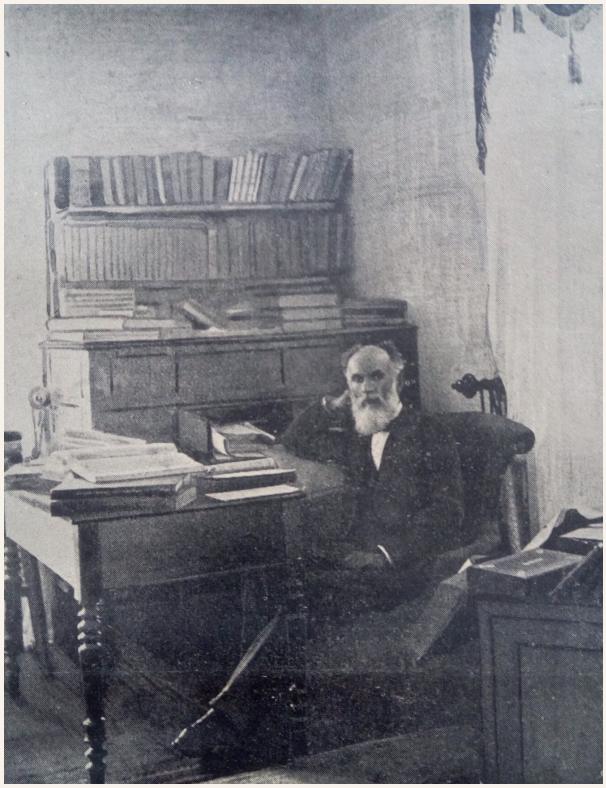
SAMI FRASHËRI

Albania: What It Has Been, What It Is, and What It Will Become

Thoughts on saving the homeland from the dangers surrounding it



English · complete AI-assisted translation

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This new English translation contains all 3 parts and 36 sections of the selected Albanian Fletoret transcription. It was produced with AI assistance in 2026 and is not a certified or specialist-reviewed translation. It uses larger type, generous line spacing and illustrations.

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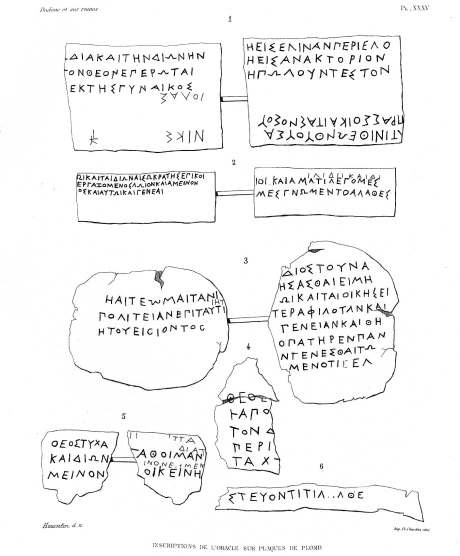
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I What Albania Has Been

The Pelasgians



P02 · Drawings of inscriptions from Dodona, published in Constantin Carapanos's Dodone et ses ruines (1878), plate 35. They show the material evidence behind study of the sanctuary associated with Pelasgians in ancient literary traditions.. Editorial illustration added in this edition.

Albania is the name given to the whole country inhabited by the Albanians. The Albanians are the oldest of the nations of Europe. It appears that they were the first to come to Europe from the heart of Asia, and that they brought to this continent the knowledge of building houses with walls, as well as the knowledge of ploughing, sowing and harvesting; for the people who had been in Europe before them were savages and lived in forests and caves, feeding on wild fruit and the flesh of game. That is why our ancient forefathers were called Arbënë, a word which we Tosks, following our custom of changing n to r, turned into Arbërë, as we still use it today. In other words, this very ancient nation was called, even then, Arbënë or Arbân, meaning those who work the arë, the field, who reap and sow. The Romans changed this

word to Alban, also calling their country Albania, as Europeans still do today. The later Greeks called us Arvanit, changing the l back to r; and from this Greek word the Turks made the word Arnaut, as they still call us today. But we ourselves have restricted the word Arbërë to just one branch of our nation, which we also call Lab; the nation as a whole has taken the name Shqipëtar, and our country Shqipëri, words formed from shqipë, the eagle, the blessed bird of God which our ancient forefathers worshipped and whose image we also bore on our flag. But this word does not seem to be very old, or not to have been universal from the beginning, for our brothers who live outside Albania, in Italy, Greece and elsewhere, do not know it, but still call themselves Arbërë.

The world calls our earliest forefathers Pelasgians, a word handed down from our later ancestors, who called their own predecessors plak or pleq, old man or elders. However that may be, this nation, so ancient and so important to history, was numerous, powerful and spread throughout Eastern Europe. The whole Balkan Peninsula, and beyond the Danube, Hungary, Croatia and so on, as well as Greece and all the western parts of Asia Minor, that is, Anatolia, were the land of the Pelasgians, the ancient Albanians. Some of these Pelasgians crossed the Adriatic Sea into Italy; the Etruscans, Latins and other peoples of Italy are of Pelasgian stock. Later a small people called Hellenes or Greeks arrived and settled in Greece, on the islands of the Aegean basin and along the surrounding coasts, driving out the Pelasgians or mingling with them. Yet these Hellenes who came to those lands were of the same stock as the Pelasgians, as were the Slavs,

Germans, Celts or Gauls and other peoples who came from Asia, all of whom are collectively called Aryans, a large family which also includes the Persians, Indians and other peoples of Asia. But the Latins are the closest of all to us Albanians; that is why our language also closely resembles Latin and the languages that have branched from it, such as Italian, French and so on.

The Pelasgians had a beautiful, poetic religion. They believed in all the phenomena of nature and the heavenly bodies; they worshipped the sun, the moon, the great stars, the sky, the clouds, the wind, the sea and other things. Lightning, thunder, thunderbolts and all the phenomena of nature were sacred in their eyes. They held fire in great honour, and in some places they never let it go out. Neither in government nor in religion did they want a single person doing whatever he pleased; they preferred the council and assembly of many. This religion, which the Greeks and Latins developed and embellished still further, remains even today, in Europe and throughout the civilized world, the religion of poets, who find in it the beauty and delight they need. This religion, which is called mythology, is the religion of our first forefathers, the Pelasgians.

According to the places where they lived, the Pelasgians were divided into many branches and tribes, of which the largest and best known were the Illyrians or the Free Ones (the Unfettered), the Macedonians, the Thracians (the Stout Ones), the Phrygians and others. Of these, the Illyrians lived in Albania and in the northern lands now called Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Dalmatia and so on, as far as the head of the Adriatic and beyond the Sava; the

Macedonians and Thracians lived in Macedonia and Thrace; the Phrygians were in Asia, from the coast as far as the river Halys, now called the Kızılırmak. It is said that the Illyrians were very closely related to the Macedonians, and the Thracians to the Phrygians; but all were one nation and understood one another's language.

Until Roman times all these Pelasgian peoples were alive and intact. The Macedonians had long possessed a fairly powerful kingdom, which grew and expanded greatly in the time of Philip; and his son Alexander the Great took possession of most of the world then known: Greece, Thrace, Asia Minor, Persia, India, Egypt and so on, but not Illyria and Epirus, that is, present-day Albania. After Alexander's death the Macedonians established several kingdoms in Asia, Egypt and Europe; but because they were not united, because they were divided into many branches and were devouring and killing one another, they could not endure for long. After a short time they were subjected to the Romans, who arose with great strength and occupied all the Macedonians' lands and Macedonia itself.

The Romans put an end to the Phrygians and Thracians, who disappeared and died out through warfare and through mingling with various peoples who came among them. In Macedonia they survived to some extent, but greatly mixed. Then, in the sixth century after Christ, the Bulgarians, a Tatar people, and the Serbs and Croats, Slavic peoples, entered the Balkan Peninsula in swarms and overran most of Macedonia as well, driving the Pelasgians out or mingling with them. Thus the Macedonians, Thracians, Phrygians and other

branches of the Pelasgians disappeared, except for the Illyrians, who are our direct ancestors.

I / What Albania Has Been

The Illyrians and the Epirotes



P03 · Bronze helmet of “Illyrian type,” fifth or early fourth century BCE; The Met, 2006.221. The museum classifies the object as Greek. The type name describes a form of equipment, not the ethnicity of its individual wearer.. Editorial illustration added in this edition.

Ancient Illyria did not encompass the whole of Albania, for it did not extend south beyond the Vjosa; but to the north it was much larger, for, as we have said, it stretched as far as the Sava and the head of the Adriatic, including Bosnia and other lands. From the Vjosa to the Gulf of Ambracia (Arta), the southern part of present-day Toskëria was called Epirus (Ipërë, Hipërë or Sipërë), an Albanian word by which the inhabitants of the lower coast referred to the country, and which the Greeks who came there to trade heard from them. The kingdom of Illyria was separate, and that of Epirus

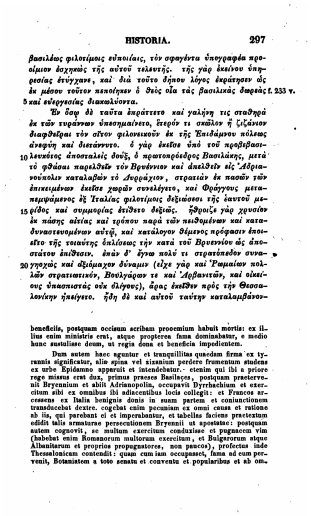
separate. But the Illyrians, like the Epirotes, were by no means entirely submissive or subject to these kingdoms; they were divided into many branches and tribes, each of which was governed by the council of its own leading men and elders. These councils were called Plakoni or Pleqësi.

From these two kingdoms, which history tells us possessed a considerable degree of civilization, there emerged several powerful and illustrious rulers, such as Pyrrhus or Burri, king of Epirus, who defeated the Romans and took Greece, and Teuta, queen of Illyria, and her son Gentius, who resisted the Romans so bravely for so long.

According to the writers of ancient Greece, the Illyrians, like the Epirotes, who did not differ from them in any way, lived and were just like the Albanians of today, without any difference; and they spoke the language that we speak today.

I / What Albania Has Been

The Albanians under the Romans



HISTORIA. 297

βασιλέως φιλοτίμους εὐποιίας, τὸν σφαγέντα ὑπογραφὰν προ-
οίμιον ἄσχημον τῆς αὐτοῦ τελευτῆς. τῆς γὰρ ἐκείνου ὑπη-
ρεσίας ἀντέχεσθαι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἥμιον λόγος ἐκράτησεν αὖ-
ἐκ μέσου τοῦτον πεποίηκεν ὁ θεὸς οἷα τὰς βασιλικὰς ἀφορᾷς f. 333 v.
καὶ εὐεργεσίας διακωλύοντα.

Ἐν ὅσῳ δὲ ταῦτα ἐπράττετο καὶ γαλήνη τις σταθηρὰ
ἐκ τῶν τυράννων ὑπεστηκυῖα, ἔτερόν τι συμβὰν ἢ ζηλῶσον
διαφθεῖραι τὸν αἴσιον φιλονεικοῦν ἐκ τῆς Ἐπιδάμνου πόλεως
ἀνεφύη καὶ διεσάννυτο. ὁ γὰρ ἐκεῖσε ὑπὸ τοῦ προβιβασι-
λευκότος ἀποσταλεὶς δοὺξ, ὁ πρωτοσπαθοδοὺξ Βασιλάκης, μετὰ
τὸ φθάσαι παραλαβεῖν τὸν Πρωένιον καὶ ἀκολουθεῖν αἷς ἐφίε-
νουκεῖνος καταλαβὼν τὸ Δυρράχιον, στρατιὰν ἐκ πασῶν τῶν
ἐπικειμένων ἐκείσε χωρῶν συνελέγετο, καὶ Φράγγους μετα-
πεμψάμενος ἐξ Ἰταλίας φιλοτίμως δεξιώσεσι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ με-
ρίδος καὶ συμμορίας ἐτίθετο δεξιᾶς. ἤθροιζε γὰρ χρυσίον
ἐκ πάσης οὐσίας καὶ κράτους παρὰ τῶν πεσθησμένων καὶ κατα-
δυναστευομένων αὐτῷ, καὶ κατάλογον ὅθμησε πρόφασιν ἀπο-
ἕξειν τῆς τοιαύτης ἐπιλέξεως τὴν κατὰ τοῦ Βρυεννίου ὡς ἀπο-
στάτου ἐπιθεσιν. ἀνὴρ δ' ἦγα πολύ τι στρατόπεδον συνα-
γωγὸς καὶ ἀξιάκουστον δύναμιν (εἶχε γὰρ καὶ Ῥωμαίων πολ-
λοὺς στρατιώτας, Βενετιγάνων τε καὶ Δρβανιτῶν, καὶ οἰκεί-
ους ὑπασπιστὰς οὐκ ὀλίγους), ὥρας ἐκείθεν πρὸς τὴν Θεσσα-
λονίκην ἠκίνησεν. ἤδη δὲ καὶ αὐτοῦ ταύτην καταλαμβάνον-

beneficiis, postquam occisum scribam proœmium habuit mortis: ex il-
lius enim ministeria erat, atque propterea fama dominabatur, e medio
hanc auferliase deum, ut regia dona et beneficia impedientem.

Dum autem haec agustur et tranquillitas quaedam firma ex ty-
rannis significatur, alio opus vel exsanium petière fremenium studens
ex urbe Epidamno apparuit et intendebatur.· etenim qui ibi a priore
rege missus erat dux, primus presecs Basilaçes, postquam praeterve-
nit Bryennium et abiit Adrianopolin, occupavit Dyrrhachium et exer-
citum sibi ex omnibus ibi adiacentibus locis collegit: et Francos ar-
cessens ex Italia benignis donis in suam partem et coniunctionem
transcebat dextre. cogebat enim pecuniam ex omni causa et ratione
ab iis, qui parebant ei et imperabantur, et tabellas facieus praetextum
edidit talis armaturae persecutionem Bryennii ut apostatae: postquam
autem cognovit, se multum exercitum condusisse et pugnacem vim
(habebat enim Romanorum multorum exercitum, et Bulgarorum atque
Albanitarum et proprios propugnatores, non paucos), profectus inde
Thessalonicam contendit; quam cum iam occupasset, fama ad eum pe-
venit, Botaniatem a toto senatu et conventu et popularibus et ab om-

P04 · Attaleiates names Arbanitai among Basilakes's troops in his account of events in 1078. Shown here is p. 297 of Bekker's 1853 edition, with Greek text above a Latin translation, rather than an eleventh-century manuscript.. Editorial illustration added in this edition.

The Illyrians and Epirotes resisted the Romans for a long time, but in the end the latter's great strength and numbers overcame them, as they had so many other nations they had conquered. Epirus was then united with Macedonia, and because they held out for a long time and killed many of the troops of Paulus Aemilius, commander of the Roman army, this savage, stone-hearted man went out and destroyed eighty cities in Toskëria and carried so many thousands of slaves off to Rome!

Thus the freedom of the Illyrians and Epirotes was lost, and these lands, that is, Albania, came under Roman rule. But the Albanians, however much they were defeated and slain, did not submit or become slaves. They remained, and always

were, masters in their own country, and the Romans possessed nothing but the title to its lordship. To have a little power in Albania, they had brought in several colonies of Romans and settled them in fortified places in Albania. The descendants of these colonies are the Vlachs or Tsintsars who are still found in our country today. Even the long road they had built from Durrës to Salonica, for moving their armies and for trade, and which they called Ignatius from the Albanian word e gjatë, long, they could barely guard. In place of the kingdoms of Illyria and Epirus stood the Roman Empire, but the Albanians were still governed by their own leading men and councils of elders, as they had always been.

Such was Albania, and such was the life of the Albanians under the Romans. When the Roman Empire was divided in two, Albania fell to the eastern empire, whose centre was Constantinople. Under the emperors of Constantinople, too, the Albanians were virtually free and governed themselves among their own people; they were masters in their own country, not slaves. In those times Christianity also entered Albania, and within a short time all the Albanians became Christians, but without changing their ancient character and customs.

As the empire of Constantinople weakened, the power and freedom of the Albanians grew. But in the seventh century after Christ, swarms of Slavs and Bulgarians rushed in from the north and east and entered Byzantine territory, willingly or by force. Of these, the Serbs filled the northern lands of Illyria, that is, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Montenegro and Serbia, while the Bulgarians, mixed with Slavs, occupied Macedonia. The Albanians of Macedonia withdrew to the

north and west into the mountains of Albania; those of upper Illyria did not generally leave their country, but mingled with such great numbers of Slavs that they lost their language and began to speak Serbian. We may therefore say that the Bosnians, Herzegovinians, Dalmatians and Montenegrins are more Albanian than Slav; they have much Albanian blood in their veins; their stature, their faces, their customs, their songs and dances, and everything about them bring them much closer to the Albanians than to the other Slavs, who do not have that stature or those faces. But because they speak Serbian today, they are called Slavs and not Albanians; for language is the first mark by which nations are distinguished.

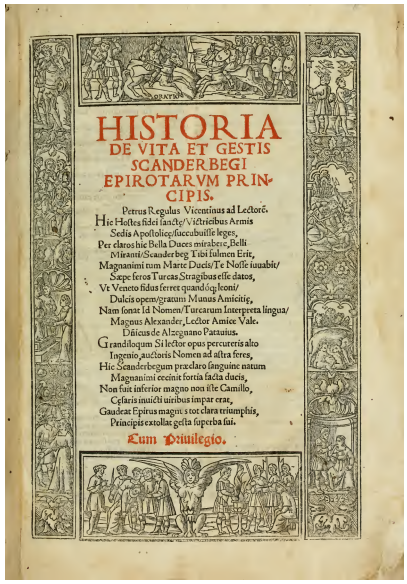
In this way, then, half of Illyria and half of Macedonia were separated from Albania and became Slav territory; and Albania remained a small country encompassing the southern half of Illyria, half of Macedonia (its northern and western portion), and all of Epirus.

In Roman and Byzantine times the names Illyria, Macedonia and Epirus were abandoned and forgotten, and what remained of Albania, as we have described it, began to be known to the world as Albania, from the Albanian name Arbëni. From that time onward Albania has not changed its borders; it is still the same today, apart from a few places given to Serbia and Montenegro after the Congress of Berlin, such as Vranje, Leskovac, Kuršumlija, Ulcinj and others. From most of these places the Albanians made the great mistake of fleeing, leaving their country to the Slavs forever, except for Ulcinj, which has been and always is Albania, and

which without fail will one day return and be reunited with Albania.

I / What Albania Has Been

The Small Kingdoms of Albania


HISTORIA
DE VITA ET GESTIS SCANDERBEGI EPIROTARVM PRINCIPIS.
Petrus Regulus Vicentinus ad Lectorē.
Hic Hostes fidei sanctę/victricibus Armis
Sedia Apostolicę/sucubuisse leges,
Per claros hic Bella Duces mirabere, Belli
Miranti/Scanderbeg Tibi fulmen Erit,
Magnanimi tum Marte Ducis/Te Nosse iuuabit/
Sæpe feros Turcas Stragibus esse datos,
Vt Veneto fidus ferret quandōq; leoni/
Dulcis opem/gratum Munus Amicitię,
Nam sonat Id Nomen/Turcarum Interpreta lingua/
Magnus Alexander, Lector Amice Vale.
Dicisus de Alzegnano Patauius.
Grandiloqum Si lector opus percureris alto
Ingenio, auctoris Nomen ad astra feres,
Hic Scanderbegum præclaro sanguine natum
Magnanimi cecinit fortia facta ducis,
Non fuit inferior magno non ille Camillo,
Cęsaris inuicti uiribus impar erat,
Gaudeat Epirus magni s tot clara triumphis,
Principis extollat gesta superba sui.
Cum Priuilegio.

P05 · Title page of Marin Barleti's Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi Epirotarum principis, Rome, ca. 1508-1510. The biography helped shape Skanderbeg's European reputation about four decades after his death.. Editorial illustration added in this edition.

In the last days of the Byzantines, when they had grown weak and no longer had the strength either to govern their lands or to withstand their enemies, several kingdoms had arisen in Albania, as everywhere else, while many places along the Albanian coast had been occupied by the Republic of Venice. Among the petty rulers who had arisen in Albania at that time, some were purely Albanian and others were foreigners who had become Albanian. Among the former were the Kastrioti family in Kruja, from which came the greatly lamented Skanderbeg, the Thopia family in Arta, and

others; among the latter were the Dukagjini family in the highlands of Shkodra, the Muzaka family in Myzeqe, and others.

Thus Albania was divided into many pieces, not all of which we can count as little kingdoms; the larger ones may be called that, while the smaller ones were chiefdoms and lordships which, owing to the weakness of the empire, had been left on their own, without any superior authority. Among these fragments, divisions, quarrels and internal wars never ceased.

When the Turks arose and crossed from Asia into Europe, taking the lands of the Balkan Peninsula one after another, Albania was divided and split apart in this way. The Turks began defeating, one by one, these lords who ruled Albania; some they drove from their lands altogether, while others they left in place after subduing them. One of those subdued in this way was Gjon Kastrioti, Skanderbeg's father, who was forced to give Sultan Murad his four beloved sons as hostages, the youngest of whom was Gjergj Kastrioti, called Skanderbeg.

I / What Albania Has Been

Albania in the Time of Skanderbeg



P06 · A posthumous woodcut portrait of Skanderbeg in Barleti’s early-sixteenth-century biography. It is evidence of his early visual reception, not a photograph or a securely identified portrait made during his lifetime.. Editorial illustration added in this edition.

Skanderbeg, for whom history shows no equal or counterpart in bravery, in the art of war, in strength, or in knowledge, sound judgment, humanity, tenderness of heart and greatness of soul; Skanderbeg, who has brought and will forever bring honour to Albania: this incomparable man was an infant when he fell into Turkish hands and was brought up in the sultan's palace. Before hair had even appeared on his cheeks, he displayed such bravery and performed such deeds in the Turkish army that the whole world marvelled; wherever he went he conquered, and no one could stand against him.

When Skanderbeg returned from Syria, where he had gone to fight for the Turks, he heard from the sultan's own mouth

that his father had died. But although, under the agreement and pledge his father had made with the sultan, one of his sons should have gone to Kruja to sit on his father's throne, along with his father's death Skanderbeg learned of the death of his three brothers, who could not all three have died by God's will at the same time in this way. The Albanian hero was not so foolish as to fail to understand what had happened to his poor brothers, and that the same fate would befall him. Indeed, from that day his master began sending him into fierce and dangerous wars and battles so that he would be killed, for he was afraid to kill him openly because of the Turkish soldiers, who loved Skanderbeg dearly for his courage and kind heart.

Skanderbeg therefore waited for an opportunity to escape and go to Albania, to save both himself and his homeland, for which his heart burned. He found the opportunity he sought without having to wait long, and went to Kruja, drove the Turks out and sat on his father's throne. All the lords and leaders of Albania gathered in Kruja, made a solemn agreement and pledged their word to strive and die for the salvation of the homeland, all acknowledging Skanderbeg as their leader and king.

Thus, for the first time, Albania was united in one kingdom with a brave and capable king like Skanderbeg. The Turks immediately sent great armies to take Albania back; but Skanderbeg and the Albanians stood bravely against them, and with a few companions he hurled himself like a falcon upon thousands of Turks and shattered whole armies of Sultan Murad and Mehmed, striking fear and terror into Turkish hearts.

For forty-odd years Skanderbeg and the Albanians held out in this way, killing and routing their enemies; and he kept Albania undefeated and unsubdued. All the powers of Europe that existed at that time placed their hopes in Skanderbeg and looked to the Albanians for Europe's salvation. But they were not brave men like Skanderbeg, nor did they possess the Albanians' fidelity to their word. Many times the Hungarians (Magyars) and the pope drew Skanderbeg into the fire, then withdrew and left him alone, watching from afar. Despite all this, Skanderbeg stood firm and endured; and in this man's lifetime Albania preserved its freedom with honour. But with Skanderbeg's death Albania fell into the hands of the Turks.

I / What Albania Has Been

Albania under the Turks

After Skanderbeg and this man's era, which, although spent entirely in wars and bloodshed, was the most beautiful and most blessed of all eras for our country, because only then was it brought together in its entirety under a free government, and its name was heard throughout the world with great honour for its resistance to the Turks, whom great kingdoms could not withstand at the time; after the era of this lamented man, we say, Albania became a part of the Turkish Empire.

The Albanians, a brave and warlike people, have always had a great love of war, and have considered warfare an occupation and a source of gain for themselves. They went

throughout Europe with weapons in their hands, bringing victory to whichever side they joined. Following this old custom of theirs, they had also crossed into Asia and entered the service of the Turks, helping them with their weapons and courage. Bayezid Pasha, a brave man steadfast in his loyalty, who brought Çelebi Sultan Mehmed out of the midst of Tamerlane's (Timur-Leng's) army and saved him from thousands of dangers, placing himself in great peril, often carrying him in his arms and begging; this Bayezid Pasha, who saved the life of that sultan, without whom the Turkish Empire and the house of Osman would have been extinguished and lost forever, was an Albanian, as were many other pashas and great men who displayed great courage and rendered important services in the Turkish army long before Albania was taken by the Turks.

Thus the Albanians had begun adopting the Turks' religion and becoming Muslims even before Albania fell into Turkish hands. But once the Turks became masters of Albania, religious conversion increased much further, and throughout Albania people began adopting the conquerors' religion, saying, Where the sword is, there is the faith. The Albanians have this characteristic: they quickly grow weary of a religion and are always willing to change it. When they also saw that the Turks did not honour those who were not of their religion, they did not hesitate to adopt that religion. Yet even those who remained Christians did not submit and become rayah like the other nations, but kept their weapons and their honour; they too went to war and fought alongside their Muslim brothers against Turkey's enemies.

The work the Turkish Empire required suited their nature perfectly. Unceasing wars, games and races on horseback, plundering, killing, slaughter and other such things that the Turks wanted were also the Albanians' favourite occupations. In the Albanians, the Turks found a strong and faithful companion in war; and in the Turks, the Albanians found a master who opened before them a wide and unrestricted field for doing everything their hearts desired.

In Turkish times Albania became richer and more prosperous than ever; for the Albanians raided together with the Turks throughout the world and returned laden with gold and silver, valuable weapons and beautiful horses from Arabia, Egypt, Kurdistan, Hungary and elsewhere. Being braver and more capable than the Turks, they also rose to the highest and most honoured offices, and enjoyed greater distinction than the Turks themselves. Around 25 Albanians became sadrazams alone, that is, grand viziers, and the best and most renowned of those who held this office were Albanians.

As for Albania itself, no foreigner ever came there. All those who governed Albania, great and small, were always Albanians. We may say that Albania was governed on its own, by Albanians and according to its own customs. It was not at all subjected to the Turks, and paid nothing except the blood it shed in war, for which it was paid and rewarded very handsomely.

This is the reason the Albanians formed ties with the Turks. In the Turks the Albanians found what they wanted: wealth, honour, weapons, horses, as much plunder as they desired

and as much freedom as they needed; and in the Albanians the Turks found what they wanted: courage, loyalty and blood shed without stint.

Such was the state of affairs until the time of the Tanzimat; below we shall see how things have changed since then.

I / What Albania Has Been

The Nationality and Language of the Albanians



P07 · A page of Gjon Buzuku's Meshari (1555), the earliest surviving substantial printed Albanian book. This image reproduces the original page through a modern history volume.. Editorial illustration added in this edition.

The Albanians speak one of the oldest and most beautiful languages on earth. The languages that were Albanian's companions and sisters disappeared thousands of years ago and are spoken nowhere on earth; in their place, their granddaughters and great-granddaughters are used.

Albanian is a companion of ancient Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, the language of ancient India, Zend, the language of ancient Persia, Celtic, Teutonic and others. But these languages we have listed, some of which were younger sisters of Albanian and much more recent than it, these languages, I say, have not been spoken for a thousand or several thousand years and survive only on the pages of a few old books. They are called dead languages, while Albanian, our language, which is older than they are, is alive and is still spoken today as in the time of the Pelasgians.

Without doubt, the Pelasgians are the oldest of the Aryan nations of Europe. We have many indications and much evidence which plainly demonstrate that those Pelasgians, who seem to us like a fable because of their extreme antiquity, spoke this language which we speak today. The names of the gods whom the Pelasgians worshipped and whom the mythology of the Greeks and Romans took from them, as well as many other words which history has preserved for us, and place names and so on, appear to be purely Albanian words, and show us that so many thousands of years ago the Pelasgians spoke this language that we speak today, almost without change, or with so little change that, were a Pelasgian to appear today, we could speak with him as a Gheg speaks with a Tosk or a Cham with a man from Gora.

The grammar of the Albanian language, the inflection of words into so many forms, the subtlety of its articles and pronouns and its other beauties, which none of today's languages possesses and which even the ancient languages do not possess in such abundance and perfection: all these

things show that Albanian is a very ancient language, surviving from remote and legendary times and preserved as it was, without corruption or alteration.

The mark of nationality is language; every nation is sustained by its language. Those people who forget or abandon their own language and speak another language become, in time, members of the nation whose language they speak, and leave their own nationality behind. Do not suppose that the many nations which have disappeared all died or were killed; certainly not. They mingled with other nations, adopted their languages and became indistinguishable from them.

Thus disappeared the Macedonians, Thracians, Phrygians, the Illyrians of the upper regions and so many other peoples who were Pelasgians, that is, Albanians like us, and who no longer exist today because they vanished and were forgotten when they lost their language. But the Albanians of those lands now called Albania have preserved their language very well; and so, in that little piece of land, the ancient language of the legendary Pelasgians is still spoken today.

How have the Albanians managed to preserve their language whole and uncorrupted through so many harsh ages? How has the Albanian language not been corrupted and changed, despite having no alphabet or books and not being written and read in schools, when languages written and cultivated with great care have been corrupted and changed so much that they are called different languages? The answer to these questions is very simple: the Albanians have maintained their language and nationality not through writing, learning

or civilization, but solely through freedom, through always remaining alone and independent, through not mixing with others and not admitting foreigners into their country. Remaining far from the whole world, from learning, civilization and trade; in a word, living like savages in the mountains, has preserved and saved the Albanians' language and nationality.

How is it that the Albanians never thought of writing and reading their own language? This is a great marvel. We do not mean those small and scattered branches and tribes of the ancient Pelasgians and Illyrians, for, living like savages in the mountains, they saw no need for it and such a thing never entered their minds. But the Macedonians, who had an organized kingdom, as did the kingdom of Pyrrhus in Epirus and of Teuta in Illyria, how did they not see the need to write in their own language? Philip, who strove to enlarge Macedonia and conquer Greece, why did he not wish to make his own language a written one as Greek was? Let us say Alexander had no time; but the Ptolemies, who revived the learning and language of the Greeks in Alexandria, how did they never once think of their own language and provide it with an alphabet, when they saw all the nations of Asia and Egypt each writing their own language? The Romans too learned Greek and studied philosophy and all the sciences in that language, but they had also made letters for their own language, Latin, and wrote and read many things in it.

Dr Hahn, the great German philologist who has written many truths about Albania, found in one part of Albania a stone inscribed in Albanian with letters which closely resemble Phoenician letters and seem to have been derived from them

without being identical to them. But these letters have not been seen elsewhere, nor is it known that they were in use in Albania. Some tombs and other stones inscribed in Greek letters in Asia Minor near Angora, and some others inscribed in Latin letters in Etruria in Italy, whose language is neither Greek nor Latin, appear to have been written in Albanian by the ancient Phrygians and Etruscans, who were Pelasgians, that is, Albanians. But these too are few and isolated things. It is apparent that the Albanians of old occasionally wrote in their own language using whatever letters they knew, just as more recently some wrote in Arabic letters, some in Greek and some in Latin. These are small matters, and the Albanians never thought of devising an alphabet to write their own language; and Albanian remained an unwritten language until our time.

I / What Albania Has Been

The Albanians Always for Others and Never for Themselves

As we said above, the Albanians have always been killed and struggled, and have sprinkled the whole face of the earth with their blood; but others have profited from Albanian blood, while Albania has seen no benefit. Many Albanians have distinguished themselves and proved their worth in learning and other fields; but it is others who take pride in them, not the Albanians and Albania.

The Greeks take pride in Pyrrhus and Alexander and call them Greeks. The Macedonians, who through their bravery

conquered the whole world in a short time, brought no benefit to Albania; instead, the Greeks, who were their enemies, followed them and surrounded them, and it was they who profited from the blood the Macedonians shed. For throughout all the lands they conquered, the Macedonians spread the language and civilization of the Greeks, not their own, which was Albanian. Much of the world still regards the Macedonians as Greeks today. Indeed, had it not been for the Macedonians, the language of the Greeks and their civilization could never have attained the fame they have today, and might perhaps have disappeared and been entirely forgotten; for the school of Alexandria and the scholars who arose in Egypt in the time of the Ptolemies caused the language and civilization of the Greeks to spread and become known throughout the earth. The Ptolemies, who were pure Albanians from Chameria, and all the Macedonians left their own Albanian language aside, forgotten and unknown, and advanced Greek, the language of Demosthenes, who spoke so much against the Macedonians.

After the Greeks came the Romans; they too profited greatly from the Albanians. The courage of the Albanians and their intelligence served the glory of the Romans, not their own. Many brave and learned men arose among the Albanians in their time too, but the world knew them as Romans and not as Albanians.

After the Romans came the Turks' turn. Mingling with the Turks, the Albanians took part in all the wars the Turks fought and won against the whole world; and it was the Albanians who showed the greatest courage and performed

the finest deeds, but the Turks received the credit, and the whole world thought them Turks, while no one knew them as Albanians. The greatest and best of Turkey's viziers were Albanians, such as Sinan Pasha, who conquered Yemen and carried Turkey's flag as far as the seas of India, and the Köprülüs, who saved the Turkish Empire from a great danger and strengthened it so much that they went and laid siege to Vienna. Many other great men and brave heroes also arose from whom Turkey benefited greatly, but Albania not at all.

In more recent times the Muslim Albanians have worked and died for the Turks, and the Christian Albanians for the Greeks: for these two nations, neither of which appreciates their service, and which repay it with evil by striving for the destruction of the Albanian nation. Botsaris, Tzavellas, Miaoulis and most of the other heroes who strove for the rebirth and freedom of Greece were pure Albanians and not Greeks at all; yet Greece profited greatly from their bravery, and Albania not at all. In the eyes of the world the Greeks were fighting the Turks, but in truth Christian Albanians were fighting Muslim Albanians. When the former won, Greece benefited; when the latter won, Turkey benefited; but the blood shed on both sides was Albanian blood. Albanians kill one another, brother against brother, and others profit. The Albanian has always shed his blood without stint, but has shed it in vain; Albania has never profited from Albanian blood. It has always been foreigners, and enemies of Albania, who have profited from that precious blood shed without thought!

Not only with sword and blood, but also with pen and intellect, the Albanians have always served foreigners. By not writing their own language, they have been forced to write in Greek, Latin, Slavonic, Turkish or Arabic; and the peoples to whom these languages belong take pride in their names, while the Albanians are thought savage and ignorant, and everyone laughs at them, saying that the she-buffalo has eaten their book. Yet Aristotle, the greatest philosopher of ancient Greece, was a Macedonian, that is, an Albanian, and not a Greek. It is true that there were also some Greek immigrants in Stagira, where he was born; but Aristotle's face, which we see in his statues, the careless and not very correct Greek in which he wrote, his friendship with Philip, the enemy of the Greeks, and other indications show that this great philosopher was not born of one of the Greeks who had come to Stagira, but of a native Stagirite, and was a Macedonian, that is, a pure Albanian.

In Turkish times many learned Albanians have arisen who have written books and poems in Turkish or Arabic. The Albanian poets who have written verse in Turkish alone are so numerous that their names could fill an entire book. Yahya Bey, who is one of the greatest and best-known Turkish poets, is an Albanian.

The Albanians have always shown themselves capable with both sword and pen, in bravery as well as in intellect and learning, and Albania has produced many distinguished men of great renown; but none of them has worked for Albania, which has always remained poor and unknown, while other countries and other nations take pride in its sons.

There was an Albanian capable of reviving Egypt and making that lost and ruined country, as it then was, into a rich and enlightened country, as it is today. A Mehmet Ali, an uneducated Albanian, proved capable of saving a foreign and distant country in this way; but never has there been an Albanian to do such a good deed for Albania.

Therefore, in concluding these words, we say again with bitterness in our hearts: the Albanians have always worked for others, and never for themselves. Only one Skanderbeg worked for Albania in times past, and he alone is truly a source of pride for Albania.

II What Albania Is

The Borders of Albania

We saw above how extensive the country inhabited by the Albanians once was in ancient times, how widely our forefathers were spread, and how they were divided into Illyrians, Epirotes, Macedonians, Thracians, Phrygians and others. We also saw how, in Roman times, the Macedonians, Thracians and Phrygians, through mingling with other peoples, began to lose their language and nationality, and how later, in Byzantine times, swarms of Slavs came into the Balkan Peninsula and occupied Thrace, Macedonia and Upper Illyria.

Since that time Albania has grown much smaller; of all those lands which our forefathers the Pelasgians possessed, only Lower or Southern Illyria, Epirus, and Upper or Northern and Western Macedonia have remained Albania. But today the names Illyria, Epirus, Macedonia and so on are abandoned and forgotten names of ancient geography; at present the country inhabited by the Albanians is called Shqipëri in our language and Albania in foreign languages.

Albania is a part of the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe. It occupies the middle of the western side of that peninsula, extending along the Adriatic and Ionian Seas from the 42° parallel to the Gulf of Arta, below the 39° parallel. Leaving the coast, Albania's northern borders rise northward, running along the borders of Montenegro and Novi Pazar as far as the Serbian border, above the 43° parallel. Its southern borders turn back northward along the

river of Arta and the Greek border as far as Zygo. As for the eastern borders, a line drawn from the Serbian border near Vranje to the Greek border at Mount Zygo, a line to be drawn along the mountain ridges where the waters divide and along the rivers, taking the nationality of the inhabitants into account as far as possible, that is, including places inhabited by other peoples: such a line will separate Albania from the other lands of the peninsula. Thus Albania extends lengthwise between 39° and 43° north latitude and widthwise between 17° and 19° 25′ east longitude. It is therefore about 450 kilometres long and 200 kilometres wide, and its area is about 80,000 square kilometres.

To the north Albania has as borders and neighbours Montenegro, Novi Pazar, or Bosnia under Austrian rule, and Serbia; to the east it has Macedonia; to the southeast, Greece; to the southwest and west, the sea, which separates it from Italy and civilized Europe.

II / What Albania Is

The Land of Albania

This country enclosed by the borders we have described is Albania, our beloved homeland. It is one of the most beautiful countries in Europe. Perhaps it is not so rich or so fertile, but it is very beautiful. It is mountainous, with lofty mountains of steep, jagged rock, but also with clothed uplands, dense forests, cold waters, hollows that retain snow in summer, beautiful flowers, grasses that feed livestock and herbs that heal people, and metals that have lain sleeping beneath the earth since the world was created. It has broad plains through which rivers flow that could irrigate them and turn them into gardens, but which at present, for lack of anyone to take charge, flood them and turn them into marshes. The plain of Myzeqe alone is enough to feed all Albania, if the rivers are cleared. The plain of Kosovo, the plain of Monastir, and the districts of Tetovo and Skopje are among the most beautiful places on earth, producing abundant grain and the finest fruit in the world. The olive-covered hills of Chameria and its orange and lemon gardens are without equal. The entire coast is covered with olive trees and beautiful forests, and oranges grow as far as the middle of Albania, at Elbasan. There are many rivers and streams. With a little improvement they could irrigate much land, and many of them could be cleared so that boats could travel on them from their mouths far upstream. Albania has the largest and most beautiful lakes in the Balkan Peninsula, such as the lakes of Shkodra, Ohrid, Prespa, Kastoria,

Ioannina and others. All these lakes are full of fish, and several steamships could ply their waters.

Even today Albania supports much livestock and many valuable domestic animals: sheep, goats, cattle, horses and so on. The curly-fleeced and smooth-fleeced sheep of Albania supply Istanbul and all the lands of Turkey with good meat, and Albania with wool. Myzeqe can produce many horses, which, although somewhat small, are strong and have a very good gait. The Albanians are very fond of livestock and every kind of domestic animal, and know how to keep them. If there were a government to provide them with facilities and clear the way for them, and if they also knew the science of livestock, how animals reproduce, how to rear them, and how to develop and improve their breeds, they could live by livestock alone.

In a word, although Albania is small, it has every kind of climate and every kind of soil, and much wealth and many good things. If properly cared for, it could prosper greatly and feed four times as many people as it feeds today.

II / What Albania Is

The People of Albania: The Albanians

Within the borders we described above, Albania has about 2,000,000 inhabitants, or even more. Of these, some 100,000 are Vlachs or Tsintsars in the Pindus Mountains and scattered in other places; and perhaps as many again are Greeks around Ioannina, and Slavs on the plain of Monastir and in the Kosovo region. But these too may be Albanians who have forgotten their own language and learned Greek or Slavonic at school and in church. Many of them also possess neither land nor houses of their own, but are tenant farmers on the land of others, who brought them from afar to work their land at a time when the Albanians could not put down the rifle to take up the hoe.

All the other inhabitants of Albania are pure Albanians, divided into Ghegs and Tosks. The Shkumbin separates Gegëria from Toskëria, though there are also a few Ghegs south of this river, and Gheg is spoken in some places there. There is no fundamental division between Ghegs and Tosks. They are all one nation and speak one language with very little variation, which will soon be removed altogether as the language is developed. In religion, too, the Albanians are divided into Muslims, who make up two thirds, and Christians, who make up one third. The Christians are divided approximately in half between Catholics, or Latins as we call them, and Orthodox. In Gegëria the Christians are

Catholic; in Toskëria, Orthodox. The Muslims are also divided into Sunnis and Bektashis.

But these religious divisions do not bring any separation or split among the Albanians. Religious quarrels, which not only in Eastern countries but also in Europe and in lands enlightened by civilization have often led to great and terrible massacres, are unknown in Albania; and in this country nothing has ever happened between Muslims and Christians, between Catholics and Orthodox, or between Sunnis and Bektashis. The Albanian is Albanian before he is Muslim or Christian. What he was when he had his own religion, the religion of the Pelasgians, he remained when he became Christian, and he remains after adopting the religion of Muhammad. Religion has never changed him at all, for he always places nationality before religion.

Through the strength of this attachment and this love which they have always maintained for their nationality, generation after generation, the Albanians have been able to preserve their nationality and language amid so many dangers that have overwhelmed them from time to time. Despite changes of religion and changes of the times, the Albanians are still today what they were so many thousands of years ago; they are the Pelasgians of legendary times, the Illyrians and Macedonians of ancient times, the Epirotes of Skanderbeg's time. They are a very ancient nation which has survived to this day as it was at the beginning.

The Albanians have everything a nation needs. They are so brave and strong that, although fewer than 2 million people, men and women, if pressed they can put 300,000 or even

more soldiers into the field, who are equal to a million from another nation. It is not only we Albanians who speak of the Albanian's bravery and his power and strength in war; even our enemies cannot hide it and say so constantly. Since this is so, there is no doubt that the Albanians are capable of defending their country against any enemy and any danger. Albania therefore ought never to be trodden underfoot by foreigners, but ought always to maintain its freedom. Why should the brave and strong Albanian not be master of Albania? Why should he not rule in his own country?

The Albanian is not only strong and brave, but also more intelligent than any other nation. Whatever school or course of study an Albanian enters, he distinguishes himself from the others and comes out above them all. In work and crafts the Albanian is no less capable than in war and learning: he works the land tirelessly, digs deep channels, and can carry out great and valuable works. He is an outstanding ironworker; he makes knives, scissors, weapons and so on. Once he sees a rifle produced in the factories of Europe and made with perfected machines, he is capable of making an indistinguishable one at once by hand and with imperfect tools. The Albanian also works silk, wool, cotton and flax; he makes cloth, felted woollen fabric, gauze and so on. He works leather and makes dressed skins, furs and the like. Cheese, butter, oil, wine and other things made from the milk of livestock or the fruits of the earth are among the most common products in which Albanians engage.

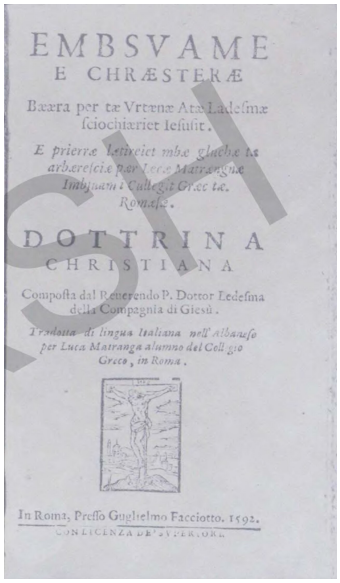
Albanian women, as graceful as they are honourable, more so than their husbands and almost as brave as they are, attend to the household work entirely on their own, without

involving the men. Even so, they do not leave the loom or embroidery frame idle; they make fine fabrics and very beautiful silken gauzes, and embroider with gold and silk. This is in addition to cutting and sewing clothes, knitting stockings and the other everyday tasks of the home.

In a word, the Albanians are brave, intelligent, hardworking and capable of every kind of work. Despite their religious differences they are not divided and split apart, but united; they love one another. They possess, that is to say, everything a nation needs in order to prosper.

II / What Albania Is

The Albanians Outside Albania


EMBSVAME
E CHRÆSTERÆ
Bæara per tæ Vrtænæ Atæ Ladesmæ
sciochtariet Iesusit.
E prierræ Lekureiet mbæ gjuhën tës
arbëreseie per Lecæ Matrangjæ
Imbanam i Collegjit Grec të
Romës.
DOTTRINA
CHRISTIANA
Composta dal Reuerendo P. Dottor Eedesma
della Compagnia di Giesù.
Tradotta di lingua Italiana nell' Albanese
per Luca Matranga alunno del Collegio
Greco, in Roma.
In Roma, Presso Guglielmo Facciotto. 1592.
CON LICENZA DE' SVPERIORI.

P08 · Title page of Lekë Matranga's Embsuame e Chræsteræ / Dottrina Christiana, printed in Rome in 1592. The Italian subtitle explicitly identifies its translation into Albanian, a landmark of Arbëresh literary history.. Editorial illustration added in this edition.

Besides the approximately two million Albanians in Albania, we also have more than half a million Albanians outside

Albania, in Italy, Greece, certain parts of Turkey, Montenegro and elsewhere. Of these, the Albanians of Greece and Italy are numerous. Those in Greece left Albania before the Turks, in Byzantine times; they fled from the Huns and other savage peoples who swept down from the north and overran Albania along with the other lands. Thousands of Albanians then left their homeland in terror of them and went to the Greek islands, the Morea, Attica and other parts of Greece. They found many of these places empty and uninhabited; but even where there were inhabitants, because they went and settled together they were able to preserve their own language, Albanian, which they still speak to this day. Hydra, Spetses, Poros, Koulouri (Salamis), Aegina and other islands are still inhabited entirely by Albanians, and nothing but Albanian is spoken there. Most of the inhabitants of Attica are Albanians: before becoming the capital of Greece, Athens was a purely Albanian small town, and no language but Albanian was heard in it. They say that at present one third of the inhabitants of Greece, excluding Thessaly, are Albanians; but if they are not a third, there is no doubt that they are a quarter. In those times many Albanians also spread into other regions; thus the island of Marmara near Constantinople and several villages near Adrianople and Philippopolis called Arnavutköy are inhabited entirely by Albanians.

The Albanians of Italy are found in Calabria and Sicily, where they have established villages and settlements and even entire cantons (small districts) of their own, and live apart from the Italians, preserving their language and their religion, for they are Orthodox. They number about 300,000

people, pure Albanians who speak Albanian. They left Albania after Skanderbeg's death, when Albania fell into Turkish hands. Many Albanians fled then, but most dispersed throughout Europe and disappeared, forgetting their language and mingling with the local inhabitants. Nevertheless, some great families, although assimilated, preserved the Albanian name, such as the Albani family in Italy, which has produced many great men who have served Italy through their learning and great benefactions. From this family also came a pope: Clement the Twelfth.

Of this multitude of Albanians who fled to Europe at that time, only those who went to the kingdom of Naples, which Skanderbeg had helped, were able to remain together and preserve their language and nationality until today. The language they speak is pure Tosk Albanian, somewhat corrupted and mixed with Italian, but it still preserves and retains many old Albanian words which we have abandoned and forgotten. Among the Albanians of Italy there are many learned and worthy people who have a great love for their nationality and language. They have collected many old poems and songs and published several Albanian books. They have also rendered great service to Italy and shown much bravery alongside Garibaldi.

Thus the Albanians on earth, in Albania and outside Albania, number more than two and a half million.

II / What Albania Is

What Are the Albanians Like Today?

We said above that, on falling into Turkish hands, the Albanians did not enter a cage, as they had imagined, and did not become the Turks' slaves, but their companions, with whom they fell upon other nations, plundered and pillaged, and then returned to their own country laden with wealth. Albania too was free and almost independent.

For so many hundreds of years the Albanians lived in this way. But do they still live like that today? Certainly not! Today the Albanians are slaves, subjected and humbled, trampled on and dishonoured far more than the other nations of Turkey! They are held lower than the Greeks, the Slavs, the Armenians and even the Jews!

Turkey has withdrawn its trust from the Albanians; it does not trust them and regards them as enemies and traitors, not as companions and brothers, as it regarded them of old. Today it takes the Albanian as a soldier, torments and beats him to make him learn its language, and seeks to teach him the art of war, which it does not itself know and which the Albanian learned while suckling his mother's milk. It does not teach the poor man, but stupefies him and drives him out of his mind; it takes him for three years and keeps him under arms for ten, far from his home and his homeland, and in what condition? Naked, hungry, sick and destitute! In war it has him killed for nothing; his commander, who is a Turk, ignorant and cowardly, puts him into a pit from which there

is no escape. Despite all this, the poor Albanian fights naked and hungry and with inadequate weapons, fights like a dragon, displays his courage and brings honour to the Turks and Turkey! But is it appreciated? Is he rewarded for the blood he sheds? Never! If the Albanian soldier does not die in war, he dies of sickness, lack of food and lack of clothing. Of those who go into the army, very few return to their homes. And who becomes a commander? Always the Turks. Half of Turkey's army is Albanian, but not even one hundredth of the commanders in Turkey are Albanian.

The Albanians, who were accustomed to paying nothing, have now been placed under such heavy taxes that they cannot raise their heads. The Turks, who have been their masters for five hundred years, have taught the Albanians neither work, crafts nor learning, but have taught them to fight and plunder; now, all at once, they want to take away their weapons and tell them, Pay! And where are the poor men to find the money to pay? They have nothing to eat themselves. Those Albanians who, a short time ago, wore gold-embroidered clothes and were fitted out with silver and polished weapons, they or their sons are naked today in a shirt so ragged that a dog could find nowhere to seize it! Then the gendarme or tax collector comes, raises his stick and beats them, shouting, Pay! Where is the poor wretch to find the means to pay? Then they sell his ox, his goat, whatever he has, down to the roof tiles of his house! An Albanian beaten to make him pay!! Oh, what a great shame! Oh, what a great evil! Do not endure it, O God!

Such is the condition of all Toskëria today, and of many parts of Gegëria. Some parts of Gegëria, which have kept their

weapons and held out in their rugged mountains, have not been so trampled on; they provide no soldiers and pay no taxes, but they too live like savages without any government, killing one another every day. Poverty is consuming them too, for they have no source of earnings and their lands are bare and poor. Despite all this, the Turkish government is also closing in on them day by day; it is trying to take away their weapons so as to make them too into abject and powerless slaves, and strip even the skin from them!

Albania, which until yesterday was governed and ruled by Albanians, as we said above, is now ruled and governed by foreign Turks and by base and dishonourable people who buy their posts in Constantinople with money and come to fleece Albania and the Albanians, to recover the money they have paid and as much again as they intend to steal for themselves!

Although Albania is poor and uneducated, it has people capable of governing their country, as they have governed it for so long with honour and justice. But these Albanians are not only denied employment in Albania; they are not even allowed to set foot in their beloved homeland! They are given a piece of bread to silence them and are kept like slaves in the remotest corners of Anatolia and Arabia! Only if some traitor is found is he held in honour!

II / What Albania Is

The Nationality of the Albanians

For a person in this life there is nothing more precious or more beloved than nationality. Just as everyone loves his father and mother and the place where he was born and brought up, so he loves his nation. Whoever does not love his nation and homeland is a traitor and a wicked man; such a person cannot be called human. The Albanians, more than any other nation, love and honour their nation and homeland. A true Albanian will die for his nationality and can never endure hearing anyone insult Albanian identity. In our Eastern regions people always place religion before nationality; a Greek, for example, on changing his religion also abandons his nationality, and if he becomes Catholic he says, I am a Frank; if he becomes Muslim he says, I am a Turk. Only the Albanian leaves religion in second place and puts his nationality first. Whether Muslim, Orthodox or Catholic, the Albanian is always Albanian. Religion never brings division or a split among them. That is why the quarrels that occur between religions so often, even in enlightened Europe, are unknown in Albania and have never occurred among the Albanians.

But despite this love which the Albanians have for their nationality and all the honour they pay it, they have done nothing to sustain and preserve it. What sustains a nation's nationality? First of all, its language. As we also said above, language is the first and greatest mark of a nationality. What sustains a language? Writing. An unwritten language cannot remain uncorrupted for long; through mingling with other

languages it is corrupted. You will ask how our language, without being written, has survived for so many thousands of years, and why it should not continue to endure in the same way. Yes, it has survived for so many thousands of years because the Albanians then lived on their own in their mountains, without mingling with other nations, and because the nations around them were uneducated too. In those days everything depended on the sword, and with the sword the Albanian was the strongest of all. Even so, we see that the Macedonians, although so powerful that they conquered the whole world, because they did not have their language in writing, lost their nationality as soon as they mingled with other nations more enlightened than themselves, and disappeared altogether, so completely that much of the world has taken them for Greeks.

Only the Albanians of Albania have preserved their nationality, by not mingling with foreigners and by living apart from the whole world, like savages. But if until today they have preserved their nationality and language through ignorance and without writing, will they be able to preserve them in this manner from now on, whether in Albania or in Italy and Greece? No, no, never! The world has changed, people have awakened, nations have become enlightened; each strives to advance ahead of the others, each looks for ways to grow and become greater, and takes care to swallow those that are smaller and weaker.

Today every nation, in order to preserve its nationality and language, needs to open its eyes, keep its wits about it, advance its language and take great care that neighbouring nations do not devour it and tear it to pieces. Between

nationalities there is no friendship, just as there is none in a game; each seeks to win for itself and devour its companion. Nations are like fish that eat one another. Woe to the weak!

II / What Albania Is

The Dangers Facing Albania

Until a short time ago Albania was surrounded by Turkish lands, and the borders of that empire were very far from Albania. The Albanians went with the Turks to defend the empire's distant borders, but they considered their own homeland beyond all danger and knew that no enemy could approach Albania. But today it is not so; today Albania has been left in a distant and isolated corner of Turkey and is surrounded by enemy borders. Montenegro, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria have enveloped and encircled Albania, and Austria has come to stand over its head. A narrow strip of land between Bulgaria and the Aegean Sea connects it to Turkey; the Bulgarians can seize this strip at the first opportunity, descend to the seacoast and cut Albania off and detach it from Turkey, which has no power at sea with which to help Albania from that direction. Therefore, in a war in which the Bulgarians also take part, the Albanians must be capable of defending their country themselves and must not depend on Turkey, which cannot manage its own affairs.

But apart from these dangers that will appear in wartime, Albania faces greater and deeper dangers which are uprooting it in peacetime, without blood or weapons. This is the war of the pen and the school, the war of nationality. The

nations surrounding Albania want to tear it apart and divide it among themselves. The Greeks, Slavs and other neighbouring nations do not want to recognize the existence of Albanian nationality. Each uses its religion and seeks to draw to its side those Albanians who share its faith. First of all, the Turk wants to draw away the Muslim Albanians and separate them from their brothers, the Christian Albanians, by introducing fanaticism and quarrelling between them. To separate the Christians from the Muslims forever and open a deep pit between them, the Turkish government does not recognize Christian Albanians as Albanians, but calls them Rum, meaning Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Latins and so on, while it calls the Muslims Islam; and it does not recognize the name Albanian and does not wish to hear it. Blind Turks! They cannot understand, and it does not enter their minds, that by this course they serve the aims of their enemies and tear out their own foundations and roots!

The Greeks, who won their freedom and the kingdom they possess today with the blood of the Albanians, of Botsaris, Tzavellas, Miaoulis and the other Albanian heroes; those Greeks who still retain the Albanians' clothes, fustanellas, leggings, shoes, dances and songs, are the worst enemies of Albania. The whole world knows the Greeks' Great Idea. Although in the time of Pericles, when they were greater and more enlightened than ever, they possessed less territory than they have today, and although they have no right to demand more, they ask to be given all the lands Alexander the Great conquered, or to revive the Byzantine Empire, without considering that Alexander was Macedonian and the Byzantines Roman, both peoples enemies of the Greeks who

brought Greece to ruin. Following this Great Idea, the Greeks have wanted to conquer and bring under Greece the whole Balkan Peninsula, including Romania and Bulgaria. But after losing these lands forever, despite all their shouting and shrieking, they have now narrowed their hopes to Albania and Macedonia. Following the general custom, they rely on religion to draw the Orthodox Albanians to their side and separate them from their Muslim and Catholic brothers; they try to make them forget their beautiful language and accustom themselves to speaking, writing and addressing others in Greek, and in this way become Greeks. They think that if the Christians become Greeks, Europe will not take the Muslims to its hearth, and when the time comes that country, that is, all southern Albania and all Toskëria, will be given to Greece.

Therefore the Greeks, on one side from Athens, with schools, teachers, books, doctors and many other things, and with large sums of money paid, once again, by mad and treacherous Greek-loving Albanians; and on the other side from Constantinople, through the patriarchate, the bishops, the priests and the Church, using anathema and expulsion from the Church, as though Christ too were Greek, and as though in order to be a Christian and Orthodox everyone must without exception be Greek or a Greek partisan: from these two directions, we say, the Greeks are striving to convert the Orthodox Albanians day by day and make them Greeks.

And the Orthodox Albanians, because of the ignorance and darkness in which they find themselves, are quickly deceived. It seems to them that they truly cannot be

Christians without being Greeks; they imagine that Greek alone is the language of Orthodoxy and that, on abandoning this language, which they know very little and cannot learn despite racking their brains, because it is so difficult, so lost and forgotten that even among the Greeks themselves very few people can learn it. These Albanians, unwitting traitors, are called Grecomans.

Praise be to God! Since Albanian began to be written, the Grecomans have begun to diminish day by day, to understand the Greeks' cunning and to withdraw from them, grasping their own nationality and language with both hands. They fear neither the Greek teacher nor the bishop of the Phanar; but the Greeks have a powerful companion, with whom they have firmly joined hands to destroy the nationality and language of the Albanians. That companion is the Turk, who helps Greece and the patriarchate of the Phanar in this work with all the means at his disposal. To do the Greeks' work, the Turkish government permits no school to be opened, no book to be printed, and no instruction or progress to take place in the Albanian language, while helping Greek schools in every way and keeping the Christian Albanians under the yoke of the clergy of the Phanar.

After the Turks and Greeks, Albania has as enemies the Bulgarians and Serbs, who want to do in the eastern and northern regions of Albania what the Greeks are doing in the south. In those regions too, many Orthodox Albanians, as ignorant and uncomprehending as the others, show a liking for the Slavs' languages and wish to forget the beautiful language their forefathers have spoken for so many

thousands of years. What a great shame! What great baseness and filthy servility! Yet the Turks help these Slavs too, leaving their hands free to do whatever they wish and binding ours tight; they give them decrees to open schools and metropolitan bishoprics in our lands, while they do not allow us even a little school! Without once considering whether it is the Greeks and Slavs or the Albanians who are Turkey's friends, and who have shed and still shed blood for it today!

Thus the Turks, and with their help the Greeks and Slavs, are the enemies of Albania and the Albanians; and they strive with every means at their disposal to destroy the nationality and language of this nation, whose very name they wish to eradicate. Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia each strive to destroy and remove Albanian nationality and the Albanian language from that part of Albania which has fallen to its share, and which it already regards as its own, by turning the Christians into members of its own nationality. Turkey, meanwhile, helps them in this work on the one hand, and on the other seeks to draw away the Muslim Albanians and separate them from their brothers, not for its own good, but to drag them too down with it into the deep pit of destruction into which it is falling, never to emerge.

These are the dangers facing Albania and the Albanians. The Albanians must guard themselves carefully against the cunning of the Turks, Greeks and Slavs, and stand against them with their own rights.

II / What Albania Is

The Friends of the Albanians

Although the Albanians are surrounded by enemies, and although the Turks and Greeks, who have a great need to be friends and allies of the Albanians, these two foolish nations do more than anyone else to destroy the Albanian nation, despite all this we cannot and must not say that the whole world is the Albanians' enemy. No, we have friends too; there are many who love us and can help us, if we ourselves are willing. All the nations of Europe, the French, Italians, Germans, English and others, all love and honour our nation; all marvel at the Albanians' bravery, their fidelity to their word and the many other good qualities they recognize in our nation. All the writers of Europe have always written well of us; they know us as brave and trustworthy men, and recognize us as the oldest and noblest nation of Europe. They have begun studying our language, giving it great importance in general scholarship. France has long shown a special affection for the Albanians, and especially for the Catholics and the Mirditans. Italy has three hundred thousand Albanians in its territory, who strove harder than the Italians themselves for the unification of Italy; to please them it wishes Albania well, and Albania is also its neighbour, which it does not want to see torn apart by the Greeks and Slavs. Austria cannot wish the Slavs of Serbia and Bulgaria to penetrate to the middle of Albania and spread and grow so much; it will want a brave nation like the Albanians as a friend and helper in the Balkan Peninsula against the numerous Slavs, just as it also supports the

Romanians. England, which desires the welfare and freedom of all nations, cannot fail to love the Albanians. Even Russia, which is itself Slav and the protector of all the Slavs, does not withhold kind words and help from the Albanians, just as it has never withheld them from the Greeks, although they do not love it and are enemies of Slavdom.

Thus all the great powers love and honour us, and we have many friends; but none of them is so much our friend that it will take our cause in hand and set to work on it of its own accord. Moreover, seeing us divided among three religions and mostly Muslim, they cannot imagine that we could form a single, united nation capable of governing itself. But when they see us at work and understand that we are capable of this, then there is no doubt that they will all help us obtain our rights.

Among the neighbouring peoples we have only one friend, which understands its own interest and knows that it cannot sustain itself without us. This is the nation of the Vlachs who live in Albania and near Albania. Some of them are Albanian Vlachs, who speak Vlach and Albanian, and some are Greek Vlachs, who speak Vlach and Greek. The Greeks have done and are doing to these Vlachs everything they have done and are doing to us Albanians; that is, they are trying to make them Greeks through their schools and churches. Until recently the Vlachs too had been deceived like the Orthodox Albanians, and wished to be called Greeks and to forget their own language by learning Greek. But in the end they too understood how precious language and nationality are to every person, and began learning their own language and opening schools of their own.

In this work the Vlachs can have no other helper and friend in the country besides the Albanians. Having broken with the Greeks, who cannot have their fill of roasting and eating those Vlachs who love their language, just as they do the Albanians, they needed to unite with the Albanians, with those who are true Albanians and love their language and nationality. Romania too, which is the mother of these Vlachs, or their paternal home, to use a comparison, knows well that the Vlachs of Albania and Macedonia cannot survive and preserve their language and nationality against Greek cunning except by relying on the friendship of the Albanians and uniting with them. That is why Romania has shown itself Albania's friend more than anyone else, and has desired and still desires the separation of the Albanians from the Greeks; and it was in Romania that the first society was formed, the first printing press opened and the first Albanian books printed. Albania will not forget this kindness from Romania and will repay it by loving and treating well the Vlachs of Albania.

But if a person is feeble and weak, everyone climbs on his back, not only enemies but friends too; to preserve his honour he must show himself capable against enemies and against friends. So it is with us: although the Vlachs love us and need our friendship, they nevertheless wish to be higher and more honoured than we are, although so much fewer in number and immigrants and foreigners in Albania. There are some Vlachs who wish to show Europe that the Vlachs are the mind and the Albanians the body, that the Albanians should fight and die while the Vlachs govern and judge. They do not hesitate to say that the Albanians have no need of

letters and schools, because they have the Vlachs' letters and schools. The Greeks and Turks also show us this generosity: they all love us enough to give us their languages and letters, and they all welcome us into their schools with open arms!

Therefore we should not trust the Vlachs too much either, although we wish to believe that this is not the opinion of all Vlachs, nor of the wisest among them. Whatever the case, we must think carefully about our own affairs and strive for our own cause ourselves, because in this life everyone strives for himself. The enemy wants to take your skin, and the friend your clothes.

II / What Albania Is

Writing the Albanian Language

We also said above that the foremost mark of a nation, and the thing that causes it to be counted as a nation in its own right, is language. A language that is not written and read is not regarded as a language, as with the Provençals in France, the Catalans in Spain, the Gaels in Britain and so many other peoples who each speak a language of their own but do not write their language, so that the world knows them as French, Spanish, English and so on, according to the language they write and read.

Therefore the first thing a nation that wishes to preserve its nationality must attend to is the writing of its language; and therefore those who wish to destroy and swallow up that nation insist on preventing it from writing its own language.

We have explained how the Albanians never took care from the beginning to write their own language, how Albanian remained unwritten until our time, and how our language was preserved because our forefathers lived apart and did not mingle with other peoples. But ours is not the only nation that did not have its language in writing; many other nations of Europe and Asia began writing their languages in this latest century. If Albanian has survived for so many thousands of years without letters, it cannot survive much longer from now on, because times have changed: no nation can live separate and alone, our neighbours have awakened and are advancing, and they are striving to swallow us up. Their first task is to make us forget our own language and learn theirs. Not only the Albanians of Greece and Italy, but also many of those in Albania, have begun neither to speak nor to know Albanian, although their parents knew no other language. If left unwritten in this way, Albanian, which has been preserved for so many thousands of years, would disappear and be forgotten in a short time.

Seeing this great, evil and terrible danger, some Albanians with hearts full of love for their nationality brought into the open the desire that every enlightened Albanian had kept hidden in his heart to write our beautiful language. Twenty years ago, at the time of the League of Prizren, a complete and perfected Albanian alphabet was made, with each letter having only one sound and each sound a letter of its own. When the Albanians saw their beautiful language written so well, they embraced the letters with both hands; societies were established in Romania and Egypt after the one in Constantinople, which could not survive long under the

Turkish yoke. A school was opened in Korça, and for the first time our language began to be taught. The schools did not multiply and advance as they should have, but Albanian writing spread throughout Albania, and men and women, boys and girls, all learned in a short time to write and read Albanian. In twenty years Albanian writing put down such sound roots and established such firm foundations that it can never be uprooted or overthrown. This tree, planted twenty years ago, blossomed and bore very sweet and beautiful fruit.

The progress of Albanian writing is death to the enemies of our nationality. At first they all said that this could not be done, that Albanian was not a language that could be written, that it was a poor and corrupt language, that it could not have a grammar, that no science could be written or taught in it, and so many other empty words, to make us abandon hope and not strive to write our own language. But then they saw that Albanian could be written very well, read very beautifully, that its grammar could be composed and proved better and more complete than those of all the languages on earth, and that all the sciences could be taught in it. They understood that in the time it took a Greek to learn the language of Homer, Euripides, Plato and other lost languages, and a Turk to study the vast and lengthy language of the Arabs and Persians without being able to master them, while these people were occupied with these languages, the Albanian had learned in a few days to write and read his own language correctly, and had also learned many necessary subjects.

When they saw these advantages of the Albanian language and the great progress of our writing, they understood that Albania would escape their claws, and all united to prevent the writing of Albanian. Turks, Greeks, Slavs and others, although enemies among themselves, joined hands against us. The Sublime Porte and the Yıldız Palace, the patriarchate of the Phanar, the government of Athens and others united in this work. The Turk forbade the opening of Albanian schools, seized books at customs, allowed not even a scrap of paper to be printed in our language, and regarded as enemies all who wished to write and read in it, calling them komitadjis, as was his custom. The Greek shouted and tore his clothes in Athens against the writing of our language, set a thousand intrigues in motion against the Albanians who loved their language, and killed many of them by the Turk's hand; the patriarch and the bishops hurled anathemas as God hurled thunderbolts of old.

All these prohibitions prevented Albanian schools from multiplying and spreading in Albania, and books, newspapers and the like from appearing in our language; but they could not prevent the Albanians from learning Albanian letters. The Albanian has grown accustomed to learning letters even without a school, out in the open, even without books and from writing done by hand.

Today Albanian is not an unwritten language as it was twenty years ago; today it is a language that is written and read, and one of the most beautiful. No language is read as easily and as well as Albanian. This has bitterly grieved and utterly poisoned our enemies, for, seeing that the writing of the Albanian language has put down such long and powerful

roots, they can no longer say today that Albanian cannot be written: for there it is, written.

II / What Albania Is

The Poverty of the Albanians and Albania's Lack of Leadership

Until some time ago Albania was quite rich and prosperous. The Albanians lived on soldiers' pay and the spoils of war, as well as on several crafts they practised. They wore their own clothes and footwear made in the country. Government taxes were very few and light. Of the money they brought into Albania from abroad, very little went out again; most remained in the country. This brought general prosperity.

Today things are not like that. The Albanians no longer go as paid soldiers, but are placed under a military yoke; they do not return from war clothed in gold and equipped with polished weapons, but naked, sick and exhausted. Nothing can be made in the country, because local workers cannot compete with Europe's factories. Even the few pennies that come into the Albanians' hands flow out of them and roll away to Europe. Government taxes are numerous and heavy, so that they can barely pay them. The old sources of income have been removed, and no new ones have taken their place. They pay separately for roads, yet there are no roads; the rivers flood the plains, and the fevers arising from these marshes make people continually sick and weak, unable to work, and cause them to die of disease and hunger. Thus a great and terrible poverty has covered all Albania.

The Turkish government is in Albania only to collect taxes and soldiers: come, young Albanian who has entered his twentieth year, go to the ends of the earth to be shut in a barracks naked and hungry! Come, poor Albanian, pay five grosh for a goat from which you cannot earn even half that sum in a year! This is the work of the Turkish governor; but there is no government. No sooner has the gendarme left the hut of the villager whose son or property he has taken than the robber enters to rob him, or the enemy to kill him, and that governor, who was capable of fleecing him, is not capable of protecting him from the robber or defending him against the enemy! The poor Albanian is forced to remain day and night with weapons in his hands to be able to protect his property and his life, if they even leave him weapons; for often the government takes his weapons away and leaves him with his hands tied before the thieves and enemies from whom it is incapable of protecting him. Not to mention that the governor often joins with the thief to fleece the honourable Albanian.

Can such a government be called a government? Never. Albania is in a terrible state of misgovernment. It has no government at all. The Albanians fight and kill one another every day; Albanian blood is shed uselessly and in vain, that precious blood of which not a single drop ought to be shed except for the defence and salvation of Albania!

Poverty, lack of government and ignorance bring quarrelling, division and hatred. The Albanians, poor, ignorant, divided and enemies of one another, are killing one another, shedding their blood in vain and perishing more and more! They have fallen into a deep and heavy sleep.

Their neighbours are awakening day by day, becoming enlightened, growing and taking great strides into Albania, which they stand ready to tear apart altogether!

Such is Albania today!

III What Albania Will Become

Can Albania Remain as It Is?

Albania is a part of European Turkey; its survival as it is today is bound up with Turkey's survival in Europe. Will Turkey survive much longer in Europe? No one can answer this question with a yes; the answer is no. Turkey has lived a long time in Europe; after the Congress of Berlin it was expected to live ten years; twenty have passed, meaning that it has lived a long time. This empire has done and is doing nothing at all to prolong its life. Like a sick man who does not do what the doctors tell him and brings on his own body's destruction, so this empire is doing everything necessary to shorten its days. We do not know how much longer it may live in Asia, and to speak of that lies outside our purpose; but in Europe its life is very short. Albania has laid no foundations and put down no roots of its own; it lives on Turkey's crumbling foundations and rotten roots. When this great edifice falls, Albania too will fall and be crushed beneath its heavy ruins.

The other nations of European Turkey began long ago to prepare themselves to stand on their own and not be crushed beneath Turkey's ruins. These nations are like the grasses that feed and grow strong beneath the winter snow, and when this cold, heavy burden is lifted from the earth's surface, they immediately begin to blossom and grow beautiful. But the Albanians, who have depended on the Turks for so many hundreds of years, although they see that this great edifice called Turkey has collapsed and its eaves are falling day by day, still do not give up sheltering beneath

it. This snow of so many centuries, which has nourished the other nations beneath it, has burned Albania's roots with its cold; Albania has frozen and withered in this long winter of dark tyranny, although it has not been trampled on as much as the other lands.

The Macedonian question has been placed on the green cloth of diplomacy; one way or another it will reach a conclusion. Rumelia will not remain as it is; the Turks' claws will be clipped a little, and they will no longer fleece the nations of these lands. The cries of the nations will be heard and their rights will be granted. Will the Albanians then raise their voices? Will they too demand their rights? Or will they strive until the last hour to maintain Turkish tyranny over their own heads and those of the other nations? That is the question.

The closer the time comes for the removal of the Turks' dark tyranny, the brighter grows the hope of salvation for the nations groaning beneath it. We saw above that in former times the Albanians were the Turks' companions, not their slaves; but today they suffer the greatest tyranny and are trampled on and crushed more cruelly than anyone. Since this is so, why do all the nations strive to throw off this oppressive shadow, while the Albanians want to keep it? Do they not see that they are lending their shoulders to a wall that is collapsing and will crush them as it falls upon them? The Albanians are like a man who has fallen into the sea and knows how to swim well, but in saving themselves they also want to save the Turks, who have fallen into the sea too and cannot swim. Yet these accursed men will not let the swimmer take hold of them in the proper way and bring

them out of the water; instead, they seize both his legs, or one leg and one arm, and will not let him swim. Thus their own nation is drowning, and it is also dragging the Albanian nation with it to the very bottom of the sea and drowning it. Why does the Albanian, who sees this danger with his own eyes, leave himself in the hands of this wicked and senseless man, who cannot save himself and will not allow himself to be saved, but treacherously seeks to drown even those who wish to save him? What should a man who falls into such danger do? Give a strong kick to this traitor who seeks to drown him, send him to the bottom of the sea and save himself. This is the way to salvation, and no other.

Turkey can no longer live, nor does it know how or wish to live, nor ought it to live. If the Albanians wish not to separate from Turkey, they must perish with it. This is a dead man; however much we love the dead, we must lay them in the ground. To wish not to part from him is like wishing to enter the grave with him. He is rotting, he has rotted, we can no longer keep him, for he fills the world with his stench.

Therefore we say again that Albania cannot continue to live as it has lived until today, not for a moment longer. Quite apart from Turkey being dead, so that it cannot live with it, even if this empire were revived and lived for some time yet, Albania would still be unable to live, for Turkey's revival is Albania's death. We saw above how the Turks bind the Albanians hand and foot and hold them for others, the Greeks, Slavs and so on, to devour and tear apart. Until today Albania has preserved its nationality and language, but from now on it cannot preserve them unless it too establishes schools and advances in learning. Yet the Turkish

government does not allow the Albanian to open schools and advance his language, while it leaves the others, its enemies and Albania's, free and unrestrained to do whatever they wish.

If things remain like this and Turkey lives a few more years, there will no longer be an Albania; this country will have been divided forever between the Greeks and the Slavs.

III / What Albania Will Become

Are the Albanians Capable of Sustaining and Defending Themselves?

Two things are needed in this life: right and strength. Right without strength, like strength without right, is like a single wing; no bird can fly with one wing. Occasionally strength without right achieves something, and right without strength is very rarely heard. The big fish always eats the little one.

Now there is no doubt that the Albanians have right on their side. How can the Albanian not have the right to write and read his own language, when all nations, even the feeblest and weakest, have this right and no one prevents them? Why should the Albanians be deprived of a right possessed by all the nations of the earth? Why should they be unable to write and learn their own language, while other, foreign nations come and open schools for them in their own languages and transform their nationality and language? Are the Albanians so weak? No! A thousand times no!

The Albanians are stronger than all the nations of the Balkan Peninsula. In proportion to their numbers they may be stronger and more robust than all the nations of the earth. Today, this very day, and as it now stands, Albania can raise an army of 500,000 men! Certainly 200,000 or 300,000 can take the field at once. Those who know Albania are not surprised at these numbers, for Albania has raised and constantly raises armies of this size. And it is a known fact that an army of 200,000 Albanians is equal to an army of 500,000 foreign soldiers. Even their enemies cannot dispute the Albanians' bravery.

We saw above how many brave deeds the Albanians have performed and how they have brought honour to the foreigners who were their masters or companions. Can those who have shown so much courage for foreigners, who have scarcely appreciated it, be incapable today of sustaining and defending their own country, language and nationality? How can they be incapable of defending this right, when they also have a strong country to help them? Until today they have always fought with strength alone, but never with right; today is the day to fight with right and for right. For a nation there is no more sacred right than its nationality, language and homeland. A brave man who fights for booty and plunder is always dishonoured; one who fights for such a right is doubly brave. Right gives him a force and strength that never lets him be defeated, but enables one man to defeat ten!

Then if the Albanians are so strong and brave, why do they sit with their hands tied while foreigners, weak and without any strength, as well as without any right, tear them apart

and destroy them forever? They sit with their hands tied because the Turk has tied their hands and holds them, and the foreigners tear them apart with his power and assistance! But is the Turk himself so strong that with one hand he can hold the Albanians' hands and with the other help their enemies? No, we know he is not strong, but he is a fox; he holds the Albanians through cunning and treachery. Let us put it this way too: the Albanians tie their own hands, because they are ignorant and blind!

Albania today is like a mighty dragon surrounded by a few jackals and foxes, which have bound its feet and are preparing to tear it apart and devour it. It need only stir and shake a little, move its hand and foot once, and all those jackals and foxes will scatter and will not dare even to turn their eyes to look at it. First it should bare its teeth at Turkey once and say: Stand aside and do not interfere, for I can see very well how you are repaying the kindnesses I have done you. I have been protecting you for five hundred years, and you hold my hands tied so that others can tear me apart; and you want to drag me too to the bottom of the pit into which you wish to fall yourself. What are the Turks? A savage people who came from the deserts of northern Asia, each with a goad in his hand. With their savagery they seized the most beautiful and most civilized countries in the world; and after plundering, wrecking and burning them, they have kept them to this very day under a barbarism, a poverty and a tyranny that terrifies the whole world. Among all these lands which have been groaning for so many hundreds of years is poor Albania, which suffers this tyranny, or suffers more than all the other lands because of the Albanians'

carelessness. The Turks are one of those peoples who have passed over the earth like a hailstorm or a snowfall. Where are the Huns, the Vandals, the Mongols, the Avars, the Goths and so many savage peoples who occupied half the face of the earth, burning, destroying and shedding blood? The Turks had no right to live longer than those companions of theirs; their survival and endurance until now have been a windfall, and now they have no right to live and endure any longer. Nor do they know how or wish to live any longer, for to this day they have not formed a nationality and a government like the rest of the world, but wish to live in barbarism forever. They will disappear and must disappear so that humanity may be freed from them, but what have they against us that, as they fall, they want to take us with them? What have we to do with them? Did we perhaps come with them? Never! We are neither Turks nor arrivals from the deserts of Asia. We are the oldest nation of Europe; we have more right to Europe's soil than any nation.

The Albanians are capable of defending and demanding this sacred right, even with weapons in their hands. When right combines with strength, it gains a force that nothing can withstand. The Albanians are therefore capable of sustaining and defending their right, that is, their nationality, language and homeland, against any enemy; they need only be willing.

III / What Albania Will Become

Albania's Salvation or Destruction Is in the Albanians' Hands

Albania today stands on the edge of a very deep and terrible precipice. Remaining on that edge is not possible; if it tries to remain there, it will tumble down the cliff and break into a hundred pieces. If it wishes to be saved, it must retreat from that edge and take its place on level and safe ground.

If Albania escapes the dangers surrounding it and enters the path of progress and prosperity, it will become one of the best and most beautiful countries in Europe. Although not a very large country, it is not much smaller than Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and others, each of which is a state of its own. It faces Europe and is a neighbour of Italy and Austria. It can very quickly enter civilization and mingle with Europe. It has everything it needs, as we saw above. The Albanians are very intelligent and sensible; they have a great aptitude for civilization and every kind of learning; they are brave and distinguished soldiers.

Our beloved homeland cannot live much longer as it is today. Either it will perish forever, and neither Albanians nor Albania will remain, or it will be saved and developed in a manner without equal in the world, envied by all the nations of the earth. Albania's salvation or destruction is in the Albanians' hands; if they wish, they will be saved; if they wish, they will perish.

The Albanians have no need to take up arms, withdraw into mountains and caves, be killed and ruined, as other nations do to win their freedom. The Albanians are not so trampled on and subjected that they are forced into such sufferings. They need do nothing except make an agreement among themselves, unite every one of them, give and receive a solemn pledge like men, stand unshakably by their word and demand their rights from Turkey and Europe. Turkey will listen to them and give them what they demand, willingly or unwillingly, and Europe will help them as it has helped the other nations, and will compel Turkey to give them their rights too.

III / What Albania Will Become

The Pledge and the League



P09 · A group photograph attributed to Pjetër Marubi and identified by its source as the Shkodër delegation to the League of Prizren, 1878. The identification and date have not been independently matched to the Marubi archive.. Editorial illustration added in this edition.

The Albanian's pledged word, his besa, is and always has been known and renowned throughout the world. The pledge an Albanian gives he does not take back or break; he keeps it as long as there is a flicker of life in his body. The pledge which has brought honour to the Albanian until today is the pledge that will now save him from every danger. Before anything else, the Albanians must make a great and general pledge among themselves and form a league and a union encompassing the whole of Albania. Every Albanian will enter this league and this pledge. Let them abandon blood feuds and hostilities among themselves; let them forget what has happened until today; whoever has blood to avenge, let him forgive it. Albanian blood is very precious; why should it be shed in vain? Why should we kill one

another when we need to unite and shed that blood against the enemies of the homeland? Thus bound by a firm pledge and united in one league, the Albanians will be like a single man, brave and strong, with one desire, one word and one purpose. Who will then stand against Albania and the Albanian, and who will dare seize or trample on his rights, as they do today when they find him divided and weak?

Come, men, Albanians! Grasp the pledge, the league and unity with both hands, for this will save you! Otherwise you are lost. Pay no heed to creed and faith; Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, all Albanians, however many and wherever they are, are brothers. All must unite beneath Albania's sacred flag!! The Albanian who abandons his brothers and separates from the Albanians to join Albania's enemies, drawn by religion, is a traitor, an enemy of the nation and the homeland. It would be better for such Albanians not to exist than to exist. They must be regarded as enemies and not as Albanians.

Praise be to the Lord! The league is being formed in Albania, the pledge is growing stronger and unity is spreading. The league began in one corner of Albania and is spreading day by day throughout the whole country. At first this league appeared different, as though foreign to the Albanians' purpose; but increasingly it is becoming clear that this is not so. It had to appear that way at first because those who established it wanted it so; without presenting itself that way it could never have been established, for they would not have allowed it. But once established and strengthened, it will be able to bring its purpose into the open and do what

must be done. The second and third meetings will confirm these words of ours.

We wish to believe and hope that this league, this assembly and this pledge now being formed in Albania will be the beginning of Albania's salvation; for all the Albanians have recognized Albania's great danger and understood where their salvation lies. Today's pledge is unlike the pledges of the past; it is a pledge for life or death.

The Albanian League must not be for a short time, but must endure continually until the Albanians are granted what they want and Albania is saved from danger. Until that day the league must stand and take the place of a government in Albania, for the Turkish government is a government for destruction, not for building; the Turkish government does not save Albania but ruins it. Therefore the Albanian League must take its place in all matters concerning our nationality and our rights; it must do these things itself or compel the Turkish government to do them against its will, and thus preserve our language and nationality and all the rights of the Albanian nation.

The league will have as many branches as Albania has sanjaks, and one centre. In each there will be a permanent council meeting once a week, and a large general council meeting once a year and whenever necessary. The members of the general council will elect the members of the permanent council, who will be: a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer and four or five members. When they see a need, these will convene the general council or communicate in writing with the great central council.

III / What Albania Will Become

The Aim of the Albanians

The Albanians' sole aim is to preserve Albania from being torn apart by foreigners, to maintain their language and nationality, to withstand their enemies' intrigues and to prevent the spread of the languages and ideas of the Greeks and Slavs, which are undermining the foundations and tearing out the roots of Albania and Albanian identity.

Everything that may harm this aim will be fiercely opposed by every true Albanian and by the Albanian League. Those things which will help this aim will be grasped by them with both hands and carried out, willingly or by force. The foremost of these is language; there can be no Albania without Albanians, no Albanians without the Albanian language, and no Albanian language without Albanian letters and schools in which Albanian is taught. Therefore, before all else, the language must be sustained, and the Turkish government compelled to lift the ban it has placed on Albanian and to allow Albanian schools to open and Albanian books and periodicals to enter and be printed freely in Albania. Every Albanian should first learn to write and read Albanian, and only afterward other languages.

The second is the Church: the Albanians must be freed from the yoke of the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian clergy and have their own Church with Albanian priests and an Albanian Gospel; for Christ was neither Greek nor Slav.

But to do these things, the present government must cease and a patriotic government be established, a government

that will work according to the Albanians' needs and rights. An Albanian government with open eyes, not a foreign and blind government like the one that exists today. Let it be a proper government, and then let it bear whatever name it pleases.

This is the aim of the Albanians.

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The Future Government

The government we have described is as necessary to the Albanians as the bread they eat and the water they drink. Without such a government the Albanians cannot revive and spread their language and maintain their nationality.

Albania must be demarcated as soon as possible, and it must be known where it begins and where it ends. Our country must be recognized as Albania, and Europe too must recognize it as Albania. The Albanians must illuminate and beautify their language through writing and learning; they must all unite and show themselves as one nation, which will possess the rights every nation has on the face of the earth.

Then, even if upheaval breaks out in the Balkan Peninsula and Turkey falls and disappears, Albania will stand on its own; no one will wonder what is to become of Albania, and no one will dare contemplate seizing a piece of it.

For the present this government will be under Turkey. The Albanians, who have been shedding blood for this empire for

five hundred years, will never desire its destruction, although they see that it is striving to destroy them and divide them among their enemies and its own. To the very end the Albanians will shed blood for this empire and keep their pledge to it, as they have kept it before. When they have such a good government and have grown properly strong, they will also be able to help Turkey more and better. But if Turkey persists and stubbornly follows the course it has taken, rolling into the pit of destruction and refusing its own salvation, as is its habit, then the Albanians will save themselves and will not perish together with this madman who is killing himself while having the power to save himself, as the whole world knows.

Thus this government will be under Turkey, but in such a way that, if Turkey falls, it will not drag it down too, and Albania will be able to stand on its own just as it is. As long as Turkey is alive, it must not be able to ruin and wreck Albania as it has done until today, and when it dies, it must not drag Albania into the grave with it.

But how will Albania obtain this kind of government? For we know that Turkey never gives anything out of love and kindness. Turkey is not a shepherd who wishes to feed and rear his sheep in order to take their milk and wool; it is a wolf which, once it seizes a poor sheep by the neck, does not let it go without tearing it apart, eating its flesh and crushing its bones. Turkey would rather lose Albania and divide it among its enemies than give it a wise and good government which would set it in order, beautify it and make it an enlightened country like the rest of the world. This is what they have done everywhere; in this way they have given

away and lost so many countries which they could have saved and held forever with humane government. For the Turks say: when we cannot kill and slaughter, beat, fleece, steal, burn and destroy as we please, what do we want those countries for? Better to abandon them altogether and let whoever wishes take them. With this thinking, the Turkish Empire still refuses to carry out the reforms in Rumelia and Anatolia to which it pledged itself at the Congress of Berlin more than twenty years ago. However much Europe presses it, it makes not even the slightest reform, but prepares for a war which will destroy it completely.

Therefore Turkey will give the Albanians nothing willingly either. The Albanians must take what they want against its will; they must demand it with words, but have their rifles loaded too. We still do not believe it will be so mad as to go to war with the Albanians; gone are the days when it sent Ghegs against Tosks and Tosks against Ghegs. Today not only the Albanians but perhaps many Turks too, and especially the Turks of Rumelia, will not attack the Albanians. The Albanians are not greatly frightened of the Anatolians. Besides, when the Albanians and Turks come to grips, will the other nations of the Balkan Peninsula watch from afar and not rise too to take their shares?

For these reasons the Turks will not be able to attack the Albanians; and some of the great powers, which do not want disturbances in the Balkan Peninsula, will intervene to prevent the fire from being lit and will compel Turkey to give the Albanians what they want. But if neither Turkey nor Europe wishes to listen to the Albanians, then the latter can frighten them by saying: we are ready to reach an agreement

with the small neighbours around us and divide European Turkey among ourselves, keeping Albania for ourselves and leaving the other lands to them. Whatever happens, the Albanians' voice will be heard and their rights will be granted.

Albania, from end to end, will be recognized as Albania and will have a government of its own, separate in itself. We want this government to remain under Turkey for as long as Turkey remains in Europe; and unless it strikes us and drives us away itself, we shall never wish to separate entirely from it. But events show that, on the course it has taken, Turkey cannot live much longer, especially in Europe, where its life is very short. What will then become of Albania? It will remain on its own. Very well, but how? What kind of government will it establish?

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The Head of Albania's Government

Foreigners sometimes, and Albanians constantly, wonder who will become prince or king, or whatever the head of government is to be called, when Albania stands on its own. If he is an Albanian, they say, no family in Albania is so great and so well known to all Albanians; then, if he is a Gheg, the Tosks will not want him; if a Tosk, the Ghegs will not want him; if a Muslim, the Christians will not look favourably on him; if a Christian, the Muslims will not be pleased. If a foreigner comes from Europe, he will come with all the balls, theatres and other European customs which not only the Muslims but even the Christians in Albania do not want. If a foreign Muslim prince or king comes, he will come with a caravan of servants, women, black attendants, qepe and so on, whom Albania has neither the time nor the means to feed and maintain.

But what need has Albania of one man at the head of its government? A king or prince would spend more than our country can afford; he would also spoil our character, taking some of us under his wing and alienating the others.

Strabo, the great geographer, writing about our country nearly two thousand years ago, says that although the Macedonians, Illyrians and Epirotes, that is, all the Albanians, have some small kingdoms here and there, their true government is a kind of council of leading men, which they call plakoni, meaning a council of elders, and these govern and administer justice in those lands. Why, then,

should we abandon this fine custom of so many thousands of years today and seek a foreign man to consume half of Albania's revenues and spoil all the nation's fine qualities? What need have we of such a man? Let us never abandon Strabo's plakoni, the council of elders which we have preserved to this very day, for the council of elders has always ruled in Albania. Let the Council of Elders rule and reign forever.

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The Administrative Division of Albania

Today we do not know exactly how far Albania will extend, so as to say definitely how many provinces it will be divided into; for on the eastern side we have some mixed regions, and we do not know which will be left to us and which will not. But speaking according to our wishes, we may say that Albania can be divided into 15 provinces, which, named after their capitals, are: Shkodra, Peja (İpek), Prizren, Pristina, Skopje, Monastir, Dibra, Elbasan, Tirana, Berat, Korça, Kastoria, Ioannina, Gjirokastra and Preveza. Each of these provinces will be divided into 3-4 districts [kazas], of which the central one will be administered by the governor himself and the others by deputy governors. Thus throughout Albania there will be 15 governors and about 50 deputy governors.

The centre of Albania, that is, the national capital, will be one of the towns situated in the middle of Albania in which

Albanian is spoken. But it would be better to build a new city in the middle of Albania in a healthy and beautiful place. This city, which we may call Skanderbegas, will be laid out in a very beautiful manner, with wide, straight streets, good houses, squares and everything necessary; and in a short time it may grow and expand greatly, because all Albania's leading men and enlightened Albanians will need to gather and build houses there. Thus this new city will be free of all the bad customs of the old towns; and because its inhabitants will have come together from every part of Albania, the language spoken there will also be a mixed one, which can be called the common language and literary language of all Albania. This city, with a small surrounding area, will be governed as a separate district.

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The Council of Elders

Each province will elect one of its leading men to the Council of Elders. These fifteen elders will gather in Albania's capital and elect from among themselves a president and a vice-president. The president of the Council of Elders will take the place of a prince or king in Albania: he will receive and see off visitors, sign all the cabinet's decisions, summon whomever he considers suitable and charge him with forming a new cabinet when the old one is changed, open the General Assembly and deliver the opening address. In a word, he will do everything kings and princes do in other countries; but he will do all this after it has first been discussed in the Council of Elders and after taking the views of the other elders too. He will do nothing on his own authority, for one man may be deceived and make a mistake, but fifteen mature and seasoned men cannot all be mistaken. Although the president of the Council of Elders will possess the honour of the head of government, in practice it will not be he alone but the whole Council of Elders that rules. When the president of the Council of Elders is ill or away, the vice-president will attend to the business and take his place.

The elders will be elected for four years, as will their president, but they will not all be replaced at once; half will be elected at one time and half two years later. Thus half the elders will be replaced every two years. The president will be replaced with one half and the vice-president with the other, so that the council is never left without both president and vice-president at the same time. But if the vice-president is

elected president at the second election, a vice-president will then be elected only for the two years that remained to him.

Each elder will have a secretary, and the secretary to the council's president will be chief secretary. The secretaries will not be replaced along with the elders. Each province of Albania will maintain constant correspondence with the elder it has elected, writing to him about any complaint it has against government officials or others, and about any deficiency in its locality. The secretaries will keep and preserve these communications in orderly fashion, and after each elder has read them with his secretary, they will be put before the Council of Elders to consider what must be done and to write to the prime minister or the minister whose business it is. In this way the Council of Elders will also be an intermediary between the inhabitants and the government, to put every matter in order and ensure that no one has cause for complaint.

The Council of Elders will be permanent and meet every day. Only during two months in summer, half in the first month and the other half in the second, will they have leave to go to their own districts to rest and also see the needs of the locality.

Those elected to the Council of Elders will be drawn from the leading men and people whose word carries weight, and will be 30 years of age or older, whether literate and educated or not.

The Council of Elders will also examine the decisions of the General Assembly and always maintain a middle course, preserving moderation, the customs of the country and the

Albanians' character, and tempering a little whatever it finds too impetuous and fiery.

As the elders change, all Albania's leading men will have their turn to enter this council, and many will be able to become its president; no one will be left with grounds for complaint. Even those who are not sufficiently educated to hold the chief administrative posts will be able to enter the Council of Elders and will not be left without a share.

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The General Assembly

Two representatives will be elected from each district, that is, about one delegate for every 20,000 inhabitants. These, who will number 100 people, a few more or a few less, will gather in Albania's capital and form the General Assembly, which will meet once a year and remain in session for one month to examine the budget and all the country's public affairs, as well as many matters referred to it by the cabinet or the Council of Elders. The elected representatives, that is, the members of the General Assembly, will be elected for 4 years, but half of them will be replaced every 2 years. Voters must have completed their 20th year and possess a house, field or any kind of property on which at least 5 pieces (francs) a year are paid to the government, or have attended a school and know how to write and read. Those elected must have completed their 25th year and possess a house and land or other property on which at least 10 pieces a year are paid to the government, or have completed a secondary or higher school.

Every law to be enacted, every tax to be imposed and all major works, such as railways and so on, after being carefully considered and decided by the Council of Ministers, will be put before the General Assembly. Once that assembly has approved them, they will also be put before the Council of Elders, and if approved by the elders too, they will return to the Council of Ministers bearing the signature of the president of the Council of Elders.

On assembling, the elected representatives will elect a president and a vice-president from among themselves.

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The Ministers

The ministers who will govern Albania according to the laws will be seven: the ministers of internal affairs, foreign affairs, the army and navy, finance, justice, education, public works, and religions. One of them will be the head of them all and of the council they form when Albania is independent; while it is under Turkey, the head will be the governor-general, who will be sent from Constantinople for five years. The Sublime Porte will communicate his name to the Council of Elders, and the Council of Elders will convene the General Assembly; if these two councils approve the man, he will be sent. If not, the president of the Council of Elders will reply to the Porte and tell it to choose another, and so on until one is approved.

Each minister is answerable for his actions before the General Assembly and the Council of Elders, and the prime minister or governor-general will answer for them all.

The Council of Ministers will meet once or twice a week to discuss the affairs of government, and each minister will bring for discussion those matters which he has not ventured to undertake on his own authority. On certain important matters this council will enter into correspondence with the

Council of Elders, and when it sees a need, it will meet with the elders for joint discussion.

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The Armed Forces

Every Albanian will be a soldier from the age of 20 to 40. On entering his twentieth year, he will enter the training army [nizamiye] for one year only. During this year he will stay in the barracks [kışla] nearest his home and learn the art of war and all the lessons a soldier needs. If he learns them in less than a year, he will apply in writing for his release, and if his commander confirms it, he will be released. Those leaving the training army enter the ready reserve [redif], which is divided into three classes, the first of 7 years and the other two of 6 years each. The first class assembles for one month a year to repeat its training [talim], the second for two weeks a year, and the third for only one week. They gather in the capital of their district, where they have their commanders and their weapons and clothes, each with his own number. Whenever there is a need and an order is given, the ready reserve will immediately be called to arms: for a small need, the first class; for greater needs, the second too; and finally the third class, to be sent where required.

After forty, every Albanian is a home-defence soldier (müstahfız) until the age of 60. These will be called to arms only in wartime, to defend the country.

Albania's army, which in this way will not exceed 20,000 men in peacetime but may rise to 500,000 in wartime, will be divided into four corps: one on the Greek border, one on the eastern border, one on the northeastern or Serbian border, and one on the northwestern or Montenegrin border. Ioannina, Monastir, Pristina and Shkodra will be the headquarters of these corps. In the centre of each province there will be a commander [general], in the centre of each district a commander of a thousand (binbaşı), and in the communes junior officers as needed.

These commanders will not be involved with the training army, which will have its own commanders and be stationed in a few places; they will command the ready reserve, which they will assemble during the training period. At other times they will keep its registers in order and also command the security force [gendarmerie]; whenever a disturbance occurs which the latter cannot handle, they will immediately summon the ready reserve of one class from one or several communes, and with these men suppress the disturbance and restore peace.

The naval force will be somewhat different and remain under arms somewhat longer for training, as will the [cavalry] and artillery. The sailors will serve on several warships based at Ujë i Ftohtë (Pasha Liman) near Vlora and will guard the coast from Ulcinj to Sallahora.

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Education and Learning

If there is one thing to which the Albanians must devote the greatest care, it is unquestionably learning. All communes and all villages, or two or three nearby villages together, must have primary schools, and towns must have more than one, according to their size. All boys and girls from the age of 7 to 13 will be obliged to attend school without fail, and parents who do not send their children to school will be reprimanded and compelled to send them. Instruction will be free of charge, and the poor will also be given notebooks, paper and so on without charge. In the centre of each district there will be a secondary school for boys and one for girls. In the centre of each province there will be, besides secondary schools (rüşdiye, scholeion), upper schools (idadiye, gymnasion) for boys and girls separately, and schools for crafts suited to the locality, or for agriculture and so on.

In Albania's capital, besides secondary and upper schools, there will be a university (darülfünun, panepistēmion), a military school, a school for mining and forestry, one for agriculture and many others for particular sciences and crafts. Later two more universities should be opened: one in Upper Albania and one in Lower Albania. The naval school must be on the coast, where the warships are also based, in Durrës or Ujë i Ftohtë near Vlora.

A council of learning, an academy, must be established in the capital to attend to the language and the books that are needed, and so on. A government printing press will

undertake the printing of books needed for the schools and publish scholarly periodicals and everything necessary to awaken the Albanians. Several societies will be formed with the help of the Ministry of Education to advance the geography, history, geology, mineral resources and other studies of Albania. Each of these will publish a periodical once a month or more frequently, setting out everything the society has discovered or devised.

In Albania's capital there will be two large language schools. In one the modern languages of Europe will be taught: French, German, Italian, English, Slavonic, modern Greek and others; in the other, the ancient languages: ancient Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and others. Each of these schools will have a council composed of people who know these languages, and they will endeavour to write and print textbooks and other works in them. The government printing press will possess the type for all these languages in order to print them.

A general museum will be established in the capital for all the antiquities, statues, images, inscribed stones and so on found in Albania and elsewhere, and the administration of this museum will dig and excavate all the sites of ancient cities in search of antiquities. Another museum will be devoted to natural history, and its council will conduct investigations throughout Albania into the country's plants, trees, minerals, living creatures and so on, as well as the ancient objects of [geology] and anthropology. Each of these two museum councils will publish a monthly periodical in which they will describe their investigations and discoveries, as well as much knowledge of what is being done in Europe

and elsewhere in these fields. A large library will be established to contain books and other necessary and valuable writings in all the languages that can be understood in Albania.

In those parts of Albania where languages other than Albanian are also spoken, such as Bulgarian, Greek and Vlach, those who speak these languages will learn both their own language and Albanian in primary school; secondary and higher schools will be Albanian. But if they wish, they may also establish higher schools in their own languages for themselves; however, unless they know how to write and read Albanian, they cannot enter any government employment or be elected as members of the councils.

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Public Works

After education, the Albanians' concern and greatest need will be public works, which will bring great prosperity and wealth to Albania. Roads, railways, harbours, the clearing of rivers and lakes, mines, forests and so on are the most necessary and valuable undertakings Albania will carry out once its hands and feet are untied. The roads, for which the Albanians now pay enough to pave all Albania's roads with [silver], can be built with far less money by a just and honourable government, so that people and animals can travel safely in every direction.

A railway should start from Monastir and, after passing through Korça, divide into two branches, one ending at Preveza by way of Ioannina and the other passing through Berat and Skanderbegas, then dividing again into two, one ending at Vlora and the other at Durrës, with a branch also extending to Elbasan. Another line from Monastir should go to Ohrid and from there follow the Drin, with one branch descending to Shkodra and Lezha, and the other passing through Prizren and joining at Ferizovik the main line leading to Salonica and Austria.

These railways, with a few secondary branches as well, can be completed in a short time, either by foreign companies or by Albania itself with a small loan, and bring great wealth and civilization to the country.

After the roads, the first work to undertake is Myzeqe. This broad plain is a great bread trough which can feed all Albania and also produce much grain and other goods, if properly improved. To improve this plain, the rivers must be cleared: the Seman, the river of Berat, the Devoll and others, as well as the Vjosa and Shkumbin which flow along its edges. These rivers must be deepened and embankments built where necessary so that their waters do not spread over the plains. Sluices and channels which can be opened and closed can then be made to irrigate the entire plain. It will then also be possible to drain the many lakes and marshes in which excess water remains in summer, putrefying and spoiling the air of the whole region; and in winter that whole plain will be saved from becoming one continuous waterlogged marsh. Myzeqe will become a broad and extensive field which, being irrigated and possessing very

fertile soil, will become a second Egypt. The hills of Myzeqe can be covered with vineyards and olive trees, and its meadows can feed enough horses and livestock to supply not only Albania but Europe too.

The opening of the harbour of Durrës, a broad and beautiful harbour on the northern side of that town, which Sultan Mehmed in his ignorance blocked to keep Venetian ships from entering. Opening the entrance to this harbour and deepening its interior will revive the town as it was in ancient times and make it a second Trieste or another Salonica. Many other harbours can also be opened and cleared along the Adriatic coast, such as Butrint and others, and many ports with great trade can arise and flourish.

A steamship company can be established to operate steamers among Albania's ports and as far as Trieste and the ports of Italy and Greece. Steamers and boats can also operate on the lakes of Shkodra, Ohrid, Prespa and others, as well as on some of the rivers that are to be cleared.

All these works, as well as the forests and mines, will be supervised by the Ministry of Public Works. Each forest will be divided into several sections, and by the time it is the last section's turn to be cut, the section cut first will have grown again; thus timber will always be cut from the forests, yet the forests will never be exhausted, but will renew themselves and always flourish. Minerals will be sought throughout Albania and extracted wherever they are found.

Crafts and trade, as well as agriculture and livestock, will also be under the care of this ministry, which will endeavour to advance in each locality the craft to which its inhabitants

are accustomed: wool, flax, cotton, silk, iron and timber should be produced and worked as much as possible, so that Albania will not have so great a need to bring these things from abroad.

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Religious Affairs

One of the ministers, that of education or justice, will also be responsible for religious affairs. A grand mufti for the Muslims, an exarch for the Orthodox Christians and an archbishop for the Catholics will oversee all the affairs of the three religions in Albania. Mosques, churches, tekkes, monasteries, muftis, imams, muezzins, priests and all religious personnel and establishments, as well as their property and pious endowments, will be supervised and set in order by these three great dignitaries, each of whom will also have two councils to deliberate on these affairs. The minister responsible for overseeing these matters will assist them and also examine their accounts, without interfering in purely religious affairs, in which only the religious councils may intervene. Of the two councils which we said each religious leader would have, one will consist entirely of religious people: muftis, ulema, teachers of theology, dervishes, or bishops, priests, theologians and so on; the other will be composed of such people together with laypersons. The first will deal only with religious matters and also examine religious books; the second will oversee the administration of mosques and churches, examine the accounts and attend to other such matters. Some members of these councils will be appointed by the religious leaders and confirmed by the head of government on a submission from the minister of religious affairs, while others will be elected by the inhabitants.

The religious leaders, that is, the grand mufti, the exarch and the archbishop, will be held in great honour, but will concern themselves only with religious affairs, as will the other muftis, bishops and all religious personnel. The ulema, dervishes and clergy will not interfere in teaching or schools either, except for religious instruction, which they will give in mosques, madrasas, churches and so on.

The Bektashis, who are fairly widespread and numerous in Albania, will have a chief baba in one place in Albania, who will appoint the other babas and, together with a council composed of babas and dervishes, supervise and set in order the affairs of the tekkes and the order.

All other religions will be unrestricted and free in Albania; Jews, Protestants and others will each have a head of their own under the supervision of the minister of religious affairs.

Every person holds his religion for himself, and no one has the right to compel another to believe something or perform a religious act against his will. Religious leaders, the ulema and the clergy may bring people to the path of faith only through words and kindness, and this within mosques, madrasas, tekkes, churches and so on, not outside them. No person will be compelled to pay anything for religious activities or establishments; only whoever wishes may give whatever his heart desires.

III / What Albania Will Become

Financial Affairs

Today, according to the taxes collected by the Turkish government in the four vilayets, including customs, salt and so on, Albania yields about 3,000,000 Turkish liras a year, apart from what is stolen, embezzled and wasted.

It is true that most of the taxes are excessive, such as the livestock tax and others, and must be reduced to relieve the people. But against these there are so many resources now lost and wasted, such as forests, minerals and many other things, which, if properly managed, could bring great wealth.

With all these things, and if properly managed, Albania can have much greater annual revenue; but let us be content with 3,000,000 French liras, about which there is no doubt, that is, 60,000,000 francs.

When Albania is independent, it must at once mint distinct and clearly defined coins. A gold lira will be worth 20 pieces (francs), and each piece will be divided into 100 cinga (centimes). There will also be half- and quarter-liras in gold, as well as two-and-a-half- and five-lira coins, that is, 50 and 100 pieces together. The pieces will be of silver. There will also be coins of two and a half and five pieces together, as well as half- and quarter-pieces, that is, 50 and 25 cinga in silver. In nickel there will be coins of 2½, 5, 10 and 20 cinga. These will be all Albania's coins; but their foundation and basis will be the gold lira. The silver and nickel coins will serve only to make up small sums and will be so few that they cannot change the value of the lira according to the

market price of silver and nickel, as happens in Turkey today because of the abundance of silver mejidiyes.

A national bank must be established in Albania from the outset. All those who have money and do not know where or how to keep it, and lose not only the interest but often the principal too, will leave their money without fear in this bank, endorsed and guaranteed by the government. The government too will not keep the taxes it collects in cash chests, but will immediately give them to the bank. The bank will have branches in every province and in some commercial districts. Thus it will be available throughout Albania, and no one will need to carry money in his breast or purse; the bank will be everyone's cashier. It will put to work all the money it receives from the people and the government, bringing prosperity and beauty to the homeland, and in its place it will issue paper money, banknotes, which will be used more widely among the people so that gold and silver do not remain idle and without earning interest.

Two things often corrupt the officials of a government: excessive salaries, which open the way to extravagance and ostentation, and low salaries, which make them steal and neglect their work. Therefore in Albania salaries must be neither very high nor very low.

By way of example, we can set out officials' salaries and see what they might all amount to each month:

		each	pieces
	President of the Council of Elders	3000	3000
	Vice-president	2500	2500
13	Members	2000	26000
15	Secretaries	300	4500
7	Ministers	2000	14000
	Prime minister	2500	2500
8	Chief secretaries	1000	8000
8	Clerical offices	2000	16000
3	Religious leaders	2000	6000
3	Their councils and secretaries	2000	6000
15	Governors	1500	22500
15	Chief secretaries	750	11250
15	Finance inspectors	750	11250
15	Education inspectors	750	11250
15	Public works inspectors	750	11250
15	Judicial inspectors	750	11250
15	Accountants	2000	30000
50	Deputy governors	750	37500
50	Secretaries	300	15000
50	Deputy finance inspectors	300	15000
50	Other clerks, etc.	300	15000
50	Courts of first instance	1000	50000
15	Courts of second instance	2000	30000
1	High court	5000	5000

		each	pieces
50	Secondary schools	2500	125000
2000	Primary schools	200	400000
20	Higher schools	5000	100000
		fr.	989750
	Brought forward	-	989750
10	Academy, printing press, observatory, museum, library, etc.	5000	50000
20000	Soldiers, average per man	40	800000
	Wartime army cadre and gendarmerie		500000
	Roads and other public works		500000
	Warships		500000
	Representatives in foreign countries		25000
	Miscellaneous		75000
	Per month		3439750
	Which makes per year		41277000
100	Members of the General Assembly at 1000 pieces (2 months)		200000
	President, vice-president and secretaries		10000
	Per year	-	41487000

Thus total expenditure does not amount to much more than 2 million liras, and nearly one million liras remain, to be spent on building railways, carriage roads, harbours and other public works, as well as ships and steamers for war and trade. As these things advance further and further, they will increase Albania's revenues year by year, so much that a day may come when the country can be governed on

customs and trade duties alone. The poor villagers will then be freed from the taxes they pay on themselves, their livestock, their land and their houses, taxes that are breaking their backs and will not let them breathe. Then the Albanians, like the Americans today, will live as if in paradise.

On one side Albania's coin will bear an eagle standing on its feet with wings half spread and a star (God) above its forehead, that is, the emblem of Albania, with the name Albania around it and, beneath the eagle's feet, the year in which it was struck. On the other side it will have, in the middle of a wreath of branches, the number, and below it the name of the pieces or cinga.

III / What Albania Will Become

The Communes

The happiest country in the world is the one where the hand of government is felt very little. As far as possible, the government should have no direct dealings with the inhabitants. For this purpose the communes must be well organized, so that the inhabitants know only these, while these know the government and deal with it. The commune will collect taxes and deliver them to the government; it will hear minor disputes among the people; it will build the small roads between villages and the streets of towns; primary schools, markets and other affairs of towns and villages, as well as public forests and gardens, fields and vineyards, will be under its supervision.

Every small town will constitute a commune (belediye); larger towns will be divided into two or more communes. Among rural settlements and villages, several that lie close together and collectively form a basin or area will count as one commune. Thus every district will be divided into several communes.

Each commune will have its general assembly, comprising all men who have passed the age of 20 and who possess at least a house and a field, vineyard, garden or other property on which at least 5 pieces (francs) a year are paid to the government, or who know how to write and read. Once a year this general assembly will elect a communal head [nahiye müdürü or belediye reisi], a deputy or assistant communal head, three members of the communal council, and a president, a vice-president and three members of the peace tribunal (justices of the peace). Their names will be communicated to the deputy governor, who will immediately forward them to the governor, and he will confirm and return them. The road and forest guards, tax collectors (tahsildars), communal gendarmerie and so on will be under the communal head's orders. The inhabitants' taxes will be collected by the commune through the tax collector, with the assistance of the gendarmerie when necessary, and sent ready to the district administration. All minor cases, whether concerning debts and transactions or offences, will be heard in the commune's peace tribunal, which may also hear larger cases if both parties agree.

Thus all local affairs will be attended to by the commune, and the inhabitants will know no government other than the commune they themselves have elected. The government

will intervene only in major and general matters, in affairs which the commune, being unable to settle them itself, will refer to the district administration.

The commune will have its own taxes, collected either on houses, fields, vineyards, forests and so on, or on markets, sales, purchases and the like. These taxes are outside the budget, and with them the commune will be maintained and the guards and others paid.

III / What Albania Will Become

Conclusion

From everything we have said, it is very clear how Albania can be governed and what a beautiful country it would become with such a government! How it would advance and prosper! In a short time it would become one of the most beautiful countries in Europe and in the whole world. In this way the Albanian nation would soon become one of the most enlightened and civilized nations on earth, and the Albanians, who have lived for so many hundreds of years in bondage, poverty and great oppression, would all become rich and happy and live as human beings!

What is needed to save this poor nation and this impoverished country from the great darkness that has covered it and from all the dangers that surround it, and to make it flourish as we have described? Very little: only the will! It is enough for us to want it. If we want it, we have the power to make Albania as we have described and save it

from every danger and every calamity. Since it is in our hands, in the hands of us Albanians, to save or destroy Albania, let us think how great a crime it is to sit still and do nothing! This is to kill our homeland with our own hands. When we have the power to save it and do not save it, that means we are killing it with our own hands!

But what are we to do? Here is what we must do:

Every Albanian must always, night and day, keep in his mind and heart the salvation of Albania and the progress of the Albanian nation. How is this to be achieved? Every Albanian who wants this must want the unity of the Albanians; all Albanians are brothers, with one blood in their veins. There is no Turk and no infidel; all are Albanians! Whoever is a true Albanian must regard true Albanians as brothers and love them from his heart, even if they are not of his religion. The Albanian was Albanian before becoming Christian or Muslim.

Therefore the true and good Albanian, and anyone who wants Albania's salvation, always and everywhere places nationality before religion; his brothers are not those who share his religion, but those who share his nationality. True Albanians are a special brotherhood among themselves; their brotherhood must be so close that nothing can divide or split it and nothing can come between them. Just as Freemasons and Bektashis are brothers among themselves, so must true Albanians be.

An Albanian is anyone born of Albanians who speaks Albanian, but a true Albanian is one whose mind and heart are Albanian. These true Albanians are genuinely and purely

Albanian. They love their language and nation and strive for the progress of the homeland. When all Albanians, or most of them, become true Albanians in this way, Albania will then be established and saved from every danger. Therefore every Albanian must first himself be or become a true Albanian, and then strive to make others such companions too, so that little by little and person by person they all become true Albanians.

Today many Albanians, ninety per cent we may say, are not Albanian in either mind or heart; they neither love nor honour their nation and language; they do not want to read and write in their own language, and many are ashamed even to speak Albanian! But if they are ashamed to say that Albania is our mother, Albania has far greater shame and disgrace in being seen to have such sons! The Albanian nation is not a nation to be ashamed of; belonging to so brave and intelligent a nation is no shame, but a great honour. If our nation has fallen behind, it is not its fault, but ours; if the Albanian language has remained unwritten, it has not done so because it is a poor or defective language, but only because we have not taken care to write it. The nation is not to blame, the language is not to blame; the fault is ours. We are the oldest nation of Europe and the noblest and bravest; we speak the oldest and finest language of the Aryan family.

Those Albanians who do not know how to value their nation and language, who do not like them and are not ashamed to wish to be called Turks, Greeks, Slavs or something else, are mad and ignorant traitors. Their existence is a great disgrace to Albania and the Albanian nation. What a great shame when an Albanian, in whose veins the blood of Skanderbeg

and his companions flows, debases his nation and his mother's language and honours a foreign language which he strives to establish and spread in its place! He strives to ensure that his sons, grandsons and great-grandsons do not know Albanian and are not called Albanians! A great shame for Albania to have borne such sons! A great shame that such people exist and live on the face of the earth! Who can be more wicked and more loathsome than one who does not love and honour his mother, but throws her into a corner and is ashamed to say he is her son?

The disgrace of such people is a disgrace to our homeland! No country in the world except our own produces such bitter fruit! So many wealthy Albanians have spent all their property on advancing a nationality which is the enemy of their own, on making their sons and their brothers' sons forget Albanian and cease to be called Albanians! These are not merely enemies; there is no word to name these wicked and filthy traitors! There are no Albanians, they say; the Albanians are not a separate nation. They are Greeks, some say; Turks, say others; Slavs, say still others. Oh, what a terrible thing for an Albanian mouth to say! Oh, how can the mouths of these shameless men contain such words!

Such people should not exist in Albania or on the face of the earth; these traitors weigh too heavily upon the earth; it cannot bear them. Let them be gone! Every true Albanian must take care that not a single such Albanian remains, for they bring great harm and shame upon all Albania and Albanian identity. Every Albanian must first become a true Albanian himself, then make others so, as many as he can. He must take care that Albanian advances and spreads, that

is, the writing and reading of our language, and that teaching and learning in our language increase. In a word, he must strive to make our nation too one of the civilized and enlightened nations. If we all strive for this, our nation, being by nature intelligent and brave, will soon become one of the most enlightened and civilized nations of Europe.

An ancient nation, the oldest of the nations of Europe, the Pelasgians of antiquity preserved and enduring for so many thousands of years as they were; a nation so [ancient] and yet so young, only now beginning to blossom for the first time; a brave and capable nation with a head and brow unlike any other's, with a broad and complete language, beautiful and easy, which it learns at its mother's breast: who can stand against such a nation, and who can move ahead of it?

Come, Albanians! If we wish it and strive for it, we shall be one of the finest and most enlightened nations of Europe, envied by the whole world. Come! Let the sleep of apathy and ignorance not cover us, for if we remain like this, we are lost. Oh, what a great loss and what a heavy shame for a nation like the Albanians, which has endured for so many thousands of years through so many harsh ages, to perish today, at a time when even the weakest nations are awakening and flourishing! For a nation so intelligent and with so beautiful a language to perish through ignorance and the lack of a written language! For a nation so brave, which does not spare its blood at all, to perish, torn apart by weak and cowardly nations! We have intelligence, we have bravery, we have a beautiful and easy language, and yet we do not know how, or do not wish, to use all these things for

our own good, but sit with our hands tied, or, what is worse, work for our own destruction, tearing out our nation's foundations through our own ignorance and blindness!

Are we Albanians? Let our pledge, our faith, our work, our care, our desire and our thought be for Albania and Albanian identity. Let us advance the language, broaden and beautify it through writing and learning; let us open schools and learn, so that no Albanian remains ignorant or unable to read and write. Let us remove foreign schools from Albania and fill our homeland with Albanian schools; let our children quickly learn to read and write their own language and the knowledge they need. Since they know the language naturally and can master it in a short time, they will have the opportunity to acquire considerable knowledge; neither the shepherd, nor the farmer, nor the mason will be without learning.

These things are among our rights; whoever does not allow us to work on this path of right and goodness has seized our right from our hands. It is our right to strive with words, with deeds, with the mouth, with the hand, with the pen and with weapons to wrest our right from the claws of those who have seized it from us. We do not wish to seize what belongs to another, but neither do we wish to let our own property and our plain right be taken from us by force. Let us strive for our right, our language, our nationality and our nation's welfare; whoever stands before us and obstructs us on this sacred path, let us push him aside, overthrow him, tread upon him and move onward! Let us raise our voices and cry out so that the civilized world hears us and helps us too in the blessed right we wish to defend. Let us fear nothing, let

us strive and not rest until we win what we seek. We are in the right; God is always the helper of the righteous; God is right itself!

O Albanian brothers! Let us not suffer the fate of those savages of Australia and Africa, to whom Europeans go and deceive them with a few beads, coloured glass trinkets or tin mirrors, and take their lands from their hands. Let us not be deceived in the same way by a few pieces of tin and glass worth nothing at all, and leave the rights of our nation and homeland in the hands of foreigners and our enemies. Let us break the yoke [that] has weighed upon our necks for so many centuries [now], break the irons that bind our [feet], and cast off the heavy shadow that [tramples] and crushes us and will not let us breathe! Let us not [remain] numb and frozen; let us move our hands and feet, stir and shake ourselves, and walk freely on God's path, on the path of right:

GOD, RIGHT, THE NATION, THE LANGUAGE! ALBANIA, ALBANIAN IDENTITY!

This is our aim! This is our sacred task! This is our pledge! All those who have this aim are our brothers! Among true Albanians there is no division, no split, no difference! They are all brothers, all one body, one mind, one purpose, one pledge!

END

Notes on the text and sources

This is a new AI-assisted English translation of the complete selected Fletoret Albanian transcription of Sami Frashëri's 1899 work. All 36 sections and 221 source blocks are included in their original order, including the budget table. It is a reading translation, not a certified scholarly translation; no human literary or specialist review is claimed. The author's historical arguments, political proposals, repetitions and hostile language are translated as part of the historical work, without silently correcting his claims. The original Albanian text and the companion translations use matching section and paragraph identifiers.

E1

All historical, linguistic, racial, religious and political claims belong to the author and his period. Their reproduction does not establish their factual accuracy or endorse hostile language.

E2

This edition does not include Shaban Demiraj's later essay, the modern glossary or the ALBANIANA 2015 editorial apparatus.

E3

The 2015 comparison PDF has an internal splice on p.79. Fletoret contains the omitted end of III.4, all of III.5-III.13 and the beginning of III.14. No wording has been back-translated from Robert Elsie or the 1913 German translation.

E4

III.11 says seven ministers but enumerates eight portfolios. This inconsistency is preserved as printed in the chosen transcription, without silently changing the number.

E5

The chosen transcription gives the monthly budget total as 3,439,750, consistent with its annual 41,277,000 before assembly costs. The comparison PDF p.87 gives 8,439,750. The Fletoret reading is retained, not represented as a verified reading of the 1899 printing.

E6

Square-bracketed letters and words, notably in III.18, already occur in the Fletoret transcription. They are preserved; the underlying printed witness and restoration rationale are unspecified. In this English translation, when only part of an Albanian word is restored in brackets, the corresponding English word is bracketed as a whole; these marks do not represent a new restoration from the original print.

E7

In II.7 (2.07.005), the clause beginning ‘edhe që me të lënë këtë gjuhë’ (‘and that, on abandoning this language’) has no completed main assertion in the selected transcription. The same incomplete construction occurs on p.54 of the 2015 comparison PDF. No missing conclusion has been supplied; the passage requires textual review against an early printed witness.

E8

In III.7 (3.07.001), the selected transcription has the unclear word ‘qepe’ in the list accompanying a foreign Muslim ruler. It is retained without silently substituting another word. A 2025 academic quotation reads ‘qerre’, meaning carriages, but this comparison does not establish the wording of the 1899 printing. The reading needs specialist textual review.

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AI-assisted translation produced in 2026 directly from the Albanian transcription. No human literary or specialist review is claimed.

Illustrations and their sources

P01 · Sami Frashëri in his office

Unknown photographer; via TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi / Wikimedia Commons. Public domain as marked by Commons (PD-old; original photograph dated 1896).

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sami_Frash%C3%ABri_%281896%29.jpg

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The photographer is unidentified. The date and identification follow the source record; this is a historical photograph, not a later painted portrait.

P02 · Dodona inscriptions in Carapanos's excavation publication

Constantin Carapanos; drawings by Alexis Housselin; University Library Heidelberg scan. Public-domain mechanical scan (PD-old-expired / PD-scan).

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carapanos%2C_Dodone_et_ses_ruines_%281878%29%2C_pl._35.png

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These are nineteenth-century drawings of ancient inscriptions, not surviving writing in an identified Pelasgian language. Do not assign one date to every object on this plate.

P03 · Bronze helmet of Illyrian type

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Martin E. Segal, 2006, accession 2006.221. CC0 1.0 Universal; museum Open Access image.

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Do not turn the archaeological label "Illyrian type" into evidence that a named Illyrian or Albanian wore this particular helmet.

P04 · Attaleiates names Arbanitai in the Basilakes episode

Michael Attaleiates; edition by Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1853); University of California / Google / Internet Archive digitization. Public-domain nineteenth-century edition of medieval text and mechanical scan.

https://archive.org/details/michaelisattali00bekkgoog/page/n314/mode/1up

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The passage attests a medieval group name in a specific military context. It does not prove an unbroken ancient ethnic genealogy. The event date, author's composition period and printed edition date are different.

P05 · Barleti’s early biography: title page

Marin Barleti; printer Bernardino dei Vitali; University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign / Internet Archive scan. Public-domain early-sixteenth-century print and mechanical scan.

https://archive.org/details/historiadeuitaet00barl/page/n2/mode/1up

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“Epirotarum” documents early-sixteenth-century terminology; it does not establish an unbroken ancient ethnic genealogy.

P06 · Skanderbeg portrait in Barleti’s early printed biography

Anonymous woodcut illustrator in Marin Barleti’s book; University of Illinois / Internet Archive Book Images. Public-domain early-sixteenth-century illustration and mechanical scan.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Historia_de_uita_et_gestis_Scanderbegi_Epirotarum_principis_%281508%29_%2814559502798%29.jpg

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Do not label “Skanderbeg, 1460” or imply a verified lifetime likeness.

P07 · A surviving page of Buzuku’s Meshari

Gjon Buzuku, 1555; scan by Dori from Historia e Popullit Shqiptar, vol. I (2000), p. 696. Public-domain mechanical scan of 1555 printed page (PD-old-100-expired / PD-scan).

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The page’s contents are not quoted here; its exact folio has not been independently established. Do not label it the book’s original cover. Small image: use at modest display size with a zoom option.

P08 · Matranga’s Arbëresh catechism, 1592

Lekë (Luca) Matranga; Rome: Guglielmo Facciotto, 1592; National Library of Albania digitization via Commons. Public-domain 1592 print and mechanical scan; preserve library watermark.

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An early-modern diaspora book, not a medieval manuscript. The image is a watermarked library facsimile; no watermark has been removed.

P09 · Historical group photograph associated with the League of Prizren

Attributed to Pietro (Pjetër) Marubi (1834-1903); identification via the Commons source record. Public domain as marked by Commons (PD-Albania; photographer died 1903).

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_delegation_of_Sanjak_of_Shkodra_in_the_League_of_Prizren.jpg

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Use the qualified wording. Do not identify every sitter or assert that this shows the League’s founding meeting in Prizren. The caption reflects the cited record, not an archive catalogue number verified here.

Paragraph reference index

Each identifier matches the same source block across companion editions. The adjacent number is the starting page in this PDF. Click a reference to jump to its paragraph.

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