

## WHY DID THE ARBER & EPIROTS RETURN IN ALBANIAN

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### Abstract in English

To unravel the complex history of the Albanians, the so-called Pandora's Box has already been opened so as not to be closed until the truth is revealed. From the invasion of Albania by the Turkish empire in 1478 and until about 1660-1703, in addition to the military and political occupation, began to outline some new strata in the then population, strata of population that spoke Albanian or Albanian-speaking, because they were colonists who came from areas of the Turkish Empire, but Muslim, native converted to Islam with military-political positions and after them were converted en masse and peasants, but remained orthodox most of the Orthodox religion, either in the north of the Albanian lands or in the middle lands, and whether in the south. Thus, under Turkish pressure, which implemented the special anti-Arbëresh-Epirote strategy, at the end of the 17th century - beginning of the 18th century, there was a tragic spiritual and religious division of the Albanian-speaking population with all the consequences that are still felt today. due to religious and traditional dichotomy. So, the problem of the unification of the Albanian lands and in general of the Albanian people is not so easy, but in the first place it requires some preconditions and clarification of the truth, no matter how difficult or easy it may seem. This fact can also be explained with the phrase of Faik Konica that he showed; "When I started the fight for the liberation of Albania twenty-five years ago, I remembered as a very young man that the problem was only a problem of nationality, that is, that if he managed to fully awaken the sense of nationality in the hearts of Albanians, the establishment of a free Albania, it was a finished job as soon as the opportunity arose. When I thought more, for fifteen years now, I realized that the problem of Albania rather than national was a moral problem .. In other words this people in order to be saved, he needs, first of all, to be trained and to elevate his character, to soften and purify his heart..` Many, especially those of the type Koço Danaj, or the Albanian AK, or Kosovar self-determination, radicals seeking with pathos and rage the return of the past of `Jasha Padishah`, seek the unification of Albanian lands as if it were just a broken piece of crystal that can be easily glued.

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### Analysis

This phenomenon can never happen through the artificial rise of nationalism, or through sharia that reminds of Kahramanname of the League of Prizren which ultimately led to the division of Albanian lands between the neighbors <sup>1</sup>. It should not be forgotten that after 1878, non-Muslim Albanians, i.e. Christians who had found shelter and support in the respective Slavic churches, such as the Orthodox Albanians of the northern Albanian territories or the Skies, and the Orthodox Albanians of the of the south or Arvanitis. Reason? The reason according to them was that Arbëria and Epirus cannot become a separate state, because they are occupied by the Turks and that Albanians of the Islamic religion are not Albanians! Here, the respective churches, the long time under occupation, the golden opportunity gained after the defeat of Turkey in 1878 by the Russians have influenced. But why did this strong division happen between the Albanians and the two main religions, because both communities were ruled by the Ottoman Turks? His story is painful and if the truth should be revealed, it should not condition us for the future of the Albanian population and the Albanian lands, but simply to find the

best possible solution in this new Balkan and European reality, of course through integration. With three lines (which actually require hundreds of pages of explanation), the main problems in the Albanian lands and the Albanian population which have caused the division of not only the Albanian lands but also an impact on the Albanian population, both Muslim and Christian, are as follows:

- The Turkish invasion damaged the formation of a genuine Albanian state which, if history had been different, would not have been called Albania but Arbëri and Epirus, because in the first place it damaged the binomial Religion + Homeland = State, harming religion. Some may say that.. but before the Turkish invasion? The chances were to form a strong Arber state that would dominate the Balkans.
- The reasons why the Turkish rule had more serious consequences in the Albanian lands than in other Balkan lands are: The stubbornness of the Albanian leaders (Arbërias and Epirotes) not to submit, Human and economic resources less than the Turkish Empire, little European aid.
- The reasons why the Turks totally destroyed the arboretum principalities, territories, castles, and expelled the people were: the harsh and armed obstacle that made the Albanians against the spread of Islam, the refusal to accept vassalage for a long time, the Western incitement,
- The reasons why the Turks took many Albanians of that time and put them in executive and military positions, was that the Arber and Epirote race, an ancient, beautiful, brave and intelligent race, actually constituted the Turkish strategy; conquer and fight with Janissary commanders and soldiers (not Turks, but converted hostages),
- The argument why the Albanian population was not completely assimilated despite all the pressure and violence was: the survival of the population through emigration (so as not to surrender and convert - the rich and the middle left), + through conversion to Islam (for favors and power , and thus also a survival with negative effects), +through the preservation of religion by seeking support from the Orthodox Churches that had the permission of Turkey but that caused the loss of the language, or from the Catholic Church which also had the same effect on the population that sought refuge and support).
- The Turkish strategy of Islamization for the lands and the Albanian population that did not emigrate can be presented through six tactics: murder for those who do not return, hostages for those who waver, heavy taxes for the non-Islamic community, demolition of castles, removal of inhabitants and the construction of villages and cities in places without protection, and influx of other population to <sup>(2)</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. Pirro Prifti: *The League of Prizren and the Islamic League, 2014, Albanian Heart*

<sup>2</sup>. Marin Barleti: *The history of Skanderbeg Prince of the Epirotes, year 2005, reprint, p.200-344,*

populate the fields and hills of the abandoned Albanian lands, mainly from Anatolia, Persia, Abkhazia, giving rewards and military-administrative posts to converts.

The Turkish-Ottoman revenge fell very heavily on the Albanians and their lands precisely to take revenge on the stubborn Christian Albanians because Sultan Mehmet II himself (the one who conquered Constantinople in 1453) said about the Albanians (the Arbër-Epirotes at that time): "I will not let stone on stone in Arbëri". And so he did, he destroyed all the forts. He even destroyed and damaged the tomb of Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg, taking his bones - ``for a talisman" (M.Barletti `George Castrioti-Skanderbeg, Prince of Epirus) <sup>(2)</sup>.

In my article from a few days ago ``Shkijet and Albanians - or the Genesis of the word Albanian and Albania", the problem of where the Orthodox Albanians disappeared (and less so the Catholic ones) was a problem that was both ``taboo" and a little mysterious, because in fact it also had to do with the transition to a new stage of the spoken Albanian language and of course the change of names and denominations due to the religious divide and the breakdown of the Albanian state for almost 500 years. The Albanians on the border with the Slavs did not emigrate but chose another alternative not mentioned before by our historians: they approached the Slavic Orthodox Church because it had

immunity; this saved them from reprisals. And this is where the transformation begins. From Arbër to Albanian. The Orthodox Arbers protected by the Slavic Church - called the converted Muslim Arbers as Sqep-tars, while the Orthodox Arbers called them Shqije-Sqja-nga schizma (which means skep, so,). The word Albanian was left to the Arbers and Epirotes who converted to Muslims; the Orthodox Arbers, who joined the Slavs out of trouble, were called Schikies; the orthodox epirotes were called arvanitas; Orthodox who spoke Albanian in the Albanian lands were called cristians albanians as - Kaurr. According to F. Xharra: "The year 1637, for Gjakova, according to the missionary fra Bonaventura da Palacula, of the 500 houses of this village, only 20 were Catholic, the others "il resto tutti Turche et Scismatici" (the rest were Muslim Albanians and Albanians of the Scythians). And then continues: "Per andare dalla parte del Settentrione sopra Jacova incominciano li Scismatici" - going up from Gjakova to Deçan, north of Gjakova through the villages of all the "schismatic" villagers In March 1683 the testimonies of brother Kerubini give the demographic-statistical picture of the district of Gjakova as "from Gjakova to Deçan were all schismatics and the Monastery of Deçan. So friar Kerubini from Gjakova to Deçan came across "schismatic villages" ("molte ville di Scismatici".)

An example of the presence of Orthodox Albanians is also this, where it is written (1837) about Hasi (among the mountains of Pashtriku, in the Drin River valley, south of Gjakova): the entire region is inhabited by Albanianized Serbs and Albanians. ..(tout le district habite par des Serbes allbanises et des Albanais)". For the castles of Peja and Gjakova, until the Crimean War, according to Myller and Bue, it was established that the Orthodox Christian element prevailed in the surroundings of these cities (shkijet p.xh.) and less Catholic Albanians, Latin (<http://www.revistadrini.com/2012/03/fahri-xharra-kush-jane-shkijet-1/>)<sup>(3)</sup>. The spiritual division in addition to those of the lands in the Sanjak occurred under Ottoman pressure, which on the one hand did everything to keep the Balkans occupied, where the most rebellious population was that of the Arbërs and Epirotes. This spiritual-religious division happened when a large community of Islamized Arbërs was created who, together with groups coming from Anatolia, were spread together with mostly Orthodox Christian Albanians, but also Catholic ones in the north, in the center, and south of the Albanian lands. Most of them were privileged and ran the administration and the army, but spoke the Arabic language. The Christian population in the north of the country, as well as in the south, influenced, subjugated, mistreated by

<sup>2</sup>. *Marin Barleti: The history of Skanderbeg Prince of the Epirotes, year 2005, reprint, p.200-344,*

<sup>3</sup>. *Fahri Xharra: The historical truth - Orthodox Albanians of Macedonia, 2013, ISBN 978-9951-641-59-3 ë1]*

the conqueror, became hostile to the Islamized population as much as feeling unprotected, or left altogether to Italy in the north of Venice or in the South in Calabria.

The other sought refuge and consolation in the Church Slavonic and Greek because of the reprisals, surviving but sacrificing the language over time due also to the pressure of the hosts (after 1878).

The division started from enmity due to the loss of land, the risk of losing religion. They were called by the Islamized Arbri (Rabans) as Shqie or Shqa who betrayed the land and language, while the Shqie or Shqata called the Islamized Arbri as Shqeptare (who have left the religion).

This is how the Albanians who spoke Albanian but who were of Islamic faith were created after 1703, and they were called that in all the lands and the language from Arbrian to Albanian, in the south, the Christian Arbers were called Arvanitas as well as their Arberish brothers in Italy ; whereas it happened that the Orthodox Christian Albanians who came down over the years after 1878 were called Albanians just like their Muslim brothers.

Despite official orders that Muslim Albanians be called Turks both at home and abroad, in fact as a result of violence and pressure, Orthodox Christian Albanians in the south were called Greeks, and Orthodox Albanians in the north who joined the Church Slavonic were called Shqa, Shkie . Thus, the

spoken Albanian language continued to survive from ancient times to the present day, but in groups and populations of people with different religions, the clash between which was instigated by the Turkish conqueror, - in fact, it destroyed the culture of this ancient people. The war for freedom brought to light on November 28, 1912 a truncated state and full of problems with itself, so Albania looked like a patient who lived in a psychiatric hospital, who came out into a new reality without being able to orientate and without understand who he is.

### III

What can we do for the population of Orthodox Albanian origin that also lives in its own lands but under other neighboring states? The population of Albanian origin or the northern fringes who live as Serbs, as Montenegrins, and as Macedonians under the new conditions of democracy, integration and globalization, have the opportunity to decide for themselves where they should live, but at least not get involved in radicalism Slavic orthodox, but try to re-find their roots<sup>(5,6)</sup>. The same can be said about the Arvanites. Due to the conditions, they made their choice 280 years ago, but nevertheless, they have preserved the language, even partially. Orthodox Albanians in Macedonia (said to be 300,000) but also in Serbia (?) should be emancipated. To be emancipated - they must be supported. In addition to religious tolerance or as it can be better called "religious indifference" according to A. Klosi<sup>(4)</sup> which only temporarily solves the survival between communities, communist atheism created the illusion of coexistence (bratsvo-jedinstvo), but now atheism is a serious danger for Albanians in the not-so-distant future, because atheism causes moral degeneration and consumerism, which for a small country like us, as well as western globalism, will severely damage our identity. Of course, the state of post-communism is also harmful, along with its negative aspects; unemployment, poverty, radicalism, nationalism. Today, the silent spiritual division, the political wars, the different strategies to progress, I think come from traditional religious differences and preferences.

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<sup>4</sup> Klosi, Ardian: Archived 3 March 2016 at the Wayback Machine, uebersetzercolloquium.de (in German)

<sup>5</sup> Kristo Frasheri: *Lidhja shqiptare e Prizrenit : 1878-1881 : botohet me rastin e 100-vjetorit të lidhjes shqiptare të Prizrenit - (1979)*

<sup>6</sup> Kristo Frasheri: *E vërteta mbi Shqiptarët e Maqedonisë dhe shtrembërimet e Enciklopedisë së Shkupit - (2010)*

I think religion is a problem, which hinders the spiritual and real union of Albanians: Each community is looking for its own history, its own heroes. Let them make this clash, therefore we are inferior to our neighbors because we quarrel with each other and insult our or each other's heroes. The support must come from the Muslim Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia, as well as from the Albanian and Kosovar states, and thirdly, the support must also come from abroad. Obstacles: has divided and created the designation of the religious prejudices among the Albanians have so far destroyed their recognition and support because it is precisely this problem that Albanians and Albanians. This has been a dividing bridge; Muslim Albanians were called by the Albanian Shkis (shkije- shkizma or shkep, shkepem).

So the religious problem was the main one that weakened and divided Albania. The next question arises, why the Orthodox Albanians, just like the Arvanites, found it easier to preserve their religion by joining the Slavic and Greek churches, than to cooperate with the Muslim Albanians or, in the opposite case, to emigrate? Do you want the truth? There is only one answer: Muslim Albanians, as the most privileged in the Ottoman Empire in these lands, behaved very badly with the Scythians and the Arvanites. So they found it impossible to cooperate. That was the separation. We praise (Albania and Kosovo) two things: the League of Prizren and Ali Pasha Tepelena. Both, despite the

official interpretations - the League of Prizren with Kahrarname - sanctioned the Turkish invasion because it did not envisage either an Albanian capital, an Albanian state, or an Albanian language. Then? Why is there a League of Albanians? The connection of Albanians and pro-Turkish beylers? This was also the reason why no one supported us; Secondly, Ali Pasha Tepelena: Is this man a hero or a criminal who destroyed all of Tuscany and Epirus, making the final division of the Albanian Christians (who in the south were called either "Greeks" or Arvanitas) with the Albanian Muslims. This caused the Arvanites to join the Greeks (Romanoi), and with the help of the Anglo-Russians they liberated the tree and non-tree lands to the south, but ultimately agreed to live under a Greek-speaking state.

The same thing happened with the Slavs: With the Slavs of the North and the South, they accepted the Arbers (that is, as we call the Orthodox Arbers today because of the schism or 'break' with their Muslim brothers), to enter their umbrella to protect but also to benefit from them. For Kosovo and Macedonia, it will take time, I think for a secular state in Kosovo, because the population is not well educated and is full of religious prejudices. This phase must be passed, which is being extended by the exaggeration of the religious cult (by powerful individuals) to the extreme, doing the opposite of what the West wants. For this reason, a new integration strategy is needed in accordance with the orders of the EU and the USA, in which today's Albanian factors and actors must cooperate in the first place;

- Integrate into the EU sooner or later, and simultaneously:
- The re-renewal of a single Academy for all Albanian lands for Albanian History and Language,
- Close contacts, and the creation of conditions for acquaintance, rapprochement, and cooperation with the Albanians integrated with the Slavs and their church (Scythes), the Albanians of Greece (Arvanitas), contacts and rapprochement and cooperation with the Albanians of Turkey and wherever they are, in order to know their true history.
- Removing the pressure of religious prejudices on the population, which will be done through compulsory education, Basic religious education should not be done until the end of adolescence, that is, it should be done in high school or high school <sup>(6,7)</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>*KristoFrasheri: The truth about Macedonian Albanians and the distortions of the Skopje Encyclopedia - (2010)*

<sup>7</sup>*Faik Konica: "Faik Konitza – Selected Correspondence 1896–1942"*

- Create comprehensive conditions to count everything irregular: education and compulsory education up to high school, counting the administration, preserving and strengthening the official language by enriching it with agreement with new dialectal things,

Unfortunately, this is the truth, that they are sorry or even ashamed to be called Albanians, but they prefer to be called Shkja or Serbs or Greeks, considering the bitter past when the Ottoman Turks and the Arbers converted to Islam. they took advantage of the opportunity to become owners, administrators, commanders under that regime, oppressing both Arbers converted to Islam but poor as well as Arber Christians and Epros, taking away their lands. The Albanian name was partially identified with Arbers and the Islamized Epirots <sup>(6,8)</sup>.

However, the word ship remained a word used by all the actors. The situation changed after 1878, and the enmity became even worse because these same Albanian speakers created the Greek state, the Serbian state, and after the 20th century, a truncated Albania was created, and in the 21st century, Kosovo was created.

Today is the time to recognize themselves with the help of integration. This is a difficult path, but it will take us where we need to be: the prosperity of the Albanian lands, integration and close cooperation with the progressive forces, the respect of our neighbors towards us.

<sup>6</sup>. *KristoFrasheri: The truth about Macedonian Albanians and the distortions of the Skopje Encyclopedia - (2010)*

<sup>8</sup>. *Pirro Prifti: Skis and skiers, or the genesis of the word Albanian and Albania, 2013, newspaper Sot.*

## Referencies

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