

The Ottoman Heritage in Albania at the Brink of World War One

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Introduction

The object of this paper, it is one of many attempts to analyze the heritage of the Ottoman rule in the four Albanian-speaking vilayets, and later the newly shaped independent Albania, under the aegis of the Great Powers and their decisions of London 1913. The question that rises is: what is the Ottoman heritage in Albania? It's the islamization of the society, the minarets, the common taste in food and habits, the feeling of being part of this Meso-region as Jenő Szűcs has rightfully described and Maria Todorova has called as imaginary, more than real (the Balkan phenomena¹)? Or the Ottoman heritage is the blood, fire and war, continuously proposed by the national official history?

This paper focuses on the direct line between the attempts of the late Ottoman Sultans to modernize their empire, the difficulties that they faced, and how and when these problems manifested in Albanian-speaking territories, and the link with nationalism. In the first chapter I am going to provide a reader with a summary of the economic, politic and military attempts and failures of the Ottoman Empire in 19th century in the optic of the modernization process under the Weberian theory. The second chapter, under the elements of the first one, will introduce the concept of periphery and center relation, on how the attempts and failures of modernization, taking into account the temporal-spatial delays, were introduced in the Albanian speaking areas. Different Albanian groups perceived them differently leading to a heterogenous response of the neighboring nationalities, which answers the problem of latency of the Albanian nationalism, especially on the first phase.

The Sick Man of Bosphorus. The military problem

The end of the 18th century saw the Ottoman Empire in a crisis situation, that persisted for more than one century. In an age when progress and modernization were the main driving forces of the world, the Empire was hardly an empire, more closely resembling to a medieval pre-modern state like China in the T'ang Dynasty.² The main elements of this period were the decentralization forces (with governors almost independent in Tripoli, Egypt, Albania, etc.), continuous losing battles and sovereignty over territories (Wallachia, Moldavia, Serbia) and an ever-spreading corruption and pression from the local *ayans*.³

¹ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 10-11.

² Hanioglu, *A brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 7.

³ *Ibid.* 18.

The calm days of the empire were shattered in a number of seemingly periodical clashes with the old Russian adversary, first in 1774 and later in 1792. After the crushing defeat, from a much smaller army of disciplined Russian soldiers, Sultan Selim III (known for his lamentation over the situation of the empire), gathered 20 of the most prominent intellectuals of the empire to write a memorandum, over the solution facing this crisis. Unanimously the intellectuals agreed for a change of course, but they were divided upon the route to take. One group wanted the reintroduction of the practices of the Golden Ottoman Age, meanwhile the other group opted for the emulation of the westerner practices. In the end, under the dubious influence from the west, the Sultan opted for the second course of action.⁴ According to many scholars of the period, this path taken from Selim III and Mahmud II, was an attempt of modernization, mainly to centralize and reorganize in a more fashionable way the power of the government, not only under the military pressures from the west, but also from the decentralizing forces of the *janissaries* forces and the *ayans* (local leaders acknowledged by the central government). What once had been the strength of the Ottoman Empire (decentralization and autonomy of decisions by the local leaders) had manifested in the end of 18th century as the main problem in the coming decades.⁵

This environment on the other side, proved to be the ideal ground for the spreading of power and later political thoughts expressed by a form of proto-nationalism in the Balkans. Backed mainly by the Russians in military terms, and the westerners through economic incursion, three ethnic groups stood up: the Bulgarians, the Greek and the Serbians. Among these ethnic groups was raised a form of self-consciousness manifested in three social elements: 1) Traders and guild members operating in different colonies or capitals of the West like Vienna, Trieste, Venice or Odessa; 2) Non-Muslim intellectuals in direct contact with the trading member class; 3) Local military leaders, half romantic and half bandit (*hajduk, klepht*), which in most of the cases had military experience, by working as mercenary forces in the West.⁶

In 1795 Selim III tried to reform the administration frame of the empire, by organizing the state unto 28 provinces administered by vezirs, which were appointed by the sultan. In theory the vezirs could be fired from the Porte and for any mayor decision had to communicate with the center, but de facto none of the administrative attempts proved viable.⁷ In his attempt to reform his power base, which was the military, Selim III tried to create a private army outside the specter of influence and control, inside the palace (the ulema and the janissaries) and outside of it, by continuously calling for military instructors (mainly French ones). The result was a creation of a new fighting corpus of 22.865 soldiers under 1590 officers in 1806.⁸ The initial result showed great progress in comparison with the embarrassment of the performance of the old corpus. And this led to the breaking point where Selim III in an attempt to disband the military forces of the Janissaries, was killed by a coup and his nephew Mahmud II barely survived the assassination attempt in July 1808.

After the assistance of the Alemdar Mustafa Pasha forces (mainly Albanian and Bosnian troops), the *Deed of Agreement* (mistakenly posed as an Ottoman Magna Charta) was

⁴ Ibid. 42.

⁵ Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman*, 38.

⁶ Ibid. 33-35.

⁷ Hanioglu, *A brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 49-50.

⁸ Ibid. 47.

signed in October 1808, which laid the foundation for the security of the State, the Sultan and his sovereignty. Ironically this act was an agreement *par excellence* for the recognition of the respective powers of the sultan and the *ayans*, which all came into the capital to sign and honor it with their respective armies. In a sense this act and all the other attempts of Mahmud II, were an attempt to modernize the main power structure available to him, considering his weak position. The deed of 1808 and other modernizing reforms that Mahmud II opted, were half measures, and in many cases worked better in the center (Anatolia) than in the other provinces

The reforms were pushed back by the continuous pressure from the janissaries and the ulema, who on November 1808 had killed Alemdar Pasha, the main supporter and grand vezir of Mahmud II, prolonging the military difficulties of the empire. After the defeats in Missolonghi of the Greek forces from the much superior and modern military forces of Mehmet Ali of Egypt, the sultan had decided to get rid once and for all the janissary corpus in 1826. This led to the creation of the regular troops (one of the main elements of the Weberian theory over modern states) named the Victorious troops of Muhammed (*Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*).⁹ With this event, all the affiliated orders related with the janissaries were forced to hide or be exiled, among them the Bektashi order, who found a resting place in the areas, that once used to be ruled under the independent ayan Ali Pasha Tepelena. This course of action didn't included only the military aspect, but also hit the *Timar* and *Zamet* economic system, the branch upon which the power of the sultans was being held for centuries.

The economic failure

To create a modern army, are needed two things and in grand quantity: men and money. Posing the Weberian theory of the modern state, the most rational way to finance the ever-growing bureaucracy and army, the capitalist system is seen as the most ideal source of stable incomes. The Ottoman economy up until the brink of WWI was not a capitalist one, either in liberal or protectionist forms. The economic system until the Land Law of 1858, had been barely functional until the beginning of the 19th century. The state revenues were acquired from two taxes: the *tithe* (the percentage of agricultural production) and the *cizye* (the millet taxation of non-muslim communities). Beside these revenues the state had control on ports, borders and monopolies all over the empire. Under this system, the state had stable monetary revenues, but in the beginning of the century the economy encountered many problems. One of many was the fact that Ottoman economy remained a pre-mercantilist economy with high agricultural elements. Priority in this economy was the self-efficiency of the provinces and the remaining surpluses were either incorporated into the military budget or sent toward Istanbul. This led to a close system where the use of the coinage was low and the trading among normal people was done by products to products forms.

Making things worse were the Sultans laws, protecting the guilds and pushing toward the importation of low-quality goods, stagnating the country toward a poor economic and fiscal system that almost collapsed under the continuous internal demand for debts from the

⁹ Hanioglu, *A brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 60.

High Porte.¹⁰ Beside the issues showed above, the main problem that led to budgetary difficulties between 1770-1840 were the military voices, more than the reforms or the corruption of the state, as generally believed. The wars with Russia, Iran and Egypt, not to mention the internal fights with the ayans, had impacted more than the loss of the territories and revenues from the Serbian and Greek case. The desire to modernize the army, *alla Prussian* style, toppled with the payments of wars had reached the half of the budget expenses.¹¹

The Ottoman currency periodically lost value. In 1789 1 *Kuruş* was approximately 5.9 g of silver, dropping to 1 g from 1884 until the WWI. Available in the markets all over the empire, there were 47 different types of the *Kuruş* currency, mainly from the different private minting facilities and the speculations that the Ottoman finances kept doing to set right their payment books.¹² What made worse the situation in the long term was the continuous devaluation of the currency meanwhile the taxes didn't change according to the scale of the devaluation or the inflation rates. Shortly putted the Ottoman state was consuming more on non-profitable investments like the military, was having currency problems, was exporting less and less and importing low quality materials with the hope to protect the internal producers. Adopting wrongly on the model of modernization of Egypt, the state protected the monopolies of raw materials like opium, silk and tabaco. This led to the lowering of the incomes from these products, meanwhile (especially in the Balkan area) the contraband flourished.

The introduction of the Tanzimat reforms on 3rd of November 1839 and the Ottoman-British pact of 1838 were a major moment not only in political terms, but also economic ones. Mainly seen a breakthrough, either from the westerners into the Ottoman Empire, or to the empire into the European Power Concert, the reality is that these moments pushed more the empire into the economic instability. As we have seen above the empire had exhausted all the borrowing capabilities from the internal market, leading toward borrowing abroad, in order to implement the military and bureaucratic reforms. The debt between 1875/6 was so high, that it reached 200 million British pounds, or 2/3 of the Ottoman budget. On 1881 the Ottoman economy under the great debts and expenditures fell into default. The European Powers, reaching to get back their investments, organized the OPDA (Ottoman Public Debt Administration) which up until WWI had the control over the finances of the empire.¹³

Meanwhile the rise of the German power, as Fritz Fischer has rightfully described, was a coordination of efforts between the industrial branch (such as the steel industries and cities around them created by Friedrich Krupp) and the military one, in the Ottoman Empire less data is available to us to create a picture of the industrial elements of the century.¹⁴ The liberal opening up until the end of the Tanzimat period and the returning to the protectionist form of economy under Abdul-Hamid II, didn't appealed any investors to do any investment in the Ottoman Empire. In the end of the Tanzimat period the Ottomans were pushing for the policy: *Everything must be produced at home, sur la place*.¹⁵ A few steps were made to create an industrial complex, mainly military outside Istanbul (*Grande Fabrique Zeytin-*

¹⁰ Ibid. 20.

¹¹ Pamuk, *A monetary history*, 188.

¹² Ibid. 193.

¹³ Ibid. 214.

¹⁴ See the book of Fritz Fischer: *War of Illusions*.

¹⁵ Hanioglu, *A brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 93.

burnu) and another one in *Bakırköy*. But until the start of WWI the complexes couldn't produce enough armaments and ammunition, such as heavy shells of artillery, leading to the need for import with higher cost. Ironically, even though the empire was a major producer of cotton, couldn't produce bandages.¹⁶

Table 2 Data from Mitchell's <i>Historical Statistics</i> (Demography)	State income per year	Coal production in ton	Railway lines km
Great Britain	1680 million	229 million	32623 km
France	1831 million	33.4 million	40770 km
Austro-Hungary	1321 million	11 million	22981 km
Russia	2113 million	16.2 million	62300 km
Ottoman Empire	330 million	0.6 million	5759 km
Germany	N/A	N/A	63378 km

One very interesting data to shed some information about industrialism was the production of coal as prerequisite for industrialization. Even though the oil deposits in Mesopotamia were discovered before WWI, they remained unused. The transportation system in many senses was obsolete, opting for the traditional way of shipping goods and barely was pushed forward by the interests of the European powers to link the Balkan and the other parts of the Ottoman state with the centers of trade. In comparison to India, a non-modern European country, with twice the size of the Ottoman Empire, had 10 more times railway lines, meanwhile Russia had 62300 km of railway lines. This data shows the huge disparity in production and communications lines between a pre-modern country and her modernized adversary.¹⁷

The rhythm of military reforms, putted more stress in to the economy opening toward the west, not only for finances but also politically to be accepted by the European Power Concert. Putting the empire into the focus of the European concert was elementary for the statesman of the time, as the only way to secure finances, border security (after the revolt of Mehmet Ali of Egypt and the previous Balkan and Russian conflicts). But as usual both the treaties by opting for a new legal prospect produced more changes than the empire and the sultans were willing to accept. For example, in the religious aspect the ulema group was the first to contradict the course of action, posing it not only as an interventionist foreign move, but into a degree a bypass of their religious authority in decision-making. The reactionary Muslim element even moved in very brutal fashion, posing threats to Christians communities in a number of events, such as the great pogrom of 1860 in Baghdad. The Ottoman state in many cases opted for reconciliatory movements, trying to pacify the religious discontent, especially in the Balkan where it was mixed with nationalistic sentiments. The bells of the different churches all over the empire, after Tanzimat, instead of being metallic, remained wooden, in order not to stress more the Muslim community. Among the religious groups

¹⁶ Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 78.

¹⁷ Ibid. 79.

even the Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul opposed Tanzimat, commenting the following: *The state has made us equal with Jews, we were better under the Muslim superiority.*¹⁸

On educational prospect many Ottoman researchers consider either the Tanzimat or Abdul-Hamid II period as an enlightened period for the empire. In reality it was more of a make up than a reformation. During Tanzimat initiated the opening of a number of professional schools, such as Medical, Military and Bureaucratic ones, which were expanded during the Hamidian regime. One of the reformers Midhat Pasha, emphasized greatly the expansion of the bureaucracy via education, and led to the opening of the *Mekteb-i Mulkiyye* and the School of Civil Administration in Istanbul on 1859. Beside the opening of this type of schools in the capital, great efforts were made to open them in the provincial capitals as well, and under the Freedom of Provinces status (*Vilayet Nizamnamesi*) every ethnic group took under control the education of their private financed schools. In 1869 it was passed the Education Law, which created a 5-layer hierarchy of schools.¹⁹

Despite the benefits in letter of every law signed during this period, the reality proved to be different. According to the numbers that we have, despite the military schools and the professional ones, the system was almost non-existent, with 119 *rusdiye* in all the provinces (17 alone in the capital).²⁰ According to the words of one of the educational reformers of that time Cevdet Pasha, the high education and the basic elementary education were purposely bypassed: *There was only the immediate interest to educate a small technic and bureaucratic class, that would lead to modernization; the mass-education was not in the agenda.*²¹

The political impasse

Mahmud II and two other predecessors, Abdul-Aziz and Abdul-Mejid as Karpat had rightfully described initiated a number of economic and military reforms, mainly to achieve and implement the modernization of the state. But in their attempts to do so, they never fully committed to the modernization of the empire like the western style. As Huntington would had said, the rulers were opting for modernization in military, industrial and scientific turns, not toward a westernization. This trend was visible in many cases.²² One of them is the political ideology as the main tools that the modern state has in its disposal in order to effectively govern and centralize. In the Ottoman Empire one ideology-one state pattern was not viable, and this led to multiple ideological groups rallying for power and affirmation.

The late period of Tanzimat, which after that led to a short constitutional period and later to the introduction of a form of Absolutism (opting for imperial social construction via Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism) of Abdul-Hamid II, was the failure of the political system and ambient to produce a stable environment, and a unifying ideology (pre-requisite of modernism). Interesting is the form how the empire was run at that time, a number of reforms were done, but still no constitution was raised. The legal system until the Ottoman constitution of 1876 was more a collection of agreeable arrangements between two legal

¹⁸ Hanioglu, *A brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 75.

¹⁹ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 154.

²⁰ Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman*, 74.

²¹ *Ibid.* 68.

²² See *Clash of Civilization* by Samuel Huntington.

systems, the Shari'a and the Sultans laws (*örfi law*). The high number of legal and religious elements (*fiqh*, *kanun-names*, *fatwas*, *yasak-names* and *adalet-names*), topped with the regional regulatory oral systems of different groups, created an heterogenous environment, where decision making was very fluid and less centralized. Over this multitude of known and unknow laws, the Ottoman society with over 30 million people, was divided in multiple layers, comprising the religious and social elements (*askeri-rulers* made up from *ulema*, *bureaucracy* and *janissaries* and *re'aya*-the ruled ones) under the umbrella of the religious millets.²³ The laws either religious or not, were up in the air legally, and every effort could be nullified by the mood of the Sultans. The bureaucracy had a free hand on the power structure, under the umbrella of the reforms, and no control from any other source of power.

The political polemist of the 19th century, were in havoc in their view of the Empire mainly calling it: “a government of Bedouin in the heart of Europe, expressed by an absolutist form of government fit only for tribes”.²⁴ Their laments were understandable, considering the facts they brought up. For them “savage” states such as Montenegro and Serbia had constitutions and parliaments such as *Skupštine* (1805), Rumania with its own bicameral legislative body (1866), Mount Lebanon with a mixed assembly (1864) or Crete with her own General Assembly (1866). For the political analysts, the Ottoman Empire was behind even among her Muslim sibling states, where Tunis in 1861 had voted the first constitution among the Muslim countries, and later followed by Egypt in 1866. A constitution was essential for the safe guarding of the rights of all the citizens in the empire, and foremost would had halted the influence of the West toward the affairs of the Ottomans.²⁵

The short period of Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire between December 1876-February 1878, was like rain in the middle of the legislative Ottoman desert. Pushed forward by the CUP and brought down by the events of war and decision making by the Great Powers after the Russian-Balkan states victories of 1877-1878, these events brought back to power a ruler like Abdul-Hamid II, who opted for the only way available to him to save the empire, the absolutist one. As some historians view him as an enlightened ruler in a period of turmoil, and some as a great despot, the truth is in the middle on my opinion. After the losses of great parts of territories in the Balkans, he saw that the number of Muslims in the empire rise up from 60% to 73.3% from the data from the censuses of 1881/2 and 1893.²⁶ Under these conditions arguable he saw fit a rallying of the remaining forces (and mainly opposing the CUP constitutional regime ideas) under the banner of Pan-Islamism. This move was not only a move for the demoralized internal Ottoman forces, but also a diplomatic bluff toward the Great Powers. Again arguably his role as Caliph of all the Muslims around the world, that with a snap of his fingers would had attack the west (especially threatening the British interests in India), is far from reality. The Arabs and especially the Sherifs of Medina and Mecca, had considered the sultans since the period of Selim III as pagans under the Wahhabi doctrine, refusing the yearly gifts toward the Holy Muslim cities.²⁷ Also not in favor of the position of Abdul-Hamid II, was his rather simplistic view of the West and East, where one was motivated by political and material actions under the

²³ Hanioglu, *A brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 19-20.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 114.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 112-113.

²⁶ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 148-150.

²⁷ Hanioglu, *A brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 19.

banner of nationalism, the later one motivated by the geniality of Arabic origin from which Islam stemmed from.

The failure of modernizing the Ottoman Empire as Huntington would have suggested, was purposely generated by half-measures from the sultans to hit the base-power of the political enemy inside the Empire (pushed modernization toward technical and scientific appropriation, without westernization). Under these conditions instead of a unifying ideology, the Ottoman landscape produced a hydra ideology, where different groups or power holders kept emerging and seeking absolute control, such as:

1-The Sultan, which opted for the concentration of power like the Russian example of the Tsars.

2-The bureaucratic/rational intellectuals, coming from either from the reformed Ottoman school or from the foreign ones inside the empire, discontent with the society and the lack of order (constitution and parliament).

3-The religious branch, more and more falling into the Wahhabi doctrine of Islam.

One sentence from Kemal Karpat is on my believe essential to describe the empire up until the beginning of WWI: *In the streets of the empire during the Hamidian regime, you would had found logical intellectuals (architects, military officers, etc.) debating with contempt and violence against doubtful mystical figures, beggars and occult members over the best way to save the empire.*²⁸

The Albanian Mahalla answers back

On 1st of September 2017 in the newly reconstructed national square of Albania in the capital of Tirana, the Muslim community held the *Namaz* for the Kurban Bayram. This event stirred up many debates in the coming days, mainly to the images circulated from the medias. There, hidden behind a black curtain the great sculpture of the National hero Skanderbeg (vanquisher and Christian protector against the Turkish invasions) was shadowed by the podium where the *hoca* (hoxha) was holding the ceremony. In this event the Albanian society was divided into two camps, those imposing the religious view for this curtain and to the other side, those condemning this action seen as retrograded Islamic movement pushing toward a less laic society, mainly affiliated to the Ottoman heritage. In one square, one picture, two myths, one religious and the other nationalistic, were clashing from primacy in the subconsciousness of the public. A perfect Balkan picture. But there is more into it or not? On my opinion yes, taking into account the words of Fernand Braudel: *politics is like the bubbles of the sea waves, we must investigate further what's under it.*²⁹

When we start analyzing the Albanian nationalism, there is a number of problems related with it. Mainly its latency (Albania was one of the last countries to separate via independence in 1912/13), has posed major problems how it has been perceived by different authors. In the Turkish historiography, nationalism unraveled the threads that unified the empire and it was seen as purely a religious and political movement, pushed by the adversaries of the ottomans. In reality little interest has been shown to the socio-economical elements of it, causes that in the majority of the cases, the policies were veiled under the na-

²⁸ Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman*, 72.

²⁹ Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*, 20.

tionalistic banner.³⁰ In the case of the Albanians, the Muslim brothers and later traitors, their nationalistic view was bypassed by the Turkish historians, mainly by opting the view that such thing as Albanian nationalism never existed (religion=nation). Interestingly this position was adopted also by the early political and historical neighbors of Albania, Greece and Serbia, which mainly by adopting this connotation (religion=nation) benefited upon territorial expansion, either by including Christians or by removing Muslim population from their disputed territories.

On the other side of the isle, the Albanian communist historiography implemented an antagonistic approach, spurred by an interesting political and ideological hybridization. In the view of the communist ideologs of that time, the Albanians were one of the oldest people in Europe, and by hitherto being purely European, fought for over 4 and half centuries for their freedom from the Ottoman yoke. Interesting and intellectually choking is the dogmatic phrase: *We fought with pen and sword to cut through history (E came rrugen e historise me palle e pene)*. As many new countries in the Balkan, creating an identity historiography was primary in many cases, and this period of identity creation was relatively new, spanning from the inter-war period (1919-1939) up to the communist one. The time was short and the two ideologies had to be implemented together, by putting aside the elements that didn't fit the general story telling (uncomfortable reactionary views). In the case of Albania, the Academy of Science was organized in 1972, and only during this period onward a more organized and scientific approach was led toward the periodization of history, but never outside the frame of sanctioned hybrid ideology (national communism).

My opinion is that both these views are outdated and don't show a clear indication toward a better understanding of the center and periphery problem, due to the failure of modernization and the introduction as a salvation anchor of nationalism in the Balkans. Again the historical truth, remains in the middle of these two controversial descriptive histories.

The Albanians, generally called as *Arnaut* or *Arnavud* by the Ottomans and their documents, are relatively late comers into the real Ottoman gamefield of power. The majority of processes that happened into the late 18th century up to the beginning of the 20th century, putted them into a pivotal role, that in many cases remained free or was taken due to their pragmatic and bellicose abilities. Even though either the Albanian or Turkish historiography articulates generally the presence of 42 Grand Viziers and an innumerable number of functionaries and military personnel, when it comes to actual and statistical data the numbers seem to be missing and are very fragmentary.

Mainly incorporated into four Albanian speaking vilayets (Kosovo, Monastir, Shkodra and Salonica), this ethnic group predates the Ottoman invasions in the 13-15th century. Arguable under arms or taxation policies the Ottoman rule imposed a policy of religious conversion into Islam, which up until the 16th century as shown from the Ottoman documents, was not accepted by the local population. Only after this period the trend in religious demographic numbers started to change in favor of the Muslim Millet. According to Halil Inalcik the policies of the early ottoman rulers, where not those of exclusion, but integration expressed by the term *İstimalet*. According to him through an integration policy of the border areas and practice of *Aman* (mercy toward the defeated) the same ruling classes before the Ottomans, kept their privileges by bowing to the new rule. Hitherto the existent ruling

³⁰ Keiser et al, *WWI and the end of the Ottomans*, 74.

classes converted into Islam and gradually started the same conversion for their peasantry, which they ruled, under the interest of social, political and economic benefits.³¹

Beside this policy of conversion from above, the Ottomans kept using other methods, such as the practice of a strong *Sufism* (Islamic mysticism), mainly by sending among the different areas of the Balkan *Sufi*, religious figures comparable with the Christian missionaries. Strongly was their presence into the areas of Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia, where huge problems were posed by the heterogenous nature of the populations of these areas. In these areas the number of Sufi movements (*tariqat/tekke*) kept rising, spanning from *Bek-tashiyya* to *Halvetiyya*, *Qadriyya*, *Mawlawiyya*, *Rafi'iyah* etc.³² This general reshuffling of the demographic and religious cards, even by using the arms lead to new realities, which in a sense provoked a slowing element into the quick activation of the national movement. Mainly the areas of three northern vilayets extensively converted into Islam, meanwhile a small minority in the area of Shkodra kept the Catholic rite, and in Janina the orthodox community remained strong. An important number of people also fled toward Italy, after the defeat of the rebellious coalition of Albanian nobles under Skanderbeg in the beginning of the 16th century, mainly composed from populations from Lezha, Drisht and Shkodra. This diaspora was called the *Arberesh*, denoting the place of their origin *Arberia* (Albania). They settled in Sicily, where they formed a large diaspora that served as one of many nuclei of proto-nationalism, especially in a location called *Piana Degli Albanesi* (Valley of Albanians).³³ Despite this conversion, an element must be kept in mind on my opinion, the pragmatic reaction toward a new imperial force and policy. This form of pragmatism was seen in the vain practices in relation with the canonical orthodoxy of the Islam in many areas of Central and South Albania. There was a mixed form of crypto-faith, such as the crypto-Christians of the area of Shpat near Elbasan, having two names (one Christian and one Muslim) and having special areas for other believers in churches or mosques.

Why these two policies are important on this analyzes? Mainly due to the fact that the Ottomans reintroduced them again in the Balkan in order to face the problems of nationalism and failure to modernize in a Weberian way. The conditions economically and politically had changed in the 19th-20th century, and a reintroduction of old policies worked against the predictions of the Ottoman statesmen. For example the policy of Pan-Islamism, had a later manifestation on the Balkan, pushing the different ethnicities on a religious clash. The one religion, one nation was pivotal in the nationalistic narrative, and not an umbrella that envisioned the citizens of the empire.

But what were the conditions of the vilayets in these periods? Unfortunately, the data available to us for the period up to the 20th century is very fragmentary at best. In economic terms the data from the Ottoman Empire is almost non-existent showing a complete lack of interest. Surprisingly for a state that wanted to enter the European Concert of Powers, the first commissioned socio-economic census by the Sultan was made in 1897 showing the latency of the reforms and change of mindset of the Ottoman bureaucrats. Michael Palairt's book over the Balkan economies between 1800 and 1914 has no data over Albania. The Mitchell historical statistic collection puts the first entries related to the country

³¹ Inalcik, *The status of the Greek orthodox*, 408-411.

³² Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 44.

³³ See the book *Stratiotes* by Paolo Petta.

after 1920, meanwhile other economic writers as Sefket Pamuk, don't mention anything. There is no industrial data of this period, but only the data from shops collected not periodically from the Ottoman authorities for tax purposes in 1831, 1881 and 1901, which indicate a rise of commerce in the vilayets of Kosovo, Bitola (after becoming the center of the Ottoman 3rd Army) and Janina. On this bases we can do general assumptions based one the recounts of travelers and foreign counsels.

The economy was a closed agrarian one, mainly agricultural and linked more with the contraband trade of opium, silk and tabaco, not to mention weapon done during the 19th century. Despite the Land Law of 1858 and the abolishment of the *Timar* system, an Albanian equivalent remained in place, due to the clan-based economy and oral tradition. After 1858 the private property was introduced for the first time, as a legal known term in the Ottoman legal system. The pastures of large communal tribes under chieftains or *Bayraktar* (flag-bearer in Turkish) in the mountainous areas of central and north Albania, regulated from oral legislatives corpuses called *Kanun*, generally were administered as private properties. The *Bayraktars* as warlords and leaders of the tribes gave the pastures in a system that emulated a late form of feudalism, and all the trades in the areas of the tribes, had to pass through the approval of this figure (sometimes even *harac*). Beside this form of revenue, the collection of taxes for the central government was pivotal for this class of mountainous nobles. After the introduction of Tanzimat, the tax collection process (*malikane*) was stopped due to the speculation activities of the *Sarafs* of Istanbul, but never managed to be implemented into these secluded areas.

Table 3 Data from Csaplár-Degovics's *Az albán nemzetéválás kezdetei, 1878–1913* (city shops)

	1842	1888
Skutari (Shkodra)	2600	3500
Prizren	950	1560
Korica (Korça)	480	840
Berat	680	820
Elbasan	580	730
Tirana	610	720
Prishtina	380	530

From the travels of the Austro-Hungarian counsel Julius Freiherr Zwiedinek von Südenhorst, who was appointed by the Ballhausplatz to investigate the situation in Albanian speaking areas between 1899-1906, another group held economic interest. The nobles of the low-lands devided between high nobles (*Bey*) and low one (*Aga*), had a grown into a considerable force, due to their affiliation with the High Porte as bureucrats and the favourable arable areas that they controlled. Mainly travelling through the areas of the Kaza of Tirana, he gives this analyzes of their incomes: “*The Kaza of Tirana was one of the most neglected agricultural areas of the Balkan Peninsula. There was virtually no infrastructure, construction work was not carried out and the Ottoman Empire showed no interest in improving the economic situation in the area. The fields were managed with underdeveloped technology and outdated methods, which meant that the average crop yield was low and*

famines were common. Of the respected gentlemen of the Kaza, only two, the Pasha's Mehmet and Esat (both from the Toptani family), had enough land to guarantee a livelihood that suited their rank alongside government revenues. In 1900 alone, they earned an annual gross income of 2,000 Turkish pounds each from their fields. However, the national party's 'Bey' only had incomes of between £ 100 and £ 700, and thus could not afford the level of life needed to maintain their long-term reputation and power. Moreover, they could not even dispose of their existing income freely, because the Ottoman state levied ever higher taxes. For example, they were able to supplement their income with smuggling (horse) smuggling, money lending at usurious interest rates, and possibly fees for case law."³⁴

The Aga group in his description had much lower incomes, leading toward opportunistic maneuvers in order to gain official positions in the local administration, up to working the lands with their families.

The use of coinage was very small among the normal people, preferring the using of foreign coins due to the trade with the West (from here stems the famous Albanian saying: *E kam blere me franga ari – I bought it with golden franks*). Also up until the beginning of the WWI, there was no serious investment on infrastructure or railways (the first ones started during the Austro-Hungarian invasion of 1916/8). The main ways or routes were those along the shores of rivers and water streams. The only infrastructure elements, were made by local population as a form of tax payments, such as building small stone bridges, or keeping the passes open, and continued despite the abolishment of this form of payments introduced by the Tanzimat reforms. Since the Ottoman state had no power to carry out its fundamental tasks, a part of their duties was taken over by the Beys and Agas. The most important of these tasks was that of maintaining the administration outside the city limits (in the countryside and in the mountains) and exerting judicial actions, such as personal courts.³⁵

On a political view the majority of the territory was mainly a half independent territory, where the authority of the Ottoman functionaries was hard to be implemented. Shemseddin Sami Frasheri, an Ottoman intellectual of Toske origin and later supporter of the independentist cause, in his encyclopedia named *Kamus al-alam*, mentioned the fact that these territories were mainly independent. The Ottoman authorities had appointed 4 Vali (*Wali*), but large areas like the mountainous areas of Gjakova, Peja, Shkodra, Luma, Dukagjin, Mat and Mirdita were organized under the counsels of Elders or Bayraktars.³⁶ In 1868 according to Hasan Kaleshi and Hans-Jürgen Kornrumpf the Ottoman authorities tried to implement a number of submissive actions toward these areas, especially in order to collect more accurately the taxes and soldiers, a disarmament of the local populations and giving an end to the conflict either among the civilians (blood feuds) or the civilians with the authorities. Unfortunately, these actions failed in 1874 in the areas of Kosovo. In the vilayet of Shkodra, the Vali had to accept the rule of the mountainous areas under a council of Elders, due to a number of problems such as the clash of legal corpuses between the oral ones of

³⁴ Die osmanische Staatsmacht hatte auf dem Gebiet der *Çifliks* keine Geltung mehr: Ebenda, 03.09.1901, Nr. 20, p.17.

³⁵ Ibid. 17.

³⁶ Frasheri, *Dheshkronje*, 1888.

the natives and the one of the Ottomans.³⁷ In these locations the law was represented by the oral ones called *Kanune* (*Leke Dukagjinit* in the Albanian Alps, the one of *Skenderbej* in the central area, the one of *Laberia* in the area between modern day Albania and Greece etc.) which in many cases were toppled with the religious laws of the Millets. In a democratic form there was no form of massive representation, mainly oppressed by the dictate of big clan leaders in the north of Albania or Kosovo, and the interests of big landlord families in the center and south Albania (due to the trade and empowerment in the last century with the empire or with her enemies). Zef Jubani, a catholic of origin from Shkodra, used to mention the fact that, these areas were used to the special status they had (*müstesna*). By judging the actions of Grand Viziers like Ahmed Cevdet Pasa, who after 1860 build only mosques, he blamed the catholic and muslim clergy of working to divide the people, not implementing school projects in the area or appointing reasonable local officials.³⁸

The educational system before and after the Education Law in 1869, was inexistent. As mentioned in the previous pages, the reformation was a closed one, with the hope of creating a small bureaucratic branch, and the number of *rushdiye*, was small for the whole empire. The later reformers of the period after Tanzimat, tried to change the trend by turning the local *medrese* into laic schools, but didn't had any major success. Again Zef Jubani mentions that even though the sultan law had given the opportunity to all the ethnic groups to open the schools, the ones in Albania lacked freedom and equality. In the few existing schools the most important element was the fact that they were too much Ottoman and pro-Turkish identity for the Albanian Muslims.³⁹ As the data shows the functional schools were the ones financed by foreign investments, leading to high percentage of illiteracy (90% approx.) among the Albanians, especially in relation with their identity. For the nobles, the only education solution was the education either in Istanbul, or to the neighboring countries schools, in order to get educated toward a military, bureaucratic or economic prospects.

The fragmentation was even bigger in regional linguistic or religious prospect. There were two dialects: *Gegerishtja* – Northern part and *Toskerishtja* – Southern Part, meanwhile the language didn't had a written alphabet until 1908 (under the influence of Austro-Hungarian diplomats), which produced dividing elements among the different groups. Toppled to this linguistic absence was added the multitude of religious practices where the majority was held by the Sunni (50-60%), the orthodox rite (15-25%), the catholic ones (5-10%) and a branch of Bektashi (5-10%), leading toward a spectrum of extreme religious elements (mainly after the Pan-Islamic policy Abdul-Hamid II) to nominal non-practitioners.

The Crises of 1876-1878 found the Albanians a situation of disarray, in many prospects as it is shown above. Even before the crises, there was a continuous push toward a self-reaffirmation of the Albanian identity, who according to the Albanian historiography, served a proto-nationalism phase. Also Nathalie Clayer identifies this period as reaction phase due to major changes such as: the formulation of an albanolog academic branch in the West, the reinstituted consciousness of the *Arberesh* (diaspora of Albanian origin in Italy), the infiltration of Christian (*Propaganda Fide*) or Protestant missionaries and their

³⁷ Clayer, *Ne fillimet*, 193-194.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 196.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

works on translating the holy scriptures in Albanian and reaction toward the political emancipation of the Greek (1821-29), Serbians (1812-29) and Rumanians (1802).⁴⁰ Mainly supported by the works of foreigners who had a keen interest on the Western Balkan affairs, the proto-nationalistic move was pushed forward by the diaspora of Albanians. They printed brochures, periodic and journals, but had major problems with financing and reaching their reader, especially in the Albanian speaking vilayets. These set of events before the Crises of 1876-78, led toward a more perceivable orientation what was *Albanism*, but not on my opinion toward a clear nationalistic ideology on political term.

Let's take into consideration the other set of events that happened during the disastrous defeat of the Ottomans in 1877-78, and how the Albanian historiography views this moment as the first phase of the nationalistic movement. Putting in the center the creation of League of Prizren on 18th of June 1878, the nationalistic historiography justifies these actions led by the Albanians, in order to counter the moves of the neighboring forces, primarily the Slavs. What is out of the context is the fact that the majority of elements are taken out on purpose, on the premise to justify this political move. The main actors of this League are the brothers Frasheri, Mehmed Ali Pasa Vrioni and the counsels of elders from the four vilayets (Sanjak of Novipazar, Kosovo, Dibra and Tetova, Mat and Luma, Janina) endangered by these expansionist activities. Writing a number of *Kararname and Talimat* (decision paper and army orders) sent toward the Sultan, the Albanian historiography pushes these decisions as nationalistic request. But if they are read correctly with the context of the time, each one of them holds almost no nationalistic element, but a clear request for the implementation of reforms on modernistic view. Important is the fact that almost all the documents in their addressing toward the sultan don't mention the ethnic element as primary, but put first the regional identity and later the religious one (among the signatures we can observe the presence of Slavs, Greeks, Vlachs and Albanians). The majority of them had the following requests:

1. The formation of a regular modern army, due to the inability of the irregular troops (*ittifak*) of the local clan leaders, to act in case of a threat from their Slav neighbors. The request for the modern army would had helped also the local leaders to control the flows of *muhajirs* fleeing the theater of war in the north, which according to some source was massive (modern request-not national).
2. The implementation of the reforms, especially the ones related with the introduction of bureaucrats in the Albania speaking areas, who know Albanian, in order to pacify the local councils of Elders and *Bayraktars* and cease the hostilities caused from blood feuds or other conflicts (modern request-not national).
3. The opening of schools in Albanian language, beside the Ottoman language, as previously done with the other ethnic communities in the empire, under the Freedom of Vilayets act and the Education Law (modern request-not national, in a context where there was no Albanian alphabet yet).⁴¹

Even more dubious is the position of Abdyl Frasheri and Mehmed Ali Pasa Vrioni during the period of two years. Before the League of Prizren, Abdyl Frasheri had taken a collision course with the Ottoman authorities, mainly by opting for a total division from the em-

⁴⁰ Ibid. 143.

⁴¹ Ibid. 230.

pire in case of an absence of an autonomy. In April 1877 along with Vrioni, he had gone into contact with Hellenic authorities in order to see the possibility for a dual monarchy with Albanian territories. This idea was not new and continuously was pushed by the Patriarch of Istanbul and the Greek interest groups, taking into genesis the idea that the rebellious Ali Pasa of Tepelena was trying to do the same during his rule. Pushing toward this common cause, was also the number of intellectuals who in the past and in the future, in the absence of a written alphabet proposed the idea of writing Albanian with Greek letters such as Jani Vreto among many. Again this course of action was on my opinion a desperate one, in the lack of a real possible solution for the crises. After the dislocation of irregular bands of Greek nationalists in Saranda on February 1878 and the flee of the Muslim population of these areas, the two Albanian intellectuals cut the ties with the Hellenic authorities.⁴² A thorn for the Albanian-Greek dialog on this matter, were the continuous plans of the Greek monarchy for Epirus (modern South Albania) considering it, its own territory made up by orthodox (again the connotation religion=nation). The newspaper *Neologos* in May 1878 had shown the previous change of policy toward this matter, posing the idea that the Albanians were a tribe of new commers in the 7-8th century and the Bektashi Muslims of the south (the biggest religious group in southern part of the vilayets) were only Islamized Greek.⁴³

More influential in the nationalistic tone is the list of requests that was made under the watchful eye of Abdyl Frasheri, while he was in Janina to organize the work of the committee of the League there. Added to the request of the North were a number of new ones, such as the consolidation of the work for the Albanian language, the unification of the 4 vilayets into a new administrative formation and pacing up of the reform process in these lands.⁴⁴ In relation with the language reform it must be said, that under the continuous pressions of the Albanian nobles and intellectuals, the High Porte commissioned Ali Pasa to organize an Albanian alphabet committee in 1867-1871. Due to major debates over which one of the letters should be used, and continuous push by the authorities to accept the Arabic version of Daut Boriçi⁴⁵ (Davud Şükrü Boriçi), the meetings had become less and less productive and more conflictual among the members of the committee like Jani Vreto, Kostandin Kristoforidhi, Mustafa Pojani, Ismail Qemali, Sami Frasheri, Pashko Vasa, Kristaq Zografi, etc. Another problem for these committee had been the form of the dialect, because the presence of two dialects was seen as problematic. After many attempts the Ottoman authorities stopped the work of the committee with the argument, that the Albanian language was not a civilized one to be taught in the schools such as the Ottoman, Persian, French, Arabic or Greek.⁴⁶

The brother of Abdyl, Sami Frasheri understanding the antagonistic path of his sibling (most probably hearing the moods of Albanian nobility members in Istanbul and the threats of the Ottoman authorities) wrote to the Sultan in September 1878 a list of requests more moderate and brought forward a unified platform posing: a) the protection of the sovereignty of the position of the sultan in these lands (always forgotten by the Albanian histori-

⁴² Ibid. 225-226.

⁴³ Vreto, *Veptra*, 133-137.

⁴⁴ Frasheri, *Historia e Lashte*, 263-267.

⁴⁵ The same Daut Boriçi is found in other documents of the time as responsible for the schools in the Albanian vilayets in 1860 as controller of their quality.

⁴⁶ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 155.

ography); b) no territorial concession to the foreign enemies; c) administration and local bureaucrats who knew Albanian (Albanian preferably); d) the creation of a regular army (considering the fact that the irregular ones of the nobles of these areas couldn't fight and arm their bands against modern Balkan forces).⁴⁷

Abdul-Hamid II, under the dire situation of the empire, and understanding that the only front of support in Rumelia were the Albanians, kept them close to himself. But he never reached to the point of giving them major concessions like autonomy, schools or Albanian-lead administration. Understanding the previous lessons with the other nationalistic movements in the Balkan, he incited the power and intra-ethnic struggle in the border areas between Slavic and Albanian natives. Under the advices of the Grand-Vizier Safvet Pasha:

1. He introduced the Albanians in the sultan guard (national figures like Isa Boletini) and closely tying his throne with this group through loyalty and religious threads.
2. In many cases he publicized the idea that an autonomy of the four Albanian-speaking vilayets would had led to the rupture of the secular "brotherhood", and the death of the Albanian nation without the Ottoman Empire.
3. In 1879 in Istanbul, he allowed the opening of the Society of Writing Albanian Letters, as sweetening of the intellectual and linguistic conflict between the two sides. After a short period the Society was closed.⁴⁸

The arrest of Abdyl Frasheri and many other leaders of the north and the bribing by the Ottoman authorities of many southern toske nobles such as Mehmed Ali Pasa Vriani as mytaserif of Berat, Neki Pasa Libohova as mytaserif of Gjirokastra, almost threw the national movement into a disarray. Different foreign authors such as G.W. Gawrych analyzing this event came with the conclusion, that the League meant different things for different actors, meanwhile the "*national awakening*" was an element not so central in their agenda.⁴⁹ Nathalie Clayer on the other side views this moment as an explosion of heterogenous interests under the threat that the Slavic states were posing in the borders.

But was the League of Prizren the starting point of the Albanian nationalism? On my opinion no. Not only the conditions were not adept for this action course, but even the actors were not prepared or willed to back up in military terms the intellectual request of the Frasheri branch. This activity of the Sultan, in addition of his absolutist form of exerting power via the Pan-Islamic Movement and the Khalif-Sultan semi-divine figure, toppled with the activity of the inner and outer forces, produced a shattering of the national movement into three groups:

1. The radical independentist group, mainly composed by western albanologs, travelers, Albanian diaspora in the West (arberesh in Italy, in the USA, etc.), who was opting for the full separation from the Ottoman Empire.
2. The undecided group, made by the upper class of the nobility of the South and Central Albania, who under the Tanzimat period and later received wealth, education and power by scaling the Ottoman hierarchy. Undecided this group opted from the autonomy alternative, to joining the Young Turks (CUP), up to the point of a joint state with Greece.

⁴⁷ *La Ligue Albanaise*, November 1878, 98-101.

⁴⁸ Clayer, *Ne fillimet*, 236-244.

⁴⁹ Gawrych, *Ottoman Administration*, 38.

3. The rising loyalist group, heavy attached to the benefits of the last period of governments of Abdul-Hamid. Enjoying the privileges of the court, or the blind eye of the government toward their semi-independent bayraks, this group didn't saw politically and economically doable the independence as a form of preserving the nation.

In the north, especially Kosovo the religious identity and the hate for the Slavs was more potent than the idealistic call for a national state. The local autonomy that was preserved for so long under the *müstesna* conditions, was pivotal in necessity. Meanwhile in these areas, this freedom meant a way to survive via illegal trades of weapons, tabaco, opium and horse smuggling, not to mention not having too many Ottomans interfering in their business. The Albanians have a saying: *You can choose everything, but your neighbor is given by god*, and the people of these areas knew this truth and accepted certain realities that were sweetened by the smell of profit. In the area of Shkodra the catholic element had also different ambitions. Their hate for the Ottomans was comparable for the Austro-Hungarians also, and in a number of cases the *Garibaldiism* feeling throw many intellectuals in alliance with the Slavic forces of Montenegro. Zef Jubani for example didn't hide his view on this regard, to the point he was excommunicated as a Jesuit priest by the organs of *Propaganda Fide* controlled by the *Kultusprotektorats* of Austro-Hungary.⁵⁰ Regionalism and the interests of the local leaders remained primary, meanwhile the national movement was delayed until the condition were ripe. In Central Albania, the priest of the Abbey of Mirdita, closely related with figure of the powerful *Bayraktar* Preng Bibe Doda, in March 1897 wrote to the Austro-Hungarian consul a memo, where he suggest to him the idea of 5 initial small states (canton alike), that would had formed the nucleus for a national state.⁵¹

In South Albania the situation was more problematic due to the interest, that local nobles had while being either local administrators or holding high positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy in Istanbul or other imperial provinces. The period of Tanzimat had laid to the local leaders a way into bureaucracy without having to clash like the previous *ayans*, meanwhile during the Hamidian period, their interests were closely linked with those of CUP movement. Among the list of intellectuals of that time, most of them had once in their life had affiliation with these movement. One interesting data comes from the analyses that Nathalie Clayer has made to the list of ulema and other bureaucrats during the Hamidian period between 1824 and 1889 from a campion of 189 individuals. The data shows that the southern or Toske ulema, where much more integrated into the high religious hierarchy, and had a high mobility outside their respective native ambient, in comparison with their northern/Gege compatriots.⁵² These numbers were not only indicative of the educational system in the South, being more vivid due to the orthodox or protestant education activity, but also to the integration that the South had in the affairs of the empire and a different perception of the world (*Weltanschauung*) also describe by the work of Namik Delvina.⁵³ Either orthodox or Bektashi, the toske members viewed primarily the solution for the Albanian case, by firstly adopting the reformist platform before going toward the independence solution. People like Ibrahim Temo, Shahin Kolonja, Bajo Topulli, Ismail Qemali, etc. were

⁵⁰ Clayer, *Ne fillimet*, 254.

⁵¹ AMAE, NS Turquie, vol. 13, Scutari 1/3/1902.

⁵² Clayer, *Ne fillimet*, 312-324.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 324-330.

educated in the imperial schools, and before opting for radical policies, they had to choose other ways in order to safe guard their carriers, families and interests.

The dichotomy orthodox-Bektashi for the Toske of the South was also important to understand, why there was this “delay” in the nationalistic movement as the traditional historiography would had putted. Analyzing the journals of the time, which mainly were published abroad, a large interest was shaded on the role of the Frasheri family members (mainly the younger brother Naim), the Albanian Muslims in the empire and their affiliation with the Bektashi order. Mainly posing the fate of the Albanians and the ones that were Muslims, the group of Istanbul (made from associates from the Society of Writing Albanian Letters) had taken into consideration the idea of putting all the Albanians under one oath (*Besa*) as Sami Frasheri had written in the past. Taking the notion of the neighboring nationalistic ideologies, where nation was equal with religion, the Muslims who were in majority would had rallied under the flag of *Bektashism*, denoting their different, tolerant and European way of following Islam.⁵⁴ Since 1878 Abdyl, the older brother had made meetings with the Baba (Dede) of the Frasheri area to organize their believers under the cause of nationalism. The uncle of the three nationalist brothers, Dalip Frasheri had translated from Persian and given to the Bektashi leaders, the book entitled *Furulit Hadiqatu-Sa'ada*, which consecutively was added to the religious texts of the sect.⁵⁵ Also during this period, a large number of marriages were made from this family with other noble family members, leading toward a strengthening of the role of the Frasheri line into the nationalistic cause. Faik Konica, the editor of one the two primary journals of the diaspora after 1878 named *Albania*, denounced the figure of Naim Frasheri, as a person who was trying to steal the national movement, by creating a church where the Christ would had been him.⁵⁶ Viewed in this prospect the accusers of the Frasheri brothers have some sort of logic into their accusations. If this plan would had worked, the tekkes of the Bektashi order would had been used massively (were used in reality) to educate and convert the different Albanian Sunni via their educational texts and alphabet fashioned by their branch in Istanbul. But in reality, these accusations were more on the line of half-truths, to hide old resentments and problems of socio-political lines such as the clash between bey class and the other social strata. Also the Bektashi leaders proved to be too inactive, either from their accusations for opium consumptions from the editor of *Drita* Shahin Kolonja⁵⁷ or the fact they were kept under constant surveillance by Hamidian authorities due to their affiliations and cooperation with Albanian members of CUP.⁵⁸ In mind must be kept that even if this scenario would had worked, the other local beys would had not accepted willingly a dissolution of their political power without negotiation toward whichever organization would had been created.

Even in the diaspora, who continuously pushed for the independentist agenda, the religious division was hard to bypass. When Ibrahim Temo went in Bucharest in 1895 after a schism with the *Young Turks* movement, he created a journal called *Drita*, which had a great impact on the national discourse of the time. There he found two groups of nationalists: one made of rich Greeks who hated the Ottomans, and one made of Albanian Muslims

⁵⁴ *Albania*, Vol C: 47-48.

⁵⁵ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 114.

⁵⁶ *Albania*, Dt. 1897.

⁵⁷ *Drita*, Nr.10 Dt. 3-16/4/ 1902, p. 1-2.

⁵⁸ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks*, 53-54.

that hated the first group for being religiously radical and related with the finances of the Rumanian cause of dual monarchy spanning across Macedonia and Albania.⁵⁹

Divided between the Sofia, Bucharest, USA, Egypt, Brussel, London and Italy, the Albanians of the diaspora were the most active toward their national requests. Between the period of 1878-1896 where formed 11 journals, which were not printed in frequent way.⁶⁰ These journals were published by young active Albanians, and in the majority of the cases they didn't profit anything from their selling, since they were given for free to their communities. This situation led, that the majority of them had a short life, due to lack of finances or fall into the pocket of interest groups with an eye for the future throne of the country (Albert Gjika/Ghica) or the nationalistic/linguistic path (Patriarch of Istanbul and the CUP). After 1896 up to 1908 the number of journals quadruplicated reaching up to 46.⁶¹ But despite this number the problem were very visible with it. The two main journals of that time *Albania* and *Drita* where printed outside the empire and sold respectively 80% and 70% of their volumes outside the empire. The newspaper of Thimi Mitko, an orthodox intellectual from Korca emigrated in Egypt, had problems like the other journals to move around the empire, due to the restrictions of the Ottoman authorities and the Greek affiliated orthodoxy.

Even if a small percentage of the published works would had arrived in the Albanian speaking territories, the nationalistic ideas on my perspective would had to pass throu two great barriers: the opposition of the local actors bought, bribed or with a different agenda (Young Turks) and primarily to bypass the fact that the majority of the population was illiterate and there was no alphabet. A small window of opportunity was given by the continuous actions of the protestant Bible Society, the contraband smuggling and reading of the books inside the perimeters of the foreign consul buildings of Austro-Hungary and Italy.

Nationalism or Proto-nationalism?

Taking into consideration the facts risen above the first phase of nationalism proposed by the Albanian historiography, my believe is that this period was more of a reaction/patriotic phase due to the problems resulting from the crises of 1877/8 in the Balkan. The true moment where nationalism on my perspective initiated, is linked with the three Austro-Hungarian conferences convened in November and December 1896 (17/11, 8/12 and 23/12/1896) for the purpose of drawing up a new policy in Albania. The participants, officials and experts agreed that actions should be improved. It was planned to radically reorganize the Albanian policy of the monarchy: in the church, school and subsidy policies of the areas of responsibility of the consulates, via the status of the *Kultusprotektorats*. However, the northern Albanian clergy sympathized with Italy despite taking regular financial subsidies from Vienna. The Albania policy up until the turn of the century, was thus unable to build up a loyal church toward the Danube monarchy despite the sums invested. Despite the fact that the Albanian bishops were fundamentally loyal to Vienna, this could not be

⁵⁹ Clayer, *Ne fillimet*, 268.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 373.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 374-374.

said for the lower clergy. In this prospect the Foreign Minister Gołuchowski decided to increase subsidies to the local church.⁶²

The conference also changed the previous teaching strategy: the teaching posts in the monarchy-funded schools could only be taken over by their own citizens, and they had to teach with Albanian language textbooks. The new school policy openly supported the strengthening of Albanian national consciousness, for the idea of Albanian nationalism did not pose any threat to the interests of the monarchy. With this step, Vienna wanted the creation of a national and pre-state consciousness, after the expected dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

In support of Albanian nationalism, Gołuchowski decided to set up new consulates on the proposal of the Consul General of Shkodra, Theodor Ippen, also in the Muslim territories, in order to make contacts with the local population and especially the nobles of Central and South Albania.⁶³

Interesting is the work of Uran Asllani, who analyzing the diaspora in Austro-Hungary up until 1912, due to the policies of 1896, was in majority (80%) catholic, mainly from Shkodra, Kosovo and Montenegro. The majority of the priests that were educated in the monarchy, went into the Franciscan Monasteries of Croatia and Bosnia and had a close experience with the Croatian nationalism (Gjergj Fishta, Shtjefen Gjecovi, etc.), and becoming hitherto conductors of these political ideas through sermons.⁶⁴ Also one of the early intellectuals educated in Vienna, Gjergj Pekmezi introduced after 1905, a Latin version of the alphabet into the process of education lead by the institutions financed by the monarchy. Not only these finances were covering large activities despite the three objectives of the conferences, but were also covering the expenses of the education of a new generation of sons of Beys and Bayraktars, preaching and propagating a closer intellectual and economic tie with the new elite. The net of scholarships went up to the South Albania and helping orthodox students, meanwhile the data show only 7 Muslims Toske, who covered by themselves their expenses, among them Eqrem Bey Vlora.⁶⁵

Under these conditions the Albanian nationalism as described by the official Albanian historiography, or the Turkish one, doesn't explain or fit none of the reasons for its latency on surfacing on the Balkan political field. Without the connotation with the problems of the empire and the ones that the local population faced, and the latency they had to show its effect by travelling from center to periphery and back ward, a maimed theory of Albanian nationalism has been served to us for the last half a century. The periodization compressing three phases: 1) 1876-78, 2) 1905-6 (surprisingly associated with the Pugachev rebellion, and without taking into account the CUP activity), 3) 1912-3 (independence period), isn't satisfactory at least, and let alone demonstrative of the events of the time. The lack of the unified intellectual and military formation, the disunity in the diaspora, the conflictual attitude of the religious and regional actors, toppled with the deficiencies of the Ottoman Empire, on any standard historical analyzes doesn't show any sign of a nationalistic movement on political level up until the first phase of 1877-8. The movement is a patriotic reaction resembling more a proto-nationalistic phase, taking into account all the facts mentioned

⁶² Csaplár-Degovics, *Österreichisch-ungarische Interessendurchsetzung*, 135.

⁶³ Ibid. 6-7.

⁶⁴ Asllani, *Studentët shqiptarë*, 22-32.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 28.

above. The Ottoman Empire was not the big monster as described from the Albanian historians (more a relegated second type imperial power), and the Albanians in the majority of the cases didn't cut their way through history with sword (but knew what pragmatism and compromises meant).

On these results, the narrative and periodization of the current historiography needs to be revised, not emphasizing only on the semi-romantic narrative, but on data and facts. Also a greater focus must be implemented on the role of the Austro-Hungary, especially on her activity in the country after 1896, and how it was entangled with the activity of other national figures. The role of the Danube Monarchy is essential on my opinion, not only to ascertain the periodization, but also on how the course of action of the Albanian nationalism was paved (alphabet reform, independence, etc.).

Conclusions

My aim was to show a visible link between nationalism and the failure of the Ottoman Empire to modernize in a Weberian prospect. Meanwhile the majority of the works tend to fall into classic description of the people and their acts, and little interest is shown into the ambience that forges these people. The process that for more than one century failed to be implemented into the empire left a scar into the institutions and the consciousness of the different ethnicities of the empire. And under this long and sickening wait, different groups decided to act according to their agenda, meanwhile others were forced to react to the changes imposed by others. In the majority of cases nationalism was seen as the saving anchor for these ethnicities. A number of factors had a contribution on how quick or late did one ethnic group implement nationalism as an exit point: the place where their diaspora was settled and how rich it was the flux of political ideas that they brought into their native places, a historical consciousness reflected by an idolized early form of state and the presence of a language and the influence of the other Great Powers in the region.

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L'héritage ottoman en Albanie

L'objectif de notre communication est d'analyser l'héritage du règlement ottoman dans les quatre *vilayets* albanophones et plus tard en Albanie indépendante nouvellement formée sous l'égide des grandes puissances et de leurs décisions de Londres de 1913. La question qui se pose est la suivante : quel est l'héritage ottoman en Albanie ? L'islamisation de la société, des minarets, le goût commun des plats, les habitudes communes, le sentiment de faire partie de cette méso-région, comme l'a dûment décrit Jenő Szűcs et comme Maria

Teodorova l'a nommé plutôt imaginaire que réel, ou l'héritage ottoman est « sang, feux et guerre », comme il est proposé par l'histoire nationale et officielle ?

Notre communication rejette ces arguments que nous trouvons trop accablants et aveuglants envers une analyse complète de l'héritage ottoman, non seulement en Albanie mais dans les Balkans. Notre communication est essentiellement axée sur la ligne directe qui relie des tentatives de modernisation des sultans du Bas-Empire, les difficultés auxquelles il fallait faire face, la question de savoir comment et quand ces problèmes se sont-ils manifestés sur les territoires albanophones et leur lien avec le nationalisme. À partir de quel moment cet héritage a-t-il été vu comme trop oriental, rétrogradé et non plus accepté par les groupes ethniques de l'empire et surtout par des Albanais qui étaient considérés comme grands bénéficiaires des offices du *divan* ottoman et éternellement ingrats en face de leurs « Frères turcs » ? Notre communication interpelle le débat sans fin entre la nouvelle vague et l'ancienne conception des historiens si le nationalisme avait été la cause ou le résultat de l'histoire formée et sans cesse tumultueuse de cette région d'Europe. L'objectif de notre analyse s'étend sur les événements d'un siècle et entre le centre de l'empire (Istanbul) et une petite partie périphérique (Albanie).