

THE PRESENTATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE PERIOD IN ALBANIAN JOURNALS BETWEEN WORLD WARS I AND II

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Introduction

The period between World Wars I and II, was a very challenging period in the history of the Albanian people. Regardless that Albania officially was not part of any of the two belligerent coalitions (the Allies and the Central Powers) in the First World War, nevertheless, some parts of hers were occupied by the belligerents (the largest part of Albania was occupied by Austria-Hungary, while the southern part was occupied by France and Italy). Even after the end of the war, some parts of it, especially the southern part, were still occupied, and the war for freedom continued until the final departure of the foreign occupying armies. Even after this achievement, the political stability in Albania continued to be a “relative stability,” as Egro emphasizes. (Egro, 2007: 65)

Having this general preview of the political situation in Albania (without going into the details of these events that happened because it is not the aim of this article), we see that the scientific development, including historiography too, had its difficulties and did not achieve its development as it should be. Unfortunately, in this period, the historiography was still far from being a meaningful historiography, with a critical and scientific character, since the nationalist historiography was still dominating, which in fact we do not face only in Albania, but also in other Balkan countries. Nevertheless, it can not be denied their contributions in the development of Albanian historiography. Part of this contribution were journals or periodicals that were published in that period, respectively, the historical

articles that were published by those journals. (For more details on the political life in Albania in this period: *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar III*, 2007: 123-371. For more details on the development of Albanian historiography in this period: *Egro*, 2007: 65-87)

The main journals of the time that were published were: *Hylli i Dritës*, *Leka*, *Ditura* and *Agimi*. Before we see the presentation of the Ottoman period in these journals, let's have a look of these journals, their contents and therefore we will have a clear preview of the subject that we are talking about.

“*Hylli i Dritës*” (Eng. The Star of Light) was a monthly cultural-literary journal (periodical) of the Catholic clergy of the Franciscans Order. “*Hylli i Dritës*” has published cultural, social, literary, folklore, religious, linguistic, historical, and philosophical articles. It was issued in three different periods: 1) October 1913-July 1914; 2) May 1921-December 1924 and 3) January 1930-July 1944. The founder and first director for 25 years was Gjergj Fishta (1913-1938), then Gjon Shllaku (1938-1941) and Anton Harapi (1942-1943). The first number was issued on October 1, 1913. In addition to the theological, social, and political views of the religious circle that she represented, she brought valuable studies and data in the field of Albanian history too. (*Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar Vol.II*, 2008: 966)

“*Leka*” (1929-1944) was a monthly journal of the Catholic clergy. It was the body of the LEKA association (LEKA abbreviation of LIDHJA-EDUKATA-KULTURA-ARGËTIMI, in English: LEAGUE-EDUCATION-CULTURE-ENTERTAINMENT). It was founded on 9 December 1928. It was a cultural, political, historical, and literary journal. In 1942, a special issue with archival and publicity material was published following the commemorative issues on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the declaration of independence of Albania. (*Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar Vol.II*, 2008: 1460)

“*Ditura*” (Eng. Knowledge) (1909-1929), was a cultural, literary, and scientific journal. It was published by Lumo Skëndo. First number was issued on January 1, 1909 in Thessaloniki. From 1926-1929 was regularly issued in Tirana as an “Albanian temporary,” under the ownership of Lumo Skëndo’s Library. *Ditura* reflected and dealt with important problems of Albanian history, language, culture and traditions. It became a national encyclopedia for all areas of life, especially in the cultural and social areas. Acquaintance with a good part of the work of foreign explorers and albanologists about Albania and Albanians, significantly increased the level of the journal. (*Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar Vol.I*, 2008: 419)

“*Agimi*” (eng. Dawn) 1919-1922, was a journal with social, literary, pedagogical, and satirical themes. It was the body of “*Vëllaznija*” (Eng. Brotherhood)

association. It was founded on February 16, 1919 in Shkodër by the joining of two associations: “Mustafa Pasha” and “Vaso Pasha”. The first number was issued in May 1919. This journal dealt with problems of the Albanian language, history, ethnography, archeology and national traditions, literature, arts and music. (Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar Vol.I, 2008: 15)

From what was said above, we understand that these journals were not scientific journals, as we define them nowadays. The political situation in Albania unfortunately prevented the establishment of decent scientific institutions that would deal with historical studies, and therefore the publication of any decent scientific journal was missing. However, these journals and the authors of these articles, I think, made a great contribution in two aspects:

1. For the Albanian readers of that time, the new historical knowledge about the history of the Albanian nation from antiquity to the independence of Albania were welcome;
2. They began to take the first steps towards an Albanian scientific historiography.

The presentation of the Ottoman period

The presentation of the Ottoman period in these journals could be of two types:

1. The general presentation
2. The specific or special presentation

The general presentation means the studies that were made on general topics, not specifics such as national figures or important historical events. And by the specific presentation, it means studies with specific topics, such as a national figure or an important historical event, which we will see later. As for the first one, the articles that we found are as follows:

- “Javët e fundit të sunimit tyrk në Shqipëri” (Eng. The last weeks of Turkish rule in Albania) (Diturija, 4(1), 1929: 1-9; Diturija, 4(2), 1929: 41-48; Diturija, 4(3), 1929: 81-84)
- “Fundi i dominatës’ otomane në Shqipëri” (Eng. The end of ottoman dominance in Albania) (Diturija, 3(5), 1928: 178-182)
- “Roli historik i Perandoris s’Osmanllive në Ballkan dhe burime historike t’idesë nacionaliste shqiptare” (Eng. The historical role of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and historical sources of the Albanian nationalist idea) (Merxhani, B. Përpjekja Shqiptare, 1(1), 1936: 42-45) and

- “Feudalizmi në Balkan e rrjedhimet e tija nen sundimin Otoman” (Eng. Feudalism in the Balkans and its consequences under Ottoman rule) (Hylli i Dritës, 9(3), 1933: 111-116)

As for the first article, which we see in three issues, the author has made an analysis of the political circumstances in which Albania was found in the last days of Ottoman rule until the declaration of independence in 1912. “It had been two years since Albania had not seen a day of serenity” (p.1). This is how the author summarizes the events of 1910–1912, which were characterized by the Albanian uprisings and finally by the declaration of independence. But what he emphasizes more in his analysis is the events that followed the year 1912, because in addition to making them gain their long-sought rights, “some autonomy in cultural, administrative, and military matters” (p. 2), it also accelerated the formation of the Balkan Alliance, which was made by the four Balkan states, who until yesterday were enemies, to unite for attacking Türkiye” (p.3). The situation was in their favor because “Türkiye has been weakened by an incessant war that has been going on for three years (Albania, Libya, and Yemen), and this weakness was increased even more by the enmity between the Anatolians and Arbëresh (Albanian-F.P.) (p. 3). The author stresses some important changes that we have seen at the Albanians in recent times: “the rapprochement with Serbs in the north and the Greeks in the south” (p.4). This change, according to him, came as result of “Turkish behavior in the last 3 years, as well as the atrocities committed” (p.5). Another problem that we face in Albania in this time is the lack of weapons. When Mahmut Hayret Pashe Jella, commander of the Montenegrin border, arrives in Skopje, “he telegraphs to Istanbul to send 20.000 rifles. The telegraphs come from the four corners of northern Albania, where the people, the highlanders (alb. malësorët) are looking for rifles “(p.7). For the lack of weapons, he says: “Albania produce soldiers, but not weapons” (p.8). The situation was not better, even in the city of Peja. “In Ipek (Pejë), the situation has taken a form of a macabre tragedy. The city is filled with broken, demoralizes soldier, without moral or physical worth” (p.41) Then the author continues with the fact that, faced with this situation, the Albanian leaders moved to hold an assembly where the fate of Albania would be decided. Due to the circumstances, it was decided that the assembly would be held in Vlora, which was still unoccupied by the Balkan Allies, and it was “the harbor where a telegraph comes and puts it in touch with the civilized world with foreign powers “(p.47). At that time, the telegraph was the main tool of communication. “The Assembly of November 28, 1912” emphasizes the author’s point that “in theory, it ended Turkish rule in Albania” (p.81), but the reality on the ground was different. Although

there were still Turkish military divisions, such as of Mahmut Hajret Pasha in Berat (p.81), the north and the south were resisting the neighboring Balkans: the north (Shkodra) to the Montenegrins and the south (Janina) to the Greeks. Regardless of its announcement on November 28, “we can say that in May 1913, five months after the proclamation of self-government, all of Albania left outside the Greek-Slavic occupation, was under the direct rule of the new national government without any traces or signs of the old regime “ (p.83) The new circumstances created in the Balkans after these wars and the decisions of the London Conference meant that: “officially and compelled by the natural course of events, Türkiye bows to the fatality that separated her forever from Rumelia, from the cradle of her greatness, from the piece of land in which had started and developed the power and fame of the house of Osmanxhik “ (p.83)

Meanwhile, in the article “The End of Ottoman Dominance in Albania,” there is, in fact, a memory of Alfred Rappaport, an official in the Austro-Hungary Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In these memories, he narrates what was, in fact, the end of Ottoman dominance in Albania. According to him, the decisions of the London Conference put an end to Ottoman dominance in Albania. He mentions in his memory that ” On December 19, 1912, in the first meeting of the ambassadors in London - a meeting that marked great progress in the development of the Albanian question - a decision was made that was not clear and could have been commented on in different ways: “we decided that following the agreement to submit to our governments: Albanian autonomy guaranteed and controlled exclusively by all powers under the sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan. It is understood that there will not be a Turkish element in the administration “(p.4). This decision of the Great Powers is described as the “product of a compromise between the powers.”. We cannot say that it was a clear and logical explanation. This wording, moreover, “came from the Russian ambassador who wanted to add the phrase “with a governor appointed by the powers and approved by the sultan,” which would have made Albania a kind of oriental Rumeli (p.4). This unclear situation for the statute continued until the summer of 1913. Rappaport remembers that “before the Conference of London started the discussions for the Albanian statute, the governments of Vienna and Rome decided not to mention Ottoman suzerainty. A telegraph from count Berchtold to count von Mensdorff on 7, 1913, explained this joint decision because of: 1) the distance between Albania and Enos-Midia line; a line that was seen as a border between Türkiye and Bulgaria; 2) the consequences that the maintenance of Ottoman suzerainty over Albania may have for the legal situation of the monasteries of Ajnoros; 3) the opposition of Albanians themselves, especially the Christians, to the maintenance

of this suzerainty and for the difficulties that could happen - in a war case - to obstruct the neutrality of Albania. This viewpoint was accepted in the meeting of ambassadors on July 29; a meeting that approved a text, Article 2: Any form of suzerainty between Turkey and Albania is excluded. Instead of Ottoman suzerainty, the great powers decided that Albania should be under international control (p.4). The Austrian diplomat ends his memories by saying that “the end of the Turkish dominance in Albania, the end that is understood in the declaration of independence by Ismajl Qemajli, had in this way international approval and acceptance (p.4).a meeting

Branko Merxhani in his article “The historical role of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and historical sources of the Albanian nationalist idea,” analyzes, from a sociological viewpoint – the source of the Albanian nationalist idea, how it came to this. Merxhani emphasizes: “The Ottoman Empire in the first phase of its establishment is presented as a joint work for the rise of which, besides the Ottomans (Turks), all the other conquered peoples of Asia Minor and the Balkans worked positively or negatively, regardless of religious, racial, and linguistic differences. This is the special sociological quality that characterizes every imperial phenomenon... Imperialism was not supported by the national foundation. Its bases are religious and political. But above all, it is the religious feeling that rules “(p.42). In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the author divides two types of groups of this nature:

1. The Muslim religious grouping gathered around the Caliphate. Muslims of every race are members of this group
2. The Christian religious grouping gathered around the Greek Patriarchate of Fanar, where we also have the same internal form: different races, the equal rights “(p.43).

The author then concludes that: “If the sects had kept their power until the end, with the order and discipline they had maintained in the first stages of the imperial period, these groups would have never been dispersed or abolished, and therefore, the nationalist movements would never have arisen, not only of the conquered peoples, but also of the Turkish ruling people themselves” (pg. 43).

Well, what happened next? What causes this slow religious weakening by giving rise to the nationalist ideas of the ruled peoples? The author’s thesis about this is based on the appearance of a new phenomenon in the Balkans that was not found before. This phenomenon he called “oriental urbanization,” also known as Kasaba. What does this new phenomenon produce? Social density, demographic increase, and the birth of a division of labor. This new division of labor was

the reason for the formation of a sociological grouping of another type: where professional groups began to form next to religious groups. Thus, the collective religious consciousness that had struggled as the only power in the early Muslim or Christian groups began to retreat and lose ground. Religion is not an aim; it is only used as a tool (p.43-44). Schools were opened near the churches. The press began to develop, first with books and magazines, then with newspapers. The peoples of the Balkans enter a new sociological period of their collective life. We are on the verge of making national history. Language took the place of God. The language of the religious group, the sacred and unintelligible language, is set aside and replaced by the language of society, the language of living people. These changes, the author continues, caused: "collective consciousness to change, together with it, the collective functions and concepts, both of Muslims and Christians. The religious organization surrendered its power and rule into the hands of the language organization. First, Orthodox Christians do this, such as Armenians, Vlachs, Serbs, Bulgarians, even the Greeks themselves, and finally, the Orthodox Albanians. And then the Turks come and overthrow them too, even with a strong fist of rebellion, their holy and blessed Caliphate. The author describes this great social change as a transition from "people" to "nation" (p.44).

In the article "Feudalism in the Balkans and its Consequences Under Ottoman Rule," the author stresses the consequences of this system in the Balkans during Ottoman Empire rule. According to him, "the cause of the suffering of the Balkan peoples was not the Ottoman occupation, but the political fragmentation that was the main feature of the feudal system and the ambition for power of the local princes. The conflicts of a political nature between the Balkan feudal lords prevented the process of creating the Albanian national state, a process that had already begun in the 13th century. This situation greatly facilitated the work of the Ottomans, both politically and militarily, and because the notion of nationality did not exist in the Ottoman state concept, it was achieved that the Ottoman state stood above the communities" (p. 111-113)

This was an analysis of the general presentation. As for the specific presentation, we have two different types:

1. Topics with a focus on national figures;
2. Topics focusing on different historical events of the time

The national figures

As for the first one, from the national figures that we mostly encounter in these journals, it is undoubtedly the figure of Gjergj Kastrioti – Skenderbeu.

Skanderbeg, who lived in the 15th century, was at the head of the Albanian army against the largest army in the world at that time, the Ottoman one, and managed to successfully withstand their attacks, especially those of Mehmet II. We find exactly these heroisms in these articles in these journals, with special emphasis on the siege of Kruja (1466). "Towards the middle of July 1466, Sultan Mehmet II besieged Kruje, the capital of Albania, with a strong army of 150,000 soldiers. Unrelenting attacks and strict attempts to conquer this famous city were broken by the great center of the valiant guards. So, the embittered Mehmet was forced to return in the first days of August, leaving Kruja besieged by Ballaban Pasha with 70,000 soldiers. (Gjika, S. Vatikani e Shqypnija. Agimi 3(10), 1922: 181-183)

This siege, although successful, brought him into great difficulty, so Skanderbeg was personally forced to go to Rome to ask for help from Pope Paul III. This trip in Rome we can see in some articles of these journals. (Gjika, 1922; Kamsi, K. Udhimi i Skanderbeut në Romë, Leka 4(3), 1932: 73-76). Here is how his trip there and the welcome he received in Rome are described:

"He was greeted with great honors in Rome. Crowds of people have come to that eternal city to see the greatest warrior of that time." About his arrival in Rome, we also understand from Cardinal Gonzaga's letter sent to his father on December 15, 1466:

"Mr. Scanderbeg arrived here on Friday (December 12), and the families of the Cardinals were sent to meet them. He is an old man; over 60 years old; he came with a few knights and was a poor man. I feel he needs help."

After a few days, he went to a meeting of the cardinals, to whom he told them about a beautiful and long conversation about the dangerous situation of his country, which was being trampled by the Turks, and asked them for help to defeat the enemy, by destroying Ballabani's army, which was around Kruja, by expelling the Turks from Albania and stopping the danger that was threatening Christian Europe. The council of cardinals quickly saw the needs of Skanderbeg, but the help they gave him was not much." (Kamsi, 1932). The help that he received by Rome we see again in the Cardinal Gonzaga's two letters sent to his father: the first letter sent on January 7, 1467: "This morning in the secret consistory we were discussing the matter of the aid that Scanderbeg asked for, and in short, the pope said he would give him five thousand ducats, he would not give him more, alleging that he too had to look after his own business, showing that he was afraid of some novelty." In the second letter sent on January 12, he says, "This morning I had a speech in the secret conference about the fate of Scanderbeg, to whom they will also give five thousand ducats." From Rome, he wanted to go to Venice, but as time did not wait, he quickly returned to Albania. (Kamsi, 1932).

Further in this article, it is mentioned that: "Among of all the kingdoms of Europe only the Republic of Venice helped him with money, food, and soldiers". And he also added that "from the Books of Accounts, it is recorded that our national hero received financial aid from the Pope two more times after his trip to Rome. On 19 April 1467 were given to him 2700 ducats and on 1 September 1467 were given 1500 ducats". (Kamsi, 1932).

Scanderge's relations with Pope were earlier. In the article "Scanderbeg and Franciscans" (Fishta, A. Skanderbegu e Françeskajt. Hylli i Dritës, 6(7-8), 1930: 366-376), it mentions his relations with Franciscans and how they were gathered around him in the anti-ottoman war. "Not even Skanderbeg was ever pushed into those bloody battles without being advised by the Franciscans. After Sfetigrad fell to the cruel hands of the enemy on July 31, 1449, Skanderbeg turned to the Archbishop of Tivar, Monsignor Andres, a Franciscan, to inform Rome on how in bad situation he was, how in bad condition Christianity was in Albania, how he was not capable of taking paid fighters because he had not any money at all, but to inform the Saint Pope Nicole V, that the Albanian people have made an oath among themselves that they will stand until the last drop of blood rather than surrender to the harsh choice of the barbarians of Asia." (Fishta, 1930).

From these articles about Scanderbeg, we see that apart from his national heroism against the Ottomans (or the Turks, as they mentioned), we also see his religious (Christian/Catholic) heroism against them as well. He is described as a "great warrior versus the Turks and a great defender of Christianity. Our valiant people often asked for material and moral help from the Vatican to maintain the bloody battles against the Sultan's large armies that were relentlessly attacking small Albania, which, with unparalleled courage, had become a target for the expansion of the Turks in Europe" (Gjika, 1922). The importance of religious courage at that time we also understand from the article "Scanderbeg and Franciscans" where, among other things, it is mentioned how the Pope sent a Franciscan to Scanderbeg in 1447 to preserve the Catholic religion and to encourage the Christians to help Gjergj Kastrioti – Scanderbeg. The same support was mentioned given him 10 years later (27 April 1457) by the Pope Callixtus III successor of Nicholas V, who strengthened the rights given to the Franciscan nuns by his predecessor, noting only for Albania for the good of the Christian religion. (Fishta, 1930).

Another important fragment from his life that we find in these articles are his relations with the kingdom of Naples and the help he gave them against the Anjous. (Dyndja e Shqyptarve t'Italis. Hylli i Dritës, 2(2), 1921: 64-70).

When we talk about this topic, it is worth mentioning that we find documents/reports between Scanderbeg and Ferdinand of Naples (Gegaj, A. Dokumenta mbi relacione mjes të Napolit e familjes së Kastriotëve. *Hylli i Dritës*, 14(11), 1938: 617-620; *Hylli i Dritës*, 14(12), 1938: 697-701). These documents, even though they are published only in Latin, are, of course, of great historical value because we understand that this relationship between them is also proven by archival documents. The importance of the publication of these documents also stands in the fact that, until the time of their publication in this journal in 1938, they were unpublished.

When talking about the documents, it is worth mentioning the article: “Two documents from the time of Sancerbeg” (*Shqyptari per mik*. Leka 3(12), 1931: 366-372). These documents were extracted from a book called “Faggiano” (1929) and are published in both Latin and Albanian. These two documents have to do with Scanderbeg’s help to Ferdinand, the son of Alfonso, king of Naples, against the Anjous. In the first document, we see how Ioanes Antonius, the prince of Tarent, addresses Skanderbeg about how he left your country in the war against the Turks and came to our country to fight against the Christians. While in the second document, as Scanderbeg’s response against him, it is said that he came with the request of the papacy for help to Ferdinand as well as to the help of his friend Alfonse’s son, who often helped me when I was in bad condition against the Turks. Publication of these documents for the time, I think they have their value in Albanian historiography.

Another topic that we encounter about Scanderbeg in these journals is the article titled: “A rival of Scanderbeg” (Sirdani, M. *Nji rival i Skanderbegut*. *Hylli i Dritës* 3(7-8), 1932: 385-395; *Hylli i Dritës* 3(9), 1932: 437-443; *Hylli i Dritës* 3(12), 1932: 617-625).

Firstly, it talks about the history of the Dukagjini family, an important Albanian family of the 15th century. It is mentioned for the first time in documents from 1368 under the names: Ducagin, Ducaghin, Duccaghi, Ducchain and Ducchayn. In this year, a member of her family is mentioned as Vojvod in Vlore. Since then, it has always been mentioned as an Albanian “nobilis generatio albanensis”. From the archives of Venice, it is proven that the center of their government was first Lezha and later Kosova. Their principality stretched from Drin in Kosova to the Serbian border. They probably got the surname Dukagjin from a land with that name, or from one of their chieftains called Dukë, or from the head of that family who became a Dukë with the name Gjin.” (p.389). The author continues that “In 1406 at the head of the Dukagjini family came Pali who was equipped with all the qualities required for a man who has the government in his hand:

generous, loyal, and skilled to reconcile every conflict. His residency was Ulpjana (Prizren). After the return of Skanderbeg to Albania and taking over the country, Pali supported him with all the power he had. His zeal was seen from the first general meeting, the meeting of Lezha on March 2, 1444. After the assembly elected Skanderbeg as the general captain, Pali proposed that each of them should note the number of soldiers they owed to him to help against the Turks. The first war that the Albanians fought after these meetings, that of Torvioll, Pali sent good military aid to Skanderbeg under the command of Marin Igrake, who was killed in that war with several other commanders of the allied army (June 29, 1444). After this victory and the return to Kruje, he (Scanderbeg – F.P) was welcomed and congratulated for this victory by many princes, and Pali was among them” (p.392). Unlike Pali, his son Leka did not continue his father’s politics, so he saw Skanderbeg as his rival. And this is exactly the purpose of the author’s article in 3 issues: to show the rivalry between Lek Dukagjini and Skanderbeg. The reasons for this rivalry with the Leka, the author expresses as follows: “The reasons can be easily explained: by nature, he was completely different from his father: proud, selfish, unfaithful, cruel, governor of the same region, or bigger than Skanderbeg. It seemed humiliating to him to have a prince over him, and while he could not see the possibility of catching directly with him, he caused more trouble than any other Albanian prince. Among the first troubles of this prince - which later caused three big consequences: the war with Venice, the defeat of Berat, and the betrayal of Moisi Golem – was the trouble of 1445. In that year, when the little sister of Scanderbeg, Mamica, was married to Muzakë Topian, at their wedding there were many Albanian princes. Among them were Lekë Dukagjini and Lekë Zaharia. They were looking at each other hostilely. The reason for this hostility was that both of them wanted to engage with Iren, the only successor of Gjergj Dushman, the prince of Zadrimë, who was attending that wedding. Her presence raised the grudge of two contenders, and in one day two servants of them started to fight each other, and then both Leka’s started to fight each other, their armies supported their princes and, therefore, started a real battle between them for some hours.” (p.393-394).

From this article, we understand that Leke Dukagjini, in order to destroy the state of Kastriots and Scanderbeg, did not hesitate to make alliances with the Venetians as well. But the circumstances changed later. “When Skanderbeg in 1450 was found abandoned by the Albanian princes, even by Arianit, who had warned him not to expect help from him until he married his daughter, only Dukagjin and Topiaj sent help.” However, as the author points out, “His friendly relations with Leke Dukagjini lasted for a short time. When Skanderbeg married

Donika, the daughter of Arijanit, in 1451, all the princes took part in the celebration except the Dukagjines. The cause of their dissatisfaction was probably that they hoped to marry one of their daughters to Skanderbeg. However, this dissatisfaction did not last long, and it became a real enmity (p.440-441). Relations between them were broken again in 1461. The reason was that Lek Dukagjini, helped by the Shpanët, the prince of Pulti, had conquered Deja by killing the Venetian commander and had asked for Skanderbeg's protection against the Venetians. When he saw that Scanderbeg wanted to be outside of this issue, he was very angry, and together with the Shpanët, he made an alliance with the Turks against him and the Venetians. (p.442-443).

The circumstances after 1461 changed. "It seems that Leka saw his mistake and realized that only with a sincere friendship with Skanderbeg and Venice, they can save Albanians from the Turkish danger. Therefore, from 1461 until the end of his life, more than any other allied prince supported Skanderbeg against the Turks (p.617).

When we are talking about the articles about Skanderbeg, it should be noted that there are also folklore articles about him. For instance: "The Heart of Scanderbeg" (Sirdani, M. Zembra e Skanderbegut (Histori e legenda). Hylli i Dritës, 7(5), 1931: 291-299), which tells stories and legends passed down about him. For illustration, I want to mention one of them called: "The Reward of the Captives.". During the siege of Ohrid against Seremet Beg, his son and 12 important leaders were captured. When Pasha returns to the city and realized that his son has been captured by Scanderbeg, he sends an envoy to convince Scanderbeg to release his son, and in return, he will give him whatever he wants. When Scanderbeg heard, the envoy replied to him: "Go back to your lord and tell him on behalf of me: the captives are all of them free and in return, you will send what your heart feels that it should be, and that I am ready to help you any time you feel that you need my help" (Sirdani, 1931).

Among the last articles about Scanderbeg that we can find in these journals is the article "A memorable anniversary" (Sirdani, M. Nji Kryevjetuer i permallshem. Hylli i Dritës, 8(1), 1932: 30-39), an article on the anniversary of his death. "January 17, the day on which the greatest valiant of the national idea, the great Scanderbeg, left this world... to remind the readers of this journal, in this month, of the last actions until the death of this great man who knew, at such a critical time, to unite the hearts of the Albanians." (Sirdani, 1932)

Another national figure who is very present in these journals is Ali Pashe Tepelena.

Between the descriptions of Lord Byron and the diplomatic relations between Ali Pasha and Napoleon Bonaparte – this is how we can summarize the articles about Ali Pasha that we can find in different issues of these journals.

Lord Byron a well-known English traveler from the beginning of the 19th century, on his journey to Greece, had to go through Albania, respectively, through Ioannina and Tepelena, which at that time were under the rule of Ali Pasha. Precisely for these trips and for the reception made by Ali, we understand from his letter sent to his mother on October 12, 1809, from Preveza, a letter published in *Agimi* (Lord Byron në Toskni. *Agimi*, 3(4), 1921: 64-67). Here is how Byron describes it: “I have now been some time in Turkey: this place is on the coast, but I have traversed the interior of the province of Albania on a visit to the Pasha... Since then, I have traveled about 150 miles, as far as Tepelen, his Highness’s country palace, where I stayed for three days. The name of the Pasha is Ali, and he is considered a man of the first abilities: he governs the whole of Albania (the ancient Illyricum), Epirus, and part of Macedonia. His son, Veli Pasha, to whom he has given me letters, governs the Morea, and has great influence in Egypt; in short, he is one of the most powerful men in the Ottoman Empire. When I reached Ioannina, the capital, after a journey of three days over the mountains, through a country of the most picturesque beauty, I found that Ali Pasha was with his army in Illyricum, besieging Ibrahim Pasha in the castle of Berat. He had heard that an Englishman of rank was in his dominions, and had left orders in Ioannina with the commandant to provide a house, and supply me with every kind of necessary gratuity; and though I had been allowed to make presents to the slaves, etc., I have not been permitted to pay for a single article of household consumption. I rode out in the vizier’s houses, and saw the palaces of himself and his grandsons; they are splendid, but too much ornamented with silk and gold. In nine days, I reached Tepelen. Our journey was much prolonged by the torrents that had fallen from the mountains and intersected the roads. I shall never forget the singular scene on entering Tepelen at five in the afternoon, as the sun was going down. It brought to mind (with some change of dress, however) Scott’s description of Branksome Castle in his *Lay and the feudal system*. The Albanians, in their dresses (the most magnificent in the world, consisting of a long white kilt, gold-worked cloak, crimson velvet gold-laced jacket and waistcoat, silver-mounted pistols and daggers), The next day, I was introduced to Ali Pasha. I have a Greek interpreter for general use, but a physician of Ali’s named Femlario, who understands Latin, acted for me on this occasion. His first question was, why, at so early an age, did I leave my country? (The Turks have no idea of traveling for amusement). He then said, the English Minister, Captain Leake,

had told him I was of a great family and desired his respect for my mother, which I now, in the name of Ali Pasha, present to you. He said he was certain I was a man of birth because I had small ears, curling hair, and little white hands, and he expressed himself pleased with my appearance and garb. He told me to consider him a father while I was in Turkey and said he looked at me as his son. Indeed, he treated me like a child, sending me almonds and sugared sherbet, fruit, and sweetmeats, twenty times a day. He begged me to visit him often, and at night, when he was at leisure. I then, after coffee and pipes, retired for the first time. I saw him three times afterwards.” (p.64-67)

The Albanian reader of this period can learn more about the life of Ali Pasha even from Ottoman sources, rare writings that we can find in these journals. This is thanks to the translation of some fragments of “History by Cevdet Pasha (Tarih-i Cevdet) by the famous writer Mehdi Frasherri in the *Dituria* related to Ali Pasha (more exactly from vols. 9 and 11). (Frashëri, M. *Disa dokumenta historike mbi Ali pashë Janinë*. *Diturija*, 3(2), 1927: 97-106). In this article, we find information from the life of Ali Pasha, from his coming to power, the way he came, how he managed to remove his father-in-law Ibrahim Pasha from power as the leader of Berat, how he managed with his intrigues to put his son Muhtar Pasha in power in Vlora, how he had managed to leave even the inspector sent from Istanbul, Abdylkerim, without the possibility to do anything, either to remove him from power or to put Ibrahim Pasha back in power. Also, from this data, the Albanian reader understands that “Ali, after pushing Tosks into his hand, used all his power and intrigues to conquer Gegë, but the door of Bushati in Shkodër was strong enough to withstand Ali. We also learn from these data about the Fermans issued by the Sublime Porte against him that “Complaints against Ali came from three sources: a) many Christian villages that had their lands were made into fiefdoms, forcing them to sell their lands; b) the uprooting of the feudal lords of the Tosks who did not become a blind tool. Of course, when they found the opportunity, they complained to the sultan and c) the turmoil he created in Gegë to conquer this land”.

Also, from these data we learn that due to the unfavorable internal and external situation that Sublime Porte was in at that time, “Ali Pasha, seeing the weakness of the Porte, acted as if he were independent.” Then he also informs us that at that time in Sultan Mahmud’s palace there was an influential man named Halet Efendi who was a member of the Patriarchate of Fener and who was against Ali Pasha. According to Cevdet Pasha, there were two reasons why he was against Ali: 1) Ali did not send as much money as he requested, and 2) The Patriarchate, in order to facilitate the Greek uprising, wanted the Sublime Porte to enter into a war against Ali. But because of this situation and the opinion of Halet Efendi,

the Sultan asks for the opinion of the other vezirs in the royal council. The sultan's chief secretary, named Janip Efendi, who was against Halet: "showing the situation of the Greeks as the reason for not provoking a great danger in Rume-li, he expressed his opinion that Ali should not be harassed. The other vezirs also thought like him, but Haleti did not stay calm, and, in order to please the Phanariots, he pushed the Sultan to open a war against Ali. The author continues to collect more historical data about Ali until the last irade (decree) of Sultan, by which he ordered his murder.

An important episode from Ali's life that we come across in these articles is that of his efforts to establish diplomatic relations with Napoleon Bonaparte. We find this in two issues of *Hylli i Drites* (Gegaj, A. Marrveshtjet diplomatike ndermjet Napoleonit të Madh e Ali Pashë Tepelenit. *Hylli i Dritës*, 8(5), 1932: 231-236; *Hylli i Dritës*, 8(6), 1932: 288-293). In issue no. 5 we find a summary biography from the beginning of his life until becoming Pasha described by Poqueville, while in issue no. 6 we have more concrete data about his efforts to establish diplomatic relations with Napoleon Bonaparte. "Pierre Jerome Dupre (consul) towards the end of the 18th century, saw the necessity to enter into relationships with Albanian beylers, especially with Ali, who was the richest and most powerful among them. According to the records that he gave to the French minister, he announced that Ali had sympathy for the French who lived in that country and tried to make friends with them, so it was a good sign that relations with France would be successful. General Gentili (French) after visiting the areas that Venice had before, had the chance to meet the Pasha of Ioannina in the historic city of Butrint. The agreements did not have a good start because there was a dispute between the military and civil authorities of France and, on the other hand, Ali Pasha asked the general for many things and declared that he wanted to keep his ships in Corfu and around Butrint. According to his wish, Gentili partially tried to fulfill his demands by giving him two officers for the regulation of the army, but on the other hand, he was very careful not to give the Sublime Porte the opportunity to break with France. Napoleon praised the general's result and encouraged him to help the Pasha of Ioannina to increase his power because it was to the benefit of France; moreover, he ordered him to send officers of the great state to make a state (country) according to the people and traditions of Albania." There were two situations that influenced the non-realization of these agreements: the preparation of Napoleon for the expedition to Egypt and the sending of Ali by the sultan to Vidin against Osman Pazvantoglu. However, the relationship did not stop.

Other important national figures that we can find in these magazines are the Bushatlinjet of Shkodra. Bushatlinjet, a powerful Albanian family at the end of

the 18th century, takes an important place in Albanian journals between the two world wars. What makes it perhaps the most special is that most of what is written in these journals are chronicles, documents, or relations that have to do with this family but also with Shkodra in general from western provenance, so most of the documents are in Latin and translated to Albanian in these journals. There is also valuable information from the Austrian consul in Shkodër, Ippon, about this family, which we can find in the *Leka*. (Bushatlit e Shkoders. *Leka* 3(8), 1931: 233-236; *Leka* 3(10), 1931: 301-303).

We also find the relations of a Venetian soldier summarized in perhaps the longest series we could encounter in these journals on any subject called: "Some other notifications of Pashas of Shkodër in 18th century", also in *Leka* (Do njoftime mbi pashallarët e Shkoders në shekull XVIII. *Leka* 4(9), 1932: 277-280; *Leka* 4(11), 1932: 347-350; *Leka* 5(1), 1933: 16-19; *Leka* 5(3), 1933: 77-79; *Leka* 5(5), 1933: 142-144; *Leka* 5(7), 1933: 213-215; *Leka* 5(9-10), 1933: 284-286; *Leka* 5(11-12), 1933: 358-360; *Leka* 6(1), 1934: 15-18; *Leka* 6(2), 1934: 47-48; *Leka* 6(3), 1934: 88-90).

There are also can find articles based on oral traditions and folk songs, which we find in these articles: "The other wars between Albanians and Montenegrins" (Bushati, H. Luftime tjerë ndërmjet të shqiptarve e të malazezve. *Diturija* 2(8), 1927: 306-308) and "Kara Mahmud Pasha" (Bushati, H. Kara-Mahmud Pasha. *Diturija* 2(12), 1927: 377-386).

Historical events

Among the most important historical events that we face in these journals is undoubtedly the League of Prizren. The League of Prizren, as one of the main events in the history of the Albanian nation, has enough space in these journals. So much space has that on the 60th anniversary of the League of Prizren, *Leka* published two special issues fully dedicated to the League of Prizren and the events related to it (*Leka* 10 (10-12), 1938: 421-577; *Leka* 11 (7-12), 1939: 127-403). In these issues, we see that there are a total of 14 articles related to this event, with a total of 454 pages. For the time we are talking about, when historiography as a scientific discipline was not established yet, I think it is an extraordinary contribution made by this journal.

In these issues we can see an analysis of the situation of Albania and Albanians before the League: "Albania before the League of Prizren" (p.425-437); "The Turkish Administration" (p.438-446); "Why Albania was neglected before the League of Prizren?" (p.447-449).

We can find the contents of the Saint Stefan Treaty: “The content of Saint Stefan Treaty articles” (p.450-451).

Also, the Albanian reader can learn about the behavior and actions of Montenegrins and Greeks neighbors against Albania: “Montenegro and Greek against Türkiye and Albania” (p.452-459)

The activity of the League: “Mirdita in the time of the League of Prizren” (p.460-487); “For the League of Prizren” (p.488-492); The League of Prizren (p.494-512)

The various memorandums sent by its representatives to the chancelleries of the Great Powers of the time, such as the one addressed to the British Prime Minister Lord Beaconsfield, the representative of the Great Britain at the Congress of Berlin, and the memorandum sent to Austro-Hungarian Count Andrassy: “Memorandum” (p.512-524)

The statements of one of its main leaders, Abyl Frasher, about the League of Prizren, can be found in the article: “Notes on the League of Prizren – The inhabitants of Toskeria – the statements by Abdyl Frasheri (p.525-530)

We also find the letters of the Austro-Hungarian consuls sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “The series of letters from the consuls of Austria-Hungary to the minister of foreign affairs related to the various events of the League of Prizren” (p.531-576) and in the second volume (p.133-212).

Apart from this precious contribution that we can face, we also have an article about the League of Prizren, perhaps among the rare ones that we can find in these journals with critical, research, and analytical content about the publications for the League of Prizren at that time. The article is called: “The League of Prizren” by Lumo Skendo (Skëndo L. Liga e Prizrenit. Hylli i Dritës 3(10), 1922: 465-475).

The author of this article has of an analysis of two publications published about the League of Prizren: “League of Prizen, the first national movement” by Kristo Dako (1922) as the first Albanian publication dedicated to the League of Prizren, and the second one: a publication in Italian by Peitro Chiara (1889)

Regarding Dako’s book, the author emphasizes that it can better be called “four relative documents on the League of Prizren”, because for the League and its actions in 1879-82, Dako gives us only 19 pages with less than one newspaper article. (p.465) As for Chiara, the author emphasizes that “no matter how little sympathy and kindness there was for the Albanian issue, he cannot deny the great influence that the movement of the League had on the patriotic ideas of the nation and the union that brought patriotic spirit between Muslims and Christians”. (p.466)

Then the author points out that “the documents on the national movement of that time are found in the newspapers of the time in Italian, French and English, in the form of correspondence sent from Shkodra, Ioannina and Istanbul”. As for the Turkish newspapers he mentioned: Sabah and Tercuman”. Then he mentions a book by Muller (German) that a newspaper A A Z (Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung) published memorandums of the Albanian delegates sent to the Great Powers. It is about issue no.7 June 1874, memorandum signed by Abdyl Bej Frashëri and Mehmet Ali Bej Vrioni. Then the author mentions the book of Çerkezi called “History of Albanian”, Boston 1920, where he talks about the league not satisfactory according to him.

In the series of publications about the League of Prizren, there are also articles from folklore and popular tradition. Those we can find in the article “The League of Prizren” by Gjergj Fishta (Fishta, Gj. Lidhja e Prizrendit. Hylli i Dritës 2(6), 1921: 264-270; Hylli i Dritës 2(7), 1921: 307-311; Hylli i Dritës 2(8), 1921: 352- 356). These poetic verses dedicated to the League are selected from his monumental work “The Highland Lute” (alb. Lahuta e Malcis).

The other historical event that takes place in these magazines is undoubtedly the independence of Albania. The declaration of independence was the culmination of the centuries-long efforts of the Albanian people to be independent and self-governing. The greatest event of the Albanians definitely had its place in these journals of the time. Similarly, as for the League of Prizren, on the 25th anniversary of independence, we have a special issue from Leka, which, under the series “Dawn of Freedom Documents” in 12 different issues, published over 16 documents related to various events leading up to independence. In 1940, the same journal published a special issue following the commemorative issues of the 25th anniversary of national independence. In this issue, as mentioned in its introduction entitled “After Five Years”, that this special issue includes documents in foreign languages translated into Albanian for the period 1908-1915. The number of documents published in this issue is 285. (Leka 12(1), 1940: 1-290)

The articles about independence we also find in other journals of the time. I would emphasize the article called: “The making of Albania was the product of Austro-Italy” (Gimaj. Te lemt e Shqypnis kje produkti i politikës Austro-Italjane. Agimi 3(11-12), 1922: 220-221).

In this article, the author states that the political creation of Albania was a product of joint Austro-Italian policy. This policy came as a result to opposing Russia's efforts for its influence in the Balkans. She “had made a secret agreement with Bulgaria since 1909 against Austria-Hungary”. Russia had two main goals in the

Balkans: 1) to vanquish Turkey from Europe and 2) to destroy Austro-Hungary” (p.220). Seeing the current situation and the Russian danger, Austro-Hungary and Italy had agreed that an Albania should be created, but where its borders would lie had not been decided yet. The fear of a possible European conflict caused Austria and Italy to be supported by Germany with its chancellor Holweg, therefore he declared in the *Nord Deutscher Zeitung* that “the issue of Albania is an international issue, therefore it will be implemented and determined by the Great Powers together.” (p.220). Great debates were held in the congress about the assignment of borders, especially the northern ones, and in the end, it was decided that Shkodra (which had been occupied by Montenegro) remained in Albania, while Gjakova and Dibra (even with in the great Austrian insistence) remained Serbia. The article ends with that “if Austria-Hungary and Italy did not protect us at that time, we would probably not have Albania today. Therefore, this is a product of the Austro-Italian policy” (p.221).

There is not missing not of the article from the protagonists of Albania’s independence either. The manuscripts of Luigj Gurakuqi can found in the article: “Independence of Albania” (Gurakuqi, L. Pavarsija e Shqipërisë, *Hylli i Dritës* 22(3), 1944: 44-46).

Writings about independence are not absent from folklore either. “Free Albania” from Gjergj Fishta it’s the poem published in *Hylli Drites*. These poetic verses too are selected from his work “The Highland Lute”, as mentioned above. (Fishta, Gj. *Shqypnia e lirë*. *Hylli i Dritës* 2(2), 1921:70-73).

Conclusion

The period between World Wars I and II was one of the most difficult periods in the history of the Albanian people. A new Albania, which was born shortly before the outbreak of the First World War and which was initially under international control at the beginning of the war, was left alone in a difficult political, social, and economic situation. We say so because, now found abandoned, she began to become the spoils of war of those who wanted to tear it apart years ago. Not only that, it also became a “bargain” between the participants of the war, occupying almost all of Albania. The end of the war did not mean the end of problems in Albania. First, with the war against foreign invaders, and then with the lack of stable political stability in the country, scientific development did not reach the proper level in Albania, including historiography. Despite the fact that in this period we still do not have scientific historiography, but rather national historiography, however, the writings about the history and about the

history of the Albanian people were not stopped. A great contribution to the field of history in this period was also made by the journals that were published at that time. Despite the fact that they were not scientific, but literary and religious journals, they did not lack writings about the history of Albania and the Albanian people, starting from antiquity until the declaration of Albania's independence. Of course, the Ottoman period has an important place in these journals. From the articles about the Ottoman period in these journals, we see that most of them are about various national figures who lived in that time or even various historical events that happened in that time. Despite the scientific criticisms we can make, their contribution is valuable. The special issues published by Leka on the anniversaries of the League of Prizren and the Independence of Albania, I think, are among the greatest contributions to Albanian historiography at that time. In these writings, we come across quite a few archival documents of the time published and translated into Albanian, mainly from Western-Latin provenance. The lack of publications and translations of documents from the Ottoman archives is evident in these journals. For this important need, of publishing Ottoman documents, since that time, the publicist Mid'hat Frashëri also known by his pen name as Lumo Skëndo raised his voice, saying: "Ignorance and stupidity make some Albanians confess an indifference to the Turkish period, perhaps the most important time for us. I appeal to the few who still know Turkish: to sift through the Turkish historians, to make a catalog of the pages that concern us. Even better would be the integral translation of the pieces that interest us. This is an urgent work, because in a few years, there will be no one able to understand classical Turkish, as much as there is anyone today who knows the Armenian or Sanskrit language" (Skëndo, L. *Për historin e Shqipërisë. Përprjekja Shqiptare* 1(1), 1936: 12).

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