, p. 34

²⁴¹ Xhufi, P., "Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate Mesjetes", p. 7

²⁴² Xhufi, P., "Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate mesjetes", p.11. These should be assessed as spontaneous cases and directly related to the international political/religious situations and unstable political conditions in Albania.

²⁴³ Popa, Th. *Mbishkrime te kishave ne Shqiperi*, p.150

emperors.²⁴⁴ The Angevins recognized and protected the properties and privileges of the Catholic Church in central Albania.²⁴⁵ The privileges of Catholic churches were officially recognized even by Venice in the second half of the 14th –15th centuries.²⁴⁶ Churches were sometimes built by representatives of the provincial clergy. It was constituted with modest financial contribution from believers. The salvation of ones soul constituted the main reason why common people under the leadership of a priest erected a center of worship.²⁴⁷

III. Islam and Albanians

A. The First Appearances of Islam and Turks

The first contacts between Albanians and Islam happened in the middle of the 9th century. After having conquered a great part of Southern Italy, *the Muslim Arabs* launched raids on the eastern shores of the Adriatic.²⁴⁸ Arabs attacked the northern part of Albanian coastlands and created a base near Lezha (Leş/Lissus) for their incursions into the hinterland.²⁴⁹ Such a fact is corroborated by the existence of a

²⁴⁴ The church of Santa Maria within the monastery with the same name in Apolloni (an antique Greek city in Albania, today village of Pojani) was rebuilt by Byzantine emperor Andronikos III (128-1341): Adami, J., *Rruge dhe Objekte Arkeologjike ne Shqiperi*, Shtepia Botuese '8 Nentori', Tirane 1983, p.113-4, 118-9

²⁴⁵ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 94-5

²⁴⁶ Venice had freed the Convention of Franciscan friars in Durres from customs charges (1396), and when it made a deal with the inhabitants of Ulqin to take this city under its control, Venice agreed to respect all proprieties and privileges of the Catholic church (1405): *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, p. 596

²⁴⁷ Popa, Th. *Mbishkrime te kishave ne Shqiperi*, pp. 152-3, 216-7

²⁴⁸ Jirecek, K., "Die Lage und Vergangenheit der Stadt Durazzo in Albanien", in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, p. 159

²⁴⁹ Sufflay, M., *Historija e shqiptareve te veriut*, in: *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p. 28

toponym (*Sarachinopolj*), which still existed in 1416/7, and is registered in a Venetian survey of that year.²⁵⁰

Remnants of Muslim Arabs were present in the second half of the 13th century as mercenary forces in the military service of the Angevine army in the Albanian city of Durres (1272).²⁵¹ Such an early presence of Islam in Albanian lands born witness by only two toponymes, points out that the first contacts of Albanians with Islam were the result of some spontaneous military attacks for booty, of mercenary service or merchant activity. They did not manage to leave religious traces among the Albanians.

The Balkan Peninsula had been an available dwelling space for *Turks* since the 6th century,²⁵² but the first Turkish presence in Albanian lands is documented at the outset of the 11th century. In the battle of Butrint* (1081) the Normans of Robert Guiscard faced a Byzantine army that included about 2000 Turkish mercenaries.²⁵³ At the turn of the 11th century the first Turkish colonies were created around the Lake Ohrid.²⁵⁴ We do not possess information about the religious relations between the Muslim newcomers and the native population. The Turkish-Albanian contacts became more common by the 13th century, when the Muslim Turks served as mercenary soldiers in the Angevine and Byzantine provincial armies. In 1280-1, Michael VIII Palaiologos used Turkish mercenaries to stop the advance of the troops

²⁵⁰ *Regjistri i kadastrës dhe i koncesioneve per rrethin e Shkodres 1416-1417*, ed. I. Zamputi, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1977, p. 102. Such a toponymic name is documented as well close to Prizren (in 1348): Ibrahim, N., *Kontaktet e para te Islamit ...*, p. 62

²⁵¹ Jirecek, K., "Die Lage und Vergangenheit der Stadt Durazzo in Albanien", p. 162

²⁵² İnalçık, H., "Türkler ve Balkanlar", *Balkanlar*, Ortadoğu ve Balkan İncelemeleri Vakfı, Eren Yay., Istanbul 1993, p. 9

* Buthrot - an ancient city situated in uppermost Southern part of today Albanian State. This famous ancient city was founded by Greek Dorians in territories controlled by Illyrians.

²⁵³ Norris, H. T., *Islam in the Balkans - Religion and Society Between Europe and the Arab World*, Hurst & Company, London 1993, p. 33. For additional information, see: Ibrahim, N., *Kontaktet e para te Islamit ...*, p. 44-5

²⁵⁴ Ternava, M., *Popullsia e Kosoves gjate shek. XIV-XVI*, Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtines, Prishtine 1995, p. 391

of Charles I Angevine (d'Anjou) in eastern Albania. In 1337, the Byzantine emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos subjugated the Albanian nomads living between Kanina and Arta with the help of a Turkish army from the Emirate of Aydın (ca. 1337). The emir of Aydın, Umur beg, was remembered later by Ottoman ghazis as the first Turkish conqueror of the Balkans and was considered as the spiritual leader of the ghaza in Balkans.

In 1358, the despot of Janina, Nikephoros, John VI Kantakouzenos' son-in-law, invited Turkish soldiers to Arta in order to fight against his neighbouring enemies.²⁵⁵

B. *The Ottoman Advance in the Balkans*

Islam came to the Balkans in an organized and institutional form only with the Ottomans. All contacts between Balkan people and Muslims before 1352 had been spontaneous and with no long-term expectations. The Ottomans possessed the political/military capacity, and ideologically pretended to be the *avant-garde* of the Islamic world in the West, representing its militancy against a crusading and threatening seriously Christendom. Here we will try to draw a picture how the Ottomans managed to expand the space of Islam in the Balkans, and later in Albanian lands, and under what political and religious conditions they managed to do this.

²⁵⁵ For more recent information and bibliography on this topic, see: Zachariadou, E. A., "Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, no. 78 (1988), pp. 195-7; Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p. 171; Inalcik, H., "The Rise of the Turcoman Maritime Principalities in Anatolia, Byzantium and the Crusades", *The Middle East and the Balkans Under the Ottoman Empire - essays on economy and society*, Bloomington 1993, p. 320; idem, "Arnawutluk", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), vol. I, Leiden - London, 1960, p. 653-4. At this time linguists have documented the first presence of Turkish loan words in the Albanian language: Çabej, E., "Per nje shtresezim kronologjik te huazimeve turke te shqipes", *Studime gjuhësore*, vol. V, Rilindja, Prishtine 1975, p. 275

About 1350, the state of Southeast Europe might be considered a standing invitation to conquest by any powerful neighbour. The genuine threat was the Dushan's advancement toward Constantinople, which led to the first Turkish settlement in Europe. The earthquake in Galipoli (ca. 1454) and the death of Stephen Dushan (ca. 1355) facilitated the definitive settlement of Turks in Europe. Meanwhile, in taking charge of expansion and settlement in Thrace, the Ottomans gained a decisive advantage over other emirates.²⁵⁶ Such a step changed completely the destiny of the Ottoman *beğlik*, but also sealed the fate of a region for a long period with a considerable measure of finality.

In general, none of the Balkan rulers understood the imminence and magnitude of the Ottoman danger, and if at times they pressed for war against the infidel, it was principally for reasons of political/feudal expectancies. In fact, S. Dushan proposed an ecclesiastical and political union (1353) with the Latins, but his death deprived him of being the leader of Christianity in *Romania* against the Ottomans.²⁵⁷

Only by 1357 did Western Europe begin to see the Ottomans as the principal enemies of Christendom, and, in a short time, the first Crusade campaign against the Ottomans set out (ca. 1359).²⁵⁸ Pope hoped to find voluntaries among Albanians in order to participate in the crusade against Ottomans.²⁵⁹ In 1364, the Byzantine emperor asked the empress Helen, the widow of S. Dushan, for a common action against the Ottomans.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ İnalçık, H., "Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu bir Bakış", *Osmanlı*, vol. I, Ankara 1999, p. 61

²⁵⁷ Luttrell, A., "The Crusade in the Fourteenth Century", *Latin Greece, the Hospitallers and the Crusades (1291-1440)*, Variorum Reprints, London 1982, p. 146

²⁵⁸ İnalçık, H., "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1329-1451;1451-1522", ed. K. M. Setton: *A History of the Crusades*, vol. VI.: "The Impact of the Crusades on Europe", The University of Wisconsin Press 1989, p. 237-8

²⁵⁹ Ducellier, A., *La Façade Maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Age*, p. 553-4

²⁶⁰ Soulis, G. Ch., *The Serbs and Byzantium During the Reign of Tsar Stephen Dusan (1331-1355) and His Successors*, Dumbarton Oaks 1984, p. 91

With the Serbian defeat of Çirmen (ca. 1371) the Turkish domination over Southern Slavs began. With the death of Dushan (ca. 1355) the idea of Serbian Empire disappeared in name and reality; it was no longer a Serbian Empire, but only a conglomerate of territorial principalities. Serbian princes agreed to pay tribute and to serve in the Ottoman army. In other words, the Serbs and Byzantium recognized Ottoman suzerainty. But among the Serbian princes of Western Macedonia it was an Albanian family, the Gropa, who also became an Ottoman vassal and recognized the Ottoman suzerainty.²⁶¹ Suddenly after the battle of Marica (1371), the Ottoman raiders penetrated the valleys and plains of Macedonia and Albania and reached the Adriatic, devastating the country.²⁶² These might have been the first Ottoman incursions into Albanian lands. They caused a great concern in the Vatican and Hungary. The following year, in 1372, Pope Gregory IX (1370-8) made a call to Hungary to take the lead of the Holy League against the Ottomans.²⁶³ From that moment on the Ottomans were a serious threat not only for Balkan principalities, but even for Hungary and Italy. In response, the Pope planned a project for crusade, which would start from Durres.²⁶⁴

In 1377-8 the Christian intervention in Aegean was abandoned by Western powers in favor of resistance to the Turks on the eastern shores of the Adriatic.²⁶⁵ On the other hand, prince Lazar, realizing the Turkish menace, achieved reconciliation between the Greek and the Serbian Orthodox Churches. The Synod of Constantinople gave the Serbs the right to have not only an archbishop, but also an independent patriarch,

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.100

²⁶² Luttrell, A., "The Crusade in the Fourteenth Century", p. 146

²⁶³ Rossi, E., "Saggio sul dominio Turco e l'introduzione dell'Islam in Albania", *Rivista d'Albania*, XXI, anno III - fasc., dicembre 1942, p. 200

²⁶⁴ Luttrell, A., "1389 Öncesi Osmanlı Genişlemesine Latin Tepkileri", *Osmanlı Beyliği (1300 – 1389)*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul 1997, p.137

²⁶⁵ Luttrell, A., "Popes and Crusades: 1362-1394", *Latin Greece, the Hospitallers and the Crusades (1291-1440)*, Variorum Reprints, London 1982, p.579

who would not submit to anybody.²⁶⁶ Shortly after, in 1375, the Patriarchate of Constantinople officially recognized the Patriarchate of Peć.²⁶⁷

The Battle of Kosovo (June 28, 1389) illustrated the valor of alliance between the Balkan Christian armies in the course of efforts to stop the Ottoman advance in the Balkans. But it was too late. The defeat of the Balkan coalition in Kosovo legalized the establishment of the Ottoman domination in the Balkans and marked the beginning of the Ottoman – Hungarian rivalry over the area between the Balkans and Central Europe.²⁶⁸ The anti-Ottoman resistance was a peacemeal of feudal character. Only fear of Ottomans could unite the Balkan princes separated by feudal ambitions.*

At the beginning of 1380s the sultan Murat I managed to create a Balkan empire constituted by vassal local princes. Because of its rapid expansion through the Balkans, this Islamic Empire was transformed into a Balkanic/European state. In 1389, although having already perceived well the Ottoman danger, the Western powers were busy with their trade, local conflicts and randomly used the “crusade projects” as a pretext to put in charge ‘the church tax’ over the peasantry.²⁶⁹

Sultan Bayezid I inaugurated a new policy by establishing direct control over vassal countries in a number of swift military expedition. Bayezid was responsible for the transformation of the Ottoman State from a semi-feudal state of vassals and powerful uc-begs into a real Islamic Sultanate with traditional institutions.²⁷⁰ It is interesting to

²⁶⁶ Soulis, G. Ch., *The Serbs and Byzantium* ..., p.104-5

²⁶⁷ Luttrell, A., “Gregory XI and the Turks: 1370-1378”, *Latin Greece, the Hospitallers and the Crusades (1291-1440)*, Variorum Reprints, London 1982, p. 391

²⁶⁸ İnalçık, H., “The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1329-1451;1451-1522”, pp. 247-8

* On the presence of Albanian princes and their troops at the Battle of Kosovo, see: Mehmet Neshri, “Kitab-ı Cihan-nüma”, *Lufta shqiptaro-turke ne shekullin XV - burime osmane*, prepared by Selami Pulaha, Univ. Shtetëror e Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1968, p.80

²⁶⁹ Luttrell, A., “1389 Öncesi Osmanlı Genişlemesine Latin Tepkileri”, pp.147-8

²⁷⁰ İnalçık, H., “Ottoman Methods of Conquest”, pp.104-5

note that starting with the reign of Bayezid I, the Ottoman State in the Balkans consisted of a Muslim minority ruling over a Christian majority.²⁷¹

It was the Ottoman occupation of Thessalonica (ca. 1394) and the Ottoman sieges of Constantinople (ca. 1394) that caused the Crusade of Nicopolis (ca. 1396). The expedition of Nicopolis may be regarded as the last of the crusades in any effective sense, though Europe was filled with plans for such action for a century to come.²⁷²

In the end of the 14th century the crusade was viewed not as a continuous struggle between civilizations or continents, but as a particular event or expedition with a religious character.²⁷³ The Holy War, which is a characteristic of monotheistic religions during the Middle Ages,²⁷⁴ now was part of the chivalric ideal for the nobles of Western Europe at this moment relatively remote from direct Ottoman threat. It was the feudal class in Western society, which preserved the spirit of aggression and continued to form the backbone of the great crusading expeditions. Crusading machinery was often, though not exclusively, exploited by rival popes for political reasons, finance and prestige, and the profit from the sale of crusading indulgences; the crusade was not merely a papal institution the idea aroused such genuine devotion that it survived the absence of clear papal direction to inspire powerful impulses which ensured it a measure of continuity, though not of success.²⁷⁵ Although the term "crusade" in the West was gradually bastardized, the

²⁷¹ Braude, B - B. Lewis, "Introduction", *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. B. Braude - B. Lewis, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London-New York 1982, p.10

²⁷² Vaughan, D. M., *Europe and the Turk*, p.39

²⁷³ Luttrell, A., "The Crusade in the Fourteenth Century", p. 123

²⁷⁴ Baron, S. W., "Impact of Wars on Religion", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 67, issue 4 (1952), p. 538

²⁷⁵ Luttrell, A., "Popes and Crusades: 1362-1394", *Latin Greece, the Hospitallers and the Crusades (1291-1440)*, Variorum Reprints, London 1982, p.583

Muslim was an *infidelium*,* the enemy with whom one could not in good terms. The antithesis between Christians and Muslim was total.²⁷⁶

The Papal calls for crusade in the second half of the 14th century began to be formulated as a defensive struggle to save Southeastern Europe from increasing Ottoman danger. This meant, firstly, the protection of European interests in the Balkans, and secondly, to save Byzantium and Eastern Christendom.²⁷⁷

From the time of the prophet Muhammed to the present day the ultimate definition of the 'other' (the alien outsider and presumptive enemy) in Islam has been the *kafir* (the unbeliever).²⁷⁸ In response to the Western crusades organized and sponsored by the Papacy, the Ottomans said:

"Dâ'imâ küffâr-i hâkihisârın başı aşağı olub her kez mahkûr ve münhezim olalar"²⁷⁹

The Balkan Peninsula since the second half of the 14th century constituted a geography of possible contacts on a large scale or of clashes between European/Christian and Islamic/Turk conceptions of life and social mentality.²⁸⁰ This time antagonism and contradictions between Ottomans and Balkan society was caused by basic differences between forms of religio-cultural existence.

C. First Contacts between Albanians and the Ottoman Islam

Albania, as a natural part of the peninsula, shared the same fate with their regional neighbours. There were stages of the Ottoman advance in Balkans, which to the degree that they sealed the destiny of other Balkan people also sealed the fate of

* The Christian communities remained under the Muslim rule as enclaves in an Islamized area were called - *in partibus infidelium*.

²⁷⁶ Le Goff, J., "The Framework of Time and Space ...", p.145. For the Latin terminology used for Ottoman Muslims involved in the Ottoman conquest of Balkans/Albania, see: *Dokumente per historine e Shqiperise te shek. XV*, pp. 121,125

²⁷⁷ İnalcık, H., "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1329-1451", p. 239

²⁷⁸ Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, p. 5

²⁷⁹ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han - İzadi ve Varna Savaşları (1443-1444) Üzerinde Anonim Gazavatname*, yayına hazırlayan H. İnalcık - M. Oğuz, TTK 1989, p. 72

Albanians. The Ottoman passing to Tsympe* (ca. 1352), the first settlement in Gallipoli (ca. 1354), and the battles of Marica (ca. 1371) and Kosovo (ca. 1389) were the historical milestones through which the peninsula started to change political rulers, the form of governing, the rhythm of life, and demographic/religious situation. After the battle of Çirmen none of the Albanian personages perceived well the Ottoman danger, and none of them proved to have defensive or crusading plans; daily interests and political intrigues prevented them from making a fair diagnosis of the new political situation. They did not pay necessary attention to the immediate Ottoman peril, but they sought to benefit from the Serbian defeat to enlarge their territories in eastern Albanian lands.²⁸¹ Between 1371-1378, the Orthodox Church of Ohrid came under the control of the Albanian noble, Andrea Gropa. While in the beginning of the 1380s the Ohrid region recognized Karl Thopia as its ruler.²⁸² As in the 1370s the Ottomans made some incursions led by frontier begs just to terrorize the native aristocracy, in the 1380s the historical records signal the first organized and well-planned attacks. According to the so-called 'Chronicle of Janina', an Ottoman army was invited into southern Albania as allies of the Lord of Janina, Toma Preljubovic, who was engaged in a struggle with the neighbouring Albanians. Ottoman troops came under the lead of Kavala (Kephalia) Shahin, the uc-begi of the region.* The Ottoman fought against the armies of Zenebish and Mazarak in the

²⁸⁰ Vaughan, D. M., *Europe and the Turk*, p.1

* Cinbi in Turkish.

²⁸¹ The political boundaries of the Balshas were enlarged from Prizren to Kostur in the east. Soulis, G. Ch., *The Serbs and Byzantium* ..., p.103

²⁸² Grozdanov, Cv., "Ohrid i Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija vo XIV vek", *Istorijska*, no.1(1980), p.179-180

* Later, the famous Ottoman military commander Şehabettin Şahin paşa. For more information, see: İnalçık, H., "Krahina e Krujes dhe Dibres rreth vitit 1467", *Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike (12-18 janar 1968)*, vol. I, Universiteti shtetëror i Tiranës – Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Tiranë 1969, p. 183

region of Delvina. In 1382, Kavala Shahin reappeared in the region of Janina and this time conquered a fortress, Revnik, situated southwest of Konica.²⁸³

A turning point in the first contacts between the Albanian nobility and the Ottomans was the Battle of Savra (ca. 1385). The Ottomans, this time, were invited by Thopias in order to help them against the Balshas. The Balshas were defeated by the Ottoman army and suddenly Georg I Balsha surrendered Shkoder to Kavalla Shahin.²⁸⁴ During the Ottoman expansion into the Balkans local seigneurs had to deal first with the frontier begs,* and when the Christian seigneurs made a major attempt at driving them away the local nobles were faced with the Ottoman army under the sultan.²⁸⁵

After the Battle of Savra (1385) the Albanian princes became the vassals of the Ottomans.²⁸⁶ In other words, Albanian lands became *dar al-'ahd*.²⁸⁷ By Islamic Law such agreements made with the 'infidels' were to be observed in good faith,²⁸⁸ but

²⁸³: *Lufta shqiptaro-turke ne shek. XV - burime bizantine*, ed. K. Bozhori, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Tirane 1967, pp. 21-33. For more information, see: Zachariadou, E. A., "Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, no. 78 (1988), pp. 199-200

²⁸⁴ İnalçık, H., "Krahina e Krujës dhe Dibres rreth vitit 1467", p. 183

* For details on the activity of Ottoman frontier begs in the Balkans, see: Kiel, M., *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans*, Variorum Reprints, London 1990

²⁸⁵ İnalçık, H., "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1329-1451; 1451-1522", p. 239

²⁸⁶ İnalçık, H., "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy*, Variorum Reprints, London 1978, p. 104; Zachariadou, E. A., "Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania", p. 20

²⁸⁷ *Dar al-'ahd* or *Dar al-Sulh*, a territory in which the Muslim rulers continue to govern their people through their own agents, with a measure of autonomy under a form of Muslim suzerainty. The extent of the autonomy and the weight of the suzerainty vary considerably to the seigniorial attitude toward the Ottomans: Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, The University of Chicago Press 1988, p. 80

²⁸⁸ In 1383 the Ottomans attacked Novo Brdo: Drançolli, J., "Monumentet e kultit katolik gjatë mesjetës në Kosovë", *Krishterimi në shqiptare*, Simpozium ndërkombëtar, Tirane 16-19 nëntor 1999, Konferenca Ipeshkvnore e Shqipërisë, Shkoder 2000, p. 149. While Vuçitern was conquered by sultan Murat I in 1389: *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid)*, eds. R. Dankoff & R. Elsie, Brill, Leiden 2000, p. 15. In 1385-6 the Ottomans threatened seriously Vlora. The Ottoman army, probably under the command of the Sultan himself, laid siege to the city before May 1386: Jirecek, K., "Valona im Mittelalter", in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, Band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, p. 179. Balshas in 1387 were *harac-güzar* of Ottoman: Idrisi Bitlisi, "Heşt Bihişt", *Lufta shqiptaro-turke ne shekullin XV - burime osmane*, prepared by Selami Pulaha, Univ. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Tirane 1968, p. 132. From a letter of Dukagjins addressed to Ragusa we learned that this noble family, in 1387, had secured a peace deal with the Ottomans: Angelov, D., "Certains aspects de la conquête des peuples balkaniques par les Turcs", *Byzantinoslavica* 17 (1956), pp. 245

perpetual ghaza, thought it might be temporarily deferred under certain conditions; this was also a stipulation of Islamic law.*

Only one year after the battle of Kosovo, in 1390, the Ottoman troops of Bayezid I pillaged the Albanian coastland of the Ionian Sea and regions around Durres.²⁸⁹ The interest of Bayezid over Albania disturbed seriously Venice. The first signs of Ottoman-Venetian rivalry over Albania were appeared in 1387.²⁹⁰ The death of Gjergj Thopia (ca. 1391), the ruler of Durres, was awaited by two forces: Kostantin Balsha, the ally of Bayezid, and the Catholic archbishop of Durres, bishop of Kruja, Tanush Thopia, Pogon Skura, Andrea III Muzaka and other Albanian seigneurs, all allies of Venice.²⁹¹ In 1394, Bayezid launched an offensive in Albanian lands in order to break out the Venetian influence and to exercise pressure on Albanian vassals. The establishment of Ottoman rule in Albania is directly related to Ottoman – Venetian rivalry in Albania and this military campaign.²⁹² However, during the 90 the Ottomans managed to conquer the south-eastern part of Albania²⁹³ and to carry out a survey of this area.²⁹⁴ During these years the Ottomans conquered major Albanian cities (Durres, Kruja and installed a Serbian ally in Vlora).²⁹⁵

In 1392-94, Venice had to take more serious steps in order to protect its possessions in the Balkans, Constantinople and the Aegean.²⁹⁶ The Venetians succeeded in

* The attitude of Islam toward non-Muslim communities and conversion will be treated in the first part of next chapter.

²⁸⁹ "Laonik Hallkokondili", *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin XV - Burime Bizantine*, prepared by K. Bozhori, Univ. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1967, p. 43

²⁹⁰ İnalcık, H., "Arnawutluk", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 653

²⁹¹ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p.134

²⁹² İnalcık, H., "Krahina e Krujes dhe Dibres rreth vitit 1467", p.181, 183

²⁹³ "Kritobuli prej Imbrosit", *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin XV - Burime Bizantine*, ed. K. Bozhori, Univ. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1967, p.104; Musachi, G., "Breve memoria de li discendenti de nostra casa Musachi", p. 323

²⁹⁴ İnalcık, H., *Hicri 835 tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, 2. baskı, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 1987, p. III-V; İnalcık, H., "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", p.109

²⁹⁵ Zachariadou, E. A., "Marginalia on the History of Epirus ...", p. 206. In 1394-6 Kruja had been under direct Ottoman administration: İnalcık, H., "Krahina e Krujes dhe Dibres rreth vitit 1467", p.183

²⁹⁶ İnalcık, H., "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1329-1451", p. 252-3

becoming once again masters of Shkoder, Drisht and Shen-Shirgj, though the sultan did not recognize Venetian re-occupation of these places.²⁹⁷ Karl Thopia, because of the Ottoman fear and panic, delivered Durres to Venice.²⁹⁸ Concerning the city of Vlora, the Ottoman regarded it strategically. Being the nearest point of the Balkans with the Appenine Peninsula (meaning the Vatican), very early it had been one of the crucial strategic objectives of the Ottomans in the Balkans and a very important point in their plans for invasion of Italy. The Ottoman permanent interest in conquering this city in the second half of the 14th century can be only explained in this manner.²⁹⁹

Toward 1390, when the Ottomans expanded their territories in Western Macedonia and Albania, they included also in their territories the Orthodox Church of Ohrid.³⁰⁰

The Ottomans recognized it and took under their protection. The Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid was an Orthodox Church, which understood well Ottoman expectations and entered as a whole into the Ottoman structure. Therefore, the ecclesiastical organization of the Church of Ohrid was extended further during the Ottoman expansion in this region.^{301*} Sultan Bayezid I benefited much from the divergencies existing between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches:

“As long as the Franks have two popes, I am not afraid to fight them. When they have only one, I shall be obliged to make peace with them”.³⁰²

²⁹⁷ Zachariadou, E. A., “Marginalia on the History of Epirus ...”, p. 207. For a systematic chronology of events in the turn of the 14th century, see: Cordignano, F. – G. Valentini, *Saggio di un regesto storico dell'Albania*, Tipografia dell'Immacolata, Scutari 1937-40.

²⁹⁸ Jirecek, K., “Die Lage und Vergangenheit der Stadt Durazzo in Albanien”, p. 163

²⁹⁹ On the period of transition (1386-1424) from the control of native seigneurs and Venetian interests to Ottoman rule, see: Miller, W., “Valona”, *Essays on the Latin West*, Cambridge University Press 1921, pp. 435-7

³⁰⁰ Grozdanov, Cv., “Ohrid i Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija...”, p. 182

³⁰¹ This Orthodox Church was founded as a patriarchate by the Bulgarians in the heyday of their medieval empire, but it was reduced to the Archbishop of Ohrid by the Byzantines: Skendi, S., “The Millet System and Its Contribution to the Blurring of Orthodox National Identity in Albania”, in: Braude, B. & B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London-New York 1982, p. 244

* The Ottoman attitude toward the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in Albanian lands will be discussed in the next chapter.

³⁰² Zachariadou, E. A., “Marginalia on the History of Epirus ...”, p. 203

The political success in the Balkans strengthened the conviction of the Ottomans that Islam was undoubtedly superior. In all cases of conversion from Christianity to Islam, new Muslims had a political superiority relied on the military success and the moral/cultural prestige of the strongest party. By the end of the 14th century Islam constituted a new reality for the peninsula, a religion and culture that might spread, thus seriously threading Christianity, its culture and its ecclesiastical organization in the Balkans.



Chapter III: Albanian Lands between Christianity and Islam (15th Century)

I. Politics and Religion

a. From Nicopolis (1396) to Varna (1444): the period of vassality and conquest

The rapid, but no less systematic, military advancement of the Ottomans in the Balkan Peninsula, notably in the second half of 14th century, shifted the abode of conflict in the Christian areas, opposing Islam in a war of chiefly secular character.¹

The Battle of Nicopolis (ca. 1396), a battle between two different worlds and cultures, was the last clash with the participation of European crusaders.² Seen from the Ottoman point of view, Nicopolis not only confirmed the Ottoman control of the Balkans but also greatly raised the Ottoman prestige in the Islamic world.³

While the conquest of Kosovo was initiated suddenly after the Battle of Kosovo (ca. 1389),⁴ the Ottoman sources indicate that the Ottoman conquest of Albania began during the reign of Bayezid I (1389-1402).⁵ Chalkokondilas says that after 1394 southern Albania was brought under the direct control of the Ottomans and the local

¹ Pall, Fr., "Un moment décisif de l'histoire du Sud-Est Européen: la croisade de Varna (1444)", *Balkanica*, MCMXLIV (1944), p. 102

² İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire – the classical age (1300-1600)*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1973, p. 16

³ *ibid.*, p. 15

⁴ Pristina was captured by Ottomans in 1389: *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid)*, eds. R. Dankoff & R. Elsie, Brill, Leiden 2000, p. 21

⁵ 835/1432 tarihli *Premedi ve Görice İcmal defteri*, Başvekalet Arşivi, Maliye no. 231; for more details, see İnalcık, H., *Hicri 835 tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, II. baskı, TTK Yay., Ankara 1987; *idem*, "Timariotes chrétiens en Albanie au XV^e siècle d'après un registre de timars ottoman", *MÖS*, IV (1952), p. 120

nobility was expelled,⁶ while most of noble families of central and northern Albania became the vassals of Ottoman sultan (subiectus Turcho).⁷

Albanian principalities were situated in the midst of the clash between Ottoman and Venice strategic interests; for a while, they were bilateral vassals of the Ottomans and Venice. Such a scenario was approximately the same as that of Bosnia and Serbia where kings, princes and nobles were bilateral vassals, both of the Ottomans and Hungary.⁸ Until his death in 1337, Ivan Kastrioti managed to combine the Venetian and Ragusian friendship with the fidelity to Ottoman sultans.⁹

The statesmen of the Western world were very slow to realise that the schism of the Church, internecine strife and political rivalries impaired the military power of the West to a suicidal degree, thus enabling the Ottoman state, which had been almost hopelessly defeated by Tamerlane at the Battle of Ankara (ca. 1402), to recover its earlier position and prestige.¹⁰ It is important to emphasize the merit of the Ottoman military frontier commanders who managed to bring strong pressure to the local princes always looking for liberation from the Ottoman peril. In 1410, the famous Ottoman military commander in the western Balkans, Evrenos pasha, penetrated as

⁶ "Laonik Halkokondili", *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin XV - burime bizantine*, prepared by K. Bozhori, Univ. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1967, p. 43

⁷ Sciambra, M - G. Valentini - I. Parrino, "L'Albania e Scanderbeg nel Piano Generale di Crociata di Callisto III (1455-1458)", *Bolletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, vol. XXI (1967), Roma 1967, p. 84

⁸ *Dokumente per historine e Shqiperise te shek. XV*, vol. I (1400-1405), eds. A. Buda - I. Zamputi - L. Malltezi, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise - Instituti i Historisë, Tirane 1987; Filipovic, N., "A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkan under the Ottoman Rule", *Ottoman Rule in the Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak - Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, p. 343

⁹ For the course of relationship between Ivan Kastriot and the Ottomans from 1410 to 1430 (the period of vassality), see Thiriet, F., "Disa mendime rreth politikës së Venedikut ndaj Skenderbeut", *Konferenca e dytë e studimeve albanologjike, 12-18 janar 1968*, vol. I, Univ. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Tirane 1969, p. 61; Buda, A., "Lufta e popullit shqiptar nën udhëheqjen e Skenderbeut kundër pushtuesve turq", *Shkrime historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise - Instituti i Historisë, Tirane 1986, p. 202

¹⁰ Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, edited by W. Hickman, Princeton University Press 1978, p.4-5

far as the Zeta region (today Montenegro).¹¹ It was Paşa Yiğit of Skopje who forced Gjon Kastrioti (the father of Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg) to accept the sultan's suzerainty in 1410. In the summer of 1917 the Ottomans captured three important cities of southern Albania, Vlorë and Berat* and Kanina.¹² So, the Ottomans became masters of a port in the Adriatic Sea, and from that moment on the Albanian lands in Turkish hands became, as had been feared, a base for attack against the Ionian islands and even Italy.¹³

In the northern Albania the Ottomans supported first, Balšić III, who died in 1421, and later Stephen Lazarević of Serbia against Venice. In the south, the prince Carlo Tocco of Italian origin, died in 1429, and sultan Murat II, taking advantage from the conflict of his heirs, took Yannina (Janina, Yanya). In the meantime, the Ottomans conquered Salonica (ca.1430). The fall of Salonica into the hands of the Ottomans was a harbinger of the event that would take place less than a quarter of century later: the fall of Constantinople and the final collapse of the Byzantine Empire.¹⁴

After the conquest of Salonica, the Ottomans adopted a more aggressive policy in the Balkans. They clearly understood that the territory south of the Danube would be secure only if it were under their direct control. Therefore, they had to counter Hungarian claims to Serbia, and Venetian claims to Albania and Morea.¹⁵ Ottoman troops attacked the territories of Ivan Kastriot, who was trying to escape from the

¹¹ Lenormant, F., *Turcs et Monténégriens*, Paris 1866, p. 27-8

* In Turkish Arnavud Belgradi.

¹² Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, Istanbul 1990, p. 48; Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", *Vepra 4 (Shkrime Historike)*, Akademia e Shkencave, Tirane 1989, p. 337; Soulis, G. Ch., *The Serbs and Byzantium During the Reign of Tsar Stephen Dusan (1331-1355) and His Successors*, Dumbarton Oaks, 1984, p. 141

¹³ Miller, W., "Valona", *Essays on the Latin West*, Cambridge University Press 1921, pp. 437-8

¹⁴ Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, p. 10

¹⁵ İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire – the classical age*, p. 19

obligations of Ottoman vassality.¹⁶ His sons proclaimed themselves as “Muslims”, and Ivan Kastrioti was enforced to check his hand from a part of his territories. In 1431, the Ottomans conquered even the strategic city of Danja* and until 1434 there reigned an Ottoman commander.¹⁷

We knew that in 1431-2 the Ottomans carried out a survey of the territories under the control of Kastriots, which means that this territory definitely had passed under direct Ottoman rule.¹⁸ In the south, the Ottomans supported the Albanian family of Shpata against the Italian family of Toccas. Finally war was declared against Venice during which the Ottomans made real the conquest of Albania from Northern Epirus to Kruja* and formed the province of Arvanid *İli*. The Ottoman survey of land and population made in spring 1432 meant bringing most of Albania under direct Ottoman administrative control. This survey might be regarded as the real starting point of the long Albanian resistance under the lead of Scanderbeg. Moreover, it demonstrates the real character of the resistance.¹⁹

We should not forget that the chief concern of sultan Murat II (1421-1451), which was to consolidate internal order within the boundaries of his state, and to repair the damage caused by the turmoil following the disaster of Ankara (1402). The Albanian portion of Via Egnatia participated in an active regional and international trade. Furthermore, we should connect Murad's interests in via Egnatia with his efforts to

¹⁶ For more details on the Ivan Kastrioti – Ottoman relations in the 1430, see Pulaha, S., “Mbi gjendjen ne vitet 20-30 te shek. XV ne tokat shqiptare dhe mbi qendrimin e klases feudale kundrejt pushtimit osman”, *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. II, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, pp. 277-8

* This is a strategic city-castle in the crossroads between Lissus (Lezhe) and Scutari (Shkoder). In Latin is called Dagnum.

¹⁷ Gurakuqi, G., *Dieçezi i Sapes : 1291-1941*, Shtypshkronja ‘Zoja e Paperlyeme’, Shkoder 1943, p. 33

¹⁸ İnalçık, H., *Hicri 835 tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, p. 120

* In Turkish it is called Akçahisar.

¹⁹ İnalçık, H., “Arnavutluk”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), vol. I, Leiden – London 1960, p. 654

secure the conquest of Albania against Venetians, who dominated the Adriatic Sea routes at that time.

The period of the Ottoman vassality was a transitory period, which lasted differently in different regions.²⁰ In Kosovo the period of vassality lasted from 1389 to 1455,²¹ when the Ottoman established their rule and made registration of the land and population. In the southeastern regions (Permet-Korçe-Konice) this period lasted only 10 years (1382-1392). In southern and central Albania it was ended toward the turn of the second decade of the 15th century, when sultan Murat II managed to recuperate the losses of the Interregnum Period.²² The situation in Northern Albania was quite different. The severe landscape and the peculiar political formation supported by tribal organizations were serious obstacles for the final establishment of Ottoman rule. The resistance of Scanderbeg and the presence of Venice in littoral Albania had prevented the establishment of Ottoman rule before the year 1479.

In general, the length of this period depended on the character of the landscape and the attitude of local lords. We should add that this period offered to the Ottomans the opportunity to take a lot of prerequisites in order to facilitate the stabilization of their rule and to integrate a part of the native nobility into the Ottoman leading caste.

The revolts of Gjergj Arianiti and other Albanian lords (1432-5) echoed throughout Europe. The Papacy and, especially the king of Hungary, Sigismund, were looking for allies. In a short time, Sigismund sent to Gjergj Arianiti the pretender of Bulgarian throne, Fruzhin and a "pretender" to the Ottoman throne called Davud,

²⁰ Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare, shek. XV - XVI*, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1988, p. 30

²¹ For the peculiarities of the Ottoman conquest of Kosovo, see Erdoğan, H.- Y. Yücel, *Ruhi Tarihi*, Belgeler, c. XIV (1989-1992), sayı 18, Ankara 1992, pp. 449-451

²² Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare ...*, p. 30

both living in the Hungarian court. Fruzhin met many leaders of Albanian uprisings.²³

The Ragusian documents tell us that Albanian uprisings became very important in the plans of Sigismond to create an anti-Ottoman front in the Balkans, and Albanian lands seem to be the first place from when the general attack would start.²⁴

The Council of Florence in 1439 and the union of two Christian churches were very dangerous steps made against the Ottomans, because in Florence was decided also to launch a crusade against the Ottomans. According to Ottoman contemporary sources, the union of Western and Eastern Churches was the starting point of the Battle of Varna (November 1444).²⁵ In response, one year later (1440), the Ottomans attempted without success to capture Belgrad, which was the main gate to pass in Hungarian territories.²⁶

In the summer 1443 the Hungarian diet had decided to carry on the struggle against the enemies of Christendom by every available means. Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447), Venice, duke Philip V of Burgundy and Ragusa would support and contribute to this crusading initiative.²⁷ Except for Burgundy, the other Western powers were directly threatened by the Ottoman peril. The participation in a crusade or the

²³ Dimitrov, S., "Mbi misionin e princit bullgar Fruzhin ne Shqiperi ne vitin 1435", *Konferenca e dyte e studimeve albanologjike, 12-18 janar 1968*, vol. I, Univ. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Tirane 1969, p. 166

²⁴ Jorga, N., "Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle", vol. III, Paris 1899, p. 167; Buda, A., "Lufta e popullit shqiptar nën udhëheqjen e Skenderbeut kundër pushtuesve turq", *Shkrime Historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historisë, Tirane 1986, pp. 209-210; idem, "Diskutim rreth kumteses së F. Babingerit: 'Arianit Komneni - vëhërrit i Skenderbeut'", *Konferenca e Parë e Studimeve Albanologjike (15-21 nëntor 1962)*, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Tirane 1965, pp. 296-7. For more details on the conditions Bulgarian prince Fruzhin mission in Albania see, Dimitrov, S., "Mbi misionin e princit bullgar Fruzhin ...", pp. 161-7; for the Ottoman view of this mission and the place of Bulgaria in the anti-Ottoman resistance, see Inalcik, H., *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, 3. Baski, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1995, p. 20

²⁵ Inalcik, H., *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, p.1

²⁶ Pall, Fr., "Un moment décisif de l'histoire du Sud-Est Européen ...", p. 103

²⁷ For a detailed picture of the political and diplomatic relations between the Ottomans and Christian powers on the eve Varna (1444), see Pall, Fr., "Un moment décisif de l'histoire du Sud-Est Européen ...", pp. 106-8; Inalcik, H., *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, pp. 1-53; Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, pp.27-34

determination of Western powers to fight against Ottomans was strongly connected with their geographic distance from the Ottoman menace. The general expectation of Christian powers from this initiative was:

“Rumeli’den Osman-oğlu’nu çıkarub, ..., Bursasını dahi alub Kudüs-i Şerife dek zabt ü rabt edesiz ...”²⁸

This objective of the crusader powers was partially reached after the victory of İzladi. The Ottomans lost strategic points in the Balkans, and, of course, prestige. From the disaster of Nicopolis (1396) the Christian war against the Ottomans took a defensive character. Now thanks to John Hunyadi, crusaders hoped to throw the Ottomans out from the Balkan Peninsula.

Varna was a project of a great crusade, which was a result of Christian military collaboration. It was an expression of Catholic and Orthodox common action against the enemies of the Cross. It was the last concerned attempt made by Western Christendom to relieve Constantinople, though the crusade’s army never came within sight of the city. Varna marks the last European attempt to save Byzantium from its agony and was one of the most decisive events not only of Ottoman, but also of all Western history. It was not only a mere episode of the war between Hungary and the Ottomans and not just a regional enterprise, but also a European crusade.

Aside from the bordering states, the Western world did not conceive the importance of Christian army’s defeat in Varna. For years to come, a pall of discouragement lay over European Christendom. The death of King Vladislav and Cardinal Cesarini put an end to all the efforts of Pope Eugenius IV against the Turks.²⁹ Despite the attempts and zeal of Pope and Hunyadi, it was no longer possible to launch a crusade against

²⁸ *Gazavat-i Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han (İzladi ve Varna Savaslari (1443-1444) Üzerinde Anonim Gazavatname*, yayına hazırlayan H. İnalcık - M. Oğuz, TTK 1989, p. 3

²⁹ Serra, A., *L’Albania di Scanderbeg e i Pontefici per la Difesa dell’Occidente Cristiano (1444-1469)*, Editrice “Casa del Libro”, Cosenza 1960, p. 26

the Ottomans.³⁰ The states bordering on the Ottoman State were paralysed with fear. A severe blow had been dealt the Christian hope of driving the Ottomans out of Europe. After this defeat was sealed the political destiny of the Balkans under the Ottoman rule. From that moment onwards the Balkan Peninsula was separated politically and culturally from Western Europe. The Ottoman rule in the Balkans would permanently last 500 years. Meanwhile, Varna damaged the Union of Churches in Florence.³¹

The Battle of Varna is the last crusade of the Middle Ages, but the first international Christian alliance against the Ottomans in the new era.³²

b. From Varna (1444) to Otranto (1481): Scanderbeg and His Time*

The crusading victory in Iztadi (1443) created the idea in the Christian world that there was no place in Europe for the Ottomans, and their expulsion from the Balkans was an immediate event. The Ottoman rule in the Balkans was facing a serious threat. Chalkokondyles says that in these conditions many local lords were running to regain family territories. Moreover, the allies of the Christian coalition made plans to parcel out the peninsula.³³

In this international context of events Scanderbeg returned to Kruje. He benefited especially from the chaotic situation in the Ottoman army at the Battle of Niš (November 1443). But the return of Scanderbeg to Kruje and the beginning of anti-Ottoman resistance also had internal reasons. According to Serbian chronicles, upon the death of his father Ivan (ca. 1437), Scanderbeg was appointed by the sultan the

³⁰ Pall, Fr., "Un moment décisif de l'histoire du Sud-Est Européen ...", p.118

³¹ *ibid.*, p.119

³² Inalcik, H., *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, p. 52

* For a large information on the main works made on Scanderbeg and his period see, Buda, A., "Rreth disa problemeve te historise se epokes se Skenderbeut", *Shkrime Historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1986, pp. 228- 231.

³³ Inalcik, H., *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, p. 2, 34

subash of Kruja. Despite this, he considered himself as the legal heir of paternal territories, though he, already as an Ottoman official, was given only a part of paternal territories.³⁴

After the crusading disaster of Varna no danger threatened the Ottomans from Hungary. Accordingly, the sultan's eyes turned toward Albania and Greece, for it was only from these quarters that he envisaged any serious threat to the security of his European possessions. Scanderbeg came face to face with the Ottomans. Nonetheless, we should say that the difficult victory of the Ottomans in Varna deprived them from using an emergent force in order to strangle Albanian resistance when it was still in cradle.

The first step that Scanderbeg made after the capture of Kruja was his worldwide declaration of his conversion from Islam to Catholicism.³⁵ He was not only converted personally, but also ordered also the conversion of all Albanians converted before to Islam under the Ottoman pressure. He made a call for conversion to Catholicism also to Turkish soldiers situated in the castle of Kruja, otherwise he ordered their death.³⁶

The first contacts between Scanderbeg and the Papacy were realized in a short time after his return to Kruja and the proclamation of independence. Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447) thanked Scanderbeg for coming back to the territories of his father and especially to the "true religion".³⁷ The genuine relations of political character started in the spring of 1444 when the Pope invited all eminent Christian leaders in a terrestrial action against the Ottomans.³⁸ Especially after the first victory of

³⁴ Palikruseva, G., "Islamisation de la region Reka dans le nord-est de la Macedoine", *La Macedoine et les Macedoniens dans le passe*, Skopje 1970, p. 139

³⁵ Musacchio, G., "Breve memoria de li discendenti de nostra casa Musachi", in: Hopf, Ch., *Chroniques greco-romanes, inedites ou peu connues*, Paris 1873, p. 274

³⁶ Barleti, M., *Historia e jetes dhe e veprave te Skenderbeut*, transl. by Stefan Prifti, Univ. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1964, pp. 69-70

³⁷ Serra, A., *L'Albania di Scanderbeg e i Pontefici ...*, p. 23

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 24

Scanderbeg against the Ottomans in Torvioll (1444), the Pope made efforts to integrate Scanderbeg into the international Christian resistance. In a letter (11 May 1445) sent to the Pope, Hunyadi also implied aid promised from different Balkan countries, even from Albania.³⁹ The Pope nominated the Bishop of Dulcigno, Mons. Paganino his apostolic nuncio in Albania.⁴⁰

The relations between Scanderbeg and Vatican became stronger and more cordial after another victory by Scanderbeg in October 1445 (the Battle of Mokrea). Scanderbeg had already show himself as a capable *condotier*.⁴¹ The first special envoys of the Vatican came to Scanderbeg in January 1446.⁴²

In February 1447, the Pope Eugenius IV died, and was replaced by Nicola V (1447-1455). In summer 1447 sultan Murat II was engaged in Albania, when Hunyadi tried to join the allies' forces and intended to take revenge for Varna. Murat had personally led a surprise attack on eastern Albania. At the end of July 1448 the strongly fortified castle of Svetigrad (Kocacik) was captured. The contemporary Ottoman sources say that upon news coming from the Danub, sultan Murat was forced to abandon Albania to meet Hunyadi.⁴³

The first official contacts between Scanderbeg and Hunyadi started in spring 1446.⁴⁴ The mediator was Ragusa, which during this period was under the Hungarian sovereignty, and supported the anti-Ottoman resistance of Scanderbeg. In response, Hunyadi sent his envoys to Scanderbeg and Gjergj Arianiti to incorporate two Albanian leaders in the Christian war against the Crescent.⁴⁵ According to the plan,

³⁹ Pall, Fr., "Skenderbeu dhe Huniadi", p. 78

⁴⁰ Serra, A., *op. cit.*, p. 25

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 27

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Pulaha, S., "Oruç" & "Kronikat anonime osmane", *Lufta shqiptaro-turke ne shekullin XV - burime osmane*, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tiranë 1968, p. 46, 55

⁴⁴ Pall, Fr., "Skenderbeu dhe Huniadi", p. 79

⁴⁵ "Laonik Halkokondili", *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin XV ...*, p. 57

Hunyadi personally with his troops would attack the Ottomans in Serbia and Bulgaria, while Scanderbeg with his Albanians from behind.⁴⁶

The advance of Hunyadi toward Kosovo (17-20 October 1448) might be argued as a proof that Hunyadi was co-operating with Albanians.⁴⁷ But for the second time he was defeated. According to a Ragusian chronicle of the 18th century, the delay of Scanderbeg was caused by Durad Brankovic, the father-in-law of sultan Murat II.⁴⁸ The Second Battle of Kosovo was the last attempt for a re-conquest of the Balkans by Christian armies.⁴⁹ At the same time, the anti-Ottoman war led by Hunyadi and Scanderbeg delayed for a while the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul and the end of Byzantium.⁵⁰

On 21 March 1449, Venice declared that it officially recognised Scanderbeg and Arianiti as *condottiero*.⁵¹ At the same time, Gjergj Arianiti demanded from Venice to take his territories under own control.⁵² In October 1450, Scanderbeg demanded the same thing after an unsuccessful Ottoman siege of Kruja. Venice refused these requests of Gj. Arianiti and Scanderbeg.⁵³

At the beginning of the 1450's Scanderbeg drew the attention of Alphons V of Naples. The first contacts between Albanians and Naples were initiated by Gjergj Arianiti in June 1449.⁵⁴ The relations were developed with an agreement according to which Arianiti could demand help from Naples in order to save his territories from

⁴⁶ Pall, Fr., "Skenderbeu dhe Huniadi", p. 79; Inalcik, H., *Osmanli Tarihine Toplu bir Bakis, Osmanli*, vol. I, Ankara 1999, p. 70

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 80

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 82

⁴⁹ Inalcik, H., *Osmanli Tarihine Toplu bir Bakis*, p. 70

⁵⁰ Pall, Fr., *op. cit.*, p. 76

⁵¹ Babinger, F., "Arianit Komneni - Vjehri i Skenderbeut", p. 480

⁵² Valentini, G., "Appunti sul regime degli stabilimenti veneti in Albania nel secolo XIV e XV", *Studi Veneziani*, vol. VIII (1966), p. 213

⁵³ Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", *Vepra 4 (Shkrime Historike)*, Akademia e Shkencave, Tirane 1989, p. 284

⁵⁴ Babinger, F., "Arianit Komneni - Vjehri i Skenderbeut", p. 480

the Ottomans; in return, he had to send to Naples the tribute that Arianiti regularly sent to the Ottomans.⁵⁵ Naples showed interest and ambitions in Albanian lands because they constituted a natural bridge for passage from Italy to the hinterland of the Balkans. Alphons was a politician with big ambitions to be the heir of the Norman and Angevine kings. His intention was to be stationed in Albania to use it as the base to launch any attack against Constantinople, or to maintain Albania as a space of war in order to prevent southern Italy from being an arena of military conflict between the Ottomans and Naples.* Chalkokondiles says that Scanderbeg delivered Kruja to Naples and was granted Napolitan citizenship.⁵⁶ Scanderbeg recognised the sovereignty and entered under the political and military protection of Alphons (The treaty of Gaeta, 1451).⁵⁷

Alphons made the same agreements with many Albanian and non-Albanian local lords (Muzaka, Spani, Dukagjini, Topia, Zenebishi and Carlo Tocco). The same agreement made by Alphons V with Arianiti and the Stephen Vukcic Kosaca.⁵⁸ Such a step marks the reorganisation of the League of Lezha under the lead of Alphons of Naples.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, in order to feel fully secure against the Christian nations, the sultan found it necessary to establish passable relations with Hungary. In 1451 Hungary accepted the offer of sultan Mehmed II for a three years cease-fire. The Ottoman

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 481

* Cerone, Fr., "La politica orientale di Alfonso di Aragona", *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, anno XXVII, fasc. I, II, III, IV - anno XVIII, fasc. I (1903); Marinescu, C., *Alphonse V, roi d'Aragon et de Naples, et l'Albanie de Scanderbeg*, *Mélanges de l'école Roumaine e France*, I (1923); Monti, G. M., "La storia dell'Albania e le sue fonti napoletane", *Studi Albanesi*, vol. I (1931), Istituto per l'Europa Orientale, Roma, pp. 35-54

⁵⁶ "Laonik Halkokondili", *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin XV*..., p. 59

⁵⁷ Inalcik, H., "Krahina e Krujes dhe e Dibres rreth vitit 1467", *Konferenca e Dyte e Studimeve Albanologjike, 12-18 janar 1968*, vol. I, p. 186. For more details on the Tractate of Gaeta and later relations between Scanderbeg and Alphons of Naples, see Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", pp. 291-292

⁵⁸ Drançolli, J., "Lidhjet historike shqiptaro-boshnjake ne shek. XV", *Gjurmime Albanologjike (seria e shkencave historike)*, XIV (1984), pp. 43-4

⁵⁹ Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", p. 292

sultan benefited from that moment to attack Constantinople. Sultan Mehmed was proud to see himself as the heir of the Caesars, Roman Emperor as well as sultan. He fully understood the strategic importance of Constantinople, believing that if he were stationed in Istanbul he could rule the world.

With the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans first began to regard their presence in Europe as something more than a protracted intrusion. Such a huge military success meant the seizure of the visible symbols of rule and the final destruction of worldwide myth, Byzantium held. Although an Islamic state, the frontiers of the Orthodox Church were made its natural boundaries. Many spiritual leaders of Orthodoxy escaped from Constantinople believing that, in a short time, sultan Mehmed planned an attack upon Italy.⁶⁰

The conquest of Istanbul prepared the way for a new confrontation between European Catholics and Muslim Turks. From that moment on the *idea of Europe* was reduced into the world of Latin Christianity. The fall of Constantinople into Ottoman hands throws a bright light on his underlying final political aim: the subjection of the Catholic Occident to his sceptre. However, such a big loss for Christianity shocked Western Europe. During the summer Pope Nicola began marshalling the forces of Christendom for a counterattack. All the Western sovereigns professed their readiness to take part in a crusade against the Ottomans. But none of them took the decisive step from words to deeds.

In spring 1454 King Alphons personally took the lead in a crusade against the Ottomans. Alphons hoped to compel the princes of West to make war on the Ottomans and to drive the infidels out of Europe. The final aim was the re-capture of Constantinople, but the course of events changed his mind. Only in the frontier

⁶⁰ Frazee, Ch. A., *Catholics and Sultans - the church and the Ottoman Empire (1453-1923)*, Cambridge University Press 1983, p. 9

countries was the resistance against the Ottomans received as a kind of “national spirit” in order to protect Catholic values. In countries far from the Ottoman peril, the confrontations were mainly internal of feudal-dynastic character.

The diets of Ratisbone, Frankfurt, Wiener-Neustadt and in the Hungarian diets convened in 1454 and 1455 did not forget the participation and the probable contribution of Albanians.⁶¹

Pope Nicola V died on 24 March 1455 lamenting his inability to help the Christian Greeks now under Islamic order. His successor was the aged Cardinal Alphons from the famous Spaniard family of Borgia, who assumed the name Calixtus III (1455-1458). He understood well that sultan Mehmed II, following the capture of Constantinople, was a real threat for the rest of Christendom and especially Rome.⁶² He was not interested in regaining Constantinople but he also believed that Christian armies should be used even to regain Jerusalem. But in order to save the Holy Centers of Christianity he had to put an end to various conflicts in the Appenine Peninsula and in Central Europe.

The crusade was the principal mission of his life.⁶³ We should always bear in mind the fact that this Pope came from Spain where the war between Christianity and Islam was reaching its zenith. In a short time, he nominated his missionaries to the crucial places of Balkans, which were seriously faced by the Ottoman threat.⁶⁴ His final aim was to defend all the Balkans states facing the Ottoman threat and, if possible, to regain the territories conquered by the Ottomans.

⁶¹ Pall, Fr., “Skenderbeu dhe Huniadi”, p. 83

⁶² Sciambra, M - G. Valentini - I. Parrino, *Il “Liber Brevium di Callisto III - La Crociata, L’Albania e Scanderbeg”*, Centro Internazionale di Studi Albanesi (Palermo) - Istituto Universitario Orientale (Napoli) - Istituto di Studi Albanesi dell’Università di Roma - Fondazione ‘Giorgio Cini’ - Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum (Roma), Palermo 1968, p. 11

⁶³ Sciambra, M - G. Valentini - I. Parrino, “L’Albania e Scanderbeg nel piano generale ...”, p. 107

⁶⁴ On the diplomatic and political actions of Pope Calixtus III soon after he came to throne see, Millosevich, F., “La politica orientale di Calisto III e l’Albania”, *Rivista d’Albania*, anno III, fasc. II,

In April 1455 the crusade was on the agenda of international relations and politics. The Pope had intensive negotiations with Philip III of Burgogna and Alphons V of Naples. He inspired and urged missionaries of Catholic orders (Franciscans, Dominicans and Agustinians) to keep his hope alive among all Christian Balkan people.⁶⁵ Hence, Calixtus III tried to put into motions all anti-Ottoman forces, but it was really difficult to be successful, because Naples, Milan, Venice, Florence and Genoa had problems among them, while Burgogna, Portugal, Germany, France, Scandinavia and Poland remained passive.⁶⁶ The Christian countries of Western Europe were not ready to meet a vast war against the Ottomans as long as their lands were not under the direct Ottoman pressure. In the camp of war always remained Hungarians, Bosnians, Albanians and the Vatican with its fleet.

Albania, Bosnia and Hungary were neuralgic points of terrestrial frontiers of Christianity and Islam. If the Ottomans would definitively capture Hungary and Albania, then they have only to get hold of the Gates of Europe, to penetrate toward the heart of Christendom.

After the fall of Constantinople the political life in the Balkans was paralysed and local princes were expecting the next actions of Mehmet.⁶⁷ He undertook the first military campaigns against Serbia and the mining cities of Kosovo.⁶⁸ On 1 June 1455 the Ottomans conquered Novo Brdo, the most important city in the interior of the peninsula, well known for its gold and silver and the presence of different ethnic communities. After the capture of Novo Brdo the whole southeastern part of the

Milano, giugno 1942, p. 127; Sciambra, M - G. Valentini - I. Parrino, "L'Albania e Scanderbeg nel piano generale ...", pp. 108-110

⁶⁵ Sciambra, M - G. Valentini - I. Parrino, *Il "Liber Brevium di Callisto III ..."*, p. 25

⁶⁶ Millosevich, F., "La politica orientale di Calisto III e l'Albania", p. 128; Sciambra, M - G. Valentini - I. Parrino, *Il "Liber Brevium di Callisto III"*, p. 19

⁶⁷ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, çev. VL. Mirmiroglu, Istanbul 1956, p. 194

⁶⁸ Inalcik, H., *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, p.134. The Ottoman conquest of Novo Brdo was achieved in June 1455: Anhegger, R.- H. İnalcık, *Kanunname-i Sultanî ber-muceb-i 'Örf-i 'Osmanî*, TTK yay., Ankara 1956, p. XIX

Serbian Despotate was occupied in a few days. At important points, like Priština, Prizren and Trepča the Ottomans established their garrisons. The fall of Novo Brdo, regarded as one the remaining bastions of Christianity, produced a great devastating impression in Hungary and Italy.⁶⁹

The first official contacts between Scanderbeg and Calixtus III realised in the spring of 1456, when Pope assure Scanderbeg that through Vatican he will have the aid of Naples and Milan.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the rescue of Belgrade from the Ottoman siege (July 1456) marks the last glory of Hunyadi against the Ottomans. He died on 11 August 1456.

For three years (1456 – 1458) Catholicism fell into a very difficult position, because it lost three important personalities very decided in war against Islam: Hunyadi, Giovanni da Capistrano and the Pope Calixtus III.⁷¹ While Scanderbeg, in 1458, lost his three best friends and great supporters of his resistance, Pope Calixtus III, Alphons of Naples and Kont Urani.*

On 6 August 1458 Enea Silvio Piccolomini became the Pope Pius II (1458-1464). In the crusading view of the new Pope, Albanian lands constituted a small sector of his general plan, while Hungary was his big concern. During 1459 Scanderbeg intensified relations with Pius II, because the Vatican wanted to incorporate Scanderbeg in a probable crusade, which would result in the Congress of Mantua.⁷² The Congress of Mantua failed because of the general faintheartedness and hypocrisy. In the last weeks of the Congress its true purpose, the crusade against the

⁶⁹ Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, pp. 127-8

⁷⁰ Serra, A., *L'Albania di Scanderbeg e i Pontefici ...*, p. 36

⁷¹ Millosevich, F., "Paolo II e Scanderbeg", *Rivista d'Albania*, anno II, fasc. 1, (marzo 1941), pp. 58-59

* The famous Albanian military commander, a loyal friend of Scanderbeg.

⁷² Serra, A., *L'Albania di Scanderbeg e i Pontefici ...*, p.62

Ottomans, was overshadowed by the Napolitan question.⁷³ The indifference of the Western princes to his pleas for military action made Pius II decide upon a personal appeal to Mehmet II in 1461 hoping that persuasion might prove more effective than force. But while Catholic Europe was dealing with its internal problems, the Ottomans continued to advance and in 1459 they conquered Serbian lands. Nevertheless, Pius II looked upon Scanderbeg as the best hope of Christendom in the Balkan and prayed that his continued resistance might demonstrate to the West European princes that the Ottomans could be stopped.

The fall of Bosnia (1463) into Ottoman hands troubled all Christian Europe. In November, Pope Pius II proclaimed a crusade. He, by means of the Archbishop of Durres, managed to convince all Albanian lords to participate in this movement. At the beginning of 1464 Pope went to Ancona and from there to Ragusa where he would meet Matthias Corvinus and Scanderbeg. In fact, sultan Mehmet had planned to give the final blow to Scanderbeg. But the death of the Pope (15 August 1364) paralysed preparations for a new crusade. Now, the states most threatened by Ottoman menace were Albania and Hungary. Actually only Albania was a Balkan region, which still was preventing the Ottoman advancement towards Italy. The fall of Bosnia had quickly put an end to the territorial quarrels between Hungarian lords. The documents show an intensive diplomatic activity among Scanderbeg, Corvinus and Stephen Kosaca, whose territories became very small.⁷⁴

Some months before the death of Pope Pius II, both the duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza⁷⁵ (8 march 1464), and Cosimo Medici of Florence (1 August 1464) died. In the Appenine Peninsula the balance of power changed. The death of Pope Pius II

⁷³ Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, p. 172

⁷⁴ Drançolli, J., "Lidhjet historike shqiptaro-boshnjake ne shek. XV", pp. 49-50

eliminated the pressure of the Vatican over the European princes for the organising of crusades. The new political configuration caused desperation. The new Pope, Paul II (1464-1471), called to Western countries to accept refugees coming from Albania. Europe was dealing with internal and territorial problems forgetting that Albania was the western most bastion of Christendom in the Balkans.

In 1466 Scanderbeg once again went to Italy to plead for help, but did not find what he hoped for. It was the last time Scanderbeg visited Italy, because in January 1468 he died. Shortly after the death of Scanderbeg, Pope Paul (1464-1471) appointed Bartolomeo Colleoni as the *generalissimo dei cristiani* of Albania. But neither Milan nor Naples wished to sponsor a new action in Albania, whose result was not clear. Consequently, this attempt to keep alive Albanian resistance had failed.⁷⁶ A great exodus of the Albanians to Italy followed the death of Scanderbeg.

Venice immediately sent to Kruja the Archbishop of Durres, Pal Engjelli, to take from there the widow and son of Scanderbeg, and to assume the right of protection of the Kastriot territories.⁷⁷ Thanks to the protection of Venice, the epicentre of Albanian resistance, Kruja, and Venetian possessions in Northern Albania resisted until 1479. Venice was, at that moment, the most important force willing to sponsor the Albanian lords, now in emigration in Italy.⁷⁸ Upon the terrible occasion after the Ottoman conquest of Euboea (11 July 1470) the doge of Venice proclaimed these words: "All, Italy and all Christendom, are in the same boat".

One year later Pope Paul II died and was replaced by Cardinal Francesco della Rovere as Sixtus IV (1471-1484). Under him the idea of a crusade assumed world

⁷⁵ Babinger, F., "Maometto II il conquistatore e l'Italia", *Rivista Storica Italiana*, LXIII, no. 4 (1951), pp. 469-505; Pall, Fr., "I rapporti Italo-Albanesi intorno alla meta del secolo XV", *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, terza serie, vol. IV (1963), Napoli 1966, pp. 123-226

⁷⁶ Millosevich, F., "Paolo II e Scanderbeg", p. 59

⁷⁷ Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", p. 340

⁷⁸ Ugolini, L. M., "Pagine di storia Veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg e dei suoi successori", *Studi Albanesi*, vol. III-IV (1933-4), Istituto per l'Europa Orientale, Roma, pp. 14-5

importance for the last time. Sixtus IV showed interest in contributing to the defence of the Adriatic coasts. But the Ottomans came to the gates of Shkodra (summer 1474). Sixtus IV sent the besieged population of the city money and supplies. On the other hand, he urged Ragusa to help more against the Ottomans. Negotiations among Venice, the Vatican and Naples were carried on in Rome and once more Pope Sixtus IV nourished high hopes of an alliance of all Italian states against the Crescent. No one believed that the first defeat of Mehmed in Shkodra would move the sultan to abandon his ambitions in Albania. The Ottoman soldiers under the walls of Shkodra castle shouted: "Rome, Rome", making clear that Mehmed earlier had planned nothing less than to make himself master of all Italy and thereby of the Catholic Church.⁷⁹ On January 25, 1479, Venice ceded Shkodra and its environs, and relinquished all claims to Kruje and castles of Himara and Sopot in the Albanian coastlands of Ionian Sea.⁸⁰ All territories taken by Venice in sixteen years of warfare were to be returned in a short time. Both parties were to appoint an arbiter to define the pre-war borders between the two states. The Albanian bastion formed the last barrier to Ottoman westward advance.

All Albanian lands : "... Arnavud İskenderiyesi dahi darü'l- İslam oldu. ...".⁸¹ At the same time, the sultan obtained unrestricted rule over Albania whose noble families such as the Arianiti, the Dukagjini, the Kastrioti, the Muzaka and the Topia were obliged to take refuge in Naples, Venice or Northern Italy, except for those who preferred to espouse Islam and who were in the future to provide the Porte with some of its foremost statesmen. The peace treaty of 1479, firstly, sealed the Ottoman

⁷⁹ Gjergj Merula, "Lufta e Shkodres (1474)", in: Marin Barletius, *Rrethimi i Shkodres*, 3rd edition, Shtepia Botuese "Naim Frasheri", Tirane 1982, p. 134

⁸⁰ Zamputi, I., "Levizja e Lezhës dhe ekspedita e Skenderbeut të Ri, 1499-1506", *Studime për epokën e Skenderbeut*, vol. II, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historisë, Tirane 1989, p. 617

⁸¹ Pulaha, S., "Mehmet Neshri", *Lufta shqiptaro-turke në shekullin XV - burime osmane*, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1968, p. 94-5. Finally the Ottomans were able to take Kruje, Drishti, Lezha and Zhabjak in 1478 and Shkoder in 1479.

conquest of Albanian lands and legalised the lifelong Ottoman rule. It has with good reason been regarded as a turning point in the policy of the European Powers toward the moral enemy of the Christian name.⁸² With great military successes, sultan Mehmed II became the greatest Islamic sovereign of his time, and the Islamic world came to regard Holy War (ghaza) as the greatest source of power and influence.⁸³

From 1480 onwards the Ottomans always thought of an invasion of Italy, but the most important factor which made them hesitate was the possibility of resistance of a Europe united under the leadership of the Pope.⁸⁴ Ahmet Gedik Pasha was dispatched from the Albanian coast city of Vlora to attack Italy. The city of Otranto fell into Ottoman hands on 18 August 1480. Italy was terrorized. All Italian states actually concluded an alliance on September 16, 1480. By chance, sultan Mehmed II died on 3 May 1481. A united Italy expelled the Ottoman troops from the Appenine Peninsula on 10 September 1481.

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The Albanian resistance lead by Scanderbeg is assessted differently by many Albanian and non-Albanian scholars. The personality of Scanderbeg, rather than about his deeds, is appraised ideologically in terms of the 20th century political realities. Rather than national background, in the assasment of the Albanian resistance of Scanderbeg determinant had been the ideological background of

⁸² Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, p. 372

⁸³ İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire –the classical age*, p. 56

⁸⁴ İnalcık, H., "The Turkish Impact on the Development of Modern Europe", *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organisation and Economy*, Variorum Reprints, London 1978, p. 51

scholars dealing with this topic. A. Gegaj⁸⁵ tried to argue that the resistance of Scanderbeg was of religious character, neglecting other aspects of this movement. L. Ugolini⁸⁶ and A. Buda⁸⁷ rejected the material and moral contribution of Papacy in Albanian resistance. For other scholars, like F. Cordignano,⁸⁸ Scanderbeg was just a representative of Italian interests in Albania, a captain of Naples and Venice.

At first, converting to Catholicism marked a significant diplomatic move. He declared a Holy War from which there was not retreat and linked his personally interests with the Christian West and burned the bridges with Muslim Turks.

Such a step intended to tie stronger relations with his people mostly belonging to Catholicism. We should clarify that Scanderbeg enjoyed the support of his people, because in their eyes he was the legal leader of these territories based in the traditional tribe organisation.

Understanding well the Ottoman power and the nature of Ottoman state, Scanderbeg lunched another important political step. The organization of the Lezha Convention (March 1444) in Albanian possessions of Venice with the participation of whole important Albanian noble families and the representatives of some tribal organizations⁸⁹ demonstrated clearly that Scanderbeg estimated the power of the Turks and was conscious that was very difficult to stop alone the attacks of the Ottomans.

While in cultural and political ideology the Ottomans always professed to be the vanguard of the Islamic world representing its militancy against a crusading

⁸⁵ *L'Albanie et l'invasion turque au XVe siècle*, Louvain - Paris, 1937

⁸⁶ "Pagine di storia Veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg e dei suoi successori", *Studi Albanesi*, vol. III-IV (1933-4), Istituto per l'Europa Orientale, Roma.

⁸⁷ "Gjergj Kastrioti - Skenderbeu dhe Epoka e Tij", *Shkrime Historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1986, p. 285

⁸⁸ "L'Albania nella storia e nella vita", *Rivista d'Albania*, anno II, fasc. I, marzo 1941, p. 29

⁸⁹ In the Convention of Lezha participated even the representatives of tribes of Himara: Buda, A., "Lufta e popullit shqiptar nen udheheqjen e Skenderbeut kunder pushtesve turq", *Shkrime Historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1986, p. 213

threatening Christendom, the idea of an Albania unified or regional co-operation on the basis of Christian ideology and a holy war against the Ottomans was an effort to exploit public opinion in Europe and Papacy in order to legitimise the policies of the individual states and communities. During the 15th century, a crusade was possible only with the inspiration of Papacy and the support of Venice and Hungary for own political interests against the Ottoman threat and for many crusaders the Holy War came to involve the defence of their homelands.

The objectives of the Holy War had always changed as political circumstances and military balance of power altered; nevertheless, the enthusiasm for the crusade parallel with the rise of the Ottoman power.

During his resistance Scanderbeg had contacts with five Popes. The Papacy was expected not only to bless the arms of the leaders of anti-Ottoman resistance, but also to help them materially. The Latin sources offer information about the material/financial assistance that Papacy granted to Scanderbeg. Although it was not of capital importance, it did not miss.⁹⁰

In 1443-4, 1448, 1456 and 1468-9 Scanderbeg tried to co-operate his actions with crusade initiatives. Directly or indirectly he took part in all international actions under the lead of Papacy and Hungary. In this context we should say that Scanderbeg and Hunyadi felt themselves to be members of the same religious-cultural community, which surpassed the boundaries of their respective countries.⁹¹

⁹⁰ A detailed information about the material assistance of Papacy for Albanian resistance can be found in: Ugolini, L. M., "Pagine di storia Veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg e dei suoi successori", p. 11; Millosevich, F., "La politica orientale di Calisto III e l'Albania", p. 132; Masci, S., "Le relazioni Italo-Albanesi al tempo di Giorgio Scanderbeg", *Rivista d'Albania*, anno II, fasc. II, (giugno 1941), p. 166; Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, p. 337; Serra, A., *L'Albania di Scanderbeg e i Pontefici ...*, pp. 26, 39, 43-4, 82-3, 135-6; Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", pp. 3313, 408 9, 414, 416; Millosevich, F., "Paolo II e Scanderbeg", p. 58

⁹¹ Buda, A., "Mbi disa aspekte te njesise dhe te ndryshueshmerise ne historine e popullit shqiptar dhe te popujve te tjere ballkanike, *Shkrime Historike*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1986, p. 52

Scanderbeg was very conscious about the geo-political position of Albania in the second half of the 15th century. He personally has said: “If I am defeated, Italy could perceive the consequences”.⁹² Beside being a military talent, Scanderbeg was a good actor of international politics. He tried to exploit the international situation and Christian religious feelings for his interests. The passage of Scanderbeg to Italy in order to help Ferdinand of Naples in his dynastic quarrels (1463-4), along with a feudal loyalty to the memory of his father, it was a tactic to increase as far as possible the number of allies in his resistance against the Ottomans. After his military success in Italy, in 1461, Scanderbeg passed to Ragusa, which gave to him a modest aid from the funds of crusade levied on behalf of the Vatican.

Seen from the Albanian point of view, the origin and motives of Scanderbeg's resistance were feudal by character, and not different from those of the other Albanian lords. While seen from the contemporary Catholic view, Albanian resistance was only a segment of an anti-Ottoman line of resistance. The Papacy called Scanderbeg *Defensor Fidei* and *Athleta Christi*, because all the Catholic world desired to keep the conflict with the Ottomans in the Balkan Peninsula. However, “the weakness, helplessness, disunion, and mutual jealousy of the Christian world were, as usual, sultan Mehmed's best allies”.⁹³

c. Last Efforts for Liberation (1481-1502)

The Ottoman military conquest changed the character of Albanian resistance. Thereafter, the actions for liberation of Albania took the character of sporadic military incursions, completely sponsored by forces out of Albania. The final ambition of Albanian lords and their heirs in emigration was to liberate paternal

⁹² Noli, F. S., “Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)”, p. 423

⁹³ Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, p. 269

principalities rather than to organize an anti-Ottoman resistance of general character. Such a phenomenon was peculiar not only for Albanian lands, but also for other western Balkan lands.⁹⁴

The destiny and the perspective of these actions were no more linked with the internal factors in Albanian lands, but directly with the international political balance of power (Ottoman – Italian relations). In 1499, the son of Ivan II Scanderbeg, Gjergj II Scanderbeg, landed to Albania, but in 1501 when the international course of events changed and consequently, Venice checked its support, the success of this initiative depended on the developments in Hungarian-Ottoman front.⁹⁵

The fate of such attempts was closely connected with the degree of Ottoman pressure on Italy and the relations between the Ottoman Empire and Italian states. In February 1484 Italy scared a lot from Ottoman preparations in Vlora (Albania) to land in Italy once again.⁹⁶ Due to this, the king of Naples ordered to opening of negotiations with Ivan II Kastrioti.⁹⁷

The internal political conjecture in Italy and relations between western states influenced also the course of events in Albania.⁹⁸ The advance of Charles VIII and French army toward the southern Italy (1494/5) caused a great scare among the Ottomans in Albanian littoral regions.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ In 1481, when Ivan II Kastrioti and Nikolla Dukagjini entered the territories of his family, the heir duke Stephen Kosaca, the duke Vlatko, entered Bosnia and Ivan Crnojevic in Montenegro: Drançolli, J., "Lidhjet historike shqiptaro-boshnjake ne shek. XV", p. 51

⁹⁵ For details of this initiative firstly sponsored by Venice and later abandoned, see Zamputi, I., "Levizja e Lezhës dhe ekspedita e Skenderbeut te Ri (1499-1506)", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. II, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, pp. 616-640

⁹⁶ *Dokumenta te shekullit XV per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. IV (1479-1506), pjesa I (1479-1499), ed. Injac Zamputi, Tirane 1967, p. 86-7

⁹⁷ Iorga, N., "Notes et extraits pour servir a l'histoire des croisades ...", Bucarest 1915, p. 143

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 165-7

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 227

Thanks to the traditional character of Albanian society, the heirs of native nobility were welcome by their people. Until the second half of the 16th century¹⁰⁰ Albanian nobility in emigration did not cut the contact with people of their lands. They were waiting the available moment to come back to their territorial possessions. Due to the fact that their lands were under the Ottoman rule, they did not possess financial sources to assume big military and political actions. The incursion of new Scanderbeg (1499-1501) was the last tentative of an Albanian member of former native nobility to save paternal territories. The actions propagated by Italian states as initiative for liberation of Balkan population were in fact some separated, un-coordinated incursions in order to occupy the Ottomans in Albania, geo-politically a buffer zone.

We should emphasize one again the fact that Albanian lands were on the axis of road starting from Constantinople to Rome and vice versa. In March 1490 Albanian lands seems to be among starting points from where the Catholic armies had planned to attack the Ottomans.¹⁰¹ Even, the landing of French army of King Charles VIII in the Balkans was planned to be in Albanian lands.¹⁰²

The aim was not to help Albanian people for liberation from the Ottoman rule, but to maintain the conflict with the Ottomans far from the Italian Peninsula. Finally, Albanian lands remained without leadership, without its elite whose shaping took many centuries. The secular elite was replaced by churchmen, of Albanian and non-Albanian origin. Paralelly, at this time we see the process of regeneration of

¹⁰⁰ Ugolini, L. M., "Pagine di storia Veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg ...", pp. 16-7

¹⁰¹ *Dokumenta te shekullit XV per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. IV (1479-1506), pjesa I (1479-1499), ed. Injac Zamputi, Tirane 1967, p.114

¹⁰² Zamputi, I., "Levizja Shqiptare ne Kohen e Ekspedites se Karlit VIII (1494-5)", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. II, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 614

Albanian tribes even in that territories were before the authority of a noble family was absolute.

In October 1498, Montenegro felt under the Ottoman rule.¹⁰³ Since the summer of 1499, the Ottomans of littoral sancaks started preparations to capture Durres (Draç), Antibarium (Bar/Tivar), Dulcignium (Ulcinj, Ülgün, Ulqin). The seizure of Durres occurred in August 1501,¹⁰⁴ thus was completed their conquest of Albania. The triumph of Islam was political and military. Actually it was the prestigious religion of rulers.

II. Islam versus Christianity and the Turks

a. Islam on non-Muslim Communities and Conversion

Islam emerged in the 7th century as a new religion, whose ultimate aim was to win the whole world. Islam, from the point of view of the creed, its perception of the world and its ambitions was a universal religion.¹⁰⁵ Similar to the law of ancient Rome and the law of Medieval Christendom, the Muslim law was also based on the theory of a universal state.¹⁰⁶ Because of that, Islam and Christendom have been facing each other as the only two rival great religious and spiritual powers with inevitability of continuous conflict for world domination. Since the spread of Islam toward the Mediterranean world, both Islam and Christendom were neighbors, rivals, and often enemies. Their ultimate aims of conquest the whole world were responsible

¹⁰³ *Dokumenta te shekullit XV per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. IV (1479-1506), pjesa I ..., p. 177

¹⁰⁴ Zamputi, I., "Lezha, Rodoni, Durresi dhe Perpjekjet e Fundit per Rimekembjen e Principatave Shqiptare", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. II, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 670

¹⁰⁵ Lewis, B., *Çatışan Kültürler: Keşifler Çağında Hristyanlar, Müslümanlar, Yahudiler*, 2. Baskı, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul 1997, p. 4

¹⁰⁶ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore and London, 1979, p. 45

for the fact why both, Islam and Christendom, refused to recognize respective legal systems, as far as its own. From the time of the Prophet Muhammad to the present day the ultimate definition of the *other*, the alien outsider and presumptive enemy has been the *kafir* (the unbeliever).

The message of Islam was not for Arabia and Arabs only.¹⁰⁷ Although the Qur'an accepts the pluralism of religions and affirms the unity of the faith, neither Christians nor Jews were prepared to accept a new and genuine religion after their final communication with Heaven. This is the reason why "the symbolism of the sword was familiar from the earliest days of Islam".¹⁰⁸ Such a symbolism on behalf of the new faith was conceived as the ultimate and indispensable tool when the invitation to embrace Islam was not accepted peacefully by non-Muslim communities.

According to the Muslim legal theory, the ultimate objective of Islam was not war, but the ultimate establishment of Islamic peace. Therefore, the Holy War (*jihad*) was merely a temporary instrument to establish peace, rather than a permanent article of the faith.¹⁰⁹ The jihad, in practice, must be preceded by an "invitation to Islam", and only the failure to accept new faith, or pay the poll tax would precipitate fighting with the enemy.¹¹⁰ Here is necessary to stress that, all war is forbidden in Islam, if it is not waged for a just cause, ordained by the Divine law. The final aim and the object of struggle of the Prophet Muhammad were to establish "liberty of

¹⁰⁷ The claim to be universal is practically illustrated in the early letters of Muhammad sent to the great states of the time. These letters are in fact invitations to embrace new faith and, meanwhile, gave a more open and widespread extension to the claim of Islam for the universal acceptance, repeatedly made for Islam in the Qur'an: Arnold, Th., *The Preaching of Islam: a History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, Darf Publishers Limited, London 1986, p. 28

¹⁰⁸ The expansion of Islam started since the time of Muhammad. Later, the eminent fall of Constantinople in the hands of Arabs would be followed later by that of Rome: Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1988, p. 22, 75

¹⁰⁹ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace...*, p. 141

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 96; for more details see Hamidullah, M., *Muslim Conduct of State*, Revised Fourth Edition, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore 1961, p. 305-6

conscience” in the world.¹¹¹ In other words, the Holy War was considered as an instrument for both, the universalization of religion and the establishment of an imperial world state.¹¹²

The principal task of the Muslim state was to put into practice the Law of God (Shari’a) and to establish it as the dominant ideology. In order to reach this target Muhammad postulated the absolute unity of an omnipotent God against the prevailing disintegration of Arab society.¹¹³ Meanwhile, he opened the way to facilitate the assimilation of the foreigners without taking in consideration their blood relationship, color of skin, language and place of birth. So, Islam has rejected all these notions and selected only the identity of ideas as the basic tie of society and the factor of union.¹¹⁴ What Islam has generally asked of its believers is not textual accuracy in belief, but loyalty to the community and its constituted leader.¹¹⁵

In the pace of the rapid expansion, Islam preferred tolerance to force, because the use of force is wrong since it produces resistance, which in turn produces unrest and divisions in state and society. The political goal of Muhammad was to abolish the tribe organization of old Arabs and to establish a community of the ‘faithful’.¹¹⁶ The *ummah* (community of the faithful) is the unique principle of social identity valid in Islam; it makes for the only Islamic community, of which any Muslim is a member simply by virtue of being a Muslim.¹¹⁷ The individual rights and obligations were always defined in terms of interests of *ummah*. From this point of view, the Muslim

¹¹¹ Hamidullah, M., *Introduction to Islam*, Revised Fifth Edition, Kazi Publications, Chicago 1981, p.180

¹¹² Khadduri, M., *War and Peace ...*, p. 51

¹¹³ Nieuwenhuijze, C.A.O van., “The Ummah – An Analytical Approach”, *Studia Islamica*, vol. X (1959), p. 6

¹¹⁴ Hamidullah, M., *Introduction to Islam*, p.168

¹¹⁵ Lewis, B., “The Other and the Enemy: Perceptions of Identity and Difference in Islam”, *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, eds. Bernard Lewis – Friedrich Niewöhner, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1992, p. 3

¹¹⁶ Schacht, J., *Islam Hukukuna Giriş*, A.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, Ankara 1977, p. 24

¹¹⁷ Nieuwenhuijze, “The Ummah – An Analytical Approach”, p. 20

law was ordinarily binding upon individual rather than territorial groups; so, Islam as a universal religion, laid emphasis on individual allegiance to a faith which recognized no boundaries for its kingdom.¹¹⁸

The religion, which propagated such an ideal society where all people are equal members of the Muslim community, should be assessed as an *egalitarian* religion. Islam, in principle, never recognized either social caste or aristocracy. There is no church or priesthood in Islam, neither theologically since there is no priestly office or mediation between God and the individual believer. Khadduri argues: "In this conception of the ummah was implied the idea of [the Muslim] state".¹¹⁹ According to Muslim legal theory, there is God, not Imam, the head of the Muslim State; but in practice the *Imam*, to all intents and purposes, acts as the actual head of the state. He enforces the law that regulates the relations of believers with nonbelievers during war and peace.¹²⁰

Legally, the imposition of Muslim rule is sufficient to change the status of a country and make it part of *dar al-Islam*. This term means that the legal position of the territory would depend on the allegiance of its people to Islam, not on mere proclamation that it belongs to Islam. Accordingly, any territory whose inhabitants accept Islam and act according to Muslim law is called Dar al-Islam.¹²¹ In this framework, the jihad was also regarded as Islam's instrument to transform the **dar al-harb** (territories under the non-Muslim control) into **dar al-Islam** (territories under the Muslim control).

The remaining part of world, out of Muslim control, is called *dar al-harb*. This term legally expresses the ultimate desire and obligation of Islam to cover the entire world

¹¹⁸ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace...*, p. 45-46

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 4

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 152

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p. 155

through invitation to Islam or permanent Holy War till the final and inevitable triumph of Islam. The status of new conquered lands and non-Muslim people depends on whether they had been taken *by force* ('anwatan) or *by agreement* (sulhan). According the Islamic law, this state of war could be interrupted by an armistice or truce of limited duration; but, it could not be terminated by a peace, but only by a final victory of Islam.

There is a third category, an intermediate zone called *dar al-ahd* or *dar al-sulh*, which comprise countries in treaty with Islam. In these territories non-Muslim rulers continue to govern their people as earlier, but with a measure of autonomy under a form of Muslim suzerainty. The status of this intermediate zone is conceived also to serve as a temporary purpose, until the whole world would become Muslim.¹²² If the non-Muslim vassal renounced the Muslim suzerainty, then his territories, according to the Islam doctrine of peace and war, were considered as *dar al-harb* and the conquest of these territories is legitimated.

The Qur'an deals not so much with specific rules regulating the Muslim-Christian relations, but rather presents principles and general guidelines for such rules and regulations. The Qur'an could only be used by later Muslim jurists, rulers and even theologians as a primary source to be supplemented by other and more specific sources.¹²³

The Qur'an did not require the non-Muslim people to convert to Islam as a condition for religious recognition and peaceful co-existence in Muslim territories. In fact the Qur'an's ideal is that faith in God must include assent to all His Prophets and

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 267

¹²³ Ayoub, M. M., "The Islamic Context of Muslim – Christian Relations", *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands (8th – 18th centuries)*, eds. M. Gervers – R. J. Bikhazi, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 1990, p. 467

Scriptures.¹²⁴ The Qur'an regards faith and not religion alone as a decisive factor in establishing good relations among the people of faith. Not even a common ritual need deprive a person from his or her religious-cultural identity.¹²⁵

The conversion to Islam or the process of islamization is a movement of individuals and groups, departing from any form of traditional religion before its contact with Islam and following a line, which ends with normative Islam.¹²⁶ In the theoretical explanation of the peaceful manner of conversion to Islam in general as the base is considered a verse from the Qur'an : "Lâ ikrâh fi'd-dîn" (Let there be no compulsion in religion).¹²⁷ Only when the invitation to Islam was not accepted, and therefore the payment of *djizya* was rejected, the Holy War (jihad) was legally legitimate.

To be Muslim at the time of Prophet was very easy. Especially new Muslims with little knowledge about Islam regarded the praying five time a day as the principal manifestation of their devotion to Islam. At the beginning members of Muslim community were called to worship Allah. Demands of prayers were no more than a few minutes a day.¹²⁸ When a person converts to Islam he has to learned the five practical-individual duties (*fard 'ayn*) of the new religion:

1. Recital of the creed,
2. Observance of the five appointed time of prayer,
3. Payment of the legal alms,
4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan,
5. The pilgrimage to Mekka,

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 468

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ Levtzion, N., "Patterns of Islamization in West Africa", *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, Holmes & Meier Publishers, New York – London 1979, p. 216

¹²⁷ Qur'an, 2: 256

¹²⁸ Shaban, M., "Conversion to Early Islam", *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, Holmes & Meier Publishers, New York – London 1979, p. 26

In an offensive war the Muslim community must react as a whole (*fard kifâya*). In such situation the collective responsibility for the survival of Islam is indispensable, and the Muslim ruler issues a general call to arms (*naḡîr ‘âmm*).¹²⁹

According to doctrine of Islam, every Muslim is a missionary. It is the duty of every Muslim, new or old, rich and poor, of high and low rank to propagate the faith everywhere is possible, and to make accompanies. On this point Qur’an says: “Summon them to the way of the Lord with wisdom and with kindly warning”.¹³⁰ In other words, all Muslims might labor for the spread of their most sublime faith.

Conversion to Islam was a “one-way street”, and Islam did not tolerate backsliding.¹³¹ All the sources of Islam jurisprudence prescribe the capital punishment for an apostate.¹³² In other words, the legal Islam encourages the process of conversion in one-way, from Christianity to Islam, and prohibits categorically the *irtadda* (apostasy). Apostasy means not only the conversion from Islam to other religions, but also the situation when a Muslim subject refuses to believe in any and every article of the Islamic faith.¹³³ The law of apostasy, endorsed by the practice of early caliphs, has been sanctioned by *ijma’* (i.e. consensus), and there is no disagreement as to its validity.¹³⁴

The apostate has to choose between Islam and the sword. De jure he is dead, although Muslim jurists emphasize that before the prosecution and condemnation of

¹²⁹ Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, p. 73

¹³⁰ Qur’an, 16: 126

¹³¹ Bulliet, R. W., “Conversion to Islam and the Emergence of a Muslim Society in Iran”, *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, Holmes & Meier Publishers, New York – London 1979, p. 31

¹³² Hamidullah, M., *Muslim Conduct of State*, p. 171; For the discussions of Muslim jurists and theologians on the punishment of apostate, see: Khadduri, M., *War and Peace* ..., p. 149-50

¹³³ *ibid.*

¹³⁴ On the treatment of the individual and collective punishment of apostates, see: Khadduri, M., *War and Peace* ..., p. 151

an apostate, it is necessary officially to discuss the matter with him and give some time in order to reflect.¹³⁵

In Muslim doctrine, non-Muslims are divided in two groups:

- a. The Polytheists (or Primitives), those who do not have Divine Laws revealed by their founder of their religions (idolators, heretics, atheists, pagans ...).¹³⁶
- b. The Scripturaries (ahl al-kitab), those who believe in the One God and follow the Divine Laws revealed to the founder of their religions (Jews, Sabians and Christians).

Whether the polytheists have the limited choice between Islam or jihad, the Scripturaries can choose one of three propositions: peaceful adoption of Islam, the payment of poll-tax, or the Jihad. If the polytheists adopt Islam, they are entitled under the law of full Muslim citizenship. If they prefer to remain Scripturaries, they have to pay the poll tax and consequently to suffer some disabilities which reduce them to the status of second class citizens.¹³⁷

The Muslim law divided Scripturaries (*ahl al - kitab*) into two politically - divided groups:

1. the *dhimmis*,* non-Muslim subjects under the Muslim authority,
2. the *harbis*, the non-Muslim communities that have to face the perpetual Muslim Holy War as the test of remaining in their faith or passing to Islam.

¹³⁵ Hamidullah, M., *op. cit.*, p. 171-2. The history of apostasy begins almost immediately after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, when a number of Arabian tribes, which had submitted to Islam and to Islamic authority reverted to their previous paganism: Lewis, B., "The Other and the Enemy ...", p. 374

¹³⁶ Hamidullah, M., *Introduction to Islam*, p.179

¹³⁷ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace* ..., p. 80

* This term derives from the *dhimma*, a kind of contract between the Muslim state and the leader of non-Muslim community, by which to the members of that community are granted a certain status, with certain duties and privileges under Muslim authorities: Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, p. 77

The most characteristic feature of Islam in its attitude regarding the non-Muslim communities (*dhimmi*) living in Muslim territories is the protection offered to them. In their policy of rapid expansion, Muslims readily granted the *amân*, amnesty to the submitted Christian population, which guaranteed them, under the status of *dhimmi*, the protection of Muslim State for their lives, properties and freedom of worship. The directive of Muhammad on this question has been as follows: "Observe scrupulously the protection accorded by me to non-Muslim subjects. Whoever oppresses the non-Muslim subjects, shall find me to be their advocate on their day of Resurrection (against the oppressing Muslims)".¹³⁸ The early agreements made between the representatives of the Muslim army and the representatives of Christian people show clearly that the main goal of Muslims was to offer protection of life, religion and property to new-conquered people; in return, the Christians must recognize the Muslim rule. They must pay the same tax as before, and those who wish to leave the country may do so.¹³⁹ According to Islam jurisprudence, *dhimmis* could not be any way a slave of a Muslim, because, although they are Christian, they rendered the Muslim protection; a slave of Muslim must be only a *harbî* (Christian people living outside Muslim territories).¹⁴⁰ Muslims commonly subjected followers of the other religions to discrimination, but by and large without persecution. Discrimination was permanent and sometimes necessary, while persecution was rare and atypical, usually due to specific circumstances.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, the status offered to non-Muslims not only means a mere protection of life, but it includes also a large social and judicial autonomy. This is a

¹³⁸ Hamidullah, M., *Introduction to Islam*, p. 173

¹³⁹ Dennett, D. C., *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*, Harvard University Press 1950, p. 58

¹⁴⁰ Ercan, Y., "Devşirme Sorunu, Devşirme'nin Anadolu ve Balkanlar'daki Türkleşme ve İslamlaşma Etkisi", *Belleten*, no. 50 (1986), pp. 679-725

¹⁴¹ Braude, B. - B. Lewis, "Introduction", *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. B. Braude & B. Lewis, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London-New York 1982, pp. 3-4

judicial autonomy, which contains not only the personal status of non-Muslims, but also all aspects of their life: civil, penal and others.¹⁴²

Theoretically, the residing non-Muslim subjects in the territories of a Muslim state have accepted the supremacy of the Muslim state; so, they have submitted to Muslim rule and agreed to accept the status of *dhimmi*. Therefore, there is a main duty of the Muslim government to protect the interests of non-Muslim people. The essential purpose was to recognize, at very first sight, the religious community of each and every individual. The intention was to protect the culture of everyone. In addition, it can be said that the conception of nationality in Islam is based neither on an ethnic source nor on the place of birth, but on the identity of religion.¹⁴³

The Qur'an and the Hadith stress Muslim obligation not only to tolerate, but also to protect the Scripturaries from a possible attack, if they are in peaceful relation with Islam. The Christians accept payment of *djizya* (in money) for persistence in their belief. Muslim authorities receive the *djizya* in exchange for granting security and protection to them.¹⁴⁴ The Caliph 'Umar has said: "Impose to them the *djizya* in accordance with their wealth ... as stated in Allah's Book (Qur'an 9: 29). If *dhimmi*s pay regularly the *djizya*, you should require no more of them".¹⁴⁵ While the law of capitation tax (*djizya*) was laid down by the Qur'an regarding the Scripturaries (Christians and Jews), the same source is silent concerning other non-Islamic creeds.¹⁴⁶

The non-Muslims who converted to Islam were freed from *djizya*, since it is a form of punishment for disbelief. The total sum of the *djizya*, as a tribute, was paid by the

¹⁴² Hamidullah, M., *Introduction to Islam*, p. 175-6

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 176

¹⁴⁴ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace* ..., p. 184-5

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 186; Arnold, Th., *The Preaching of Islam* ..., p. 59-60

¹⁴⁶ Hamidullah, M., *Muslim Conduct of State*, p. 112

remaining dhimmis. Djizya was collected from all non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim state, except for women, children not yet at puberty, the poor, the blind, the sick, the insane, beggars (impecilli et debiles), the unemployed and monks (if they were poor), on principle those dependent on charity escaped.¹⁴⁷ Since the dhimmis were not required to participate in the jihad as members of Muslim army, the djizya might be considered in lieu of military service as well for the protection they received under the Muslim rule.¹⁴⁸ If a non-Muslim subject participated in military service during some expedition in a year, he was exempted from the djizya for the year in question.¹⁴⁹ But, when the Muslim State was in need of money, the non-Muslim subjects were more and more burdened with taxes.¹⁵⁰

The agreement between Muslim rulers and the leaders of non-Muslim communities comes to an end in these cardinal cases:

- rebellion against the Muslim state,
- rejection of the payment of djizya,
- denial of the obedience to the Muslim government,
- fornication with a free Muslim woman, espionage in the favor of a enemy state,
- outraging the sanctity of God and his messenger (Muhammad) and his book (Qur'an),
- causing a Muslim to apostatize.¹⁵¹

While in theory the poll-tax was paid by non-Muslim subjects in order to compensate for the royal and priestly duties, they were unable to discharge, payment of the tax

¹⁴⁷ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace* ..., p. 191-3; Dennett, D. C., *Conversion and the Poll Tax* ..., p. 26-7, 54

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.196-7; Hamidullah, M., *Introduction to Islam*, p. 171-2

¹⁴⁹ Hamidullah, M., *Introduction to Islam*, p. 172

¹⁵⁰ Arnold, Th., *The Preaching of Islam* ..., p. 79

¹⁵¹ Hamidullah, M., *Muslim Conduct of State*, p. 326-7

amounted to badge of degradation and a mark of social inferiority.¹⁵² Non-Muslim subjects were neither allowed to wear uniforms or carry arms or to take out their banners during their feasts, except during holidays. The dhimmi was not permeated to marry a Muslim woman or to enter in sexual connection with her (*zinâ*). They were required to wear distinctive clothing from those of Muslims. The dhimmis were not permeated to ride on horseback or to carry weapons, but to ride only on donkeys and mules. The houses of non-Muslims should not be higher than the houses of Muslims, preferable lower. They should not ring the church bells loudly nor should they raise their voices loudly in prayer. Their dead must be buried in places away from Muslim quarters.¹⁵³

From this point of view, the status of dhimma constituted an asymmetrical relationship between two partners, one of whom acknowledge the supremacy of the other in return for religious and local autonomy within the limits of certain restrictions. We should also add that during the history of Islam religious fanaticism occurred from time to time, and it has been mostly depended by the very nature and conduct of Muslim rulers and their provincial representatives. With the measures taken by some of them a big gap was created between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, and also in practice non-Muslim subjects were often treated as the second class citizens.¹⁵⁴ In the Muslim view, non-Muslims were people to whom the truth had been offered in the final and perfect form they willfully and foolishly refused.

¹⁵² Dennett, D. C., *Conversion and the Poll Tax* ..., p. 15

¹⁵³ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace* ..., p. 186, 195, 197-8; for more details on this point see, Nedkoff, B. Ch., "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Cizye", *Belleten*, c. VIII, sayı 32, I. Teşrin 1944, pp. 602-605

¹⁵⁴ For the acts of fanatic Muslim rulers against the socio-political and economical position of non-Muslim communities see, Arnold, Th., *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 76-77

Although the status of dhimma and its pertinent restrictions may be regarded as a real difficulties for the everyday life of non-Muslims resident in Muslim territories, the safeguard of the rights of non-Muslim subjects sometimes goes to such extent as giving to them the liberty of practicing customs entirely opposed to those of Islam. For example, the non-Muslims not only possess the right of consumption (not in public), but also of the manufacture, importation and sale.¹⁵⁵

Khadduri makes clear that non-Muslim communities were bound to owe allegiance to two social orders, his own and the superstructure within which these communities existed. Although their rights were fully protected, as a subject of the Muslim State, the non-Muslims suffered certain disabilities, which reduced them to the status of second class citizens:

“The general treatment of the dhimmis under Muslim rule, however, must be measured not in terms of suffering at the hands of careless caliphs and individual Muslims, but in the spirit of tolerance embodied in the law and in general spirit prevailing in each age and generation, and this must also be judged in terms of the relative prosperity and security enjoyed by the majority”.¹⁵⁶

b. Turkish Islam

“The Turkish conversion to Islam was the result of a long process of acculturation before it took a definite and massive form with the formal decision of a ruler”.¹⁵⁷

Although this process took an official character and was endorsed by the ruler of Kharakhanid state in 960 (A. D.), the process of islamization among common Turkish people had started as early as the 900s.¹⁵⁸ As far as is true that “Turks and

¹⁵⁵ Hamidullah, M., *Introduction to Islam*, p.178

¹⁵⁶ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace* ..., p. 198-9

¹⁵⁷ İnalcık, H., “Islam in the Ottoman Empire”, *Essays in Ottoman History*, Eren, Istanbul 1998, p. 229

¹⁵⁸ Ocak, A. J., “Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türklerin İslam Yorumu (Tarih Boyunca Türkler ve İslam Problemine Genel bir Bakış Denemesi)”, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam: Yaklaşım, Yöntem ve Yorum Denemeleri*, İletişim Yayınları, 2. baskı, İstanbul 1999, p. 26, 28; for a chronology of events related to the islamization of Turks see, Turan, O., *Türk Cihân Hâkimiyeti Mevkûresi Tarihi*, 8. baskı, Boğaziçi Yayınları, İstanbul 1995, pp. 133-62

Mongols entered the Islamic world as conquerors,¹⁵⁹ it is already a well-known fact that the first Turkish Muslim state, the Kharakhanids, became one of the most distinguished centers of orthodox Islam.¹⁶⁰ In the 11th century (H. 5th century) Islam had taken under its influence almost the entire Turkish world.¹⁶¹ They were soon converted to become the most valiant champions that Islam has ever known.¹⁶²

The first contacts of Turks with Islam were realized owing to commercial activities of Arab traders; but, the historical sources and the characteristics of Turkish Islam shows clearly that Islam was spread among Turks mostly *via Iran* through Harezm, Horasan, Transoxiana (Margiana) and Fergana, accompanied with a mystic interpretation.¹⁶³ There were Iranians who oriented Turks to come into the Islam domain. The oldest Turkish written source *Kutadgu Bilig* (H. 462 / M. 1069-70) testifies to the traces of Iranian Islamic experience.

Even before the conversion to Islam, it is possible to talk about a Turkish identity reflected in their social institutions, language, religion, morality, traditions and jurisprudence, which in general was a mirror of Turkish life. Since the establishment of the first Turkish-Islam states, for example the Kharakhanids, while entering the Islamic cultural sphere, were at the same time dependent on high Uyghur culture, which had flourished in the East.¹⁶⁴ At the outset, the Turks accepted Islam superficially because they had a strong influence of pre-Islamic traditions; so, it is

¹⁵⁹ Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, p. 7

¹⁶⁰ İnalcık, H., "Islam in the Ottoman Empire", p. 229

¹⁶¹ Köprülü, F., *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, 7. baskı, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, Ankara 1991, p. 14

¹⁶² Lewis, B., *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York-London 1982, p. 23

¹⁶³ Ocak, A. J., "Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türklerin İslam Yorumu ...", pp. 31-2

¹⁶⁴ İnalcık, H., "Turkish and Iranian Political Theories and Traditions in *Kutadgu Bilig*", *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire (Essays on Economy and Society)*, Indiana University, Bloomington, p. 10

not a surprise to see, at this initial phase, that the Islam they accepted had to response to their specific needs.¹⁶⁵

The choice of *Sunni* Islam and the Hanafi School from the Kharakhanids to the Ottomans seems to be explained by three reasons:

- 1? When the Turks began to convert to Islam in the region of Maveraünnehr, Sunni Islam was definitively established. The Turkish state could not remained out of this reality.
- 2? Sunni Islam had a three hundred years elaborated and institutionalized political tradition, which constituted a great systematic and developed juridical and theological system.
- 3? Newly converted Turks wanted to win legitimacy among the other Muslim states and especially in the eyes of the Abbasid State's elite.¹⁶⁶

Sunni Islam was instituted as a necessity for the survival of Islam when it faced the attacks of Shi'a and Crusaders; therefore, Sunni Islam was seen as the Muslim doctrine which supported the *powerful khalifa* and the *strong state*. In other words, the Sunni interpretation of Islam has played an important role during the history of Islam in terms of the *political state unity* and *religious continuity* of Islam.¹⁶⁷

The Hanafi school* constitutes an interpretation of Islam relying on the perpetual and unchangeable principles of the Qur'an and Sunnet, though from the point of view of belief, politics and law was rational and takes into consideration regional controversies. This must be the reason why Turkish Sunni Islam was successfully spread in a large geographic space from Central Asia to the Balkans, areas very

¹⁶⁵ Köprülü, F., *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, p. 11, 146

¹⁶⁶ Ocak, A. J., "Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türklerin İslam Yorumu ...", pp. 36-7

¹⁶⁷ İnalçık, H., "Şeriat ve Kanun, Din ve Devlet", *Osmanlı'da Devlet, Hukuk, Adâlet*, Eren, İstanbul 2000, p. 39

* The rise of Islamic schools quoted by the individual names was achieved into the middle of the 9th century, Schacht, J., *İslam Hukukuna Giriş*, p. 68

different from each other. Levtzion argues, “the distribution of the schools of [Muslim] law over the Muslim world suggests routes of the spread of Islam”.¹⁶⁸

The Sunni doctrine of the Ottomans through the influence of *madrasas* was the heir of the classic mentality of the Muslim world.¹⁶⁹ The Ottoman State, as a frontier region, inherited the religious traditions of Seljuk state and retained the Sunni interpretation of Islam. The first *madrasas* founded by a Muslim state in the Islamic world are *Nidhamiyya* madrasas in the Seljuk Empire.¹⁷⁰

The nature of Turkish Islam should be analyzed along two lines:

a. Orthodox Islam

b. Heterodox Islam

a. Islamic jurisprudence was born as a mixture of old Arabic tribal traditions and the laws of people in newly conquered lands.¹⁷¹ From the beginning it faced problems, whose solutions were not anticipated in Shari’a. So, there were Muslim lawyers who developed new methods (*icma’*, *ictihad*) in accordance with new conditions. The interpreters of Islamic doctrine (*fakihs*) enlarged the framework of Shari’a and boundaries of Islamic law. Thereby, *ulama* remained bound to the *progressive* principle, especially when the interests of the Muslim state were in danger.¹⁷²

With Turks the *kitabî Islam* recognized new perspectives. In the cities of the Kharakanid state, like Buhara and Samarkand, were founded such madrasas which were very famous in all the Muslim world for the level of teaching and cultivation of Muslim thinkers.

¹⁶⁸ Levtzion, N., “Toward a Comparative Study of Islamization”, *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, Holmes & Meier Publishers, New York – London 1979, p. 4

¹⁶⁹ Ocak, A. J., “Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türklerin İslam Yorumu ...”, pp. 40-1

¹⁷⁰ İnalçık, H., “İkinci Bin’de Türkler”, *Doğu ve Batı*, yıl 3, sayı 10 (2000), p. 66

¹⁷¹ Schacht, J., *İslam Hukukuna Giriş*, A.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, Ankara 1977, p.10; for more details on the historical sources of Islamic jurisprudence see pages 18-38 in the same book.

¹⁷² İnalçık, H., “Şeriat ve Kanun, Din ve Devlet”, *Osmanlı’da Devlet, Hukuk, Adâlet*, Eren, İstanbul 2000, p. 40

The establishment of Turkish-Muslim states in Muslim lands (10th-11th centuries) brought a fundamental change into the Islamic concept of state and law, rather than in the field of religious doctrine. The laws, historically independent of the Shari'a and known as *törü* ve *yasa*, were based on rational and not religious principles, and were enacted primarily in the spheres of public and administrative law. *Törü* constituted the foundation of state organization and of the reign of the khan, meanwhile it was allowed to be enacted in Turkish-Mongol multi-national states as far as the local laws did not conflict with the law of center.¹⁷³ *Törü* is a synthesis of the objective legal tradition, which binds the sovereign.¹⁷⁴ The equivalent terms used by Ottomans for *torü* and *yasa* are *urf u adat*. The kanuns based on old Turkish tradition were also called '*urf-i ma'rûf*'.

The establishment of Turkish states marked a distinguished development in the field of lawmaking. The Turkish rulers, in the cases related to public and state interests, set out normative acts called *kanun*. The kanuns, which were a product of the direct will and the authority of sultans, were called '*urf-i sultânî*'.¹⁷⁵ This was the independent right of rulers, who over time brought conflicts between lay and fanatical Islamic authority.

As a Muslim State, the Ottoman Empire always recognized the superiority of Shari'a as a profound principle of its statehood. The state law was considered to be based on Islamic principles, and in complete conformity with the religious law. Although the kanuns could not in theory supersede the Shari'a, the latter, in practice, was modified.¹⁷⁶ In spite of this, the Ottoman sultans always showed great concern for justifying their conduct in terms of the Shari'a. The Ottoman concept of state and law

¹⁷³ idem, "Türk-İslâm Devletlerinde Devlet Kanunu Geleneği", *passim*, p. 29

¹⁷⁴ idem, "Turkish and Iranian Political Theories and Traditions in *Kutadgu Bilig*", p. 12

¹⁷⁵ idem, *op. cit.*, p. 27

¹⁷⁶ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, p. 271-2

was based on twin elements of strong, independent state-power and political action for the public good. This dichotomy in the Ottoman Empire is expressed by the terms “şeriat ve kanun, din ve devlet”.¹⁷⁷

b. Arabic, Persian and Chinese sources written in 10th – 13th centuries show clearly that Islam was superficially spread among Turkish tribes. If Turkish Islam was rapidly oriented toward the *tasavvuf*, then is possible to anticipate that the pre-Islamic forms of religion among Turks were closely connected with the mystic aspects of Islam.¹⁷⁸

Due to the geographical location of Central Asia, Turks were in intensive contacts with religions and cultural waves of Iran and China. The long distances between centers of Islam and peripheries, and the lack of communications between the remotest Muslim communities and the centers of learning thanks to rapid spread of Islam, have lead to the widening of the gap between normative (orthodox) and popular (heterodox) Islam. Moreover, Islam, since the 8th century, started to manifest important differences. The different ethnic communities spread throughout the different parts of the world, though converted to Islam, continued to live under the strong influence of local traditions. There were such strong remnants, which caused severe differences even in the most cardinal points of Islamic doctrine.¹⁷⁹ Levzion argues, “within the political system, Islam and traditionalism were by no means abstract concepts, but represented different social groups competing to extend their influence over the rulers”.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ İnalçık, H., “Şeriat ve Kanun, Din ve Devlet”, *Osmanlı'da Devlet, Hukuk, Adâlet, Eren*, İstanbul 2000

¹⁷⁸ Ocak, A. J., “Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türklerin İslam Yorumu ...”, p. 29-30

¹⁷⁹ Köprülü, F., *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, p. 14-15

¹⁸⁰ Levzion, N., “Patterns of Islamization in West Africa”, *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levzion, Holmes & Meier Publishers, New York – London 1979, p. 213

While in the centers flourished a high conservative culture (theology, palace literature and Islamic jurisprudence), in the periphery, where a clash of different cultures and the central authority in general was not always visible, prevailed a popular culture (mysticism, epic literature and traditions). The spiritual influence of *mutasavvifs* over the Eastern rulers was as strong as to sometimes frighten the laymen and in accordance with concrete situations they were enforced to take appropriate measures.¹⁸¹

When the central government became strong, the tendency to develop a high culture was irresistible. This culture developed in the capitals and around their hinterlands. While the central governments increasingly were influenced in the orthodox direction of religion, the population in the remote provinces of empires embraced the heterodox tendencies, developed the epic literature and promoted traditional law. It was characteristic of the frontier life that heresies of all sorts received welcome among the common people. Religions among common people became a very mixed affair. Heresy marks a deviation from the normative religion. The Turkish Islamic heterodoxy reflects a certain interpretation of Islam interweaving with local forms of pre-Islamic belief.

Especially, in the periods of political decentralization and anarchy the spirit of common people need *tasavvuf*. Heterodox Islam, not only balanced the theoretical Islam developed from *fakihs*, but enriched it thanks to its human and tolerant characteristics.¹⁸² Since the 12th – 13th centuries in Iran, Central Asia, Syria, Egypt, Anatolia, in almost whole area of Islam appeared *tekkes*, the symbolic centers of Islamic heresies.¹⁸³ There were dervishes, cultivated in such centers, the persons who

¹⁸¹ Köprülü, F., *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, p. 197

¹⁸² Ocak, A. J., "Tarihsel Süreç İçinde Türklerin İslam Yorumu ...", p.58

¹⁸³ Köprülü, F., *op. cit.*, p. 195

successfully spread the wave of mysticism in Anatolia and later on in the other areas of Ottoman Empire.

Under the pressure of Mongol conquests lead by Cengiz Khan a considerable number of *mutasavvifs* emigrated from Turkistan, Haresm and Iran (Khorasan) and came to Anatolia. The respect of Seljuk rulers for them was shown clearly once again. They welcomed and established mystics in their territories. The dervish religiosity is in essence a popular religion, which is immune to historical change.¹⁸⁴

A dislike of the world and the burning desire for a god that transcends this life led many to seek escape in a religious mysticism that was other-worldly. Dervishes had always to offer to common people all the things that are impossible to find in normative Islam. It consisted largely of mystical doctrines and popular beliefs and superstitions. The dervishes propagated an ideal world amongst poor people. They came among common people and explained their ideas with a simple language and in an attractive manner. They made some “extraordinary” actions, known as *keramet*, which caused them to be seen as prophets.¹⁸⁵ Especially in the rural districts the “Islam of the Babas” became active and well-spread thanks to the propagation of such an Islamic doctrine already diluted by the tolerance of old Turkish custom and beliefs.

The frontiers of Islam were extended not through the work of the learned urban ‘ulama, but by the efforts of mystics. It was characteristic of the frontier life that heresies of all sorts received welcome among the common people.

¹⁸⁴ Karamustafa, A. T., *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1500*, University of Utah Press 1994, p. 5

¹⁸⁵ Ocak, A. Y., *Kültür Tarihi Kaynağı Olarak Menakıbnameler - Metodolojik bir Yaklaşım*, T.T.K.yay., Ankara 1997, p. 3

III. The Dervishes, the Ghaza and Albanian Lands

a. *Sarı Saltuk and Bektashism*

Due to the powerful authority that dervishes received from the common people, dervishes and their followers were recognized by the kings of the states in which they lived. Sometimes the kings themselves were disciples of a certain dervish order. Such a situation strengthened the authority of dervishes and gave to them a strong influence.

The first Ottoman sultans (Osman, Orhan, Murat I) were leaders of Turkmen tribes close to the life of dervish and heterodox elements. Being among them, the first Ottoman sultans followed a safeguarding policy toward dervish orders.¹⁸⁶ The close relationship between them shows clearly the tolerant attitude of Ottoman sultans the religious concerns. The Islam of the first Ottoman sultans has been fed from mystic sources.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, the Ottoman sultans conceived well the place of dervish orders within the social structure of new state and followed a very balanced religious policy. Because they needed each other - the sultans asked dervishes for legitimacy among common people, while dervishes needed political protection and a source for livelihood - their relationship took the character of a political alliance.¹⁸⁸

The Ottomans were responsible for leading the dervish-warriors and Turkish population into the Balkans.¹⁸⁹ It is interesting to observe in the vilayetnames the double role of dervishes; as helpers of the helpless and of ghazi warriors in their fight against the infidels. Restoring order and justice on earth, according their view of world, gives the group to which the dervishes (abdals) belonged, its militant

¹⁸⁶ Köprülü, M. F., *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu*, TTK Yay., Ankara 1994, p. 100

¹⁸⁷ Ocak, A. Y., "Din", *Osmanlı Devleti ve Medeniyeti Tarihi*, vol. 2, IRCICA, Istanbul 1998, p. 111

¹⁸⁸ Barkan, Ö. L., "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler I", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, II (1942), p. 287

¹⁸⁹ İnalçık, H., "The Yürüks: Their Origins, Expansion and Economic Role", *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire – Essays on Economy and Society*, Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington 1993, p. 100

character.¹⁹⁰ From the beginning, ghaza (Holy War), and popular mysticism gave Turkish Islam its original and permanent features.¹⁹¹

The dervish expansion and colonisation in new territories, in general, followed the paths of the Ottoman conquests. Especially, dervishes established *tekke*, *zaviye* or *dergahs* in depopulated lands serving as the nucleus for the foundation of new urban centres (*memleket açmak*) or regeneration of old ones (*şenletmek*). The religious institutions of dervishes were also founded on the strategic, military or trade roads to which the Ottomans gave a great importance. In that manner, dervishes guaranteed the unity of population and increase the number of settlements in no man areas they helped the growth of incomes in the imperial treasury. They were installed there by the Ottomans to ensure these arteries of communication and, making propaganda in the favour of Islam prepared the ideological and spiritual environment for new conquests. The role of dervishes as the state missionaries, and the responsible authorities for the organisation of Turkish colonies was to transform these centers into nuclei of Turkish culture and Muslim propaganda (*atılğan bir istila kuvveti idi*).¹⁹²

In newly conquered territories dervishes dealt with agriculture and religious-cultural propaganda. Considering them state missionaries, the Ottomans State granted to them several tax exemptions and lands.¹⁹³ The status of territorial *vaqf* granting to new conquered lands to such dervish orders was one of the successful Ottoman methods of colonisation in Anatolia and the Balkans.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ İnalçık, H., "Dervish and the Sultan: An Analysis of the *Otman Baba Vilayetnamesi*", *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire – Essays on Economy and Society*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1993, p. 23-24

¹⁹¹ İnalçık, H., "Islam in the Ottoman Empire", s. 229

¹⁹² Barkan, Ö. L., "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak ...", p. 293-4

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 292

¹⁹⁴ İnalçık, H., "Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu bir Bakış", *Osmanlı*, vol. I, Ankara 1999, p. 49

The principalities on the marches of empires had a distinct way of life, which could be described as a *frontier culture*, and this distinguished them clearly from the hinterland. Instead of staying in a stable place in order to propagate their doctrine, heterodox dervishes were very active in military actions and efforts to spread Islam among the non-Muslim communities with which they were in contact. The names of such dervishes still live on in many areas of the Balkan Peninsula. In Turkish literature they are called *abdals*.^{*} Abdals do not stay in one place. They are free from worldly concerns, so they do not have family, home, or any kind of property. Their tombs are left without a trace. All this explains why abdals do not have, as a rule, an established *tarika* or a shrine.¹⁹⁵ The Islam they propagated in new territories took much from non-Muslim customs and beliefs, abandoning the codified norms of Sunni Islam.

Bektashism is the most wide spread Islamic religious order in the Balkans. Although many scholars have argued that Bektashism emerged as a major new order carried by the legacy of the earlier ones,¹⁹⁶ the roots of Bektashism or at least its mission in the Balkans are pre-Ottoman. *Menakib-i Hacı Bektas-i Veli* says it was Hacı Bektash

^{*} In the Turkey of 14th–15th centuries the term “abdal” were very common. It meant vagrant dervishes, lost in religious convictions: Köprülü, M. F., “Abdal”, *Edebiyat Araştırmaları*, vol. II, Ötüken Neşriyat, İstanbul 1989, p. 373. The development of the religious institutions, such as the dervish brotherhood, which were not present at the time of the Arab conquests, added further religious ardor and conversionary motivation to Muslim society in Anatolia: Vryonis, S., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh Through the Fifteenth Century*, University of California Press 1971, p. 356

¹⁹⁵ İnalçık, H., “Dervish and the Sultan ...”, p. 21

¹⁹⁶ Karamustafa, A. T., *God's Unruly Friends ...*, p. 4; Melikoff, I., “İlk Osmanlıların Toplumsal Kökeni”, *Osmanlı Beyliği, 1300-1389*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul 1997, p. 154

who ordered Sarı Saltuk* to convert the Christian people of the Balkans,¹⁹⁷ but recent research argues that there is no real connection between Sarı Saltuk and Hacı Bektash or other Babaî dervishes.¹⁹⁸ However, Sarı Saltuk was the religious leader of the first Muslim community established in the Balkans and he made efforts to spread Islam among the Christian population in the eastern part of the peninsula. Besides, especially after his death, he was transformed into a impressive ample of a warrior-dervish in the name of Islam and for successor dervishes that came to be established in the Balkans in order to spread Islam. Sarı Saltuk was not merely a mystic dervish, but also a hero, a fighter on behalf of Islam. He symbolized enthusiasm for the ideal of spreading God's word by conquest and animated all of Ottoman society.¹⁹⁹

Sarı Saltuk was the first saint in the Bektashi pantheon and accordingly the stalking-horse for Bektashi propoganda amongst Christians in the Balkans. This is the reason why Sarı Saltuk is a famous and a respected religious figure also in the other Balkan areas where he had never been. Hasan Kaleshi believes, since the 15th century Sarı Saltuk has been a famous figure in the Balkans. Bektashi dervishes could not do without the legacy of this figure whose deeds in the Balkans were well-known by everyone.²⁰⁰ Sarı Saltuk embodied in one the personality of a dervish, religious

* For the historical information about Sarı Saltık, his life and his religious activities see, *Saltuknâme, the Legend of Sarı Saltuk Collected from Oral Traditions by Ebu'l-Hayr Rûmî*, text in facsimile with critical and stylistic analysis and index by Fahir İz, edited by Şinasi Tekin, 6 vol., Harvard University 1974-1978; Ebu'l-Hayr-i Rumi, *Saltuk-name*, ed. Ş. H. Akalın, 3 vol., Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara 1987-1990; Wittek, P., "Yazijioghlu Ali on the Christian Turks of the Dobruja", *BSOAS* 14 (1952), pp. 639-68; Babinger, F., "Sarı Saltık Dede", *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, c. 10, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul 1993, p. 220-1; Kiel, M., "The Türbe of Sarı Saltık at Babadağ – Dobrudja", *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans*, Variorum Reprints, London 1990, p. 205-220 and Mélikoff, I., "Qui était Sarı Saltuk? Quelques remarques sur les manuscrits du Saltukname", *To the Professor V.L. Menage on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, 15 April 1995*, The Isis Press, İstanbul 1994; Ocak, A.Y., *Sarı Saltık – Popüler İslam'ın Balkanlar'daki Destanı Öncüsü*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 2002. For the Albanian legends on Sarı Saltık see, Kaleshi, H., "Legjendat Shqiptare per Sarı Saltukun", *Perparimi*, XIII, no.1 (1967), pp. 86-103

¹⁹⁷ *Menakıb-ı Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli*, ed. A. Gölpınarlı, İstanbul 1958, p. 47

¹⁹⁸ Mélikoff, I., "Qui était Sarı Saltuk? ...", p. 236

¹⁹⁹ İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire – The Classical Age*, p. 187

²⁰⁰ Kaleshi, H., "Legjendat Shqiptare per Sarı Saltukun", *Perparimi*, XIII, no.1 (1967), pp. 87

leadership for Turkish newcomers to the Balkans, and the active propagator of Islam in a Christian geography. He was the symbol of the Turkish leader who presided over the Turkish tribes that emigrated from Anatolia to the Balkans.

There are historical data which show that aside from the Eastern Balkans, Sarı Saltuk did not visit other areas of the peninsula, even those areas where today people claim the existence of Sarı Saltuk's tombs.²⁰¹ But the legends of Sarı Saltuk founded in Albania, Kosovo and Corfu might be seen as the result of the influence of Bektashi *menakıbnames* spread in these areas by dervish orders throughout the Ottoman period.²⁰² We know, these legends had existed at least since the end of the 17th century, because they do not take place in the Evliya Celebi's *Seyahatname*. There is also historical information stating that in the Balkanic places where today exist legends related to the tombs of Sarı Saltuk, in pre-Ottoman periods were, without exception, visited by Christian people as holy places. The tombs of Sarı Saltuk in Ohri and Corfu are in the same places where before have been the tombs, respectively, of Saint Naum and Saint Spiridhon. Such legends where Sarı Saltuk appears as a mixed figure, Muslim and Christian, have existed since the first half of 16th century.²⁰³ Thanks to their *syncretism*, that tended to equate Islamic practices and saints with those of the Christians, the dervishes left open the way for conversion of non-Muslim people to Islam.

During the Ottoman expansion into the Balkans we can see some profiles of dervishes, such as Seyyid Ali Sultan, who is real ideological successor of Sarı Saltuk, and is also a perfect combination of warrior and dervish.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 100

²⁰² *ibid.*, p. 99

²⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 88; Due to an intensive and convertive contact with Christian people in Anatolia (Kayseri), after the death, the figure of Hacı Bektas was personified with the figure of saint Charalambos: Ocak, A. Y., "Bazı Menakıbnamelere Göre XIII-XV Yüzyıldaki İhtidarlarda Heterodoks Şeyh ve Dervişlerin Rölü", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, vol. I (1981), p. 38

Ghaza is a duty ordered by Islam, and regulated by certain rules: "...niyyetü'l-gazâ' kasd-i kâfir...".²⁰⁴ Ghaza implied irregular raiding activity whose ultimate goal was the expansion of the power of Islam: "...gazânin fazîleti ne mertebedir ve şühedânın mertebesi ne kadar yücedir ...".²⁰⁵ On the other hand, the ghaza must be conducted unceasingly on the frontiers of the Islamic world so long as this aggressive policy did not endanger the Islamic community.²⁰⁶ The initial role of ghaza in Islamic history continued to aim at unifying and protecting Islam through continuous *ghaza* (Holy War) against the initially successful counter-offensives of Christendom, both Byzantine and European.²⁰⁷

The ghazis and the mujahada of the dervish to conquer fighting in the frontier the path leading to God, had a common mystic meaning. Unlike the center, the periphery (frontiers) possessed a mystical and eclectic popular culture. Here the warriors of different ethnic background and social classes have been united under the dream of conquest in the name of Islam (dîn-i İslâm 'aşkına).

Bektashism is a composite, an eclectic system of faith and practice to which additional elements have been added from time to time. The theology of Bektashism ranges from pantheistic, as its profound base, to atheism.²⁰⁸ Bektashism, rather than a sect, was an Islamic order far removed from Sunni Islam. This is the reason way the term "Bektashi" was synonym with the "heretique".²⁰⁹ Having an eclectic and tolerant nature the Bektashi dervishes made no distinction in their conduct between

²⁰⁴ *Gazavat-i Sultan Murad b. Mehemmed Han ...*, pp. 24, 36

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 57

²⁰⁶ İnalcık, H., "The Rise of the Turcoman Maritime Principalities in Anatolia, Byzantium, and the Crusades", *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire – Essays on Economy and Society*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1993, p. 327

²⁰⁷ İnalcık, H., "Islam in the Ottoman Empire", p. 230

²⁰⁸ Hasluck, F. W., *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. I, The Clarendon Press, Oxford 1929, p. 166

²⁰⁹ Mélikoff, I., "Un ordre de derviches colonisateurs: les Bektachis – leur rôle social et leur rapports avec les premiers sultans ottomans", *Memorial Ömer L. Barkan*, XXVIII, Paris 1980, p. 151

Muslims and non-Muslims, and they welcomed non-Muslims to be admitted to their order. All of the traditions point at least to a Christian mother of Balım Sultan, one of the leaders of Bektashi order.²¹⁰ Bektashism was especially attractive to new and would-be converts as well as being more tolerant of alien thought. However, the partial adoption by the Bektashi of such Christian conventions as St. Naum and St. Spiridhon really represent intermediate stages in the progress of transition from exclusive Christian ownership to complete Islam/Bektashi occupation.²¹¹

The Bektashi tekkes, in general, were erected in the peripheries of cities or just outside villages.²¹² A tekke may, according to circumstances, be a convent containing a number of professed dervishes under a baba, or abbot, or a kind of “lodge” inhabited only by the baba, as the spiritual head of the local community along with his attendants. It often contains the grave of a saint (turbe) and always has a room for common worship. It is important to emphasize that a tekke, firstly, promoted Muslim religion and culture; secondly, due to the grave of the dervish-founder, it was a place of pilgrimage for the local population, and thirdly, it offered assistance to needy visitors.

According to J. Rexhepagiq, the oldest tekkes in Kosovo are: the tekke not far from Mitrovica (1450), the tekke of Janjevo (1481) and the Sinanî tekke of Kutb Sheyh Musa from Khorasan in Prizren (1575).²¹³ He claims that first two tekkes belonged to Bektashi order, but his information is not convincing.

F. Hasluck believes that if the grave of Sersem Ali at Tetovo (Tetova, Kalkandelen) was genuine, Bektashism must have been introduced into Albanian lands before

²¹⁰ Birge, J. K., *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, p. 56. Balım Sultan (d. 1516), of whose life there is no authentic account, assumed the headship of the order (c. 1500): İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire – the classical age*, p. 198

²¹¹ Hasluck, F. W., *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. II, p. 586

²¹² Rexhepagiqi, J., *Dervishet, rendet dhe teqete ne Kosove, ne Sanxhak e ne rajonet e tjera perreth ne te kaluaren dhe sot*, Dukagjini, Peje 1999, p. 210

²¹³ *ibid.*, p. 158

1550.²¹⁴ The founder of the tekke at the entrance of Kostur (Kesriye), Kasım baba, is supposed to have lived at the time of the Turkish conquest, and enjoyed considerable local fame as a miracle-worker. The date of this tekke is still vague, but the name of Kasım baba is documented in an Ottoman survey held at the end of the 16th century and by Evliya Celebi in the mid-17th century.²¹⁵

The evidence provided on this issue by Albanian scholars is far from being convincing.²¹⁶ According to *F. Babinger*, the first concrete evidence for a Bektashi tekke in Albania, situated in the town of Kanina (near Vlora), dates to the second half of the 17th century,²¹⁷ but we should say that the history of Bektashism in Albania is still rather nebulous.* *F. Hasluck* is right when saying, “in Albania the typical saint is again a missionary, but differs both from the “Anatolian” and the “Rumelian” types in laying no claim to great antiquity”. He claims that Bektashi propaganda in Albania dates from the 18th century onwards and the saints, in general, are historical persons.²¹⁸ The same opinion is shared also by *J. K. Birge*, though his information in the favor of the earlier presence of Bektashism in Albania is not questionable.²¹⁹ *H. J. Kissling* supports the assumption of Babinger, who considered the tekke of Kanina (mid-17th century) to be the oldest Bektashi monument in Albania.²²⁰ Recently, *M. Kiel* claims that it appears very probable that Albanian Bektashism found its origins in the Turkified Macedonia of the 16th and the 17th centuries.²²¹ He insists that the

²¹⁴ Hasluck, F. W., *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. II, p.438

²¹⁵ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, Istanbul 1990, p. 174

²¹⁶ Dashi, S., “Teqete e Shqiperise: aspekte te historise dhe te arkitektures”, *Perla*, I (1999), p. 96-103

²¹⁷ Babinger, F., *Evlija Tschelebi's Reisewege in Albanien*, Berlin 1930, p. 12

* For a summary of the works made on the earlier historical traces of Bektashism in Albania see, Kiel, M., “A Note of the Date of the Establishment of the Bektashi Order in Albania – the Cult of Sari Saltuk Dede in Kruja attested in 1567-1568”, *Bektachiyya – études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groups relevant de Hadji Bektach*, Éditions Isis, Istanbul 1995, p. 269-70

²¹⁸ Hasluck, F. W., *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. II, pp. 501-2

²¹⁹ Birge, J. K., *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, p. 70-2

²²⁰ Kissling, H. J., “Zur Frage der Anfänge des Bektasitums in Albanien”, *Oriens* 15 (1962), 281-6

²²¹ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, p. 174

earliest traces of Bektashism in Albania could be found in the second half of the 16th century.²²²

Indications concerning the first tekkes in Albania are sporadic,²²³ and do not reflect the similar picture and intensity to the dervish establishment and activity as in other Balkan areas. The first epigraphic evidence on Islamic orders appeared in the first half of the 16th century, when the Ottoman military rule was definitively established. They increased numerically toward the middle of the 17th century. The increasing instances of such evidence coincide with the time when the process of islamization was expanding. The first epigraphic indication on Bektashi order belongs to the grave-stone of Gül baba in Kruja, in 1674.²²⁴

If we have a look at the evidence provided above, there are two points which draw our attention: firstly, the character of the landscape where the tekkes were built and secondly, the time discordance related to the first appearances of tekkes in Kosovo/western Macedonia and Albania. While most of the territories of Kosova and western Macedonia are lowlands, in 2/3 of Albania mountains prevail. Such a landscape made difficult the possibilities of communication among people and ideas. Albania rather than the place of dervishes and mysticism, was a natural refuge of persons and local lords fighting against the centralist empires.

²²² Kiel, M., "A Note of the Date of the Establishment of the Bektashi Order in Albania – the Cult of Sarı Saltuk Dede in Kruja attested in 1567-1568", *Bektachiyya – études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groups relevant de Hadji Bektach*, Éditions Isis, Istanbul 1995, pp. 273-4. Nevertheless, I am obliged to add that the historical facts and arguments author provided concerning the earliest traces of Bektashism in Albania are not so convincing.

²²³ The first traces of a tekke of Halveti dervishes is linked with the military campaign of sultan Bayezid II in Southern Albanian in 1492: Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, pp.62-3. There was a district in Elbasan, which in 1532 was called *Kalender mahallesi*: Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet Shqiptare (shek. XV-XX)*, Akademia Shkencave e R.P. te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1973, p. 109

²²⁴ Buharaja, V., "Mbishkrimet turko-arabe te vendit tone si deshmi historike", *Konferenca e Dyte e Studimeve Albanologjike, Tirane 12-18 janar 1968*, vol. II, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës – Instituti i Historise dhe i Gjuhesise, Tirane 1969, p. 83-4

M. Kiel argues that it appears very probable that Albanian Bektashism found its origins in the Turkified Macedonia of the 16th and the 17th centuries, while in Kosovo and western Macedonia the presence is documented since the 15th century. The first tekkes of dervishes in eastern Albanian lands were built all the way up to the borderline separating low and highlands. On the Albanian side of the mountains the dates and the history of most saints and their conventions are known, and they have no pretensions to be more than the founders of the tekkes where their bones lie. Dervishes are not the forerunners of Ottoman conquests in Albania and did not prepare the coming of the Ottoman army. They were stabilized in Albania only after the establishment of Ottoman military rule.

Bektashism was to become one of the most important and popular tarikat in the Balkans, because it gradually absorbed various other tarikats and the groups of dervishes, known as abdal, kalenderi or haydari. However, among dervish movements we should distinguish the Sunni orders, like Kadiri, Halvati ve Nakshibendi, which acted mostly in the zones populated by Muslim people. Moreover, it is possible to say that such dervish groups did not participate in military conquests, nor in the spread of Islam among the non-Muslim communities.²²⁵

b. The Ottoman Conquest, the Turkish Colonization and Islam

The genuine conquest and the establishment of Ottoman rule in a certain territory meant first the registration of land and population and the establishment of the *timar* system. The *vilayet tahriri* was the basis of the Ottoman provincial administration. It consisted of assessing all taxable resources on the spot and of recording that data in

²²⁵ Ocak, A. Y., “...İhtidarlarda Heterodoks Şeyh ve Dervişlerin Rölü”, p. 36

record books called *defter-i hâkânî*.²²⁶ Previously, there were two stages that the Ottomans followed systematically as the stages of conquest:

- 1? The period of Ottoman suzerainty over the Balkan states (*haracgüzârlık devresi*)*,
- 2? The direct control over Balkan countries by the elimination of the native aristocracy.²²⁷

The perpetual attacks of the Ottoman frontier forces (*akın devri*) prepared for the conditions of Ottoman suzerainty over the Balkan states. This period of vassality of Balkanic princes succeeded terrifying raids by the Ottoman frontier lords. If the vassal failed to fulfil his duties, his lands would again be considered *dârülharb* open to merciless raids of the frontier ghazis. Beyond the northern and western frontiers lay infidel lands to which it was their sacred mission to bring Islam and its civilisation.

Although the Ottoman conquest could be seen as a mere substitution of one master for another, the Ottomans brought to the Balkan Peninsula the norms and rules of an *imperial* and *centralist* state. It eliminated the local boundaries and demonstrated justice toward its new subjects and provided them with security. The protection of the local population was believed to be necessary for both moral and practical purposes.²²⁸ It was seen as the key factor in ensuring the allegiance of the subject peoples. Such a policy was called *istimalet*, i.e. leniency aimed at winning the hearts of the peasants, and played a prominent part in the Ottoman expansion.²²⁹ Through

²²⁶ Inalcik, H., "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", *The Ottoman Empire : Conquest, Organization and Economy*, Variorum Reprints, London 1978, p. 109

* "...kadimden Arnavut beği İskender Hünkar'a harac verirdi. ...": "Mehmet Neshri", *Lufta shqiptaro-turke ne shekullin XV - burime osmane*, p. 92

²²⁷ "yerli hanedanın bertaraf edilmesi": Inalcik, H., "Stefan Duşan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na: XV. asırda Rumeli'de Hristiyan Sipahiler ve Menşeleri", 60. *Doğum Yılı Münasebetiyle Fuad Köprülü Armağanı*, İstanbul 1953, p. 245; Inalcik, H., "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", p. 103

²²⁸ Inalcik, H., "State and Ideology under the Sultan Suleyman", *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, Bloomington 1993, p. 70-2, 76

²²⁹ Inalcik, H., "Ottoman Policy and Administration in Cyprus after the Conquest", *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy*, Variorum Reprints, London 1978, p. 5

this policy the Ottomans did not intend only to win over peasants and townspeople, but also the military and clerics by way of generous promises and concessions.²³⁰

“... Padişah Hristyanların papazlarına, kiliselerine ve çeşitli mezheplerine bağlı kalmalarına da izin vermiştir. ...”²³¹

To sum up, Ottoman rule brought less abuse of the Balkan people and greater security. The concept of justice for the Ottomans was strongly connected with the old Turkish state tradition: “For the people to prosper just laws must be set forth”.²³² In the Turkish State system, which relied on the absolutist rule of the sovereign, justice is understood as the prevention of abuse and oppression of the people by those in authority. It is considered the most important duty of the rulers, who did not wish to recognize any limitation to their political authority. Some of the major objectives of the ruler, who represented justice, were:

- To treat everyone in accordance with their status in life,
- To govern the people through just laws and give no opportunity for the strong to do dominate the weak.²³³

Within the policy of *istimalet*, the Ottomans, especially during the first centuries of their rule, maintained intact the laws and customs, the status and privileges, that had existed in the pre-conquest times. When the Ottomans conducted their first survey in a newly conquered region, their first step was to ascertain the pre-conquest laws and customs of the area. For example, even one century after the Ottoman conquest (1485-1570/1) the Ottomans did not adopt in the sancak of Shkodra their tax system, but retained the Venetian tax practices.²³⁴ The local practices had held a more

²³⁰ Inalcik, H., “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Under the Ottomans”, *Turcica*, tome XXI-XXIII (1991), p. 409

²³¹ Curipeschitz, B., *Yolculuk Günlüğü (1530)*, TTK Yay., Ankara 1989, p. 25

²³² İnalcık, H., “Turkish and Iranian Political Theories and Traditions in *Kutadgu Bilig*”, p. 5

²³³ *ibid.*, p. 6

²³⁴ Pulaha, S., “Tradita dhe ndryshime ne marredheniet ekonomiko-shoqerore ne trevat shqiptare gjate shekujve te pare te sundimit osman”, *Studime Historike*, no. 3 (1990), p. 120

prominent place in the Ottoman regulations, and, indeed, had had a great influence in the development of the typically *Ottoman kanun*.²³⁵ However, the Ottoman sultans, while preserving some of the fiscal regulations of the previous rulers, gradually introduced their own laws. Although each sancak had its own regulations, they all conformed in their essentials to the *kanun-i Osmani*. The general uniformity in *kanun-i Osmani* was in accord with the imperial standardization efforts in the areas such as, taxation, weights and measures, currency, urban and rural organization, and architecture with its classical imperial style. Thereby, *time* in the Balkans started to work according to the Eastern/Oriental clock. These are only some indicators demonstrating an initial process of essential changes in the secular life of Albanians and the Balkan Peninsula.

According to the rules of Holy War against the infidel, the prospective adversary should first be called upon to espouse Islam; if he refused he was free to choose whether to accept Moslem sovereignty and to pay tribute or to fight. Despite this, the policy of the Ottoman sultans towards each community was determined by the circumstances in which it had come under their control. Before the capture of a city, the Ottoman sultan, in accordance with Islamic law, urged the defenders to surrender peacefully, though he did not, on this or any other occasion, demand that they adopt the Muslim faith. Eager to win the native population, the Ottoman sultans accorded full tolerance to their religion.

With a few exceptions, in general, Albanian cities and castles were taken *kahren*. Consequently, in the Ottoman chronicles Albanians are depicted differently from the other peoples of the region:

“...Amân bilmez imânsuz ve dahi kitabsuz bir tâîfedir kim Islâm’a gelse dahi islâha gelmez ... kimseye baş eğmezler ve dahi harâca kesilüb mutî olmazlar ve mutî olanlar

²³⁵ İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire – the classical age ...*, p. 71

dahi zarûretle olur ... bunlar [Osmanlı dilaverleri] dahi Arnavud kavmini islâha getürememişlerdir, el-hâsılı Arnavud kavmi islâha kâbil değildir. ...”²³⁶

Because most of the Albanian urban centers were captured by force, the local people were subject to the rules on war and peace in Shari’a.²³⁷ According to the Shari’a, the noncombatants who did not take part in fighting, such as women, children, monks and hermits, the aged, blind and insane, were excluded from molestation. If the above mentioned people indirectly helped their people, they were subject to molestation.²³⁸

During or after the capture of a city, small Ottoman garrisons were left in several fortresses of strategic importance, while the surrounding fortresses around were often demolished. The Ottomans completely destroyed the fortresses of Lezha, Drishti and Zabyak during the siege of Shkodra (1478-9).^{*} Such a measure was an important part of the Ottoman methods of conquest and was taken, firstly, in order to avoid the necessity of maintaining considerable forces in these fortresses and secondly, to prevent the reemergence of these fortresses as centers of anti-Ottoman resistance under the lead of native lords.²³⁹ In other words, these centers were not to become a refuge for rebel infidels. In addition, the Ottoman state liquidated all feudal boundaries and obstacles in order to create a uniquely imperial space. But the Ottomans not only demolished, they also built new fortresses when it was necessary, especially in the extreme frontiers with darulharb and at strategic points of the Ottoman hinterland. Evliya Celebi writes that sultan Mehmed II built a fortress in Podgorica (Montenegro) to protect this area from Albanian “brigands” and Venetian

²³⁶ Yusuf bin Abdullah, *Bizans Söylenceleriyle Osmanlı Tarihi (Târîh-i âl-i Osmân)*, Dokuz Eylül Yayınları, İzmir 1997, pp. 236-7

²³⁷ Nedkoff, B. Ch., “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Cizye”, p. 617

²³⁸ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, pp.103-4. The Ottoman chronicles are full of information about the plundering of slaves from Albania as war booty.

^{*} Almost all Ottoman chronicles offered rich information about these events.

²³⁹ Inalcik, H., “Ottoman Methods of Conquest”, p. 107

infidels.²⁴⁰ Meanwhile, sultan Mehmed II built the fortress of Elbasan (1466) in the surroundings of the Kruja. So, Fatih erected a frontier stronghold with a twofold strategic importance: firstly, to put under pressure the city of Kruja, epicenter of Scanderbeg and, secondly, to control all threats coming from the Via Egnatia. Although in the following centuries Elbasan constituted a nucleus of Islamic/Oriental life in Albania, it is interesting to note that sultan Mehmed II ordered, not the deportation of Muslim Turks from Anatolia as he did in the other parts of Balkans, but the deportations of a considerable number of Christian families from Ohrid and Skopje.²⁴¹

The Ottomans were also responsible for leading the Turkmen ghazis and Turkish population into the Balkans. There is no doubt that the Ottoman – Turkic groups were sent to the Balkans with a view to consolidating the territories seized, and ensuring the roads of military expansion. Sometimes by forcible deportation they settled Turkmen colonies in the newly conquered lands. The Balkan Turkmens are known under the name of “Yörük” and not “Türkmen”.²⁴² They seem to have spread only in certain areas, being strongest in Thrace, parts of Bulgaria, Macedonia and Thessaly.²⁴³ The Turkish colonization in western Macedonia was of a smaller dimension if we compare it with that of other areas of Macedonia.²⁴⁴ They were used for the repopulation of depopulated lands, for guarding the bridges and mountain passes and safeguarding of fortresses. The Yuruks of Kodjadjik on the mountains to

²⁴⁰ Evliya Celebi in *Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohri)*, p. 47

²⁴¹ “Kritovulos”, *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin XV - burime bizantine*, prepared by K. Bozhori, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1967, p. 87; Snegarov, I., *Istoriya na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija – Patriarshija ot padaneto I pod turcit do neinoto unishcozhenie (1394-1767 g.)*, Makedonski Haucen Institut, Sofia 1932, p. 41

²⁴² Inalcik, H., “The Yürüks: their Origins, Expansion, and Economic Role”, p. 100

²⁴³ Vryonis, S., “The Conditions and Cultural Significance of the Ottoman Conquest in the Balkans”, *Actes du IIe Congres International des Etudes du Sud-Est Europeen*, tom III (histoire), Athens 1978, p.15

²⁴⁴ Zhelyazkova, A., *Razprostranenie na Islama v zanadnobalkanskite zemi ...*, p. 95

the East of Dibra were apparently stationed to safeguard the Macedonia-Albania highway and the fortress of Sveti Grad captured by the Ottomans in 1448.

One of the important functions of the yuruks in the Balkans was the exploitation of mines. Shortly after the Battle of Kosovo (ca. 1389), the sultan Bayezid I stationed a Turkish colony in the mine-city of Novo Brdo, and later, in the first decades of the 15th century, in the other mining-city, Trepca.²⁴⁵ After the conquest of Gjirokastra (ca. 1417), Chalkokondiles says that in that city were established a yeniceri garrison and a small number of Turkish people.²⁴⁶ While, in the period of the reign of sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, the presence of a small yürük group was registered in the kaza of Korca (Gorice).²⁴⁷

The presence of sixty-nine Muslim houses in the city of Shkodra (1485), only six years after the final Ottoman conquest, confirms once again the idea of the almost complete absence of the Turkish colonization in this area.²⁴⁸ Being so few, Turkish colonies in Albanian lands, in a short time, there were assimilated by native people. The massive Turkish colonization in Albanian lands was not of such important dimensions as to threaten the Albanian national identity or the ethnic balance of society, like in the other lowlands of the Balkans.

The complicated geographical and political situation and, thereby the shortage of economic and human resources, were two major factors which prevented a massive transplantation of Turkish population from Anatolia to Albanian lands, though breaking the rule: "... bölgenin arzettiği ehemmiyet dolayısıyla iskan tarzı ...".²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, Shtepia Botuese "8 Nentori", Tirane 1987, pp. 240, 408

²⁴⁶ "Laonik Halkokondili", p. 48

²⁴⁷ Akgündüz, A., *Osmanli Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri*, c. VI, OSAV, Istanbul 1993, p. 616

²⁴⁸ Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit të sanxhakut të Shkodres të vitit 1485*, vol. I, Tirane 1974

²⁴⁹ Barkan, Ö. L., "Osmanli İmparatorlugunda bir Iskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler", *İÜİF Mecmuası*, c. 15, no. 1-4 (1953-4), p. 233

The rural and mountain areas were not at all affected by the massive Turkish emigration. The indicated areas preserved their absolute Christian outlook for a relatively long period.²⁵⁰ Even in the 16th century the Turkish colonization remained an unknown phenomenon.²⁵¹

The lack of toponimic names of Turkish origin, apart from several toponimic terms such as “Kodjadjik”, and Turkish adaptation of Albanian toponimic names (“Labova e Madhe” into “Büyük Labova”),²⁵² is another factor indicating that Turkish colonization in Albanian lands was insignificant* and did not leave deep traces.

The Ottoman colonization of the Balkans did not take shape as a massive Turkish emigration into the region. The phenomenon of *sürgüns*, individual deportees, is of special importance in Albanian lands. In the first century of their conquest, the Ottomans seemed to be interested rather in using deportation for military purposes and for the protection of public order in the newly conquered. The policy of deportation aimed to shift to the distant parts of empire an individual or a group of rebellious elements, which were a real threat for the public order. The deportation of influential persons or families from Anatolia to Albania marked not only a great step forward in strengthening the Ottoman rule in newly conquered territories weakening the traditional authority of local noble families, but also in reorganising these territories in accordance with the rules of oriental imperial traditions.²⁵³ The Arvanid defteri (1431) testifies to the establishment in Albania of many deportees from

²⁵⁰ Pulaha, S., “Aspekte të demografisë historike të trevave shqiptare gjatë shek. XV-XVI”, *Studime për Epokën e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historisë, Tiranë 1989, p. 46

²⁵¹ Zhelyazkova, A., *Razprostranenie na Islama ...*, p. 87

²⁵² İnalçik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954, p. 3

* A. Zhelyazkova attributed a great role to the Turkish colonization in the process of islamisation of Bosnians. For more details on this thesis see her article: “Bosnia pod Osmanskoj Vlastju v XV-XVI vv.”, *Osmanskaja Imperija - gosudarstvenaja vlast i socialno-politiceskaja struktura*, Akademija Nauk SSSR, Moskva 1990, p. 173

²⁵³ Barkan, Ö. L., “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir İskan ...”, p. 214

several parts of Asia Minor (Saruhan, Djanik, Bolu, Engürü and Vize).²⁵⁴ Granting to them timars in these frontier districts, the deportees, as warriors, were treated in an exceptionally generous way. The situation in Albania was complicated and dangerous, and to be granted a timar in this area was not so much an award for combat merits and loyalty to the sultan, than a kind of exile. We should remember that timar-holder deportees with their men did not exceed 800 in number. This insignificant number of timar-holders made possible the phenomenon that a deportee held at the same time two timars in different regions of Albania.²⁵⁵

The Ottomans used the policy of individual deportation rather than mass deportation as a tool in organizing newly conquered Albanian lands. The Turkish population in this remote province consisted only of military, administrative and religious personnel.

The Ottoman sürgün policy had not only one direction: from Anatolia to Balkan, but also the reverse. The mass deportations by Mehmed II from Albania and other Balkan areas to Istanbul are well known.²⁵⁶ The Islamic legal opinion had, on the whole, opposed deportations of non-Muslims for reasons other than security.²⁵⁷ In the 15th century the Ottoman government transferred some Albanian timar-holders of the feudal families (Mazaraki and Hekali) to Trebizond.²⁵⁸ The result was a complete ethnic assimilation and islamization of these people cutting forever every connection with their native lands.

²⁵⁴ İnalcik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954

²⁵⁵ Palikrusheva, G., - A. Stojanovski, "Debarska oblast u sezdesetim godinama XV veka", *Simpozjumi per Skenderbeun (9-12 maj 1968)*, Instituti Albanologjik I Prishtines, Prishtine 1969, pp. 190-1

²⁵⁶ İnalcik, H., "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", p. 123

²⁵⁷ Braude, B. - B. Lewis, "Introduction", *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, p. 11

²⁵⁸ Barkan, Ö. L., "Osmanli Imparatorlugunda bir Iskan ...", p. 218, 221. The recent work on this topic is the article of Beldiceanu-Steinherr, I., "L'exil à Trébizonde d'une quarantaine de combattants albanais à la fin du XVe siècle", *The Mediaeval Albanians*, National Hellenic Research Foundation - Institute for Byzantine Research, Athens 1998, pp. 349-369

Although not being accompanied by a massive Turkish colonization, the Ottoman military conquest caused an unprecedented event in Albania and other Western Balkan lands: the massive emigration of native people in Italy. The Ottoman conquest finally altered the direction of traditional emigration from north-south to east-west. The most massive Albanian emigration was that of the inhabitants of Ohrid and Shkodra, after the fall of these cities into Ottoman hands. Snegarov says that the Ottoman seizure of Ohrid led to the emigration of 3000 Christians along with their spiritual leader.²⁵⁹ While a comparative study of Latin and Ottoman sources on the demography of Shkodra Sancak from 1416 to 1485, shows a clear decrease of population in the sancak of Shkodra.²⁶⁰ The Latin/Italian documents also mentions about 200.000 Albanian emigrants leaving Albania to be established in Venice and nearby areas.²⁶¹ The Albanian emigration Italy lasted until the end of the 15th century.²⁶²

The Islamic Holy War, ghaza, theoretically was intended not to destroy but to subdue the world of infidels. Holy War and colonization were two dynamic elements in the Ottoman conquests,²⁶³ which brought about not only the fall of local state formations, but also the collapse of the organization of Christian Churches. The Ottomans did not favor or tolerate the ecclesiastical administration of the largely influential churches having been there consistently and uninterruptedly for a long part:

“...[kale] içine müslümanlar koyub keniseleri mescid edüb Arnavud İskenderiyesi dahi darü'l-İslam oldu. ...”²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ Snegarov, I., *Istoriya na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija* ..., pp. 31-2

²⁶⁰ Menga, P., “Vendbanimet fshatare te Shqiperise se Veriut ne shek. XV-XVI”, *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 166

²⁶¹ *Historia e Shqiperise*, ... pp. 322-4.

²⁶² “Oruc”, *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin XV - burime osmane*, prepared by Selami Pulaha, Univ. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historise dhe Gjuhesise, Tirane 1968, p. 49

²⁶³ İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire –the classical age* ..., p. 12

²⁶⁴ “Mehmet Neshri”, pp. 94-5

The first care of the Prophet after his arrival in Medina was to build a *mosque* to serve both as a place of prayer and of general assembly for his followers.²⁶⁵ The first Ottoman mosques were situated within the castle walls. It can be argued that the Ottoman garrison of Shkodra in 1395 had a kind of mosque (musalla)* at its disposal within the castle.²⁶⁶ The Ottomans transformed into mosques not ordinary churches, but the best and most famous ones, those having a special symbolism for the life and history of a certain urban center and region.²⁶⁷ Besides, the transformations of these significative spiritual centers of Christianity in Balkans marked the definitive disappearance of Christian symbols from the memory of native people. The Santa Sofia Church in Ohrid was transformed into a mosque immediately after the Ottoman conquest, but in the mentality of Christian people of this region it still remained a "church", where Christians managed to enter by slipping a few akces to the doorkeepers.²⁶⁸ The same fate also befell the major churches of Vucitern,²⁶⁹ Novo Brdo,²⁷⁰ Pec,²⁷¹ the Church of St. Stephen in Shkodra,²⁷² and the Cathedral of St. Nicola (Lezha).²⁷³ The Santa Maria Metropolitan Church in Durres²⁷⁴ and some other

²⁶⁵ Arnold, Th. W., *The Preaching of Islam - A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, new impression, Darf Publishers Limited, London 1986, p. 26

* A musalla had also in Prizren: Kaleshi, H., "Prizren kao kulturni centar ...", p. 92

²⁶⁶ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, p. 285

²⁶⁷ Zirojevic, O., *Crkve i Manastiri na podruclju Pecke Patriarsije do 1683. godine*, Istorijiski Institut u Beogradu, Beograd 1984, p. 25

²⁶⁸ Evliya Celebi in *Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohri)*, p. 207

²⁶⁹ Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, Shtepia Botuese "Drita", Ferizaj 1992, p. 87

²⁷⁰ Rizaj, S., *Kosova Gjate Shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, Shtepia Botuese "8 Nentori", Tirane 1987, p. 207

²⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 220

²⁷² Degrand, A., *Souvenirs de la Haute-Albanie*, Paris 1901, p. 78

²⁷³ Armao, E., *Localita, Chiese, Fiumi, Monti e Toponimi Varii di Un'Antica Carta dell'Albania Settentrionale*, Istituto per L'Europa Orientale, Roma 1933, p. 31

²⁷⁴ Cordignano, F., "Geographia ecclesiastica ...", ..., p. 253

Catholic churches were completely destroyed,²⁷⁵ while some others were used for other purposes.²⁷⁶

The Christian symbols were removed from these churches and their buildings were redesigned in compliance with the requirements of Islam. Most of the early mosques in Albanian lands were called *Fethiye Camii*. It is important to emphasize that, though they transformed a lot of churches into mosques, the Ottomans did not change the divine designation of Christian buildings, they ensured the continuity of the initial mission “to pray to God”.²⁷⁷

From the beginning, the most fundamental and perhaps the most effective component of the istimalet policy was the recognition of the Orthodox Church as part of the Ottoman State.²⁷⁸ The fact that the Ottomans favored openly, firstly the Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid versus that of Constantinople, and later the Patriarchate of Constantinople, restoring it everywhere they went to its position of superiority vis – à – vis the Latin Church, is a clear indication of the political intent of the Ottomans toward the Catholic Church.

The Orthodox provincial authorities were fully empowered by the sultan’s berat to deal independently with clergy in the churches and monasteries under their jurisdiction. The Arvanid defteri contains documents concerning the appointment with a sultanic berat of a Metropolitan at Berat under sultan Mehmed I, and by his

²⁷⁵ Many churches in the districts of Shkodra and Lezha were completely destroyed: Jirecek, K., “Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mittelalter”, p.124; Gurakuqi, G., *Dieçezi i Sapes : 1291-1941*, p. 40

²⁷⁶ The St. Vlasius Church in Shkoder, at the beginning was destroyed, and later was built an hamam: Kamsi, W., “Kisha e kuvende te Shkodres me rrethina ne Mesjete”, *Krishterimi nder Shqiptare*, Simpozium Nderkombetar –Tirane, 16-19 nentor 1999, Shkoder 2000, p. 123. The churches of St. Sebastian and Santa Maria in Lezha were transformed into a store-house for military needs: Jirecek, K., “Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mittelalter”, in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, p. 124. While a church in Kruja was divided into two parts, a half was used as a mescid, the other part as a house: İnalçik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, p. XXXI

²⁷⁷ Kamsi, W., “Kisha e kuvende te Shkodres ...”, pp. 124-5

²⁷⁸ İnalçik, H., “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Under the Ottomans”, p. 409

successor.²⁷⁹ Two Orthodox monasteries in the Dibra region (1467) were exempted from taxation by the berat of sultan.²⁸⁰

After the Ottoman conquest the Catholic bishops and other provincial authorities were not able to go to their churches, and these churches became economically impoverished. After 1478, the Bishop of Lezha abandoned the city and preferred to move up to the mountainous villages of Kallmet,²⁸¹ while the Franciscan friars moved up to the mountainous region of Mirdita (Rubik).²⁸² After the conquest in 1501, the Catholic Archbishop of Durres was prohibited from living in the city, so he decided to move to a rural area nearby.²⁸³ From 1404-1596 Prizren remained without a Catholic bishop, despite the complaints of native people to the Catholic high-ranking authorities.²⁸⁴

The religious and cultural life of the Muslims in Albania began to be organized around *camiis*, whose erection sometimes was personally urged by the Ottoman sultans.* The documents show that even the Ottoman frontier leaders²⁸⁵ and the high-ranking local officials²⁸⁶ had built *camiis*.

²⁷⁹ İnalçık, H., *Hicri 835 tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, see Index: Metropolit and Peskopos.

²⁸⁰ İnalçık, H., "Krahina e Krujes dhe Dibres rreth vitit 1467", p. 187

²⁸¹ Jirecek, K., "Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mittelalter", 124; Gurakuqi, G., *Dieçezi i Sapes* ..., pp. 45-6

²⁸² Jirecek, K., "Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mittelalter", p. 123

²⁸³ Kurbin (Blinisht): Jirecek, K., "Die Lage und Vergangenheit der Stadt Durazzo in Albanien", in: *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. L. Thalloczy, band I, München und Leipzig, 1916, p. 166

²⁸⁴ Gjini, G., ..., pp. 117-8

* The list of mosques in Albanian lands built with the initiative of early Ottoman sultans in Albanian lands is also provided in: Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, pp. 295-6, 95. For more details see the information offered by Evliya Celebi, *Evliya Celebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohri)*, eds. R. Dankoff & R. Elsie, Brill 2000

²⁸⁵ Kaleshi, H., "Oriental Culture in Yugoslav Countries from the 15th Century to the End of the 17th Century", *Ottoman Rule in the Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czecho-Slovak - Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, p. 324

²⁸⁶ Pilana, E., "Vuciterna dhe rrethina ne sundimin osman ne shek. 15-17", *Gjurmime Albanologjike*, no. XII (1982), p. 79

Since the second half of the 15th century we can document the presence of an imam in the newly conquered castle of Kodjadjik (Svetigrad).²⁸⁷ Apart from mosques, the other Islamic/Oriental objects that we see earlier in Albanians lands were *turbes*²⁸⁸ and *hamams*.²⁸⁹

c. The Ottoman Organization of Territory

Ottoman territorial organization, in general, followed the paths of Ottoman military conquest, but the Ottomanization of a conquered region was not a sudden and radical transformation, but a gradual development.²⁹⁰

At the turn of 14th century, sultan Bayezid I had conquered the territories of western Macedonia and southeastern Albanian lands. The Paşa Sancak included many regions of western Macedonia, as Tetovo, Kičevo (Kerçova), and southeastern Albania, as Bihlišhte, Kostur and Hurupişhte. Toward 1395 the Ottomans founded the Sancak of Ohrid.²⁹¹ The southeastern Albanian lands were among the first registered Ottoman regions.²⁹²

The Ottomans in general called by the name or the title of the local lord the territories of their first contact, and this is the reason way in the earliest Ottoman documents we see the term, such as “.... – ili”. The Ottoman survey of Kosova held in 1455 was called “defter-i vilayet-i Vilk” (the survey of the lands of Vuk

²⁸⁷ İnalçık, H., “Krahina e Krujes dhe e Dibres rreth vitit 1467”, p. 190

²⁸⁸ The first Turkish building in Kosova was the turbe of Sultan Murad I. Immediately after the Battle of Kosovo (1389) sultan Bayezid I built a mosque in Vilcitrn as a commemoration of the victory: Cerrabregu, M., “Development of Urbanization and Economic Activities in the Province of Kosova During the Ottoman Period”, *V. Milletlerarası Türkiye Sosyal ve İktisad Tarihi Kongresi*, 21-25 ağustos 1989, Marmara Üniversitesi, İstanbul 1989, p. 676

²⁸⁹ A hamam was built in Pec during the 15th century: Rizaj, S., *Kosova Gjate Shekujve XV...*, p. 220

²⁹⁰ İnalçık, H., *The Ottoman Empire –the classical age ...*, pp. 13-4

²⁹¹ Zhelyazkova, A., *Razprostranenie na Islama ...*, p. 92

²⁹² Başbakanlık Arşivi, *Maliyye'den Müdevver Defteri no. 231*. For a detailed information on the oldest Ottoman survey registers belonging to Albanian lands, which are situated in Turkish Archives see, İnalçık, H., “Stefan Dušan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na ...”, pp. 219-21, 230; idem, *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, p. XI

Brankovic).²⁹³ Even in Bosnia the Ottomans after 1463 retained the old fashion of pre-Ottoman territorial organization: “king’s lands” and “duke’s lands”.²⁹⁴

The Ottoman survey of 1467²⁹⁵ comprised the Albanian territories involved in the resistance of Scanderbeg, just one year before his death. Actually, this survey aimed to make a registration of sources and people in a rebel area where the local lords no longer existed. It is probable that this region was administratively joined to Ohri Sancak.²⁹⁶

The Ottomans, in the first decades of their rule, went to great pains to adapt themselves to local conditions; they could not act as absolute masters in this territory, insecure and disputed as it actually was. During the 15th century boundaries were fluid and changeable, so, from time to time, the territories registered in a defter conflicted with territories registered before or later. Another characteristic of Albanian lands was the concordance between the territorial organization of tribes in mountain areas with the initial Ottoman territorial division.²⁹⁷ In this case, it was the geographical condition that determined the Ottoman administrative division of such regions.

Only toward the end of the 15th century were the Ottoman administrative units named after the larger cities that fell within their boundaries, cities that were also the seat of the territory’s administrative-judicial (kadı) and military authorities (...-bey).²⁹⁸ At the beginning of the 16th century areas with Albanian population were

²⁹³ Hadzibegic, H.- A. Handzic – E. Kovacevic, *Oblast Brankovica opsirni katastarski popis iz 1455. godine*, vol. I-II, Orijentalni Institut, Sarajevo 1972

²⁹⁴ Heywood, C., “Bosnia under Ottoman Rule, 1463-1800”, *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: their historic development from the Middle Ages to the dissolution of Yugoslavia*, ed. M. Pinson, Harvard University Press 1993, p. 29

²⁹⁵ Başbakanlık Arşivi, *Maliyye’den Müdevver Defteri no. 508*

²⁹⁶ Palikrusheva, G., - A. Stojanovski, “Debarska oblast u sezdesetim godinama XV veka”, p. 182

²⁹⁷ Pulaha, S., “Mbi gjallerimin e lidhjeve farefisnore dhe krijimin e fiseve ne Shqiperine e veriut ne shek. XVI-XVII”, *Studime Historike*, p. 139

²⁹⁸ idem, *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Skodres te vitit 1485*, vol. I-II, Tirane 1974

divided among these sancaks: Delvina (Delvine), Vlora (Avlonya), Elbasan (Ilbasan), Ohri, Dukagjin (Dukagin), Shkodra (İşkodra), Prizren (Prizrin) and Vëlçitrin. Some frontier areas were included in the neighboring sancaks, such as the sancaks of Manastir and Üsküp.²⁹⁹ The size of a sancak depended on the existing political and administrative structure, on geographical conditions and on military considerations. Accordingly, changes occurring in the frontier areas also led to changes in the sancaks of the interior.³⁰⁰

The sancaks of a certain region were joined together by both a common administrative and military subordination formed the largest administrative unit – the *beylerbeylik*.^{*} The sancak was divided into smaller units called *nahiye*. The *kaza* was originally a territory covered by the administrative and judicial authority of a kadi. Such an administrative division took its classical form in the 16th century.

Still, the Ottoman division of territory did not mean the islamization of territory. In Arvanid ili (1431) only 24 % of sipahis were Christian Albanians, while the rest, 74 %, were Ottoman.³⁰¹ It was just the initial phase of the establishment of Ottoman rule, but the numbers show clearly that the traditional balances in the control of territories shifted in the favor of the conquerors.

The first *sultan has* in Albanian lands was registered in the sancak of Shkodra in 1485, and later, at the beginning of the 16 century, in the other sancaks in Albanian

²⁹⁹ idem, "Gjendja demografike ne tokat shqiptare gjate shek. XV-XVI", *Popullsia Shqiptare e Kosoves gjate Shek. XV - XVI - Studime dhe Dokumenta*, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1984, pp. 605-6

³⁰⁰ Todorov, N., *The Balkan City, 1400-1900*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1983, p. 22

^{*} For a broad information on the administrative division of Rumeli in 15th – 17th centuries see, Rizaj, S., *Kosova Gjate Shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, pp. 38-43. For a comprehensive information on the administrative division of Albanian lands see: Inalcik, H., "Arnavutluk'ta Osmanlı Hakimiyetinin Yerleşmesi ve ...", p.157; idem, *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, p. XI; idem, H., "Arnavutluk", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 655-6. For the last and the most detailed work on the administrative division of all Albanian lands in the 15th and the 16th centuries see, Pulaha, S., "Gjendja demografike ne tokat shqiptare gjate shek. XV-XVI", pp. 603-8

³⁰¹ Inalcik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954

lands.³⁰² The cities of Gjirokastra (1431)³⁰³ and Shkodra (1485)³⁰⁴ were has of sancakbeys.

The instensity of land division in timars and zeamets was higher. In the first half of 16th century the number of timars and zeamets was increased twice, while at the end of the 16th century the number of zeamets was increased six times.³⁰⁵ These data show that the establishment of Ottoman rule resulted in the intensification of territorial Ottomanisation.

At the turn of 15th century we see the first *mülk** in southeastern Albania. It was granted to Miriahur Ilyas bey, a high-ranking Ottoman official of Albanian origin. Mulksahibi were persons, who through the devshirme system reached high positions in the Ottoman state, and in general they were granted parts of territories where they were born.³⁰⁶ But mülks were also granted the high-ranking Ottoman officials of Albanian origin.³⁰⁷

One of most important effects of the Ottoman conquests was the Church's loss of property and income. The Ottoman division of territory meant at the same time the destruction of the Church's ecclesiastical organisation. Before the Ottoman conquest (1416-7) the Christian churches possessed great estates and thereby incomes,³⁰⁸ while afterward, within the boundaries of the nahiye of Ipek remained eleven Orthodox monasteries,³⁰⁹ and in the territories of Shkodra sancakbey's hass there

³⁰² Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare, shek. XV - XVI*, p. 185

³⁰³ İnalçik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954, pp. 1-27

³⁰⁴ Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Shkodres te vitit 1485*, vol. II, Tirane 1974, pp. 53-145

³⁰⁵ Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare ...*, pp. 204-5

* We will deal particularly in next chapter with the process kulliyye building and the transformation of mulks into family wakfs and their effects on the process of islamization of territories and people.

³⁰⁶ Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare ...*, pp. 174-5

³⁰⁷ Mustafa pasha Dukagjini had a mülk in Dukagjin region: Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale...*, p. 175

³⁰⁸ Biçoku, K., "Rreth pronesise se tokes dhe strukture shqiptare te fshatit shqiptar te zones se Shkodres ne fillim te shek. XV", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, pp. 179-80

³⁰⁹ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, p. 219

were twelve monasteries, without any real income or ecclesiastical organisation/authority.³¹⁰

The ecclesiastical organisation in Albanian lands changed according the rhythm of Ottoman conquest and the intensity of the implementation of the timar system. The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans destroyed all the Christian states and principalities with the result that the Church no longer entertained dangerous and suspect political liaisons.

However, the Ottoman conquest not only restricted the ecclesiastical boundaries of Christian churches. Sometimes it brought an extension of the ecclesiastical boundaries of certain churches. For instance, the boundaries of Ohrid Diocese were broadly extended during the 15th century when the Ottomans were recuperating territorial losses after the Battle of Ankara (ca. 1402). The ecclesiastical extensions were very large especially in the Eastern and Northern Balkans.³¹¹ The Ottomans endorsed the Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid in order to use it against the ecclesiastical and hierarchical authority of Constantiople and the Church of Peć (Peja). The ecclesiastical authority of the Ohrid Archbishopric was extended, also to the disfavor of the Catholic ecclesiastical organization. Before the Ottoman conquest Novo Brdo was a Catholic stronghold; from the late 15th century on it was included in the Orthodox ecclesiastical organization of the Ohrid Archbishopric.³¹²

In the 15th century in Albanian lands there were eighteen Episcopal Sees, many of them having a continuous history from the earliest time of Christianity.³¹³ The Catholic Church ecclesiastical organization in the Balkans, especially after the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia (1463) and Albania (1479), was considered *in partibus*

³¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 77

³¹¹ For details on the territories and dates of extensions see, Snegarov, I., *Istorija na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija – Patriarshija ...*, pp. 156-9, 160-2, 174-5

³¹² *ibid.*, pp. 29-30

infidelium (in the lands of kafirs). In Italian documents the Catholic clergy appointed in these territories were considered to be serving in a great difficulty *in partibus infidelium*.³¹⁴ However, the survival of Catholicism in Kosovo depended not only on the presence of Catholic Albanians, but also on the number of Ragusians, Germans and other Catholic communities.³¹⁵

The Ottoman conquest and its territorial organization deeply damaged the Catholic ecclesiastical organisation in the central and northern Albania. The Abbey of St. Sergio in Albania Venetiana was completely destroyed,³¹⁶ while the Diocese of Lis (today the region of Mat, central Albania), administratively under the care of Catholic Archbishopric of Durres, was demolished.³¹⁷ The epigraphic material points out that during the 15th century in none of the churches situated in Albania do we have any inscription showing that these objects were built during this period.³¹⁸

IV. The Ottomans, Islam and Albanians

a. The Ottoman's Attitude toward Albanian Nobility

The Ottomans maintained the same class divisions of the pre-Ottoman period, dividing the peoples of a newly conquered region, Muslim and non-Muslims, into the *military* and the *reaya*.³¹⁹ The Ottomans accepted as a military class the members of the equivalent caste in the Balkan countries, and considering the native Balkan nobility as "military" (*askeri sınıf*), they did not demand anything else except for

³¹³ Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", p. 221

³¹⁴ Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, Shtepia Botuese "Drita", Ferizaj 1992, p. 118

³¹⁵ Handzic, A., "Nekoliko vijesti o Arbanasima na Kosovu i Metohiji sredinom XV vijeka", *Simpozjumi per Skenderbeun (9-12 maj 1968)* Prishtine 1969, p. 208

³¹⁶ Armao, E., *Localita, chiese, fiumi, monti, e ...*, p. 140

³¹⁷ Frasheri, K., "Peseqindvjetori i dokumentit me te vjeter shqip", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. III, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, pp. 281-2

³¹⁸ Popa, Th., "Materialet epigrafile shqiptare te vendit si burime per historine e kultures se popullit tone", *Konferenca e Pare e Studimeve Albanologjike (15-21 nentor 1962)*, Universiteti Shteteror i Tiranes - Instituti i Historise dhe Gjuhesise, Tirane 1965, p. 570

³¹⁹ Inalcik, H., *The Ottoman Empire - the classical age*, p. 69

submission and loyalty. The military class comprised all who were directly in the sultan's service and were not engaged in direct production. This class enjoyed privileges in return for particular services to the state. Ottoman rule treated everyone in accordance with his status. For a man to pass from the reaya to military status was considered a breach of the fundamental principles of state, since the reaya were essential as producers and tax-payers.³²⁰

The key point of divergences between native Balkan noble families and the Ottoman State was the issue of land ownership and its distribution, i.e. the fundamental contradiction between the nature of the Ottoman *imperial* system and the native *feudal* system of land. Landed property became the main source of the family's honor and power in Albanian lands, as in Bosnia and other Balkan areas, where the feudal system prevailed. Moreover, in the mountainous areas because only small percentage of the soil was arable, even under the best conditions, land became of particularly high value.

The Ottomans were making conquests in the Balkan Peninsula where before the Islamic occupation was unknown. The first Ottoman sultans were realistic not to oppose directly the established in the newly conquered country. But this was just a transitory period, because state proprietorship was not only a natural consequence of the conditions present at the moment of conquest, but the Ottoman state always sought to take more and more lands under its ownership. It was the military character of the state that necessitated this policy. The Ottoman State always fought against the local landed aristocracy. The Ottoman land system was a happy combination of the

³²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 69. For more information and large analyses on the question of social stratification of Ottoman society see, Inalcik, H., "Comments on 'Sultanism': Max Weber's Typification of the Ottoman Polity", *Princeton Papers in Eastern Studies*, eds. Ch. Issawi & Bernard Lewis, no.1(1992), p. 49-72

state's military needs and social security for the peasantry.³²¹ So, in essence, there was a real clash between the Ottoman imperial system and the feudal land system. While the Ottoman State considered the timar-lands, forming mostly from the original noble land, as a contingent from the state-lands (*miri*), the Albanian lords regarded these lands as their own soil inherited in familiar line from some generations according to feudal traditions. Land property remained the principal aim of all struggles of Albanian nobleman. Christian timar-holders and their heirs were forced to abandon parts of their lands and their special feudal rights under the new *miri/timar* regime; the greatest families sustaining the greatest lost. Mervin Hiskett says, "military conquest cannot, of it self, force men to abandon their belief and ideas. But the Muslim political authorities can set up the institutions which, given time, will persuade them or pressure them into doing so".³²² At last, it was landed property that chiefly motivated the Albanian nobility to convert to Islam.

However, the change of masters by Albanian feudals seems to be obviously determined by the fact that the attitude of Italian states³²³ appeared much more favorable than the Ottoman policy. The Ottoman military conquest struck the leading role in society and the economic incomes of Albanian nobility, while the Italian states recognized its social status, their traditional rights and territorial proprieties. The Ottoman State since the beginning made clear its attitude towards the reduction and later the removal of the fundamental/vital interests of native nobility and of making efforts to integrate it in the Ottoman State's structures. In this context

³²¹ Inalcik, H., "Land Problems in Turkish History", *The Ottoman Empire – conquest, organization and economy*, Variorum Reprints, London 1978, p. 224

³²² Levzion, N., "Toward a Comprehensive Study of Islamization", p. 11

³²³ The attitude of Venice toward the Albanian nobles is analyzed in these articles: Valentini, G., "Appunti sul Regime degli Stabilimenti Veneti in Albania nel Secolo XIV e XV", *Studi Veneziani*, vol. VIII (1966), pp. 195-265; idem, "Dell'amministrazione veneta in Albania", *Venezia e il Levante fino al Secolo XV: storia, diritto, economia*, vol. I, Firenze 1973, pp. 843-910

Barletius regards the return of Scanderbeg to Albania (ca. 1443) as a legal step towards regaining the complete territorial properties of his family.³²⁴

In medieval times the struggle of a ruling elite against a foreign power representing another ruling elite was, in the last analysis, a process of the same character, a struggle between two 'imperial' groups striving to achieve or maintain control over the native nobility of provinces with the promise to protect the basic prerequisites of the inherited system. But Albanian lords did not hesitate to change even their religion when such a thing was necessary to retain their political/economical existence. The attitude of Albanian lords towards religions was determined directly by the political conjecture and the international balance of power. The most typical was Gjon Kastrioti, the father of Scanderbeg. He was a Roman Catholic from 1407-1410, as an ally of Venice.³²⁵ He converted to Orthodoxy from 1419-1426, accepting the alliance of Stephen Lazarevic of Serbia. In 1426 Gjon Kastrioti granted two villages to the Hilandar monastery of Mount Athos. From 1431 to 1438 he was converted to Islam, because politically he was a vassal of the Ottomans. Gjon Kastrioti died as a Roman Catholic.³²⁶

The Ottoman omnipotent ruler gradually abolished all local and traditional rights and privileges within the border of its empire, and had the absolute authority to show that all rights stemmed from his will. The expression: "the sultan was the state itself" had a real meaning.³²⁷ Always seeking to strengthen his position by expanding his revenues and his armies, he served society as a whole by consolidating public security and order. Although the Albanian aristocracy's exposed and vulnerable position forced them into a co-operation quite unnatural to their tradition and

³²⁴ Marin Barleti, *Historia e Jetes dhe e Veprave te Skenderbeut*, translated by Stefan Prifti, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1964, p. 74

³²⁵ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. II, p. 232

³²⁶ Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", pp. 244-5

inclinations, after the Ottoman military conquest they were isolated groups in hostile territory.

The main concern of Balkan feudal lords was to protect their traditional privileges, and to retain, as far as possible, landed proprieties and sources of incomes. Albanian lords were responsible for the unrest, because they were against the imperial/centralist land control, and the division of their own lands. However, the Ottoman State, at the beginning, was tolerant when it accepted the status of Balkan nobility; besides, it opened the doors of state structures to the members of Balkan aristocracy in order to prevent their uprising and the destabilization of newly conquered areas. The basic fact in the Ottoman conquest was the restoration of the central authority and bureaucratic control vis-à-vis a provincial elite, which was in a way to undermine an age-old socio-political system.³²⁸ The Ottomans, following a conciliatory policy, reduced the local Christian lords to Ottoman timar holders controlling partially the family territories. The incorporation of the Balkan feudal elite into the Ottoman military class was made easier by their previous experience during the stage of vassality.

The Ottoman conquest and the establishment of the Ottoman regime left just two alternatives before the Albanian aristocracy: to leave Albania and to be refugees in Italy hoping for a possible return to family lands, or to be “Turkish”.³²⁹ The word “Turkish” expresses not an ethnic, but a political term originated from the name of the Turkish dynasty, while to be a “Turkish” meant to be a member of ruling class, which as a state servitor in return profited from the state budget.

³²⁷ Inalcik, H., “Ottoman Methods of Conquest”, p. 113

³²⁸ Inalcik, H., “The Çift-Hane System and Peasant Taxation”, *From Empire to Republic – Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History*, The Isis Press, Istanbul 1995, p. 63

³²⁹ Musacchio, G., “Breve memoria de li discendenti de nostra casa Musachi”, p. 276

In the Balkanic areas the Ottomans accepted the institution of *hristiyan sipahiler* as a transitory phenomenon. The Christian sipahis were no more a feudal independent class, but a caste whose economic and political status was determined by the Ottomans, and their future was strongly bound up with their loyalty to the Ottoman State. In addition, we have to stress that the institution of Christian sipahis was not a peculiar phenomenon just for Albanian lands;³³⁰ it was an institution, which appeared in the certain conditions and constituted a certain reality to which the Ottomans had to adopt a Balkan-wide peculiar policy.³³¹

For a while, Christian timar holders were subject to the same regulations as their Muslim counterparts, and there was no pressure or added incentive for them to convert to Islam. Conversion to Islam was not considered necessary for their possession of timar.³³² In the region Korce-Permet-Konice (1431/2) the native Christian timar-holders had 38 timars of 136 in total, i.e. 27.9 %.³³³ The Christian timar-holders possessed 56 of 335 timars, in other words they constituted 16 % of all the timar-holders in Arvanid ili (1431/2). In vilayet-i Vlk (1455), the territory of Kosovo Field there were just 27 Christian sipahis from 177 timars in total, or 15.2 % of timars were in the hands of Christian sipahis. Only 10 of them were classified as "kâdimi".³³⁴ In the defter of Debre (1467) we see 19 timars in the hands of Christian people from a total of 105 timars, 18 %. One of them was possessed by an Orthodox priest.³³⁵ In vilayet-i Mat (1467), a mountainous region in Central Albania, the

³³⁰ İnalcık, H., "Stefan Dušan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna ...", p. 235

³³¹ For the presence of Christian sipahis in the other areas of the Balkans see especially: İnalcık, H., "Stefan Dušan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna ...", p. 221-4

³³² İnalcık, H., "Arnawutluk", p. 654; İnalcık, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954; Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare*, shek. XV - XVI, p. 44

³³³ BOA, *Maliye'den Müdevver*, (1431/2 tarihli) Suret-i defter-i vilayet-i Goriçe ve Premedi ve Koniçe, no. 231

³³⁴ Hadzibegic, H.- A. Handzic – E. Kovacevic, *Oblast Brankovica opsirni katastarski popis iz 1455. godine*, vol. II, Orijentalni Institut, Sarajevo 1972

³³⁵ BOA, *Maliye'den Müdevver*, (1467 tarihli) Debre Esami Defteri, no. 508

majority of timar-holders were Christian.³³⁶ In the sancak of İşkodra (1485) only 15 of 120 timar-holders were Christians, 8.3%.³³⁷

Although the earlier Ottoman survey registers indicate the phenomenon of Christian sipahis, there is evident superiority in the number of Muslim sipahis compared with the Christian sipahis during the 15th century. In the newly conquered Albanian lands the presence of Christian sipahis was higher than in territories conquered later.³³⁸ The volume of incomes coming from timars granted to Christian timar-holders was less than the volume of incomes of Muslim timar-holders:

Korce - Permet – Konice (1431/2)	28.4 %
Arvanid ili (1431/2)	11.6 %,
Vlk ili (1455)	3.9 %,
The region of Dibra (1467)	9 %,
The sancak of Shkodra (1485)	7 %.

The number of timars and the portion of incomes in the hand of Christian sipahis, though a transitory period shows that the institution of Christian sipahis did not threaten the Islamic character of the Ottoman possessions in the Balkans. During the 15th century the Muslim sipahis controlled 60 % of timar incomes in total, except for some mountainous regions and the rebel territories. For instance, in the vilayet-i Uraka (district of Mati, central Albania) there were three timars, which were controlled by three native Christian sipahis. The reason was very simple. The Ottomans preferred to temporarily control such areas through native Christian timar-holders.³³⁹

³³⁶ *ibid.*

³³⁷ Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Skodres te vitit 1485*, vol. I-II, Tirane 1974

³³⁸ Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare, shek. XV - XVI*, p. 51

³³⁹ BOA, *Maliye'den Müdevver*, (1467 tarihli) Debre Esami Defteri, no. 508

In the territories where the Ottomans felt safe, they left just a small percentage of timars and incomes in the hands of Christian elements.³⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the existence of Christian sipahis in Albanian lands is still documented in the summary survey for the Sancak of Vlora held in year 912/1506.³⁴¹ As far as a Christian sipahi and his heirs fulfill all obligations of this status, they remained for some generation in the position of Christian sipahi.³⁴² But, as the quantitative data indicate, this institution was not applied with the same intensity in all Albanian territories. The presence of Christian sipahis was most concentrated in the highlands and in the rebelled territories. However, the numbers of Christian sipahis over a century was obviously decreased. For example, there were 17 timars in the hands of Christian sipahis from 61 timars in total in the vilayet-i Berat (Arnavud Belgradı) (1431), while in 1506 in the same vilayet we see just 7 timars in the hands of Christian timar holders of the 138 timars in total.³⁴³ This example shows clearly the decreasing number of Christian sipahis, and at the same time, the growing degree of the Ottomanisation of Albanian territory in favor of Islam.

The Ottoman documents of the 16th century point out that this institution was a transitory phenomenon, which was applied differently in the various parts of the Balkan Peninsula. The Ottoman State did not seek, as a rule, their conversion to Islam as a necessary prerequisite to enrolment in the Ottoman military class.

Among the Christian timar holders it is interesting to see also the churchmen, like metropolitans, archbishops and bishops. The Orthodox Bishop of Korça was granted

³⁴⁰ For a comprehensive information about the territorial losses of important Albanian feudal families, see Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare, shek. XV - XVI*, p. 54-63

³⁴¹ Timar-i Dimo Sopotino, timar-i Gjin veled-i Andrea: BOA, 912 (1506) *tarihli defter-i icmal-i livâ-i Avlonya*, no. 24

³⁴² Inalcik, H., "Stefan Dušan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna ...", p. 232

³⁴³ Inalcik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*; BOA, 912 (1506) *tarihli defter-i icmal-i livâ-i Avlonya*, no. 24

a timar of 2345 akca,³⁴⁴ the Metropolitan of Berat was granted a timar of 1424 akca, the Bishop of Kanina a timar of 1652, the Bishop of vilayet-i Çartalloz a timar of 1628, while the Bishop of Kruja was given a timar of 1075 akca.³⁴⁵ In the middle of the 16th century we do not see any timar in the hands of Christian clergy.

The position of middle and lower sipahis was considerably different from that of the upper strata of this estate. After the collapse of Dushan's Empire in Kosovo and Macedonia small Serbian principalities emerged, and most of them were destroyed by the Ottomans in battlefields. So, the percentage of middle and lower Christian sipahis, who replaced the lords, was greater than in Albania where mountainous regions served always as a natural refuge for all, Albanian upper and lower feudal class. It was easier to attract lower feudals compared with lords whose losses from the Ottoman conquest were very considerable. Among the sipahis of vilayet-i Tetovo (1452/3) prevailed small former Christian feudals, actually Muslim sipahis being a part of the Ottoman ruling class in this area.³⁴⁶ In Albanian lands their number was very few. There were only 21 timar-holders in central and southern Albania whose incomes did not exceed 1000 akce, while 95 of them had incomes over 1000 akce.³⁴⁷

The vacuum of middle and lower sipahis in Albania the Ottoman State tried to fulfill bringing sürgün from different regions of Anatolia. A considerable number of them received a salary not exceeding the sum of a few thousand akcha per year. In 1431 they controlled 30% of timars, with incomes more or less than 1000 akce. The lack of Turkish colonists and the considerable presence of sürgün timar-holders from Anatolia suggest that the geography and the anti-Ottoman resistance obliged the

³⁴⁴ BOA, *Maliye'den Müdevver*, (1431/2 tarihli) Suret-i defter-i vilayet-i Göriçe ve Premedi ve Koniçe, no. 231, timar no. 16

³⁴⁵ İnalçik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, timar no. 200, 100, 270, 299

³⁴⁶ *Turski dokumenti za istorijata na Makedonskiot narod (opširni popisni defteri od XV vek)*, Arhiv na Makedonija, Skopje 1976, pp. 35-143

³⁴⁷ İnalçik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*; BOA, *Maliye'den Müdevver*, (1431/2 tarihli) Suret-i defter-i vilayet-i Göriçe ve Premedi ve Koniçe, no. 231

Ottomans in Albania to follow a different policy compared with it in other areas of Balkans.³⁴⁸

The Ottoman regime in Kosovo and western Macedonia was based on the small feudals and Christian militaries called *voynuk*, and always made efforts to protect them.³⁴⁹ The loyalty was mutual, so Christian militaries ensured their existence, while the Ottoman State assured the control of a broad area. Even persons achieving public services, like scribes, arm-holders etc. were raised to the position of timar holders.³⁵⁰ We should stress that the relations between the lords and small feudals were determined by immediate interests. Both were looking at the forces, which best defended their interests. Lords hoped for help coming from the West, while the lower military caste sought to retain its traditional status and its economic power under the Ottoman rule.

But inasmuch as the Islam was one of the essential and determinant features of the Ottoman state, to be a Muslim meant being of a native person more acceptable and trustworthy to Ottoman authorities. In fact, conversion to Islam marked a step forward in the way of the integration of Balkan people into Ottoman state structures. The need to raise their level of credibility forced the Christian timar-holder to convert to Islam, otherwise they would be the representatives of a transitory institution. In the territories of Gjon Kastrioti (1467) there were only 8 converts of the first generations (nev-Muslim) from 19 Christian timar-holders in total.³⁵¹ In 1485 in the Sancak of Shkodra there were just 8 converts of first generation from 15

³⁴⁸ Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare*, shek. XV - XVI, pp. 68-9.

³⁴⁹ İnalçık, H., "Stefan Dušan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na ...", pp. 218-9; Rizvanolli, M., "Shkaqet e pranimit te popullise se krishtere ne klasen e spahinjve", *Feja, kultura dhe tradita islame nder shqiptaret*, Simpozium nderkombetar i mbajtur ne Prishtine me 15-17 tetor 1992, Prishtine 1995, pp. 131-2.

³⁵⁰ İnalçık, H., "Arnavutluk'ta Osmanlı Hakimiyetinin Yerlesmesi ve ...", pp. 172-3; İnalçık, H., "Timariotes chretiens en Albanie ...", p. 133.

³⁵¹ BOA, *Maliye'den Müdevver*, (1467 tarihli) Debre Esami Defteri, no. 508.

Christian sipahis in total.³⁵² In 1467 in the vilayet-i Tetovo 7 % of the timar-holders were nev-Muslim, while in the nahiye-i Kırçova this number was 8.5 %.³⁵³ Only two of the 27 Christian sipahis in the Vlk ili were converted to Islam: one in Priština and one in the nahiye-i Morava (Doğan, veled-i Dragoman).³⁵⁴

In fact, the Albanian collaborators, who helped the Ottomans in the seizure of some of Scanderbeg's military commanders, were also encouraged by the Ottoman state with timars and they voluntarily converted to Islam.³⁵⁵

Of great interest is the fate of the famous Albanian feudal families in the second half of the 15th century.³⁵⁶ A part of the Dukagjini family was islamized and integrated into the Ottoman state structures, while the other part emigrated to Italy.³⁵⁷ The sancakbey of the Sancak of Dukagjin (1571) was still an islamized offspring of Dukagjin family.³⁵⁸ One of the sons of Teodor Muzaka was islamized and managed to reach the position of the sancakbey of Arvanid ili.³⁵⁹ The Isa bey, son of Ozgur (from the Albanian family of Skurraj), reached the position of the bejlerbey of Anatolia.³⁶⁰

It is worthy of note that the descendants of Albanian noble families, who were converted to Islam, served as the Ottoman local authorities and timar-holders not

³⁵² Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit të sanxhakut të Skodres të vitit 1485*, vol. I-II, Tirane 1974

³⁵³ *Turski Dokumenti za Istorijata na Makedonskiot Narod*, Opshiren Popisen Defter no. 4 (1467-8), Skopje 1971, pp. 37-575

³⁵⁴ Hadzibegic, H.- A. Handzic – E. Kovacevic, *Oblast Brankovica opsirni katastarski popis iz 1455. godine*, vol. I-II, Orijentalni Institut, Sarajevo 1972

³⁵⁵ Inalcik, H., "Krahina e Krujes dhe e Dibres rreth vitit 1467", p. 189, 192

³⁵⁶ For detailed information on the destiny of the most important Albanian noble families after the establishment of the Ottoman rule in Albania, see Musacchio, G., "Breve memoria de li discendenti de nostra casa Musachi", in: Hopf, Ch., *Chroniques greco-romanes...*, pp. 284-289, 300; Inalcik, H., "Stefan Dušan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna ...", p. 226-8 and Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ...*, pp. 36-8

³⁵⁷ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, pp. 216-8

³⁵⁸ *Qendresa e Popullit Shqiptar kunder Sundimit Osman nga Shek. XVI deri ne Fillim te Shek. XVIII - dokumente osmane*, prepared by Selami Pulaha, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1978, p. 80

³⁵⁹ Inalcik, H., "Arnavutluk'ta Osmanlı Hakimiyetinin Yerleşmesi ve ...", p. 83

³⁶⁰ Inalcik, H., "Stefan Dušan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna ...", p. 228; idem, H., *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, p. 83

only in Albania, but also in the other areas of the Balkans; for example, Hasan, the son of Zenebish, was the subashi of Fener in the sancak of Thessalia.³⁶¹ The sons of the Balšić family were timar-holders in the vilayet of Vidin.³⁶² So, the Balkan seigneurs took the title of *bey* and were eligible for attaining the highest administrative post. From that moment on they were converted to Islam.

Islam was the religion of the conquering state, and there were worldly advantages to be among the new rulers. The first converts to Islam in Albania society were the Christian timar-holders. Individuals do not willingly change religious unless their existing social status is threatened, or unless they can convert in such a way as to maintain or improve their social status. It means that few people convert if there is no disadvantage to remaining in their previous religion, or if, by virtue of converting, they markedly lower their social status.³⁶³

“... le régime ottomane des timars a apporté avec le temps en Albanie un changement profond et essentiel d'ordre politique, social et culturel. La terre est devenue propriété foncière de l'Etat conquérant. Une autorité centrale s'y est installée; les grands seigneurs réfractaires ont été éliminés, à la suite de longues luttes; l'Islamisme s'y est répandu petit à petit”.³⁶⁴

Islam, in the 15th century, gained more and more converts, but at the beginning of the next century there were still timar holders whose families had remained Christian. It became apparent that the islamization of Balkan feudal lords would be an important precondition for their complete merger into the Ottoman leading class. Here we should always remember once again that the timar system played the decisive role in the islamization of the Balkan feudal class members. The converts were part of the already consolidated Albanian ethnic group and so, by converting to Islam, their

³⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 217

³⁶² *ibid.*, p. 224

³⁶³ Bulliet, R., “Conversion to Islam and the Emergency of the Muslim Society in Iran”, *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., New York 1979, p. 33

³⁶⁴ Inalcik, H., “Timariotes chrétiens en Albanie ...”, p. 137

conscious Albanian ethnicity was weakened or completely obliterated, as in the other parts of the Balkans.³⁶⁵

The first converts in Albanian lands were just individuals; they were the representatives of nobility, who hoping to save their own estates by accepting the faith of their conqueror. Being a complete close stratum for the penetration from below, the Christian nobility following the course of islamization and their integration into the Ottoman State structures really contributed to its own total liquidation. The passage of Albanian nobility to the Ottoman military class did not last more than two generations from the time when they face the Ottoman timar system. In the Ottoman summary surveys held at 1530s in Kosovo, we do not see any Christian sipahi nor any trace from the native feudal aristocracy.³⁶⁶ The Ottoman surveys of the 16th century, including other parts with Albanian population, testify to an intensive islamization of native aristocracy.³⁶⁷

After the death of Scanderbeg, which caused a real shock for the anti-Ottoman resistance within Albania and to Catholics world-wide, Venice ordered the diplomatic envoy of Scanderbeg in Italy, the Catholic Archbishop of Durres, Pal Engjelli, to take under control the situation in Albania, because the son of Scanderbeg still was very young.³⁶⁸ The most active figure in the resurrection of anti-Ottoman resistance in Albania with the Italian support after 1479, was another

³⁶⁵ Todorova, M., "Identity (Trans)formation among Bulgarian Muslims", *Working Paper: Project on Global Security and Ethnic Conflict*, Center for German and European Studies, University of California at Berkeley, march 1995, p. 6

³⁶⁶ Zhelyazkova, A., "Nekotorije aspektij raspostraneniya Islama na Balkanskom poluostrrove v XV-XVIII vv.", *Osmanskaja Imperija – sistema gosudarstvjenno upravleniya, socialnija i etnoreligioznija problemij*, Akademija Nauk - Institut Slavjanovedeniya, Moskva 1986, p. 108: the anthroponimic data show only the existence of Muslim timar-holders without any trace of the past.

³⁶⁷ Somewhere are registered timar-holders of first or second islamized generation, for example three timar-holders are registered in the nahiye of Kostur, three in the vilayet of Ashtin, and only one in the Korca district: Zhelyazkova, A., "Nekotorije aspektij raspostraneniya Islama ...", p. 108

³⁶⁸ Sirdani, M., "Kontributi i Elementit Katolik Shqiptar ne Lame te Atdhetaris qe prej Kohve te Vjetra deri ne Kohen e Turqve te Ri", *Hylli i Drites*, IX, no. 10 (1933), p. 337; Noli, F. S., "Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)", pp. 440-1

Catholic Archbishop of Durres, Martin Firmano. He became the political representative of Catholic Albanians at the court of the French King, Charles VIII, in 1494/5,³⁶⁹ and the mediator of Venice among Albanians when the Ottomans started seriously to threat Durres in June 1499.³⁷⁰ The cases of Pal Engjelli and Martin Firmano show that the Ottomans actually attained to minimize the political authority of Albanian aristocracy. Meanwhile, the process of the destruction of the Albanian noble class happened parallel with the extension of space wherein the political leadership of Christian clergy was obviously increased.

Whether this phenomenon was visible in the lowlands, in the Albanian highlands the situation shifted in another direction. During the last decades of the 15th century there were emigrated Albanian leaders who were constantly ready to come back to Albania with Western support. But as long as such a step was impossible to be realized, the leading authority in the highlands was replaced by assemblies of the tribe elders. This event marked a step back in terms of the social organization of Albanian people. The Ottoman policy toward the Albanian aristocracy indirectly influenced the position and statutes of other strata of Albanian society. The Ottomans indirectly contributed to the resurrection of such forms of social organizations, which had been surpassed centuries before.

b. The Ottoman's Attitude toward Peasantry and Djizja

The Ottoman Empire was a monarchy, consequently the Ottoman was not a citizen, but a subject.³⁷¹ The Ottoman sultans, like all Islamic rulers, considered their subjects, Muslim or non-Muslims, as *reaya* (flock) and their fermans frequently

³⁶⁹ *Dokumenta te shekullit XV per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. IV (1479-1506), pjesa I, pp. 137-9

³⁷⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 221-2

³⁷¹ Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, p. 63

reiterate that God had given them the reaya in trust.³⁷² In the widest sense of the term, the reaya were, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, the productive and tax-paying subject of the empire, as distinct from the military class. In a narrower sense the reaya were farmers, as distinct from urban dwellers and nomads, who had a different status.³⁷³

According to the Sasanid traditions among the duties of Eastern rulers were to lead subjects into good circumstances through justice, protecting the subjects' homes, and to keep the hand of oppression far from them.³⁷⁴ In the emerging Ottoman State, as in the other Eastern Empires, the position of the sultan was central. The Ottoman provincial authorities were extensions of his domain.

The peasants, therefore, must have had the feeling that they were under an impersonal central/imperial government as compared to their close dependence upon the former feudal lords and under the old regime:

“... Memâlik-i Mahrûse’yi ehl-i fesâddan sıyânet ve hıfz ü hırâset idüb reâya ve berâya asûde-hâl olmakdur....”³⁷⁵

It is true that the peasants were glad rather than sorry to change masters. Here the crucial point is the facilitation of fiscal statute.

The Ottomans with their so-called *istimalet* policy greatly profited from peasant protests against the feudals, and through the preservation of the family-farm system (çift-hane sistemi) with its customarily established rules a paramount state policy, they could relatively easily eliminate petty dynasts and provincial lords in the Balkans.³⁷⁶

³⁷² İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire –the classical age ...*, p. 67

³⁷³ *ibid.*, p.111

³⁷⁴ İnalcık, H., “Turkish and Iranian Political Theories and Traditions in Kutadgu Bilig”, p. 6

³⁷⁵ BOA, *Mühimme Defteri*, no. 7, vol. III, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Ankara 1999, dok. 2206

³⁷⁶ İnalcık, H., “The Çift-Hâne System and Peasant Taxation”, p. 69

However, the Ottomans did not abrogate earlier fiscal practices completely and rapidly. For example, in the district of Shkodra, they left in force the Venetian fiscal practices even in the second half of the 16th century (1416/7- 1570/1).³⁷⁷ In all medieval societies, *custom* was generally respected as the most dependable and just rule by both the governing body and its subjects. In the Ottoman case, expressions like “adet-i kadime” or “olagelmiş” personified the third most important authority referred to after *defter* and *kanun*.³⁷⁸

It was a fundamental principle that “reaya and land belonged to sultan”. This meant primarily that no one had any right to exercise authority over land and reaya without a specific mandate from the sultan. The sultan’s delegated authorities in provinces were not to dispose of anything beyond what was stated in their diploma of investiture (*berat*) or imperial survey registers and *kanun*-names. The sultan had always to be vigilant in order to react strongly against the abuses over reaya from his delegated authority in provinces. The Ottomans abrogated also the taxes, which were very heavy to be paid by reaya.³⁷⁹

One of the central points in the *kanun-i Osmani* was that timar-holders were not to take anything more from the peasants once they had obtained that which was defined in the *kanun*-names and registers.³⁸⁰

“... reaya ... tazallum etdikleri eelden ref’ olundu. ...”³⁸¹

In the minds of the Ottomans the proclamation of a *kanun*-name was identified with justice. The *kanun*-names were composed and distributed to the law courts of the

³⁷⁷ Menga, P., “Vendbanimet fshatare te Shqiperise se Veriut ne shek. XV-XVI”, p. 161; Pulaha, S., “Tradita dhe ndryshime ne marredheniet ekonomiko-shoqerore ...”, p.120

³⁷⁸ İnalçık, H., “The Çift-Hâne System and Peasant Taxation”, p. 61

³⁷⁹ Egro, D., “Arnavut Topraklarına ait Osmanlı Kanunnameleri Üzerine Sosyo-Ekonomik bir Bakış”, (unpublished M. A. thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi 1997), p. 53

³⁸⁰ İnalçık, H., “Suleiman the Lawgiver and Ottoman Law”, p.130

³⁸¹ “Kânunnâme-i livâ-i Avlonya ber-mûceb-i defter-i atîk”, in: İnalçık, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954, p. 125

kadis in the provincial cities and towns, and thereafter decisions were given in accordance with its provisions.³⁸² The *kanun-i Osmani* in general brought to the reaya, a simpler and easier system of taxation than the previous complicated system of feudal services, which had been much more open to malpractice.³⁸³

Since the birth of Islam, there has been no indication of massive religious persecution against non-Muslim population by the Muslim rulers. The Muslim leading caste spared the inhabitants and granted them religious freedom. Legally, the term *dhimmi* refers to a certain status of non-Muslims, the acquisition of which entitles the person to certain rights, which must be protected by the state.

The Ottomans usually dealt with *dhimmis* of all denominations as members of a community, not as individuals. This was the only type of entity officially recognized within the larger political framework of the Ottoman Empire.³⁸⁴

The only real economic burden imposed on unbelievers in the Muslim States, compared with Muslim reaya, was fiscal.³⁸⁵ The punishment for disbelief in the Qur'an and Allah's Apostle is implied by payment of the poll tax (*cizye*).³⁸⁶ The non-Muslim community had to pay a tax, which from the point of view of the Muslim conquerors, was a proof of their subjection, just as for the inhabitants it was a concrete continuation of the taxes paid to the earlier regimes.³⁸⁷ Besides, by paying the *djizya* the non-Muslim community gained the right to preserve its faith³⁸⁸ and being territorially a part of Muslim State, non-Muslims enjoyed its military protection.³⁸⁹ The Christians were obliged to pay a poll tax also in lieu of military

³⁸² Inalcik, H., *op. cit.*, p.105

³⁸³ *ibid.*, p.130

³⁸⁴ Inalcik, H., "The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Under the Ottomans", p. 420

³⁸⁵ Braude, B. - B. Lewis, "Introduction", in: B. Braude & B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews ...*, p. 6

³⁸⁶ Khadduri, M., *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, p. 177

³⁸⁷ On the origin of this tax see Cahen, Cl., "Djizya", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. II, Leiden 1965, p. 559

³⁸⁸ Nedkoff, B. Ch., "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Cizye", pp. 601-2

³⁸⁹ Hadzibegic, H., "Dzizja ili Harac", *POF*, vol. III-IV (1952-3), p. 57

service, not as a favor to them but because in theory only the Muslim fought for “the true faith”.³⁹⁰

The tithes, a tax collected in kind in a given ratio from every kind of crop, along with djizya (cizye-i şer’i) were regarded as *Shar’i* taxes, i.e. having the sanction of the Sacred Law of Islam. Djizya was a religious tax the collection of which had to receive special care. It was collected as a rule directly for the state treasury by the sultan’s own slaves (kuls).³⁹¹

S. Shaw claims that the payment of djizya was far from being a mark of “discrimination” of non-Muslim living in a Muslim State.³⁹² While B. Ch. Nedkoff argues that djizya was not only a clear mark of a humiliating policy against the non-Muslims, but also an indicator showing how expensive was the status of being non-Muslim in Muslim territories.³⁹³ Nevertheless, it is clear that djizya paid in cash was a kind of “compensation” for non-adoption of Islam by non-Muslim communities. In this context, the conversion of non-Muslim people to Islam brought a facilitation of their fiscal status.

The subjects of djizya payment were all adult non-Muslim males. In complete accordance with Shari’a, the Ottomans always excluded from djizya children, women, disabled and blind men, and the unemployed poor people. Only the widows possessing the land of their deceased husbands were liable for djizya.³⁹⁴ Monks were also exempted from the poll tax.³⁹⁵ The collection of djizya was regulated in the

³⁹⁰ Vucinich, W., “Reply”, *Slavic Review*, vol XXI, no. 4 (december 1962), p. 637

³⁹¹ Inalcik, H., “Djizya”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. II, Leiden 1965, p. 562

³⁹² Shaw, S., “The Aims and Achievements of Ottoman Rule in the Balkans”, *Slavic Review*, vol XXI, no. 4 (december 1962), p. 620

³⁹³ Nedkoff, B. Ch., “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Cizye”, p. 605

³⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 615; Hadzibegic, H., “Dzizja ili Harac”, pp. 61-2

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*; Hadzibegic, H., “Dzizja ili Harac”, pp. 62-4

accordance with the economic status of non-Muslim peoples: *a'la* wealthy, *mutawassit al-hal* medium and *adna* working poor man.³⁹⁶

In the Balkans the Ottomans identified the payment of djizya with certain pre-Ottoman poll taxes. Following a conservative policy in the Balkans, the Ottomans accepted for djizya the old tax of one *flori*, or *aded-i Eflakiyye* (one gold). This tax was paid to the Hungarian kings before the Ottoman conquest.³⁹⁷

It was the sultan's responsibility every new year to declare the rates of djizya to be collected on the base of a fatwa given by the Shaykh al-Islam, who determined it according to the Shar'i scale.³⁹⁸

From the establishment of Ottoman rule to 1691 djizya was levied per family,³⁹⁹ thereafter, the increasing state need for cash enforced the Ottoman State to collect djizya per person. Exemption from djizya payment was considered a waste of state revenue, hence it was usually made only in exceptional cases in return for military or other strategic services as was the case of guarding passes (*derbent*)⁴⁰⁰ and mines.⁴⁰¹ This is the reason why the Ottoman sultans were very and careful in the collection of djizya.

The Ottoman sources indicate that the payment of djizya was a cause for the massive movement of Christian population in order to avoid the payment of djizya:

“... ve kangı tımarun ki haracgüzar kafirleri kaçmış ola ...”⁴⁰²

³⁹⁶ Inalcik, H., “Djizya”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 564

³⁹⁷ Barkan, Ö. L., “894 (1488-1489) yılı Cizyesinin Tahsilatına ait Muhasebe Bilançoları”, *Belgeler*, c. I, sayı 1 (1 ocak 1964), p.6; Inalcik, H., “Djizya”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 562

³⁹⁸ Inalcik, H., “Djizya”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. II, Leiden 1965, p. 564

³⁹⁹ Barkan, Ö. L., *op. cit.*, p. 5; Zhelyazkova, A., *Razprostranenie na Islama ...*, p. 12

⁴⁰⁰ *Evliya Celebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions...*, pp. 96-6, 192-3

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.*, pp. 128-9

⁴⁰² Anhegger, R – H. Inalcik, *Kânûnnâme-i Sultânî ber Mûceb-i ‘Örf-i ‘Osmanî*, 2. Baskı, TTK Yay., Ankara 2000, p. 76

The avoidance from the payment of *djizya* was a reason for punishments, such as the expulsion of native Christian people to Anatolia, or the levy of native boys as a contingent for *yeniceri*:

“ ... her kadayısa buldurub Anadolu’ya sürdürem ve oğlanların yeniçeriliğe alduram.”⁴⁰³

During the reign of sultan Mehmet II, half of the *djizya* due from the fugitives of a village was to be made good by its *timar* holder and the other half by the rest of the *djizya* payers.⁴⁰⁴ The Ottoman sultan ordered his local authorities not to abuse the Christian population during the collection of *djizya*.⁴⁰⁵ In accordance with the sultan’s order, this process demanded the assistance of almost all Ottoman provincial (military and judicial) authorities.⁴⁰⁶

At the end of the 15th century the Ottomans consistently had to respect the tribal organization and the autonomy of tribes; indeed, the Ottomans expanded their function and privileges. At this moment we can not talk only about the traditional blood relation which bound the tribes, but about tribes which constituted *territorial units*. These territorial units were the direct inheritance of territorial principalities that the Ottomans fought against. It is understandable that these tribes controlled only the highlands where Ottoman military conquest was impossible and where the *timar* system was not possible to apply.⁴⁰⁷ It was very difficult to be confronted with Albanian highlanders who were very determined to protect their traditional autonomy. Actually, the Ottomans did not nominate their local authorities in these regions and therefore their collocutor were the leaders of tribes. Nevertheless, in 1497

⁴⁰³ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 77-8

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 77

⁴⁰⁷ The *timar* system was not applied especially in the highlands of Shkodra district and *sancak* of Dukagjini in the Northern Albania, and Kurvelesh and Himara in Southern Albania: Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare, shek. XV - XVI*, p. 381

the tribe of Kelmend recognized Ottoman rule, accepted registration, and paying a lump sum tribute:

“... ve harâcları ve ispenceleri ve cemî’ hâsılları maktû’ emr olunmuştur ...”⁴⁰⁸

“... ve mezbûr Klemente nâhiyesi beş pare karyedir mezbûr karyelerin kâfirleri yılda ber-vech-i maktû’ bin akça harâc ve ber-vech-i maktû’ bin akça ispence sancakbeyine virüb ve gayr-i öşr ve rûsûm vormeyüb cemî’ ‘avâriz-i divâniyyeden mu’âf ü müsellemler olub...”⁴⁰⁹

Also in Kurvelesh and Himara the villages in rebellion agreed to submit to the sultan on the condition of paying *djizya* in a lump sum.⁴¹⁰ Himariots protected their autonomy after a long resistance to the Ottoman armies lead by sultan Bayezid II in the year 1492. According to the agreement, the Himariots would enjoy the right to rule themselves on the basis of their own traditional law. The sultan would not send his provincial authorities to govern this region. On their part, the Himariots promised to pay regularly only the *harac* as a token of submission.⁴¹¹ In these examples we see the Ottoman government being rather forced to come to an agreement with its *dhimmi* subjects. As the Albanian chieftains were always inclined to escape from Ottoman centralist administration like the former native aristocracy, this seems to have been the only way of establishing Ottoman rule in mountainous Albania.

Here it is very important to say that the incomes from *djizya* constituted one of the most important items of the Ottoman State treasury.⁴¹²

“... be resm-i cizye Hazine-i Amireye mubalağa mal virür idi. ...”⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁸ Durdev, Br., “Odredbe o nekim brdskim i malisorskim plemenima iz 1497 godine”, *Kanuni i Kanun-name za Bosanski, Hercegovacki, Zvornicki, Kliški, Crnogorski i Skadarski sandžak*, prepared by Br. Durdev, N. Filipović, Hamid Hadžibegović, Muhamed Mujić i H. Šabanović, Sarajevo 1957, p. 153

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 154

⁴¹⁰ *Dokumenta te shekullit XV per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. IV (1479-1506), pjesa I, p. 126

⁴¹¹ Skendi, S., “The Millet System and Its Contribution to the Blurring of Orthodox National Identity in Albania”, in: B. Braude & B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London-New York 1982, p. 247

⁴¹² Nedkoff, B. Ch., “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Cizye”, p. 615; Hadzibegic, H., “Dzizja ili Harac”, p. 55; Inalcik, H., “Türkler ve Balkanlar”, *Balkanlar, Ortadoğu ve Balkan İncelemeleri Vakfı*, Eren Yay., İstanbul 1993, p. 19

⁴¹³ Tursun Bey, *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth*, hazırlayan M. Tulum, İstanbul 1977, p. 122

In 1528 the revenue from djizya along with ispençe constituted 8 % of the total incomes of Ottoman state treasury.⁴¹⁴ Even in the second half of the 16th century djizya and ispençe* were the most important taxes mention in kanunnames.⁴¹⁵

Until the end of Scanderbeg's resistance and the fall of Shkodra, there is not any Muslim registered in the Ottoman survey registers.⁴¹⁶ In 1485, in the rural areas of the sancak of Shkodra we observe the first Albanian converts, but they were just isolated cases, which were only the first indicators of the massive conversion to come in the 16th century. Thereafter, the revenue from djizya constituted the greatest tax amount the 15th century (5.761.720 akca):⁴¹⁷

Kosovo	3.173.515 akca
western Macedonia	2.643.280 akca
Albania	1.502.138 akca ⁴¹⁸

These data ones again show the impact of the landscape's character on the density of population and thereby on the volume of tax collected from peasants. Although the surface of Albania is larger than the surface of lowlands of western Macedonia, the amount of djizya changed in accordance with the nature of landscape.

⁴¹⁴ Inalcik, H., "Türkler ve Balkanlar", p.19

* Ispençe was a tax introduced into the Ottoman tax system as early as the 14th century and it seems to be a relic of the Byzantine tax system. Ispençe, like djizja, is a *per capita* tax collected from *non-Muslim* peasants and town dwellers, from bachelors and married men, in short from all adult males and it belonged to sipahis (ispençe-i sipahî). It amounted in general to 25 akcha: Inalcik, H., "Osmanlılarda Raiyyet Rûsûmu", *Belleten*, no. 92, pp. 602-608. On ispençe tax in Albanian lands see, Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare, shek. XV - XVI*, pp. 351-3

⁴¹⁵ "Kânunnâme-i livâ-i Avlonya ber-mûceb-i defter-i atîk", in: Inalcik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954, p. 125

⁴¹⁶ Inalcik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954; BOA, *Maliye'den Müdevver*, (1431/2 tarihli) Suret-i defter-i vilayet-i Görice ve Premedi ve Koniçe, no. 231; Hadzibegic, H.- A. Handzic – E. Kovacevic, *Oblast Brankovica opsirni katastarski popis iz 1455. godine*, vol. I-II, Orijentalni Institut, Sarajevo 1972; BOA, *Maliye'den Müdevver*, (1467 tarihli) Debre Esami Defteri, no. 508

⁴¹⁷ Barkan, Ö. L., "894 (1488-1489) yılı Cizyesinin Tahsilatına ait ...", scales no. 25, 30, 31, 32, 33-7, 42-6, 52, 53

⁴¹⁸ These quantitative data is set out based on: Barkan, Ö. L., "894 (1488-1489) yılı Cizyesinin Tahsilatına ait ..."

The most mountainous region of Albanian lands (Dukagjin) is at the same time the part of Albania from which was levied less revenue from djizya (21.630 akcha).⁴¹⁹

Strongly connected with the fact mentioned above is that, at the same time, the biggest volume of djizya was levied in the region of Kosovo Field (745.230 akcha).⁴²⁰

The volume of djizya collected in Albanian lands at the turn of the 15th century (5.761.720 akcha) constituted 1/5 of the volume in total of djizya collected in all Balkan Peninsula (28.555.158 akcha). These quantitative facts and the information on the confessional situation offered by Ottoman registers indicate that Albanians, in the end of the 15th century, constituted about 20 % of all Christian people in the Balkan Peninsula.

H. Inalcik argues that in Balkan mountainous areas it was very difficult to pay taxes in cash, so this might be one of the major factors why Albanian, Bosnia and Rhodop mountainous people converted to Islam.⁴²¹ While the Bosnian scholar N. Filipović believes that the huge contribution of incomes coming from djizya and ispence to the Ottoman state treasury represented a sum much larger than that which would result from the eventual islamization of peasants; the djizya would be lost and the ispence (25 akca) replaced by the tax called resm-i çift (22 akca).⁴²² There is little doubt that it could replace the incomes resulting from the djizya and ispence by some new forms, in the case of mass islamization of the Balkan Peninsula.

The relationship of the Muslim conquerors to the city and the village was quite different. Although they did not introduce changes to the life and the external

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 76

⁴²⁰ *ibid.*

⁴²¹ Inalcik, H., "Islam in the Ottoman Empire", p. 238

⁴²² Filipovic, N., "A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkan ...", p. 314

appearance of the villages, they at least considerably altered the outward appearance of the cities and placed upon them their lasting imprint.

c. *The City*

The medieval city in the Balkans had already experienced its own centuries as an economic center of a rural area, as a fortress and focal point of military and administrative authority, and as a commercial junction and crossroads for thoroughfares leading to other parts of Europe and Asia Minor.⁴²³

The Albanian scholar Z. Shkodra argues that the Ottoman military incursion and final conquest brought a complete destruction of many flourishing cities and fortresses. Such cities, like Drishti, Shirgji, Deja and Sveti Grad, were destroyed decisively and did not recover once again. Furthermore, the big cities like Shkodra, Lesh, Kruje, Durres, Berat, Vlore and Gjirokaster and others were either destroyed and rendered uninhabitable, or were reduced to villages and strong-points where Ottomans military garnizons were established.⁴²⁴ From the very beginning, these towns were not reduced only to centers of administration,* but also to key points for a further westward conquest. From the city of Elbasan the Ottoman attacks started against Durres in the turn of the 15th century.

It is a great mistake to regard the Ottomans only as *destroyers*. As invaders planning to be established for a long time in Balkans, they tended not to destroy everything Christian they would face in Balkans. We should always keep always in mind that the Ottoman survival in the Balkans was strongly connected with their *istimalet*

⁴²³ Todorov, N., *The Balkan City, 1400-1900*, University of Washington Press 1993, p. 79

⁴²⁴ "Qytetet shqiptare gjate dy shekujve te pare te sundimit turk", *Ekonomia popullore*, no. 5 (1963), p. 66

* The opinion according to which the major Ottoman contribution lay in the reduction of Balkan cities to military, administrative and Islamic centers, is well established in Balkan historiography: Pulaha,

policy. While the Christian and Islamic worlds from the Middle Ages were rivals of one another, the continuity of urban life in the Balkans was eased by the general similarities and needs of socio-economic system in pre- and post-Ottoman invasion. The Ottoman records show that Kruja was granted tax exemption shortly after the first Ottoman conquest in 1394.⁴²⁵ It was nothing more, but just the protection of traditional privileges, that Kruja enjoyed under the Byzantium and Serbian Empire. The continuity of urban life appeared to be of great importance for the Ottomans. The Ottoman kanunnames testify not only to the continuity of urban life in the big and economically important cities, but also to their development and extension of their economical activities.⁴²⁶ Trade activity in the city of Vlora remained predominantly in the hands of the local business circle.⁴²⁷ Along with the foundation of Elbasan non-Muslim servants were brought from neighbor regions. They were employed in auxiliary services in the new fortress. They were encouraged by special privileges, such as exemption from certain taxes. Non-Muslim people were governed by 20 elders (protoyoros).⁴²⁸

Eager to win the native population peacefully, the Ottoman sultans accorded full tolerance to their religion. A significant example is the *amanname* offered by the Ottomans for the inhabitants of Yannina:

“...[if you will submit willingly] I swear to you ... that you shall have no fear, either from enslavement, or from the taking of your children, or from the destruction of the churches, nor shall we build any mosques, but the bells of your churches shall ring as had been the custom”.⁴²⁹

S., “Qytetet Shqiptare nen Regjimin Feudal Ushtarak Osman gjate Shek. XV-XVI”, *Monumentet*, no. 1 (1984), pp. 17-42; Zeljazkova, A., “Bosnija Pod Osmanskoj Vlastju v XV-XVII”, pp. 167-84

⁴²⁵ İnalçık, H., “Arnawutluk”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 654

⁴²⁶ “Kânunnâme-i livâ-i Avlonya ber-mûceb-i defter-i atîk”, pp. 123-6; Zamputi, I., “Lezha, Rodoni, Durresi dhe ...”, p. 673

⁴²⁷ “Kânunnâme-i livâ-i Avlonya ber-mûceb-i defter-i atîk”, p. 122

⁴²⁸ *Evliya Celebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohri)*, p. 163

⁴²⁹ Vryonis, Sp. Jr., “Isidore Galabas and the Turkish Devshirme”, *Speculum*, vol. 31, Issue 3 (Jul., 1956), p. 440; For more details on the the capitulations offered by the Ottomans and the peaceful

A similar ferman by sultan Mehmet II was granted to the city dwellers of Berat.⁴³⁰ The conquest of two Albanian cities in 1571 is very significant: Antibarium surrendered the key of castle to the Ottomans, so the city was prevented from the plunder, while Ulcignum resisted, so it was plundered.⁴³¹ Upon the capture by force (*kahren*) of Novo Brdo (ca. 1455) the Ottomans placed Muslims in the fortress, and also those of the unbelievers whom they trusted. An important portion of the native population was deported to Istanbul. Children were taken as a contingent for *yeniceri*. The miners were left at their homes. The main Catholic Church of Novo Brdo was transformed to mosque, while the other churches were violated.⁴³²

From its geographical position, the Albanian/Balkan city was distinguished by highly developed handicrafts and commerce. A guild organization existed with elaborate rules pertaining to the variegated activities of its affiliated producers. While commercial cities of the Adriatic Sea promoted intensive transit and import-export trade, to which certain types of production were subjected. What distinguished the pre-Ottoman internal city from the littoral/commercial city of Albania integrated to Adriatic/Western world was the presence of a developed system of state rules. Albanian commercial cities had a *communal* form of regime, like the Swiss people,⁴³³ and had their own codified rules of self-organization. The power was in the hands of city's noble class. The native population enjoyed the liberty of

surrender of Janina see, Delilbaşı, M., "Selanik ve Yanya'da Osmalı Egemenliğinin Kurulması (4 belge ile beraber)", *Belleten*, c. LI, sayı 199 (nisan 1987), pp. 75-101

⁴³⁰ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet Shqiptare - shek. XV-XX*, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1973, pp. 27, 83

⁴³¹ *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), Universiteti Shteteror i Tiranes – Instituti Historise dhe Gjuhesise, Tirane 1962, p. 103

⁴³² Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, p. 128

⁴³³ Jorga, N., "Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle (1476-1500)", Academia Romana, Bucharest 1915, p. 273

migration, the protection of personal liberty, personal security and religious liberty.⁴³⁴

The number of city dwellers in Albanian cities after the Ottoman conquest dropped drastically. It is enough to mention that Durres, one of the most flourishing cities of the Late Middle Ages in the Mediterranean world, according the Ottoman survey registers, had no native people, but only the families of Ottoman military garrison. Although the nobles of Antibarium surrendered the key of the castle to the Ottomans in 1571 and the city was prevented from the plunder, after the establishment of Ottoman rule there remained only 77 houses.⁴³⁵

Here it is of great interest also to follow the shift of quarters where the Christian population lived. After the Ottoman conquest the Christian people of Shkodra were a majority in the district called "Tophane" where their parish church was situated. Gradually, as the city developed around the Islamic objects, the Christian quarters shifted to "Parruce". Later, the Christian population of this city lived in the suburbs and outskirts of Shkodra.⁴³⁶ The Christian people were prohibited from living in the castle, and at the turn of the 15th century, in Shkodra there was no church, except for a small chapel in the house of the parish.⁴³⁷

But even at the end of the 15th century, Novo Brdo had 33 quarters and all of them had names of clergymen (pop, protopop, kalogjer) or the names of churches situated in the centers of these quarters.⁴³⁸

After the Ottoman conquest, mostly by force, a mosque, a hamam followed by an imaret, a han and tekke, which replaced churches and monasteries, were the core

⁴³⁴ Valentini, G., *Lo statuto personale in Albania all' epoca di Scanderbeg* (Appunti dagli Archivi della Repubblica Veneta), Shejzat, Roma 1967, pp. 24-7

⁴³⁵ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet shqiptare nen regjimin feudal ushtarak osman ...", p. 18

⁴³⁶ Kamsi, W., "Kisha e kuvende te Shkodres me rrethina ne Mesjete", p. 126

⁴³⁷ *ibid.*

⁴³⁸ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, p. 207

elements around which the future Islamic urban centers were profiled. In the Muslim world the term accepted for designating a city was *şehir*. But sometimes in survey registers the term *nefs* is used, which literally means “the very place”, and it indicates the centre of a *nahiye*.⁴³⁹

Many cities were *has* belonging to sultans or high provincial authorities (*sancakbey* and *subash*). The mines of Kosova were completely *has* of sultan (Novo Brdo,⁴⁴⁰ Trepča,⁴⁴¹ Plana⁴⁴²), while Priština,⁴⁴³ Prizren,⁴⁴⁴ Vučitrn⁴⁴⁵ and Peć⁴⁴⁶) were *has* of respective *sancakbeys*. In 1431 the city of Berat was a *has* of *subash*.⁴⁴⁷

The main Albanian cities, which survived the process of transition from pre- to Ottoman rule, in general were the administrative centers of Ottoman territorial units (*sancaks*), and the names of *sancaks* followed the names of these cities. Towards the end of 15th century Berat was the administrative center of *sancakbey* of Vlora.⁴⁴⁸ In the second half of 15th century in Berat the Ottoman local (military and judicial) authorities were established, like *alaybey*, the head of judicial authority *kadi*, the commander of *yeniceri dizdar*, *voyvoda*, *muhtesib*, *bacdar*, *mimarbaşı* and *haracçı*.⁴⁴⁹

From the viewpoint of Muslim/Ottoman reality, the population of a city was made up of two categories: representatives of power, the tax exempted military and religious

⁴³⁹ Todorov, N., *The Balkan City, 1400 - 1900*, p. 20

⁴⁴⁰ Rizaj, S., *op. cit.*

⁴⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 241

⁴⁴² *ibid.*, p. 226

⁴⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 229

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 234

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 247

⁴⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 220

⁴⁴⁷ Inalcik, H., *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 1954, p. 55

⁴⁴⁸ Duka, F., *Berati ne kohen osmane (shek. XVI-XVIII)*, Botimet Toena, Tirane 2001, p. 19

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19

officials, and secondly the *reaya*. A part of it was engaged in handicrafts and trade, while the rest cultivated land.⁴⁵⁰

In principle, the Ottoman bureaucrats believed that the imperial system could survive only by maintaining the *guild* system in city and *çift-hane* in rural areas as the key stone institutions of the Ottoman regime.⁴⁵¹ Inasmuch as the guilds in Albanian lands* were essentially a reminiscence of former corporates of pre-Ottoman, the remnants of such organizations in the second half of the 15th century were inclined to be oriented toward the fulfillment of Ottoman strategic and military needs. The names of some handicrafts, which survived the Ottoman military conquest, were quoted in the first Ottoman survey registers: *meremetçi* and *demirci*.

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In the second half of the 15th century, when the urban economy was very limited, and the population was Christian, the number of artisans was very small, and in general the *shehirlis* paid the same taxes as the *reaya* in rural areas. They were obliged to pay ispence, *öşr* and other *kulluk* taxes.⁴⁵³ We should remember that, for a time after the Ottoman conquest, the urban economy in the Albanian lands seem to have been very close to the agricultural economy of rural areas.

However, after the Albanian nobility, the inhabitants of cities were the very first social stratum of Albanian society directly facing the pressure of the Ottoman regime and Islamic culture. All scholars of Muslim history and civilization share the same opinion, according to it medieval Muslim life and culture was above all an urban

⁴⁵⁰ Todorov, N., *The Balkan City (1400 – 1900)*, p. 10

⁴⁵¹ İnalçık, H., "The Çift-Hâne System and Peasant Taxation", p. 66

* *Guild*, which in Ottoman terminology is known as *lonca* system; in Albanian lands it was called *esnaf* system.

⁴⁵² Duka, F., *Berati ne kohen osmane (shek. XVI-XVIII)*, p. 78

⁴⁵³ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet shqiptare nen regjimin ...", p. 21. For more details on this topic see, Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare, shek. XV - XVI*, pp. 406-7

culture.⁴⁵⁴ So it is normal to see the first cases of conversion or massive converts to Islam in Albanian cities where at the outset the Ottoman state apparatus was established. In order to illustrate this fact we can provide a significant example: although the city of Peć was the center of Serbian Orthodox Church, in the year 1485 the islamized population prevailed there.⁴⁵⁵

In western Macedonia, specifically in Tetovo, the process of islamization had started in year 1455 (153 Christian families versus 56 Muslim).⁴⁵⁶ At the beginning of the 16th century, we find a drastic decrease of non-Muslim families in favor of the Muslim ones (98 Christian families against 84 Muslim).⁴⁵⁷ During the first half of 15th century in Kercova we find 149 non-Muslim household and 13 Muslim ones. In 1481 we see 150 non-Muslim families and 45 Muslim ones. While in 1519, 118 non-Muslim and 96 Muslim.⁴⁵⁸ Almost the same picture was offered by the city of Kostur (Kesriye): in 1460, there were 703 non-Muslim families and 22 Muslim ones. While in 1530 there were 661 non-Muslim and 83 Muslim households.⁴⁵⁹

In 1455, Priština had 51 Muslim families versus 248 non-Muslim ones.⁴⁶⁰ Three decades later, in 1487, while the number of Muslim and non-Muslim households remained unchanged, the Muslim families for the first time were registered in defter as “cemâ’at-i müslümânân”.⁴⁶¹ In the first Ottoman survey register of sancak of

⁴⁵⁴ Todorov, N., *The Balkan City - 1400 - 1900*, p. 8

⁴⁵⁵ Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Shkodres te vitit 1485*, vol. I-II, Tirane 1974, 50-63

⁴⁵⁶ Stojanovski, A., “La Population dans les villes macedoniennes au XVe et XVIe siecle”, *La Macedoine et les Macedoniens dans le passe*, Institut Nacionalnoj Istorii, Skopje 1970, p. 126

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 124

⁴⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 125

⁴⁶⁰ Hadžibegić, H.- A. Handžić – E. Kovačević, *Oblast Brankovića ...*, pp. 209-10

⁴⁶¹ BOA, *Vulçitrin Icmal Defteri*, MM, no. 16; Handžić, A., “Nekoliko Vijesti o Arbanisima ...”, pp. 208-9

Shkodra held in 1485, the Muslim families in Peć and Shkodra are also registered as “cemâ’at-i müslümânân”.⁴⁶²

Only during the first decades of the 16th century “cemâ’at-i müslümânân” in Pristina (3 quarters), Novo Brdo (4 quarters), Vuçitrn and Trepca were stationed in their own quarters, separated from the non-Muslim ones.⁴⁶³ Only Vuçitrn in the second half of the 15th century (1486/7), having 43 Muslim family and 33 non-Muslim families,⁴⁶⁴ had a Muslim majority of population. This event shows that shortly after the Ottoman conquest the important cities of Kosovo entered on the path of islamization. Of great interest is to compare the confessional situation in city (şehir) and its rural area (nahiye). In Peć there were 33 Muslim families and 14 non-Muslim families, while in 213 villages of the nahiye of Peć there was any Muslim.⁴⁶⁵ It is quite normal to see the lack of islamized people in rural area where 11 Orthodox monasteries were still active and the influence of Orthodox Church of Peć was still alive. On the other hand such a situation shows that, the Ottomans at the second half of the 15th century spread their influence only in cities, while their influence in rural areas was almost minimal.

The Ottoman chronicles confirm the fact that the Ottomans established colonists in Shkodra (1479) replacing the native people emigrating in Italy, but do not confirm the above mentioned numbers:

“... kendi itiyarlarıyla hisarı teslim edüb kafirlerin duranı durub gideni gitti. Hiç bir kaire ziyân etmediler. ... Kaleyî muhkem edüb içine müslümanlar koyub”.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶² Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Shkodres te vitit 1485*, vol. I-II, Tirane 1974

⁴⁶³ Duka, F., “Momente te kalimit ne Islam te popullsise shqiptare ne shek. XV-XVII”, *Feja, Kultura dhe Tradita Islame nder Shqiptaret*, Simpozium Nderkombetar i mbajtur ne Prishtine me 15-17 tetor 1992, Prishtine 1995, p. 121

⁴⁶⁴ BOA, *Vulcitrin Icmal Defteri*, TD, no. 22

⁴⁶⁵ Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Shkodres te vitit 1485*, vol. I, Tirane 1974, pp. 50-73

⁴⁶⁶ Mehmed Neşri, *Kitâb-i Cihan – Nümâ (Neşri Tarihi)*, c. II, yayına hazırlayan F.R.Unat - M.A.Köymen, 3. baskı, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1995, p. 837 âî

The first Ottoman survey (1485) testifies that in the city of Shkodra there were 70 Christian houses and 26 Muslim, 6 of them nev-Muslim (bin Abdullah).⁴⁶⁷ In other words, only 27% of population was Muslim. This defter confirms the Turkish/Islam colonization, though its extent was limited. However, the presence of six native converts points out that the Ottoman policy of colonization urged the conversion of remaining native people. In this time an interesting fact is that the islamization process had taken its first steps forward in the mountainous nahiyes around Shkodra. Although we could classify such cases as sporadic in some villages, it is very significative the presence of 33 Muslim houses in the mountainous city of Puka against 140 Christian ones.⁴⁶⁸

At the end of the 15th century Berat, Gjirokaster, Kanina, Kelcyra, Delvina, Kruja and Permeti were among 16 cities of Balkanic Peninsula, which were completely non-Muslim.⁴⁶⁹

We think that the course and the intensity of the islamization process in Albanian lands depended strictly on two factors: firstly, the geographic conditions of landscape and geopolitical location, and secondly, the political attitude of the Ottoman State towards the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Seen from the viewpoint of time and percentage of the confessional situation, the data offered by Ottoman cadastral defters testify that the cities of western Macedonia were avant-garde of the initial phase of massive islamization. Such cities, as Tetovo, Kičevo, Kostur, were directly exposed to the rapid establishment and effective function of the Ottoman state apparatus. There was no geographical obstacles to impede the Ottoman installation in these cities. Geographically, they were part of the policies that the Ottoman followed

⁴⁶⁷ Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit të sanxhakut të Shkodres të vitit 1485*, vol. II, Tirane 1974, p. 92

⁴⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 5-185

⁴⁶⁹ İnalçık, H., "Arnavutluk", p. 656; Todorov, N., *The Balkan City (1400 – 1900)*, pp. 54, 62

in the Macedonian lowlands, though ethnically they were part of the Albanian population.

The cities of Kosovo are located in a strategic region of the Balkans. Some of the cities of Kosovo entered under the direct Ottoman rule after the Battle of Kosovo (1389), so the presence of Muslim communities at the end of the 15th century was quite normal. In some cities there were already formed Muslim communities, even in Pec where had its center the Orthodox Archbishopric. Nonetheless, in the rural districts, around which the Ottoman impact was very weak, people remained Christian.

The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans did not destroy the Orthodox Churches. On contrary, the Ottomans followed a peaceful policy especially towards the Archbishop of Ohrid, which had a crucial position in the Balkan Peninsula. In this framework, we may understand why at the end of the 15th century the cities of central and southern Albania (Berat, Gjirokaster, Kanina, Kelcyra, Delvina and Permeti) were completely Christian Orthodox, despite the fact that these regions were, by 1431, under direct Ottoman rule.

The Ottomans followed a hostile attitude against the Catholicism and did not officially recognize the existence of an alternative political and spiritual power, the Vatican. The Catholic Pope lived outside the Ottoman Empire and was the main political and spiritual impetus for crusades against the Ottomans. In the eyes of the Ottomans, the Vatican was the epicenter of political and cultural challenges. Even in Albania it was the main material and spiritual sponsor of resistance against the Ottomans and the center of inspiration for all Catholic Albanians. After the death of Scanderbeg and the fall of Shkodra the Catholicism in Albania was considerably

damaged. In the following years the process of conversion to Islam went down from the high ranks (Albanian nobility) to the common people (city dwellers).

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The conversion of a great number of individuals – individuals who may actually have been specifically targeted for conversion – was the crucial step in gaining wider acceptance for the idea of conversion among people of high social standing.⁴⁷⁰ What the Ottomans have generally asked of first converts was not textual accuracy in belief, but just loyalty to the Ottoman/Muslim community and its leader. Islam was the religion of the conquering state, and there were worldly advantages in joining with the new rulers.⁴⁷¹

The Ottoman rule made of the Albanians, as it did of the aristocracy of other regions of the Balkans, a people without a real aristocratic class. A part of it was eliminated on the battlefield during the long resistance, or was enforced to emigrate forever to Italy, while the rest were enforced indirectly to be integrated into the Ottoman State. In this way, the Ottomans managed to liquidate the Albanian elite, whose formation was a process of many centuries.

The destruction of the native Balkan dynasties and aristocracy meant their partial isolation from an active and creative cultural class and therefore from their formal culture. Albanian lands were conquered by an Asiatic military people whose social

⁴⁷⁰ Bulliet, R, "Conversion to Islam and ...", p. 34

⁴⁷¹ In 1467, in the region of Dibra there were registered 40 timars, 16 of them in the hands of Muslim timar holders. Two of 16 Muslim sipahis were *nev muslim: Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin XV - burime osmane*, prepared by Selami Pulaha, Universiteti Shteteror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1968, p. 326-75

institutions and customs spelled the negation of any and all Christian culture and whose religion shackled the life of the spirit and the mind of Albanians. The demands of the Turkish political, fiscal, feudal and religious institutions destroyed the economic as well as the political and social basis of Byzantine Hochkultur in Anatolia and the Balkans, and in doing so reduced this culture to an almost exclusively Volkskultur.⁴⁷²

After all, the term "Islamic/oriental society" applied to the social organization implies that its distinguishing features are related in some way or another to the religion of Islam. Still in Albanian lands there is little which can be regarded as specifically Islamic/oriental. On the contrary, the organization of village and productive life of urban centers belong rather to a stage of social evolution, which finds close parallels in many non-Islamic regions of Western Europe.

⁴⁷² Vryonis, S., Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor...*, p. 496

Chapter IV: The Erosion of Christianity and the Triumph of Islam (16th century)

I. International Politics and the Clash of Religions

In the 16th century the Ottoman Empire became an important factor in the balance of power in European politics. Such a position was realized thanks to the political division of Western Europe. Interventing in European politics, the Ottomans not only helped the process of the rise of national monarchies, but also the rise of Protestantism in Europe.¹ The Ottoman Empire also played an important role in the political re-configuration of Europe and the rise of the nation-states in the West.* Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent refused to recognize, even opposed, any state which claimed to have sovereignty over the whole of Western Christianity.²

The Ottoman's support and protection of Protestantism against Catholicism constituted the keystone of Ottoman policy in Western Europe.³ The Ottomans were "the ally of the Reformation" in Europe in the sense that they favoured the spread of all forms of Protestantism, such as Lutheran, Zwinglian and Calvinist, in lands under Catholic rule.⁴ In this way, the Ottomans intended to urge and maintain the disunity of the Catholic West and prevented crusade by a united Europe.

On 29 August 1521, the Ottomans captured Belgrade, while in January 1522 they conquered Rhodes. Even during the 16th century the Ottoman state continued its

¹ Inalcik, H., *The Ottoman Empire – the classical age (1300-1600)*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1973, p. 38

* On this topic see: Vaughan, D. M., *Europe and the Turk*, Liverpool, at the University Press 1954, pp. 105-146; Setton, K. M. *Papacy and the Levant*, vol. III (16th century), The American Philosophical Society 1984; Tamborra, A., *Gli Stati Italiani, L'Europa e Il Problema Turco Dopo Lepanto*, Biblioteca dell'Archivio Storico italiano XIII, Firenze 1961, pp. 10-7

² *ibid.*, p. 58

³ *ibid.*, p. 37

⁴ Vaughan, D. M., *Europe and the Turk*, p. 143

policy of ghaza, the empire's fundamental principle. There was not another alternative for a state that considered the defense and the extension of the boundaries of Islam as the most significant of its function. The Ottomans invested the institution of the caliphate with new meaning, basing their conception not on the classical doctrines of Islam, but on the principles of ghaza. We should always bear in mind the fact that the Ottoman's great challenge in the 16th century was Western/Catholic Europe.

During the internal wars in Italy (1488-1525), the Ottomans had a very active part in Italian diplomacy. In 1525, the Ottomans benefited from the chaos in Italy in order to invade Hungary. The Ottoman victory at Mohacs (August, 1526) seriously threatened the Habsburgs.

The attempts to capture the strongholds of the Adriatic coast, which still were under Venetian control, and especially the island of Corfu in 1537 and 1538, were in fact a preparation for a military invasion of the Appenine Peninsula. From 1480 onwards, the Ottomans always thought of the invasion of Italy.⁵

Much of the 16th century was dominated by a bitter struggle between the Spain of Charles V and Philip II and the Ottoman Empire of Suleyman the Magnificent. These powers not only clashed directly in the Medirerranean, but also pursued landward expansion.⁶ The Peace of Cateau-Cambresis in 1559 established Spanish Catholic hegemony in Europe.

On the other hand, the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus (ca. 1570/1) marked the last great Ottoman military success. Yet, the war for Cyprus entered a new phase with an

⁵ İnalcık, H., "The Turkish Impact on the Development of Modern Europe", *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy*, Variorum Reprints, London 1978, p. 51

⁶ Issawi, Ch., "The Christian – Muslim Frontier in the Mediterranean – a history of two peninsulas", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 76, issue 4 (1961), p. 548

intense holy war spirit on both sides.⁷ On 7 October 1571, responding to the loss of Cyprus, a strong Catholic allied fleet under the lead of Austria defeated the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto (İnebahtı). The Catholic West took breath freely. It was just a fortunate moment of Catholic unity against the Ottomans. The Ottomans suffered their first great defeat. Now the myth of the invincibility of the Ottomans was broken down. All Christian Europe knew very well that only a terrestrial victory against the Ottomans could have serious consequences for the Ottoman rule in the Balkans.⁸ The Popes Urban VII (1590), Gregory XIV (1590-1), Innocent IX (1591) and Clement VIII (1592-1605) worked very hard to fulfill their desire for the shaping of a terrestrial crusade against the Ottoman to give to them a mortal blow.⁹

a. The Clash of Religions and Albanian Lands

The victory of the Catholic alliance in Lepanto (October 1571) marks a turning point in the history of relationship between Catholic Europe and the Ottoman Empire, and had a real impact even on the international politics and the balance of power in the western Balkans.

The clash between the Ottomans and Venice in Cyprus (1570-1) was accompanied by intensive provocative activity by Venice on the littoral costs of Albania.¹⁰ While Venice wished to occupy the Ottoman territories in the western Balkans in order to ease the Ottoman pressure in Cyprus, the highland Albanians hoped that now was the time to save their territories from Ottoman rule. In this context of events, the local Venetian authorities of Antibarium (Bar/Tivar) provoked the Albanian population of

⁷ İnalçık, H., "Lepanto in the Ottoman Documents", *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy*, Variorum Reprints, London 1978, p. 187

⁸ Tamborra, A., *Gli stati italiani, L'Europa e il problema turco dopo Lepanto*, p. 10

⁹ Benigni, U., "Documenti e note sulla politica orientale dei Papi", *Bessarione*, anno III, no. 33-34 (marzo-aprile 1899), pp. 255-6

¹⁰ BOA, *Mühimme Defteri*, no. 14, pp. 837-8;

the Shkodra Sancak. The rebels and the Venetian forces intended to capture the strategic fortress of Lezha. This initiative, initiated by Venice in order to draw Ottoman attention away from Cyprus, might be oppressed during the first half of 1571.¹¹ The same thing was also attempted by Venice along the Ionian coastlands of Albania. They urged the Himariots to rebel (June 1570), but this rebellion was also oppressed next year.¹²

The Venetian documents also point out Albanian chieftains, who sent many letters to Venice demanding help in order to be liberated from the Ottoman pressure. They made calls to the Republic of San Marco to take Albanians under its protection.¹³ Even the civil authority of Venice in Antibarium (Bar, Tivar) carried out secret negotiations with the Ottoman sancakbey of Shkodra, Mustafa, to take this important city in return for plenty of money, but without success.¹⁴

In February 1571, intelligence came to Istanbul that Venetians were assembling their forces near Corfu, and were waiting for the Spanish fleet.¹⁵ In September 1571, the third vezir, Ahmet Paşa, arrived in Albania to exercise power against the Albanian rebels in Ohrid, and to reinforce the garrisons in the fortress of Delvina, Vlora and Durres.¹⁶

The fall of Cyprus and the capture of the Venetian fortress/cities of Dulcigno (Ulcinj, Ulqin, Ülgün) and Antibarium in August 1571 marked a great military successes for

¹¹ *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), Universiteti. Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tirane 1962, p. 102; *Historia e Shqiperise*, vol. I, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Tirane 1959, p. 354

¹² *ibid.*; Zamputi, I., "Disa flete te historise se Shqiperise ne periudhen 1506-1574", *Buletini i shkencave shoqerore*, nr. 2 (1960), p. 23

¹³ Fabri, L., "L'Albania e Venezia dal 1570 al 1574 attraverso documenti inediti", *Rivista d'Albania*, Reale Accademia d'Italia, anno V - fasc. I (1944), p. 43-4

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 44

¹⁵ İnalcık, H., "Lepanto in the Ottoman Documents", p. 185

¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 189-90

the Ottomans.* According to contemporary Italian chronicles, the Albanians of Dulcigno were murdered, while the provincial Venetian authorities remained free to leave this area.¹⁷ Upon the news coming from Dulcigno, the people of Antibarium were terrorized, so they submitted the keys of fortress to Ahmet Pasha and saved a massacre.¹⁸ A part of them emigrated to Italy, while the rest were converted to Islam.¹⁹

Even after the Battle of Lepanto, the Albanians continued contacts and requests for help from Venice, as the strongest Christian power in Adriatic basin. The mediators were always members of the Catholic and the Orthodox clergy.²⁰ Nonetheless, here we should say that the assistance of Venice to the Albanians was conditioned with the actual course of relations between Venice and the Ottoman Empire.²¹

Towards the end of the 16th century, there were two most interested forces in the war against the Ottomans: Spain and the duke of Savoia, Carlo Emanuele I. Meanwhile, the Ottomans waged exhausting wars against the Austria. Border incidents led the two empires, the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, to war in 1593. The Pope was working hard in the East to find allies for the Austrians. This long war, which was concluded with the Peace of Zsitvatorok (ca. 1606), demonstrated to the Ottomans their own military weakness.

* For a detailed chronology of events during the summer 1571 see: Fabri, L., "L'Albania e Venezia dal 1570 al 1574 attraverso documenti inediti", pp. 41-64; İnalcık, H., "Lepanto in the Ottoman Documents", pp. 185-192

¹⁷ *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), p. 103

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Galanti, A., *L'Albania*, Roma 1901, p. 163

²⁰ Fabri, L., "L'Albania e Venezia dal 1570 al ...i", pp. 49-50: the Albanians of Pogon (region in southern Albania) sent their Orthodox archbishop to Venice in 13th of March, 1572.

²¹ Ugolini, L. M., "Pagine di storia veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg e dei suoi successori", *Studi Albanesi*, vol. III-IV (1933-4), Istituto per l'Europa Orientale, Roma, pp. 16-7

In the 1590's the Catholic bishops serving in Albanian lands made efforts to make contact with Catholic Spain,²² which "successfully" expelled all *moriscos** until 1610.²³ After all, the attempts of Albanians to find support in Western Europe were broken down by the Venetians, who always assessed commercial interests with the Ottomans before everything.²⁴

In 1596, the Orthodox archbishop of Ohrid, Athanasios, carried out a long trip around Europe visiting Naples, the Vatican and later the Habsburgs and Spain. The high-ranking Orthodox authority proposed his projects for the liberation of Albania and Macedonia, but he did not find the support he sought.²⁵ The archbishop of Butrinti also tried to communicate and inform the Venetian *bailo** about the existing situation in southern Albania.²⁶ The call for help and liberation from the Ottoman rule addressed to Catholic West was made also by the Orthodox Patriarch of Pec, Jovan (July 1609).²⁷

At the turn of the 16th century and during the first decades of the 17th century, several Italian states had their plans in the Balkans against the Ottoman Empire:²⁸ Duke Carlo Emmanuele I of Savoia,²⁹ Prince Vincenzo I Gonzaga of Mantova³⁰ and Ferdinand I and Cosimo II of Toscana.³¹ In 1614 Albanian highlanders promised to

²² Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania dagli ultimi decenni del secolo XVI alla meta del secolo XVII", *Orientalia Christiana* vol. XXXVI-4, no. 99, Roma 1934, p. 232

* The Muslim people, which were enforced to leave Spain under the pressure of Catholic Reconquista.

²³ Levy, R., *The Social Structure of Islam*, ..., p. 31

²⁴ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, Shtepia Botuese "8 Nentori", Tirane 1987, p. 446

²⁵ The roots of this initiative are in 1593. In a letter addressed to Pope Clement VIII, the people of Ohrid region declared that they were ready to rebel against Ottoman rule: Matkovski, A., "Kryengritje te panjohura ne sanxhakun e Ohrit ne vitet 1566-1574", p. 59

* The ambassador of Venice in Istanbul.

²⁶ Ugolini, L. M., "Pagine di storia veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg ...", p. 18

²⁷ Tamborra, A., *Gli stati italiani, L'Europa e il problema turco dopo Lepanto*, pp. 87-9

²⁸ For detailed information about the political course of events between the Italian states and the Ottomans see: Tamborra, A., *Gli Stati Italiani, L'Europa e Il Problema Turco Dopo Lepanto*, Biblioteca dell'Archivio Storico italiano XIII, Firenze 1961

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 21-51

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 51-68

³¹ *ibid.*, pp. 69-82

pay to the Duke of Parma eight million gold, which these population gaved to the Ottomans as *harac*.³² The Italian interest to fight against the Ottomans was not a spontaneous phenomenon. Such a policy originated from the geopolitical position of the Appenine Peninsula. Italy still remained one of the prime targets and ambitions of the Ottomans.

In 1574 Venice withdrew from the Catholic League and from that moment it opposed every kind of uprising in the Balkans which was addressed against the Ottoman Empire. This period lasted until the year 1644, when the Ottoman-Venetian War (1644-69) for Crete started. In 1602, Albanian leaders offered to Venice the possession of the castle of Kruja and forty thousand solders ready to fight against the Ottomans. But Venice kepted its silence.³³ It also killed some Catholic clergy working in Western Balkans in the name of the Vatican and Spain.³⁴

In the second decade of the 17th century the Duke of Nevers (France) made some attempts to acquire the lead of Balkanic initiatives for liberation from the Ottomans.³⁵ The Habsburgs also tried to use the troubles in the Balkans in their favor during their war with the Ottomans (1593-1606). Through the Bosnians Austria laid contact with highland Albanians. Even the Duke of Wallenstein came to Ancona planning to pass to Albania.³⁶

However, the situation in Albania was confused as long as Albanians addressed different European forces for help:

“...all the Albanians desire naturally to be liberated from the Turkish yoke, ... but among the Christians there are three different factions, one depended on the Pope, the other on the Catholic King (Philip V), the third on the Venetians, which at present is united with the Turks, for the Venetians who do not dare go to war against the Turks, ...

³² Ugolini, L. M., “Pagine di storia veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg ...”, p. 28

³³ *ibid.*, p. 22

³⁴ Zamputi, I., “Randesia nderkombetare e kuvendeve shqiptare ne kalimin prej shekullit te XVI-te ne te XVII-tin”, *Buletini i Universitetit te Tiranes* (seria e shkencave shoqerore), XVI (1962), p. 155

³⁵ On the Balkanic projects submitted to the Duke of Nevers for the expulsion of the Ottomans from that region see: *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), pp. 120-2

³⁶ Zamputi, I., “Randesia nderkombetare e kuvendeve shqiptare ...”, p. 155

do not allow that they be liberated by others, and when they hear of an agreement of the sort they even uncover it to the Turks ...”³⁷

After the elimination of the native Albanian nobility during the 15th century, the Albanian tribe's assemblies (*kuvend*) replaced their leading authority in the Albanian highlands and from that moment they were the political interlocutors with various Catholic powers. The eldest members of these assemblies did not consider themselves as the lifelong and legitimate leaders of the Albanian people, but they assessed themselves as a transitory leading force for as long as the heirs of native nobility needed to regain their former legal position and political power. In all the projects submitted to the Catholic powers the point of reference was the time of Scanderbeg and always in the subconscious of people lived the memory of the Albanian nobility. In other words, Albanians were searching for a political leader, a strong personality and a unifying force, which would replace Scanderbeg.³⁸ This is the reason why the Albanian kuvends systematically offered the crown of Albania to the kings, dukes or members of royal families of Western states: in 1592 the crown of Albania was offered to Carlo I Emmanuele of Savoia, in 1606 to Rudolph II of the Habsburgs and in 1615 to the Duke of Parma, Ranuncio I Farnese.³⁹

b. *The Establishment of Ottoman Rule*

While the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans was advancing and the power of local nobility was paralyzed, the tribe organisation was regenerated and began to take over many of the leading functions in the highlands of Albania. In these regions Ottoman

³⁷ Cordignano, F., “Geografia ecclesiastica dell’Albania ...”, p. 231-2; Skendi, S., “Religion in Albania During the Ottoman Rule”, *Südost - Forschungen*, Band XV, München 1956, pp. 315; *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), pp. 108-9

³⁸ Rossi, E., “Saggio sul dominio turco e l’introduzione dell’Islam in Albania”, *Rivista d’Albania*, XXI, anno III – fasc., dicembre 1942, p. 202. See also an authentic document belonging to the beginning of the 17th century: Tamborra, A., *Gli stati italiani, L’Europa e il problema turco dopo Lepanto*, pp. 73-4

³⁹ Sirdani, M., “Shqypnija dhe shqyparet”, *Hylli i Drites*, XIX, no. 3-5 (1941), p. 116

rule, rather than a military conquest, constituted an official recognition of the Ottoman state by the native chieftains. We should remember that the timar system in these regions was not applied so intensively as in the Albanian lowlands.⁴⁰

Actually the term *tribe* did not mean only a group bounded by blood relationship, but also a territorial unit under the control of a certain group. In fact, these are the small geographical units, which previously belonged to a feudal family. Every Albanian tribe possesses a considerable potency of decision-making and it is accustomed to take risks. Therefore, even in difficult situations they are able to undertake a dangerous initiative; certainly they are not indifferent to internal and external politics, but are individualists.⁴¹ Although Albanian tribes are distinguished individualists, they are accustomed to share their freedom with horizon and do not support outside control: "People discontented and always rebellious".⁴²

Tribes were free from all those prejudices, taboos, and inhibitions which limit the outlook of those who belong to an organized community. Poverty lent a severe pragmatism to their thought, so that they judged matters only by results, knowing that, if man cannot live by bread alone, he cannot even subsist without it.⁴³ So, "it was very easy to buy the Albanian leaders, but probably very difficult that they would stay loyal to their boss".⁴⁴

The *fis* (tribe) was a mobile unit, never completely static. In this context, the leaders of the Balkan tribes followed very carefully the changeable political and religious balances in Western Europe. The institution of tribe assemblies took on an inter-

⁴⁰ Pulaha, S., "Mbi gjallerimin e lidhjeve farefisnore dhe krijimin e fiseve ne Shqiperine e Veriut ne shek. XVI-XVII", *Studime Historike*, nr. 2 (1975), pp. 121-42

⁴¹ Louis, H., *Albanien Eine Landeskunde Vornehmlich Auf Grund Eigener Reisen*, Verlag von J. Engelhorn's Nachf. In Stuttgart, 1927, p. 36

⁴² Stadtmuller, G., *Historia shqiptare ne pikepamje te kombis si probleme gjurmimesh*, Shtypshkronja "A. Gj. Fishta", Shkoder 1942, p.23

⁴³ Emery, J., *Sons of the Eagle*, Macmillan & CO.LTD, London 1948, p.10-11

⁴⁴ Konica, F., *Shqiperia – Kopshti Shkembor i Evropes Juglindore*, in: *Vepra*, eds. N. Jorgaqi – Xh. Lloshi, Shtepia Botuese 'Naim Frasheri', Tirane 1993, p. 511

regional⁴⁵ and pan-Balkan character at the beginning of the 17th century.⁴⁶ In the pan-Balkan conventions the Patriarch of Pec was also present. If the Balkanic projects would find the political and financial support of Spain, then war would be joined also by the Mitropolit of Durres, Yannina, Arta etc.⁴⁷ In 1614, despaired from the negative attitude of Venice, Pope and Spain, the Balkanic leaders made a call for help to the Duke of Parma. If his answer would be negative, than as the last chance for help was seen in the Protestant states, like England and German principalities.⁴⁸

As he always thought of the conquest of Catholic Europe, the sultan Suleyman the Magnificent supported every heretic movement against the Catholic Church, which to be the unifying spiritual force of Western Europe. So, on the foundation of Suleyman's concept of the world laid his claim for supremacy as the shadow of God on all nations.⁴⁹ He believed that he could restore the unity of Islam world-wide through his unmatched power, and he also believed that it was an imperative duty for him to ensure that the absolute rule of the Islamic law in his own lands became reality.⁵⁰

It appears that until the end of the 16th century Ottoman rule in Albanian lands created a peaceful and prosperous era. If we have a look at the demographic situation

⁴⁵ Ugolini, L. M., "Pagine di storia veneta ai tempi di Scanderbeg ...", pp. 21-5: in this contemporary document we have the opportunity to see the participating names of Albanian tribes and their leaders in the *kuvend* held in Dukagjin in 1602.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 26-36: in this contemporary document we have the opportunity to see the names of participating tribes and their leaders. Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, pp. 448-9: in Kuc (Montenegro) were organised two conventions, the first in July 1614 and the second in September 1614. In November 1616 in Prokuplje of Serbia and in November 1620 in Belgrade were organized two pan-Balkan conventions. There participated the leaders of tribes from Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Dalmacia and once again help was demended from the Catholic world.

⁴⁷ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, p. 449

⁴⁸ Ugolini, L. M., *op. cit.*, pp. 31-2; Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, p. 448

⁴⁹ Inalcik, H., "State and Ideology under Sultan Suleyman I", *The Middle East and the Balkans Under the Ottoman Empire - essays on economy and society*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1993, p. 78

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 81

from the first half of the 15th century to the end of the 16th century,* we will see that the number of settlements in Albanian lands increased 42.8 %, ⁵¹ the number of households increased 107.5 %, ⁵² while the average number of household density per settlement increased 42.3 %. ⁵³

In some mountainous areas the population decreased, like in Mirdita (23%) and Kelmend (64.3%). ⁵⁴ The most remarkable growth of population was seen in the territories of the sancaks of Vlora and Delvina (the average of settlements 21.6 %, while the number of households 189.8 %), in the sancak of Shkodra the (the average of settlements 36.9, while the number of households 62.5 %) and Vuçitern (the average of settlements 81.4 % while the number of households 41.6 %). ⁵⁵ From the beginning to the end of the 16th century, the number of households increased in total 31.7 %.

During the time of sultan Suleyman was seen an increased importance of the Via Egnatia. We should take into consideration the new interest in this historical route as among the preparations for the expedition of 1536-7, during which sultan Suleyman led an army of 300.000 soldiers to Vlora to be transported to Italy by the Ottoman navy. ⁵⁶ The city of Vlora survived the process of the establishment of Ottoman rule and developed from a military base (the 15th century) into a major commercial city (the 16th century). By the 1580s, the port of Vlora competed with Dubrovnik and had

* For statistical details on the each of sancak of Albanian lands see, Pulaha, S., "Gjendja demografike ne tokat shqiptare gjate shek. XV-XVI", *Popullsia Shqiptare e Kosoves gjate shek. XV - XVI - studime dhe dokumenta*, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1984, pp. 642-8

⁵¹ Pulaha, S., "Gjendja demografike ne tokat shqiptare gjate shek. XV-XVI", p. 639; Pulaha, S., "Aspekte te demografise historike te trevave shqiptare gjate shek. XV-XVI", *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1989, p. 46

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 640

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 647

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 646

⁵⁶ Demetriades, V., "Vakifs along the Via Egnatia", *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, a Symposium held in Rethymnon 9-11 January 1994, ed. E. Zachariadou, Crete University Press, Rethymnon 1996, p. 92

established traffic with Istanbul, Brusa and the Danubian basin, as well as close connections with Dubrovnik, Venice, Ancona and Florence.⁵⁷

As the 16th century advanced, the West European statesman began to realize that the Ottoman Empire could not be regarded as a transitory phenomenon. It had to be recognized as a European power. The great extent of the Ottoman/Islamic presence and institutions created the precedent of death of the Balkan's feudal relations system and a new belief in the *inevitability* of newly established Ottoman military, social and economic systems.

c. The Politics and the Moments of Religious Fanaticism

The Medieval Muslim, like the medieval Christian, believed that he alone had the true faith and that those who believed otherwise would burn in everlasting hellfire. Muslims commonly subjected followers of other religions to discrimination but by and large without persecution. While persecution was rare and atypical, usually due to specific circumstances, discrimination was permanent and indeed necessary, inherent in the system and maintained by both Holy Law and common practice.⁵⁸

Under the Ottoman rule there was considerable social and cultural intercourse, even integration, between the conqueror and the conquered. The Ottoman interest in the Christian Balkanic world sprang only from the desire to become the longlife ruler of the peninsula. The mutual social, cultural and religious intercourse was of vital importance for the long life of the Ottomans in the Balkans. Politically, the Ottoman attitude towards the Catholic communities in the Balkans depended not only on the

⁵⁷ For general picture of this city and its commercial activity in the 16th century see, Inalcik, H. and others, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire (1300-1914)*, CUP 1994, pp. 266-8 and idem, "Kanunnâme-i Livâ-i Avlonya ber- müceb-i defter-i 'atîk", *Hicri 835 tarihli Sûret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, 2. baskı, TTK yay., Ankara 1987, pp. 123-6

⁵⁸ Braude, B.- B. Lewis, "Introduction", in: B. Braude & B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London-New York 1982, pp. 3-4

doctrinal bases of Islam, but also on the relations between the Ottoman State and the Catholic powers of Western Europe.

An Albanian Catholic priest said, “the real conquest of Christian Albanians happened when they forgot at all their traditional faith and felt the absence of clergy”.⁵⁹ When the strong Islamic faith joined the military power, then the prestige of Islam rose to those dimensions as dictated over the non-Muslim subjects.

The successive military victories of the Ottomans until the Battle of Lepanto (ca. 1571) created a psychological pressure on the Christian communities of the Balkans. As the 16th century was advancing, Islam started to dominate the social life of Balkanic people. According to R. Bulliet, “it is an axiom of conversion that no one willingly converts from one religion to another, if by virtue of conversion he markedly lowers his social status. More starkly put, if an emperor converts to a religion of slaves, he does not become a slave; the religion becomes a religion of emperors”.⁶⁰ Here lies a strong link to understanding the relationship between power and prestige.

The Latin sources testify that after the defeat of Scanderbeg at Berat (ca. 1455) and successive sieges of Kruja (ca. 1465, 1466), the conversions increased.⁶¹ In 1571, when the military forces of the Holy League were united, they destroyed the Ottoman fleet and threatened Istanbul, then in the Ottoman territories had emerged a Christian hostility, but it would not continued for a long time.⁶² A moment of Islamic fanaticism was also the year 1593 when started the Otoman – Habsburg War.⁶³ After

⁵⁹ Sirdani, M., “Shqypnija dhe shqyptaret”, p. 2-3

⁶⁰ Bulliet, R., *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period – a essay in quatitative history*, Harvard University Press 1979, p. 41

⁶¹ Noli, F. S., “Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-1468)”, *Vepra 4 (shkrime historike)*, Akademia e Shkencave, Tirane 1989, p. 297; Zhelyazkova, A., *Razprostraneniye na Islama v zapadnobalkanskite zemi pod osmanska vlast*, Izdatelstvo na Blgarskata Akademija na Naukite, Sofija 1990, p. 160

⁶² Inalcik, H., “Kültür Etkileşimi, Küreselleşme”, *Doğu-Batı*, yıl 5, sayı 18 (2002), p. 99

⁶³ Bartold, B., *Soçinenija*, tom 6, Moskva 1966, p. 427

the Polish victory in the war of 1631-4, the Ottomans the Ottoman provincial authorities reacted fanatically, saying to the Catholics of the Balkans: "you share the same faith with Poland, pray to God to help you". Upon this difficult situation many Catholics of Prizren and Dukagjin region converted to Islam.⁶⁴ During the Ottoman – Venetian War in Crete (1645-69) northern Albanians supported Venice. In 1645 a plot was prepared by the Catholic Archbishop of Antivari to deliver Shkoder to Venice. This plan was discovered by the Ottomans. This was a sufficient reason for the persecution of the Catholics. Many fled to southern Dalmatia, which was under Venetian rule. The conversions to Islam again rose.⁶⁵

Not only the Ottoman Turks were responsible for the urging of Islamic fanaticism. The moriscos, expelled from Spain, attacked some Catholic churches in the Balkans as revenge for the loss of their sacred places in paternal territories.⁶⁶

II. The Situation of Christianity

a. *The Orthodox Churches, Albanians and the Ottomans*

The Ottoman Empire was not structured by national entities. The very name of the ruling dynasty is a clear evidence that the basis of the political society was not a nation; however, the Turkish foundation, as the Arab foundation in earlier Muslim empires, was strong enough to carry a political superstructure of varying geographical strength.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, Shtepia Botuese "Drita", Ferizaj 1992, p. 139

⁶⁵ Hecquard, H., *Histoire et description de la Haute Albanie ou Ghégarie*, Paris 1858, pp. 472-5; Skendi, S., "Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area under the Ottoman", *Slavic Review*, vol. 26 (1967), no. 2, p. 236

⁶⁶ Tamborra, A., *Gli Stati Italiani, L'Europa e Il Problema Turco Dopo Lepanto*, p. 2

⁶⁷ Grunebaum, G. E. von., "Self-Image and Approach to History", *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. B. Lewis - P. M. Holt, Oxford University Press 1962, p. 478

The *millet** system, applied to the non-Muslim communities living in a Muslim state, owed its specifically Islamic legal bases to the very beginnings of Islam, to the events of Muhammad's Medinan years (622-623).⁶⁸ In addition to the norms which previous Middle Eastern empires had developed – norms originated from the legacy of Islamic civilization – the Ottomans had other precedents: firstly, the legal traditions of Islam, secondly their own knowledge of the Byzantines, and thirdly the distinctive customs of the Turkish peoples.⁶⁹

In the Ottoman Empire the word “millet” became a technical term, and was used for the organized, recognized, religio-political communities enjoying certain rights of autonomy under their own chiefs.⁷⁰ The millet system was based on the sultan's recognition, through a diploma, of the existence and limited authority of a non-Muslim community. The non-Muslims remained always *dhimmi*, subjects of the Islamic state enjoying the privilege of looking after their own communal affairs in certain defined spheres of life, in this case within the Church organization.⁷¹

Both political and religious reasons forced Islam to preserve and even extend the status of the Orthodox Church ruling over the Orthodox communities. The *Rums* of the Balkans consisted of Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Rumanians, partially Bosnians and the southern Albanians. So, the Orthodox believers in the Ottoman lands speaking different languages, all came to be designated administratively as *Rum*, literally “Roman”. The primary basis of calling them “Rum” was religious, rather

* The word *milla*, more familiar in its Turkish form *millet*, is a Qur'anic Arabic word of Aramaic origin, originally meaning “a word”, hence a group of people who accepted a particular word or revealed book. It is also used of other, including non-Muslim, religious groups, and some deviant groups within the Islamic world: Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, The University of Chicago Press 1988, p. 38

⁶⁸ Bosworth, C. E., “The Concept of *Dhimma* in Early Islam”, in: B. Braude & B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London-New York 1982, p. 37

⁶⁹ Braude, B. – B. Lewis, “Introduction”, p. 10

⁷⁰ Lewis, B., *The Political Language of Islam*, pp. 38-9

⁷¹ Inalcik, H., “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Under the Ottomans”, *Turcica*, tome XXI-XXIII (1991), p. 420

than ethnic. The Ottomans, though they distinguished them ethnically, did not give importance to their national or racial differences. In the eyes of the Ottoman authorities they were all of the *Rum milleti*.

The *milletbaşı* was the administrative officer responsible to the state for his community, and to his community for the state.⁷² The Orthodox millet was under the leadership of the patriarch for civil and religious matters. He became a religious leader vested with fiscal, judicial and administrative powers. His delegated power was exercised in the provinces by the local clergy. The Ottoman sultans issued their *berats* to the patriarch and provincial clergy. Besides, the protection of churches and monasteries against the abuses of the Ottoman local authorities was considered to be a public duty. The *cadi* also helped the provincial Orthodox authority to use his power over the priests and their believers.⁷³

Hence, non-Muslim religious authorities, being quite well bound to the Ottoman authorities, became Ottoman “servants”. Having religious, economic and some social rights, the leaders of non-Muslim communities had no political rights. The Orthodox Patriarch was the guardian of the official Byzantine legal tradition.⁷⁴

In fact, the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Ottoman Empire were characterised by the harmony of mutual interests. Parallel with the Ottoman advance, the Orthodox Church had to adopt itself to the new situation; either Greek or Serbian Orthodoxy had no other alternative to survive. Accepting the status offering by the Ottomans, the Orthodox Church preserved its ecclesiastical organisation. As in the Byzantine Empire the Church was an important civil organ, in the Ottoman time it

⁷² Braude, B., “Foundation Myths of the Millet System”, in: B. Braude & B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London-New York 1982, p. 69

⁷³ Inalcik, H., “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans”, p. 427

⁷⁴ Pantazopoulos, N. J., *Church and Law in the Balkan Peninsula During the Ottoman Rule*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki 1967, p. 23

extended their rights and had the advantage of being important also in *laique* issues.⁷⁵

The legal traditions and daily practices of each of the non-Muslim communities, particularly in matters of personal status, like death, marriage and inheritance, were respected and enforced throughout empire. Such a policy helped the non-Muslim communities living in the Ottoman lands to protect their traditions and culture.

The Orthodox Church of Constantinople and archbishoprics of Ohrid and Pec retained the inner hierarchical and organizative structure.⁷⁶ The ecclesiastical authorities elected by central or provincial synods in accordance with canonical rules of the Church had to take the *berat* of sultan. Among the the Metropolitans of the Balkan Peninsula, which were immediately subjected to the administrative jurisdiction of the *oecuménique** Patriarch, those of Pec and Ohrid, are not mentioned in the older *berats*. They constituted *autocephalous** churches. However, the degree of autonomy of Ohrid and Pec Archbishoprics from the Patriarchate of Constantinople varied directly according to the fragile relations between the Patriarchate and the Ottoman State.⁷⁷

The Ottomans liquidated the autocephalous churches of Trnovo (1393) and Pec (1459)* after the military conquest of their ecclesiastical centers, because they were

⁷⁵ Hadrovics, L., *Le peuple serbe et son eglise sous la domination turque*, Paris 1947, p. 54

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 65

* World-wide leading position among the autonomous Orthodox Churches.

* The trends of some archbishops to be called "patriarchs" had an internal character and not an inter-Orthodox canonical one. The official documents never mentioned them as "patriarchs", but as "archbishops": Angelopoulos, A., "The Archdioceses of Ahris and Pec on the Basis of Patriarchal Acta Edited by K. Delikanis (17th /18th centuries), *Balkan Studies*, ..., p. 342

⁷⁷ Vesela, Z., "K voprosy o polozenii hristianskoj cerkvi v osmanskoj gosudarstve", *Osmanskaja Imperija – gosudarstvennaja vlast i socialno-politiceskaja struktura*, Moskva 1990, p. 120

* There existed different ideas related to the fate and status of the Archbishopric of Pec immediately after the Ottoman conquest. Some scholars claim that the Ottomans put an end to the Archbishopric of Pec, while some others say that the Ottomans recognized it officially. On the different opinions of Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian scholars see, Djurdjev, B., "The Serbian Church in the History of the Serbian Nation under the Ottoman Rule (till the Reinstatement of the Patriarchate of Pecs in 1557)", *Ottoman Rule in Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers Presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, pp. 289-91.

state churches, which always maintained the memory of Bulgarian and Serbian medieval states.

However, after 1459 the activity of Pec was minimized. In the second half of the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century the Archbishopric of Ohrid benefited from the chaotic situation in Pec's ecclesiastical territories, and subjoined southern eparchies under the ecclesiastical organization of Pec.⁷⁸

Now, the Serbian Church had to resist because it would mean not only the loss of its believers, but also the loss of the national identity of the Serbian people. From as early as the 16th century, the Orthodox patriarchs of Pec had aimed at bringing all Christians of Serbian nationality under their jurisdiction, no matter what their confession was.⁷⁹ But what about Orthodox Albanians, who were ecclesiastically bound to the institutions of this archbishopric? To give a significant example: In the 16th century, in the village Bilush of the Nahiya of Opolje* the names of all the heads of the families were Slavic (thirty nine family's heads and 6 bachelors). The existence of this Slavic Orthodox enclave, in a territory completely islamized, indicates clearly that the ethnicity of the islamized people was completely different from that of the above mentioned village.⁸⁰ This example shows that the Archbishopric of Pec had been not successful in preventing the islamization process among the Albanian majority of people in this region. We should always bear in mind that Islam did take root more readily in religiously unstable regions.

⁷⁸ Djurdjev, B., "The Serbian Church in the History of the Serbian Nation ...", pp. 291-3. For a detailed information on the ecclesiastical organisation of the Archbishopric of Pec in the 15th and 16th century see: Zirojevic, O., *Crkve i manastiri na području Pečke Patriarsije do 1683. godine*, Istorijski Institut u Beogradu, Beograd 1984, pp. 48-9, 110, 140, 154-5, 169-70, 170-1, 201, 206

⁷⁹ Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule*, Duke University Press 1990, p. 42

* A district in the Northeastern Albanian lands.

⁸⁰ Pulaha, S., "Elementi shqiptar sipas onomastikes te krahinave te sanxhakut e Shkodres ne vitet 1485-1582", *Studime Historike*, nr. 1 (1972), pp. 87-9

The Archbishopric of Ohrid with ecclesiastical organization in Serbian, Macedonian, Greek and Albanian lands and with strong relations with Bulgarian political and religious traditions, was the first Orthodox Church recognized officially by the Ottomans. The destiny of this archbishopric was strictly connected with the political perspective of the Ottoman state in the Balkan Peninsula. In the 15th century, the extension of the ecclesiastical organization* of the Ohrid Archbishopric in Albanian and Serbian lands followed the path of the Ottoman conquest.⁸¹

Before the capture of Constantinople (ca. 1453), the Ottomans supported the Archbishopric of Ohrid in its traditional conflict against the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It was the Ottoman political conduct that caused the destruction of the parity and the ecclesiastical balance between the autocephalous archbishoprics of Ohrid and Pec. The Ottomans endorsed Ohrid for their pragmatic interest. Gaining Ottoman political support, the Archbishopric of Ohrid felt so strong as to extended their ecclesiastical territories overlapping those of Pec. Revenge was realized when the political and religious restauration of the Archbishopric of Pec in 1557 brought some territorial loss for the Archbishopric of Ohrid.⁸²

The relations between Ohrid and Pec up to 1557, in general, were determined by a political and ecclesiastical rivalry. This conflict was also reflected in the field of applied arts.⁸³ Nevertheless, the spiritual links between the two churches are developed through the popular honorary cult of the local Serbian saint John

* For detailed information on the ecclesiastical organisation of the Archbishopric of Ohri in the 15th and 16th century see: Snegarov, I., *Istorija na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija-Patriarshija ot padaneto i pod Turcit do nejnoto unishcozenije (1394-1767)*, Sofia 1932, pp. 156-181, 422-500

⁸¹ Matkovski, A., "Les relations entre l'archeveche d'Ohrid et l'Etat Ottoman de 1382 a 1557", *XI. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, vol. V, Ankara, p. 2022

⁸² Snegarov, I., *Istorija na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija-Patriarshija ...*, Sofia 1932, pp. 65-6

⁸³ On the aspects of quarrels between these two Orthodox Churches in the field of art see, Petkovic, S., "Artistic Activity and the Struggle for Survival of the Serbian Church during the 16th and 17th Centuries", *Balkan Studies*, no.2 (1972), pp. 626-30

Vladimir, who was a very popular and beloved saint among the Orthodox population of the western Balkans.⁸⁴

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The status of the Orthodox Church after 1453 consisted of:

1. The right of the free practice of religion, the maintenance of churches and the use of the native language,
2. The exclusive jurisdiction of the Patriarch over all the personal differences of the Christians related to religion: marriage, adoptions, divorces, wills etc.
3. The exemption of the Patriarch and all the bishops from all taxation. This means that, the “privileges” were recognized on the condition of payment by the Christians, of the yearly tax of subjection, as determined by the Koran.⁸⁵

The Ottomans extended the Patriarch’s jurisdiction to the whole area of private law. The legislative activity of the Church is especially expressed in the *Family Law* and the *Law of Inheritance*. The authority of the Patriarch extending over clergymen and laymen is recognized in its twofold aspect – ecclesiastical and civil.⁸⁶ The Ottoman state did not interfere into relations between the Orthodox Church and its believers. Hence, the protection of the judicial competences led to the protection of the internal autonomy of the Orthodox Church.

The Christian dignitaries had only very limited jurisdiction in penal matters involving members of their communities. The Orthodox authorities were authorized

⁸⁴ Angelopoulos, A., “The Archdioceses of Ahris and Pec on ...”, *Balkan Studies*, no.3 (1965), p. 342

⁸⁵ Pantazopoulos, N. J., *Church and Law in the Balkan Peninsula ...*, pp. 24-5

⁸⁶ Papadopoulos, Th. H., *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, Brussels 1952, p. 31

to arrest violators of their religious law and to inflict on them certain penalties (exclusion from the church services, refusal of religious burial, excommunication).⁸⁷

The Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman state could be addressed even to the Ottoman courts of law, which tried all subjects of the sultan, including the non-Muslims.⁸⁸

The Patriarch and the metropolitans were entitled to a revenue, which was derived from taxation of the Christian subjects under the jurisdiction of the Church. The tax contribution paid by Orthodox people was intended for the collection of the amount needed for the payment of the *pişkeş** to the Sublime Porte.

The taxes paid by the non-Muslim reaya can be classified into three categories: taxes going directly into the Ottoman treasury, those going to high-ranking clergymen, and those levied for the local clergy.⁸⁹ The Orthodox peasantry, except for the taxes paid to the Ottoman state, had an additional burden of paying taxes to the Orthodox clergy at all levels. The Patriarch and his subordinated authorities acquired the right to impose church taxes. The ecclesiastical taxes were added to *djizya* and other governmental taxes.⁹⁰ It was not very easy for the reaya to pay church taxes in cash, so alms, in particular, were given in goods: wine, butter, olive oil and honey.

The Ottoman government, even on this occasion, came forward to play its protective role of the reaya against the illegal or excessive demands of the high clergy. Nonetheless, the patriarchal tours of the provinces were primarily motivated by a need to fill the treasury of the Patriarchate. It aggravated more the fiscal position of peasants.

⁸⁷ Heyd, U., *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law*, Oxford University Press 1973, pp. 78-9

⁸⁸ Vesela, Z., "K voprosy o polozenii hristianskoj cerkvi v osmanskoj gosudarstve", p. 12

* For detailed information on *pişkeş* see: Inalcik, H., "Ottoman Archival Materials on *Millet*s", *From Empire to Republic-Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History*, The Isis Press, Istanbul 1995, pp. 102-3; Inalcik, H., "The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch ...", pp. 422-3

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 426

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 427

The taxes,⁹¹ which the Orthodox reaya paid to clergy, constituted a heavy fiscal addition to their tax burden as a whole since all of the payments had to be eventually met by the faithful. Almost the same taxes were paid even by Orthodox Albanians.⁹² It is argued that the taxes imposed by the Orthodox Church in Bosnia were one of the causes for the conversion of Orthodox people to Islam.⁹³ As far as the same taxes were also paid by Orthodox Albanians, and both, Bosnians and Albanians, shared almost the same geographical conditions in the western Balkans, we can say that even in Albanian lands the payment of taxes at the expense of the Orthodox Church might be one of the reasons for the conversion of people to Islam.

Islam emerged in the 7th century as a new religion, whose ultimate aim was to win the whole world. For that reason, Islam and Christendom have been facing each other as the only two great religious and spiritual rival powers with inevitability of continuous conflict for world domination. From the time of the Prophet Muhammad to the present day the ultimate definition of the *other*, the alien outsider and presumptive enemy has been the *kafir* (the unbeliever). So, the erection of a Christian object of cult in Islamic territories was not permitted by Shari'a:⁹⁴

“... zikrolunan kenisanin hedmi umûr-ı dîn-i devletdendir deyü ...”⁹⁵

While to restore existing churches as well as monasteries was sanctioned only with a firman of sultan. Moreover, restoration was fraught with enormous costs, complications and not infrequently, dangers. The Ottomans were very decided to

⁹¹ The list of taxes that the Orthodox reaya gave to its church is provided by Inalcik, H., “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch ...”, pp. 422-3. For a broad information about the Orthodox system of taxation in the Ottoman period see the monographic work of Kabrda, J., *Le système fiscal de l'église orthodoxe dans l'Empire Ottoman*, Universita J. E. Purkyne, Brno 1969

⁹² In a berat of sultan for the appointment of the Archbishop of Ohrid are quoted the taxes, which had the right to gather from its believers: Duka, F. *Berati ne kohen osmane (shek. XVI-XVIII)*, Botimet TOENA, Tirane 2001, p. 159

⁹³ “Bosna”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, vol. I, Leiden – London 1960, p. 1265

⁹⁴ The Ottoman sultan emphasized in his ferman that the restauration of an old church could be possible according to the Shari'a and the permission of sultan: BOA, *Mühimme defterleri*, no. 81, vesika no. 526

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

prevent any attempt at the building of new churches, but, meanwhile, the sultan ordered the local Ottoman authorities not to destroy the churches existing from the pre-Ottoman period.⁹⁶

According to foreign travelers the reason why the Ottomans did not permitted the erection of new churches was explained in a different way:

“... Türkler hiçbir kilisenin onarılmasına ya da yeni bir kilisenin yapımına izin vermiyorlarmış. Bunun nedeni de kendi dinlerini kısa bir süre içinde kabul ettirmektir.
...⁹⁷

Nevertheless, inscriptions situated in some Orthodox churches in Albania show that the building activity of churches was not interrupted, but it mostly continued within the space of existing monasteries.⁹⁸ Additionally, we should say that during the Ottoman period the Orthodox churches and monasteries continued to be the place of traditional fairs preserving the traditional function of the pre-Ottoman period.⁹⁹

The famous Orthodox monasteries, like Saint Naum, were always strong magnetic centers of spirituality and traditional culture. Therefore, the donations made from native people continued even during the Ottoman period. In 1503, an Albanian Orthodox, Petro Hartofilaks, and his family built a new church in the Monastery of Boboshtica.¹⁰⁰ In 1600, another Albanian Orthodox, Christofor, built a church in the Monastery of the Virgin Mary.¹⁰¹

The traditionalism of the Orthodox Church was indeed a great force against the massive conversion of Orthodox believers to Islam. The Orthodox monks kept alive at their community of believers the faith and Orthodox cultural inheritance.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Curipeschitz, B., *Yolculuk Günlüğü, 1530*, 2. baskı, TTK Yay., Ankara 1989, pp. 25-6

⁹⁸ Popa, Th., *Mbishkrime te kishave ne Shqiperi*, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1998, p. 155

⁹⁹ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*, Shtepia Botuese “8 Nentori”, Tirane 1987, p. 178

¹⁰⁰ Snegarov, I., *Istorijska i Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija-Patriarshija ...*, p. 270

¹⁰¹ Popa, Th., *Mbishkrime te kishave ne Shqiperi*, p. 224

Especially provincial after the Ottoman conquest the Orthodox clergy was strongly bound with people of their provinces. The lack of native leading aristocracy made indispensable the activity of churchmen against the rival religion (Islam) and its prestigious culture. In the middle of the 15th century the Archbishop of Ohrid, Dorotej, very often visited the cities and villages under his ecclesiastical authority and organized informative speeches on everyday Christian life and Orthodox theological issues.¹⁰²

Except for the highest dignitaries of Orthodox churches and the few learned monks in large ecclesiastical centers, ordinary clergymen were poorly educated and could give but little encouragement to their followers.¹⁰³ In spite of the iron curtain that the Ottoman state and the Islamic culture may have erected between themselves and European Enlightenment, there was no any barrier between the Balkan people and the Renaissance and Reformation, except for that which the high and low-ranking Catholic and Orthodox clergy had themselves created. This was not a moral charge, and couldn't affect negatively the judgment about a class of clergy who generally stood by the people and played the important part of acting as their moral assistants throughout this difficult period. The churches and monasteries remained as the holders of the monopoly of knowledge and local/traditional values.

Painting played an important role in the endeavours of the Orthodox leadership. The subject matter of wall paintings included the figures of eminent saints, the most important Christian feasts, scenes from the Christ's life etc. Painting constituted an

¹⁰² Snegarov, I., *Istorija na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija-Patriarshija ...*, p. 256

¹⁰³ Matkovic, P. "Putovanja po Balkanskom polutoku XVI veka", *Rad JAZU*, vol. LXII, Zagreb 1882, p. 60; Papadopoulos, Th. H., *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church ...*, p. 136

indirect way in the Church's struggle against the islamization, but it involved intelligible and significative messages.¹⁰⁴

In time of peace the churches and monasteries were centers of spiritual and intellectual life, while in time of rebellions against the Ottoman rule, the churchmen shared the fate of their people.¹⁰⁵ The Church represented its believers before the Ottoman authorities and led them into rebellion on occasion.¹⁰⁶

The parishes and monasteries constituted a strong pole of attraction for non-Muslim people and united them, who were otherwise divided by geography factors and social organization. In this way, the church fulfilled certain political functions. Also, serving as a repository of national culture and traditionalism, the Orthodox Church kept in touch with its followers and played the role of mediator with the Catholic world.¹⁰⁷ Above all, church was the center of social life.¹⁰⁸ As a source of spiritual strength and intellectual power, its major mission now was not the discussion of theological problems and learning process, but the preservation of followers of Orthodoxy throughout the territories of the Ottoman empire.

b. *Relations between Orthodoxy and Catholicism*

The relationship between Orthodox Archbishoprics of the Western Balkans and Rome was evaluated in the framework of *negotium spirituale* and was mostly a consequence of the Ottoman pressure and the Islamic culture.

¹⁰⁴ Petkovic, S., "Artistic Activity and the Struggle ...", p. 620

¹⁰⁵ At the end of the 16th century, the Archbishop of Ohrid was the leader of popular uprisings in this region: *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), p. 106-7. According to Evliya Çelebi, as the ecclesiastical center of the Orthodox archbishopric, in 1670's Ohri had six churches/monasteries and about 40-50 priests: *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid)*, eds. R. Dankoff & R. Elsie, Brill, Leiden 2000, p. 209

¹⁰⁶ *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), p. 106

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 139

¹⁰⁸ Vucinich, W., "The Nature of Balkan Society under Ottoman Rule", *Slavic Review*, vol XXI, no. 4 (december 1962), p. 609

The Catholic world was always ready to launch initiatives with the alliance of the Orthodox Church in the Balkans, but always under the primacy of the Pope. It was a lifelong ambition of the Roman Curia to form a Christian union in the Balkans against the Ottomans. This pressure was stronger along the Adriatic coasts than in the Balkan hinterland. The Archbishoprics of Pec and Ohrid gave hope that they might be persuaded to recognize the Pope as the supreme head of Christendom. In return, they demanded the promised financial aid, and especially assistance for the liberation from the Ottomans.¹⁰⁹ Feeling themselves close to Catholic Christianity, the patriarchs of Pec and Ohrid made serious attempts to coordinate their actions with those of the Vatican. These steps, beyond being the personal preferences of archbishops,¹¹⁰ were a general opinion of high clergy, which took shape in the sinods.¹¹¹

The Papacy used the Catholic Archbishop of Antivari as its mediator in its contacts with Orthodox people of the western Balkans. Meanwhile, there were not a few Orthodox monks sent by Orthodox Archbishops to Rome.¹¹² In 1587, the Archbishop of Ohrid, Gabriel, personally went to Rome and asked the Pope for material aid.¹¹³

The monastic Christian clergy, who supplied the contingent of bishops and patriarchs, constituted the clerical upper class, while the secular clerics, who served in the parishes and were always in contact with common people, constituted the lower class. Although they lacked learning and possessed little if any power, the secular

¹⁰⁹ Radonic, J., *Rimska Kurija i južnoslovenske zemlje XVI-XIX veka*, Belgrad 1950, pp. 43-283, 301-329

¹¹⁰ During the first half of the 17th century four archbishops of Ohrid had very close relations with the Vatican. They were called "secret catholics": Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren ...*, pp. 167-70

¹¹¹ Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, p. 168

¹¹² The Catholic Archbishop of Ohrid was promotor of *negotium spirituale* between the Vatican and Pec Archbishop Jovan (1529-1614). While the missionar of the latter was monk Damian: Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, p. 165

¹¹³ Gjini, G., *op. cit.*, p. 167

clergy, because of their daily relation to common people, exercised an influence over the fate of their people. The Christian religious life in the Balkans during the Ottoman period was preserved by low clerics who were the representatives of traditional religion. They were far from the doctrinal discussion or political contacts of high-ranking clergy, but, perhaps, more than high clergy living in big cities, they felt the pressure of rival churches and were protagonists of quarrels between churches. The chaos prevailed in frontier zones between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. An apostolic visitor (1603) who visited Albania, wrote: "Neither the Pope, nor the College of Cardinals, nor the Latin community know which road they are following, so they will be damned without exception".¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, even among the theological works translated or, more frequently, transcribed at that time there was an increased number of those directed against the so-called *Latin heresy*. These books were, however, addressed to the few literate and even fewer learned man of that time.¹¹⁵

The Serbian historian, J. Radonic, had argued that in the conflict between the Catholicism and the Orthodox Church of Pec, the Ottomans had always supported the Serbian Orthodoxy threatening the Catholic Albanians living in the Orthodox ecclesiastical territories, but who were religiously loyal to the Pope.¹¹⁶ The subject of persecution were the Albanians of Catholic faith, who ecclesiastically were under the Orthodox Church of Pec and politically under the Ottoman rule. The Catholic visitors of the first half of the 17th century reported to the Papacy: "...because the majority of Catholics in Kosovo are Albanians, in these region the Catholicism was called 'la

¹¹⁴ Skendi, S., "Religion in Albania During the Ottoman Rule", p. 318

¹¹⁵ Petkovic, S., "Artistic Activity and the Struggle ...", p. 623

¹¹⁶ Radonic, J., *Rimska Kurija i juzhnoslovenske zemlje XVI-XIX veka*, pp. 269, 476, 511-2

fede albanese' (the Albanian faith)".¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the Catholic Archbishop of Skoplje (Shkup), Albanian Andrea Bogdani, reported in 1604 that Catholic Albanians were persecuted, rather than by the Ottomans, by the representatives of the Orthodox Church.¹¹⁸

The borderline in Albania between the Orthodoxy and the Catholicism was as follows: the south of Lezha - the region Kruja - the region of Mat - the region of Dibra.¹¹⁹ In Kosovo had remained only some Catholic enclaves in mining cities, like Novo Brdo, Janjevo and Trepca, where since the Middle Ages many Catholic German miners and Ragusian merchants (1577) were stationed.¹²⁰ The territories of the Catholic diocese of Prizren – Skoplje with an ancient history,¹²¹ later were transformed into the frontier of ecclesiastical territories between the Archbishoprics of Ohrid and Pec. This is a good example of overlapping ecclesiastical organizations between Catholicism and Orthodoxy.¹²² In the first decades of the 17th century, Catholic propaganda and the ecclesiastical activity was increased. As a result, toward the middle of this century, the Catholic Bishopric of Ohrid was restored, though only nominally.¹²³

In the Catholic diocese of Shkodra there were some Orthodox enclaves already under the pressure of Catholic clergy and there were many occasions when the Orthodox

¹¹⁷ Krasniqi, M., "Roli antishqiptar i kishes ortodokse serbe ne Kosove", *Çeshtja e Kosoves – nje problem historik dhe aktual*, Simpozium i mbajtur ne Tirane me 15-16 prill 1993, Instituti i Historise (Tirane) – Instituti i Historise (Prishtine), Tirane 1996, p. 100

¹¹⁸ Krasniqi, M., "Les Albanais dans l'oeuvre d'un diplomate russe", *Gjurme dhe Gjurmime*, Prishtine 1979, pp. 291-391

¹¹⁹ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", pp. 234-235

¹²⁰ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", pp. 234-236. For more information on the Catholic presence and the life of Catholic people in Kosova during the 16th century see: Uroshevic, A., "Iz zhivota katolicikih gradana Janjeva, Letnice, Novog Brda i Trepce u XVI veku", *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, knj. 1 (1956), pp. 239-43

¹²¹ During the Ottoman period the Catholic diocese Skoplje-Prizren was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Antibarium: Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 248

¹²² Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, p. 165

¹²³ For details on the Catholic bishopric of Ohrid and the first Catholic bishops see: Snegarov, I., *Istorija na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija-Patriarshija ...*, p. 104

people were converted to Catholicism.¹²⁴ But in this Catholic diocese there were also cases when the Catholic people were baptized by the Orthodox priests.¹²⁵ Sometimes, the Catholic clergy, which cut its contacts with Rome, accepted the sacraments of the Slavic Orthodoxy, because it remained in the Orthodox ecclesiastical zone.¹²⁶

The quarrels between the Archbishopric of Antbarium and the Archbishopric of Pec mobilized the Archbishopric of Antbarium to send clerics and missionaries in the highland region of Shkodra, Montenegro and nearby in order to prevent the passage of these regions to the ecclesiastical control of the Archbishopric of Pec.¹²⁷

c. The Catholic Church, Albanians and Islam

After the death of Sanderbeg and the political elimination of the Albanian nobility, the Catholic clergy in particular assumed the role of the *intellectual leader* and the *co-ordinator* between the Albanian Catholic community and the Western world. The Catholic authority, filling the political vacuum of native secular power, worked very hard with the leaders of Albanian tribe-regions and to organize all of them in anti-Ottoman resistance. Catholic clergy made serious attempts to keep alive the atmosphere of survival against the Ottomans and Islam.¹²⁸ The local Catholic clerics were the very first in the hierarchy of tribes, which sent letters to the Vatican and other Western powers.¹²⁹ Thanks to their propagative activity, in the eyes of the

¹²⁴ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 251

¹²⁵ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 251

¹²⁶ Hadrovics, L., *Le peuple serbe et son eglise sous la domination turque*, Paris 1947, p. 33

¹²⁷ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 276

¹²⁸ Sirdani, M., "Kontributi i elementit katolik shqiptar ne lame te atdhetaris qe prej kohve te vjetra deri ne kohen e Turqve te Ri", *Hylli i Drites*, IX, no. (1933), p. 343. For the co-ordinative role of Catholic clergy between Albanians and the Catholic world see: Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, pp.158-9; Grabianski, A., "Due chiese, due destini. Saggio di sintesi della storia delle Chiese Ortodossa e Cattolica Romana nei Balkani Occidentali", *L'Europa Orientale*, Roma 1939, no. 5-6, p. 259

¹²⁹ *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), p. 104

Albanian highlanders the Pope still remained the *father of orphans*, and Albanian Catholic tribes considered themselves *the citizens of the Papal spiritual state*.¹³⁰

However, the efforts of the Papacy to retain its control in the Albanian regions where the Catholics were a majority, were insufficient under the conditions of Ottoman rule. For example, after the Ottoman conquest of Antivari (ca. 1572) the palace of the Archbishop was seized by the Muslims, but it had been left unoccupied for eight years, as archbishop Ambrosius (1579-1598) had found it prudent to go into exile. Farlati says that many Catholics of Tivar decided to emigrate in the neighboring countries, so the Christian population decreased day by day.¹³¹

The Catholic visitors, to explain the Catholic losses, stress the shortage of priests, their ignorance, and the indifference of local bishops.¹³² In the middle of the 17th century, five out of the twelve Albanian Sees were vacant. The Diocese of Pulti had not been visited by a bishop for thirty years, and there were only two priests to 6348 Catholic souls.¹³³ In some parishes of hinterland, there had been no priests for more than forty years.¹³⁴

In 1582 in a letter addressed to the Vatican, the head of a village in the district of Lezha reports that due to the fact that the diocese of Lezha was abandoned for a long time by its bishop, who lived in Ragusa, the Catholic community had remained without spiritual leaders and religious services. This situation had created confusion among Catholics and a strong precedent for conversion to Islam.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 103-4

¹³¹ Arnold, Th. W., *The Preaching of Islam - A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, new impression, Darf Publishers Limited, London 1986, p. 180

¹³² *Relacione mbi gjendjen e Shqiperise Veriore dhe te Mesme ne shek. XVII*, vol. I (1610-1634) - II (1634-50), Tirane 1965; Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 261

¹³³ Arnold, Th. W., *The Preaching of Islam* ..., p. 186

¹³⁴ For the shortage of Catholic clergy and the ecclesiastical situation in the region of Dibra see: Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 244

¹³⁵ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet Shqiptare - shek. XV-XX*, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1973, p. 47

In 1518, the Vatican ordered the bishops of Northern Albania to go to their bishoprics, because there were still many Catholics.¹³⁶ The Pope made the same call even in 1603 ordering the bishop of Stefaniaka to send to Cermenika some Catholic priests, but there were still about four thousand Catholics.¹³⁷ In 1584, the city-dwellers of Janjeva demanded from the Apostolic See the Archbishop of Antibarium or the bishop of Lezha to go as soon as possible in order to make religious services.¹³⁸

At the beginning of the 17th century, Catholic missionaries reports that in the region of Mirdita the native Catholics were buried without any religious service.¹³⁹ Even the tribes of Kelmendi and Gruda were Catholic only nominally. They had no sacerdotes, and their children were not baptized. The visits of Catholic authorities were just *temporary*, and intended only to meet immediate needs.¹⁴⁰

The Bishop of Sapa (near Shkodra) had been long resident in Venice, where he is said to have had a comfortable life and had appointed as his vicar an ignorant priest who was a notorious evil-liver.¹⁴¹ The Bishop of Shkodra was looked upon as a tyrant of the people, because he retained his position thanks to the aid of the local Ottoman authorities.

At the end of the 16th century in the regions of Berzhezhta, Polis and Cermenika there was only a prelat to four thousands Catholics. Even this priest was excommunicated and therefore was prohibited to conduct a church worship. Thus, these people were almost without any spiritual servitor.¹⁴² The examples mentioned above show clearly that the shortage of Catholic clergy in Albania lands was one of

¹³⁶ Sirdani, M., "Pulti e Dukagjini", *Hylli i Drites*, no. 4 (1934), p.188

¹³⁷ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 213

¹³⁸ Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, p. 155

¹³⁹ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 239

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 275

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 266; Arnold, Th. W., *The Preaching of Islam ...*, p. 180

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 234

the major causes, having a considerable impact in the conversion of Albanians to Islam.

The majority of the Christian clergy was unlettered; most of them, though they could read a little, did not know to write, and were so ignorant of the duties of their sacred calling that they could not even repeat the formula of absolution by heart.¹⁴³ Some representatives of clergy were sent to Italy to study, but finding a pleasant life there, they refused to return to their native country. Having a priesthood so ignorant and so careless of their sacred duties, it must not be a surprise that common people had no knowledge even of rudiments of their faith, and numerous abuses and corruptions sprang up among them.¹⁴⁴ Because of the complete lack of necessary literature, the low Catholic clergy in Albania was forced to memorize some formulas for the daily ceremonies. The profession of priest began to pass from father to child. Often in remote Catholic areas of Albanian lands young clerics were sent, no more than twenty-two years old.¹⁴⁵

The Catholic clergy was strictly connected with its believers and the landscape, where they served. Because they were more literate, they were able to exercise their religious and political authority among the tribes of their dioceses.¹⁴⁶ In order to survive through the mountains where the Catholics were still alive, they often dressed in civilian clothes and had a weapon in their belt.¹⁴⁷ Such a reality far from the Christian canonical life originated not only of the popular belief and geographical features of landscape, it was also of the debates within the church and of the

¹⁴³ Arnold, Th. W., *The Preaching of Islam* ..., p. 183

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 187

¹⁴⁵ Grabianski, A., "Due chiese, due destini...", p. 259; Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 251

¹⁴⁶ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, Rilindja, Prishtine 1968, p. 157

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 157-9

arbitrariness of judgment of provincial priesthood in theological issues. The Metropolitan of Paramithia was "suspicious about the providence of God, and do not believe in the immortal character of spirit".¹⁴⁸ This contingent of clerics was often called: "piu heretici, che catholici" (rather than Catholics, they were heretics).¹⁴⁹

Most of the Catholic priests serving in Albania were non-Albanians, so they did not know the language of native people. According to contemporary reports of Catholic visitors, this was a great handicap for the Catholic clergy, and consequently the activity of non-Albanian clergymen among native believers was very unproductive.¹⁵⁰

In the first half of the 17th century, the Bishop of Sapa wrote a letter to an European prince. Among the others, he wrote: "... the people are interested, but we are missing them ...".¹⁵¹

The authority of Catholic clergy was also determined by their economic power. In general, the priests lived with incomes of private properties, with taxes from taxes of church and alms giving by believers.¹⁵² In 1602, in Shengjin (near Lezha) an abbot came sponsored by the native people in order to restore the Catholic church, but the abbot used people's money to buy a boat for trade with Ragusa.¹⁵³

There were not very unusual cases when the Ottomans incited the native Muslims against the Catholic ones. The Catholic missionaries were murdered by Muslims or persons incited by them.¹⁵⁴ A Catholic Church in Dukagjin was stolen by persons newly converted to Islam.¹⁵⁵ The Catholic parson of village Kisanje (near Shkodra)

¹⁴⁸ Xhufi, P., "Ndjenja fetare ne Shqiperi gjate mesjetes", *Studime Historike*, nr. 1-4 (1994), p. 13

¹⁴⁹ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 251

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 249

¹⁵¹ *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), p. 186

¹⁵² Cordignano, F., *op. cit.*, p. 261

¹⁵³ Sufflay, M., *Serbet dhe Shqiptaret*, p. 202

¹⁵⁴ Cordignano, F., *op. cit.*, p. 265

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 239

was killed by Muslims, because he was very active in making Catholic propaganda in this region.¹⁵⁶

The Catholic priests were not repositories of the national aspirations and ideals, as were the clergy of the Orthodox Church in other provinces of the Ottoman empire, who inspite of their ignorance kept alive among their people that devotion to the Christian faith which formed the nucleus of the national life of the Slavic and Greek Orthodox people. High and low Orthodox clergy supplied some of the “moral strength” which enabled the Greeks and Slavic people “to resist morally the Ottoman/Islamic power”. The Albanians cherished a national feeling that was quite different from religious belief, and with regard to the Turks, considered, in true feudal spirit, that as they were the masters of the country they ought to be obeyed in whatever commands they gave.

Concerning the Catholic dioceses, Cordignano said that there existed a real confusion as to the Catholic ecclesiastical borderlines* in Albania.¹⁵⁷ The Bishop of Lezha accused the Archbishop of Tivar of co-operating with the Vatican, with secular Catholic clergy and with local Ottoman authorities, he was working to detached the sufragane diocese of Sapa from the central diocese of Lezha and to join it to it ecclesiastical administraton.¹⁵⁸ Quarrels of the same character were seen also between the Bishop of Shkodra and the Archbishop of Antibarium.¹⁵⁹

The Roman Catholic Church, following the resolutions of the Council of Trent (1545-63), began to disseminate its teachings among all ranks of the peope in

¹⁵⁶ Jacques, E. E., *Shqiptaret: populli shqiptar nga lashtesia deri ne vitin 1912*, Shtepia Botuese ‘Karte e Pende’, Istanbul 1996, p. 315

* Cordignano, F., “Geografia ecclesiastica dell’Albania ...”, pp. 229-294; *Schizzo Storico sull’ Opera dei Francescani in Albania (pro manuscripto)*, Scutari 1930, pp. 13-4; Armao, E., *Localita, chiese, fiumi, monti e toponimi varii di un’antica carta dell’Albania settentrionale*, Istituto per L’Europa Orientale, Roma 1933

¹⁵⁷ Cordignano, F., “Geografia ecclesiastica dell’Albania ...”, p. 266

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 282.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

whatever form and language would be most accessible to any given group.¹⁶⁰ It had been ten years since the Council of Trent had begun, and its sessions for the reformation of the Catholic Church were still going on. In this framework should be seen the first book with religious character written in Albanian (1455). Gjon Buzuku, an Albanian Catholic priest, in his “Meshar”* (Missal) translated and adopted the formulas of Catholic Mass from Latin to Albanian. Buzuku intended to prepare a liturgical book written in Albanian for Albanian clergy and he tried to adopt the Catholic norms to Albanian reality. In this book Buzuku replaced some Christian saints with some Albanian popular ones.¹⁶¹ Gjon Buzuku prepared his book when the Catholic Europe was completely covered by the reformatory movements, and he tried to do something in the special conditions of Albania, when the islamization process was advancing.¹⁶²

From the second half of the 16th century in Albanian lands appeared the first attempts to create the body of an Albanian Catholic priesthood.¹⁶³ The book of Gjon Buzuku was a real indicator in this direction.¹⁶⁴ Gjergj Bardhi tells us that in Kosovo the parson Andrea Bogdani was preparing two children to be priests (1641).¹⁶⁵ While, in the region of Kurbin there was a Catholic school for 10-12 clerics under the custody of the Archbishop of Durres (1648).¹⁶⁶ However, the relevant information about the Catholic schools in Albanian lands increased in the first half of the 17th century.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia ...*, p. 47. For more details on the history of Christian councils and especially on the Council of Trent see, Dvornik, F., *Konsiller Tarihi – Iznik'ten II. Vatikan'a*, TTK yay., Ankara 1990

* Çabej, E., “*Meshari*” i Gjon Buzukut (1455), vol. I (introduction and transliteration) – vol. II (facsimile and transcription), Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës – Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësise, Tiranë 1968

¹⁶¹ Myderrizi, O., “Meshari i Gjon Buzukut në veshtrim fetar dhe politik”, *Studime Historike*, nr. 3-4 (2000), p. 1

¹⁶² Tamborra, A., *Gli stati italiani, l'Europa e il problema turco dopo Lepanto*, pp. 9-10

¹⁶³ Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren neper shekuj*, p. 183-4

¹⁶⁴ Zamputi, I., “Randesia nderkombetare e kuvendëve shqiptare”, p. 154

¹⁶⁵ Gjini, G., *op. cit.*, p. 183

¹⁶⁶ Cordignano, F., “Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...”, p. 256

¹⁶⁷ Gjini, G., *op. cit.*, p. 184

In 1613-4, Bartol Kasic, a Bosnian Catholic priest, made a call to Pope demanding the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Sublime Porte, because such a step would improve the social and economic position of Catholics in the Balkans and thereby, would slow the pace of the islamization process.¹⁶⁸ In this framework the foundation of *Congregatio de Propaganda Fidei* (1622) by Pope Gregory XV should be seen. This new institution intended to create a body of native Catholic clergy, which would serve in the Levant. Furthermore, most of the bishops or visitors after the foundation of Propaganda Fidei were Albanians, except for the Archbishops of Shkodra and Lezha.¹⁶⁹ The ultimate aim of the Roman Catholic Missions in the East was to supplant the weakened Church of Constantinople, and substitute the Papal authority, an objective partly attained.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, the Propaganda Fidei was a measure forward in order to control the Catholic orders and their missions in Levant. The Catholic Orders it was chiefly carried on were the Jesuits and the Franciscans, particularly the Capuchins.¹⁷¹ In the western Balkans (Albania and Bosnia) it was the Franciscans that took the lead. They were supported by local leaders in their daily activity.

The Ottoman military conquest of Albanian lands put an end to the activity of the Benedictine and Dominican Orders leaving behind only the ruins of their monasteries, the memories and the inheritance of flourishing medieval times. After 1479, only the Franciscans remained in Albanian lands. Since that moment, the Franciscans were regarded as a potential fifth column.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 141

¹⁶⁹ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 260

¹⁷⁰ Papadopoulos, Th. H., *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church ...*, p. 152

¹⁷¹ Gibb, H. A. R. - Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. 1, part II, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 244

While Christianity failed in Asia and Africa (where the first Franciscan missionaries were killed by the Muslims), it rediscovered through its experiences the frontiers of an imaginary world those geography remained that of the Bible.¹⁷² Following the example of Jesu Christ who preferred to preach before the crowds in the highlands,¹⁷³ the Franciscans in Albania after the Ottoman conquest moved up to highlands, where Ottoman control was very difficult. The position of Franciscan friars was exceedingly difficult not only owing to unpleasant conditions under the Ottomans, but also because of very difficult landscape where they carried out their activity.

In 1585, five monasteries of the Franciscans (Rrubik, Lezhe, Rodon, Sebaste ? and Mirdita) were repaired.¹⁷⁴ In 1591, a Venetian ambassador, going to Istanbul, testifies to the presence of Franciscan friars in Lezha and tells us that they built their monastery in the highland.¹⁷⁵ At the turn of the 16th century there had been some efforts in Rome in order to recognize to Franciscans of Albania the privileges granted before to them by Pope Piu IV.¹⁷⁶ The number of Franciscan friars in Albanian increased, so in 1593 the Albanian lands were proclaimed a *Franciscan autonomous province*.¹⁷⁷ After the foundation of the Congregation de Propaganda Fidei a new wave of friars was sent from Italy with final destination Albanian Mountains, Kosovo and western Macedonia.¹⁷⁸ Here we should stress that in 1622 the Ottoman recognized officially the activity of the Franciscan Order in its territories.¹⁷⁹

The Franciscans working in Albania were spread everywhere the Catholics lived, there to be the exclusive caretakers of their people's spiritual well-being in the

¹⁷² Le Goff, J., "The Framework of Time and Space (Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries)", *Medieval Civilization, 400 – 1500*, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.151

¹⁷³ *Schizzo Storico sull' Opera dei Francescani...*, p. 26

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 4-5

¹⁷⁵ *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), p. 170

¹⁷⁶ *Schizzo Storico sull' Opera dei Francescani...*, p. 5

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 3

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 6

¹⁷⁹ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell' Albania ...", p. 273; Inalcik, H., "Arnawutluk", p. 65

absence of the secular clergy, who had withdrawn before the Ottoman advance. The natural consequence was that the Ottomans turned violently against the Franciscans and their monasteries especially after becoming embittered by ensuing failures. Often during the 16th century the Franciscans were beginning to wear common peasant clothes to avoid persecution.¹⁸⁰ To no avail did the sultans, Suleyman the Magnificent and his successors, reconfirm and strengthen the right granted the Franciscans in the *ahd-name*.¹⁸¹ In the middle of the 17th century the activity of Franciscans in Albania comprised a geographical space as follows: from Highlands of Shkodra and Montenegro to Kruja in central Albania and up to Dibra in East.¹⁸²

“With a self-denial that bordered on martyrdom, they defended and maintained the leading position of the Roman Catholic Church in the Balkans”.¹⁸³ The Franciscans worked very hard especially in keeping alive the Catholic popular morality and the spirit of resistance against the Ottomans. They were no longer the representatives of a mystic order, but religious missionaries in a specific reality. Thanks to their adaptation to the Albanian conditions of life, the meaning, which the friars wished the native Catholics to receive, and the meaning that the Catholics actually found, were almost the same. Over several centuries of work, the Franciscans have provided a rare picture of divine sacrifice and cultural labor among Albanians. In this context the words of a Catholic missionary takes a special meaning: “... there are not the objects of cult which constitute the mission, but the missionaries themselves ...”.¹⁸⁴

The Franciscans made efforts to stop the process of conversion of Catholics to Islam,

¹⁸⁰ Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia ...*, p. 45

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 41

¹⁸² Cordignano, F., “Geografia ecclesiastica dell’Albania ...”, p. 265

¹⁸³ Andric, I., *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia ...*, p. 44

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

and it is a remarkable coincidence that only under the Ottoman rule could the Catholic Church develop spontaneously and sink deeper roots.

The Christian churches conserved the cultural heritage of particular peoples, kept fresh in their minds their medieval glory and independence and preserved the ethnic individuality of the faithful.

III. The Recovery of City and the Beginning of Massive Islamization Process

a. Külliye and Vakf: the Islamization of Territory

In the Ottoman society to be a slave of the sultan was an honor and privilege. Such a status was originated in the Islamic Law, which considered freedom as fundamental and slavery as a transitory condition.¹⁸⁵ Such a tradition of training the young slaves for the state services and services of the army had been inherited from the Seldjuk Sultanate of Rum.¹⁸⁶ The characteristic aspect about which the slave system of government in the Islamic world was centered, was the *loyalty* of the slaves to the master, blind *obedience* and complete *devotion* to him.¹⁸⁷ An obedient servant is better than one hundred children.¹⁸⁸

The Ottoman system of administration was based upon the *ghulam system*. The term *ghulam* is used for a young slave subjected to special training to equip him to serve the Sultan. The Ghulam System was in force at every level of the Ottoman military-administrative organization.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ İnalçık, H., *The Ottoman Empire –the classical age ...*, p. 87

¹⁸⁶ İnalçık, H., "Ghulam", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, vol. II, Leiden-London 1965, p. 1085; Vryonis, S., "Seljuk Gulams and Ottoman Devshirmes", *Der Islam*, vol. 41(1965), pp. 224-52

¹⁸⁷ Marin Barleti, *Rrethimi i Shkodres*, 3rd edition, Shtepia Botuese "Naim Frasheri", Tirane 1982, pp. 50-1; Vryonis, S., "Seljuk Gulams and ...", pp. 233-4

¹⁸⁸ Bosworth, C. E., "Ghaznevid Military Organization", *Der Islam*, XXXVI (1960), pp. 40-1

¹⁸⁹ İnalçık, H., "Ghulam", pp. 1085, 1090

It is argued that Christians converted after the descent of the Qur'an were not entitled to the status of *dhimmi*, and most of the dhimmis in the Balkans had been conquered by force, thus the levy of the Christian boys was held to be in conformity with Islamic Law. But the Ottoman historian, Sa'deddin, denied the allegation of forced islamization saying: "children were born with no religion, and levy boys became Muslim as a result of their contact with Muslims and not through force".¹⁹⁰

In the Ottoman Palace the Albanians were always present in great number. At least thirty Ottoman Grand Viziers can be identified as being of Albanian origin.¹⁹¹ This is a sufficient fact to argue that the *devshirme* was practised extensively in Albania.*

Albanian and non-Albanian scholars have demonstrated that the institution of Ghulam contributed greatly to the ottomanisation¹⁹² and islamization¹⁹³ of Albanian nobility. Nevertheless, the islamization by means of *devshirme*/ghulam system, though the Ottoman historian, Sa'deddin, says that in 200 years over 200.000 Christian boys were converted to Islam merely through the *devshirme* system,¹⁹⁴ the number of *devshirme* converts to Islam was less than 1 % of all converts in the entire Balkan Peninsula during the Ottoman period.¹⁹⁵

This contingent of boys taken captive or levied by the Ottoman authorities left their native land as individuals born in non-Muslim families, but returned after their retirement as good and conscious Muslims, as the real propagators of Islam and

¹⁹⁰ Inalcik, H., "Islam in the Ottoman Empire", *Essays in Ottoman History*, Eren Yay., Istanbul 1998, s. 237-8

¹⁹¹ Inalcik, H., "Arnawutluk", p. 656

* Evliya Çelebi writes that from the region of Pogradec-Starova (the western littoral region of Ohri Lake) were taken hundreds of selected youngs as a contingent for the *devshirme*: *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and ...*, p. 225

¹⁹² Inalcik, H., "Timariotes Chrétiens en Albanie au XV^e Siècle d'après un Registre de Timars Ottoman", *MÖS*, IV (1952), Vienna, p. 128

¹⁹³ Duka, F., "XV.-XVIII. yy.'larda Arnavut Nüfusu'nun İslamlaşması Süreci'nin Gidişatı Üzerine Gözlemler", *XI. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, TTK yay., Ankara 1994, pp. 1692-3

¹⁹⁴ Inalcik, H., "Islam in the Ottoman Empire", p.238

¹⁹⁵ Popovic, A., "L'İslamisation dans les Balkans, mythes et realites", *Mesogeios*, no. 2 (1998), p. 14

vanguard of the Ottoman interests in the provinces. The Ottoman high-ranking dignitaries of Balkan origin had been conscious about their ethnic origin. To illustrate this idea it is enough to mention that the *mülks* they were granted during state service and *külliyes* they founded after retirement in their native lands.¹⁹⁶ The granting of territorial property to the high-ranking Ottoman dignitaries of Balkan origin, in fact the sultan rewarded them for their loyalty and devotion during their career, indicated the level of slave integration into Ottoman state structures. By doing so, in fact sultans opened the way of shaping a new Ottoman elite of slave origin in the center and provinces. They, at the same time, used these individuals, who had benefited from the goods of the Ottoman system, as a tool to create or regenerate life according to the Islamic principles and customs.

From the point of view of the *mülk* receiver, the favor (*lütf*) of the sultan was an indicator of his trust. While the foundation of vakf and the building of a külliye was another useful service in the name of the Ottoman/Islamic state's ideology. The founding of a külliye was a strong indicator that the members of new Ottoman elite of slave origin were conscious of their ethnic origin, but now they were transformed into good Muslim believers forgetting forever their family religion. The training in the Turkish/Islamic environ, the goods of treatment in the Ottoman Palace made them not only trustful individuals in state service, but also *conscious* Muslims, and propagators of İslam in their native lands. The foundation of a vakf or the building of a külliye, at that time, was an obligatory mission for everyone who was rich. Achieving such a mission in the native lands took a special meaning:

“Vâkif yaptığı eserle hem halk arasında iyi bir ad kazanıyor, siyâsî ve içtimâî mevkiini sağlamlıyor, hem de uhrevî mükâfata liyâkat kazanıyordu”.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Kaleshi, H., *Najstariji vakufski dokumenti u Jugoslaviji na arapskom jeziku*, Bashkesia e institucioneve shkencore te Kosoves, Prishtine 1972, p. 327

¹⁹⁷ Köprülü, F., “Vakıf Müessesesinin Hukukî Mahiyeti ve Tarihî Tekâmülü”, *İslâm ve Türk Hukuk Tarihi Araştırmaları ve Vakıf Müessesesi*, ed. O. Köprülü, Ötüken, İstanbul 1973

The foundation of a vakf and the construction of a kulliye were not a mere act of gathering people in a depopulated area or a regeneration of life in a certain place. It was also a concret aspect of the policy of islamization of a territory in a non-Muslim geography. We should remember that Islam did not have an ecclesiastical organization and hierarchy. There are the objects of cult, like mosques, imaret, medrese etc, which determine the islamization of a territory, while their density in a certain space determined the degree of islamization of that territory.

The construction of külliyes¹⁹⁸ provided the urban centers with public services, social aid and played an important part in the emergence of new cities in accordance with the Islamic principles of urbanisation. Külliye was a complex of institutions, like mosque, medrese, traveller's hostel, water installations and soup kitchen, etc. They in general were grouped around a mosque, as the Christian sacred geography centered on churches and monasteries.

The Ottoman statesman launching an charitable enterprise by means of the vakf institution, assured not only his own salvation in the next world, but also a continuous and secure livelihood for his own family and descendants by appointing them *mutevellis** of the pious endowments. The family vakfs, *avkâf durrîya*, opened the way for the formation of family trusts from which succeeding generations might benefit.

A typical case is that of Albanian Myteveli family in the city of Korça (Görice) in southeastern Albania. From the vakfname of his pious endowment dated in 1505,¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ The oldest kulliye in the Balkans was built in 1435 by Sungur Çavuş in the city Manastir (Macedonia). It was made up of a mosque, a medrese and a tekke supported by a vaqf: Kaleshi, H., *Najstariji vakufski dokumenti* ..., p. 324

* The *müteveli* was a descendant of the vakf's founder, responsible for all matters concerning the vaqf, like the collection of income and their use to fulfill the conditions of the vaqf etc. For more information on this topic see: İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire –the classical age* ..., p.142

¹⁹⁹ *Burime te zgjedhura per historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), pp. 80-90

we learn that this Ottoman high-ranking dignitary of Albanian origin was called “Ilyas bey, bin Abdullah”.²⁰⁰ But according to a legend he was the son of the Orthodox priest in the village Panarit (Permet), and was taken captive by the Ottomans. His name was Ilia. After arriving at Istanbul he was called Ilyas. Ilyas was one of the first Ottoman soldiers, who entered the Samatya district in Istanbul in 1453. As a reward for his “*yararlık*”, he was granted the incomes of what today is the “Imrahor” district in Istanbul. Here he built an imaret and a tekke for the Rufa’i order to which he belonged spiritually.²⁰¹ During the reign of sultan Bayezid II he reached the high position of *Amir Akhur*.^{*} Ilyas bey had proprieties in Istanbul, where he showed heroism, in Janina, where he served for a while as the sancakbey, and in the native lands in southeastern Albania.²⁰²

The settlement where the Ilyas bey built its külliye seems, according to the legend, to be called *Peskopje*, which in the Greek language means a sacred Orthodox place. Actually we do not know, if it was a coincidence or a well-thought out plan to erect a mosque in the foundations of an old Orthodox monastery or church. Here Ilyas bey built a *mosque*, an *imaret*, a *hammam* and a *muallim-hane*, where the boys and girls had the opportunity to learn Qur’an and Ulûm-i Islâmiyye. All the above-mentioned objects were supported materially by a rich vakf he founded.²⁰³ This vakf had also the purpose of assisting the settlement of Muslim population in a area abandoned by its Christian inhabitants.

²⁰⁰ Pepo, P., “Dy dokumenta mesjetare mbi Shqiperine – berati i sulltan Bajezitit II dhe vakefnameja e Mirahor Iljaz beut”, *Buletimi i Shkencave Shoqerore*, nr. 3 (1956), p. 278; Pepo, P., “Kater dekrete (fermane) te sulltan Bajezitit II per Mirahor Iljaz beun”, *Studime Historike*, nr. 3 (1967), pp. 217-243

²⁰¹ Pepo, P., “Dy dokumenta mesjetare mbi Shqiperine ...”, p. 282; Gallota, A., “Gallotta, A., “Ilyas Beg, I Mütevelli e le Origini di Corizza (Korçe / Görice)”, *The Via Egnatia Under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, A Symposium Held in Rethymnon 9-11 January 1994, Crete University Press, Rethymnon 1996, p. 122

^{*} The chief groom of the Royal Stables: the Miriahur had responsibility for the animals, stables, carriages and sedan chairs, both inside and outside the Palace.

²⁰² Pepo, P., *op. cit.*, p. 271

²⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 279

In 1513, Suzi Çelebi (bin Muhammed bin Abdullah) erected in Prizren a mosque and a mekteb and supported them with a vakf. In the second half of the 16th century Koca Sinan Pasha, a high-ranking Ottoman dignitary of Albanian origin, constructed in Kačanik (between Kosovo and Macedonia) a mosque, an imaret, a mekteb and founded a very rich vakf.²⁰⁴

An islamized member of the Albanian noble family of Skurraj, Ahmet Bey, in the middle of the 16th century (1553-4) founded a kulliye (a camii, a medrese, an Halveti tekke and a hammam) in the important Albanian city of Berat.²⁰⁵

Sinanuddin Yusuf Pasha, an islamized member of the old Bosnian noble family of Borovinic,²⁰⁶ built a kulliye (a mosque, a han, an imaret-soup kitchen, a medrese, a hammam, a tekke)²⁰⁷ supporting them with a large territorial and financial vakf in 1491 in the city of Ohrid. In 1479, he had been inspector of sultan's hass in Bosnia.²⁰⁸ According to Evliya Çelebi, during his term as the Beylerbey of Rumeli, in 1502, he also founded another kulliye (a camii, an imaret, a hamam, a muallimhane and a Halveti tekke) and a rich vakf in Elbasan.²⁰⁹

The sultan Bayezid II came personally to Albania during the military campaign of 1492 and ordered the construction of a several buildings in the cities of Berat and Vlora for the development of the Islamic way of life.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Kaleshi, H., *Najstariji vakufski dokumenti ...*, p. 328

²⁰⁵ *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and ...*, p.109; Duka, F. *Berati ne kohen osmane (shek. XVI-XVIII)*, Botimet TOENA, Tirane 2001, pp. 182-3

²⁰⁶ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, p. 109

²⁰⁷ *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid)*, p. 199

²⁰⁸ Kaleshi, H., *Najstariji vakufski dokumenti ...*, p. 111; *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and ...*, p. 199

²⁰⁹ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*, p. 109

²¹⁰ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*, p. 49, 62

Mehmet Aydın, called Kukli Bey, from Van (Anatolia) also built mosques and mektebs in 1538 and supported them by vakfs.²¹¹ In 1530/1 in Prizren Yakub bey and Ahmet Bey Evrenoz had their vakfs also.²¹²

To convert the landscape completely took centuries. In empire-wide perspective such a phenomenon started with the sultan Mehmet II and continued during the reigns of Bayezid II,²¹³ Suleyman the Magnificent²¹⁴ and beyond. While locally, the foundation of külliyes and vakfs passed from one generation to another. The son of Koca Sinan paşa, Kaçanikli Mehmet paşa, followed the example of his father, and founded rich vaqfs and kulliyes in Kačanik, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kičevo and Dibra (1608).²¹⁵ During the first 150 years of the Ottoman rule, the Albanian local governors, who themselves were largely from the former or new Albanian aristocracy, not infrequently displayed interest in the own country's progress.

The vakf, by harnessing much of the land, manpower, and revenues of Balkan to Islamic institutions, enabled the latter to achieve preeminence at the expense of Christianity. The above examples of the burgeoning of certain Islamic institutions spread in almost all Albanian lands, contrast sharply with the economic decline of the bishoprics overlapping the same areas. This parallel developmet in reverse directions is visible throughout the Balkans.

²¹¹ Kaleshi, H., Kaleshi, H., "Prizren kao kulturni centar za vreme Turskog perioda", *Gjurmime Albanologjike*, 1 (1962), Prishtine, p. 93; Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shekujve XV, XVI ...*, p. 408

²¹² Zirojevic, O., "Vucitrnski i Prizrenski Sandzak u Svetlosti Turskog Popisa, 1530/1", *Gjurmime Albaninologjike*, nr. 2 (1968), pp. 114-6

²¹³ The number of vaqfs along the Via Egnatia founded by Bayezid II and his dignitaries was considerable: Demetriades, V., "Vakifs along the Via Egnatia", *The Via Egnatia Under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, A Symposium held in Rethymnon 9-11 January 1994, Crete University Press, Rethymnon 1996, pp. 113-121

²¹⁴ Barkan, Ö. L. – E. H. Ayverdi, *İstanbul Vakıfları Tahrîr Defteri – 953 (1546) Târihli*, İstanbul 1970. For a general approach to the historical and legal picture of vakfs during the classical period of the Ottoman history see especially pages X-XXXVIII. For the place of vakf in Turkish and Ottoman history see: Köprülü, F., *İslâm ve Türk Hukuk Tarihi Araştırmaları ve Vakıf Müessesesi*, ed. O. Köprülü, Ötügen, İstanbul 1973

²¹⁵ Kaleshi, H., *Najstariji vakufski dokumenti ...*, pp. 328-9; Kaleshi, H. – M. Mehmedovski, *Tri vakufnami na Kaçanikli Mehmed pasha*, Institut za Nacionalna Istorija, Skopje 1958

The public life of the city of Berat in the 16th century was developed around and between the külliye of sultan Bayezid II and the külliye of Ozguroglu Ahmet Bey.²¹⁶ It was the foundation of a külliye (camii, hammam and imaret) the process which promoted Tirana to the status of *kasaba* in the 17th century.²¹⁷ Such an example shows clearly that even in the 17th century the külliye continued to be a nucleus of a new urban center. In fact, such a complex was an essential part of the urbanization of the Ottoman cities. They were symbols of Islamic urbanization and, at the same time, demonstrated common elements of the urban life and similarities in the urban picture of Anatolian and Balkan cities during the Ottoman period.

But to what degree did the islamization of territory influence the process of massive islamization of the people ? Did the regions or cities, where these kulliyes were founded, change in a short time their confessional profile ? Let us have a look at the confessional situation in two regions, where the representatives of the Ottoman elite of Albanian origin had their mülks and founded their kulliyes.

In the region where Miriahur Ilyas bey founded his kulliyeh and his vakf (the southerneast Albania), in the second half of the 16th century was islamized only 6 % of population, and 40 % of them were first generation Muslims.²¹⁸

In the nahiyes of Zadrime and Rogami, which were the mülk of Mustafa paşa Dukagjini,²¹⁹ the course of islamization of the population followed a reverse direction. While in 1529 the number of Christian families in these two nahiyes

²¹⁶ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*, p. 49

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 249

²¹⁸ Zhelyazkova, A., *Razprostraneniye na Islama ...*, p. 207

²¹⁹ In 1529-36, the nahiyes of Zadrime and Rogami were granted as mülk to a member of famous Albanian family of Dukagjini, Mustafa pasha, actually an islamized high-ranking Ottoman dignitary. Later, he turned this territorial mülk to a family vakf: Pulaha, S., "Nahijet e Altunilise, te Hasit, te Hoces, the Opojes ne Rrafshin e Dukagjinit dhe popullsia e tyre gjate shek. XV-XVI", *Popullsia shqiptare e Kosoves gjate shek. XV - XVI - studime dhe dokumenta*, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1984, pp. 87-8

totalled 286, in 1591 this number increased to 575.²²⁰ The number of Muslim families in 1529 was 79 in total, while in 1591 it decreased to 48.²²¹

These two cases in different parts of Albanian lands show that, at least in Albania, the institutions of mülk and vakf were not tools of the imposition of Islamic creed by the Ottoman state, but they served as the nuclei of Islamic urbanism and regulators of social and religious life in accordance with the Islamic rhythm of life. This, of course, happened in a moderate geography allowed for advancement. These evidence also shows that the islamization of a geographical area or region is not the same phenomenon as the islamization of a demographic group.

b. *City and Guilds: an Urban Center of Production and Trade*

“Islam was from the beginning a religion not of the desert, but of the city, or at any rate of the urban settlement, and all the superstructure built upon its early foundations was the work of townsmen”.²²²

City-dwellers, after the Albanian nobility, were the social stratum, which faced the strong pressure of the Ottoman institutions and Islamic culture. After the Ottoman conquest, Albanian cities were reduced into military and administrative urban centers and mostly served as trade centers of rural areas nearby.²²³ But as the 16th century advanced, the number of shops increased, and the life gradually moved beyond the walls of the castle. The varoshs appeared outside *kal'as*. However, the presence of taxes, like the teeth from agricultural products, in the survey registers of the 16th

²²⁰ Pulaha, S., “Krahinat e sanxhakut të Dukagjinit gjatë shek. XVI”, *Studime Historike*, no. 3 (1973), p. 22

²²¹ *ibid.*

²²² Gibb, H. A. R. – H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. I, part II, Oxford University Press 1957, p. 182

²²³ Pulaha, S., “Aspekte të demografisë historike të trevave shqiptare gjatë shek. XV-XVI”, *Studime për epokën e Skenderbeut*, vol. I, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historisë, Tiranë 1989, p. 47

century shows clearly that cities still had not lost their agricultural character.²²⁴

Despite this, only in some cities the craftsmen and merchant caste together constituted a distinguished social stratum (Prizren and Peć 43 % of population), while in Priştina and Vučitrn only 21 %. The possessors of bastinas within the borders of urban centers constituted 50-54 % of the whole population of Kosovo.²²⁵

Even in Albania the growth of security under the Ottoman empirical umbrella brought a more active trade and handicraft activity. Only in the course of the second half of the 16th century did the Balkans transversal routes become routes of commerce of some importance.²²⁶ At this time, some cities of Albania started to lose their agricultural character, which they gained after the Ottoman military conquest. In Berat craftsmen and merchant constituted 58.2 % of city-dwellers, in Elbasan 58.6 %, in Shkodra 42 %, while in Gjirokastra just 6 %.²²⁷

Because the largest portion of townspeople was artisans and merchants, in Ottoman cities the *guilds* were the mainspring of economic life in urban centers. They were organizations, which brought together people who shared the same occupation and who had a kindred material position and interests. The roots of guild organization in the Islamic world remain obscure, but there seems to be a close similarity between the guild systems in Islamic and Christian medieval Europe. The *futuwwa** societies,

²²⁴ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet e Rrafshit the Dukagjinit dhe te Kosoves ne rregjistrimet kadastrale osmane te gjysmes se dyte te shek. XVI", *Popullsia Shqiptare e Kosoves gjate shek. XV-XVI, studime dhe dokumenta*, Akademia e Shkencave - Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1984, p. 484

²²⁵ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet e Rrafshit the Dukagjinit dhe te Kosoves ...", p. 486; Pulaha, S., "Qytetet shqiptare nen regjimin feudal ushtarak osman gjate shek. XV-XVI", *Monumentet*, no. 1 (1984), p. 39

²²⁶ Stoianovich, T., "A Route Type: the Via Egnatia under the Ottoman Rule", *The Via Egnatia under the Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, a Symposium held in Rethymnon 9-11 January 1994, Crete University Press, p. 207

²²⁷ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet shqiptare nen regjimin ...", p. 38

* For a comprehensive work in this field see: Taeschner, F., "Islam Ortaçağında Futuvva (Fütüvvat Teskilatı)", *IÜ İktisad Fak. Mecmuası*, c. XV, no. 1-4 (1953-4), pp. 1-34

which young, unmarried workers organized in the larger cities, recall the fraternities of the Roman Empire.²²⁸

The corporates of Berat and Yannina - these two cities were taken peacefully - were the last examples of pre-Ottoman Balkanic guilds.²²⁹ The guilds of the pre-Ottoman period in the city of Berat survived the Ottoman conquest and sultan Mehmet II recognized them officially. But they were forced to adopt themselves to new conditions. Along with the arrival of the Ottomans, new kinds of handicrafts, previously unknown, were introduced and many of the existing ones changing their character. Now the specter of crafts changed, the relevant terminology, their organization, and the destination of products. In the all the Albanian lands subjugated by the Ottomans, the greatest flourish was attained by those craftsmen who were processing metals, leather and textiles. They, mostly, fulfill the needs of Ottoman army. For that reason, the Ottomans state granted the craftsmen and merchants in the towns a distinct status and recognized the most influential and wealthy among them as their natural leaders. Their leaders acquired a great authority in the Balkanic cities under the Ottoman rule. The guildmasters were among the most influential residents of a city, whom the central government always addressed on matters directly concerning the town people.

The first marks of organization on professional bases appeared in Elbasan in the second half of the 16th century (1580). It was a group of merchants called *taife*, which were directed to the local court, because one of the members of group had broken the rules of organization.²³⁰ Along with this group in Elbasan was also a

²²⁸ İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire – the classical age ...*, p. 151

²²⁹ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet shqiptare, shek. XV-XX*, Akademia e shkencave e R. P. te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1973, p. 83

²³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 202-3

group of *debbağ*, *terzi*, *çukadar*, *kürkçü* etc.²³¹ The process of guild formation was a direct result of the economic recovery of cities, as the centers of craft production, transitory and local trade in the conditions of empire-wide security. Guilds appeared, at the same time, even in the other areas of the Balkans.²³²

However, during the 16th century, the guild organization in Albanian cities rather than being professional groups, were religious and military groups.²³³ Such a characteristic was inherited from the period of Late Middle Ages. As the 16th century was advancing, they took the character of professional organization, they had the flag of Islamic saints, as well as their own saints.²³⁴ However, it should be said that toward the end of the 16th century in big Albanian cities the first *taifes* of major (metals, leather and textiles) crafts were shaped.²³⁵ From the sicils of kadi, we see in Elbasan in the end of the 16th century the first steps in the internal organization of *debbağ taifes* and its authorities, like *ahi*, *yiğitbaşı* etc.²³⁶

The member of a guild was expected to be a good believer who must respect the religious norms, go frequently to religious cults, participate regularly in religious celebrations and materially help the poor.²³⁷

The guild was not only a simple economic organization but one bound by strong social bonds, permeated with the religious and mystical atmosphere of the *futuwwa* and revering a *patron saint* with whom it connected its traditions.²³⁸ The patron saint of each guild was considered as a symbol and defender of a certain craft. The patron saints of Albanian guilds were the same as Muslim and Christian guilds all over the

²³¹ *ibid.*, p. 36

²³² *ibid.*

²³³ Shkodra, Z., "Islami dhe institucioni esnafor ne Shqiperine etnike", *Feja, kultura dhe tradita islame nder shqiptare*, Simpozium nderkombetar i mbajtur ne Prishtine me 15-17 tetor 1992, Kryesia e Bashkesise islame te Kosoves, Prishtine 1995, p. 144

²³⁴ Shkodra, Z., *op. cit.*, p. 85

²³⁵ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet shqiptare nen regjimin ...", p. 36

²³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 36

²³⁷ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet shqiptare ...*, p. 133

Ottoman empire.²³⁹ Every year the guilds celebrated the day of their saint, which was the biggest celebration of a particular guild. The Muslim guilds on such days gathered in tekke or zaviye of their patron saint. The Muslim guilds also celebrated the *bayrams*, like *nevruz* and *mevlud*.²⁴⁰ The celebration of these days were accompanied by relevant rites in their cults.²⁴¹

In this late medieval society, these communities sought a religious and moral justification for their existence and for their regulations, and thus at the head of each guild was a *sheyh* representing this moral and religious authority.²⁴² For example, in the city of Elbasan the sheyh of the *debbağ* guild was only the spiritual leader of guild, while in Berat the sheykh of *debbağ* guild was also a administrative director.²⁴³

Organized in so-called *ahi** unions, the Muslim craftsman played a major social and political role in the Ottoman cities. The *ahi* unions were not only mere professional unions, but also real mystic organizations.²⁴⁴ In Muslim guilds in Albania we see also *duaci*, who was a person who lead the Muslim religious ceremonies of a guild. The presence of *duaci* for the religious life of guild was considered indispensable. The same mission in Christian guilds was carried out by priest.²⁴⁵

As early as the 16th century, the guilds of Voskopoja (Moschopolis) - a town completely Orthodox - when already so well-developed that they could effectively participate in the life of their community, assuming its financial responsibilities. The

²³⁸ İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire – the classical age ...*, p. 155

²³⁹ Shkodra, Z., *op. cit.*, p. 270

²⁴⁰ On the celebration of these days by Muslim and non-Muslim guilds, in Albanian cities Shkodra, Z., “Islami dhe institucioni esnafor ne Shqiperine etnike”, pp. 140-2

²⁴¹ Shkodra, Z., “Islami dhe institucioni esnafor ne Shqiperine etnike”, p. 142

²⁴² İnalcık, H., *The Ottoman Empire – the classical age ...*, p. 152

²⁴³ Duka, F. *Berati ne kohen osmane (shek. XVI-XVIII)*, pp. 103-4

* *Ahi* is the person who gathers bachelors and unmarried people working in the same craft, and agrees to be their leader. On *Ahilik*, *Ahi Evren* and the *Futuwwa* tradition see the recent study of İnalcık, H., “Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu bir Bakış”, *Osmanlı*, vol. I, Ankara 1999, pp. 56-9

²⁴⁴ Ocak, A. Y., “Osmanlı Beyliği Topraklarındaki Sufi Çevreler ve Abdalan-ı Rum Sorunu”, *Osmanlı Beyliği (1300-1389)*, ed. E. Zachariadou, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul 1997, p. 163

²⁴⁵ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet shqiptare*, p. 160

governing body of the community was a council of notables composed of seven members. The relations between the Church, on the one hand, and the guilds and the community on the other, were regulated by a statute drawn up by a group of clergymen.²⁴⁶

In the 16th century the cities of Prizren and Elbasan had the biggest number of crafts* (45). They were followed by Shkodra and Priština with 28, and Berat with 23.²⁴⁷

While the biggest number of craftsmen in Albanian cities was situated in Berat.²⁴⁸

While the Muslim and non-Muslim subjects in the eyes of Ottoman authorities were separated in religiously-differentiated millet, on the local level they were also isolated from one another by the guild organization which usually was divided by religion. In the hands of Muslim guilds of Berat laid such important/strategical crafts like debbağ, demirci, ipekci and mu'tafci, while in the hands of the Christian population were such crafts as kuyumculuk, kürkçü and kalaycı.²⁴⁹

In the second half of the 16th century in the main cities of Albania and Kosovo had in total 1686 Muslim craftsmen versus 39 non-Muslim ones. The number of Muslim craftsmen constituted 45.7 % of all Muslim urban population, while the non-Muslim craftsmen constituted only 1 % of all the non-Muslim urban population.²⁵⁰ These statistics show clearly the superiority of the Muslim population over non-Muslims in the sphere of craft production.

²⁴⁶ Pantazopoulos, N., "Community Laws and Customs of Western Macedonia under the Ottoman Rule", *Balkan Studies*, vol. 2 (1961), pp. 11-2

* For a detailed information on the distribution of crafts according to city and confession look at a tablo prepared based on the data provided in the Ottoman survey registers of the second half of the 16th century see: Pulaha, S., "Qytetet shqiptare nen regjimin feudal ushtarak osman ...", pp. 30-4

²⁴⁷ Duka, F. *Berati ne kohen osmane*, p. 79

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 97-8

²⁵⁰ From 185 craftsmen of rural origin 39 hold as a surname the Albanian Christian names of their fathers, and 30 of them were Muslim of first generation: TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal livi-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 252-3

However, the most privileged people among city-dwellers were the Muslim craftsmen. They were exempted from a great part of taxes in return for various military services. If we compare their fiscal status with that of a Muslim reaya (*resm-i çift*), or a Christian craftsmen (*djizya* and *ispence*) we will see that they were really in a better fiscal position. Thanks to these privileges in the second half of the 16th century, in the city of Berat the number of Muslims of the first generation coming from rural areas nearby the city increased.²⁵¹

In a the better position were also the Muslim merchants, who were to pay a customs tax of 4 %. A non-Muslim merchant, but an Ottoman subject (*dhimmi*), was to pay 4 %, while a merchant coming from the Domain of War (*harbi*), was forced to pay 5 %.²⁵²

Cities were restored as the Ottoman administrative and Islamic centers of life, so the Muslim elements were stimulated to populate the urban centers and were mostly engaged in craft activity and trade, while the non-Muslim people dealt intensively with agriculture activity.

c. The Ottoman/Islamic Urbanization

A late medieval city was made up of two main parts:

1. Castle
2. Districts outside the walls (*varosh*).

In the feudal period the castle had been the compositional center of an urban center.

In the castle lived the nobles of the city, and there they were always defended from

²⁵¹ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet shqiptare nen regjimin feudal ushtarak osman ...", p. 23

²⁵² Inalcik, H., "Kânunnâme-i livâ-i Avlonya ber-mûceb-i defter-i atîk", *Hicrî 835 tarihli Sûret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, 2. baskı, TTK yay., Ankara 1987, pp. 123. During the reign of sultan Mehmet II the customs due was 4 % for Muslim and Dhimmi merchants. The sultan Bayezid II lowered the tax for Muslim merchants to 2 %: Anhegger, R. - H. Inalcik, *Kanunname-i Sultani ber Muceb-i Örfi Osmani*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1956, p. XXI

the attacks of feudal character, while in the varosh lived common people dealing with agriculture and crafts.

The Ottoman state broke out all feudal borders in the Balkans Peninsula, so even in Albania. In the 16th century it proved that it was not a transitory component in the political life of the peninsula. The Ottoman State was a permanent political formation coming from the East and bringing a new religion and its civilization to an old Christian geography. From that moment the path of urbanization would follow the Islamic rules and traditions.

The physical arrangement of Ottoman cities was based primarily on considerations of:

1. security,
2. being the sacred center,
3. being the center of craft production and commercial life.

After the Ottoman conquest, the urban development in main cities, like Shkodra, Berat, Gjirokastra and Prizren, followed the courses of Ottoman/Islam considerations. In the beginning the Ottoman authorities lived in the castle along with *yeniçeris* and the first Muslim converts.

The increasing craft production and the exchange of production between urban centers and rural areas necessitated the emergence of market places. Gradually, they were transformed from open bazars into shopping centers organized on certain streets. Furthermore, the bazar came to replace the castle in the urban composition of the Ottoman city. In the cities developed along the lines of the Ottoman urban conception the most important urban components were the *bazar* with streets for various crafts and business, and *mahalles*, the residential districts of various creeds.

Along with these, the *mosque*, *imaret*, *hamam*, *han* etc. religious and public buildings constituted the core around which the future urban center was built up.

As the islamization process was advancing, the Muslim and non-Muslim people started to live in separate quarters (*mahalle*), represented by a special area separated from the pazar, but these quarters alternated with one another and were immediate neighbors, and the artisan and commercial part of the city was basically common. The Muslim mahalle had usually its mosque (*mescid*), basic religious schools (*mekteb*) and other institutions serving the needs of a limited number of people. Such a urbanistic picture constituted the essential difference between the medieval Muslim city in general and the city in the Ottoman Empire, especially in those Ottoman territories where, as in the Balkans, the local population continued to constitute a majority.²⁵³

The general principle was that all the inhabitants of a mahalla were of the same religion, sometimes they might be composed of an ethnic group.²⁵⁴ The city-dwellers in Albanian lands were separated in residential areas according to confession. After the Ottoman conquest, the existing districts or the newly founded ones changed their names respectively from those of Christian origin to Muslim ones, or took the name of the eminent figure who caused the formation of the new district.²⁵⁵ New ones were mostly the names of Ottoman local authorities or other state dignitaries and Islamic centers of cult. The Christian district continued to hold the names of old Christian clerics, dignitaries, churches/monasteries and crafts.²⁵⁶

The economic recovery of cities and the intensity of the islamization process determined the time and the intensity of formation of Muslim mahalles. For example,

²⁵³ Todorov, N., *The Balkan City - 1400 - 1900*, University of Washington Press 1983, p. 58

²⁵⁴ Halimi, K., "Zejtaria e Kosove-Metohis ne te kaluamen", *Perparimi*, vol. IV, no. 1 (1958), p. 34

²⁵⁵ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shek. XV, XVI, XVII*, p. 221

²⁵⁶ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet e Rrafshit the Dukagjinit dhe te Kosoves...", p. 495

in Shkodra and Pec where the process of islamization advanced quickly, the Muslim mahalles were formed from the first half of the 16th century. The Muslim mahalle in Shkodra was the most beautiful district of the city, while the Christian ones were situated around it.²⁵⁷ In the cities of Berat and Gjirokastra, which in the first half of the 16th century did not have any Muslim households, the urban outlook still remained unchangeable, because the native Christian population was confesionally compact. But even these two cities began to submit to Ottoman/Islamic urban rules in the beginning of the 17th century.²⁵⁸ We should say that in 1520 Muslim elements lived separatly in the Christian residential districts of Berat, while in 1582/3 the existence of Cemaat-i Muslimanan was registered.²⁵⁹

The names of the districts of Albanian cities in Albania, Kosova and western Macedonia, to a great extent, offer the opportunity to follow the macro-course of islamization in urban centers.²⁶⁰ In the case of Berat, the situation was a little bit different. Although the islamization process did not advanced, until the second half of the 16th century the number of the native Christian population was increased twofold. Hence, the increasing number of Christian people caused the increase of Christian districts; the names of districts directly reflected the economic recovery of the city, because a considerable number of them were related to the names of crafts.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet shqiptare*, p. 32

²⁵⁸ Duka, F., "Momente te kalimit ne Islam te popullsise shqiptare ne shek. XV-XVII", p. 121

²⁵⁹ BOA, (1520 tarihli) *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 99, pp. 23-9; TKGM, (1582/3 tarihli) *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 251-2

²⁶⁰ The names of mahalles of main cities (Albania, Kosova) can be seen in: Pulaha, S., "Qytetet shqiptare nen regjimin feudal ushtarak osman ...", pp. 40-2. For this issue the information of Evliya Celebi is of essential importance, though he offers data for the first half of the 17th century: *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and ...*, pp. 73 (Gjirokastra), 111 (Berat), 139 (Vlora), 169 (Elbasan), 209-11 (Ohri), 221 (Resnja).

²⁶¹ TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 251-2

In the second half of the 15th century mosques were built only in the castle and fortresses of Albanian cities for the needs of Turkish garrisons.²⁶² Since the beginning the mosque was a symbol of Islam and an object of cult of the prestigious religion of conquerors.

During the 16th century mosques came down from castles to the districts outside the walls. Now they were built everywhere in the cities demonstrating that the mosque was, at the same time, a constituent element of *urban* Islam,²⁶³ and an indicator of the presence of the Muslim population outside the castles. Thanks to the intensive building activity and thereby, the presence of mosques and other buildings of Islamic character, the city of Prizren, from the first decades of the 16th century, took a Islamic urban character.²⁶⁴

The construction of a large mosque (the Mosques of Murat Bey, 1533-4) outside the walls of the castle of Kruja is some indication of the relative peace of the 16th century and indicates the relative importance of Islam in this town just as it demonstrated how far and how much the center of gravity of Kruja had shifted from the castle to an open area, where there was ample room for urban development.²⁶⁵

The construction of Islamic objects of cult outside the walls testifies also to the presence of an Ottoman leading caste,²⁶⁶ of Albanian* and non-Albanian origin,**

²⁶² Meksi, A., "Ndertimet e Kultit Mysliman ne Shqiperi", *Studime Historike*, no. 1(1980), p. 190

²⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. 213-4

²⁶⁴ Here an important role was played by the kulliye of Suzi Celebi and the Islamic objects built by Kukli bey: Kaleshi, H., "Prizren kao kulturni centar za vreme Turskog perioda", p. 92

²⁶⁵ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*, p. 180

²⁶⁶ Buharaja, V., "Mbishkrime turko-arabe te vendit tone si deshmi historike, *Konferenca e Dyte e Studimeve Albanologjike, 12-18 janar 1968*, vol. II, Univ. Shtetere i Tiranes - Instituti i Historise dhe i Gjuhesise, Tirane 1969, p. 82

* The mosque of Hasan Balizade in Elbasan (1607-8): Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*, p. 110

** In 1592, the Ottoman great vezir constructed a big and very expensive mosque in Delvina: *Burime te Zgjedhura per Historine e Shqiperise*, vol. III (1506-1839), p.197

who by means of the construction of Islamic objects helped the spread of Islam among native Albanians.

Of great interest is the case of Elbasan, which was a town erected by the Ottomans (1466) on the foundations of an old Byzantine fortress. As a newly founded urban center, the Ottomans did not need to transform old objects into Islamic ones, but built the new ones with a great intensity. The number of Islamic buildings here were much more than those in the towns with a flourishing pre-Ottoman past.²⁶⁷ Evliya Çelebi registered forty six mosques and other public and cultural objects, and says that Elbasan was the greatest Islamic center in Albania.²⁶⁸

While the construction of mosques, the beginning, was a mark of the presence of the Muslim community, the presence of mescids in every Muslim district was a real indicator showing the deep penetration of Islam and the degree of islamization process in a certain urban center. The massive presence of the mahalle's mosques (mescid) is documented mostly in the 17th century. While the mosques were constructed in the crucial points of the town, mescids were easier to build, and in general followed the newly shaped districts of islamized people:

“... ve cümle yedi ‘aded mahallâtlarda yedi ‘aded mesâcidler vardır...”²⁶⁹

However, the construction of mescids came forward parallel to the urban extension of cities and the advance of the islamization process.

From the beginning of the 16th century many Islamic orders (tariqats)²⁷⁰ were established in Albanian lands. The epigraphical data offer valuable information about

²⁶⁷ *Historia e Arkitektures shqiptare (nga fillimet deri ne vitin 1912)*, eds. A. Bace, A. Meksi, E. Riza, Gj. Karauskaj, P. Thomo, Ministria Arsimit dhe e Kultures - Instituti i Monumenteve, Tirane 1980, p. 404

²⁶⁸ *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and ...*, pp. 169-73

²⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 155

²⁷⁰ For a general picture of the geographical spread of Islamic orders in the 16th century see: Rexhepagiqi, J., *Dervishet, rendet dhe teqete ne Kosove, ne Sanxhak e ne rajonet e tjera te perreth, ne te kaluaren dhe sot*, Dukagjini, Peje 1999, pp. 70, 77, 147, 160-2, 165, 167, 176, 198-9; *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and ...*, pp. 77, 79, 113-5, 173

the earlier establishment of Islamic orders in Albanian lands. The first indication belongs to the first half of the 16th century, but this information increased evidently toward the middle of the 17th century when the islamization process had obviously advanced.²⁷¹

It is interesting to note that in the 15th-16th centuries tekkes were mostly part of külliyes founded by the representatives of the Albanian²⁷² and non-Albanian²⁷³ leading caste. This happened because they were disciples of different Islamic orders. However, it is possible to see a tekke situated very close to a mosque, like the Tekke mosque of Kiçevo (1540), where the mosque and the tekke (of Hayati baba) were near to each other.²⁷⁴

Since the 16th century, "tekke" was also a commonly used term as a micro-toponymic name, like tekke mosque and tekke medrese in Ohrid²⁷⁵ and Tekke soup kitchen (Tekke imareti) in Elbasan.²⁷⁶

At the turn of the 16th century Albanian city began to acquire a predominantly Muslim character, in scope and in the number of its inhabitants. From that moment a much greater need for Islamic buildings appeared.

d. The Islamization of City-dwellers

The establishment of Ottoman rule and the economic recovery of towns brought the pressure for markets and the needs of the Ottoman army for products and services. Although the towns under Ottoman rule represented a high level of the way of

²⁷¹ Buharaja, V., "Mbishkrimet turko-arabe te vendit tone si deshmi historike", pp. 83-4

²⁷² For example, Mirahur Ilyas bey constructed a tekke, because he personally belonged to the Rufa'i order.

²⁷³ The Bosnian Sinan Pasha constructed a Halveti tekke within the castle of Elbasan in the 16th century: *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and ...*, p. 173

²⁷⁴ Rexhepagiqi, J., *Dervishet, rendet dhe teqete ne Kosove, ...*, p.174

²⁷⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 211, 213

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 173

production and working organization, we should say that in the 16th century they always remained under the shadow and pressure of the natural/agricultural sector and therefore, of the working force coming from rural areas.

The reason for the rapid growth of urban population through the 16th century should be detected in the phenomenon of the internal emigration of the working force from rural areas to urban centers.²⁷⁷ Hence, the overwhelming majority of townsmen were of local origin as were the emigrants coming from the villages in vicinity. The size of cities in the 16th century, according to the number of houses registered in the Ottoman surveys was as follows:

800-1000 houses:	Berat, Elbasan, Vlora,
400-600	“ : Prizren, Priština, Trepča, Vithkuqi,
300-400	“ : Gjirokastra, Kanina, Voskopoja, Novo Brdo,
200-300	“ : Shkodra, Antibarium, Janjevo, Vučitrn, Kelcyra, Delvina
100-200	“ : Peć, Lezha, Permeti, Petrela, Kavaja. ²⁷⁸

The urban population represented the leading social stratum in the spread of Islam in Albanian lands. The islamization of cities was realized in two major ways:

1. The islamization of newcomers from the rural areas nearby,
2. The conversion to Islam of local city-dwellers.²⁷⁹

The Albanian townpeople registered in Ottoman survey registers were shown as: Muslim craftsmen, non-Muslim craftsmen, mobile craftsmen (haymanegan) and townsmen occupied in agricultural activity.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Pulaha, S., “Qytetet Shqiptare nen Regjimin Feudal Ushtarak Osman gjate Shek. XV-XVI”, p. 23

²⁷⁸ Pulaha, S., “Aspekte te demografise historike te trevave shqiptare gjate shek. XV-XVI”, p. 47

²⁷⁹ Duka, F., “Momente te kalimit ne Islam te popullise shqiptare ne shek. XV-XVII”, p.119

²⁸⁰ Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale ne tokat shqiptare, shek. XV-XVI*, Akademia e Shkencave-Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1988, p. 407

The individuals or families that abandoned rural areas, were attracted to urban centers by the social and fiscal status of townspeople. The status of *reaya* working in agricultural activity was fiscally heavier than the position of *şehirli*.²⁸¹ The peasants left the village for the town in order to avoid taxes paid by *reaya* to the state and *sipahi*.²⁸² The *şehirli*s of Shkodra, Elbasani, Skrapar, Delvina, Permet, Korca etc. were charged to perform different military or auxiliary services and, in return, were exempted not only from extraordinary taxes, like *avariz-i divaniyye*, but also from ordinary taxes, like *tithe*, *ispenje*, and the right to levy children for the *corpus yeniceri*.²⁸³ Additionally, the *şehirli* had a further opportunity to be rich compared to the *reaya* in rural areas, where the state control was very strict.²⁸⁴

The Muslim inhabitants of cities, on the other hand, were exempted from various taxes in return from different military services.²⁸⁵ For example, the Muslim guilds and Muslims of Elbasan were charged to help with the protection of the castle of Durrës from the attacks coming from the Adriatic Sea. In return they were exempted from all fiscal obligations.²⁸⁶ The Muslims of Gjirokastra were charged to care for the newly built forresses in the highlands of Kurvelesh.²⁸⁷ The conversion to Islam for a newcomer meant the facilitation of his establishment in an urban center, already under the pressure of Ottoman and Islamic institutions.²⁸⁸ Between 1506-1583 the

²⁸¹ TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 251-2; idem, *Defter-i mufasssal-i liva-i Elbasan*, no. 66, pp. 11-12

²⁸² Filipovic, N., "Sedam dokumenta iz kodeksa br. 1 Orijentalnog Instituta u Sarajevu", *POF*, III-IV (1953), p. 440

²⁸³ BOA, *Suret-i Defter-i Vilayet-i Gorice ve Premedi ve Konice*, Maliyyeden Müdevver, no. 231, p. 92; *Defter-i mufasssal-i liva-i Elbasan*, no. 66, pp. 10-1; *Defter-i mufasssal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 10, 171, 321; TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i liva-i Delvina*, no. 91, p. 10; Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Shkodres*, p. 317

²⁸⁴ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet Shqiptare nen Regjimin Feudal Ushtarak Osman gjate Shek. XV-XVI", p. 24

²⁸⁵ Sucëska, Avdo, "The Position of Bosnian Muslims in the Ottoman Empire", *Ottoman Rule in the Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak - Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, p. 169

²⁸⁶ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet shqiptare*, p. 261

²⁸⁷ TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 62, p. 126

²⁸⁸ Duka, F., "Momente te kalimit ne Islam te popullsise shqiptare ne shek. XV-XVII", pp. 119-20

increase of population in the city of Berat was only 17 houses. At the end of the 16th century this city had 461 Muslim houses and 187 haymanegan (from the villages Fratar, Tozhar, Dobronik, Gjerbes and Gjeqar).²⁸⁹ This example testifies that the islamization process in this city advanced thanks to the islamization of the local townsmen of Berati, but, we should mention that the number of newcomers in that city was not a few, and most of them began to convert. Thirty-nine of the newcomers used the names of their Christian fathers as surnames, while the other thirty persons took Muslim names accompanied with *bin Abdullah*.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 251-2

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 251-2

Cities	The number of houses in the 15 th century	The number of houses in the first half of the 16 th century			The number of houses in the second half of the 16 th century			
		Christians	Muslims	Total	Christians	Muslims	Total	The course of islamization (%)
Kiçevo	150	118	96	214	53	42	95	44
Kostur	703	661	83	744	702	95	797	11
Follorine	-	157	67	224	35	190	225	84
Ohrid	-	-	-	-	179	257	436	58
Struga	-	-	-	-	183	58	241	24
Tetovo	180	93	99	192	127	347	474	73
Prizren	-	-	-	-	237	320	557	56
Priština	401	-	-	-	199	307	506	60
Trepça	-	-	-	-	353	94	447	21
Novo Brdo	887	294	77	371	228	138	366	37
Janjevo	-	-	-	-	247	41	288	14
Vučitern	-	-	-	-	58	288	346	80
Peć	138	99	133	232	15	143	158	90
Antibarium	-	-	-	-	214	77	291	26
Shkodra	80	43	119	162	-	282	282	100
Lezha	-	-	-	-	141	6	147	1.3
Drishti	16	-	-	-	10	25	35	71
Kruja	125	97	65	162	47	81	128	63
Elbasani	-	175	108	283	168	640	808	79
Kavaja	-	-	-	-	117	5	122	4
Berati	175	406	-	406	444	650	1094	60
Vlora	-	762	-	762	878	-	878	-
Gjirokastra	121	143	-	143	232	70	302	23
Kanina	216	587	-	487	300	1	301	0.3
Kelcyra	100	271	-	271	244	6	250	2.4
Delvina	60	120	-	120	234	10	244	4
Himara	117	-	-	-	130	-	130	-
Skrapari	60	192	15	207	17	119	136	87
Permeti	42	136	-	136	125	-	125	-
	3571	4354	862	5116	5917	4292	10209	40

Table 1 : The demographic and confessional outlook in urban centers during the 15th-16th centuries. These figures do not include the military or the civil officials.²⁹¹

²⁹¹ To prepare this table these Ottoman survey registers are used: Inalcik, H., *Hicri 835 tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, 2. Baskı, TTK yay., Ankara 1987; BOA, *Suret-i Defter-i Vilayet-i Gorice ve Premedi ve Konice*, Maliyyeden Müdevver, no. 231; Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Shkodres i vitit 1485*, vol. I-II, Tirane 1974; BOA, *Rumeli Timar defteri (1529-36)*, no. 367; BOA, *Defter-i icmal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 24; BOA, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 99; BOA, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Dukagin*, no. 499; TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Delvina*, no. 91; TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 491-2; TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Elbasan*, no. 66; TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Iskenderiye*, no. 59; TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Dukagin*, no. 63; TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Ohri*, c. I-II, no. 25, 27; TKGM, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Paşa*,

Ottoman sources indicate that the cities situated in western part of the Rep. of Macedonia had the highest pace of islamization among the urban centers with an average of 79 %. In this space the Ottoman conquest and the establishment of Ottoman institutions happened relatively earlier, from the end of the 14th century (during the reign of the sultan Bayezid I). Except for some mountainous regions, which took part in the resistance of Scanderbeg, during the 15th century these territories lived in peace and in a short time recovered economically. From the first decades of the 16th century the Muslim households in Tetovo equalled the number of Christian households.

The Ottoman sources for the second half of the 16th century bear witness that craftsmen were the first social stratum of the Balkan city to lead islamization and constituted the major contingent of the Muslim community.²⁹² The dissemination of Islam among the urban business circles was very distinctly outlined in Kosovo also. Prizren was one of the biggest commercial and artisan centres of that region. This also determined the relatively high intensity of the process of islamization here. Here in 1571 more than 45 crafts were practiced and of the 246 shops in total, 227 were already in the possession of Muslims.²⁹³

The town of Pristina provides a different feature: it was the largest administrative center in Kosovo. In the second half of the 16th century there twenty-eight crafts were exercised distributed among a hundred shops. Only three of them were in the hands of Christians.²⁹⁴ In order to preserve their economic function, many people adopted Islam, while those who retained their faith were gradually displaced from

c. II, no. 52; TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i livai-i Prizrin*, no. 55; TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i livai-i Vucitern*, no. 124

²⁹² Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Shkodres*, p.135; TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i livai-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 491-2; idem, *Defter-i mufasssal-i livai-i Elbasan*, no. 66, pp. 11-12

²⁹³ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet e Rrafshit te Dukagjinit dhe te Kosoves ...", pp. 429-30

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*

their economic sphere and took up activities connected with agricultural labour. The Muslim craftsmen did not pay poll-tax (djizya) and resm-i çift.²⁹⁵

In the 16th century the course of islamization in the cities of Kosovo increased by an average of 51 % . After the cities of the eastern Albanian lands, the cities of Kosovo came second from the point of view of the pace of islamization. Interesting here is the case of Novo Brdo. The decline of this city as a mining center at this time was reflected even in the drastic decrease of population, and gradually it took on the general characteristics of the other cities of the region. The Ottomans had taken this city by force in 1455. Its inhabitants were granted the right to stay in their city, but in the end this right was limited to miners, whose work was indispensable. Seven hundred women were handed over to the army. Many youngs were enrolled in the Janissaries, while in 1467, the rest of the native population was carried off to Istanbul.²⁹⁶ Although the number of the population decreased after the Ottoman conquest, even in the first half of the 16th century the largest income in Novo Brdo consisted of ispence and revenues from the mines.²⁹⁷ Such information justified the presence of 294 Christian households versus 77 of Muslim ones in the first half of the 16th century. Nevertheless, the islamization process advanced more quickly in the administrative and craft centers (71.5 %), than in mining ones (31 %). Such a fact is explained by the long presence of Catholic miners and merchants in these cities and traditional contacts of these centers with Catholic Europe. In 1569-70 in none of the mining cities of Kosovo is registered a name of Sas miner. All of them might have been converted to Islam. The Islamization process in the mining cities of Kosovo

²⁹⁵ TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i livai-i Iskenderiye*, no. 59, pp. 7-9; idem, *Defter-i mufasssal-i livai-i Elbasan*, no. 66, pp. 8-12; idem, *Defter-i mufasssal-i livai-i Avlonya*, no. 62, pp. 250-6; idem, *Defter-i mufasssal-i livai-i Prizrin*, no. 55, pp. 13-17

²⁹⁶ Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, Princeton University Press 1978, p. 127

²⁹⁷ Todorov, N., *The Balkan City*, p. 90

was a recent process, and this is indicated by the names of new converts, who in general are 'bin Abdullah'. According the information offered by the Vatican sources (1578) Novo Brdo, Janjevo and Trepča still had many Catholics.²⁹⁸

The statistical data show that Pec and Ohrid in the end of the 16th century, though they were the ecclesiastical centers of respective Orthodox Archbishoprics, were among the most islamized cities in Albanian lands. While Ohrid was an administrative center of a big sancak, Peć, after the Ottoman conquest at least, ceased to be an active ecclesiastical Orthodox center. The islamization of Pec must have been strictly connected with the period of interregnum of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Pec (1459-1557). And the high level of islamization of the people of Peć can probably explain why the Ottoman state allowed the restoration of the Patriarchate of Pec.

Dulcignium, conquered by the Ottomans (ca. 1571) two months before Lepanto, in 1638 did not have any Christian households.²⁹⁹ While Antibarium, very close to Dulcignium, but delivered peacefully to the Ottomans, continued to be the center of the most important Catholic Archbishopric in Albanian lands. In the second half of the 17th century it had such a confessional outlook: Muslims 43 %, Catholics 22 %, while Slavic Orthodox constituted 35 % of the whole population.³⁰⁰

From the table we see that Shkodra was the only Albanian city completely islamized (100 %) in the second half of the 16th century (1582). The high degree of islamization, of course, had special reasons. Shkodra had been for a long time a stronghold of Venice on the Adriatic coast. Besides, the capture of this castle by the Ottomans held a symbolic mission; it meant the end of the period of Albanian

²⁹⁸ Rizaj, S., *Kosova gjate shek. XV, XVI, XVII ...*, p. 426

²⁹⁹ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet shqiptare, shek. XV-XX*, p. 48

³⁰⁰ Armao, E., *Localita, chiese, fiumi, monti e toponimi varii di ...*, p. 33

resistance led by Scanderbeg. We should remember that this city was also a strong Catholic center. The role of Catholic friars in the defence of this city was enormous.³⁰¹ For that reason, the Ottoman established a small Turkish colony which served as the nucleus of islamization in this frontier city.

The case of Kavaja (a near town close to Durres) is interesting. From 1431 to 1569/70 the population of this new town was increased eightfold.³⁰² Kavaja, especially in the first half of the 16th century, in strategical importance took the place of Durres, when this city passed into Ottoman hands (ca. 1501). In 1431 it was a village and had only 16 households, all Christian, while in the second half of the 16th century in this city we see 122 households, five of them Muslim. The establishment of an initial Muslim community may perhaps go back to the initiative of a leading Ottoman authority, Ali Haydar bey, who may have been the builder of the Old Mosque (Xhamia e Vjeter) on the main street of the town.³⁰³

Elbasan was a newly founded urban center in the midst of Albania. It had not problems with a pre-Ottoman past. It had a strategic position on the North-South and East-West axes.* In a short time, it was transformed into an important administrative center of the sancak with the same name. An anonymous traveler, who passed through the city in 1570, described Elbasan as an important economic center, where someone can find every product he wants.³⁰⁴ An Venetian ambassador reports in 1591 that Elbasan was an important trade center of products made of leather and wool, and that there were two karvansaray.³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ Marin Barleti, *Rrethimi i Shkodres*, 3rd edition, Shtepia Botuese "Naim Frasheri", Tirane 1982

³⁰² Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania*, p. 155

³⁰³ *ibid.*

* Elbasan is situated in between Kruja and Berat, and on the line of Via Egnatia.

³⁰⁴ Shkodra, Z., *Esnafet shqiptare*, p. 31

³⁰⁵ *ibid.*

In the first half of the 16th century these Albanian cities were completely Christian: Berat, Vlora, Gjirokastra, Kanina, Kelcyra, Delvina, Permeti, Korca. These urban centers were situated in the Albanian lands which were the first facing the Ottoman conquest and the establishment of its institutions. Before and after the Ottoman conquest they were under the ecclesiastical authority of the Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid of the 16th century. We should emphasize that except for Berat, the non-islamized or less islamized cities of Southern Albania were not involved in the resistance led by Scanderbeg. Some cities like Vlora, Himara, and Permeti even in the second half of the 16th century retained their Christian confessional outlook of the pre-Ottoman period: they did not possess any Muslim families. Such a reality is a good example to demonstrate that the Ottoman state did not follow a policy of islamization by force.

If we make a regional comparison we see the process of islamization was more advanced in the cities of the western Macedonia (79 %). In the 16th century the course of islamization in the cities of Kosovo increased, by an average of 51 % coming second in terms of the pace of islamization. The islamized population of these two regions constituted 65 % of townsmen in Kosovo and western Macedonia. The cities situated in the territories of today Albanian state had the lowest pace of islamization (38 %). We think that the geographical conditions were decisive in the determination of the course of the islamization process in urban centers. Even the military conquest and the establishment of Ottoman/Islamic institutions lasted longer and was more difficult in eastern and north-eastern than in central Albanian lands.

If we have a look at the course of islamization in the urban centers situated in the territories of Albania, the evidence shows that the most islamized cities were those of the North (49 %), second came the cities of the central part (48 %) and last was the

southern part (19.6 %). Someone can ask, why the geographical factor was not determinant in the course of islamization for the cities of Albania. Firstly, the Albanian cities of the North and Central regions were not situated in the mountainous area, they were almost all littoral areas or those with strong links with Adriatic basin. The urban centers of North and Central Albania were active centers of Catholicism. In other words, they were part of the Catholic sphere of influence. The Ottomans considered the Catholic Church as an enemy and never officially recognized the existence of the Vatican to which this part of Albania was bound with spiritual/political relations. The establishment of the Ottomans and the transformation of Catholic churches into mosques in frontier Albanian cities in the Catholic zone gradually enforced the idea of the inevitability of the old society's end and its traditional relation with the Western world. Now they were politically no longer an extension of the Catholic world in the Balkan Peninsula, but the frontier cities of an Eastern territorial empire with a great strategic importance. The establishment of life-long Ottoman rule had a devastating effect upon the minds of Albanian Catholics with a great measure of finality. Being politically, fiscally and religiously Ottoman subjects, the Catholic Albanians had no other alternative but to be integrated in each aspect of Ottoman and Islamic life.

The Orthodox Albanians did not experience the same crisis of identity as the Catholic Albanians. Politically and fiscally they were Ottoman subjects, but religiously they were members of a church which was officially recognized by the Ottoman state. Moreover, the Archbishopric of Ohrid, to which all Orthodox Albanian cities belonged ecclesiastically, enjoyed warm relations with the Ottomans during the military advance in the Balkans and the Interregnum of the Archbishopric of Peć (1459-1557). For the Orthodox Albanians the Ottomans symbolized merely a

change of political authority: they were an integrative part of the Byzantine/Orthodox world, while actually they made efforts to be integrated into the Ottoman world. Religiously they retained their faith. Their conversion to Islam was a question of time, but conversion meant prestige over their co-religionists and escape from higher taxes.

In the first half of the 16th century only 16.8 % of urban population was islamized, while in the end 40 %.

The establishment of Ottoman domination in the Balkans led to many changes in the religious composition of the urban population, because it was cheaper to be a Muslim craftsman than a Christian reaya. The existing Christian population, however, was not ousted from the cities and did not lose its position as the basic urban productive population. Although deprived of its own political and administrative power and subjected to the strong and centralized military-theocratic organization of the Ottoman Empire, it nevertheless preserved itself in the majority of the cities in numbers exceeding the newly converted population in general. In other words, despite heavy losses during the Ottoman invasion, in the 16th century the overwhelming majority of the Balkan cities retained the non-Muslim character of their population.

e. The Islamic Urban Culture

“Political events reflect only indirectly the growth of a mass Muslim society. The more important correlations that must be made are between conversion and the creation of the institutions which ultimately came to inform and typify society to such an extent that they truly justified the appellation ‘Muslim society’. Key among

these institutions are mosques, dervish tekkes, medreses, tombs etc".³⁰⁶ The intensity of the enlightening activities in a town was dependent on its strategic and economic importance, the size of the Ottoman garrison, the intensity of the process of islamization, and on the number of vaqfs.³⁰⁷

The *mosque*, as with churches for Christians, were places of praying to God as well as meeting places with a great finality in the elaboration of Muslim public opinion. The preacher addressed the congregation assembled in the mosques giving instruction concerning not only basic principles of creed and the individual religious obligations, but also the messages to work, good, behavior, attitude toward the family and society, virtues etc. From the point of view of Islamic culture and education, the mosque also carried out the mission of the religious education of children. Evliya Çelebi says that in Elbasan, which was culturally one of the most islamized cities of Albania there were forty-six mosques and an open preaching place called the *namazgah*.³⁰⁸ The mosques were also places available for religious and mystic debates:

"The courtyard [of Hünkar Mosque in Ohrid] is graced by huge lofty trees, in the shadow of which are grassy knolls where the town's cognoscenti and mystics sit to enjoy the fresh air and to engage in religious debates."³⁰⁹

Tekkes were centers of Islamic mysticism and theologically provided a popular alternative to normative Islam. Tekkes were establishments in which dervishes assembled to obtain education according to the rules of their order, to study Islamic mysticism and to perform their rites under the guidance of a *sheyh*. From the period

³⁰⁶ Bulliet, R., "Emergence of Muslim Society in Iran", *Conversion to Islam*, ed. N. Levtzion, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., New York 1979, p. 36

³⁰⁷ Kaleshi, H., "Oriental Culture in Yugoslav Countries from the 15th century till the End of the 17th century", *Ottoman Rule in the Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czecho-Slovak - Yugoslav Historical Committee, Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1978, p. 381

³⁰⁸ Evliya Çelebi in *Albania and*, pp. 169, 171. 173

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 209

of the establishment of the Ottoman rule onward (the beginning of the 16th century) they began to sprout, like mushrooms, throughout Albanian lands.*

The *türbes* (tombs) were situated near tekkes. There were buried tekke's sheyhs or other religious personalities of relevant order. Tekkes are of great interests because their story was connected with numerous legends, superstitions and quack medicine; both, Muslim and non-Muslim, were visiting them on certain days in order to look for remedies for certain diseases, barren women and insane people. A typical example is the tomb of Sarı Saltuk in the Mountain of Kruja.*

The religious character of science and education in Islam determined the prevalent religious character of mekteb, medrese and libraries. The *medrese* was a school teaching arithmetics, logic and geometry, Arabic grammar and syntax, dogmatic philosophy, rhetoric, the Kur'an, Islamic Law and tradition. The importance of a medrese depended on the position of its founder, the size of the endowment and the professors giving lessons there. The medrese was an institution supported by a vakf and was usually one of the constituent buildings of a külliye. The oldest medrese in Albania was that of Ilyas bey Mirahori; it was one of the buildings of his külliye constructed at the turn of the 15th century. In the middle of the 16th century, in Berat there were five, in Shkodra ten, in Gjirokastra five mektebs and three medrese, and in Vlora three madrasa.³¹⁰ In the middle of the 16th century in Prizren a full system of Islamic education existed.³¹¹ Evliya Çelebi says that in Ohrid there were two medrese (the medrese of Siyavuş pasha and the Tekke medrese), and several other medreses

* Rexhepagiqi, J., *Dervishet, rendet dhe teqete ne Kosove, ne Sanxhak e ne rajonet e tjera te perreth, ne te kaluaren dhe sot*, Dukagjini, Peje 1999

* Kiel, M., "A Note of the Date of the Establishment of the Bektashi Order in Albania – the Cult of Sarı Saltuk Dede in Kruja attested in 1567-1568", *Bektachiyya – études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groups relevant de Hadji Bektach*, Éditions Isis, Istanbul 1995, pp. 273-4

³¹⁰ Meksi, A., "Ndertimet e kultit mysliman ne Shqiperi", *Studime historike*, XXXIV (XVII), no. 1 (1980), pp. 210-11

³¹¹ Kaleshi, H., "Prizren kao kulturni centar za vreme turskog perioda", p. 93

attached to the dervish lodges.³¹² The case of Ohrid provided a good occasion to see the clash of two realities overlapping one another: being the ecclesiastical center of the Orthodox Archbishopric, and an important Balkanic center of Islamic culture and education.

The library had an important place in Ottoman urban society. They were founded in mosques, medreses, hospitals and tekkes, and private libraries in residences. Many of these private book collections found their way to vakf libraries, since it was considered meritorious to leave books to a pious foundation.³¹³ The number of such private libraries of manuscripts was especially high in Prizren. The appearance of these libraries testifies that Prizren had readers and writers of Oriental languages (Arabic, Persian, Turkish) and the Islamic cultural life in this city was very extensive.³¹⁴ In 1513, in Prizren Suzi Çelebi (bin Muhammed bin Abdullah) erected a mosque and a medrese and supported them with a vakf. He donated a lot of books to this school, founding the first library in Albanian lands.³¹⁵

In Prizren in the 16th century there were many poets, who wrote in Oriental languages, like Aşık Çelebi, Sa'yi, Şem'i ve Behari.³¹⁶ Evliya Çelebi regarded Elbasan as "... the home of scholars and virtuous men, poets and mystics ...".³¹⁷ While of the level of Islamic culture and life in Gjirokastra, he writes: "There are people of much knowledge here, in particular a good number of poets, of whom Bükayi, Figani, Nalishi, Sükuni and Feza'i Nalishi is without peer in both ghazals and qasidas".³¹⁸

³¹² *Evliya Çelebi in Albania ...*, pp. 211, 213

³¹³ İnalçık, H., *The Ottoman Empire ...*, p. 174; Kaleshi, H., "Prizren kao kulturni centar ...", p. 100

³¹⁴ Kaleshi, H., "Prizren kao kulturni centar ...", p. 101

³¹⁵ For more information about the life and activity of this personality see: Kaleshi, H., "Prizren kao Kulturni Centar ...", pp. 91-115; idem, "Oriental Culture in Yugoslav Countries ...", p. 391

³¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 108-11

³¹⁷ *Evliya Çelebi in Albania*, p. 117

³¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 85

In a newly conquered city a military garrison was established, and the Ottoman state immediately appointed a *kadi** and a *sancakbey**. They were followed by Muslim clerics like imams, which in the beginning served as the spiritual leaders of Ottomans garrisons. The most advantageous position of all was that of the representatives of the Muslim intelligencia (*ulema*), like müfti, kadi, müderris and va'iz. They belonged to the category of esteemed personalities constituting a closed caste of the highest strata,³¹⁹ which created public opinion and largely participated in power. Although they constituted a small percentage of city-dwellers in the 16th century (in Peć 20.3 %, in Prizren 2 %, in Priština 5 %, in Vučitrn 6 %, in Berat they were completely absent, in Elbasan just 0.8 %, in Shkodra 2.4 %, while in Gjirokastra 2 %),³²⁰ their influence derived from the religious services and the status offered by the Ottoman state. "Where and when institutions developed depended upon where and when conversion created a mass society of non-Turkish Muslims".³²¹

The first essential function of the ulema was to indoctrinate all ranks of society with the habits of thought and principles of action and judgement in conformity with Islamic ideals. The ulema constituted a body of scholars and learned people who would safeguard the principles upon which the religious institution was founded, and by their manner of life win the respect and affection of the people.³²² In the Balkans

* Giver of decisions, administered it in the law courts under delegated authority from Imam or the secular ruler. They put into practice the collections of sultanik kanun becoming not only the interpreters of religious rules (Shari'a).

* The bey was responsible for the execution of decisions given by the kadi.

³¹⁹ For a broad information on the social hierarchy in big Albanian cities during the 17th century see: *Evliya Çelebi in Albani*, pp. 31, 59, 71, 103, 137, 163, 167, 203. The new elite provided almost the same picture, and the dimensions of that presence in a urban center was strictly connected with the seniority and the size of people living in a certain urban center.

³²⁰ Pulaha, S., "Qytetet Shqiptare nen Regjimin Feudal ...", pp. 38-9

³²¹ Bulliet, R., "Emergence of Muslim Society in Iran", p. 41

³²² Gibb, H. A. R. - H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, p. 81

the position of a member of the ulema (hoca) was rather special: he was a religious servant, functioning simultaneously as an imam, vaiz, hatib and muallim.³²³

From the very beginning the newly conquered Balkan towns were not only centers of administration, but also key points for further military and cultural conquests westwards or northwards. Consequently, these towns represented urban centers from which Islam was spread to further areas. From that moment on, the life of mind and spirit developed under conditions of Islam as the prestigious religion of conquerers, and this happened not only for those who embraced it, but all Ottoman subjects irrespective of faith. Various aspects of Oriental culture affected the people as a whole, irrespective of religion.

IV. The Islamization Process in Rural Areas

In the Ottoman kanunnames for Albanian lands instead of the term *çiftlik* we always encounter the term *baština*. As well as *çiftlik*, *baština* constituted a fundamental fiscal unity.

Baština was a term of Slavic origin used for an allotment of arable land under the full ownership of a person. During the 15th - 16th centuries, a *bashtina* was a portion of land under the actual possession of a non-Muslim peasant (*raiyyet baştinası*). In other words, it was the equivalent term/institution of *çiftlik* used for the allotment of arable land under the usage of Muslim peasant.³²⁴

From the fiscal point of view, there is no difference between *bashtinas* in the hands of Christians and the *çiftliks* of Muslims. Both paid *raiyyet* taxes, but where the *baštinas* were registered was not mentioned *resm-i çift*, but *ispence*. From the

³²³ Kaleshi, H., "Oriental Culture in Yugoslav Countries ...", p. 385

³²⁴ Inalcik, H., *Hicri 835 tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, 2. Baskı, TTK yay., Ankara 1987, p. XXX

viewpoint of social status, the only difference was that the holder of a baština was non-Muslim, and consequently he had to pay ispenje instead of resm-i cift and additionally the djizya.

The baština, as an agrarian institution, was initially mentioned in the Arvanid Defteri (1431-2), but from the reign of the sultan Bayezid II, the term baština, nominating an institution, began to be recorded more frequently.³²⁵ In the second half of the 16th century the baštinas started to pass into the hands of Muslim elements, peasants or local Ottoman authorities.³²⁶ The Ottoman state did not react against this practice, because the religion of the peasant or the status of the new possessors was no important, but the regular payment of taxes:

‘...bi-kusur cizyeleri ve ispenceleri alına, vermeyenlerin hakimü’l-vakt olanlar cizye ve ispencesin alı-vereler.’³²⁷

The fiscal status of baštinas did not change even when they changed hands and the religion of their possessors. It is interesting to note that everyone, whether a non-Muslim who possessed a baština, or a Muslim who acquired a baština, was forced to pay djizya.³²⁸ For that reason they were called ‘haraclı baština’.³²⁹ Toward the end of the 16th century, baštinas in the hands of Muslim individuals existed mostly throughout Kosovo and in the kazas of Korça, Bihlišhte and Hurupişhte.³³⁰ Although the Ottoman kanunnames are documents of conservative character, so sometimes they reflect the previous situations, the intensive usage of term ‘baština’ instead of

³²⁵ Egro, D., “Arnavut Topraklarına ait Osmanlı Kanunnameleri Üzerine Sosyo-Ekonomik bir Bakış”, Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, (unpublished M.A. thesis), Ankara 1977, p. 78

³²⁶ Akgündüz, A., ‘İlbasan Sancağı Kanunnamesi’, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri*, c. VII, madde 41, p. 679

³²⁷ ibid.

³²⁸ Barkan, Ö. L., “894 (1488-1489) yılı Cizyesinin Tahsilatına ait Muhasebe Bilançoları”, *Belgeler*, c. I, sayı 1 (1 ocak 1964), p. 5; Inalcık, H., “Djizya”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. II, Leiden 1965, p. 562

³²⁹ Inalcık, H. “Stefan Dušan’dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’na: XV. asırda Rumeli’de Hristiyan Sipahiler ve Menşeleri”, 60. *Doğum Yılı Münasebetiyle Fuad Köprülü Armağanı*, İstanbul 1953, p. 238

³³⁰ TKGM, *Defter-i Mufasssal-i liva-i Prizrin*, no. 55, pp. 11, 39, 42-3; Stojanovski, A., *Turski dokumenti za istaorijata na Makedonskiot narod (opshiren popisen defter za kazite Gorica, Biglishta i Hrupishta od 1568-9 godina*, knjiga I, Arhiv na Makedonija, Skopje 1997

'çiftlik' is an general indicator showing that in the second half of the 16th century Albanian peasantry was still not islamized.

At the end of the 15th century, in mountainous regions of Albania the timar system was not applied.³³¹ Because they were geographically difficult to control, and the native population was tribal and rebellious, these regions in general were taken under the direct control of the sultan or sancakbeys (hasses). However, the Albanian tribes recognized only nominally the authority of the sultan or sancakbey.³³²

During this transitory period the Albanian mountaineers were granted the status of *florici*,* which marked a continuity of their pre-Ottoman status. In return the Albanian highlanders were to pay a lump sum which was less than the sum of taxes paid by non-Muslim reaya living in lowlands. Because the Albanian highlanders did not enjoy the right of *tapu*, land was nominally under the collective control of a tribe. Such a status was granted by the Ottoman state in return for the recognition of the sultan's authority by the Albanian chieftains. Thus, in the eyes of the Albanian tribes the sultan's authority meant a substitution of pre-Ottoman Albanian lordship with a centralist authority.

The Ottomans, however, were predisposed to shorten this period of transition. Gradually they shifted a part of the Albanian highlanders to the status of *derbenci* or to the status of reaya. In the mountainous district of Piper the Ottomans from 1497 started to apply the timar system and native people were submitted to reaya status.³³³

³³¹ The timar system was not applied, especially in the Highlands of Shkodra, in the region of Dukagjin in north, and in the Highlands of Kurvelesh and Himara in the southern Albania: Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale*, p. 381

³³² *ibid.*, p. 384-5

* The fiscal status of *florici* comprised the payment of 55 akcas in total, from which 33 akca constituted the payment of poll tax (*djizya*), 20 akca were equal to *ispence* and 2 akca were paid to Ottoman scribes: *Kanuni i kanun-name za Bosanski, Hercegovacki, Zvornicki, Kliski, Crnogorski i Skadarski sandzak*, prepared by Br. Durdev, N. Filipovic, H. Hadzibegic, M. Mujic, Sabanovic, Orientalnu Institut u Sarajevu, Sarajevo, 1957, p. 12-4; Pulaha, S., *Pronesia feudale*, p. 383

³³³ Pulaha, S., *Defteri i rregjistrimit te sanxhakut te Shkodres ...*, vol. I, pp. 189-200

The other mountainous districts were given the status of *derbentci* (Hoti, Shala, Shoshi, Petrishpan ili, Pult and Kelmend). Here the status of *derbentçi* was not applied only to a separate village, but to the entire region. In other words, it was a collective status granted to the region of the Shkodra Highlands (Malesia).³³⁴ However, the Ottoman survey registers state that the Ottomans did not managed to established the *timar* regime in Albanian highlands. Even during the period of *derbentcilik*, land was under the collective control of the tribe.

As the 16th century was advancing, the presence of *timar*-holders even in these areas appeared in Ottoman survey registers. Despite the fact that the *timar* system applied to highlands districts was only nominative, it was an attempt to establish the direct control of the Ottoman state in these districts. The Ottoman state followed a well-thought out policy in this part of the Balkans. It divided the great territorial units into small *timars*, built *kal'a* in strategical points of these dictricts, and put them under the control of military forces stationed in *kal'as* (*kal'e muhafızları*).³³⁵ The growing presence of the Ottoman authorities in the Albanian highlands, increased the Ottoman pressure on the highlanders. The implementation of the *timar* system in the Albanian highlands opened the way for the substitution of local *kanuns* with Ottoman law.

We should say that the process of transition from pre-Ottoman to the Ottoman period in lowlands was shorter than in the highlands. While in lowlands the Ottoman rule and its basic institutions were established shortly after the military conquest, in the highlands the transition lasted almost one century. The *timar* system and the Ottoman

³³⁴ Pulaha, S., *op. cit.*, p. 387

³³⁵ TKGM, *Defter-i mufasssal-i liva-i Iskenderiye*, no. 59, pp. 114-8 (Hoti), 119-22 (Palabardhi), 127-30 (Pipri), 131-2 (Kelmendi), 133-5 (Kuci), 258-9 (Petrishpan ili).

Law in the highlands did not take its classical form because of the resistance of traditional social organization:

“The mountaineer is the man whose curiosity is necessarily restricted and horizon is limited by a high mountain barrier; the slave from the birth of tradition and routine, conservative to his inmost being and rooted in the past; the superstitious guardian of the moral and material heritage left him by his ancestors because nothing occurs to inspire him with a desire for change. Old habits, old costumes, old languages, old religions”.³³⁶

This is the reason why Albanian highlanders refused to be registered, did not accept to pay taxes even in lump sum, even very often rebelled against the timar-holders as the delegated representatives of the centralist state in Albanian province. The Albanian mountaineers were not accustomed to live under the rule of an imperial/centralist state.

The Muhimme registers are full of information about the rebellions of Albanian mountaineers. Particularly the Christian people of the sancak of Dukagjin often rebelled in the sixth decade of the 16th century. This is probably the reason why the Ottoman state launched a registration of this sancak in 1570/1.³³⁷ The highlanders plundered the merchants and stolen goods were sold in the bazaars of Shkodra. The reason for such an activity was that they were not able to meet the payment of taxes, especially the djizya, which was paid in cash.³³⁸ Even the peasants of the village Fand i Vogel in the Mirdita region rebelled because they were not able to pay “harac”.³³⁹ Besides, the villagers of the nahiyes Fandi i Vogel and Mirdita escaped the registration.³⁴⁰

³³⁶ Febre, L., *A Geographical Introduction to History*, Routledge, London 1996, p.198

³³⁷ Rizaj, S., “Trazimet e kryengritjet ne Dukagjin (1560-1570)”, *Konferenca e dyte e studimeve albanologjike*, vol. II, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës - Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, Tiranë 1969, pp. 117-9

³³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 118

³³⁹ BOA, *Muhimme defteri*, no. 7, p. 920

³⁴⁰ BOA, *Defter-i mufassal-i liva-i Dukagjin, Tapu defterleri*, no. 499, pp. 86-8

In some villages of Pipri, Kuc and Kelmend (sancak of Shkodra) in 1565, the mountaineers declared that no longer recognized the Ottoman authority. Some local elders proclaimed themselves as the local authorities with the hierarchical titles of the pre-Ottoman period, and declared that they had actually replaced the authority of the kadi.³⁴¹ In order to avoid the payment of djizya they declared: "We do not submit to Shari'a, mountain [the law of tribe] is our Shari'a".³⁴² The areas where the rebellions happened were in general mountainous. The proportions of income coming from the rebellious villages indicates that they were very poor.³⁴³ They were not able to meet the payment of taxes. The first target of the rebellions were sipahis and the collectors of djizya, as the representatives of centralist state in province. The difficulty of the geographical relief, the lack of productivity of the soil and the traditional form of social organizations (tribe) are only some of the causes, which forced Albanians of the highlands to rebel against the taxes and the centralism of the Ottoman state. While the Ottomans managed to successfully control the Albanian lowlands, the highlands always remained rebellious and difficult to be control politically and fiscally. For that reason the Ottoman authorities made many attempts to deport Albanian mountaineers from the highlands to lowlands, because in that way it was easier to take them under strict control.³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ BOA, *Muhimme defteri*, no. 6, pp. 232-3; *Qendresa e popullit shqiptar kunder sundimit osman nga shek. XVI deri ne fillim te shek. XVII (dokumenta osmane)*, Akademia e shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise-Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1978, dok. 35, pp. 69-70

³⁴² Matkovski, A., "Kryengritje te panjohura ne sanxhakun e Ohrit ne vitet 1566-1574", *Studime Historike*, no. 3 (1973), p. 57

³⁴³ Matkovski, A., "Nje kryengritje e panjohur, por e rendesishme ne nahien e Dibres ne vitin 1560", *Gjurmime albanologjike*, no. 1 (1969), p. 251

³⁴⁴ *Qendresa e popullit shqiptar kunder sundimit osman ...*, dok. 35, pp. 69-70; Pulaha, S., "Kryengritjet antif feudale dhe clirimtare gjate gjysmes se dyte te shek. XVI nen driten e te dhenave te dokumentave osmane", *Studime Historike*, no. 1 (1979), p. 210

a. *The Djizya and Other Taxes, and Their Effect on the Islamization Process*

The Ottoman Empire needed the Christian reaya as a productive contingent and principal mass of tax-payers, who ensured a steady annual revenue for the treasury. The poll-tax was levied in cash, and contributed directly to the incomes of the Imperial Treasury. In 1527 the income from djizya constituted 42.3 % of total revenues that the Ottoman state collected in its Balkan territories.³⁴⁵ Hence, the Ottoman sultan threatened the Ottoman local authorities and military commanders to avoid the exercise of force against the reaya which did not participate in rebellion and continued to pay regularly their taxes.³⁴⁶ The Ottoman state was not interested in implementing a forced policy of islamization of rural people in Albanian lands, because such a policy would reflect a great decrease of the incomes, especially of djizya.

The sicils of Vlora testify that in 1567/8 the djizya still continued to be a collective tax, not an individual one.³⁴⁷ The sum of djizya in the 16th century in Albanian lands, as in the other areas of the Balkans, did not exceed 40-50 akchas.³⁴⁸ The djizya was imposed upon non-Muslims at the rate of one gold ducat, but it was considerably increased from the end of the 16th century. Until that time the amount of ispenje (25 akca) also remained unchangeable.³⁴⁹ At the beginning of the 17th century, the amount

³⁴⁵ Zhelyazkova, A., *Rasprostraneneje na Islama v zapadnobalkanskite zemi pod Osmanska vlast*, Izdatelstvo na Blgaskata Akademija na Haukite, Sofia, p. 191

³⁴⁶ *Qendresa e popullit shqiptar kunder sundimit osman ...*, dok. 35, pp. 69-70

³⁴⁷ Veinstein, G., "Une source ottomane de l'histoire albanaise: le registre des kadi d'Avlona (Vlore), 1567/8", *The Medieval Albanians*, National Hellenic Research Foundation - Institute for Byzantine Research, Athens 1998, p. 381

³⁴⁸ Bartl, P., *Arnavutluk Müslümanları (1878-1912)*, Bedir Yayınevi, Istanbul 1998, p. 29; Zelyazkova, A., "Social Aspects of the Process of Islamization in the Balkan Possessions of the Ottoman Empire", *Etudes Balkaniques*, no. 3 (1985), p. 119

³⁴⁹ The Delilbaşı, M., "1564 tarihli Mufasssal Yanya Livası Tahrir Defterine Göre Yanya Kenti ve Köyleri", *Belgeler*, c. XVII, sayı 21 (1996), p. 10; Pulaha, S., "Nahijet e Altunilise, te Hasit, te Hoces, te Opojes ne Rrafshin e Dukagjinit dhe popullsia e tyre gjate shek. XV-XVI", *Popullsia shqiptare e Kosoves gjate shek. XV-XVI*, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise-Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1984, p. 89

of djizya in the Nahiya of Tetovo reached 170 akca,³⁵⁰ in 1646 in the Sancak of Shkodra 305 akca; while in 1652 in the Nahiye of Priština, part of the Sancak of Vučitrn, 314 akce. At the end of the 17th century a non-Muslim in the Nahiye of Korça paid djizya of 402 akca, while in the region of Ohrid, 385-415 akca.³⁵¹

The original lump sum tax of 1000 akca paid by the highlanders of Shkodra Sancak had become a trivial amount by the end of the 16th century due to the depreciation of the akca, and the government therefore wanted instead to assess the djizya at 1000 gold coins. This caused the rebellion of the tribes of northern Albania. In order to stop these depredations the Porte built a new castle near Gucia.³⁵²

There were two ways that non-Muslim reaya applied to avoid the payment of djizya: firstly, by emigration to the towns and conversion to Islam, and secondly, by flight to other rural settlements.³⁵³ The sultan always ordered his collectors of djizya to be very careful in their conduct towards the non-Muslim, who regularly paid djizya and the other dues.³⁵⁴ When in some villages several households adopted Islam, the collective liability for the payment of djizya demanded that the tax of the islamized people be taken up by the remaining Christian households. Soon this resulted in whole villages passing over to the ruling religion so as to avoid the possible sanctions in the event of unpaid taxes. If conversion freed a native from the all tribute/poll tax, the burden of those who remained faithful must quickly have become intolerable, if their tribute was not reduced by a corresponding amount.

According to a djizya defter of 1593 belonging to the vilayet of Prizren, nine villages which in the middle of that century were djizye-payers, actually were not registered

³⁵⁰ Zhelyazkova, A., *Rasprostraneneje na Islama v zapadnobalkanskite ...*, p. 194

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 194-5

³⁵² Inalcik, H., "Arnawutluk", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, vol. I, Leiden – London 1960, p. 656

³⁵³ Arkivi i Shtetit, *Sixhilet e qytetit te Beratit*, dosja no. 14, p, 2b

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*

as such. From 178 households of this vilayet in total, there were only 10 djizya-paying households in every 110 villages.³⁵⁵

Aside from the taxes of reaya and djizya, the non-Muslim subjects living in the Ottoman territories were also forced to pay the taxes for the expense of the churches.*

The Christian peasantry living in poverty stricken areas found it especially difficult to pay this cash tax, and it has been argued that mass conversions took place in precisely these mountainous districts. In 1610, the Catholic Archbishop of Antbarium, Marin Bizzi, reports that the desire to avoid the payment of taxes was one of the major causes why an erosion of Catholicism occurred in Central and Northern Albania.³⁵⁶

Despite such a report of Western origin, we would prefer to see what kind of information is offered by the Ottoman sources, which directly reflect the observations of Ottoman local authorities and the relevant reaction of the Ottoman sultan. The sicils of Vlora of year 1567/8 gave examples of non-Muslim people's complaints against those individuals who converted to Islam just to avoid the payment of taxes.³⁵⁷ The main reason of the uprisings in the mountainous regions of Dukagjin, Dibra and Ohrid in the second half of the 16th century was the poor economic condition of the peasantry and their inability to pay taxes, especially djizya.³⁵⁸

The payment of djizya - a tax in cash - was very difficult for the Albanian mountainers, who lived in a difficult landscape and too far away from the roads of

³⁵⁵ BOA, (1001/1593 tarihli) Defter-i Cizye-i Gebran-i Vilayet-i Prizrin, *Maliye'den Mudevver*, no. 14930

* For these taxes we talked in the first part of this chapter.

³⁵⁶ Cordignano, F., "Geografia ecclesiastica dell'Albania ...", p. 248; Arnold, Th. W., *The Preaching of Islam* ..., p. 180

³⁵⁷ Veinstein, G., "Une source ottomane de l'histoire albanaise: ...", p. 381

³⁵⁸ BOA, *Mühimme Defteri*, no. 43, pp. 1, 306; no. 46, pp. 295; no. 48, pp. 75, 80, 172, 205

trade and communication to pay. This is a the reason why these Albanians were always rebellious, even when the amount of djizya was constant.³⁵⁹ The Ottoman documents testify that the djizya, because it was paid in cash, was the most difficult tax to pay and was the symbol of the Ottoman taxation the native were required to pay. But in the 16th century the cause of rebellion was not only the difficulty of the payment of djizya. They rebelled because they were not able to meet the fiscal obligations originating from Ottoman Law, and they started to pillage in order to fullfil their immediate needs to survive. As mentioned above, the target of their uprisings were not only the collectors of djizya, but also the sipahis and other Ottoman provincial authorities (sipashis, kadis and mutesellims). The difficult position of the Albanian highlander was expressed by a Catholic Archbishop of Antibarium (1575), who said that the Albanian, Serbian and Bulgarian Christians were under such heavy taxes, that their payment was difficult even for people living in productive lands.³⁶⁰

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According to the evidence offered by the Ottoman surveys the number of city-dwellers was obviously less than the number of the rural population. This indicates that in Albanian lands the agricultural economy prevailed, and the most important part of the native population was engaged in agricultural activity. During the 15th century the total number of houses of the urban population constituted only 3.4 % of

³⁵⁹ BOA, *Mühimme Defteri*, no. 7, p. 885

³⁶⁰ Snegarov, I., *Istorija na Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija-Patriarshija ...*, p. 72

the total houses of Albanian population. The urban population at the end of the 16th century increased 70.8 %, while the Albanian population in total increased 108.8 %. The Ottoman survey registers held in the second half of the 16th century show not only the growth of population in urban centers, but also that in the rural settlements. Some villages, though they are registered as “village”, from the viewpoint of number and the density of population, were as big as a town. For example, the village Labova e Madhe had 473 houses (the Sancak of Vlora), Kamenica 550 houses (the Sancak of Delvina), and Vithkuqi 486 houses (Kaza of Korca). The rural settlements with a considerable demographic number and density situated mainly in the sancaks of Vlora, Delvina, Elbasan and Ohrid, and sparser in the Sancak of Shkodra and none in the sancaks of Dukagjin and Kosovo. Such a phenomenon is explained by the character of the landscape and the productivity of the soil. The large rural villages emerged in lowlands, they were a rare phenomenon for hilly regions, and were almost absent in the highlands. The emergence of such large rural settlements argues that agriculture and the trade of agricultural products increased, while their registration with the status of village and its population as reaya show that in these settlements agriculture was the prevailing branch of economy, though we also see the presence of craftsmen.³⁶¹

Now, let us present statistically the confessional situation of native population according to the data of the Ottoman survey registers held in the first and second half of the 16th century:

Sancaks	Households				The total number of households
	Christians		Muslims		
	Amount of Households	Percentage %	Amount of Households	Percentage %	
Prizren	13 621	97.2	380	2.8	14 001
Vučitrn	19 630	97.5	496	2.5	20 126
Shkodra	19 402	98.2	372	1.8	19 774
Dukagjini	1 849	100	-	-	1 849
Elbasan	8 916	94.4	526	5.6	9 442
Ohrid	32 648	98.1	623	1.9	33 271
Vlora	40 570	99.3	253	0.7	40 823
	136 636	97.8	2650	2.2	139286

Table 2 : The demographic and confessional outlook in the first half of the 16th century

Sancaks	Households				The total number of households
	Christians		Muslims		
	Amount of Households	Percentage %	Amount of Households	Percentage %	
Korça, Bihliste, Hurupiste (nahiye)	12 529	85.5	2 123	14.5	14 652
Prizren	11 175	92.9	845	7.1	12 020
Vučitrn	20 338	95.5	968	4.5	21 600
Shkodra	17 852	87.8	2 467	12.2	20 318
Dukagjini	6 203	79	1 644	21	7 847
Elbasani	8 656	73.9	3 053	26.1	11 709
Ohrid	23 893	83.2	4 807	16.8	28 700
Vlora	34 058	87.6	4 780	12.4	38 838
Delvina	17 529	98.8	207	1.2	17 736
	152 233	87.1	20894	12.9	173127

Table 3 : The demographic and confessional outlook in the second half of the 16th century

³⁶¹ Pulaha, S., "Gjendja demografike ne tokat shqiptare gjate shek. XV-XVI", *Popullsia shqiptare e Kosoves gjate shek. XV-XVI*, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS te Shqiperise-Instituti i Historise, Tirane 1984, p. 654

In the first decades of the 16th century, as is shown in Table no. 2, 97.8 % of the Albanians was non-Muslim. So, Islam was still an urban religion, and did not manage to penetrate in rural area. Therefore the conversion to Islam was an individual phenomenon.

The Sancak of Elbasan, according to the Ottoman sources, resulted in the most islamized space of the Albanian lands in both the first (5.6 %) and second half of the (26.1 %) of the 16th century. The territories of this sancak comprised the central Albanian lands and are mostly low and hillylands. As we explained before, the city of Elbasan was founded in 1466 by sultan Mehmet II as a strategic point in the North-South and East-West axes. In a short time, it was transformed into an administrative center of the sancak and an important point of Islamic life and culture. The economic development and the intensification of exchange in the 16th century influenced even the penetration of Islam in the rural area of this sancak. Nevertheless, we should not forget that, although it was the most islamized administrative unit, until the end of the 16th century only one fourth of the population of this sancak was islamized. The statistics show that islamization was still a superficial phenomenon (12.9 %).

The lower rate of islamization is seen in the Sancak of Delvina and in two sancaks of Kosova. In these regions such a phenomenon can be explained by the strong influence of the Orthodox Church, respectively of the Greek Church of Constantinople and the Orthodox Archbishoprics of Pec and Ohrid. In 1490, in the territories of the Sancak of Prizren we see only one Muslim household, while in 1520-30 was islamized only 2.8 % of all population. The increase was not significant.

Of great importance is to see the differences in the course of islamization between the city and countryside. The cities of Vlora (0 %), Kanina (0.3 %), and Delvina (4 %) were less islamized than their countryside (12.4 %). But this is just an isolated case, because in other sancaks in general the islamization in cities was spread to a considerable extent. In major Albanian cities the rate of islamized people surpassed half of the population, while the average of islamization in countryside did not exceed 13 %. An extreme case was constituted in the cities of Shkodra (100 %) and Peć (90 %) were the most intensively islamized urban centers at the end of the 16th century, while their countryside, at the same time, was islamized only 12.2 %. We should say without doubt that in the 16th century Islam was an urban religion. The economic and social differences between the Ottoman Albanian town and the countryside in the 16th century took on the character of religious separation between the Muslim city and the Christian countryside.

Accordingly, during this century in rural area we see a loose-knit network of Islamic objects of cult, because the Muslim population formed a small proportion of Albanians. In the villages there would have been no need at all for buildings of Islamic creed. From the beginning of the 17th century on, the Islamic buildings began to be built even in the rural areas.³⁶² The Mosque of Alaybey, in the rural region of Dibra, might have been constructed in the last decades of the 16th century. It must have been built by an Ottoman military commander, very probably an Albanian who by way of devshirme entered Ottoman service and wanted to promote Islam in his native district, or else the mosque was built as part of the government policy of bringing the Albanian mountainous tribes down to the plains, as is reflected in a number of entries in the Muhimme defters of the late 16th century.³⁶³

³⁶² Meksi, A., "Ndertimet e kultit mysliman ne Shqiperi", p. 191

³⁶³ Kiel, M., *Ottoman Architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, p. 85

However, the Ottoman conquest and the political, fiscal, and religious institutions destroyed the economic as well as the political and social bases and infra-structure of high Balkanic culture, and in doing so reduced this culture to an almost exclusively popular culture. Christian practices, beliefs, and forms, which are at the basis of a rather substantial portion of popular Islam, entered Islam as a result of conversions and everyday contact of Muslim and Christians in a cycle of life regulated by ancient custom, and through the religious syncretism of the popular dervish orders.³⁶⁴

The chrypto-christian elements emerged in periods of outbursts of Islamic fanaticism. These were elements of Christian origin converted to Islam, but satisfying their conscience by practising Christian rites in private: "In our hearts we are Christians; we have only changed our names in order not to pay taxes imposed by the Turks".³⁶⁵ Being by definition secret, chrypto-christianity encountered a confused state giving the impression of a mixed religion brought about by an imperfect Muslim conversion:

"Müslümanız derler amma asla din ü diyanet ve haşr ü neşr nedir bilmezler. ..."³⁶⁶

Chrypto-christianity is whether the Christian faith was adhered to in concealment. In this state situation, both Islamic and Christian creeds coexisted. The first concrete evidence of *laramania** it has been possible to find among the Catholic Albanians dates from 1610. The Catholic Archbishop of Antıbarium, Marin Bizzi, during a trip through Catholic Albania reports that in the village of Kalivac (close to Durres) there were ten Muslim houses, but they were contributing to the maintenance of the priest because almost all the men had Christian views. A Muslim told him that, though he

³⁶⁴ Vryonis, S., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh Through the Fifteenth Century*, University of California Press 1971, pp. 484-5

³⁶⁵ Skendi, S., "Chrypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area under the Ottomans", *Slavic Review*, XXVI (1967), p. 237

³⁶⁶ *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions*, p. 67

* this is another term used for Chrypto-Christians in Albanian lands. In Slavic lands is used term *dvoeverstvo*.

professed Islam, in his heart he held the Christian faith, in which he wanted to live and die. Marin Bizzi says that of those who outwardly professed Islam but retained Christianity in their hearts there were many in the Ottoman territories, above all in Albania, where whole villages had apostatized in order not to pay taxes.³⁶⁷

A Catholic missionary visiting Kosovo in 1584 recommended that the resident clergy baptise the children of crypto-christians in order to ensure the continuity of Catholicism in this region.³⁶⁸ An Italian traveler who visited Albanian lands in 1625 says that every family had a Muslim member.³⁶⁹

Instances of the secret profession of Christianity after the acceptance of Islamic creed testify to the wide scope of conversions under the pressure of difficult conditions. When to these kinds of conversions is added the forced abductions of girls and women, it becomes clear that factors that at first glance seem insignificant slowly but steadily fostered the expansion of the Muslim population on the Balkan Peninsula.

We should say that the phenomenon of crypto-christianity emerged because the Christian Albanians wanted to survive under the rule of an Islamic state, to avoid the fiscal pressure and social-administrative "discrimination". A religion carried by a conquering race to alien lands superimposed itself.³⁷⁰ Theoretically "...unbelievers were people to whom the truth [the Islamic faith] had been offered in the final and perfect form ..., they will fully and foolishly refused."³⁷¹ In 1573 the Kadi of Elbasan wrote of the need to convert the population of Reka (Dibra region) to the true faith to discourage uprisings. This is a case in which a positive policy of encouraging conversion as a method of pacifying an unruly area was pursued. The punishment

³⁶⁷ Skendi, S., "Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area under the Ottomans", p. 236

³⁶⁸ Gjini, G., *Ipeshkvia Shkup-Prizren* ..., p. 169

³⁶⁹ Snegarov, I., *Istorijska Arhiepiskopija-Patriarshija*..., p. 81

³⁷⁰ Hasluck, F., *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. II, The Clarendon Press, Oxford 1929, p. 564

³⁷¹ Lewis, B.-B. Braude, "Introduction", in: B. Braude & B. Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, Holmes & Meier Publishers, London-New York 1982, p. 4

inflicted on the rebellious Catholics was a determining factor more than sufficient to consummate the tendencies that had been drawing them towards Islam and to cause large numbers of them to fall away from the Christian Church.

Islam is a patriarchal religion,³⁷² and that suited many in the Albanian highlands and their codes of life. In the history of religions the woman enjoyed a special place as a persistent and conservative force. Even during the beginning of the massive islamization of Albanians in the 16th century, they strongly reacted protecting their previous or traditional religion, culture and manner of life. Evliya Celebi says: “the reaya [of Mamurras] are all infidells and their women folk are all enchantresses”.³⁷³

The ulema represented normative Islam whereas the majority of the Muslims practiced what may be called popular Islam. Continuous communication between the remotest Muslim communities and the centers of learning prevented the widening of the gap between normative and popular Islam.

³⁷² Knappert, J., “The Theme of Conversion in Swahili Literature”, *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, New York - London 1979, p. 188

³⁷³ *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions*, p. 27

CONCLUSIONS

Ibn-i Haldun says: "the vanquished always want to imitate the victor in his distinctive marks, his occupation, and all his other conditions and customs. A nation that has defeated and comes under the rule of another nation will quickly perish".³⁷⁴

After converting to Islam, islamized Albanians became defenders of the new ideology hoping to merge with the Ottoman state's interests including those of religion and cultural enlightenment. The conversion to Islam in the 15th century of an Albanian normally resulted in a major change in the convert's social status and identification. For an individual, even a noble, conversion to Islam meant that he was no longer a part of his old religious community. He may actually have been regarded as legally dead in the eyes of his former co-religionists. If there were too few Muslims in his home community, for him to feel that he could live a good Muslim life, a concept that was inevitably affected by how he had been conceived a good Christian, Jewish, he was likely to emigrate to a community with a larger Muslim population. This last tendency might well be enhanced by economics insofar as a convert might find himself frozen out of his customary participation in the economic life of his erstwhile coreligionists and consequently seek out a large Muslim community in whose economic life he could participate more or less in his accustomed fashion. Together these changes constituted what has been termed social conversion.³⁷⁵ He came to think of a new language, and he normally gave his children names from the Turkish/Islamic onomasticon.³⁷⁶ It was social rather than

³⁷⁴ Vryonis, S., "Nomadization and Islamization in Asia Minor", *Byzantina kai Metabyzantina (Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks and Ottoman)*, vol. I-II, Reprinted Studies, Undena Publications, Malibu CA, 1981, p. 61

³⁷⁵ Bulliet, R., *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*, Harvard University Press 1979, p. 36-7

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 36

formal conversion that created pressures for change which affected the course of Islamic religious development.³⁷⁷

The term “Muslim society” means a society in which Islam had achieved such a numerical preponderance in comparison to other existing religions that its social institutions determine the complexion of the society as a whole. Additionally, the Islamic institutions have been adapted to a mass following, and alternative religious and institutional structures pertaining to minority religions are no longer seen as a potentially vital threat to Islam.³⁷⁸ Islamic influence reached the various urban centers and groups in different degrees. Because of its adaptability in compromising with traditional Albanian ways of life, Islamic creed could appeal differentially to a wide section of the population. Dhimmis and newly converted Muslims in Albanian lands lived side by side, so they were comparatively free from sectarian prejudice, partly because they were bound by common interests and similar ways of life, partly because countrymen of both faiths tended to be latitudinarian in matters of religion.

Commoners in urban centers and areas nearby may have been drawn into the orbit of Islam by attending official ceremonies in which Muslim prayers were said. They are to be distinguished from the other pagans not incorporated in an Islamic “kingdom”.

In the 16th century, conversion gave rise to strong pressures that now, taking on a collective character, affected the course of development of the new religion in Albanian lands. H. Lowry is right when he said that it was cheaper to be a Muslim than a non-Muslim. Non-Muslim city dwellers paid more taxes than those converted to Islam.³⁷⁹ Besides, in the daily and religious life, the Christians were not allowed to forget that they were a subject people. They could not build new churches without

³⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 37

³⁷⁸ Bulliet, R., ““Emergence of Muslim Society in Iran”, p. 32

³⁷⁹ Lowry, H., *Trabzon Şehrinin İslamlaşması ve Türkleşmesi, 1461-1583*, 2. baskı, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, İstanbul 1998, p. 136

special permission, which was seldom granted unless the proposed site was in a purely Christian locality. Permission also had to be granted for the repair of churches. The Christians had to wear a distinctive costume. A Christian who was converted to Islam, even involuntarily as a child or a captive, was liable to the death penalty if he reverted to his old faith.

The growing physical isolation and social pressure of a people who were scattered enough as it was, and their increasing remoteness from public roads and centers of culture could not have remained without consequence for the cultural and moral development of any Christian person.

While the mass of the faithful people in the lowlands oscillated according to the religion whose political power was stronger, Albanian highlanders were people living under difficult geographical conditions and bounded only by blood. Poverty lent a severe pragmatism to their thought, so that they judged only by results, knowing that, if man cannot live by bread alone, he cannot even subsist without it. Insecurity sharpened their understanding of human nature, trying their values by the acid of survival.³⁸⁰ So, we can doubtless say that the conversion of Albanians to Islam directly reflected the spirit of the constitution under which they always lived. Albanians did not managed to create and inherit in the Ottoman period a national church, as the Slavic people, so their attitude towards Islam was expressed excellently in the Latin maxim: "cuius regio eius religio" (the common people follow the religion of the ruler).

Islam was adopted in Albanian lands by an ethnic group in their own milieu, but maintaining their own ethnicity and cultural identity. There was hardly a break with past traditions, and pre-Islamic customs and beliefs survived. In this process more people came under the influence of Islam, but they took longer to cover the distance

from the former religion to Islam, viewed as a continuum from the nominal acceptance of Islam to greater conformity and commitment.³⁸¹

During the 16th century, while the confessional situation of urban center changed in favor of Islam, the rural area continued to preserve its Christian outlook. The Muslim population increased insignificantly chiefly through the islamization of local inhabitants. The absence of Ottoman colonists explains the fact that islamized Albanians preserved their nationality. Thirty percent of the total population nevertheless converted to Islam, while seventy percent retained their pre-Ottoman faith. The conversion of Albanians, in general, was a indicator of the degree of their integration into the Ottoman/Islamic rhythm of life.

³⁸⁰ Emery, J., *Sons of the Eagle*, Macmillan & CO.LTD, London 1948, p.10-11

³⁸¹ Levtzion, N., "Toward a Comparative Study of Islamization", *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, New York - London 1979, p. 19

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