

The Trajectory of the Albanian Historiography: Between the Austrian Albanologie (Volkskunde) and the Communist Albanologie (National-Stalinism/Etnographiya)

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to analyze the trajectory of the Albanian historiography before and during communism. After the fall of the communist regime in 1991, the related studies on this subject were focused on the main narratives proposed by this historiography, with a critical eye by the German-speaking community of researchers. In this regard, little effort has been put to analyze the context – scientific and political – how these two closely resembling narratives were created. The paper tries to show a clear evolutionary path of the Albanian Historiography initiated by the actions of the *Ballhausplatz* in the last decade of the century XIX, as part of the literary propaganda towards the Albanians, up to the adoptions and distortions of the same teachings by the communist historians half a century later. Such evolution passed through two major steps: the transition from the scientific tradition of *Volkskunde als Volksgeschichte* to its sibling version of Soviet *Etnographiya*; and further on to the implementation of the historiographic archetype work of the Hungarian historian Lajos Thallóczy in the new textbooks by the Albanian communist historians.

Keywords: Albania, Albanologie, historiography, Volkskunde, National-Stalinism, South East Europe

Roots of the Albanian Historiographical Problems

In an interview held in May 2020, the Albanian philosopher Artan Fuga posed his thesis that *Albanologie* as an anthropological branch of *Balkanologie* didn't exist.¹ His thesis was based on the idea, that the Albanians as likely other nations, belonged to the same social sphere of public interests and their history was part of the same route that other nations had taken before. In this regard, the *compartmentalization* and *nationalization* of knowledge were seen as a phenomenon, that had been surpassed by the political and historical events.

This notion, the *non-existence of Albanologie* has generally gained terrain in the last decade, especially as a counter-idea toward the criticism, that the Albanian communist historiography and academism has faced. Seen primarily as a fusion between internal nationalism and external revolutionary zeal, the criticism toward the communist academism

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7HoQT1oeTc>

was conducted by the works of the German-speaking researchers, who were tightly tied up with the studies of archeology, ethnography, history and linguistic of the Albanians. Considered primarily as the founders of *Albanologie* as a scientific branch, the German-speaking researchers – undivided up until 1960's between Austrian or Germans – studied the Albanians under the thematic of *Volkskunde Studium* (folklore study).

This tradition had its own scientific roots in the 1830's and was later emphasized after the Unification of Germany in 1871 when nationalism became an important tool in order to unify the fragmented *Landes* for the interests of the Prussian state. In this context, the German *Volkskunde* gained socio-political significance and became an integral part of German historicism.² Eventually, the tradition of *Volkskunde* took shape in an environment (economically, politically, culturally and socially) fueled by the romantic and nationalistic resentment of the past. This led the German intellectual elites to consider Romantic nationalism a viable strategy of overcoming the historical problems their group had faced before.³ As a nationalist ideology, Romanticism started with German national resentment giving birth to Pan-Germanism. In this context, the study of the German culture of its people (*Volkskultur*) gained momentum, and *Volkskunde* as discipline was institutionalized at the same time as the national movement and state-building. The wish to stand apart from the neighboring countries and the aggressive promotion of claims to civilizational superiority and antiquity were and still are, the characterizing features of studies in the *Volkskunde* tradition.⁴

At the same degree as *Volkskunde* was entangled with the unifying and legalizing “scientific thesis” of German Autochthony and cultural superiority, the academic established *Völkerkunde* (ethnology) caught up the pace with the imperial interest of the Prussian state, as a rising imperial power and its colonial ambition overseas.⁵ The newly academic branch and its researchers highly objectified the exoticism of the traveler's reports, the folkloric displays in museums and ethnological expeditions (*Völkerschauen*) of the newly coming colonizers.⁶ Both *Völkerkunde* and *Volkskunde* derived from a historicist and museum-oriented tradition in which, *Völkerkunde* dealt with the history of the culture of external others and *Volkskunde* with the historical inner others of the national cultural tradition.⁷ In the same amount, but in different forms, these two trends of German academia contributed to the 19th and 20th century to create the image of the “Other”, the “non-European”, the

² A. Gingrich, *The German-Speaking Countries – Ruptures, Schools, and Nontraditions*, 77.

³ L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, 360.

⁴ According to Doja: *Turned into a weapon of politics and national pride, the task of these studies became to enforce identity construction by providing the proof of national cultural unity over heterogeneous local communities. They located, with varying degrees of success, the nation's essential continuity from antiquity to the present. They insisted on the nation's superiority in autochthony and uniqueness over rival neighboring cultures as an indispensable element for a prestigious image of national identity. They became a nation-building discipline because they provided cultural and historic evidence of German existence, distinction, prestige and legitimacy as a confirmation of “scientific” ideals.* A. Doja, *The Beautiful Blue Danube and the Accursed Black Mountain Wreath*, 320.

⁵ A. Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*, 5–10.

⁶ H. G. Penny and M. Bunzl (eds.), *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire*, 5.

⁷ A. Doja, *From the German-speaking point of view: Unholy Empire, Balkanism, and the culture circle particularism of Albanian studies*, 293.

“*uncivilized one*”. In Germany, Austria and many countries of the Central and Eastern Europe started to develop theories of origins, in which human “mental poverty” (*Ideenarmut*) of some regions or people could have been improved, due to the influence of some local “civilizing centers” (*Kulturkreise*) and their “civilized people” (*Kulturvölker*). In this regard, the Germanic cultural diffusionism becomes an important and speculative center of the history of hierarchical cultural distribution.

Undoubtedly the German and Austrian folkloric studies were exceptional competitors and adversaries in the scientific spectrum of this period, funding anthropological expeditions, publishing respectable periodicals and having a continuous presence in international conferences.⁸ Highly-funded by the state and non-involved philanthropists, the Germanic scientific community became a carrier of state-propagated *Volkskultur* and without a doubt to the idea of cultural superiority over certain areas viewed as primary colonial interests. In this prospect, the link between state (subject) – colonialism (policy) – academia (vessel) – scientific expeditions (primary contact), was established and informally accepted by both sides. The most evident example of this trend was voiced by the testimony of Hans von Wangenheim, the German ambassador in Constantinople in 1902:

*“The idea of Germany's gradual spiritual conquest (geistige Eroberung) of Asia Minor is thoroughly sound and capable of development. The interim intellectual goals already pursued, or to be pursued by our schools, our doctors, and our archaeologists could very well become, in the course of time, the crystallization point onto which German economic and colonizing undertakings are grafted. The economic will follow the intellectual conquest as a natural result, and then these two diffused phases will naturally be followed by the third stage, that of political exploitation (Verwertung) and consolidation of the cultural values we have created.”*⁹

In the colonial race, the Germans and Austrians were more heterogeneous and less thorough than their French and British colleagues, but respectively the researchers of *Völkerkunde* benefited much more from the colonial approach of their own authorities. Up until 1918, even during the period of World War I, the imperial armies of Germany and Austria-Hungary had in their officer corps a high number of researchers as reserve officers, who actively conducted studies in different theaters of war. (e.g., Haberlandt, Veith, Prachniker, etc.)¹⁰ This research activity was highly supported by the academic institutions – the Academy of Science of Vienna supported a collective ethnographic expedition in the Balkans as a new military-controlled area in 1917 – where new ethnographic and linguistic data could be gathered from territories and populations, that were inaccessible before. Therefore, it's hard to divide the goals of *Volkskunde Studium* researchers from the ones of the authorities (mainly military) controlling the newly conquest territories, but it was obvious that both goals of the two groups were in symbiosis.

⁸ H. G. Penny and M. Bunzl (eds.), *Worldly Provincialism...*, 5.

⁹ S. Marchand, *Orientalism as Kulturpolitik: German Archeology and Cultural Imperialism in Asia Minor*, 318.

¹⁰ Ch. Marchetti, *Austro-Hungarian Volkskunde at War: Scientists on Ethnographic Mission in World War I*, 207–230.

Austria-Hungary's case was different in many prospects from its German sibling. In the approach toward the imperialistic goal, the folkloric studies were highly supported by the authorities, especially the *Ballhausplatz* (synonym for the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry) as a sign of political ambition mixed with scientific curiosity, as praxis for the *Kulturpolitik of Knowledge*. However, the Austrian folkloric studies were developed in a different context than the German side, who implemented the simplified historiographic equations of *Völkerkunde* with colonialism and *Volkskunde* with nationalism.¹¹ While the Austrian *Völkerkunde* was less racial in stereotypes and less prone to simplifications of *Orientalism* than its German counterpart, *Volkskunde* was undoubtedly impossible to be applied in the context of nationalism in the Habsburg Monarchy. This impossibility derived from the heterogeneous political and ideological perception, that different communities in local and central position had about nationality, and its relation with the empire – concept such as tribalism, federalism, confederation, independence, etc.

What became obvious, was the fact that Vienna had to find a solution and pacification tool, both politically and scientifically for the question of nationality, especially after the radiating concepts of the German *Volkskunde* had become increasingly appealing for the ethnic groups of the empire. In the 19th century, the scientific and political institutions launched a new concept of *Volkskunde*, which highlighted the cultural and ethnic diversity as a glue for the mosaic of the empire. The foundation of this idea derived from the notion, that the ethnic groups in the empire were all part of the same Indo-European or Indo-Germanic race. Their respective languages despite their phonetic and grammatical diversities, belonged to the same language family branch, the Indo-Germanic one. In this regard, the roots of the “*real people*”, both linguistically and ethnically were the same, and only a thin layer of diversity served as a dividing and antagonizing characteristic for the different groups in Austria-Hungary. The rule of a generous and empathic monarch (more likely resembling the idea of Plato about the *philosopher-king*) and a centralized government would have secured, that these diversities wouldn't serve as dividing elements, but as unifying and enriching ones. In this context, the Herder's concept of humanity *Einheit durch Vielfalt* (unity through diversity), became the essence for the existence of the empire and for the different groups inside of it. Thus, the Austrian *Volkskunde* had an appealing approach as more liberal in nature, less nationalistic and more intercultural than her German counterpart.¹²

If the later one had required the usage of *Volkskunde* for the nationalistic agenda and *Völkerkunde* counterpart for the imperialistic goals, the Austrians found necessity on using only *Volkskunde*. In it were fused the tools of integration (*unity through diversity*) and also the ones for imperialistic expansion through cultural diversity (*Kulturkreise und Kulturvölker*). Quite naturally the imperialistic interests of the empire were projected in the near vicinity borders (*imperium limes*) of the Dual Monarchy, instead of oversea as the French and British Empires had previously done over their rule in Asia and Africa.¹³ The prospect of an imminent crumbling Ottoman rule in the Balkans, made the area a primary zone for

¹¹ A. Doja, *From the German-speaking point of view...*, 295.

¹² *Ibid.* 296.

¹³ W. Sauer, *Habsburg Colonial: Austria-Hungary's Role in European Overseas Expansion Reconsidered*, 5–23.

further expansionism, which was countered by the Russian fueled Pan-Slavism and Italian imperialistic rivalry.

In the Balkans were found the primary interests for the *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* approach: an exotic area, ready to be discovered and westernized, to be studied and culturally elevated from the previous *oriental rule*. The nominal governance over Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 and later on the annexation in 1908, opened new possibilities for the military authorities and also for the academic institutions. Above all, the Austrian researchers benefited the most from the imperial interests over these areas. They advocated successfully an agenda for greater influence and financial subsidies from the central government, with the premise, that more studies would have been of greater importance for the military, economic and political interests of the Monarchy. Thus, in 1897 it was founded the Balkan Commission (*Balkankommission*)¹⁴ in the Austrian Imperial Academy of Vienna, with the main purpose of “*better understanding the area*” for the interest of the empire and furthermore creating a network of collaborating researchers.¹⁵ In 1908 in Sarajevo it was created the Balkan Research Institute (*Institut für Balkanforschung*) with director, the head of the Sarajevo museum Carl Patsch. Later on, following the example of the Austrian colleagues, in 1914 it was founded a second Balkan Commission in the Hungarian Academy of Science.¹⁶ Furthermore, in 1916 the Hungarian Academy doubled the efforts while creating the Orient Commission, with the research subject Asia Minor, Northern Asia and the Balkans.¹⁷ It was obvious, that the political goals of the monarchy for the area were syntonized with the booming of publications of periodicals and scientific monographies, especially to counter the Italian and Russian influence. This aggressive scientific approach was considered as a tendency to monopolize and legitimize their role in the Southeast European studies, commonly labeled by the German-speaking researchers as *Balkanologie*. According to Albert Doja:

“The institutionalized of this academic formation considered Southeast Europe as an entity. It was influenced by the discursive conjunction of nationalism and linguistics and was dominated by philological approaches. The so-called “Balkanologists” were mainly concerned with ethnolinguistics and historical linguistics, as Southeast European languages were still in a process of standardization along a form of linguistic nation-building. Additionally, through the de-hierarchization of culture in

¹⁴ Known as “*Kommission für die historisch-archäologische und philologisch-ethnographische Durchforschung der Balkanhalbinsel*”, the commission was formed on 03/02/1897 with members: Vatroslav Jagić, Konstantin Jireček, Paul Kretschmer, Wilhelm Meyer-Lübke, Joseph von Karabacek, Eugen Bormann, Benjamin von Kállay, Hugo Schuchardt, Maximilian Lambertz, Franz Seiner, Gjergj Pekmezi etc. K. Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft...*, 70–71.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 70.

¹⁶ The members of this commission were: Oszkár Asbóth, Ignác Goldziher, Sándor Kegll, Ignác Kunos, János Melich, Dezső Csánki, Jenő Gaál, Antal Hodinka, Sándor Matlekovics, Lajos Thalóczy, Mór Déchy, Géza Horváth, Lajos Lóczy, Ferenc Schafarzik, János Tuzson and in 1916 Ferenc Nopcsa joined also. K. Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft...*, 81.

¹⁷ The members of this commission were: Oszkár Asbóth, Ignác Goldziher, Sándor Kegll, Dezső Csánki, Jenő Gaál, Antal Hodinka, Sándor Matlekovics, Géza Horváth, Ferenc Schafarzik, János Tuzson, Gusztáv Heinrich, Pál Teleki, Árpád Degen, Mihály Lenhossék and Ferenc Nopcsa. K. Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft...*, 82.

romantic nationalism, folk literature and customs became a legitimate subject of academic research, and in the late 1800's Volkskunde had become the major topical area of Balkanologie."¹⁸

The rising focus over the area as a political entity, was reflected later on with a more compelling study of the different fragments forming it. In this prospect, Austria-Hungary began to show greater political interest over the problems of the Albanian population. Especially in the secret meetings held in 1896 in the *Ballhausplatz*, was produced an action plan named "*Memorandum über Albanien*", which pointed out a further deterioration of the Ottoman rule in the area. If this scenario manifested, the power void in the peninsula would have been filled by the presence of other antagonizing powers such as Italy and the Russian Empire, unless the Austrians wouldn't react first. Exploiting the privileges of *Kultusprotektorat* as a formal shield to hide their political activity, the imperial authorities launched a massive action plan – beyond their domain among the catholic Albanians – including school financing and diplomatic non-orthodox measures. Such activity, using the *Kultusprotektorat*, alongside the massive educational financing and the study of the Albanians – their language, history and culture – under the *Volkskunde* tradition, generated two main consequences for both sides. Among the Albanians started to propagate a general and superficial perception, that Austria-Hungary was one of the (if not, the main) supporter(s), if the Ottoman rule would have crumbled.¹⁹ On the other hand, the intensification of Austrian-Albanian relations – in the fields of politics, commerce, culture and research – would have secured and strengthened the political, economic and cultural influence of the Monarchy over the country, in the form of informal imperialism based on structural violence.²⁰ Yet, the political interest and the scientific appeal regarding the Albanians was short-tempered and under the will of the diplomatic orientations of the Imperial authorities. Especially during the period of Count Aehrenthal as the Foreign Minister, the policy of *pénétration pacifique* in the Balkans created the premises for pacification and safeguarding of the status quo with the Ottoman authorities. Therefore, this led toward a hushing of the open political and cultural support for them. Despite these diplomatic efforts to seize the Balkans via economic and political solutions, the bordering new states became more hostile toward the

¹⁸ A. Doja, *The Beautiful Blue Danube and ...*, 323.

¹⁹ In 1896 the Albanian nobleman Surya (alb. Syrja) Bey Vlora, the brother of the previous Ottoman Grand vizier Ferit Bey, wrote a Memorandum addressed to the Ministerium des Äußern. In his memo, Surya Bey posed the view that the rule of the Ottomans would fall soon in the Balkans and the Albanians needed to seek the support of a new Great Power to help them elevate as a nation. Part from his memo: "*We the Albanians, know very well that sooner or later the Turkish rule in Europe will end. The Epirotes will be taken by Greece, the Bulgarians as well from Bulgaria and the Serbians will go to Serbia or Montenegro. What about us, the Albanians, what it will happen? As I know well the soul of my fellow Albanian patriots, we will be favorized if we fall under the protectorate of Austria-Hungary, through the creation of an autonomous province. Italy has never been popular among us, despite the propaganda of some priests and Italian diplomats in Albania. If we as Muslim must be integrated under a foreign government, because for the moment we do not possess the necessary maturity to establish an independent Albania, we prefer Austria-Hungary over any other foreign power. Even the lowest strata of our people know until what point the Austro-Hungarian government respects our religions and customs.*" HHStA, PA I, k. 473, Fol. 173.

²⁰ K. Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft...*, 20–27, 39–42.

Monarchy. Only after the two Balkan Wars and the period of the First World War, while the imperial armies had a massive control over a large portion of the Balkans, the academic and institutional interest would have risen again.

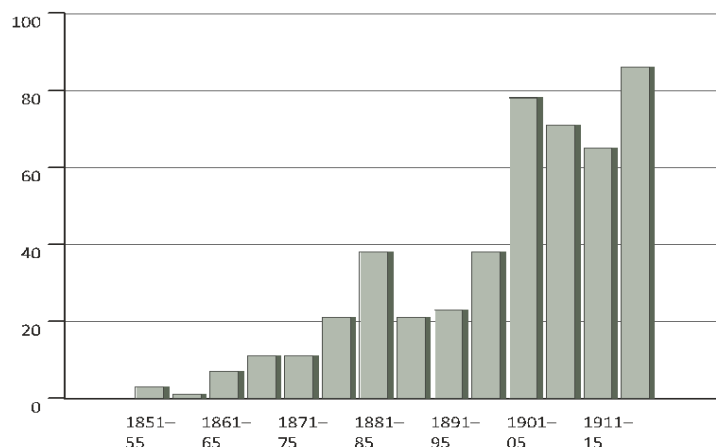


Fig.1 Diagram of Publications of the Austria-Hungarian Albanologie²¹

Despite the fluidity of diplomacy, the Prussian and Austro-Hungarian researchers would manifest an increasing interest toward the Albanians. Following the *Volkskunde* tradition, they would elaborate an ethno-linguistic evolutionary theory along with a historical autochthonous thesis. Among their main interest were: 1) the research of the oral customary activity and the tribal organization (exotic and generalizing depiction of a small portion of the population in Northern Albania); 2) the ethnogenesis of the Albanians from the Illyrians, passing many stages of hybridization due to Hellenization, Romanization, Slavicization and Islamization processes up to the present day (e.g. Thallóczy).²² A high number of these researchers gained recognition as founders of the Albanian studies, commonly known as *Albanologie* and with a visible influence from *Volkskunde*. The Austrian researcher Kurt Gostentschnigg would have pointed out the evolution of *Albanologie*, as a scientific branch of *Balkanologie* into two phases. The first period dating up to 1850's, would have seen the researchers (mainly travelers or imperial officials) studying and proposing theories as basically prescientific, due to the lack of previous qualitative works and the absence of a scientific methodology. After the 1850's up to 1918, the second phase would have seen a refinement of the theoretical thesis, manifested into the processes of individualization, differentiation and subcategorization of different theories.²³ Despite such refinement, a large portion of the works would have encountered archetypic generalizing descriptions, such as: a primitive society, orally customary driven, archaic, tribal and tribalism, blood vengeance, etc. As a counterpart the terms: valiant warriors, pure and primitively innocent, spartan life,

²¹ Ibid. 765.

²² L. von Thallóczy, *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen* (Vol. I-II).

²³ K. Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft...*, 64–65.

hospitality, honor etc.; would serve as positive characteristics for the Albanians. As accepted by many modern German-speaking scholars (e.g., Gruber 1998; Kaser 2002; Marchetti 2013; Gostentschnigg 2017), it was obvious that's such depictions would create a *Balkanized* and *Orientalized* description of the natives, countered by the cultural and mental differentiation of the foreign observers or researchers. Also, this image served as a generalizing characteristic for the entire population, despite the fact that the majority of the travelogues and ethnographic expeditions were conducted in Northern Albania. The area, covered by the umbrella of the *Kultusprotektorat* (during the Ottoman rule) or the Imperial Armies (1916–1918) was the main research spot for the activity of the *Albanologists*.

As the peninsula and the country would have served as a *par excellence* model of fusion between the field of politics and science, the dual nature of the work of the individual actors was the actual testimony of this model on the ground. The publications of the German traveling diplomat George von Hahn, the ethnographic descriptions of the counsel Theodor A. Ippen, the travelogues of the spy Ferenc Nopcsa, or the scientific works of the politician Lajos Thallóczy showed, in general, a mixture of a variable amateurism/academism along the lines of the political and economic objectives to be pursued. Especially the figure of Lajos Thallóczy is important for the moment, in order to highlight the link, that stands between the problems of the Albanian Historiography before 1945, the Austria-Hungarian tradition of *Volkskunde* and the perceived lack of imperialistic goals from the Monarchy during the invasion period of 1916–1918.

Born under the German name Ludvig Benedek Strommer in 1857, and later changed into Lajos Thallóczy (from the Croatian-Hungarian nobility family of Talovac/Thallóczy), was one of the best connoisseurs of the Balkans. Educated in history, economy and law, he served in multiple positions inside the monarchy, either as a state functionary (official in the Hungarian State Museum and State archives, Head of the Viennese court archives of the K.u.K Ministry of Finance and civil governor of MGG Serbia during WWI) or as an academician (a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; professor of Hungarian history and public law in the Theresianum, in the Consular Academy and in the Budapest University).²⁴ In this prospect, he was one of the few figures in the Monarchy, that had access and altogether understood, how both spheres of the Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy worked and what its plans for the Balkans were. What is not generally known, is the fact that Thallóczy had also a past as a secret agent. In 1883 he traveled in North Albania, under the alias “Lemaic”²⁵ in order to lead the northern tribes toward an uprising. According to the archival data, the uprisings would have served as a diversion for the imperial military forces to an-

²⁴ G. Stadtmüller, *Lajos von Thallóczy*, 294–296.

²⁵ According to the documents, Thallóczy traveled in Northern Albania, disguised as a trade traveler, in order to find out the true feelings of the highlanders regarding the Ottoman authorities. This typical network of “*business correspondents*”, independent and secret since the 1870’s, was subordinate to the Hungarian Ministry of Commerce. Its well-trained members dealt not only with economic issues, but also with information gathering and the expansion of international relations. The most talented correspondent was none other than Thallóczy, who officially worked as a travel correspondent for the newspaper Pesti Napló (*Daily Pest*). But unofficially the agent Lemaic kept sending primarily, secret political and economic reports to the Hungarian Minister of Commerce, Baron Gábor Kemény. K. Csaplár-Degovics and L. Jusufi, *The birth of the first Albanian-Hungarian dictionary*, 89.

nex the territories of Bosnia-Hercegovina.²⁶ Nonetheless, the action was conducted without notifying firstly the diplomatic Austro-Hungarian colleagues. In a precarious and embarrassing position, the General Consul in Shkodra Lippich, had to bargain a hard truce between the Ottoman authorities, that were organizing a punitive campaign in the mountainous area near Shkodra, and the tribes in order to lay down their weapons. The failed uprising and the discovery of Thallóczy as a spy, had no clear repercussion for him due to his friendship and previous work as the personal secretary for the powerful governor of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Benjamin Kállay (in Hungarian Béni Kállay).

Once again Thallóczy would have been involved in the Albanian matters, on the onset of the three secret conferences of 1896 in *Ballhausplatz*, but this time in order to give his expertise as a historian. Despite the irregular diplomatic activity and the cultural subsidies, the “*Aktionplan*” of 1896 necessitated a scientific backing, especially one directed toward the Albanians, in order to create the link between their rising nationalism pointed toward the Slavic threat and the imperial objectives of the Monarchy. Due to its secretive nature, the “*Aktionplan*” was divulged to a small number of experts outside the participants for further suggestions or corrections. Among them was the consul Theodor A. Ippen, who in 1897 had been appointed as General Consul in Shkodra. On his view, considering the specific Albanian circumstances, the only way to create a favorable interest for the national movement and its literary-cultural activity among the natives, was the publications of interesting books in Albanian.²⁷ Among the first suggestions for publications in Albanian, dating 18th of May 1897, was the production of an Austrian version of the “History of Albania” (*Geschichte Albanien*).²⁸

The productions of such a work would have secured two main advantages for the Monarchy. Firstly, among the Albanians would have risen a sense of national awareness, due to link with the historical past, especially by highlighting periods such as the one of Skanderbeg²⁹. Yet, it was necessary not to alienate the Muslim Albanians and the Ottoman authorities and therefore a balanced, non-conflictual language and set of events was proposed, pointing out the autochthonous nature of the natives and the annexionism tendencies of the Christian neighboring states. Secondly, the writing of the book in Albanian was seen as a stepping stone for a unified orthography for the Albanian language.³⁰ For such a task, the

²⁶ K. Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft...*, 343–344.

²⁷ R. Beluli (ed.), *Ludwig von Thallóczy: Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet* (third edition), 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 25–26.

³⁰ In a report dating 31/01/1898, the vice-consul in Pristina Rappaport presented to the authorities a study regarding the different versions of the Albanian alphabet, in the context of the absence of a unified version. His report along with tables of content counted 17 different versions of the alphabet, but the panorama in the words of the diplomat was incomplete since at least 20 different methods of transcription were in circulation. The majority of the versions of the Albanian alphabet had symbols and orthographic combinations that were used by the Slavs, Greeks, and Italians. In this context, the vice-consul advised the authorities in the Ballhausplatz, that a correct written alphabet was not a *sine qua non* for the creation of an Albanian unified alphabet. In his view, the final version should have been a compromise between the two religious’ communities, the Christians and the Muslims, and with a logical and practical easiness to be learned and used by the natives. T. Toleva, *Influenca e Perandorisë Austro-Hungareze në ndërtimin e kombit shqiptar 1896-1908*, 254–256.

General Consul of Shkodra, Ippen proposed the historian Lajos Thallóczy, as an informed researcher of the Balkan History and its people. He was to be joined in this task by the Albanian Catholic merchant Zef Curani (Shtjefën Curani, Stephan Zurani), who was under the service of the K.u.K. Ministry of Finance. In this context, it is not sure if this suggestion was done through the mediation of Kállay, due to the acrid impressions his failed uprising of 1883 had created among the Habsburg diplomats, or if it was the original suggestion of Ippen. Even more uncertain is the fact, if Curani was a simple helper in the Albanian linguistic matters or a keen observer for the activity of the Hungarian historian in service of the authorities.³¹

A couple of months later, the historical book was ready for printing. On 12/02/1898 Thallóczy wrote of its completion firstly to his friend and mentor Benjamin Kállay, which subsequently would have informed the foreign minister Goluchowski. Secretly the book was printed in 500 copies in the Viennese printing house “Adolf Holzhausen”, with the title *T’nnolonat e Scóypniis prei gni Gheghet éi don vënnin e vet* (Albanian Stories from a Ghege who loves his country). Counting 143 pages of format 19x13 cm, the anonymous work had the falsified printing location *Skenderie* and no printing house information. The type of paper and the typographic formats of its printing, were the same ones used in the oriental printing houses, with the purpose of misleading the Ottoman authorities to think, that the book was printed in Alexandria or in Shkodra (in Turkish *Iskenderiye*). From the data produced by the work of the Albanian researcher Raim Beluli, a part of the costs (around 100 Gulden) was paid to Curani for his translation in Albanian.³² The book, in the same secretive way that was printed, would have been smuggled to a list of trusted Albanian figures and furthermore initiating one of the programmed steps of the literary propaganda of the Austro-Hungarian officials.

With a simple language similar to other Albanian writers of the time such as Pashko Vasa³³ and Naim Frashëri³⁴, the book became one of the most popular literary works among

³¹ The collaboration between the two individuals in questions would have continued not only regarding the publication of the historical book, but at the same time for the production of an Albanian newspaper published in 500 copies named “Zani I Scyptarit” (*The Voice of the Albanian*), in the Albanian colony of Borgo Erizzo in Dalmatia. Later on, in 1899 they collaborated once more for the production and translation in Albanian of an ABC book named “Selteri I par për shkollat filltare t’ Shqypniis” (*First ABC book for the elementary schools in Albania*).

³² R. Beluli (ed.), *Ludwig von Thallóczy...*, 42.

³³ Pashko Vasa (1825–1892) was an Albanian publicist, writer, linguist and political figure for the Albanian National Movement, additionally to his career as high Ottoman Official (Administrator of Edirne vilayet and Governor of Lebanon). Participant of the League of Prizren in 1878 and of the Society for the Publication of Albanian Writings in Constantinople in 1879, he advocated the political rights of the Albanian Nation and their ability to write their own language (co-proposal of the Latin version alphabet). Among the most important works of him was the poem “O moj Shqypni” (*Oh Albania*), from where one of the main ideas/quotes of the Albanian National Movement would have arisen: “Feja e Shqiptarit asht Shqiptaria!” (*The Albanian's faith is Albanianism!*)

³⁴ Naim Frashëri (1846–1900) was an Albanian poet, historian, translator, lawyer and Ottoman civil official. Brother of Abdyl and Sami Frashëri, he was involved in the Albanian Movement and became the literary founder of the Albanian Literature, with the epithet given by the communist regime as “national poet of Albania”. Among the most influential works of him, was the poem “O malet e Shqipërisë” (*Oh Mountains of Albania*), from where the national motto of Albania came to be: “Ti

the supporters of the national movements. Highly influenced by the *Volkskunde* tradition, the book presented an *ethnogenesis and continuum theory* for the Albanians in the Balkans, as one of the oldest ethnic groups (location: *Illyria – Arbëri – Shqipëri/Shqypni* and its people: *Illyrians – Arbanas/Arbër – Shqyptar*). The choice of words was accurate and understandable, with the purpose of creating a *unity feeling* among the Christian and Muslim readers. Most of the historical descriptions would had started in 1st plural person (*our people, our ancestors, our country*), later to be followed with *common values, myths and virtues* (*bravery, formidable warriors, love of freedom, the heart of the Albanian* etc.). Foremost, the book gave for the first time to the readers a *periodization* of the Albanian history, with a keen eye to the autochthonous thesis and their relations with Western World. In this frame, special importance was given to the links between the Albanian and Hungarian history (presence of the Illyrians in the Carpathian Basin, campaigns of Ludwig I against Naples, Johann Hunyadi and Matthias Corvinus fights against the Ottomans). This form of periodization was purposely chosen in order to show to the readers a *sense of belonging to the West* and foremost, a *possible and trustable alliance with Austria-Hungary*. Beside the ancient and medieval period, the Ottoman rule was described with an emphasis to the freedom of movement (northern catholic tribes) and the rise of the Albanians in the Ottoman military and political elite. Figure such as Ali Pascha Tepelena or the Bushatlli family in Shkodra were described as Muslim Albanians, but not as Ottomans (e.g., *Ali t'onë* – “our Ali”).

“Whoever reads the stories of our Albania (and) considers himself as Albanian, should feel in his veins flowing the same blood, that had stood for thousands of years fighting. We shall tell to our children, that the men of Albania have spilled their blood like a river, to keep our land whole (unified), with honor and for the sake of those who speak our language... We have no other desire, then see our country honored among friends (as equal); only to see our country as good as others: simply put, we want to avoid evil and seek goodness where it is. We don't want to hurt anyone and we don't resent anyone, but we seek and desire what belongs to us, even if the entire world would say no. Albanians! Love each other and then freedom will really come.”³⁵

A fragment from the epilogue of the book “T nnołunat e Scëqypniis prei gni Gheghet çí don vënnin e vet”, written by Lajos Thallóczy between 1897–1898

Lastly, a great deal of work was put into the creation of *the cult of Skanderbeg*. This step was important not only in a unifying sense, but also as one of the few demonstrative historical moments of state formation from the Albanians: Skanderbeg as the creator of a medieval and independent Albania, as the builder of the “modern” state, as a representative of European culture, as Europe’s last defensive bastion against the Ottomans.³⁶ His figure was

Shqipëri, më jep nder, më jep emrin Shqipëtar!” (*You, Albania, give me honor, give me the name Albanian!*).

³⁵ R. Beluli (ed.), *Ludwig von Thallóczy...*, 202–203.

³⁶ K. Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft...*, 395.

even more important due to the conversion of an aged Skanderbeg to Catholicism, so that all four religions (Sunnis, Bektashi, Orthodox and Catholics) could identify with him.



Fig. 2 Cover of the Historical Book written by Lajos Thallóczy. In the center is a lithography of the Albanian National Hero, Skanderbeg with French-style attire³⁷

The work of Thallóczy, despite the propagandistic nature of it, was the first publication of a general history of the Albanians, and hitherto creating the archetype model how the Albanian history should be written.³⁸ The book would have remained over the next 4 decades without the authorship of the Hungarian historian, and later in 1939 republished under the name of his co-editor, Zef Curani. Considering the fact that the Monarchy had collapsed two decades earlier and Thallóczy had no voice over it (died in a train accident in 1916, returning from Serbia to Hungary for the funerary ceremony of the late Emperor Francis

³⁷ Ibid. 3.

³⁸ Other historic accounts in the past such as the “*Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbeg Epirotarum Principis*” (*History of the life and deeds of the Epirus Prince Skanderbeg*) by Marin Barletius (printed between 1508–1510) or the poem of Naim Frashëri “*Histori e Skënderbeut*” (*History of Skanderbeg*) recalled the life of the Albanian National Hero. In this context there was an existing writing tradition of Albanian historiography, nevertheless it was personalized similarly to chronicles of the royal courts of Europe, and not to the entirety of the Albanian nation.

Joseph), it is not sure if Zurani took willingly advantage by claiming the authorship of the book. Nevertheless, the Albanian Historiography before and during communism, would have incorporated the same methodological, thematic and historical consciousness lessons as of its own, not taking into account the authorship (*Thallóczy's*), context (*imperial literary propaganda*) and tradition (*Austrian Volkskunde*) upon which it was produced.

Albanian Communist Historiography: Fusion between National-Stalinism, *Etnografiya* and *Thallóczy's Volkskunde*

The end of the Second World War saw the rise to power in 1944 Albania, of the Communist Party led by the “iron fist dictator” Enver Hoxha.³⁹ Considered as one of the most brutal regimes among the communist countries, the rule of Hoxha would extend until his death in 1985. No stranger to the usage of the security apparatus as a tool of fear and punishment, the regime would execute even its inner circle members⁴⁰, with the premise of creating a *top-down* narrative of legitimation. In many regards, such endeavor – the quest of legitimacy and consolidation of power – was the main driving force not only for the Albanian case, but also for the majority of the communist regimes. Beside shows of political strength, the bulk of the new governments would initiate a number of modernizing reforms, mainly radical and illiberal, emulating the Soviet Industrialization (1929–1941) or the Chinese counterpart implemented since 1952. Nonetheless, such models were unviable and unimplementable in the majority of the countries that adopted communism after the war, due to the high human costs for their success⁴¹. Especially the majority of the problems (economically and politically) would arise from the forced transformation of underdeveloped agrarian societies to industrialized socialist ones, in a short frame of time (4-5 years economic plans).

Learning from their previous mistakes, the soviet hierarchs created the political blueprints of transformation for all the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, primarily to smoothen the transition from a national state to a communist one, without harming the new political elites. Known as “*National-Stalinism*”, this process meant a period of complex policies, ideological tenets and social contexts reflecting the party’s commitment of building socialism in a country self-identified as a national state.⁴² Originally National-Stalinism

³⁹ B. Fevziu, *Enver Hoxha: The Iron Fist of Albania*.

⁴⁰ The most famous and frightening examples of political purges among the hierarchs of the Albanian Politburo were those of Beqir Balluku and Hysni Kapo. Both as Ministers of Defense and close helpers of the dictator Enver Hoxha, they were executed (respectively in 1975 and 1983) for alleged high treason charges of collaboration with the Western Intelligence Agencies, in order to overthrow the regime.

⁴¹ According to the data provided by the researcher Tymothy Snyder, due to the Five-Year Economic Plans initiated by Stalin between 1927 to 1941, the territories of Belarus, Ukraine and Western U.S.S.R. suffered from mass famine, cannibalism and uncontained acts of violence from the authorities, due to the forced pace of industrialization in the country. There are no clear data regarding the total number of the victims, but according to multiple sources no less than 3.3 million people died from starvation or hunger diseases, reaching up to ten thousand victims per day in the summer of 1933 in Ukraine. T. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, 21–58.

⁴² B.C. Jacob, *Stalinism, historians and the nation: History-production under communism in Romania (1955-1966)*, 46-47.

was thought of as a transitory phase, but due to the aggressive nature of its language and mixture of ideologies, it became the identifying stamp for most of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and among them Albania.⁴³ In it were fused two elements of legitimation, that the communist leaders had sought since their ascension to power: the unreformed nature of the communist dictatorship and the principle of national (now socialist) self-determination, as means of strengthening the regime's individual actors. Simply putted, National-Stalinism was a reflection toward any form of outer influence, that could have harmed the political status of the dictators, unless it was not complainant with it. According to the Rumanian political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu, as a variant of Leninism:

*"...national Stalinism opposed any form of liberalization, let alone democratization. Reactionary and self-centered, it valued autarky and exclusiveness. It adhered to a militaristic vision both domestically and internationally. National Stalinism clung to a number of presumably universal laws of socialist revolution and treated any deviation from these as a betrayal of class principles. It voiced political anguish and played on sentiments of national isolation, humiliation and panic. It frequently tempted Leninist elites in countries, where the pre-Stalinist radical left had been weak or inexistent, or where the regime's legitimacy derived from external sources: Romania, Albania, North Korea, Czechoslovakia after 1968 and the GDR. National Stalinism was a symptom of degeneration. It was narcissistic and anachronistic; it valued uniformity and exploited tribalistic resentments and allegiances."*⁴⁴

Despite having political support for the implementation of such a complicated platform, the majority of the communist elite had to find a tool, that could have eased the transition of power and its control in the future. After all, the transformation of the national consciousness into a socialist one was a matter of collective identity. As such, forged by decades, if not centuries of common traumas and victories, it was resilient to sudden shows of political strength and massive violence. In this context, the communists showed a greater interest in the historiographic narrative and ethnographic elements of their respective nations. As a science, history was tempting and easy to control due to its materialistic nature (financing of researches and publications). With a structured hierarchy of control (History Institutes – University departments – Central Communist Committees – Ministry of Education) and the continuous supervision of the historians (academic meeting, scientific sections, debates and censured monographies), the narrative told to the common people (soon

⁴³ The roots of such contradictory and harmonious mixture between nationalism and communism were settled down originally by Stalin himself since the 1930's. With the purpose achieving maximum support by their own countrymen and cling to power, the communist parties had a white card from Comintern to use even a nationalistic rhetoric. After a concert at the Bolshoi Theatre on 20/04/1941, Stalin toasted with Dimitrov and argued in favor of nominally independent communist parties: *'the communist parties should be made into completely independent parties rather than sections of the CI. They must become national communist parties under various names—Workers' Party, Marxist Party, and so on. The name is not important. What is important, is that they take root among their own people and concentrate on their own specific tasks.'* M. Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism (1941-1953)*, 37.

⁴⁴ V. Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for all the seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, 33.

socialist ones) was easy to be manufactured by the party according to its Marxist tenets. At the same time as a forger of identities, historiography was vital for the creation of the bridge between the historical past and future socialism, while the communist held the helms over the present.

Nonetheless, the soviet ideologues had to face a second problem. If the historiographic tool was ready to write down the National-Stalinist ideology in the majority of the new communist regimes, the scientific approach was tainted by the usage of *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* traditions in their respective historiographies. After WWII, these traditions would emerge battered and discredited as scientific approaches meanwhile, their practitioners were among the first to suffer from the association with the Nazi regime. Their theories (sometimes pseudo-scientific) had previously incorporated racial and cultural superiority models, hitherto justifying and providing the scientific ground for the actions of Hitler's administration.⁴⁵ In this context, the necessity of the Germanic academia after the war and the majority of the Balkan communist countries, that had implemented it as part of *Balkanologie*, became their reintroduction in a respectable position under a new scientific frame. Surprisingly, the initial reaction to this problem was mild. Most of the communist elites reacted dispassionately toward a discipline considered decadent and produced by a petty-bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, in its advocacy tendencies, the communists saw eventually a possible route to justify and calcify their political power, as much as the Nazis had done before them. In the early years of their rule, they would adopt a similar soviet version of *Volkskunde*, named *Etnografiya*.

According to the work of Gingrich, both these scientific traditions had a common background dating up to 1770's, describing the Siberian folk and their cultural environment under the same prism.⁴⁶ The Bolshevik revolution and its success, would lead to the differentiation of the Russian version of *Volkskunde*, later on reframed under the lenses of the Marxist doctrine. In the center of the soviet *Etnografiya* was the role of the peasant as the carrier of the true spirit, culture and language of the pre-industrial era, unpolluted from the imperialistic and material temptations of capitalism. Especially for these studies, it was essential to describe the social evolutionary route of the people up until the last stage, socialism: Kin – People – Nation – Socialist Nation.⁴⁷ Under the label "people's culture and history", these studies engaged in a voluminous work of mixed propaganda and science in order to collect, describe, conserve and often exalt the national people's culture under the umbrella of internationalist Marxism. The researchers of *Etnografiya* carefully avoided the

⁴⁵ After the end of WWI, Germany and Austrian societies experienced a general crisis of identity. The territorial changes along with the harsh conditions implemented after the Peace of Versailles in 1919, led to the circulation of the idea of "Grossdeutsch" (Great Germany). Furthermore, the institutions dealing with social studies pursued researches, closely tied up with identity politics. Naturally the result of such bizarre conditions was the fusion of *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* with the political agenda of Nazism. Among the most famous cases in Germany are the one of John Meier and Adolf Spamer, and in Austria those of Graz and Salzburg researchers Viktor von Geramb and Wilhelm Herzog. H. Lixfeld, *The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Umbrella Organizations of German "Volkskunde" during the Third Reich*, 95–116. Also see H. Eberhart, *Folklore at the Universities of Graz and Salzburg at the time of the Nazi takeover*, 156–188.

⁴⁶ A. Gingrich, *The German-Speaking Countries...*, 70.

⁴⁷ B.C. Iacob, *Stalinism...*, 16.

usage of pejorative terms commonly used by the *Volkskunde* tradition, such as archaic, tribal, primitive etc., while describing socio-cultural or ethnic groups. This measure was done with the purpose of enforcing the substitution with a “communist language” such as people instead of nation, proletarian and proletariat, working people etc.

In particular, one of the most emblematic researchers of *Etnografiya* was Sergey Tokarev.⁴⁸ Serving as an ideological bridge between the East and the West, he was the first soviet scholar posted since 1951 in East Germany and taught for many years at the Humboldt University in East Berlin and Karl Marx University in Leipzig. Altogether with few emigrants and party ideologists, he greatly influenced the radical transformation and promotion of a dogmatically Marxist Ethnography out of *Völkerkunde* and *Volkskunde* in East Germany⁴⁹. In many regards, it is not clear if the teachings of Tokarev were implemented at the same time in communist Albania as in the other Eastern countries, but the researcher Doja draws a depiction of its work as an influencer in the mid 1980's:

*“...when I joined the Institute of People's Culture in 1985 as a young researcher, even though Soviet intellectual influences were definitely outdated, I was told by my older colleagues that one of the best handbooks of people's culture studies, that had helped them to complete their training was written by a Soviet scholar named Sergey Tokarev. I was also advised to use him, as a translation of his works into Albanian could be found in the Institute's Archives.”*⁵⁰

As part of the legitimation process under the influence of National-Stalinism, the communist in Albania would similarly participate in the creation of a new historiographic path, elevating the glorious struggles of the Albanian Nation among the centuries, later on triumphant under the banner of the Communist Party led by Hoxha. Undoubtedly a project of such magnitude necessitated a massive human and ideological capital for its completion. According to the work of the researcher Idriz Idrizi, when the communists took over power in 1944, such capital was not at hand.⁵¹ Differently from the case of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Rumania, which had previously an established historiographic path and professional body, in Albania the major contribution was as result of the work of foreign researchers, mainly German-speakers of the *Volkskunde* tradition. In the country over 75% of the population was illiterate⁵² meanwhile, the intelligentsia was remarkably small with only 380

⁴⁸ Sergey Tokarev (1899–1985) was a Russian scholar, ethnographer, historian and researcher of religious beliefs. Educated in 1925 from the University of Moscow in Historical Studies, he would later on join the ethnologic section, due to his studies on the Totemic Societies. Following the guide of another Russian researcher Aleksandr Maksimov, he believed that an ethnologist should not restrict himself to “primitive” people, but should study people at all stages of development. Based on such perspective, his paved the foundation for the research of the socio-cultural evolutionary path of societies, under the influence of the Soviet Marxist ideology and Russian nationalism.

⁴⁹ A. Doja, *The Beautiful Blue Danube and ...*, 328.

⁵⁰ A. Doja, *From the German-speaking...*, 304.

⁵¹ I. Idrizi, *Between Subordination and Symbiosis: Historians' Relationship with Political Power in Communist Albania*, 68.

⁵² E. Kambo, *Arsimi në Shqipëri (1945-1960)*, 58.

graduates from institutions of higher education in 1938.⁵³ Among the members of the communist party, the circle of educated people was even smaller in 1948, with only 328 university students (1.2%) and 68 graduates (0.2%) out of 29.137 members.⁵⁴ Apart from an 'Institute of Albanian Studies' founded during the fascist occupation, the modern scientific and higher education institutions were absent. The country lacked a national archive, while the few public libraries were poorly equipped. Very few intellectuals, mainly the teaching priests of the Jesuit Gymnasium Xaverianum in Shkodra, had interest over historiography, but they conducted no significant scientific studies.⁵⁵ It was obvious that from the end of WWI up to WW2, the only surviving elements were the educational system raised by the Austro-Hungarian Military regime and the cultural notion of nation and nationalism, as a result of the *Volkskunde* tradition and the cultural imperialism of Vienna.

The first task that the communist elite had to undergo for the creation of such a narrative, was to secure a new elite of experts and institutions loyal to their cause. Using different funding programs, a young generation of students traveled in Yugoslavia, Soviet Union and in a number of other communist countries in Eastern Europe. Among the first to study in the U.S.S.R. would have been Stefanaq Pollo⁵⁶ and Arben Puto, later on to become prominent historians and members of the Institute of Science created in 1947 in Tirana. In their aid to produce the new historiographic narrative, they were joined by other intellectuals educated abroad before the WW2, out of which the most important ones were the historian Aleks Buda⁵⁷ and the linguist Eqrem Çabej⁵⁸. The last two researchers had studied

⁵³ H. J. Hoppe, *Hochschulen und Wissenschaft*, 556.

⁵⁴ <http://www.panorama.com.al/dokumenti-i-rralle-sa-analfabete-e-te-pashkoll-kishte-ppsh/>

⁵⁵ I. Idrizi, *Between Subordination and...*, 68.

⁵⁶ Stefanaq Pollo (1924–1997) was an Albanian academic, professor and historian during communism in Albania. Educated in the French Lyceum in Korçë, after the Italian invasion of Albania in 1939 he would have joined the Liberation Movement led by the Communist Party. In 1951 he finished his studies in History in the Lomonosov University in Moscow, and became a full-time professor in the University of Tirana. Holding multiple position in the University, Institute of Science (after 1972 the Academy of Science), he was one of the co-writers of the Albanian History under the lenses of National-Stalinism, along with Buda and Puto.

⁵⁷ Aleks Buda (1910–1993) was a historian during communism in Albania. Educated in primary school in Lecce, Italy and later on finishing his secondary education in Salzburg, Austria, he would enroll in 1930 in the University of Vienna to study philosophy and literature. Nonetheless, he didn't graduate due to a number of unfortunate events. After returning to Albania, he joined the Liberation Movement during WWII, and later on held multiple positions such as Head of National Library, Parliament Member, member of the Institute of Science and later on, as the first President of the Academy of Science. Despite not having a proper education in History (without degree and academic orientation), Buda was the *par excellence* case of notable Albanian politician-historians during the socialist period in Albania, as result of his work on the ethnogenesis of Albanians under the lenses of Marxism-Leninism.

⁵⁸ Eqrem Çabej (1908–1980) was an Albanian historical linguist and scholar. Born in Turkey (Eskişehir), he would return to complete his elementary education in Gjirokastër, in southern Albania, in 1921. After that he finished his secondary and university studies in Austria, passing from St. Pölten, Klagenfurt, Graz and graduate as a doctoral student in Vienna, under the supervision of Austrian Albanologists such as Carl Patsch and Norbert Jokl. Due to his work on the historical development of the Albanian Language, he became one of the key academicians to scientifically co-relate the ethno-linguistic theories of Austrian *Albanologie*, with those proposed by communist historians such

together in the University of Vienna and undoubtedly had been in contact with the historical and ethnolinguistic theories of the Austrian *Volkskunde*. In this prospect, it was clear that a historical bridge (literally and imaginary) between the old historiography and the new Marxist one, had been created by the cooperation of the four beforementioned researchers. The soviet-educated Pollo and Puto were in many regards the bearers of the National-Stalinism models into the new historiographic path, with the introduction of quotes and theoretical approaches close to the Marxist doctrine. On the other side Buda and Çabej had to elaborate further on the previous historiographic works of the German-speaking researchers, with the focus of verifying the ethno-linguistic theory of autochthony of the Albanians.

In 1952 the Central Committee Secretariat (CCS) of the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA) tasked the Historical Section at the Institute of Sciences to elaborate a synthesized version of the history of the Albanian people based on the tenets of Marxism-Leninism.⁵⁹ Such a task had a clear political stamp, the Albanian people needed (had) to learn the “real history”, that the Party would teach to them. The same year in October, in the capital was organized a conference entitled “The Formation of the Albanian Nation and the Beginnings of the Albanian National Movement”. For two days 30 participants debated over the production of a scientific periodization of Albanian history and its problems.⁶⁰ More than a challenge, the task given by the communists was a hydra-like problem: the historians had to identify the nation and national identity, while using an almost unknown methodology and at the same time upholding the internationalist teachings of Marxism. Even more problematic was the issue of the primary sources, barely few and almost all of them of German-speaking origin linked to the Austrian version of *Volkskunde*.

Unsurprisingly the work of the Albanian experts over the production of a communist history delayed over 7 years. Only in 06/05/1959 the first draft would had been presented to the Politburo of PLA, where it encountered negative reviews. Among the reviews, some of the communist hierarchs accused the work as anti-national and without emphasizing on the class struggle of the Albanians. However, the winds of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization course had putted Enver Hoxha as a leader, under the political pressure of the Soviet Union and at home in Albania. In one of the few moments of restraining from using his usual methods of intimidation and political violence, Hoxha advocated his colleagues to accept the work of the historians with some minor adjustments.⁶¹

The diplomatic divorce between Tirana and Moscow in late 1961, became the demarcation date where the Albanian Politburo would have shown for the last time tolerance to the work of the academicians, not committed to narrate the National-Stalinist version of history. After that point, feeling the political setback from such diplomatic maneuver, the regime insisted to create its own version of facts and any opposition or remark (even aca-

as Buda and Pollo. Nonetheless, his position is viewed as more distanced academically from the regime and it’s narrative, than the other communist scholars.

⁵⁹ I. Idrizi, *Between Subordination and...*, 69.

⁶⁰ In his memoir, as one of the participants of the conference and as member of the Institute of History, Kristo Frashëri wrote that his colleagues were confused and worried, since they had not managed to convincingly apply Marxism-Leninism, in particular the theory of class struggle, while interpreting key issues of the Albanian history. K. Frashëri, *Jeta e një historiani*, 190.

⁶¹ P. R. Prifti, *Socialist Albania...*, 174–6.

demically) was considered a betrayal to the cause. As the researcher Idrizi would have pointed out, historiography and the Albanian studies perceived generally as transdisciplinary researches on the Albanian people's 'millenary-old past', would emerge as a major propaganda weapon: "A number of central propaganda narratives, policies and political/ cultural norms, such as the necessity of the unity of the people and the unity of the people and the leader, the cult of the leader, the image of the self as unique and noble, xenophobia, isolationism and militarization, were thus justified through the misuse and manipulation of history."⁶²

Quite naturally the deviation of *Albanologie* and historiography after the 1960's toward nationalism, was not a native phenomenon⁶³ and even more so, an unexpected result considering the roots of its creation and purpose (Austro-Hungarian imperial scientific and literary propaganda). Like a river flowing back to its original riverbed after the torrential rains of events, the position and work of the Albanian researchers would have been similar, if not a continuity of the Austrian colleagues. But despite the presence of nationalism, xenophobia and folk-centrism, the Austrian *Albanologie* (*Volkskunde*) was not (meant to be) the same as the Communist *Albanologie* (*National-Stalinism/Etnografiya*).

In the midst of a tumultuous political and diplomatic period after the separation from the U.S.S.R. and heightening of the relations with China, the second version of the *History of Albania* was ready for printing in 1965 and later on republished in 1967.⁶⁴ Under the supervision of the four mentioned scientists of the communist era, the historical volumes remarkably resembled the anonymous work of Lajos Thallóczy, looking almost as an improvement of the historiographic archetype produced by the Hungarian scientist. The language now was much structured to a scientific or semi-scientific audience, while bearing the heavy jargon and quotations for Marx, Lenin or Hoxha himself. From the Austrian version the sense of unity described by using the 1st person in the plural (*we, us, our*), was replaced with 3rd person in the plural (*they, the Albanians, the Illyrians*), with a premise of having a sense of academic distance, as if the unity among the people was already reached under the communist party. Unsurprisingly the volumes had the same *glorification and mythization* of the Albanian people from ancient times as noble and proud warriors, while aggrandizing the continuous revolt and uprisings against the despotic invading powers. Furthermore, the first volume of *History of Albania* had the *same periodization* as the book of Thallóczy, describing the period of the Illyrians; the Roman and Byzantine rule; the creation of the medieval semi-independent formations; the Ottoman invasion and rule alongside the personal formations (Turk. Paşalık, alb. Pashallëk) of the Albanian rulers such as Ali Pascha Tepelena in Janina or the Bushatlli family in Shkodra. Nonetheless, the period of Ottoman rule was described as a dark period, where the Albanian people were under the

⁶² I. Idrizi, *Between Subordination and...*, 72.

⁶³ At the same time a number of neighboring countries under the communist regime experienced the same rise in number and quality of propagandistic publications of nationalistic/communist character, and additionally a materialization of the symbiosis between the intelligentsia and the regime. For Romania see the book of Francesco Zavatti, *Writing History in a Propaganda Institute: Political Power and Network Dynamics in Communist Romania*; for the case of Bulgaria see the work of Iskra Baeva and Evgenia Kalinova, *Bulgarien von Ost nach West. Zeitgeschichte ab 1939*.

⁶⁴ Universiteti I Tiranës (Instituti I Historisë dhe I Gjuhësisë), *Historia e Shqipërisë* (vol I-III). Tiranë, 1967.

rule of an ignorant and retrograded empire. Unsurprisingly the continuous revolts and rebellions against it, were shown in a double context: foremost as an expression of the Albanians to be independent and free, while at the same time proposing such actions in the frame of the Marxist-Leninist tenets (the dissolution of the serfdom relations and of the feudal order). Especially over the second context, the role of the Albanian peasant/warrior was heightened, taking into account the influence of *Etnografiya*, as the bearer of not only to the true patriotic and cultural ideals, but at the same time as a forerunner of the Marxist revolution in the country since ancient times.⁶⁵

*"We are the oldest tribe (nation) in Europe. The waves of enemies, hitting us continuously over our heads for many times, thousands of years, have shrunk our nation, which once had been so great, to the point of never being devoured by others: no matter how many nations have come through us, our race has remained always miraculously unmovable (in their lands)!"*⁶⁶

*"The Albanian nation is a very old nation. It resides in its own territory since ancient centuries in history, have been known with different names. Since the times, when the historical data became certain, the territory of our country was inhabited by the Illyrians. Later on, the medieval inhabitants of Albania would be called **Arbëreshë**; in the modern time they would call themselves **Shqiptarë** (Albanians), same as they call themselves today, and from where it comes the name of our country, **Shqipëri** (Albania)."*⁶⁷

Side by side, on the left (introduction from the anonymous book of Lajos Thallóczy) and on the right (introduction from History of Albania in 1967), similarly address to the readers since the start the same ethno-linguistic autochthony thesis

Following the same pattern of Thallóczy's book, *the cult of Skanderbeg* was heightened to a more compelling level. Yet, differently from the original archetype, where the figure of the national hero served as a unifying and statesmanship example for the Albanians, in the communist history the main light was concentrated in his leadership abilities: Skanderbeg as a superb military mind, Skanderbeg as a pious and cultivated leader, Skanderbeg as a great diplomat. It was obvious, that such a historical portrait over the cult of Skanderbeg, was in fact a deliberate political and psychological imposition toward the readers, to accept *the cult of the individual* centered around the dictator Enver Hoxha. More the figure of Skanderbeg gained fame and recognition, more the communist regime would had pushed

⁶⁵ The bluntest example of such a trend was the narration of the civil uprising led by Haxhi Qamili between 1913–1915, as a proletarian revolt against the class of landowners (Turk. *Beyler*), predating the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. The movement started in Central Albania against the rule of the invested by the Great Powers King Wilhelm zu Wied, with the motto "Dum babën" (*we want our father*) referring to the Ottoman Sultan and desired the reintroduction of the newly created Principality of Albania again under the suzerainty of the Sublime Porte. Despite some social and economic elements, the movement was anti-national by nature. Furthermore see the communist propaganda work of G. Shpuza, *Aspekte të mendimit politik shoqëror shqiptar 1913–1915*.

⁶⁶ R. Beluli (ed.), *Ludwig von Thallóczy...*, 87.

⁶⁷ Universiteti I Tiranës (Instituti I Historisë dhe I Gjuhësisë), *Historia e Shqipërisë* (vol I). Tiranë (1967), 9.

for the acceptance of its own legitimacy to the general public. The peasant/warriors (now all socialists or proletarian) had no other choice, but to follow the lead of the Communist Party.

Conclusion

The Albanian historiography was organized as a scientific discipline in the middle of the 19th century, due to the works of the German-speaking researchers and travelers, coming into contact with the Albanians in the Western part of the Balkans. As part of *Albanologie* or Albanian studies, it was influenced highly by the scientific tradition of Austrian *Volkskunde*, a modified version of its German counterpart *Volkskunde Studium* (folklore study). While these studies in Germany had a clear inner (unification) and outer (colonial) political goal, the Austrian version emphasized the role of the Monarchy as an umbrella for the diverse groups (and possible future ones) that constituted her. In it were fused the tools of integration (*Unity through Diversity*) and also the ones for imperialistic expansion through cultural diversity (*Kulturkreise und Kulturvölker*).

In this context, the Balkans and the Albanians in particular, became important for the scientific community and political institutions, as a future expansion area. Following a number of secret conferences held in Vienna in 1896, among the measures as part of the literary propaganda of the empire, was the production of an anonymous history book written in Albanian. For this task was hired the famous Hungarian historian Lajos Thallóczy to work with the Albanian merchant Zef Curani. His work was of fundamental importance in the establishment of the way how the Albanian history was written (periodization, language, myth, and cult creation) and fusing the elements of Austrian *Volkskunde* into this discipline.

The rise into power of the communist party led by Enver Hoxha in 1944, saw the transition of the Albanian historiography influenced by Austrian *Volkskunde* toward the Soviet version of National-Stalinism/*Etnographiya*. The later version saw the introduction of new themes, tropes, and ideologic quotations while keeping into mind the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. Even more so it highlighted the role of the peasantry as safe-keepers of national values and forerunners of a theoretical proletarian class. Despite the communist veil, the historical narrative after WWII was nationalistic by nature, ethnocentric, and invested in proving the ethno-linguistic origins of the Albanians from antiquity to present, as much as the Austrian researchers had done before them. Unsurprisingly the first volume of the History of Albania published in 1965, closely resembled the work of the Hungarian historian, almost looking like an improvement, while keeping into consideration the ideological tenets imposed by the dictatorship of Hoxha.

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