

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF TURKISH STUDIES**

**MASTER THESIS**

**THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN  
THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE:  
THE ALBANIAN CASE 1878-1912**

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR**

**ASST. PROF. İBRAHİM VEHBİ BAYSAN**

**ISTANBUL, 2022**

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**by**

**ATDHE THAÇI**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Turkish Studies**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR**

**ASST. PROF. İBRAHİM VEHBİ BAYSAN**

**ISTANBUL, 2022**

## APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Turkish Studies.

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ÖZ

OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞUNDA ULUSAL KİMLİKLERİN  
OLUŞUMU: ARNAVUT ÖRNEĞİ 1878-1912

Thaçi, Atdhe

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Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Anthony D. Smith ve Eric Hobsbawm gibi modern milliyetçilik teorisyenleri, ulus inşasının nasıl gerçekleştiğini açıkladılar. Bu teoriler, olayların, savaşların veya siyasi hareketlerin anlatisının ötesine geçer; 'Ulusal Kimlik İnşasının Yörüngesi' olarak adlandırdığımız ulus inşa süreciyle ilgili gerçekleri analiz eder. Milliyetçiliğin Milliyetçiliğe dönüşmeden önce, bir ulusun bir 'izm' veya ideolojiye dönüşmeden önce, milletin aydınlarının yazılarını ve entelektüel çabalarını içeren bir süreçten geçtiği görülmektedir. Bu yazılar çoğunlukla 'Biz kimiz?' sorularına cevap bulmaya çalışır veya 'Ben kimim?', 'Nereden geliyorum/biz nereden geliyoruz?', 'Bizi diğerlerinden farklı kılan nedir?' ve milletlerine bir tür özgünlük kazandırmaya çalışan benzer sorular gibi. Bu yörüngenin bir kısmı, tarihin ideolojik bir "Altın Çağ" arayışının çabaları olan "Geçmişin Arkeolojisi" dediğimiz şeydir. O dönemde, o ulus, kahramanları, dostları ve düşmanları içermesi gereken daha iyi bir esenliğe sahipti. Bu entelektüel hareketlerde, Yunan milliyetçiliği için Megali Idea veya Sırp milliyetçiliği için Nacertanija gibi, gelecek için siyasi bir platform sunma çabaları açıkça görülür.

Biz bu soruyu ele alacağız: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki ulus inşa süreçlerinin yörüngesini bu modern teoriler bağlamında analiz edebilir miyiz? Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda milliyetçilik hakkında yeterli araştırma var ama yine de esas olarak

'Milliyetçilik' ilgilidir, 'Ulusal Kimlik oluşum süreci' ile ilgili değil, Bu yazacağımız bir ayırmadır. Bu soruyu yanıtlamak için Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun belirli bir örneğini incelemeyi seçtik: Arnavut örneği. Şemseddin Sami Fraşeri, Pashko Vasa ve Naim Fraşeri gibi Arnavut aydınlarından yazılar seçtik. Bunları Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Anthony D. Smith ve Eric Hobsbawm tarafından yazılan teoriler bağlamında analiz ettik.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Arnavut, Entelektüel, Osmanlı, Teoriler Ulusal kimlik.



## ABSTRACT

### THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: THE ALBANIAN CASE 1878-1912

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Modern theorists of nationalism, like Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Anthony D. Smith, and Eric Hobsbawm, concluded how nation-building happens. These theories go beyond the narrative of events, battles, or political movements; they analyze facts about the process of nation-building, which we call as 'Trajectory of National-Identity Building.' Appears that before nationalism becomes Nationalism, before a nation becomes an 'ism' or an ideology, it goes through a process, which includes writings and intellectual efforts from the nation's intelligentsia. These writings mostly try to answer the questions of 'Who are we?' or 'Who am I?', 'Where do I/We come from?', 'What makes us different from others?', and similar questions that try to give their nation a kind of uniqueness. Part of this trajectory is what I call 'The Archaeology of the Past', which is the efforts of history-searching for an ideological 'Golden Age'. During this period, that particular nation had better well-being, which should contain heroes, foes, friends, and enemies. What is apparent in these intellectual movements is their efforts to present a political platform for the future, as was the Megali Idea for Greek nationalism or Nacertanija for Serbian nationalism.

We will be addressing the question: Can we analyze the trajectory of nation-building processes in the Ottoman Empire within the context of these modern theories? There is much research about nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, still, they are mainly for 'Nationalism', not about the 'National Identity formation process', a distinction which

we will write about. To answer this question, we have chosen to analyze a specific case of the Ottoman Empire: The Albanian case. We've chosen writings from the Albanian intelligentsia, such as Semseddin Sami Frashëri, Pashko Vasa, and Naim Frashëri. We analyzed them from the context of theories written by Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Anthony D. Smith, and Eric Hobsbawm.

**Keywords:** Albanian, Intellectuals National Identity, Ottoman, Theories.



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## TIMELINE

- 1822- The execution of Ali Pasha Tepelena.
- 1826- The disbandment of the Janissary corps.
- 1829- The international recognition of Greek independence.
- 1831- The execution of 500 Albanians in Manastir.
- 1831- The defeat of the Bushatli family.
- 1834- Albanian uprisings against the attempts for military reforms.
- 1839- The official beginning of the Ottoman reforms known as Tanzimat.
- 1843- Anti-reform uprisings in Kosovo.
- 1844- The first premier in the Albanian language.
- 1878- The independence of Serbia, Montenegro.
- 1878- The League of Prizren.
- 1879- Vaso Pasha publishes his political platform in French.
- 1880- The Berlin Congress.
- 1881- The suppression of the League of Prizren.
- 1899- Shemseddin Sami publishes his political platform in Albanian.
- 1900- League of Peja.
- 1908- Young Turk revolution.
- 1911- Uprisings in Albania.
- 1912- Uprisings in Albania.
- 1912- The beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Balkan War.
- 1912- November 28, the declaration of Albanian independence.
- 1913- The London Conference and the international recognition of the Albanian state

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

After the French revolution of 1789 and during the Napoleonic Wars, the world witnessed the explosion of ideas, movements, and processes with nationalistic characters and backgrounds. Observing and analyzing these revolutions and nationalistic movements worldwide, it is noticeable that most of them have the same trajectory as how the events developed. In the second part of the 20th century, many scholars and intellectuals started analyzing the nationalist ideas and movements, not in one country, but nationalism as a whole, as a world phenomenon. At the same time, comparing many nationalisms and nationalistic movements, they concluded how nationalism develops. This development passed into stages and characteristics. It emphasized the importance of nationalistic writings for nationalistic movements. Also, the ideas and ideologies; the prominence of ideological ‘golden ages’; the heroes and foes. It emphasized the village, not the city. Also, economical autarchy, language, religion, myth, and many other ingredients, are added to the bucket which serve nationalism as an idea and theory, and almost all the time as a practice. The nationalistic movements in history, as observed by nationalism theorists, always had the same starting point, and that is the beginning of the nation’s intelligentsia writings. Their writings pose fundamental questions about identity, the past, and the people’s present. These kinds of writings are often transformed into a political platform for the future, eventually forming a particular identity, the national one.

It did not take long for the French Revolution ideas to spread in the Ottoman Empire. First, these ideas came into practice in Greece, which started a war against the Ottoman Empire in 1821. Still, even before Greece, Ali Pasha Tepelena (d.1822), who once even had constructed diplomatic relations with Napoleon Bonaparte (d.1821), started a separatist movement in the Balkans against the Ottoman Empire, even though the nationalistic background of his movement is questionable. After the Greek independence, their movement became an example of many other nationalistic ideas

and activities. This example was taken mainly from those who belonged to Orthodox Christianity in the Balkans and were part of the Ottoman Empire, such as Bulgarians, Montenegrins, and Serbs. Added to this was the help from imperial Russia, which led to the ideas of Pan-Orthodoxism and Pan-Slavism as a strategic plan for extending their influence in Europe.

The Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans developed their ideologies. Greece developed the *Megali Idea*, and Serbs developed *Načertania*, which mainly were expansionist ideas, also known as *irredentist* ideas. With these ideas, they wanted to go back to the past, when they had a state, kingdom, or principality, and those states covered a big part of Balkan territories. By doing this, they misused history and the past for present and future objectives. The ideologies of these nationalistic movements were in search of a 'golden age' and heroes; they were doing a kind of archeology of the past. Greeks found their golden age in the old Byzantine Empire. Bulgarians found their golden age in the time of kings Boris (852-889) and Simeon. Serbs found theirs in the middle age period of the Nemanjic dynasty (1166-1422); Macedonians in the time of Alexander the Great (d. 323 BC) and also Montenegrins found their golden age in the period of Principality of Zeta (14th-15th century).

Ottoman Empire seeing these movements and developments in the European part of its controlled territory, and also as a response to their internal stagnation, started to implement new reforms. The reforms were firstly in the military, then in the judiciary, and in the empire's economic and administrative system, commonly known in the historiography as the *Tanzimat*. These reforms led to a domino effect in the empire, directly impacting the Albanian population. What firstly seemed that trigger anti-Ottoman sentiment in Albanians was the removal of the *Timar* System, which was an economical-administrative system of the Ottoman Empire since the beginning of their rule in the Balkans. With the *Timar* System since the beginning of the Ottoman Empire rulership in the Balkans, specific personas controlled a particular territory, where they could use that territory's financial gains and profits. In return for this 'favor,' they would have to lead an army in the service of the Sultan, in case of need, in the case such a thing would be required by them, an analogical system to the old Byzantium system of *Pronoia*. Over time this system led to the empowerment of specific Albanian

families, as they became wealthy and influential not only in the areas they operated but also were able to take high positions in the administration of the Ottoman Empire, as was the case with the Avlonyalı Family (Alb. Familja Vlora). From this family came Avlonyalı Ferid Pasha (d.1851-1914), which became the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire during 1903-1908. His cousin Avlonyalı İsmail Kemal Bey (1844-1919) served as an Ottoman governor of Lebanon for some time. In 1912, Ismail Kemal declared the independence of Albania and became the founder of the Albanian state and its first prime minister.

With the new reforms in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, there was new military recruitment and a standard army of the Ottoman Empire. The new army was led now not by the local Albanian beys and pashas but by the army officers of the Ottoman Empire, which in most cases were not Albanians. These military reforms also meant that the men recruited would have to serve for a specific period in the military. Removing the Timar System also meant that those rich and powerful Albanian families would lose prestige, power, and pedestal. Thus, they started financing uprisings against the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the sentiment against the military reforms was used for the ordinary people. This meant that they would have to go away from their families for some time, and only after five years if they would not be killed or seriously injured, could they go back to their homes and families. This way, many Albanian uprisings were organized in the Balkans, starting from the 1830s. Up to 1878, all these uprisings seem to have a specific economic background, financed by the deposed rich and powerful families of beys and pashas. These families were using the anti-military recruitment sentiment of the ordinary Albanian people. However, in 1878, things started to change. After the Turkish- Russian war of 1877-1878, the neighbors of Albanians: Serbs, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, and Greeks began to expand in the territories inhabited by the Albanians and Muslims in the Balkans; thus, a new sentiment started, firstly as a problem of existence, and after as a nationalistic sentiment.

To oppose the expansion of their neighbors, a political-military movement started in 1878, which in historiography is known as the League of Prizren. This movement first had an Islamic character since part of it was Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, specifically Albanians and Bosnians. The Sultan and the Sublime Porte

initially supported the League. However, after the San Stefano Treaty (1878) and later the Berlin Congress (1880), and especially after the assassination of the Ottoman Empire's representative in the Berlin Congress, Mehmet Ali Pasha (d. 1878), who was sent to the Albanians as an Emissary of the Sultan, the League now evolved into an Albanian nationalist movement.

The Ottoman army eventually brought down the League of Prizren in 1881 but left a significant mark on the Albanian nationalistic sentiment. Even though there were Albanian uprisings before the League of Prizren, what is different from other uprisings, is the beginning of writings about the national identity of Albanians. Albanian intelligentsia, serving in the Ottoman Empire bureaucracy, started to pose fundamental questions about the Albanian identity, such as who is an Albanian? Where are the Albanian territories? Questions about their archaeology of the past in the attempts to legitimize their presence in the present. In 1879, the first political treatise of Albanian nationalistic political thought was printed and published by Vasa Pasha, first in French and then in Albanian, entitled *La Verite Sur Albanie et Les Albanais* (Eng. The Truth about Albania and Albanians). After this time, an 'explosion' of nationalistic writings happened, as it was in poetry, such as the writings of Naim Frashëri (d. 1900). Later in 1899, on the eve of another Albanian nationalistic league known as the League of Peja, Shemseddin Sami Frashëri (d. 1904) wrote a political platform book in the Albanian language. It was entitled as *Shqipëria çka qenë, ç'është dhe çdo të behëtë*, (Eng. Albania what it was, what it is and what it will be). The work of Sami was purely nationalistic; as the title illustrates, it analyses the past and history of Albania, talks about the present issues of that time, and provides a political platform for how Albanians should proceed in the future. Thus, it became one of the most valuable works written on Albanian identity.

In our work, we will analyze some of the Albanian nationalistic writings and literature from the context of modern theories of nationalism and national identity. For this writing, we have considered the study approaches of nationalism from Anthony D. Smith, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm. We are aware of these writers' differences in their methods of explaining nationalism, such as 'Primordialism' and the 'Modernist' approaches to nationalism. By analyzing their

ideas, we will try to understand the Albanian nationalistic writings and thoughts better. We will not be specific only to one of them, as is to say, not only specific to Anthony D. Smith or Ernest Gellner. In this way, by analyzing the case of the Albanian attempt at identity creation in the Ottoman Empire, we intend to answer that we can explore the nationalist movements in the Ottoman Empire from the perspective and context of modern general nationalism theories. We believe the approach we will use can also explain other nationalist movements and nationalist identity creations that happened inside the Ottoman Empire, such as the Serbian and Bulgarian or Arab movements.

In the first chapter, we will present a brief historical background. With this historical background, we will show some important events during the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, which led to the consolidation and formation of the Albanian national identity in the Ottoman Empire. The other chapters are strictly concerned with contemporary national identity and nationalism theories and are followed by examples in the Albanian case. We have translated the works, poems, and other writings from Albanian into English; we will find more explanations and meanings in the footnote area for some of the translated words. Also, to better understand the work translated, we have added our interpretations many times during writing.

We hope this work serves as a milestone for a new study of these identity creation movements, not just as a history of events, as to say the historical narrative of what happened, but with a more analytical, theoretical, and modern approach to it.

## CHAPTER II

### A SHORT HISTORY

#### 2.1. A Historical Background of the Albanian Nation Formation

There are different discussions about when exactly the Albanian national identity was formed. What is sure, though, is that the Albanian national identity was formed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as was the case with almost all national identities in the world, which were mainly formed after the events of the French Revolution (y.1789 onwards).

On 24 January 1822, after a long stronghold and being convinced by the Ottoman pashas that his life would be saved, Ali Pasha Tepelena (1740-1822) was sent to the monastery of St. Panteleimon. After these assurances were made, to Ali Pasha was announced an imperial order, signed by Sultan Mahmud II. The imperial order announced that he would be executed, and the order of the Sultan was accomplished that day. Ali Pasha appeared as a robust military figure at the end of the 18th century, in today's borders in South Albania and Northern Greece, specifically in Ioannina and its surroundings which at that time was part of the Ottoman Empire. Firstly, Ali made his name known as a *Derbendci* of the Ottoman Empire. A *Derbendci* was a person who was given the duty to guard the empire's trade routes, and the routes that Ali Pasha was defending were the passes of the Pindus Mountains and what is known as North Epirus.<sup>1</sup> Before serving in this position, he was known to be a bandit in the villages of Southern Albania, where he used to rob the merchants and their caravans. With this 'freelance' work that he used to do, he became famous in the Ottoman circles of power, eventually giving him the title of *Derbendci*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening* (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1967), 44.

<sup>2</sup> K. E. Fleming, *Muslim Bonaparte* (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1999), 24.

Ali Pasha became an excellent servant to the Ottoman Empire and participated in the Austro-Ottoman war of 1787-1791. During this time, he received the military title of Pasha and eventually became the head of Sanjak of Ioannina and the most powerful political and military figure in the region. It is worth noting that Ali Pasha's family was not a famous and 'noble' family; as to say, his family did not belong to the affluent Pasha and Bey families of the Ottoman Empire. These families had established and inherited their power during centuries of Ottoman rulership in the Balkans. In fact, during the period of Ali Pasha's as the most powerful ruler in the region, those strong Pasha and Bey families almost ceased to exist. They only appeared again when the Ottoman Empire turned against Ali and executed him in 1822. One of these rich and powerful families that suffered from Ali Pasha was the famous Vlora family, or in Turkish-Ottoman documents known as Avlonyalı, a family we already mentioned previously in the introduction chapter. Avlonyalı Ismail Kemal Bey wrote his memoirs in English in 1919, just before he died. In his memoirs, he notes that his family had fought against Ali Pasha Tepelena during 1820-1822 on the side of the Ottomans. He calls Ali Pasha in his memoirs as "*our common aggressor*", meaning an enemy both of Ottomans and his family.<sup>3</sup>

During the years of his power, Ali Pasha, even though he had led with draconian and despotic means, he achieved to unite the Albanians who were subject to his rulership. This was regardless of the religion they belonged to, Orthodox Christian or Muslim, be it Sunni or the Bektashi order, although he belonged to the Bektashi one. Ali Pasha also started to finance and build a new Christian monastery, and his 'strong liberal' actions did not stop there. He was also known for having not only a 'women's house', but he was also depicted as having men (homosexuals) who would serve when European delegations came to visit Ali Pasha and when those delegations had more affinity towards men.<sup>4</sup> Some saw these liberal stances of Ali Pasha as a product of his belief in the Bektashi order, which, compared to other more orthodox Islamic orders, appear to be more liberal.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey* (London: Constable and Company LTD, 1920), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Fleming, *Muslim Bonaparte*, 144.

Ali Pasha achieved to construct a kind of de facto state within the Ottoman Empire; he succeeded in making a kind of government system which had secular characteristics. His power started to be recognized as such by European powers. For example, Napoleon Bonaparte (d.1821), appointed François Pouqueville (d.1838) as an ambassador to Ali Pasha in 1806 and he remained there up to 1815. Pouqueville wrote a book about his travels in Albania. In his book, he describes the ‘court’ of Ali Pasha, his translators, whom he calls *Dragomans*, and the staff of Ali Pasha, which gives an impression of the real leader of a country or kingdom.<sup>5</sup> Thus, him being recognized as a power by Europeans, and after his execution in 1822, Ali’s figure started to be romanticized by famous European writers and intellectuals. Only six months after the execution of Ali Pasha, in July 1822, the French biographical writer Alphonse de Beauchamp (d.1832) wrote the first biography of Ali Pasha entitled “*Vie d’Ali Pacha*”, or in English, *The Life of Ali Pasha*. Beauchamp gave Ali the nickname *Le Lion* which even today, Ali Pasha is known as ‘The Lion of Ioannina’.<sup>6</sup> Another famous European that visited Ali Pasha was the British writer and politician Lord George Gordon Byron (d. 1824). Lord Byron visited Ali Pasha in 1809, and in 1812 he published the book “*Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*”. In his book, Lord Byron describes his visit and what he witnessed in Ali Pasha’s court. Talking in superlative about Ali Pasha, he wrote “*Since the days of the Prophet, the Crescent never saw a chief ever glorious like Ali Pasha*”.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Ali Pasha found a place in the writings of the famous French writer Alexander Dumas (d.1870). Dumas wrote a book in his name entitled “*Ali Pacha*” in the year 1841. In his book, Dumas demonstrated the despotic manners of Ali Pasha, but in such a way that he tries to convince the reader that these types of manners were required in a despotic society such as the Ottoman one. According to Dumas, Ali Pasha was a Machiavellian leader.<sup>8</sup> Dumas also mentioned Ali Pasha in his famous novel titled “*The Count of Monte Cristo*”. In the book, Ali Pasha was portrayed as a supporter of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>9</sup> Ali Pasha also appeared in classical music; the German composer Albert

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<sup>5</sup> F. C. H. L. Pouqueville, *Travels in Epirus, Albania, Macedonia and Thessaly* (London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1820), 37-38.

<sup>6</sup> Alphonse de Beauchamp, *Vie d’Ali Pacha*. (Paris: Chez Villet Libraire et Commissionnaire, 1822)

<sup>7</sup> Lord Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (London: John Murray, 1812), 102.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Dumas, *Ali Pacha* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2011), 106.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 777.

Lortzing (1801-1851) composed a *singspiel*, that is to say, an opera, entitled “*Ali Pascha Von Janina*”.

This research finds the narrative(s) of many historians who argue that Ali Pasha’s ideas and objectives were strictly nationalistic, and his objectives were a nationalistic-separatist movement as unfounded. In addition, the historians’ arguments that Ali Pasha was in pursuit of creating an Albanian national state require more evidence. As we will see in the following chapters, forming a national state requires some fundamental characteristics, such as the language and writings of the prominent intelligentsia that try to form the national identity. Ali Pasha had none of the above, even the official language of ‘his court’ was Greek. This is demonstrative enough that he did not possess the necessary instruments to form a national state.

It is possible to state that his acts and achievements helped later Albanian nationalism, mainly concerning identity issues. His figure, as we mentioned, is romanticized significantly by well-known European writers and later improvised by Albanian nationalist authors. It is also worth noting that Ali Pasha was the first Albanian Muslim leader with such power that went against the Ottoman Empire, as is to say, the Caliphate. Ali Pasha helped nationalism in the Balkans mainly in an indirect way. After the fall of his dominance, the Greek hegemony of power in the region soon became more apparent and continued with the Greek War of Independence. This movement eventually led to the recognition of Greece as an independent state in 1829. The Greek independence set an example for other nationalistic efforts in the Balkans.

After the issue with Ali Pasha was solved, the Ottoman Empire faced the new problem of Greek efforts for an independent state. Against the efforts of the Greeks, the Ottoman Empire sent the military leader, Reshid Mehmed Pasha (d. 1836), who had also fought against Ali Pasha in his last battle of 1822. While fighting against the Greek armies, Reshid Pasha had the support of powerful Albanian families such as Vrioni and Bushatli.<sup>10</sup> After losing the war with the Greeks and after Greece’s independence, the Ottomans began investigating the reasons behind their failure. One of the reasons that seem to have emerged was that some of the Albanian military leaders, as was the

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution – 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (London: Penguin, 2021), 243.

case with Mustafa Pasha (d.1860) which was the head of the Bushatli family of Shkodra, which had similar influence as Ali Pasha Tepelena. Mustafa Pasha made a deal with Russians to sabotage the Ottoman army who were fighting against the Greek nationalistic movements.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Reshid Mehmed Pasha sent invitations to many Albanian military leaders to gather in Manastir, today's city of Bitola in North Macedonia, and after the gathering took place, more than 500 Albanians are believed to have been killed there.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, in 1831, Reshid Pasha led his army towards the city of Shkodra, where he managed to defeat the Bushatli family. Due to the military campaigns of Reshid Pasha, the power that some Albanian families had, which used to rule with an military feudal system, almost ceased to exist. Thereafter, in the region, the new reforms, which included a new state administration system that was announced in 1839 and known as the *Tanzimat* reforms, started to be implemented.<sup>13</sup>

With the disbandment of the Janissary corps in 1826 and with the establishment of the new regular army *Asâkir-i Mansûre-i Muhammediye* (Eng. The Victorious Troops of Muhammad), the new military reforms started.<sup>14</sup> The new reforms in 1834 included establishing reserve armies in various Anatolian regions and the Balkans. In the same year, 1834, uprisings began in Albania. These new military reforms ignited the population because many Albanians refused to join the reserve army. But another fact seems to be that many Albanians used to serve in the Janissary corps. With the disbandment of the Janissaries and the ban of the Bektashi order, which had many followers in Albania, the anti-government sentiment became high. Added to this also, Albania's old Pasha and Bey families seized the moment to gain power again, after the fall which they had first with Ali Pasha and after him with the lost battles against Reshid Pasha.

One of the most known uprisings of these years was the one known as the 'Uprising of Tafil Buzi', which initially started in 1834. Even though historiography puts Tafil

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<sup>11</sup> Kristo Frashëri, *The History of Albania*, 116.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 56.

Buzi (d. 1844) as the leader of this uprising, what seems more closely to the historical truth is that this uprising was led by Abaz Bey Lushnja. His family was one of the wealthiest and most influential families in south Albania, and Buzi served as the head of the armed wing.<sup>15</sup> Buzi became more known in 1835 when he tried to convince Mehmet Ali Pasha of Egypt (d.1848) to join their efforts. Mehmet Ali Pasha publicly rejected the invitation. Ali Pasha called Buzi a 'rebel' and the uprisings in Albania 'disorders'.<sup>16</sup> In 1837, another short uprising was started by Alush Bey Frakulla but ended unsuccessfully.<sup>17</sup> What seems to have been the most significant uprising of that time was the one in the city of Shkodra during the summer of 1835.

With the new military reforms of the Ottoman Empire, more money was needed. Thus, new taxes were presented. Against the new taxation went the artisans and traders of Shkodra led by Hamza Kazazi (d.1860). As his last name indicate, he dealt in the silk business. Once more, the affluent Bey families, including Jusuf Bey and Hysen Bey Bushatliu, who were direct descendants of the deposed Bushatli family, supported this uprising.<sup>18</sup> Similar to the previous uprisings, the Shkodra uprising of 1835 was also crushed by the Ottoman army. It is interesting that the leader of these uprisings, Hamza Kazazi, was pardoned by the Ottoman state. Twenty years later, in 1854, his name again emerged as he stood against the construction of the Franciscan Catholic Church. Although it was built in Shkodra with the permission of the Sultan, he eventually destroyed the church. To this day, this event has become part of oral history, and several folkloric songs are made about this event. After the declaration of the Tanzimat reforms in 1839, uprisings continued. During 1843-1844, uprisings started in Kosovo and the Polog valley.

During these uprisings, Albanians led by Dervish Cara managed to control the main cities and important strategic places, including the cities of Skopje, Prishtina, Gjakova, Prizren, Dibra, Vranje, etc. However, similar to the previous uprisings, they failed after a short period. This revolt, too, served later as a tool for nationalistic folklore. As can

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<sup>15</sup> Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, *Historia e popullit shqiptar. Vëllimi 2. Rilindja Kombëtare. Vitet 30 të shek. XIX - 1912.* (Prishtinë: Toena, 2002), 87.

<sup>16</sup> Bulletin de l'Extérieur, *Courrier du Midi : journal de l'Hérault*, November 14, 1835, 3.  
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1336630s/f3.image.r=tafil%20buzi> last accessed: 22/5/2022

<sup>17</sup> Akademia, *Historia*, 88-92.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

be noticed, all of these uprisings, in one way or another, were led by the ‘Bey’ people, most of whom, as we saw, had lost their power with the new reforms, so this clearly shows that there was an economic side to it. The economic side of the Albanian uprisings during the 19th century can be a good topic for researchers to write about in the future.

It should be noted that in 1844, Naum Veqilharxhi (d. 1846) wrote the first Albanian primer, a mixture of Latin and Greek letters. This can serve as a proposed thesis as the beginning of the formation of Albanian national identity. However, we believe the Albanian national identity was formed after the League of Prizren in 1878-1881, after the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877-1878. This was the first political league of Albanians with a national character, even though it started with an Islamic-religious one. The European diplomats saw this organization as a tool of the Ottoman Empire. But eventually, it converted to a nationalistic one, especially after the Berlin Congress of 1880. In this congress, certain territories inhabited by Albanians, such as the city of Ulcinj, were given to the newly founded state of Montenegro, and some other territories, such as Nish, were given to the Serbian state.<sup>19</sup>

The historian, Caroline Finkel, argues that until the formation of the League of Prizren, the empire saw the loyalty of Albanians towards the Ottoman Empire as something “taken for granted”.<sup>20</sup> The territories given to Montenegro were refused to be given by the Ottoman Empire until the Great Powers threatened to invade Smyrna, today’s city of Izmir.<sup>21</sup> At this time, in Europe, we have the first Albanian political platform written by Pashko Vasa (d.1892), also known as the Vasa Pasha or Wassa Efendi. Vasa Pasha was born in the city of Shkodra; he belonged to the Christian Catholic confession. He was fluent in many languages and participated in revolutionary activities in Italy between 1842 and 1847. After 1847, he went to live in Istanbul and started working in the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>22</sup> He wrote his nationalistic platform book, first published in French in 1879 with the title “*La Vérité Sur L' Albanie Et Les*

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<sup>19</sup> Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Pluto, *The History of Albania from its origins to the present days* (London: Routledge: 1981), 121.

<sup>20</sup> Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream, The History of The Ottoman Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 501.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>22</sup> George W. Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle, Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 57.

*Albanais*". Soon this book was translated to English as *The Truth on Albanians and Albania*, latter also translated into Albanian, German and Greek.<sup>23</sup> But why did he write first in French and not in Albanian? It appears that initially, he intended to give information to European powers and intelligentsia about Albania since Vasa Pasha also narrates that the British historian Edward Gibbon (d. 1794) wrote that Albania is more unknown than Africa.<sup>24</sup> Thus, for this reason, he notes that he wants to inform an international audience; as seen in the following chapters, but this also served Albanians as a political-informative platform. Vasa Pasha tried to provide crucial information about the Albanian national identity, the past, the present, and ideas for the future.

After the League of Prizren, literature started to 'flourish' in the Albanian language, and many poems were written. Most advanced in the sense of national identity writings were the poems by Naim Frashëri (d. 1900). His brother Shemseddin Sami Frashëri (d.1904) in 1899 wrote another political platform called "*Albania, what it was, what it is, and what it will be*". This political platform was written on the eve of another Albanian league, the League of Peja, in 1899, which, again similar to the League of Prizren, was crushed by the Ottoman state. What seems interesting is that at the same time that Sami was writing nationalistic works about Albania, he was also writing nationalistic literature for Turkey. At the same time, he wrote *Kamûs-ı Türkî* published in 1901, which became the first Turkish language dictionary that would be called Turkish and not an Ottoman dictionary. An official document in the Ottoman archives depicts a rapport written on December 30, 1890, by the governor of Suşehri, Nevzat Bey. It writes about a meeting between Sami, Naim, and, Nevzat. Nevzat gives information that the two Frashëri brothers spoke in nationalistic terms. Nevzat reports to the Ottoman government that 'we' should be careful with them.<sup>25</sup> It was during 1879, the same year that Vasa Pasha wrote his book, that a cultural organization was founded in Istanbul, named "*Society for the Publication of Albanian Writings*", which included a group of 14 Albanians, 10 of whom were Muslims and 4 were Christians: including here Vasa Pasha and Shemseddin Sami.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Pashko Vasa, *E vërteta për Shqiptarët dhe Shqipërinë* (Prishtinë: Dija, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı (BOA). Y.PRK.ASK. 68/43, Dated: 19-05-1308 AH (1890)

<sup>26</sup> Nathalie Clayer, *Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar, Lindja e një kombi me shumicë muslimane në Evropë*. (Tirana: Përpjekja, 2012), 244.

Eventually, at the beginning of the 20th century, other opportunities arose for the Albanian nationalistic movements. Such as the Young Turk revolution of 1908, where later Albanians made uprisings against them. Just before the Albanian independence in July 1912, the British newspaper *Leicester Daily Post* called Albanians rebels in a report on the events.<sup>27</sup> This uprising caused the Ottoman government to fall only one day after receiving their initial vote of confidence.<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that during this time, many nationalistic writings were also emerging in the Ottoman Empire by Turkish writers. One of them, Ziya Gökalp, wrote that the Ottoman Empire is our nation, and other groups belonging to the Ottoman Social structure, such as Turks, Greeks, Kurds, Albanians, etc., are nothing more than tribes of the Ottoman nation.<sup>29</sup> The beginning of the Balkan Wars in 1912 became a crucial moment for the Albanian nationalistic efforts. On November 28, an old Ottoman bureaucrat, Ismail Kemal Bey, declared the independence of the state of Albania. Only five days after the declaration of independence, a document signed by the Ottoman Defense Ministry was sent to Ismail Kemal Bey, who was serving as the Prime Minister of Albania. In this document, the ministry was assuring Ismail Kemal Bey that no actions would be taken in the future against the interests of Albania.

Thus, de facto, the Ottoman Empire recognized Albanian independence.<sup>30</sup> Albania was recognized internationally as an independent state in 1913 in the London Conference, which was organized to settle the Balkan issues after the war that had started in late 1912. Albania was recognized internationally with the borders it still has today but was left without the territories of Kosovo, Montenegro, Ioannina, etc., which were demanded for decades by the nationalistic writers as part of Albania. The help that Austria- Hungary gave was crucial to the efforts to gain the independence of Albania. Theodor Anton Ippen (d.1935), an Austria-Hungarian diplomat who was also an Albanologist and an Albanophile who served as a kind of ‘Lawrence of Albania’, later declared:

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<sup>27</sup> “Fighting in Albania: Rebels gain a Victory”, *Leicester Daily Post*, July 18, 1912, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 4, Turkey in the Modern World*, ed. Reşat Kasaba (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 72.

<sup>29</sup> Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans, Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 54.

<sup>30</sup> Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı (BOA). BEO. 4120-308986, Dated: 24-12-1330 AH (1912)

Austro-Hungary had constructed good relations with the catholic Albanians for 100 years, and 15 years before the Balkan Wars developed efforts to boost the nationalistic feelings of Albanians, and to prepare the needed conditions for the creation of national independence [...] The violence Albanians from Nish, Prokuplje, and Kurshumli faced in 1878, which lands were given to Serbia and those given to Montenegro, would give an example that will let you forecast the fate of those who threatened the others (those who remained). The help that was given to 1.5 million Albanians for creating their state, was nothing more than the implementation of the right of nationhood.<sup>31</sup>

Austria-Hungary made different analyses for the Albanian territories, as is the example of Franz Nopcsa (d.1933), who traveled extensively in Albanian cities and villages. He traveled and studied the Albanian populations living in the mountain area; he went illegally and was wanted by the Ottoman authorities. His mission was to collect information and make maps for the Albanian territories; later, he wrote his memoirs showing all his efforts in doing this.<sup>32</sup> Another example is the Austrian demographic statistics of the 1880s, which still serve today as an excellent quantitative source for historians.<sup>33</sup> However, what changed from 1880, as to say from when Bismarck declared in the Berlin Congress that there is no such thing as the Albanian nation, to the year 1913, when Albania was recognized internationally? Why did Albanians achieve to gain their nation-state, but other majority Muslim nations of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, such as Bosnians, did not gain it? I will try to write more about it in conclusion.

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<sup>31</sup> Elena Kocaqi, *Si e krijoi Austro-Hungaria shtetin Shqiptar* (Tiranë: Emal, 2019), 9.

<sup>32</sup> Franz Nopcsa, *Udhëtime në Ballkan* (Tiranë: Plejad, 2007)

<sup>33</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo, a short history* (Kent: MacMillan 2002), 195.

## CHAPTER III

### IN SEARCH OF A GOLDEN AGE

#### 3.1. “The Archeology of the Past”

*“Getting the history wrong is part of being a nation”*

- Ernest Renan

Searching in the past is one of the most vital tools that nationalist writers have. As historian Eric Hobsbawm mentions, they use the past, *“use history as a legitimator of action and cement a group cohesion”*,<sup>34</sup> or according to Anthony D. Smith: *“They refer to the past events but which serve the present purposes and future goals”*.<sup>35</sup> Smith writes in his book *National Identity* that the intellectuals keen on their nationalistic ideas use the myths of a national identity which are typically referred to as a territory or ancestry or both.<sup>36</sup> For Smith, it is and must be the ‘historic’ land, the ‘homeland’, the ‘cradle’ of our people, and he takes the example of Turks who see their land as their historical place even though, as Smith says, it’s not the land of their ultimate origin. *“This homeland becomes a repository of historic memories and associations, the place where ‘our’ sages, saints, and heroes lived, worked, prayed, and fought, added to this it rivers coasts, lakes, mountains, and cities which become sacred and places of veneration and exaltation and all of these makes ‘our’ homeland unique”*.<sup>37</sup>

The trajectory that is followed in the national identity-building process usually uses the past also for the reason of ‘finding our culture’ or ‘rediscovering ourselves’, and

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<sup>34</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>35</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*. (London: Penguin Books: 1991), 19.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

in this sense, we can find ‘our’ unique culture which ‘we’ share and by doing so ‘we’ are enabled to know ‘who we are.’<sup>38</sup> But what seems to be a mystery is why we agree with a shared culture; as we will see, this culture is mostly taken by the villages, which are seen as pure, uncorrupted ‘us’.

For Smith, the cultural basis for pursuing nationalistic aims was the presence or rediscovery of a distinctive ‘ethno-history’. He assumes that if history were deficient, it would have to be reconstructed and invented in places. The uses of this ethno-history were always selective, and it was important to forget certain things to remember others.<sup>39</sup> This is a similar statement to the one of Ernest Renan, who wrote in his 1882 book *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation ?*, or in English *What is a Nation?* that getting the history wrong is part of being a nation.<sup>40</sup> What we understand here with ‘getting the history wrong’ has to do with the uses and misuses of history. This phenomenon is well-known in the history of ideologies, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries; different ideologies and political groups used and misused history as one of their most potent tools. Here, of course, we include all European or non-European nationalistic ideologies. Many political ideologies that found ground during the 20th century as it was with German Nazism with their ideas of a pure Aryan people, or as it was with Italian Fascism and with their misuse of history that everything once belonged to the Roman Empire now should belong to ‘us’, as to say to Italy. We will also face the same ethno-history and the use and misuse of history in the Albanian process of national identity. This should not be seen by those who are not well informed about the history of nationalism as something unique or isolated. It was nothing but a trajectory that mainly all national processes went in all national identity building efforts, from European and non-European societies.

Part of this ‘archeology of the past’ process, which is an effort to legitimize the creation of a specific national identity of a society historically, is the search for a golden age in the past. This golden age serves as a historical utopia, an ideal time-space in the past in which ‘we’ should try to give life again in the present and future. This, almost all

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *Identity*. 126-127.

<sup>40</sup> Ernest Renan, *What is a Nation? and other Political Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018)

the time, refers to the creation of the national myth, which today is seen as an imperative for an identity of a nation. As Smith writes: central to this myth (the national myth) is the idea that nations have existed from time immemorial and that nationalists must reawaken them after a long slumber to take their place in a world of nations.<sup>41</sup> The idea of nations, whether they are something ancient or something modern, has divided the scholars who deal with nationalism. There are the *Perennialistic* scholars, who assume that nations have been there from time immemorial. As an anti-thesis are the Modernists, who believe that there is no such thing as a nation in ancient history and nations are only, as Benedict Anderson says, *Imagined Communities* or, as Eric Hobsbawm says, a group of *Invented Traditions*. As a synthesis of these two groups of scholars seems to stand Anthony D. Smith, who, concerning this topic, mentions in his book *National Identity* that nations have something from the past; many times, they misuse history and create myths; but also invent new things to add to their national identity.

The golden ages have a multi-purpose usage. First, as we said, it is used to legitimize the present. This legitimization is used for a territorial reason, as is the case with Serbia, whose nationalist intelligentsia found their golden age in the period of the Nemanja dynasty, which reigned in an ample land of the territory of today's Balkans from the 12th to 14th century. Part of this national myth of Serbia is the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, where a Balkanic anti-Ottoman coalition led by the Serbian Prince Lazar fought and lost the battle against the Ottomans. This battle for the Serbian intelligentsia served as historical truth that the territory of Kosovo belongs to Serbia in the present because it belonged to Serbia in the past; in that past, 'we' fought for it against the Ottoman army in 1389. Secondly, the golden ages helped find their ancient leaders at that time. Leaders with this ideological approach towards the golden ages are converted into heroes and recognized with the term *national heroes*. These heroes, most of the time, are warriors who fought against those enemies that 'we' are fighting today and allied with those nations that 'we' are allies today or we wish to be in the future. Thus, the golden ages also served the nationalists as a geopolitical strategy. As to say, if "we" were close to the Papacy once, we should be close to them again since we have a historical precedent, or if we were close to Russian Empire once we should

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<sup>41</sup> Smith, *Identity*. 19-20.

also be close to them now since they are ‘our best friends, brothers, and allies during all our existence as a nation in the past’.

Another usage of the golden ages is what Smith calls: the sense of ‘whence we came’ is central to the definition of ‘who we are’.<sup>42</sup> Thus, with this, nationalist intelligentsia try to answer the question, *Who are we?* And this question is very complex and crucial for national identity building, which includes the past; culture; religion(s); how we got here today; and one of the most important things, the language. When given answers to these questions, the nationalist intellectuals are invariably selective and very cautious in choosing the best answers, the idealistic answers, not the real ones. All of these answers serve for the making of ‘our homeland’, where we belong, as much as it belongs to us.<sup>43</sup> Thus, with this ‘to whom we belong, and to whom it belongs’ ideology, many ethnic cleansing tried to get legitimized in the history of nationalism. Because if it only belongs to ‘us’, then it does not belong to ‘others’. This leads to the binary opposition of ‘us vs. them’, and between ‘us’ living here and ‘them’ living here, we choose ‘us’, thus we have to remove ‘them’ in a way or another exodus; terror; murder and all other tools that they were able to think about it in many different occasions during the last two centuries.

To be more precise about the usage of the golden ages, I will cite an entire paragraph written by Anthony D. Smith:

The other way of constructing maps and moralities for present generations was through the use of history and especially the cult of the golden ages with the aim to purify and activate the people. To do so moral examples from the ethnic past are needed, as are vivid recreations of the glorious past of the community. Hence the return to that past through a series of myths: myths of origins and descent, of liberation and migration, of the golden age and its heroes and sages, perhaps of the chosen people now to be reborn after its long sleep of decay and/or exile. Together these myth-motifs can be formed into a composite nationalist mythology and salvation drama.<sup>44</sup>

Now that we have read about how the nationalistic theorists argued about the usages and misuses of history and the past by the nationalistic intellectuals, and their attempt to make “archaeology of the past” and use it for the present, we will be able to

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<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Identity*. 22.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 66.

understand better the ideology and methodology that the Albanian nationalistic writers used in their attempts to form the Albanian national identity.

### 3.2. Diggin into Albanian's Past

*“Our ancestors are  
Pelasgians...”*

- Shemseddin Sami

Shemseddin Sami Frashëri Bey claims that Albanians are the oldest nation in Europe but interestingly, in comparison to other nations' nationalism theories, where they see their nation and their people as a 'being there forever' Sami argues that *“it seems that they [Albanians] came to Europe from Asia”*.<sup>45</sup> Sami was aware of the theories about Indo-European lineage and accepted this as accurate. We should be mindful that Sami was a philologist and multilingual with knowledge of Persian, Arabic, Turkish (Ottoman), Greek, French, and Albanian as its mother tongue.<sup>46</sup> For Sami, it was the Albanians who brought the knowledge of making wall houses in the Balkans and Europe, while before them, those living in Europe were wild and used to live in caves. Sami claims that Albanians also brought the knowledge of plowing, planting, and harvesting, as is to say, the ancient Albanians were the first to establish an agricultural society in Europe.<sup>47</sup> Today scientists call the first agricultural societies in Europe *Linear Bandkeramik*. They conclude that the first European agricultural societies were in the Balkan region, but we cannot conclude that they were Albanians. Sami contradicts himself, first assuming that Albanians are 'the oldest nation in Europe' and then saying that 'those who were before them used to live in caves. Thus, he accepts that people were living in these lands before the Albanians arrived as he says '... from Asia'.

Sami uses the word analyzation to explain what the Albanians were called in the past, why certain nations call Albanians different names, and their meaning. While assuming a direct continuation from the medieval population, he writes that 'our

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<sup>45</sup> Sami Frashëri, *Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhet?*. (Prishtinë: Dijsa, 2019) 15.

<sup>46</sup> Gawrych, *The Crescent*, 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

parents' were called *Arben*. The meaning of *Ar Ban* in modern Albanian which translated to English the word *Ar* means Field and the word *Ban* is for the word *Do* or *Doing Something* which if we translate it as a verb from Albanian means *Planting the Field* or *Field-planters*.<sup>48</sup> Thus, it is with this meaning that he argues that Albanians were an advanced agricultural society, and for Sami, as we said, was the first agricultural society in Europe.

Sami writes that it was the Romans who made this name from *Arban* to *Alban*, where even today, the Albanians are internationally called as such. He says that it is because of how Romans called 'us' in this manner that today *Shqipëria* is called Albania.<sup>49</sup> Sami argues that the name Alban was taken from Romans; as such, Greeks call Albanians *Arvanit*, and from Greeks, Turks (Ottomans) received this name, and thus they call Albanians *Arnaut*.<sup>50</sup> <sup>51</sup> Linguistically speaking, it is still unclear why different nations or languages call Albanians different names. It is assumed that there was a tribe named Alban near today's city of Fushë-Krujë in central Albania, but this theory has not yet been proven. The Albanians who went to live in Italy, especially in the southern part of Italy during the Middle Ages, are still called *Arbresh* today. They were called such since the Middle Ages when they migrated there during the Ottoman conquests. The Arbresh have a specific accent of the Albanian language, which some linguists believe to be a purer form of the Albanian language, conserved throughout the centuries. The Arbresh community in Italy continues to revere the Christian Orthodox religion, which Albanians accepted during the Byzantine Empire before the Ottoman invasions of the Balkans.

Sami also explained why Albania has transitioned from calling itself *Arber* to calling itself *Shqipëri*. He claims that 'our nation' has taken the name *Shqipëri* from a type of eagle called *Shqipe*. For Sami, this bird used to be worshiped by 'our old ancestors'. Here Sami is writing about the idea that Albanians come from the Illyrian tribes, which were settled in the Balkans. Illyrians are believed to have been polytheistic and totemistic in their beliefs, and one of these beliefs is that they used to worship the

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> *Shqipëri* is the name for Albania in the Albanian language, and *Shqiptarë* is the Albanian meaning for Albanians, as to say the Albanian people.

<sup>50</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 16.

<sup>51</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 16.

eagle. He writes that ‘our ancestors’ used to have an eagle on their flag.<sup>52</sup> Here, it seems that he meant the flag of Skanderbeg, a two-headed black eagle with a red background, a flag that in the year 1912 was adopted as the national flag of Albania and is still used today as such. However, in reality, Skanderbeg did not use this flag because of a totemistic belief because it is well known that Skanderbeg died as a Christian. What remains closer to the historical truth is that the Skanderbeg family or tribe named Kastrioti (Alb. Kastrioti), which adhered to the Orthodox Christian religion, was inspired for his flag by the flag of the ruling dynasty of the Byzantine Empire, the Paleologos, which ruled with the Byzantine Empire during the 15th century. The Seljuk Empire also adopted similar two-headed eagle flags during their existence in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12th centuries; the same case is with the Holy Roman Empire. The two-headed eagle had a symbolism where one head looked towards the east and the other towards the west. This was to symbolize the significant expansion of an empire, and the colors of the eagle or the background mostly were done for aesthetic reasons.

Vasa Pasha also tries to explain why Albanians in the native language are called Shqiptarë and why they transitioned from calling themselves Arbër to Shqiptarë. While he says that he is quoting Plutarch, he goes on and says that the enemies of Pyrrhus were surprised by his speed and maneuverability. He was called the King of Epirus, a person who resembles an eagle, while Pyrrhus (always quoting Plutarch) answered the people that “*it is true that I am similar with an eagle and the spears are my wings which help me to rise*”. Vasa writes that because of this eagle similarity to Pyrrhus, Albanians were to be called Shqiptarë. For Vasa, the name Shqipëri as to say Albania means the place of eagles, and Shqiptarë as to say Albanians, meaning the sons of eagles which he calls it a historical fact.<sup>53</sup>

Sami goes further in history digging and further in time. He starts talking about what he believes are the most ancient predecessors of Albanians. He writes that “*our old ancestors are the Pelasgians*”. But who are the Pelasgians? It is hard to write about them, primarily because of their mythical existence, which is hard to prove with authentic historical evidence. Pelasgians are believed to be the people whom the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 12-13.

ancient Greek writers such as Homer depicted. They used to call them ‘barbarian neighbors’; for their context, it meant a non-Greek population on the borders of the Greek city-states who spoke a different language. For Sami, even the name *Pelasgian* is Albanian, and he assumes that it comes from the word *Plak* which in the Albanian language is used for an older person or sometimes for old predecessors as to say they call their father or their grandfather, with this name.

Thus, Sami argues that the more modern Albanians used to call the Pelasgians as *Plak* as to say ‘old’ because they were their old ancestors, their old fathers, and grandfathers.<sup>54</sup> These claims become more interesting when Sami assumes that some of these Pelasgians, as to say these ancient Albanians who inhabited the entire Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor, in one way or another, crossed the Adriatic Sea and eventually traveled to the Italian Peninsula. These people were no more than the Etruscans themselves. They were believed to have founded Rome and Roman Empire. Thus, Sami writes, “*Latins and other nations of Italy are from the seed of Pelasgians*”.<sup>55</sup> In this way, he argues that we can answer the issue of why the Albanian language similarities to other Latin languages such as Italian and French.<sup>56</sup> Sami does not consider that this may be because the Roman and Byzantine Empires ruled the territories inhabited by Albanians for more than a millennia. Thus, these conquests influenced the Albanian language in one way or another, similar to how Turkish, Arabic, and Persian influenced the Albanian language during the Ottoman Empire.

Vasa acknowledges the migration of people in the past. Yet, he claims that even during the history of the Balkans, there were many periods when different nations migrated into the region. However, the first of the arrivers he claims were the Pelasgians, whom he calls *Fils de la Terre*<sup>57</sup> (The Sons of Earth). But never the less, they were the first; he does not call them autochthon in these lands. He does not describe them as other writers of Albanian or as other writers of different nationalist movements do, in which they set their people as they were created there.

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<sup>54</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 16.

<sup>55</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 16.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Wassa Efendi, *La vérité sur l'Albanie et les Albanais*, (Paris: Imprimerie de la Société anonyme de Publications Périodiques, 1879) 7.

Sami starts to analyze the religion of the Pelasgians, whom he says had a polytheist religion. Sami writes that the Pelasgians believed in all signs of nature; they worshiped the sun, the moon, stars, sky, clouds, wind, sea, thunderbolts, etc. He also writes that they used to honor the fire, and in some places, they never used to extinguish it. This religion, as Sami writes, was spread by Greeks and Latins, who also added other things and beautified it. He says, "*this religion today is called mythology, is the religion of our ancestors*". This is to say that ancient Greek and Roman mythology were nothing less than an ancient Pelasgian or Albanian religion.<sup>58</sup>

Using the language tool, Vasa also tries to convince us that what is known today as Greek mythology was a Pelasgian religion. Vasa argues about this while showing that the nominal meanings of many Greek gods come from the Pelasgian language, while he uses modern Albanian to argue about it. For example, he writes that *Kaos*, which in Greek means emptiness or eater, comes from the Pelasgian and now Albanian word and pronunciation of the word *Ha* or *Hao*, which means ‘to eat’, or from the word *Has*, which means ‘eater’ and also from the word *Hap* which means ‘open’, or *Hapsi* which means ‘opener’. He writes that from *Kaos* in Thebe was born *Ereb*, where the root of this word he claims is *erh* which means darkness, and in Albanian, this is translated as *Errësirë* or *Errët*, which translated to English also implies darkness. *Uranus*, the Greek god, Vasa, argues that he is also Pelasgian as to say Albanian — which he follows to the Albanian word *Vrant* or *Vranësirë*, translated to English means ‘cloudy’ as for the cloudy weather. The daughter of *Uranus*, *Rhe*, is for the Albanian word *Re*, which means ‘cloud’. *Rhea* in Greek mythology is known as the mother of gods, and from *Rhea*, as to say from the cloud, *Zeus* was born, a name which Vasa thinks comes again from the Albanian word *Za* or *Zë* depending on which Albanian accent are you using, means ‘voice’. Therefore, Vasa tries to connect the dots and says that from *Rhea* (cloud) was born *Zeus*, which means he is the voice of the cloud or thunderbolt. Also, *Zeus*, he claims, is the same name as the Albanian word *Zot* which is still used today as a name for God in the Albanian language.<sup>59</sup> But naming God as *Zot* is not specific only to the Albanian language; for example, in the Persian language, the name ذات transliterated as *Zaat* is also used to denote God, or in ancient Egypt, the name *Thoth* was also used to represent a specific deity.

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<sup>58</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 17.

<sup>59</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 18-19.

Vasa continues his arguments about Greek mythology. He writes that *Metis*, the wife of Zeus, also has an Albanian name. *Metis*, he thinks, is the same as the Albanian word *Met* or *Ment*, which translated into English, means Mind. So, when Zeus and *Metis* had their child, it was named *Athena*. He claims *Athena* has the same meaning as the Albanian word *E-thëna*, translated to English, which means To-Say or To-Talk. So he tries to convince us that from the goddess *Metis* as to say from the Mind and Zeus as to say Voice, *Athena* was born, so from the combination of Mind and Voice, the ability to Talk was enabled.<sup>60</sup> In addition, he writes that the goddess *Hera* is *Era* in Albanian, which means Wind; *Nemesis* for *Nëme* in Albanian, which means Damnation in English; *Aphrodite* from the Albanian word *Afërdita* that means Near the Light or Near the Day; *Thetis* for *Deti*, which means Sea; *Delos* for *Diell* which means Sun; *Selena* for *Lindë*, which means Birth, etc. He claims this analysis has made a breakthrough investigation in documenting the seniority of the Albanian language and the Albanian nation.<sup>61</sup> Vasa also claims that it is a clear sign of the continuity of the Pelasgian-Epirus-Macedonian-Illyrian-Albanian, is the way how these people venerated nature signs, how they worshiped earth, sky, mountains, water, fire, sun, moon, stars, etc., and which still takes place in the Albanian vows today. The Albanians vow *Për qiell e për dhe*, or in English, *For the sky and earth* or the Albanian vow, *Për këtë zjarr* translated to English as *For this fire*, etc., instead of vowing to God. He continues by saying that Greeks, in difference from their mythology, which he claims was taken from Albanians, they did not take the stone worshiping. For him is a clear sign of the distinctiveness of Pelasgians, including Epirus, Macedonians, Illyrians, and Albanians from the Greeks, thus trying to prove that since Pelasgians, people of Epirus, Macedonians, Illyrians, and Albanians had the same set of beliefs, they are the same nation. They are not to be considered Greeks.<sup>62</sup>

A direct continuation of Pelasgians, Sami writes that are Illyrians, Macedonians, Phrygians, and Thracians, which for him were only some different tribes, and “*the truth is that they were one single nation and they understood each other’s language*”.<sup>63</sup> These various tribes produced ‘heroes’ such as Alexander the Great and Pyrrhus,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 19-20.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>63</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 18.

known for his 'Pyrrhic Victory'. A proof for Sami that Alexander the Great was from an Illyrian tribe; this means he was Albanian. Alexander conquered large parts of the world but never conquered Illyria or Epirus, which were his northern neighbors. Sami wanted to convey that Alexander did not have to conquer them because he was part of them; he was Illyrian and Albanian.<sup>64</sup> But maybe the answer to this is the same answer for the question of why Alexander did not conquer Europe. Perhaps in his view, the economic-political importance center of the world was not Europe at that time. At that period, Persia and Egypt had relatively developed societies in the Fertile Crescent. Conquering these territories became a remarkable triumph for Alexander. This is the reason why he is known in history as The Great. Conquest of Europe or his northern neighbors would not bring him the same glory as Greece, Persia, and Egypt. After the conquest of Egypt in 322 BC., he also received the title of 'Son of God Amun'. Would Alexander be able to receive such a glorious title if he could conquer Europe and fight with the Gaels and Celts?

Vasa also claims that Alexander was Albanian and not Greek. While quoting Plutarch, he writes that when Alexander the Great killed his friend Cleitus (Cleitus the Black), Alexander went out of his tent and called his guard in the Macedonian language. In the opinion of all historians — Vasa writes — the Macedonian language was different from all other Greek languages. For him, this means the language that the soldiers of Philip and Alexander spoke was no other than the language of ancient Pelasgians, the same language which he claims that was spoken in Epirus, which is the same language that "*we today we call it Shqype [Albanian] and which is widely spoken today all over Albania*".<sup>65</sup> Vasa furthers his arguments when he questions the ancient Greek language as something that was known only by the parts of the high society. He claims that Greek was as a kind of 'court language' where he thinks that there are many possibilities that even during the reign of Philip of Macedon and Pyrrhus, their generals and statesman spoke in the Greek language and worked with the Greek alphabet and literature. For him this happened only because the Greek language was the most advanced of languages in its time, thus knowing and using this language was helpful

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>65</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 15.

to achieve communication for trading and other political issues. He writes, “*In that time, Greek was like today’s French, which has become a worldly language*”.<sup>66</sup>

Sami also argues that the Kingdom of Epirus was an Albanian kingdom. He even explains that the meaning of the name Epirus comes from the Albanian language. He argues that it comes from the Albanian word *Eper*, which means something above; in a higher level; in this case, it has to do with a higher mountainous territorial-geographical position as to say, a hinterland.<sup>67</sup> He talks in superlatives about Pyrrhus, the King of Epirus, as the person who “*defeated the Romans and conquered Greece*”.<sup>68</sup> As we mentioned in the beginning, these battles and wars in nationalistic writings are never used as just mere historical facts. When the old enemies and the old allies are mentioned, they are always mentioned for usage in the present. The Romans ceased to exist for a long time before the writing of Sami, but Greece as a nominal territory still existed there. After their war of independence in the 1820s, Greece and the Greeks were considered one of the existential threats to Albanians. Thus, mentioning Pyrrhus here as the person who *conquered Greece* has strictly to do with the usage of the nationalistic tool of revival Golden Ages for current use. We are not trying to argue that Sami urged Albanians to conquer Greece ‘again’, but it is an effort to present Greece as a linear historical enemy of Albanians. In the end, he connects the Illyrians and Epirus with Albanians with another tremendous nationalistic tool: the shared culture. He writes: “*Illyrians and people of Epirus lived and were in the same manners as today’s Albanians, without any change and spoke the language that we speak today*”.<sup>69</sup> In the Albanian historiography, this has to do with what is called the ‘Illyrian-Arber continuation’ as to say with the arguments that Albanians are a direct continuation of the ancient Illyrians. For this, the main arguments used to try and prove this continuation are the language and cultural arguments, the same thing that Sami is trying to argue in the passage above. Adding to the characteristics of these kingdoms, Sami writes that “*they were not autocratic in leadership, they used to work with a council of elders, which was a kind of parliament*”.<sup>70</sup> Again, this served as a historical

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>67</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 19.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 17.

reference for a later remark in this book when he talks about a future vision for an Albanian state.

In Sami's opinion, even the name Epirus is Albanian, but according to Vasa, it is a non-native name. It is similar to the name Macedonia; he claims both are from the Greek language. He also claims that the name Arbëria is a European given name, but Vasa writes that Albanians at that time did not know about Epirus, Macedonia, and or Arbëria; in every period of history, it was Shqipëri. Vasa calls it offensive if someone calls Albania with other names except Shqipëri because he says, "*for Albanians, it sounds like you are talking to them in Chinese or maybe you are using swear words against them*".<sup>71</sup> In this argument, Vasa may be wrong as it seems closer to the historical truth that Albanians called themselves Arbër or Arbën or a name that sounded similar. Because people who were from different ethnic backgrounds, such as the Greeks, called them and still call Albanians *Arvanites* or Ottomans called them. Still, today Turks call them *Arnaut*, and the Albanian diaspora in Italy, which most of them went there after the Ottoman conquest, are still called *Arbresh*. So, the first two letters - Ar- are identical to each of these nominal identities. Based on this, it seems to derive even the name Albania or Albanians for its subjects. Even though there are other theories that the name Albania derives from another Illyrian tribe called Alban, there seems to be no clear understanding of how the name Albania started to be used by the Europeans.

After this period of Illyrian and Epirus kingdoms, another age came, the age of Roman conquests in the Balkans. What we notice in Sami's book is its effort to paint a picture that even though Albanians were conquered, first by Romans, after then continued in Byzantine and the end by Ottoman Empire, 'they were never humbled' and in, fact, the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman rulership for Sami was only nominal because the real rulers continued to be Albanians. He writes:

Albanians were never humbled regardless they were defeated and killed by the Romans. They were always the lords of their lands, and Romans were only nominative lords [...] Even though in place of Illyrian and Epirus kingdoms now appeared the Romans, Albanians still were governed by their council of elders.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 13-14.

<sup>72</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 21.

Similar to Sami, Vasa writes “*Even though Ottomans conquered the Albanians, and Albania became an Ottoman province, the Albanian warrior soul never vanished*”.<sup>73</sup> For Sami, even when the Romans did any work in the Balkans, they named it with Albanian language terms because the influence of Albanian was strong, as he argues that even the famous Rome-Constantinople road *Via Ignatia* has an Albanian language meaning where Ignatia is equal to the Albanian word *I-gjatë* which translated to English means ‘something long’.<sup>74</sup>

Sami gives a great emphasis during his entire book writing about this issue that Albanians ruled themselves during the conquering empires, and they kept their way of living, their rules, etc., even when they changed their religion. He writes:

When the Roman Empire split, Albania belonged to the Eastern Roman Empire with its center in Constantinople. Even under the Byzantine Empire, they were free lords of their lands, not their slaves. In that period, Christianity entered Albania, and in a short period, all Albanians became Christians, but they did not change their old traditions. [...] In Albania, no foreigner used to come (to rule). All of those who governed Albania were always Albanians. We can say that Albania was governed by Albanians with its traditions.<sup>75</sup>

Again, this ‘historical fact’ that Sami strongly emphasizes will serve him later when he talks about the present (1899) issues of Albanians in the Ottoman Empire.

Sami also argues that Albanians used to rule Bosnia; Hercegovina; Dalmatia; Montenegro, and Serbia; that’s why for him, “*we can say that Bosnians, Herzegovinians, Dalmatians, Montenegrins all have Albanian blood: their body, face, traditions, songs, and dances are more similar with the Albanian rather than with Slavic ones*”.<sup>76</sup> He means that all of them were Albanians before the Slavic migrations in the Balkans, which happened in the 7th century. But what is interesting here is the way he detaches them from Albanians. Indirectly he answers that who is an Albanian for him. He says for all those people who ‘once were Albanians’ that “*since today they speak Serbian, they are called Shqeh and not Albanians: because language is the first symbol of nationhood*”.<sup>77</sup> First, the word used here is Shqeh, which today is mainly used by Albanians as *Shka*, is a pejorative name for Slavic people and mostly for Serbs.

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<sup>73</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 30.

<sup>74</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 21.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

When Albanians use this, it is used in hatred for Serbs, so when Sami uses this word even for Bosnians, which share the same religion with Sami, that is, Islamic religion, he equals them with Serb. Thus, we can say that Sami is reaching a high level of nationalistic belief which is equal to hating the non-Albanians, a level in which religion no more unites 'us' with 'them' as is the case with Bosnians, but what only unites 'us' together is the language for which he calls the *first symbol of nationhood*, and not religion.

But the real 'Golden Age' that the Albanian nationalistic intelligentsia wanted to impose on the Albanian collective thought was the 15th century, a century where the League of Lezha was formed in 1444 against the Ottomans, and the leader of this League became Gjergj Kastrioti better known as Skanderbeg, who became the chief-hero of the Albanian nationalistic thought. Most of the league members were Albanian leaders who had achieved to have in their dominion certain territories of today's Albania. Still, also Crnojevic, the Lords of Zeta, part of modern-day Montenegro, joined in this anti-Ottoman league. This league was supported by Venice and was held in the city of Lezha in modern-day Albania, just because this city was in the dominion of Venice and was seen as a neutral place for all the members of the league, which in the past also used to have some feuds and battles between them. This league for Sami represents the first time Albanians united in one kingdom.<sup>78</sup>

Sami, in his book, writes a separate chapter only on Skanderbeg and his times. He starts by calling him a person "*which in history there is not a similar example to him: in bravery, war, knowledge, strength, and cleverness*". Sami sees this Skanderbeg as the source of Albanian honor. At the same time, he says that this Skanderbeg "*gave and will continue forever to give honor to Albania*", thus not only did it give honor to Albania in the 15th century, but he '*will continue forever*' to give this honor that was given five centuries before, and will continue in the future to do so.<sup>79</sup> Thus, this is an apparent attempt to set an ideological-historical golden age: as a past, that should be revitalized since to regain that glory, we should do what Skanderbeg did, as is to say what 'our' hero did, and thus 'we' should take him as an example for the future. But

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>79</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 24.

what did Skanderbeg do that the Albanian nationalists found him useful? Of course, it has to do with his war and battles against the Ottoman Empire, but that is not all to it because many Albanians during the centuries achieved to gain a leadership role against the Ottomans, and their figure was not used in this nationalistic thought.

The figure of Skanderbeg is more complex than only a warrior who fought against the Ottoman Empire. First, Skanderbeg was a soldier of the Ottoman Empire; as Sami says, “*as a child, he fell into the hands of Turks and grew up in the Sultan's palace*”.<sup>80</sup> Skanderbeg was recruited with the Ottoman *Devshirme* system. After years of fighting on the side of Ottoman Sultan Murat II, he is believed to have gained his loyalty and was considered a high-rank soldier. But the story has it that he achieved to gain information that he would be killed by the Sultan or by other members of the Ottoman military who envied him. Thus, to save his life, he abandoned the Ottoman military together with many other Albanian soldiers and achieved to come back to Albania in 1443 and become the leader of the League of Lezhë only one year after in 1444. In the same year the Ottomans were fighting against a new crusade that was started against them. After his ‘homecoming’, Skanderbeg achieved good diplomatic relations first with Venice, then with Pope Pius II, John Hunyadi of Hungary, and his best diplomatic relations became with Naples. For Sami, “*entire European Powers of that time, had hope and were expecting from Skanderbeg and Albanians to save Europe*”.<sup>81</sup> Thus what Skanderbeg offered to the Albanian nationalists was a person who was first a loyal part of the Ottoman Empire, as Albanian reality was again the same in the 19th century. Skanderbeg then went against the Ottoman Empire only because this empire that he was loyal to it for so long, was planning to kill him. Going against them he is believed that has achieved to unite all Albanians, as the Albanian nationalist were intending to achieve this unity with the same reason that the ‘Ottomans are trying to kill us, as a nation’. Skanderbeg became a closed ally with the European powers, again the same thing that the Albanian nationalists were trying to do as their political platform.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 26.

Sami, in search of the golden age, writes that the period of Skanderbeg was “*the most blessed of times of our nation; it was only at his age when the entire nation united in one free government and became world-famous for their stronghold against the Turks [...] after the age of this men, Albania became only a part of Turkic Kingdom*”.<sup>82</sup> Another interesting fact about Sami’s writing is that he never uses the word Ottoman for the Ottoman Empire; he always uses the words Turk/ Turks/ Turkic Kingdom, etc. I cannot give a clear answer to why he does this. Still, I can assume that it has to do with the accusations that were happening at the end of the 19th century against the Ottoman government, that they were trying the ‘Turkification’ of the Empire against other ethnic groups that were part of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, by using the word Turk instead of Ottoman, maybe Sami is trying to signify that this empire is no longer an empire that unites all the subjects that are part of it, but it is becoming more hegemonic by the Turkish subjects of the empire. Benedict Anderson writes that the Ottomans came to be hated by Turkish speakers as apostates — because by Turkifying everything, they were removing the Islamic characteristics — and by non-Turkish speakers, Anderson writes that they came to be hated as Turkifiers.<sup>83</sup>

Regarding Skanderbeg, Vasa uses his time and wars against the Ottomans to ‘attack’ Greeks and their ‘patriotic culture’. Vasa writes that the Christian Greeks melted with other Christian nations in the Ottoman Empire, and after the conquest, “*they became busy with trading, sailing, and arts*”. In contrast, he says that the Epirot, Macedonians, and Illyrians, ‘which were descendants of Pelasgians’, united under the patriotic ideal and, in the 15th century, with a heavy stronghold, went against the Ottoman invasion. In this century, he claims that entire Albania joined arms “*to defend the independence of the nation*”, even though, as we know now, the concept of nation was understood differently in the Middle Ages. Vasa continues writing about Skanderbeg, writing that “*in the name of Albanians together with his compatriots, he declared war against the two of the most dreadful sultans of the Ottoman Empire, Murat and his son Mehmet, the destroyer of the Byzantine Empire, the conquer of Constantinople*”. Vasa again compares Albanians with Greeks. While Albanians, he writes, united in the League of Lezha, Greeks stood aside. At the same time, they did nothing to support any attempt

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>83</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso 2006), 68.

of what Vasa calls ‘the Albanian national movement’ of Skanderbeg. Again, for Vasa, this disinterest serves as a shred of further evidence for the fact that Greeks did not feel close to the ancestors of Pelasgians. For Vasa, Greeks did not believe that they were in the same race; neither didn’t have a moral or political affinity which tells us that these two nations were always different, as to say Greeks were never Pelasgians, not in the ancient period and neither in the Middle Ages.<sup>84</sup>

Sami continues his narrative that even during the Ottoman time, Albanians were the governors and the lords of their lands, and not only that, but their power exceeded their territorial boundaries, and they became influential in the central Ottoman government; many times, they acted as revivals, saviors, and maintainers of the Ottoman Empire. Sami argues that a person named Bayazid Pasha, putting himself in danger succeeded in saving Sultan Mehmet I from Timur in the Battle of Ankara in 1402. This battle was between the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I against the Emir Timur’s military. At the end of the fight, it is known that Timur won, and Bayazid was taken hostage and eventually executed. His son Mehmet managed to escape from the Timurid army and, after a decade, achieved reviving the Ottoman Empire. Thus, for Sami, if it were not for Bayazid Pasha, which he argues was an Albanian, saving what would become Sultan Mehmet I, “*without him the Kingdom of Turks would cease to exist*”.<sup>85</sup> He also writes about many Albanians who served as Ottoman Grand Viziers, which he writes were more than 25, and “*the most famous grand viziers were Albanians*”.<sup>86</sup>

Sami also gives an economic history of Albanians in the Ottoman Empire, where he puts looting as the main ‘push factor’ for Albanians to collaborate with the Ottomans. He writes: “*Albania in the time of Turks, became richer than ever, because Albanians looted together with Turks on all sides of the world, and used to come back loaded with gold and silver, with guns and horses from Arabia, Egypt, Kurdistan, Hungary*”.<sup>87</sup> In fact, in these passages, Sami describes Albanians together with Turks as a kind of vicious people.

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<sup>84</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 28-29.

<sup>85</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria* 26-27.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

The duty that the Kingdom of Turkey wanted was similar to what they (Albanians) wanted. Continuous wars, games, horse racing, looting, killings, and other similar things, which Turks wanted, these kinds of jobs were also the most desired things from Albanians. Thus, Turks found at Albanians a strong and trustworthy friend for war and Albanians found at Turks a lord who opened before them a new field [of operating], to do whatever their desires wanted. [...] Turks found things they wanted in the Albanians: bravery, trust, and spilled blood.<sup>88</sup>

Not only that, he writes that Albanians used to do this looting and blood spilling, but he complains that Albanians have been killed and have made efforts for others, but always from their sacrifice others have benefitted. He gives the examples of Alexander and Pyrrhus that other nations are proud of their works, not Albanians, not Albania. He mentions other Ottoman bureaucrats who are believed to have been Albanians, such as Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha (d.1595), for whom he writes that conquered Yemen and *delivered the Turkish flag up to the Indian Ocean*. He also writes about the Köprülü family, which he claims saved the ‘Turkish Kingdom’ and they even achieved to besiege Vienna, but for Sami, from these men, Turkey benefitted but not Albania.<sup>89</sup> Sami agrees that the general conditions in Albania were good until Tanzimat. Thus, Tanzimat is seen by all writers as a transition point.

Vasa also writes that up to the Tanzimat era, the conditions in Albania were quite good, *“there was wealth, happiness and a dreadful army available”*. He writes that when powerful sovereigns in Europe could not gather a military might of 100.000 men, only Albania gathered from 60.000 up to 80.000 men for military.<sup>90</sup> For Vasa, the changes in the political system after the Tanzimat were a transition point for the well-being of Albania and Albanians. For him, the new administration caused chaos in the public consciousness. He emphasizes that even the new laws approved in Ottoman Empire’s reforms could not be delivered in Albania. For this, he accuses the governors that were employed, which for him did not come as a result of meritocracy, and they *“did not love their country, they did not know how to make their country and their people happy”*.<sup>91</sup> The Tanzimat reforms for Vasa disturbed the national consciousness of Albanians. Thus, people started not to trust the administration officials who were sent from Istanbul as to say from the central government, mainly for the reason that they were not Albanians. They also lacked knowledge about Albania and Albanians, for

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>90</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 54.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

their language, traditions and history. Vasa claims that Albanians only served these officials because they were sent with the will of the Sultan, which he calls a ‘sacred person’ who has the love and admiration of all, especially in the heart of Albanians.<sup>92</sup> Vasa also wrote about the ‘foreigner’ in the sense of the non-Albanian governors sent to govern with Albanians. As we will see in the second chapter, in his poetry, he calls them people “*Which doesn’t have your language and blood*”.

Vasa says that the old system, the Timar system, was primitive. Still, this type of governorship had become a habit for Albanians, and its removal damaged the balance of the rulership. He claims that the removal of the Timar system injured trade because with this system, it was the local leaders who guarded the trade routes, and in these trade routes, most of the products in Albania were agricultural products; thus, the damage that occurred in an agrarian society like Albania, the entire economy collapsed.<sup>93</sup> Also, for the military obligation, he writes that the military burden has fallen only on Muslim Albanians because European powers supported Christian Albanians and they never advocated for the Muslim Albanians; thus Muslims were sent to war, which for him was the labor force of Albania, thus with the insufficiency in the labor force this impacted Albanian agriculture economy. For this reason, most Muslim-Albanian families sunk into poverty.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 57.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATIONAL MYTH

#### 4.1. Ethno-Symbolism Approach

*Who more than poets, musicians, painters, and sculptors could bring the national ideal to life and disseminate it among the people?*

- Anthony D. Smith

After localizing the ‘Golden Age’, which as we said had to contain heroes, language and territories, now in the trajectory of national identity building comes the phase of creating the ‘National Myth’. This national myth contains what Anthony D. Smith calls ‘*idealized heroes and sages*’, suggesting the nation’s antiquity and continuity, “*its noble heritage and the drama of its ancient glory and regeneration*”.<sup>95</sup> Thus, as Smith says, the product produced by this ‘archaeology of the past’ is used to rediscover the ‘collective self’. This rediscovery is done through philology – as to say, the study of the language, because the language for the nationalists is like Sami wrote “*the first sign of a nationhood*”; the other tool, as we wrote in the first chapter, is considered history; the third one is considered archaeology.<sup>96</sup>

Archeology serves as a tool for national identity building, where with the archeological findings, nationalists make efforts to give material documentation of ‘our presence here’ since the beginning — whatever that beginning means — as to say it provides to the masses things that you can see and touch; visual proofs. There are some contemporary cases with the Israeli archeologists in the ancient city of Jerusalem, wherewith their archeological efforts, they make efforts to present that this city ‘always belonged to us’ since you can witness ‘our’ traces during history. In the Albanian context, we have the archeological sites known as the *Komani Culture*, which

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<sup>95</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, 92.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

are archaeological sites located in the village of Koman in today's Albania. With the material culture findings, there are efforts to argue the continuation of the ancient Illyrians to the modern Albanians.

Other than this, we also face in many nations' national identity efforts a specific national costume and appearance fashion – as to say, a way of wearing and clothing that is specific only to 'us'. These clothes have particular colors; many times, with distinctive hats; a specific form of holding your pants, as to say a special belt; a specific headscarf for women; in some nations, a specific way of women's make-up and a particular hairstyle. In the Albanian national identity, we can notice this, for example, the usage of a 'national hat' of the white cap called *Plis*; national Albanian men costume which also differs from the region, some have white trousers, some have crimson or brown, etc. Similarly in the women's costume as it is the example of *Xhubleta*, which is believed to be ancient clothing; a specific belt for the men's uniform called *Tirqe*; different colors of women's head scarf, etc. All of these give a sense of having a unique identity, a kind of 'we' are not the same as 'others', 'we' differ even in 'our' clothes and 'our' appearance, as Smith writes "*Ethnic distinctiveness remains a sine qua non of the nation*", and as he continues that "*after all, what is the raison d'être of any nation if it is not also the cultivation of its unique (allegedly unique) culture values?*".<sup>97</sup> Therefore, the entire process of Ethno-symbolism has to do with as the word can explain itself, using some ethnic characteristics as symbolism in the process of creating a unique national identity.

So, we notice that nationalist writers use things specific to their ethnicity or people, as we said, for example, national costumes. Still, another characteristic they use is the nature specifics of their territory. Smith writes that nationalist writers use the nation's rivers, coasts, lakes, mountains, and cities where they become 'sacred' – they become places of reverence and exaltation.<sup>98</sup> Smith theorizes that these 'sacred places' provide individuals with spiritual and historical pilgrimage objects and are used to reveal the uniqueness of their nation's 'moral geography'.<sup>99</sup> We also notice many sights like a hill or a mountain that started to be used for this nationalist pilgrimage, such as we

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 16.

have mount Zion for Jewish people, and there were attempts to make Tomorri mountain in Albania for such sacred site usage in the Albanian nationalist writers such as Naim Frashëri. Not only the nature's natural specifics being used by nationalistic writers, but even already built structures are being used as a tool for their nationalistic writings, such as castles, temples such as the British Stonehenge, or a specific grave of a 'hero'.<sup>100</sup> In Albania, there is what it's believed to be the grave of Skanderbeg in the city of Lezha, for which there is no proof that he was buried there but was constructed as a collective belief by the Albanian nationalist writers and probably assisted by Austro- Hungarian diplomats.

All these heroes and villains, golden ages, nature, forests and mountains, villages and cities, costumes, etc., are used by writers to inspire the nationalist feeling in the masses, thus creating a sense of belongingness, a feeling of uniqueness, a creation of a specific national identity. But who are those people that were doing such things? Again, Anthony D. Smith gives his answer while saying: "*Who more than poets, musicians, painters, and sculptors, could bring the national ideal to life and disseminate it among the people?*".<sup>101</sup> Smith makes it more detailed when he writes:

Lexicographers, philologists, and folklorists have played a central role in nation building. Their linguistic and ethnographic research into the past and present culture of the 'folk' provided the materials for a blueprint of the 'nation-to-be'. By creating widespread awareness of the myths, history, and linguistic traditions of the community, they succeeded in substantiating and crystallizing the idea of an ethnic nation in the minds of most of its members.<sup>102</sup>

But why especially philologists? Their ability to speak and read other languages, especially the European ones, made available to them the nationalistic writings of other nations who had already formed their national identities. In the Albanian context, we notice that most of them knew French, which in relation to understanding the nationalistic writings, would be the best language you could read and understand. These people knowing other examples of earlier nationalistic writings, stood strict to the trajectory. As we will notice, their writings are more and less to do with the question of *Who am I?* or, more correctly, *Who are we?* Ernest Gellner writes:

Nationalism usually conquers in the name of a putative folk culture. Its symbolism is drawn from the healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the peasants, of the Volk the narod. There is a certain

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 12.

element of truth in the nationalist self-presentation when the narod or Volk is ruled by officials of another, an alien high culture, whose oppression must be resisted first by a cultural revival.<sup>103</sup>

## 4.2. The Albanian Ethno-Symbolism

*D'ou vient-il? Qui est-il? Comment vit-il?*

- Vasa Pasha

This chapter will deal with the essential writings about the Albanian national identity. All these writings (and many more) try to answer the question of the Albanian national character. It tries to answer the questions of Who or What is an Albanian; Where is the territory of Albania? etc.

*“Shqipëri, it's called that place where Shqiptarët lives”*.<sup>104</sup> This is how Sami answers the question of what Albanian territories are. This answer in the context of the time that his work is written has existential importance for Albanian territory. During that period, and up to 1912, Albanian territories were divided into four different *Vilayets*, as to say they were split into four other administrative regions inside the Ottoman Empire. The four vilayets inhabited by Albanians were the Vilayet of Shkodra, Vilayet of Kosovo, Manastir, and Ioannina. Thus, as we will see, there were significant efforts from the Albanian intelligentsia to form one single Albanian Vilayet under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. We can notice that there is no such effort to bring back ‘our old territories’ as we saw in the first chapter. Thus, we cannot notice here, as we can notice, for example, in the Greek idea of *Megali Idea*, where Greeks assume that even Constantinople ‘belongs to us’, including also the Aegean shores of Asia Minor. Thus, in the Albanian nationalistic writings, we cannot notice the *irredentism* phenomena, which was familiar to most nationalistic ideas.

Sami also answers an essential nationalistic question. He asks: Who is an Albanian? And he answers: *“Albanian is he who is born from Albanians, speaks Albanian, but*

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<sup>103</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, 57.

<sup>104</sup> Sami, *E vërteta*. 106.

*the most authentic Albanian is he who has Albanian mind and heart*".<sup>105</sup> Giving this kind of answer to that fundamental question gives us a very inclusive answer. Again, taking the example of the Jewish or Israeli people: they consider a compatriot only someone who shares the same religion with them; has the same ancestry, an ancestry that can be traceable. Thus, answering that Albanian is someone who *speaks Albanian and has an Albanian mind and heart*, as we said, is a very inclusive approach. Albanian territories, including today's Kosovo, parts of North Macedonia, south Serbia and parts of Montenegro; were not only inhabited by the Albanians but were other Muslim communities such as Bosnians, Turks, Roma, Circassians, and Wallachians. With Albanian national identity being an inclusive one, where someone who spoke Albanian and 'lived like an Albanian' whatever that 'living' it may be, achieved to be included eventually in the Albanian national identity, especially Circassians and Wallachians. I question if the word 'assimilation' can be used in such a case. I mention Muslim communities because other non-Muslim societies, such as Serbs, Montenegrins, and Croats, did not start calling themselves Albanians, but they kept their own identity. Benedict Anderson writes about the issue of language as part of national identity, "*The most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities*".<sup>106</sup> Anderson writes that taking languages as a sign and a condition of belonging to a certain community makes it available for that community to be fundamentally inclusive because, as Anderson writes: in principle, anyone can learn any language, but what nationalists most of the time intend is the diffusion of bilingualism".<sup>107</sup>

Sami also writes about the Albanian concept of *Besa*, where he writes that Albanian *Besa* is something known worldwide, and if Albanian pledges to *Besa*, he will never break it until he is alive. He notes that Albanians should have a communal *Besa*, and this *Besa* will make Albanians survive every danger. He advises that people should quit the blood feud that they have with each other, forget any enmity between them, and forget what happened in the past, while he asks, "*Why should we kill one another when we need to unite and spill that blood against the motherland's enemies? [...] If*

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Anderson, *Imagined*, 133-134.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid..

*we do so, who will dare to go against Albanians and Albania?*"<sup>108</sup> Besa in Albanian culture is a kind of pledge of honor, where it can be given as a communal one as it is in the case of the League of Prizren and League of Peja, but also on a personal level. Besa in the Albanian culture is highly revered; thus, as we will in the following chapters, it is a 'communal-collective Besa' that will be required from the nationalist writers as a way to achieve their national objectives.

Vasa writes about the character of Albanians. He notes that an Albanian is a restrained person; he is content with a small portion of food.

Cornbread, cheese, and milk is his random meal; they drink water and use wine and raki with great restraint. They wear light clothes; they achieve to survive cold and also warm temperatures, and they can endure tiredness and all other shortages stoically. They are extreme when they love someone, and they are also extreme when they hate someone; they don't hide their pain or their pleasures; they cry and laugh without disdaining their character. For them, friendship is cult-like, and they are trustworthy in every situation. Albanians are poets. Nobody can deny that when the Albanian mountaineer, in his way towards sacrifice, produces songs that he sings with a boast. Even if he is sent to execution, he smiles all the way to where the execution will occur. Rifle and Yatagan are the Albanians' most preferred guns; they consider their rifle their friend, an inseparable friend whom he takes care of with great love. He vows on his rifle the same as on God or in his religion. Beautiful weapons, these are his true wealth and honor.<sup>109</sup>

A crucial point in the national identity-building process is the question of the relationship between the nation's identity and religion. Can a Christian be an Albanian? Can a Muslim be an Albanian? Can an atheist be an Albanian? Let us give a Balkanic regional perspective. If we analyze the Slavic nations in the Balkans, such as Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro, you cannot be considered a Serb if you do not belong to the Christian Orthodox religion. This does not have to do with constitutional law as much as it has to do with compatriot peer pressure. If an Orthodox Serb were to be converted to Islam, he would start to be called by his peers an Albanian or Bosnian. If a Serbian were to be converted to a Catholic, his nation's peers would call him a Croat. Thus, being a Serb and Orthodox are interconnected because the Serbian national identity is built-in belonging to the Orthodox Christian religion. Nevertheless, what about the Albanian case?

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<sup>108</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 77.

<sup>109</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*, 51-52.

Vasa claims that Albanians always present themselves as *Shqiptarë* as to say Albanians, while he gives a practical example. He writes that if you ask an Albanian, “what are you?” He notes that he will immediately respond that I am an Albanian, but he will not respond as “I am a Muslim, Catholic, or Orthodox.”<sup>110</sup> Vasa writes that *neither Christ nor Muhammad*, in other words, neither Christianity nor Islam, has not achieved removing the old pagan religion from Albanians. He takes the example of stone worship while he argues that the stone worship continues from Albanians, where they vow in the name of the stone, a sign of religious leftovers and a clear sign for him, which tells about how old the Albanian nation is, as to say it is a pre-Islamic and more senior than Christianity. He says that the stone worship, precisely, in the same manner, was also in Epirus, Macedonia, and Illyria, which Albanians also continue to this day, and does not see only the stone itself as sacred but also its weight, as to say its heaviness.<sup>111</sup> Anthony D. Smith writes that the continuity between past and present that the nationalists try to present is most apparent in a field such as religion, where changes in ritual and dogma tend to be slow and gradual and continue to exert a strong influence over various aspects of society.<sup>112</sup> Thus the example of stone-worshipping is precisely what Smith writes about this continuity between past and present.

Sami claims Albanians started becoming Muslims before the Ottomans arrived in their territories. He makes a significant claim when he writes that Albanians have a characteristic that they get bored with one religion and like to change their faith often. He says that Albanians, in a majority, started to convert to Islam only when they noticed that they could not benefit from Turks if they did not belong to their religion. Thus, in this way, they did not hesitate to take their belief. But even those who remained Christians were not humiliated; they did not become *Raya* like other nations; they kept their guns and their honor and *joined in the war with their Muslim brothers against the enemies of Turks*.<sup>113</sup>

In this statement of Sami stand two essential questions about the Albanian identity. First, the question if Albanians were converted to Islam by force or by will, which

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>112</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism, A Cultural Approach*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 37.

<sup>113</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 27.

continues to be one of the most debatable issues in Albanian historiography; second, where he mentioned that Albanians *kept their guns* has to do with the question of Albanians as a ‘warrior nation’. For the ‘warrior nation’ issue, Sami argues that Albanians are *brave people and warriors who had a strong will for war in their entire life and history, and fighting for them was a job, and a means to earn*.<sup>114</sup> He also mentioned this earlier when he wrote that Albanians and Turks had similar wishes: looting and fighting. Vasa also writes, “*The Albanian nation always guarded their ancient character and ancient memory: Albanians always remained a warrior nation, warriors like their old predecessors*”.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, this continued in the Ottoman Empire, where Vasa writes that the Albanian militaries were always religiously mixed: Christians and Muslims “*took their arms together and used to fight bravely in the service of the Ottoman Empire*”.<sup>116</sup> We will notice more statements about Albanians as ‘warriors’ when we read the translated poetries. Regarding Albanians converting to Islam, Vasa writes that there are two reasons they converted: their will and personal interests.<sup>117</sup> Personal interests can include their wish to have a job in the state for which being a Muslim was a must and other interests like the permissibility to carry weapons, lower taxes, etc.

Sami also writes that Albanians belong to the Islamic religion, which is 2/3 of the Albanians. Christians are 1/3, half of whom are Catholics, and the other half are Orthodox. In addition, Muslims are divided into Sunni and Bektashi. However, he writes, “*this religious difference does not bring any division between Albanians*”.<sup>118</sup> This is another issue in the Albanian identity: Albanians never had religious clashes between themselves. This issue can be answered if we define the period we are discussing. If the intention is that after the modern national identity formation of the Albanian nation, we do not consider the attempt at a revolution in 1914, which had an Islamic character in Albania, as a clash between religions. In some isolated cases where a pig’s head was placed at the entrance of northern Albania’s mosques, we can probably conclude that this is a correct assumption.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, before these

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>115</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*, 30.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>118</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 43.

<sup>119</sup> Clayer, *Conflicting Loyalties*, 90.

modern attempts at nationhood, like during the Greek War of Independence, Christian Orthodox Albanians were fighting against Muslim Albanians, not for national interests but primarily for religion, whereas the Albanians supported the Greek anti-Ottoman efforts were doing so mainly for the religious cause. Those Muslim Albanians fighting against them were fighting for the cause of the Caliph, as to say Ottoman Sultan. A similar case happened in the 17th century when an Albanian Catholic Priest named Pjeter Bogdani gathered thousands of Catholic Albanians to fight for Habsburg Empire after the 1683 Ottoman siege of Vienna, a siege that was led by an Albanian Grand Vizier belonging to the famous family of Köprülü. Thus, the issue of ‘Albanians never had religious clashes between themselves’ has to do more with the rise of a national myth than with the historical truth. But what is true is that Albanian national identity was not built on a specific religion because the main characteristic of the Albanian identity became the Albanian language.

Nevertheless, Albanian identity being non-religious never meant being an atheist, as would be assumed later, especially during the Albanian communist period (1945-1990). As we will notice in the poetry, believing in God plays a significant role in the Albanian nationalistic writings. But in the sense of religion, Sami writes that “*Albanian is an Albanian before being a Muslim or a Christian [...] he always puts nationality before religion*”.<sup>120</sup> Again, this brings another issue that belongs to the Albanian identity. The question of ‘religion or nationality’, which comes first, to whom ‘our’ allegiances belong, and for nationalist writers like Sami and Vasa, it is the nation that ‘comes first’.

As we mentioned earlier, language remains a pillar of the trajectory of the national identity-building process. Sami writes, “*One nation is identified with the language: every nation survives because of its language: those people who forget or change their language for another, with time they become subjects of that nation, the language to whom they speak*”.<sup>121</sup> But concerning the Albanian language, many questions were raised as it is about the issue of how the Albanian language survived during the ages. Sami writing about the Albanian language, argues that it is ancient, similar to the old Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, or old Hindi language. He claims that these languages are now

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 30.

called dead languages. However, Albanian, “*our language which is more ancient than them, is still alive and it is spoken similarly like in the times of Pelasgians*”.<sup>122</sup> Both writers, Vasa and Sami, ask the same question; how did the Albanian language survive without being written? The oldest known writing in the Albanian language belongs to the year 1462, written by the Archbishop of Durres, Pal Engjelli, a script which contained the Baptismal Formula. Compared to other languages, this is a relatively late period of writing. Vasa asks the question about how could, as he says, the oldest spoken language in Europe, which approximately only 2 million people speak, has succeeded in surviving without an adequately built grammar? He writes that this is a thing, a kind of mystery or issue that cannot be explained or cannot be answered, but this issue, for him, deserves the consideration of scientists and linguists.<sup>123</sup> Sami tries to answer this question by writing: “*Albanians have conserved their language because they did not mix with others [...] living like wild in the mountains, Albanians achieved to conserve their language and nationality*”.<sup>124</sup> He criticizes the ‘ancient Albanian kingdoms’ for not cultivating the Albanian language.

I am speaking about Macedonians who had their kingdom; Pyrrhus the King of Epirus; Queen Teuta in Illyria; how they haven't felt the need to write their language? What about Philip of Macedon? What about Alexander? What about the Ptolemaic? While they saw nations of Asia and Egypt doing so.<sup>125</sup>

Sami mentions ‘Doctor Han’ for he says, “*he had found in Albania one stone written in Albanian with letters that look similar to Phoenician*”.<sup>126</sup> The person Sami is mentioning is Johann Georg von Hahn, an Austro-Hungarian philologist specializing in Albanian Studies. Hahn appears to be the first scholar that tried to prove that Albanian is an Indo-European language. He is also known to advocate the thesis that Albanians are direct descendants of Pelasgians. But concerning the question of how Albanian achieved to survive as a language, even though it was not written and cultivated, we should consider the idea of Ernest Gellner.

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>123</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*, 24-25.

<sup>124</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 30-31.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 32.

For Gellner, there are two kinds of national cultures, the *Wild* and the *Garden* cultures. The wild or savage cultures are produced and reproduced spontaneously by a generation without conscious design, supervision, surveillance, or special nutrition. For him, the cultivated or garden cultures develop from the wild varieties; they possess complexity and richness, sustained mainly by literacy and specialized personnel. Eventually, the industrial revolution made these garden cultures high and dominant cultures. From this transformation from wild to garden cultures, each of these high cultures wanted a state. Continuing with this analogy, Gellner expresses that since these High Garden cultures are cultivated artificially, they need maintenance. This maintenance of cultivated nationalistic culture is a national education and communication system, as to say, a standardized language.<sup>127</sup>

The books written in the form of *Sami* and *Vasa* mainly served the literate strata of the society, which we should understand was not high in number. But what was more accessible for ordinary people to understand were poetries. Poetries offered another valuable tool for nationalistic thought: the ability to memorize them. Next, we will cite some poetries, which I have translated to English from the Albanian language. In these poetries, you will be able to notice all of the above things we wrote about in this chapter, which gave a significant push factor and strength for the creation of the Albanian national identity. Things concerning the past and history, things concerning the language, nature as ‘sacred lands’, relations with the religion(s), ‘our enemies and allies’, the nation as a big family where its members are presented as brothers; present problems and thoughts about the future composed in a literarily way.

Next, you will be able to read the poetries, the first one by Vasa Pasha and the other by Naim Frashëri. In Vasa’s poetry that was written approximately at the same time as his book, which coincides with the League of Prizren, we are able to notice three stages. The historical stage or the stage where he talks about how Albania was in the past; the second stage where he talks how Albania is now, blaming Albanians for their national condition; and the third and last stage where he writes about what should be done. These poetries are widely used in Albanian culture and literature, and accessing

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<sup>127</sup> Gellner, *Nations*, 50-52.

to them is easy. I have used an online website called *Teksteshqip*, the largest online server on Albanian poetry.

### Oh Albania (O moj Shqypni)<sup>128</sup>

Oh Albania, poor Albania,  
Who has brought you down, with your head in the ashes?  
You have been a noble lady,  
Men used to call you mother,  
You had many good things and blessings,  
With beautiful girls and young boys,  
Cattles and territories, fields and *Bashtina*,<sup>129</sup>  
With white (silver) and golden weapons,  
With brave men and pure-honored women,  
Amid friends, you had been the best.

When the rifle used to be fired, it was like a blast of thunder,  
The Albanian rifle has always been the ablest one.  
He (the Albanian) has been for the war, and in the war, he used to die,  
Violence was never left behind him, (he never escaped from the war)  
When the Albanian men formed *Besa* (league),  
It instilled fear in the entire Rumelia,  
Severe battles he has faced,  
Always with honor, he has finished them.

But today, Albania, tell me, how are you?  
Like an oak fallen into the ground,  
The world walks above you and steps on you with its feet.  
Noone says a good, sweet word to you,  
Like a snowy mountain, like a field covered with flowers,  
You were well dressed, and now you have been left with old clothes,  
You are left nameless, unfaithful,  
You have done this to yourself, with *black cheek*.<sup>130</sup>

Albanians, you are being killed with your brothers,  
You are divided into one hundred groups,  
Some say I have *Fe*; some say I have *Din*  
Some say we are *Turk*; some say we are *Latin*  
Some say I am *Greek*, *Shkje* (Serb), some else,  
But you are all brothers, oh wretched people.<sup>131</sup>  
Priests and Imams have bewildered you,  
They want to divide and impoverish you!

There comes a foreign person, who stays in your home,  
To humiliate you with your wife and sister,  
And for the money that you will earn,

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<sup>128</sup> Pashko Vasa, *Moj Shqypni*. <https://www.teksteshqip.com/pashko-vasa/poezi-101206.php> last accessed 6/5/2022.

<sup>129</sup> *Bashtina* or *Baştina* was a hereditary land with the Timar system in the Ottoman Empire, given by the government, used by families to plant, it was specific to the Balkan Christian people.

<sup>130</sup> *Black Cheek* in Albanian culture of expression symbolizes something that you have done or somebody has done to you, and you have been publicly shamed from it. It should not be understood as being something racist.

<sup>131</sup> The word *Fe* in Albanian means Religion, it was used at that time mostly by Christians to symbolize their religion, and the word *Din* was used for the word Religion but by Muslims to symbolize their religion. The word *Turk* here again symbolizes being Muslim, *Latin* symbolizes being Catholic Christian, *Greek* and *Shkje* here symbolize Orthodox Christian.

The *Besa* of the ancestors all of you will forget (about it),  
You will become the slaves of the foreigner,  
Which doesn't have your language and blood.

Weep oh you swords, and you rifles,  
The Albanian was caught as a trapped bird!  
Weep, oh you brave ones, together with us,  
Because Albania has fallen head ground,  
As there is no bread or meat for her,  
Neither blood, neither honor among her friends,  
But it has fallen and has become broke!

Gather you girls, gather you, women,  
With those beautiful eyes, who know well how to cry,  
Come, let us mourn poor Albania,  
Which is left nameless, in disgrace;  
It has been left like a widow without its husband;  
It has been left like a mother that never had a son!

Whose heart can carry the burden to let her die,  
This brave woman that today is weakened?  
This lovely mother will we allow,  
That a foreigner to step on her?

No, no! This kind of shame nobody wants,  
From this *black cheek*, everyone is dread too,  
Before Albania gets lost in this way.  
With guns in their arms, let the brave ones die!  
Wake up Albanians, wake up from your sleep,  
Altogether, like brothers, hold on to one *Besa*  
And don't venerate churches and mosques:  
The religion of Albanians is Albanianism;

From Tivar up to Preveza,  
Everywhere the sun is releasing warm and sunlight,  
It is our land, our fathers have left it to us,  
Nobody should touch it because all of us will die for it,  
Let us die as the men who died in the past,  
And let us not be ashamed before God.

It is worth talking about the lines above: *Don't venerate churches and mosques: The religion of Albanians is Albanianism*. This is probably the most influential line of the entire Albanian nationalistic writings. This line is used and misused by the nationalists, and as a matter of fact, it has also been misused by historians. This line is used as a historical legitimization of anti-religious sentiment in Albanian society, while the use the line as a sign that 'we were never religious and we never cared about religion when it comes to the matter of nation'. This is incorrect in the context of what Vasa Pasha was writing. With his line, he was not mentioning a fact in Albanian society, as to say that Albanians are irreligious. In fact, is the contrary. Vasa specifically observing these divisions was making a farcry for Albanians, not to have such kind of religious-based division. Whereas, we will see that Vasa shows his concern that if the Ottoman Empire

fails to keep Albanians under its power, there is the potential danger that Albanians will make a civil war based on these religious divisions. This line later served in 1967 as a motto for the communist leadership in Albania to ban religion entirely and become the first and only atheist state in the world.

Naim Frashëri, the brother of Sami, writes the next poetries. You will notice the emphasis on nature and 'Fatherland' as more precious than the biological parents and all of the above things we discussed in the two chapters. Naim's poetry is mainly written during the 1880s

### **Livestock and Agriculture** (original title "Bagëti e Bujqësi")<sup>132</sup>

Oh, you mountains of Albania and you tall oaks!  
Vast flowery fields, which I have in my mind day and night!  
You beautiful hommocks, and you pure rivers!  
You mountaintops, hills, hillsides, rocky and green forests!

I will sing for the cattle that you handle and feed,  
Oh, a blessed place, you amuse my mind.  
You Albania give me honor; you give me the name Albanian.  
You baked my heart with desire and fire.

Albania, oh my mother, even though I have migrated,  
Your love, my heart has never forgotten about.  
When he hears the voice of his mother when the lamb leaves its herd,  
It bleats two or three times and goes immediately (to his mother).  
Even if twenty or thirty make obstacles to him,  
And scare him (the lamb), he doesn't return but goes across them like an arrow.

Similarly, my heart leaves me (my body) here,  
And comes running with desire in your lands.  
Where the cold-water spring and wind come from the north,  
Where the flower with happiness, beauty, and smell germinates.  
Where the shepherd blows his pipe while cattle graze,  
Where the goats with their bell bleats, my mind is there.

There the sun rises smiling, and the moon is happy.  
The good luck and goodness have covered that place,  
Night there is different, even the day there is different,  
In the green forests, there the gods lay.

Mind! Go to the fields and mountains, away, away from the city,  
From the concerns, gossiping, the mess, and the crowd.  
When the quail and birds sing with happiness,  
And cuckoo while smiling, nightingale with sweetness,  
When the rose opens, there I want to be,  
Together with the birds, I want to sing,  
To watch the heifer cattle, rams, goats, sheep,

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<sup>132</sup> Naim Frashëri. *Bagëti e Bujqësi*. <https://www.teksteshqip.com/naim-frasheri/poezi-100082.php>  
last accessed 6/5/2022

Beautified sky, the land with flowers and light.

[...]

Tomorr,<sup>133</sup> oh blessed mountain, the high throne where God stays,  
The old religion that Albanians had in the past,  
And you the high Old-Mountain, with your own eyes, you have witnessed,  
Great wars and important things that have occurred,  
Oh Albanian mountains, you keep your head high,  
Spread horror and fear, swallow the skies and clouds.

### **Fatherland (Atdheu)<sup>134</sup>**

Oh, Fatherland!  
You are more beloved to me than everything else,  
You are mother, sister, and you are a brother to me,  
You are the most precious to me,  
You are the best thing that the earth has,  
You, every day my mother used to see,  
Your soil, in the end swallowed her  
[...]

You have seen my grandfathers and great-grandfathers,  
You have wasted their bones in the end,  
From you, oh soul, they never separated,  
Near you, they had laughed, and they have cried,  
My mother died, thus today, you are my mother,  
A mother that doesn't have a death (eternal)  
[...]

Bless it, oh God, this place!  
Give his people wealth and health!  
May his enemies become ashes forever!  
May his subjects always have happiness!  
Blessed and flowered may it be,  
May it have a future full of happiness!

### **Skanderbeg<sup>135</sup>**

Who doesn't know Skanderbeg,  
The one who honored the motherland?  
Even today from his weapons, bravery flows!  
Entire humanity knows what this Lord has done.

When Skanderbeg used to draw his sword,  
To the brave ones, he used to give dread,  
Men wearing steel, experienced warriors,  
Who have been in past wars, riding frenetic horses,  
They were (for Skanderbeg) light like a feather,  
Like a melon, he used to cut them,

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<sup>133</sup> Tomorri is a mountain in Albania, which is venerated as holy by the Bektashi order. There were attempts by writers such as Naim to make Tomorr a national symbol also, as a place of nationalistic pilgrimage.

<sup>134</sup> Naim Frashëri, *Atdheu*. <https://www.teksteshqip.com/naim-frasheri/poezi-103163.php> last accessed 6/5/2022

<sup>135</sup> Naim Frashëri, *Skenderbeu*. <https://www.teksteshqip.com/naim-frasheri/poezi-103165.php> last accessed 6/5/2022

Feelingless, he sent them to death.

He used to cut the men and horses in half,  
Both of them, in four he used to divide,  
The goodness and the bravery of that Lord,  
No men had it, only that brave man had.

Even the friends that he had:  
Like Tanush and Uran, like Mojsiu and Hamza  
Like Manesh and Muzaka,  
Which used to jump like flame,  
Like Lekë Dukagjini, like Perlati and Mardini,  
Zenebisha, Arianiti. Gjon-Koka, who was unique,  
Contes, princes, and other kings,  
Men of honor, they were true braves,

How much they have fought,  
How much work they have done!  
How many kings and princes there were,  
Who have known the Grand Skanderbeg,

They had chased the road of wisdom,  
They were far from foolishness,  
They did not like grandiosity,  
But they had brotherhood,

They did not approach evil,  
But they have left an eternal name for themselves,  
True lords...  
They did not leave behind gossip,  
Evil and fakeness,  
They loved the entire motherland,  
And the nation of Skanderbeg.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

#### 5.1. The Impact of Tanzimat on Albanian Nationalistic Thought

*Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle.*

- Ernest Gellner

After the process of the archeology of the past, as we have also noticed in the poetries that we have already cited beforehand, there is the tendency of nationalist writers to write about the present issues. Present, here, means the time context that these writings were done — for the intention to give the readers the problems that ‘we’ are facing. These issues, of course, many times appear to be correct, but many times they become exaggerated. By exaggerating them, they use the feelings and emotions of the readers, especially happens with the poetries, as we saw the part of Vasa’s poetry where he writes that “*Don’t venerate Churches and Mosques...*”, where this poetry still affects nationalism today in the Albanian society. The Albanian Communist state misused it as a slogan for abandoning religion in 1967. Even though they were Communist, where the Communist lessons teach the idea of *Internationalism*, the Albanian Communist state with this slogan transited to a more nationalist or nation-centered state.

The process of ‘presenting the present’ in the Albanian context is related closely to the idea of Ernest Gellner, cited at the beginning of this page “*Nationalism sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle*”.<sup>136</sup> This is true also in the trajectory of the building of Albanian national identity, but the question arises which principle(s) did the Ottoman state violate towards Albanians? We saw in the first chapter the uprisings that happened after the beginning of the Tanzimat reforms

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<sup>136</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, 1.

in the Ottoman Empire. I argued that the Albanian high rich strata influenced these uprisings, where with the removal of the Timar System, their power faded. Also, with the new taxation, the rich people were more impacted by it, not the common masses. Still, they used the sentiment of ‘military obligation’ as a tool for it. Even though we saw that in the nationalistic writings, they praise ‘The Albanian’ as ‘Warrior-Type’. Still, at the beginning of the century, it was precisely the military becoming obligatory for them, which was used for the uprisings of the masses. Thus, here we face a dichotomy between the national character the writers were trying to picture and the actual historical facts. However, what was the principle being violated in the 1880s and 1890s? Well, it appears that what was being violated in the eyes of the nationalistic writers is precisely the thing that was being protested against at the beginning of the century, and that was the failure of the state to deliver the promises of Tanzimat.

In the first chapter, we cited Sami when he argued that during the centuries within the Roman, Byzantium, and Ottoman Empires, Albanians used to ‘self-govern’ themselves even though they were under foreign empires. He mentioned that even though the Ottomans conquered their lands, Albanians used to fight, horse race, and loot together. Nevertheless, for Sami, this all has changed. Sami now writes and questions that: *“Albania was almost an independent country. For hundreds of years, they lived like that. Do they still live like that today? No, never! Today, Albanians are enslaved people, humiliated, and violated more than any other nation in Turkey. They are lower than Greeks, Slavs, Armenians and Jews”*.<sup>137</sup>

It is interesting the comparison that Sami does with these particular nations. First, we have the Greeks, which achieved their independence at the beginning of the 19th century. Just two years before Sami’s writing was done, in 1897, there was a war between the Ottomans and Greeks, a war started on the islands. This war ended with a win for the Ottoman Empire, even though the island of Crete was not to be under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire anymore. Secondly, he mentions Slavs: who in the year 1878 achieved to form their states like Serbia and Montenegro after harsh battles and were recognized as independent. Still, they were accepted as enemies of the Ottoman Empire. Then he mentions Armenians and Jews, where their efforts against

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<sup>137</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 47-48.

the Ottoman Empire and their actions against them were high in the period that Sami's book was written. But comparing them with Albanians looks pretty exaggerated. And we see some exaggeration again in the following citation:

Turkey does not trust Albanians anymore, he looks at them as enemies and traitors, not like brothers and friends as it was in the past. Today they take the Albanian as a soldier and beat him so he can learn his language. They want Albanians to learn the knowledge of war, which they themselves do not have, but Albanians learned it while they were still drinking their mother's milk. They take them for three years, and they keep them for ten years, away from their house, away from their motherland, how? Naked, hungry, sick, and poor! [...] With all these calamities, the poor Albanian fights as a dragon, and honors the Turks and Turkey! But this blood that they spill, is it rewarded? No, never! The Albanian soldier, if he doesn't die in a war, dies from sickness, hunger, and nakedness. Of those who go to the military, few are those who come back home. Who becomes their leader? Always the Turks. Half of Turkey's military are Albanians, but not even 1/100 of its leaders (officers) in Turkey is not Albanian.<sup>138</sup>

In this citation, Sami is speaking about what was perceived as the 'Turkification of the Ottoman Empire'. He writes *'Today they take the Albanian as a soldier, beat him so he can learn his language'*. During the late 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was becoming more of a 'Turkish Empire', but how was it so? It started as a reaction to the nationalist ideas of the 19th century and especially at the end of it. First with ideas of the Young Ottomans, where one of their founders and leaders was Namik Kemal, who is believed to have been half-Albanian from his mother's side, then we have another political organization called the Young Turks, which was founded by Ibrahim Temo, again an Albanian from the city of Struga, today's North Macedonia. For a short time, part of the Young Turks also became Ismail Kemal Bey, the founding father of Albania. Ahmet Niyazi Bey also led the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, which was again an Albanian.

What is remarkable, is the influence that Sami himself had on the 'Turkification of the Empire'. During the writing of his book that we are analyzing, he also wrote *Kamûs-ı Türki* published in 1901, which was the first Turkish language dictionary that would be called Turkish, and not an Ottoman dictionary. Thus, Sami himself, had a big part in this 'Turkification of the Empire'. Historians like Erol Köroğlu also argue that writers like Sami were the ones who gave birth to *'Cultural Turkism'*, a movement

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<sup>138</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 48.

and ideology which later won against the Pan-Islamist ideas and activities in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>139</sup> *They wanted Albanians to learn the knowledge of war, which they themselves did not have*; the reforms of 19th century Ottoman indeed started as a product of the backwardness of the Ottoman army in comparison with the European armies, but there were many efforts made to produce a new officer class in the Ottoman Empire, which eventually was achieved. The Ottomans absorbed this new military knowledge, opening new military schools in the empire. From these schools, many officers graduated, and many notable alumni have been part of these schools, such as Mustafa Kemal, also known as Atatürk.

Another concern that Sami addresses are the pressure the Ottoman government was doing on its subjects and for Sami, specifically on Albanians, to pay the taxes.<sup>140</sup> Sami acknowledges that Albanians are not used to paying taxes, even though this is only partially true with historical facts. The Albanians living in the mountain areas such as North Albania or in the area of Himara, today's South Albania, were not obliged to pay taxes from the Ottoman state. Still, most Albanians were obliged to do so as other normal subjects of the Ottoman Empire; with the Timar system, they were compelled to pay to the local government, but after Tanzimat and especially during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909), the state became more centralized. The taxes were gathered directly from the state rather than the local governors.

Turks, who have been their lords for more than 500 years, never learned workmanship to Albanians [...] but they say Pay! Where should the poor people find the means to pay? They don't have food to eat. Those Albanians that in the past had golden clothes, and silver guns, their sons today are naked with a single shirt. Albanians are getting beaten for paying! Oh, what a great shame! Oh, what a great evil! Do not endure it, o God!<sup>141</sup>

In this citation, we can notice the same themes with the poetry that we cited earlier in the 2nd chapter written by Vasa Pasha. The 'Albanian with silver guns', and the dramatic parts of 'No, no, this kind of shame nobody wants' and 'What a great shame! What a great evil! Do not endure it, o God!' All of this is used for sentimental reasons, where a big part of the building of national identity is sharing the common sentiment.

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<sup>139</sup> Erol Koroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity, Literature in Turkey during World War I* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 25.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

Sami also shares his concern about Albanians not governing themselves as we talked earlier about his emphasis that Albanians used to do so in the past; now, he writes that Albania is being governed by Turks who are foreign and dishonest people who bought their positions in Constantinople.<sup>142</sup> Again, we face the same theme with Vasa Pasha's poetry, where he says that Albanians are being governed by people that don't have '*your language and blood*' this foreign person who '*stays in your home, to humiliate you with your wife and sister*' and thus you have become '*the slaves of the foreigner*'. We face 'The Foreigner' a lot in nationalistic literature, in not only the Albanian one but mainly in nations that require independence, especially in the colonized countries. This has to do with the rise of the 'us versus them' sentiment that the nationalistic movement requires. Thus, Albanian writers were trying to find and define their enemies, which for them was this 'foreigner', whomever it may be, be it Turk, Greek, Serb, etc.

Nationalist writers like Sami not only wanted to make these 'foreigners' 'our enemies', but they started to call traitors those who worked for the Ottoman state, where Sami says they are only '*some traitors who can gain honor*'.<sup>143</sup> But again, many Albanians that were working for the administration were part of the Albanian nationalistic movements. These include Ismail Kemal Bey, who, as we mentioned, worked for 40 years as a bureaucrat of the Ottoman Empire and also served as the governor of Beirut. Also, this includes Vasa Pasha, but even Sami himself who used to work for the 'foreigner' in the Ottoman Translation Office. This process of 'finding our enemies' goes on in a very detailed way from Sami. He claims that Greeks and Turks are strong allies in the cooperation against the Albanians, for the '*disappearance of the nation and the Albanian language*'.

Sami claims that the Ottoman state using its influence in the Orthodox Fener Patriarchate, is helping the Greeks by opening their schools in the Albanian territories, where they again didn't allow the Albanian language to be taught. Still, the Ottoman state did not allow Albanian schools to open.<sup>144</sup> The allowance and not allowance of the Albanian schools to be opened became one engine of the Albanian nationalist

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 55.

movements, whereas, as we said in the ‘Historical Background’ chapter was seen as a direct attack on the Albanian identity. Sami himself, also Ismail Kemal Bey, was educated in the Zosimae school in Ioannina, which was a Greek school. The Ottoman authorities allowed this school, but the Albanian language-based schools were not allowed until 1887, and after that date, they were opened and closed many times. Smith calls the ‘civic education’ a characteristic of nationalistic effort done mainly by the state. For Smith, this education can be used to:

[...] convey, through language, history, the arts and literature, political mythology, and symbolism of the new nation (or the ‘nation-to-be’) that will legitimate its novel, even revolutionary, directions in the myths, memories, values, and symbols of its struggle, its movements for social and political liberation and its visions of distant heroes and ‘golden ages’ that may inspire similar self-sacrifice today.<sup>145</sup>

Sami considers that “*After Turks and Greeks, Albania has for enemies Bulgarians and Serbs*”. But this makes Sami question the ‘affinity’ that the Ottoman Government has with the Greeks and Serbs and the ‘loyalty’ that the government displays toward the Albanians. Sami writes:

Serbs are permitted to open schools in our territories, and we are not allowed to have a single school! Thinking about this, are Greeks and Serbs friends of Turkey, is it Albanians who spilled and still spill blood for them? With the help of Greeks and Serbs, Turks are enemies of Albania and Albanians.<sup>146</sup>

Thus, Sami concludes that “*Albanians should be careful of the evilness of Turks, Greeks, and Serbs and stand against them with their right!*”.<sup>147</sup> But at the same time, he writes a specific chapter on “The Friends of Albanians”. As we already noted, the National Identity process requires the clarification of ‘who our friends are and who our enemies are’. Thus, he makes an interesting statement when he writes that “*We cannot and we should not say that the entire world is enemies of Albanians. No, we have friends also, there are plenty who love us and can help us if we want ourselves. All European nations, French; Italian; German; British, etc., love and honor our nation*”.<sup>148</sup>

Again, this doesn’t sound correct from the historical point of view, because just a few years before his writings, in the 1880 Berlin Congress, Germany and more specifically

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<sup>145</sup> Smith, *Identity*, 119.

<sup>146</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 55.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

Bismarck refused to accept the Albanian nationality. British were the greatest advocates of giving the city of Ulcinj, which was inhabited generally by Albanians, to the Montenegrins. They greatly supported the Greek efforts for independence and expansion plans; France and Russia became the Serbs' best allies. Italy would conquer Albania during World War I, and again in 1939 at the beginning of World War II. Sami makes a kind of friendship offer towards the Austro-Hungarians. Here we should consider that the Austro-Hungarian officials mostly helped publish Albanian nationalistic writings in Romania. Sami writes that *Austrians do not want Serbs and Bulgarians to expand in Albania. A brave nation like Albania will be their friend and helper in the Balkan peninsula against the Slavs, which are many.*<sup>149</sup> Here Sami achieved to 'prophesize' one thing, and that was the wishes of the Serbian state to expand. These Serbian efforts for expansion eventually led to the beginning of World War I, which started as a reaction to the killing of the Austro-Hungarian Crown Prince Ferdinand by some Serbian armed groups.

Another thing that Sami achieved to analyze and 'prophesize' was the Balkan Wars that started in 1912. However, beforehand, he offers an analysis of Albania. Sami presents the borders of Albania, even though we should keep in mind that Albania was not a state and was not recognized as a united *vilayet* or, in fact, it was not recognized as any kind of particular territorial-administrative subject. For Sami, the northern borders of Albania are up to the borders of Montenegro and Novi Pazar, up to the borders with Serbia, which means that today's entire Kosovo territory is included in Albania. The southern borders are down to the Arta in today's Northwest Greece, including Ioannina. In eastern borders, he mentions up to Vranina, part of South Serbia today. Thus, he concludes that the Albanian territory is long nearly 450 km and wide 200 km: and its territory is 80.000 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>150</sup> Therefore, here we have a vigorous pattern that every nationalistic platform of every nation has, and that is the 'demarcation' of the borders, which is a crucial part of the formation of national identity and more and less nationhood. But how did he achieve to predict the Balkan Wars 13 years before they happened? He analyzes these Albanian territories then, who were their neighbors 'now' and who were they in the 'past'. He writes:

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

Other Turkey's territories surrounded Albania until recently, and the borders of this kingdom were far away from Albania. Albanians, together with Turks used to guard the kingdom's borders, but their motherland was far away from any danger, and they knew that no enemy could endanger Albania. But today is not the same; today Albania is surrounded by hostile borders. Montenegro, Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria have surrounded Albania, add Austria to this. With Turkey, (Albania) is connected by only a narrow strait between Bulgaria and the Aegeus Sea, a strait that can be invaded by Bulgarians and can end the territorial connection between Albania and Turkey, which doesn't have navy power. Thus, in a war against Bulgaria, Albanians should be prepared to guard themselves and not be dependent on Turkey, who is not able to guard himself.<sup>151</sup>

What he writes in the passage above is precisely what happened when Balkan Wars started in 1912. Bulgaria and Greece ended the 'narrow strait' that Sami were mentioning and ended the territorial connection between Albania and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the independence of Albania became a matter of survival for Albanians rather than just a matter of wishful thinking. To understand this better, we can just understand what happened to the Muslim people that were inhabiting the territories which were conquest by Greece and Bulgaria after the Balkan Wars. Even though historiography does not deal – or at least it should not deal – with 'what-ifs', the example of Muslims in territories conquered by Greece and Bulgaria, can give us a hint of what would have happened to Albanian Muslims if the Albanian state would not be able to be created and secured from the European powers after the Balkan Wars.

Sami mentions another 'war' that is happening, what he calls '*the intellectual nationhood war*'. For this war, he claims that religion is being used. He writes that Turkey is trying to detach the Muslim Albanians *from their brothers and attach them to themselves*, and the Christian Albanians, by the installed fanaticism in their midst, are being divided among selves. He also expresses his concerns about how the Ottoman government calls Albanians, where he mentions that the Christian Albanians are being called Rum, which automatically puts them in the same line as Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, etc. The Muslim Albanians are not being called Albanians; thus, he concludes that: "*The blind Turks cannot understand that this way they are serving the intentions of their enemies*".<sup>152</sup> Here, with the 'the intentions of their enemies' he means Greeks, Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bulgars, where their hostility and plans against the Ottoman Empire in general and in the Balkans in specific were something very well known. Albanians were seen as the only allies of the Ottomans left in the

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 52.

Balkans. Thus, by dividing them, Sami is writing that the empire is weakening, and they were the only allies they had in the Balkans, which in one way or another could be used to fight against *'their enemies'*.

Vasa also writes about the issue of the Ottoman Empire, willingly or unwillingly helping *'their enemies'*. Vasa sees the new territorial changes in the Ottoman part in the Balkan divided Albanians in different *vilayets* as a *divide et impera* strategy of the empire. He considers this a bad omen for the empire because he argues that every movement in this century is a movement with a character of unity. Thus, if they divide Albanians, it may lead to a boomerang effect so that they will start movements for national unity. Therefore, Vasa proposes that Albanian territories be united in one single Sanjak with a centralized administration to ensure public education, security, and justice. With this unity in administration, they have to ensure Albanians' military character, and thus they can produce 200 organized military battalions. He claims that these soldiers will be willing to die up to the last soldier to protect the rights and interests of the empire and for the internal love that they have for their sacred sovereign.<sup>153</sup>

So, analyzing these political events, Sami complains that Greeks are trying to receive the lands of Alexander the Great and give a rebirth to the Byzantine Empire. This, for Sami, is not even right in a historical matter because he writes that they do not even think that Alexander was a Macedonian and not a Greek, and Byzantium was not a Greek Empire but a Roman one. Thus, he again 'predicts' the future when he writes, *"When the time comes, Europe will give entire South Albania to Greece"*.<sup>154</sup> Here with South Albania, he means the city of Ioannina and maybe up to the city of Vlora, where indeed Greek military invaded up to the borders of Vlora during the Balkan Wars and World War One. Later the Greek borders were accepted internationally with Ioannina inside of them. Thus, what Sami seems to refer to at that time is the Greek nationalistic platform *Megali Idea* which was formulated at the beginning of the 19th century and indeed promoted to make the borders of Greece the same as those of the Byzantium Empire, here including Albania and up to Constantinople.

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<sup>153</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 66.

<sup>154</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 53.

After writing that Albania today is a piece of European Turkey and claiming that the existence of Albania today is linked with the existence of Turkey in Europe, Sami begins making high anti-Turkish declarations one after another. He starts by posing the question: will Turkey continue to survive in Europe for a long time? He writes that the answer is no, and Turkey, for him, has already survived long in Europe where after the 1880 Berlin Congress, he says that it was believed that Turkey would continue to live only for ten more years, and now it has become twenty which for Sami means that *'it lived too long'*. He writes that *'we don't know how much it will survive in Asia: but in Europe, its days are numbered'*, and with the fall of Turkey, Albania will fall also and will be smashed under its ruins of it.<sup>155</sup> Then, he compares Albanians to good swimmers and Turks to lousy swimmers who are drowning and calls Turks 'damn people' and 'traitors' and a nation that should not survive.

Albanians are like a person who has fallen into the sea and capable of good swimming, and if they want to survive, they can. But they also want to save Turks who have also fallen into the sea and are not capable of swimming. But these damn people do not allow you to save them and bring them out of the water and also, they grab you and don't allow you to swim either. In this way, their nation is drowning and also pulling and sinking the Albanian nation. [...] What should a person do in danger like this? They should give a strong kick to this traitor, who seeks to drown you and save himself. This is the way of salvation, and there is no other way. Turkey cannot survive after this, will not survive, and should not survive.<sup>156</sup>

Then he starts criticizing the Albanians, saying they will have to die together if they want to not separate from the Turks. Turkey, for Sami, is like a dead person, whom no matter how much we love a dead person -- he says -- we should bury him, and wanting to continue living with it, is like wanting to go together with them in the grave. Sami writes that Turkey, as a dead person, is stinking and is making the world stink; thus, 'we' cannot keep him anymore, and as such, it should be buried. In addition, he raises his attention by saying that those Albanians who are helping the maintenance of Turkey and those who want Turkey to be resurrected again should know that Turkey's resurrection means Albania's death.<sup>157</sup> Again, this becomes more curious when we know Sami himself was making a significant contribution to the Turkish nation and nationalism, while at the same time, with this writing, he was writing the *Kamûs-i Türki*. In contrast to Sami, Vasa writes that the existence of the Ottoman Empire is a

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 71.

*sine qua non* for the well-being of Albania.<sup>158</sup> Analyzing this, the historian Barbara Jelavich writes that the Albanian national movement was unique. Their leaders did not wish the Ottoman Empire dismembered, nor did they seek an independent state. Instead — she writes — they feared that should make the empire fall, their lands would be divided among their neighbors. Thus, the autonomy within the Ottoman state appeared to be the best guarantee of their national safety.<sup>159</sup>

Sami continues his strong anti-Turkish language by posing the question of what the Turks are. He answers by saying that they are a wild nation coming from the deserts of Asia with a shepherd's goad on their hands. He writes that with their wilderness, they occupied the most beautiful and civilized place in the world — meaning Constantinople — and he says that they are keeping their conquered territories with such poverty and tyranny, which is terrifying the world as a whole.<sup>160</sup> Here, he uses ‘they are coming from Asia’ in a derogatory way, but in the beginning, as we mentioned, Sami also claimed that although Albanians are the most ancient people in Europe, they came from Asia too. And now he is blaming Turks as ‘with their wilderness’ have occupied Constantinople, where in the beginning Sami was showing proudly that the first person from the Ottoman military to go beyond the walls of Constantinople during the Ottoman siege of 1453 was Albanian. In contrast to Sami, who called Turks wild people for these conquests, for Vasa, Ottomans achieved great power and a glorious empire similar to the old Roman (Byzantium) one, for which he calls them the ‘Ottoman ancestors.’<sup>161</sup>

Again Sami continues with the statements of the nature of ‘they don't deserve to exist’ while saying that Turks are within the same nation as Huns, Vandals, Mongols, Avars, Gots, and others of what he calls “wild nations”. Thus, he declares that “*even Turks did not deserve to live more than their friends*”, by friends here meaning the Huns as mentioned above together with Mongols, etc.<sup>162</sup> Thus by trying to differentiate between the ‘Turks who came from the Asian desserts’ and the Albanians whom he

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<sup>158</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 60.

<sup>159</sup> Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (London: University of Washington Press, 2000), 222.

<sup>160</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 74.

<sup>161</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*, 35.

<sup>162</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 74.

calls the ‘oldest nation in Europe’, he concludes that The Right without any doubt is with Albanians. In the near future, he says ‘the calls of nations will be heard, and their rights will be given’, where he kind of ‘predicts’ again what would be known as ‘The Right of Self-Determination’. This ‘right’ would be written first by Vladimir Lenin in 1914 and 1945 would become a policy which with the insistence of United States will be recognized internationally. Nevertheless, when this happens, Sami asks, will Albanian ask for their rights? <sup>163</sup> While he calls Albanians people who are not active in their request for ‘their right’ and he calls them ‘hand-crossed people’, for two different reasons, the first being they are as such because of Turks and secondly because they are “ignorant and blind people”, thus he makes a strong auto-criticism.

Sami does not stop criticizing Albanians. He also writes about the Greek War of Independence, criticizing the Albanians. He says that Muslim Albanians worked and got killed for Turkey; Christian Albanians for Greeks, they all fought for these two nations ‘*whom neither of them does not acknowledge their sacrifice but they try to destroy the Albanian nation*’.<sup>164</sup> He adds other criticism to the role of Albanians in the Greek War of Independence, where he says:

In the eyes of the world, it was the Greeks and Turks who were fighting with each other, but in reality, it was the Christian Albanians fighting against the Muslim Albanians. When Christians won, Greece was winning, when they were losing, Turkey was winning; but the spilled blood from both sides was always Albanian blood. Albanians are killed brother with brother, while others benefit [...] Albania never benefited from the blood of Albanians.<sup>165</sup>

Vasa also writes about the involvement of Albanians in the Greek War of Independence, where he writes that people like Botsaris, who fought for the Greek side, were once Christian Orthodox members in the Ali Pasha Tepelena. According to Vasa, they were led by their ‘warrior spirit’ and their religious sentiment. For Vasa, the Greek War of Independence would never have been accomplished without the Albanian warriors. Vasa claims that the Greek war was not a war with the national sentiment but was a war with religious sentiment, or, as he says, the Cross against the Crescent.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>166</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 32.

It appears there is historical truth to it. During the Greek War of Independence, the forces leading the Ottoman army were Albanians, as is the case with Omer Vrioni or Mustafa Bushatli, and their soldiers were Albanians. In the Greek defense against the soldiers of Vrioni and Bushatliu, there were Albanians, also known as Souliotes, led by Markos Botsaris, an Albanian who earlier served in the Napoleonic French Albanian Regiment. It is also believed that there was a letter exchange between Vrioni and Botsaris where Vrioni complained to him that *'you are embarrassing us'* — meaning the Albanians. Another fact worth mentioning is the observation of Vasa about Albanian society. Vasa writes that the Albanian population's life is patriarchal and primitive. He considers Albanians, mainly in the northern part, governed by tribes, so Albanians still have a tribal society.

A specific leader or the oldest men lead these tribes from the tribe, who not only manages the affairs of the tribe, but also serves as a judge. This is an inherited position, a kind of *Primogeniture* inheritance system, as to say when the old leader dies; the most senior men amongst the tribe become the leader. He gives information that nobody has immunity if they do a bad or a criminal act, same as the tribe's subjects that can be judged in this tribe-like court, in a similar way the tribe leaders can face trial and even be punished. The law of these tribes is based mainly on what is known in Albanian society as the *Kanuni I Lekë Dukagjinit*. Kanuni is a kind of constitution that dates to the 15<sup>th</sup> century written by Lekë Dukagjini, a tribe leader whom some consider his title to be a prince, which is from the Dukagjini family, a family which when they converted to Islam after the Ottoman conquest, gave to the empire important names like Dukaginzade Ahmed Pasha (d. 1515) or the important Ottoman poet Dukaginzade Yaya Bey (d. 1582). The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini as also Vasa explains is a law that contains rules like 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' as to say, who kills will be killed; who steals will pay double the amount of the price of the stolen product. Personal property is to be considered sacred and there is no difference between Muslims and Christians before the law. Kanun regards friends and hospitality as sacred and a man who kills a woman will be considered together with his family as ashamed persons and all of them will bear the name of 'women killers'.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 49-51.

## 5.2. Political Thoughts for the Future of Albania

*What should be done for the nation's salvation?*

- Sami Bey

All that we have mentioned until now, as it was with the chapter of Archeology of the Past, which emphasized the usages and the misusages that nationalistic writers do. Also, with Ethno-symbolism as we mainly mentioned it deals with literary works, where they use everything that is more unique to the specific territory or people, that these nationalistic writers are attending to write about. Add to this also the writings about the 'problems of the presents', all of these serve as the fundamentals for the creation of a political platform which will lead this 'National Identity' to eventually become an 'ism', as is to say 'Nationalism' where this identity that is built becomes a political-ideological platform and vision. Anthony D. Smith writes "*what we mean by national identity involves some sense of political community [...] A political community, in turn, implies at least some common institutions.*"<sup>168</sup> So for Smith, the political part of nationalism should be considered part of national identity, be it a political platform, a constitution, a compilation of laws or institutions, or what Smith calls a 'single political will'.<sup>169</sup> For Smith, national identity often requires a kind of ideology such as a religious one, liberalism, fascism, or communism.<sup>170</sup> However, did Albanians have a national ideology? Can *Albanianism*, which we will discuss later, be considered a national ideology?

For Smith, the main task of an ethnic intelligentsia is to mobilize a formerly passive community into forming a nation around the new historical culture that has been rediscovered, which is connected to the first chapter we have written.<sup>171</sup> Smith gives four characteristics to the nationalistic political movements. The first is a movement that tries to activate politically a community from being passive to active. The second is what he calls '*a movement [which tries] to place the community in its homeland [a homeland which is] a secure and recognized compact territory*'. Here again, we can

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<sup>168</sup> Smith., *Identity*. 19.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

mention the Jewish people and their efforts for settling their diaspora population to the newly founded state of Israel, this settlement started from 1918 when Jerusalem was conquered from British forces and in 1948 the official establishment of the state of Israel. The third one is the endowment of the territorial community with economic unity, we will notice a big emphasis of Sami on this topic later. Fourth, a movement that places the people at the center of concern and by re-educating the masses in national values, memories, and myths.

We have noticed until now that what Sami, Naim, and Vasa have done is exactly this one. They propagate to the masses the unique values of the nation, and this is also connected to what we call today ‘state education’ or schools and universities which are owned by the state, most of them even now serves as a ‘tool’ for state or nationalistic purposes, especially the departments of ‘Liberal Arts’, as to say History, Philosophy, Philology, etc. The fifth characteristic that Smith writes characterizes a nationalistic movement as the efforts to turn the ethnic members into legal citizens, which means the establishment and the foundation of the national state, or the state which is based on nationalistic values.<sup>172</sup>

So, as we said, when the political platforms are set and done, platforms that contain as their core values the values of the nation and its ‘unique’ characteristics, and these political platforms are accepted by the political movements, it is only then when we face nationalism. That is because, having a nationalistic movement without a theoretical ideology, as to say without even knowing what is and who is ‘our nation’ it is impossible to become a political movement. For these reasons, the modern theorists of nationalism declare that nationalism is an invented doctrine. Gellner even goes further by saying that “*nationalism is not the awakening of an old, latent, dormant force, though that is how it does indeed present itself. It is, in reality, the consequence of a new form of social organization*”.<sup>173</sup> Thus for Gellner nationalism invents nations where they do not exist — but he says — it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on.<sup>174</sup> Elie Kedourie argues against nationalism as a ‘natural thing’. Kedourie argues that nationalism is an invented doctrine in Europe at the beginning of

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 64-65.

<sup>173</sup> Gellner, *Nations*, 48.

<sup>174</sup> Smith, *Identity*, 71.

the nineteenth century.<sup>175</sup> Smith sees nationalism as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population deemed *by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'*.<sup>176</sup>

Smith observes that the general ideology of nationalism, as is to say what nationalistic intelligentsia all have in common, contains four characteristics of their beliefs and thoughts: First, they believe that the world is divided into nations, each with its individuality, history, and destiny.<sup>177</sup> In the Albanian case, Vasa writes on the first page of his book *"the life of nations, similar to the life of humans, goes through different anomalies and events"*.<sup>178</sup> Sami also writes *"between nations, there is no friendship, like in games: everyone wants to win by themselves. Nations are like fishes which eat one another. Woe to those who are weak"*.<sup>179</sup> Thus, we notice their attempts to see the nations as something organic, something that has life, or as Smith wrote something that has a destiny.

The second characteristic that Smith writes that the writings and writers of nationalism doctrine have is the attempt to acknowledge that loyalty to the nation overrides all other allegiances.<sup>180</sup> We saw that in the Albanian case in our second chapter, especially with the poetry of Vasa where he makes that call that *"don't venerate churches and mosques: The religion of Albanians is Albanianism"*, or what Sami writes, *"Don't venerate religions; Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox, all Albanians are brothers with each other. Let us all unite under the sacred flag of Albania!"*.<sup>181</sup> The fourth characteristic is the thought that humans *must* identify with a nation if they want to be free and realize themselves. For example, Vasa also makes a rhetorical question where he sees a nation as something so natural where he writes that *'Is it a sin to love your nation?!'*, where probably he would answer that, it is not a sin, is something so natural or something that the Creator itself creates.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>178</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*, 5.

<sup>179</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 51.

<sup>180</sup> Smith, *Identity*, 74.

<sup>181</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 77.

<sup>182</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*, 67.

The fourth characteristic is that nations must be free and secure if peace and justice are to prevail in the world.<sup>183</sup> We will see concrete examples later on it. Smith also continues by saying, “*Nationalism is an ideology of the nation, not the state. It places the nation in the center of concerns*”.<sup>184</sup> We can understand this more in the modern context with the example of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia, which was formed first as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes during the First World War in 1918, and which took its name as the Kingdom Yugoslavia only in 1929 and after World War Two under the communist leadership removed the kingdom and remained only as of the socialist state of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia, for all its existence, never achieved becoming a nation; it always remained only a state. What is the difference? In Yugoslavia, many nations formed their nation-state, which eventually, with few exceptions, agreed to form a confederate with one state. It soaked in itself Slovenians, Serbs, Albanians (Kosovo), Croats, Montenegrins, and Macedonians. All of them kept their national consciousness but were subject to a non-nationalistic state such as Yugoslavia, which used to propagate ‘Inter-Nationalism’. But in the period, we are discussing in our topic, did the Albanian nationalists intend to form a state or a nation? Ernest Gellner writes:

Neither nations nor states exist at all times and in all circumstances. Moreover, nations and states are not the same contingency. Nationalism holds that they were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy. But before they could become intended for each other, each of them had to emerge, and their emergence was independent and contingent. The state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation. Some nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their own state. It is more debatable whether the normative idea of the nation, in its modern sense, did not presuppose the prior existence of the state.<sup>185</sup>

For the Albanian case, Vasa writes that it is the enemies of the Ottoman Empire and those who have insufficient knowledge who have convinced others that the Albanian people aim to detach from the empire. Vasa writes that there is “*nothing more unrealistic and unfair than this*”. Albanians who during these centuries have achieved to preserve their way of life, their language, traditions, and character, are entirely convinced that if they fall under another great power, it will take just a little time for them to lose all their benefits. Thus, any change (of power) for Vasa would have consequences in language change, traditions, and nationhood. Albanians would be a

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<sup>183</sup> Smith, *Identity*, 74.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>185</sup> Gellner., *Nations*, 6.

source of sadness because they are devoted to remaining Albanians. Thus, they would never agree to a peaceful way for such a thing.<sup>186</sup>

Vasa writes that Albanians are well aware that being divided into three different religions while public education is still in the embryonic phase will make it very difficult to be understood by one another and to administrate themselves if there is a lack of a powerful hand leading them.<sup>187</sup> Thus he writes that if Albanians were to be left alone without a kind of guardianship, with these religious differences between them, it would not take long for Albanians to enter a civil war. He claims Albanians are convinced that they can be united only under the Ottoman Empire. Only under this unity are their aims guaranteed because he writes that the Ottoman Empire is not an obstacle to Albanian national ideals, their mother tongue, and traditions, and they do not put their existence, race, and nationality in danger, thus the Albanian race is connected with the fate of the empire.<sup>188</sup> He continues by saying that: Albania this place cannot live in any other form except under a rule which respects their existence, traditions, and their nationality, and all these conditions up to today were only fulfilled by the Ottoman Empire and for Muslim Albanians' detachment from the Caliphate would be unacceptable.<sup>189</sup> But of course, we should understand the writings of Vasa from the time context, where he was writing during the League of Prizren, where this league still contained in itself a pro-Ottoman and pro-Islamic stance.

In the theories of Anthony D. Smith, there is also another concept to analyze the nationalistic identity or nationalism movement. That is the differentiation between a 'western model of nationalism' and an 'easter model of nationalism'. Its distinguishing feature — as Smith writes — is the emphasis on a community of birth and native culture. Smith notes that with the Western model of the nation, an individual had to belong to a nation, but you could choose the nation to which you want to belong. The non-Western or ethnic concept of nation was a kind of deterministic national identity. That means that you cannot change your national identity; whether you stayed in your community or emigrated to another, you belonged to the national community that you

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<sup>186</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 58.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

were born to. Thus, with this non-Western or ethnic-national identity approach a nation was first and foremost a community of common descent. For Smith, this ethnic model of the nation is stressed on descent or presumed descent- rather a kind of super-family than in territory.

This model uses genealogies to back up its claims, often tracked down by native intellectuals, which for Smith is mainly done in East European and Middle Eastern countries. Thus, the nation can trace its roots to common ancestry; its members are brothers and sisters, or at least cousins.<sup>190</sup> In the Albanian context, as we wrote in the beginning, there are two fundamental 'ingredients' to be an Albanian. The first was the language and the second, as Sami wrote, to be borne by Albanian parents. Thus, can you become an Albanian? This is impossible in the Albanian collective consciousness; you cannot 'become Albanian' if you are not born as such. Thus, the concept of 'being Albanian' is deterministic. As with some European countries like today's Switzerland or the U.S.A, where you can earn a Swiss or American nationality, here, we are not talking only about gaining citizenship. But if you gain Albanian citizenship, will you be counted as Albanian? The answer is no. Thus, in the filter of Smith's idea of 'western and eastern-model of nationalism, this puts the Albanian one in the eastern model of nationalism.

A big part of the political side of national identity, Smith writes, is the efforts to present the nation and the national territory as something that can become self-sufficient and can achieve autarchy.<sup>191</sup> Smith notes that nations underwrite the quest for control over territorial resources, including manpower, and also elaborates on the division of labor when he says, "*By defining the membership, the boundaries and the resources, national identity provides the rationale for ideals of national autarchy*".<sup>192</sup> The Albanian nationalist writers also do this. Sami writes:

Albania, our dear motherland is one of the most beautiful places in Europe. It has high mountains but also plateaus with dense forests, cold waters, places that keep the snow until summer, beautiful flowers, grasses that feed the livestock, and precious metals that have slept underneath since the world's creation. It has wide fields where rivers flow which can be used for irrigation. The Kosovo fields, the fields of Monastir, Tetovo, and Skopje are one of the best places on earth. The hills of Çameria, are covered with olive trees and orange and lemon

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<sup>190</sup> Smith, *Identity*, 11-12.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

gardens. [...] Albania has a lot of livestock [...] sheep from Albania fill Istanbul and Turkey with good-quality meat. Myzeqe feeds a lot of horses, whereas Albanians have the wish and will to keep livestock. [...] Albania has more than 2 million population [this includes manpower] and he concludes that “In one word, Albania, even though it is small, has every kind of climate with a lot of blessings and goodness.”<sup>193</sup>

Vasa also writes about the ‘riches of Albania’. For him, Albania has a mountainous territory that can serve as a guard barrier against intruders or enemies. Vasa concludes that Albanian valleys near the sea coasts are very fertile, which can be used not only for the internal autarchy but also for developing surplus. With this surplus, Albania can create export and international trade. He writes that Albanian people are keener on farming and agriculture. Thus for him, this kind of economy is the prime economic background of Albania. In addition, similar to Sami, he writes that in Albania, many territories are covered with woods and forests, lakes, and mines. He observes that industry is in its start, and this kind of economy is facing many obstacles. In conclusion, he writes that Albania is covered by poverty, and from the viewpoint of modern civilizations, Albania is a backward place.<sup>194</sup>

So, after all these writings about the past, present, and ethno-symbolism, now Sami poses the question of what should be done for the nation’s salvation?<sup>195</sup> a question that sounds similar to 1902 (just three years after Sami’s) book of Vladimir Lenin “*What is to be done?*”. Sami starts to give his answer when he writes, “*Today is the day to fight for the right. There is nothing more rightly sacred for a nation, than nationhood, language, and motherland*”.<sup>196</sup> Thus, Sami now calls for the ‘brave’ to fight for their right, and the question of the survival or death of Albania is in the hands of Albanians themselves where he writes that “*if they like they will survive, if not they will die*”.<sup>197</sup> Like him, Vasa writes that Albanians' entire objectives are oriented toward saving their existence.<sup>198</sup>

But how should this ‘fight’ that Sami is writing about be done? What is interesting is that Sami does not believe in armed conflict against the Ottoman Empire as other nations of the Balkans did, as to say not as the Bulgarian *Chetas* did, but he writes

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<sup>193</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 40-42.

<sup>194</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 47-48.

<sup>195</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*. 73.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>198</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*. 45.

about a diplomatic solution. Very interestingly and distinguished from the other nations' ideas where they put fighting with guns as a primary way of 'national liberation', Sami writes that:

Albanians don't need to grab guns, leave for the mountains and caves, or be killed as other nations do to gain their freedom. Albanians are not humiliated that much for doing these kinds of actions. They don't need to do such things, what they need is to form an alliance (Besa) with each other, to unite and stay loyal to their allegiance: and in unity to require their right from Turkey and Europe. Turkey will listen to them and will give their right, willingly or unwillingly and Europe will help, as it helped other nations (seems that here he means Greece?) and will make Turkey give them the rights.<sup>199</sup>

Thus, as we wrote in the chapter on Historical Background the book of Sami was written during the period of the League of Peja (y.1899). This league also was called *Besa-Besë*; thus, being aware of the attempts to form the League of Peja, Sami writes: "*Glory be to God! The league is being founded in Albania, and Besa is getting stronger and larger. From one place of Albania, days ago a league was founded, and is expanding into all Albanian territories*".<sup>200</sup> So now, since this league is being formed, Sami makes a call to the Albanians:

O people, o Albanians! Grab the Besa with your two hands, unite, this will save you! Don't go astray. Don't venerate religions; Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox, and all Albanians, are brothers with each other. Let us all unite under the sacred flag of Albania!<sup>201</sup>

Thus, for Sami, the league and the relationship between the Albanians should be a national one, not a religious one, where he writes that for a true Albanian, "*his brothers are not the religious one, but those with whom he shares the same nation*". Moreover, he goes further, writing that this brotherhood should be similar to the Freemasons and the Bektashi. This is similar to what Anthony D. Smith calls 'The nationalist ideal of unity' where he mentions that in the nationalist language 'unity' signifies social cohesion, the brotherhood of all subjects in the nation, what the French *patriots* called *fraternite* during the Revolution.<sup>202</sup>

Sami writes that today many Albanians are ashamed of speaking Albanian: "*They are ashamed to say that Albania is our mother. But Albania is more ashamed to have such*

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<sup>199</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 76.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>202</sup> Smith, *Identity*, 76.

*children!*”.<sup>203</sup> Now brings back the concept of ‘nation as a mother’ and ‘national blood’ when he writes, “*It is a big shame that an Albanian, which in his veins flows the blood of Skanderbeg and his friends, humiliates his nation and his mother tongue and honors a foreign language. It is a big shame for Albania to have such sons!*”.<sup>204</sup> Sami also speaks about the fear of Albanians being colonized when he says, “*O Albanian brothers! Let them not find us as the wild people of Australia and Africa, from whom Europeans stole their lands. Let us not be fooled that way [...] let us not stay still and numb, let us walk freely in the way of God, in the way of justice*”.<sup>205</sup> Thus, he makes his final question: “Are we Albanians?” He answers that if you consider yourself as such “*Besa, religion, our work, our will, and wishes, our thoughts should be for Albania and Albanians*”.<sup>206</sup> Moreover, by calling the work for the nation as a just thing, he writes that God is always the helper of the just people: God is the Just himself.<sup>207</sup> He concludes his book with a kind of vow by saying: “*God; The Right; Nation; Language; Albania: Albanianism!*”<sup>208</sup> While Vasa concludes his book by saying, “*It is our motherland and we want to see it being happy and united under the scepter of His Highness, The Sultan. We prefer to cry for the death (to die) rather than to see it divided into pieces from its neighbors. [...] if this desire is unfair, let them prove it to us the contrary*”.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Sami, *Shqipëria*, 106.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>209</sup> Vasa, *E vërteta*, 69.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In the introduction, we presented our research question: Is it possible to study the formation of national identities in the Ottoman Empire from the context of modern theories? During the writing of this thesis, we remained strict with those theories. We have tried not to get trapped in the ideas of whether the nation is something that always existed or something created. However, we analyzed how the intellectuals influence the formation of national identity. Could a collective national identity be formed without writings about national identity? It is not possible to be so. Mostly what people know about their national identity and character is the product of these writers and their writings. These writings, even today, are embodied in the elementary state schools that most young people attend. If not in school, they are studied, as we mentioned in the poetry and songs, which appear to be a more effective tool for national identity building since the possibility of memorizing them is higher. In my personal experience, growing up after a war where the nationalist sentiment was high, I knew two things in my first days of school: the Albanian national anthem and Naim Frashëri's poem 'Fatherland', which we also analyzed here. I could only understand the real impact that nationalism had on my subconsciousness when I started reading about nationalism and the theories on nationalism, where I understood that I, too, had 'fallen victim' to these ideas and efforts.

We argued that Albanian historiography saw the beginning of Albanian national identity in different periods. First was the period of Ali Pasha Tepelena (d.1822), the second was the period of anti-reform uprisings, and the third was the period of the League of Prizren (1878-1881). We conclude that European writers mostly romanticized Ali Pasha's period, as it was by Alexander Dumas. The anti-reform uprisings, rather than having a nationalistic background, had an economic side, where the old powerful families ruling with the Timar system started to lose their power, influence, and wealth. It also had the anti-military recruitment sentiment, which was

used towards the masses. We argued that for a national identity to be formed, certain characteristics should be included, and the primary of those characteristics had the writings of the intelligentsia. Thus, all of these lead us to conclude that the Albanian national identity was formed during and after the League of Prizren. This league became the first Albanian nationalistic political and cultural movement. During this league's events, the first Albanian nationalistic platform was published, written by Vasa Pasha. After this league, nationalistic poems such as Naim's were written.

After giving the historical background, the second chapter was about what we called the "The Archeology of the Past", which included the uses and misuses of history by nationalistic writers as an attempt to legitimize present and future actions. In the Albanian case, we found that there were two periods of time that were being used and misused. The first was antiquity, whereas we noticed a tendency to make everything Albanian. They started from the creation of ancient Greece and Rome, where the writers claimed they were Pelasgians. They tried in many ways to document that these semi-mythical people were the predecessors of Albanians. We saw the efforts to make Greek and Roman mythology as something that originated from Albanian mythology and sets of beliefs. They continued in the search for heroes while claiming that Alexander the Great and his father Philip were Albanians, the same as Pyrrhus. However, we conclude that these nationalistic writers saw the most useful period, the period of Skanderbeg (d.1467). Skanderbeg was seen as the embodiment of the Albanian nation. Since Skanderbeg converted to Islam, same as Albanians; Skanderbeg served the Ottoman Empire, the same as Albanians were doing; and he went against the Ottoman Empire and approached the European powers, same as the Albanian nationalistic elite were attempting to do so. Thus, Skanderbeg became the perfect example of the Albanian nationalistic intelligentsia as a 'hero'.

In the third chapter, we presented the 'Ethno-symbolism Approach'. In the process of national identity building, this is crucial in the rapport it creates with the masses. Here everything specific to that nation can be used, be it clothes and their colors; hats and hairstyle; nature which includes the mountains and hills, animals, birds, rivers and trees, and in the Albanian case, even the shepherds. All of the findings in the archeology of the past served for the development of Ethno-symbolism. We noticed that the nationalist writers do not see the city and the city culture as something useful

for their writings. In most cases, the inhabitants of the cities tend to take the culture of what is fashionable at the time. When a nation is under the rulership of another more hegemonic nation, the cities take the culture of the rulers. Thus, village and villager, for the nationalistic writers, symbolized the purity of the nation, as people who were not corrupted by the city mentality and whatever that mentality brings. In the Albanian case, we saw the homage that was happening from Naim in his poetry for the trees, oaks, and mountains. We witnessed that he wrote a poem on livestock and agriculture, where he saw this as the richness of Albania, including here also the mount of Tomorr, where he tried to present it as something sacred. Naim wrote and glorified Skanderbeg and his friends, the fatherland; thus, we conclude that he is a perfect example of Ethno-symbolism in the Albanian case.

The fourth chapter, 'The Present' and 'The Political Thoughts about Future', as the titles showed, were about the political platforms for the future of the Albanian nation. Sami's question of 'What should be done?' was answered that the thing that should be done is, in a diplomatic way, Albania should become an independent state. Vasa writing 20 years before Sami, argued about the idea that Albania wanted to become an independent state as 'sayings from people who are not well informed about the issues of Albania'. Vasa and Sami agreed that Albanians should not use armed forces against the Ottoman Empire. Eventually, the Albanian state came as a 'product' of diplomatic solutions and efforts and not an effort of armed means. This soft approach towards Ottoman Empire, we conclude, comes as self-awareness of Albanians, of them being a small and weak nation, compared to the hegemonic power that the Orthodox nations were gaining in the region. Nevertheless, why did Albanians achieve to gain their nation, and other Muslim-majority nations in the Balkans did not? As mentioned in the Historical Background chapter, in 1880, German Chancellor Bismarck declared that there was no such thing as the Albanian nation, but in 1913, this nation was recognized internationally.

What happened is a complex reason. First, the interests of the Great Powers interfered, since Austria-Hungary, exactly as Sami wrote, could not afford to give such a territorial power to Serbia and allow Serbia to reach the Adriatic Sea. This reason also helped to gain the support of Italy, where Italy also did not want Serbia as a sea neighbor. Another reason we argue is the efforts of the Albanian intelligentsia,

wherewith their writings and efforts, supported by Austria-Hungary, made the Albanian case known in the international arena. One of the major reasons seems to be the Ottoman Empire itself, where at the beginning of the Albanian nationalistic movements, they were against it. Eventually, when the Ottomans acknowledged the risk to their empire's ability to continue existing in the Balkans, they stopped their stance against Albanians having their state. As we saw, only a few days after the Albanian declaration of independence on 28 November 1912, Ottoman Parliament released a statement that they would not go against the interests of the new Albanian state. Compared to the Greek and Serbian nationalism, although they produced their political platforms, Albanians did not make an official one, as to say they did not achieve an Albanian *Megali Idea* even though there was an attempt to make the concept of *Albanianism* as such.

Thus, to conclude and answer whether we can analyze the formation of national identities in the Ottoman Empire from the context of modern theories, we answer that it is very well possible. When we started to work on this issue, we did not expect that we would find a lot of primary sources to work with, but what happened was that we found so many primary sources that we had to be very selective about them. It is the same as other national identity efforts in the Ottoman Empire. We urge the researchers to work in a similar methodology on the different national identities of the subjects of the Ottoman Empire, for example, the Arab people. A lot is written about Arab nationalism, but what we were not able to find was an analysis of the process of building Arab national identity. For those who want to work in this field, we suggest going further and asking research questions like, what was the impact of the religious movement of Muhammad Abdul-Wahab on the Arab national identity? Which are the 'golden ages' of the Arab national collective though? What is the influence of the religion in the Christian Orthodox nations that were formed in the Ottoman Empire? Suppose they were unique in their religious background, why they did not create one unique state and other issues like this that can help identify how the national identities were formed in the Ottoman Empire? We hope that our thesis and methodology used here can serve well in analyzing these issues.

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