

THE MEMORY OF GEORGE CASTRIOTA SCANDERBEG
AMONG THE ARBERESH OF ITALY: A STUDY ON
THE ROLE OF DIASPORA IN THE CREATION OF
ALBANIAN
NATIONAL IDENTITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Since his death in 1468, Scanderbeg's life served as the source of many tales and myths in Albania and Europe. It is my contention that even though, Albanians and the Albanian diaspora in the world kept his memory alive, it was not until the nineteenth century, that Scanderbeg's memory was resurrected by Albanian nationalists, who lived outside Albania, as a rallying point toward the achievement of Albanian independence from the Ottoman empire.

The Albanian movement for independence is a phenomenon of the Albanian Diaspora. It was the work of intellectuals like Girolamo De Rada, Giuseppe Scura, Zef Serembe, Dora D'Istria, Naim and Sami Frasheri, Ismail Qemali and Fan Noli who used the memory of Scanderbeg to revive and bring to fruition Albanian independence in 1912. Many Albanian intellectuals from Diaspora, returned to Albania in the late nineteenth century to create an independent Albanian state. While many Diasporic intellectuals lived in the Arberesh communities in Southern Italy, many others lived in Egypt, Romania, Turkey, and the United States. Their efforts toward the achievement of Albanian independence were a direct response and reflected the changes that were occurring in their respective geographic domiciles of the time.

PROLOGUE

ALBANIA AND THE HISTORICAL

GEORGE CASTRIOTA SCANDERBEG

“Land of Albania! Where Iskander rose;
Theme of the young and beacon of the wise,
And he his namesake whose oft-baffled foes
Shrunk from his deeds of chivalrous emprise;
Land of Albania! Let me bend mine eyes
On thee, thou rugged nurse of Savage men!
The cross descends, thy minarets arise,
And the pale crescent sparkles in the glen,
Through many a cypress grove within each city’s ken.”¹

I was eight years old when my father first recited Lord Byron’s stanza on Scanderbeg, in Albanian, and from that moment my imagination was captured by the tales and film depictions of the hero. I remember reading as a child children’s books that told of Scanderbeg’s deeds and his stand against the Turks, and I remember wanting to have witnessed his existence. For me, Scanderbeg’s character leaped from the pages of novels and became alive the day my father took me to visit Scanderbeg’s museum in

¹ Peter J. Terpatsi ed., *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage by Lord Byron, Selected Verse Depicting Albania*, (Peter Terpatsi, 1958): 1.

Kruja. Fiction and reality became one that day at the museum as I walked through the rooms, looked at the paintings and touched the walls where Scanderbeg once conducted his war, the place where he lived and raised his family.

Memories of Scanderbeg are rich and prevalent in every aspect of Albanian society. Scanderbeg's face is on the money, his emblem on the flag, schools and piazzas are named after him, even whiskey as a brand is called *Scanderbeg Whiskey* in Albania. Surrounded with so many reminders and commemorations of Scanderbeg at home, growing up in Albania I believed the entire world was familiar with the hero. And yet, as I traveled to other countries I found that people knew very little about Albania and even less about Scanderbeg. Whether Albania's isolation to the world under a forty five year communist dictatorship, its volatile relationship with its neighbors, and its remote location in southern Europe are reasons for the country to remain and be defined as an "exotic other" by the West, what I found of interest is that regardless of little international recognition, Scanderbeg's memory continues to thrive in Albanian communities around the world. As I began research on Scanderbeg, initially I was interested in understanding why Scanderbeg was such a dominating figure in Albanian history, but as I continued my research I became fascinated with the depth of memories that Albanian diaspora has allocated to Scanderbeg since the sixteenth century. Thus I decided to focus my thesis in tracing the memory of Scanderbeg in the Albanian community in southern Italy, the Arberesh and explore their importance in keeping and maintaining Scanderbeg's memory alive for all Albanians.

Background on Albania

Who were the Albanians? Much controversy surrounds the issue because there is a distinct difference between the time the Albanian tribes first appeared in the Balkan peninsula and the first time their records became available. Albanians trace their descendancy from one of the Illyrian tribes as far back as the thirteenth century BC.² Many of the names used by the Illyrians continue to be used presently in Albania. The first mention of the name *Albani*, which was one of the Illyrian clans, was made by Ptolemy during the second century AD.³ During medieval times many names were used interchangeably to refer to the lands occupied by the Albanian populations. Early medieval chroniclers in their writings used two main distinctions with respect to nationality: the geo-political divisions and religious affiliation.⁴ All the nations that embraced Christianity and were part of the Byzantium were known as *romaioi*. As part of Illyricum the Albanians had accepted Christianity early, due to the exchange between their kings and Rome. The apostle Paul, in his epistle to Romans, makes note of his trip to Illyricum to preach the Gospel.⁵ This connection with Rome changed when Pope Leo I placed the Illyrian lands under the protection of Constantinople in 734 AD, but it was

² Nelo Drizari, *Scanderbeg: His Life Correspondence Orations, Victories and Philosophy*, (California: National Press, 1968): 26.

³ Ibid., 27; and Anthony Bryer, "Scanderbeg, National Hero of Albania", *History Today* 12(June 1962):426 also Fan Stylian Noli, *George Castrioti Scanderbeg: 1405-1468*, (New York: International University Press, 1947):7.

⁴ Kristo Frasheri, "Trojet e Shqiptareve ne Shekullin e XV"[Albanian Lands in XV century], I (November, 1989):7.

⁵ Ibid., 7-10; Jack W. Hayford, ed. "Romans, 15:30", *Spirit Filled Life Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991):1713.

not until 1043 that Byzantine sources referred to these lands as *albanoi*.⁶ Apart from ‘*Illyrian*’ and ‘*Albanoi*’, the inhabitants were referred by Byzantine chroniclers also as ‘*Macedonian sive Albaniam*’, and ‘*Epirotes*’ with no relation to modern day Greek and Macedonian lands.⁷

Marin Barleti, the first Albanian historian and contemporary of Scanderbeg, confirmed the use of these terms as analogous to one another when he wrote his history on the life of Scanderbeg. He referred to him both as ‘*Scanderbegus Albanorum*’ and ‘*Scanderbegus Epirotarum*.’⁸ Scanderbeg himself in his correspondence with other foreign dignitaries used these terms interchangeably when he referred to himself. He signed a letter to king Ladislaus of Hungary, ‘Scanderbeg Prince of the Epirotes,’ and in a letter to King Ferdinand Ferrante he called himself, ‘...Scanderbeg, Prince of Albania.’⁹

The reasons why Albanians were not mentioned in sources again until the tenth century, are both geographical and political. First, their cultural heritage was not developed in the same scale of its neighbors the Greeks and Romans. Second, the country’s geography in relation to other neighbor states was important. Geography has played both a positive and negative role in the shaping of Albanian society. Through out

⁶ Kristo Frasheri, “Trojet e Shqiptareve ne Shekullin e XV”, I (November,1989):9; Fan Stylian Noli, *George Castrioti Scanderbeg:1405-1468*, (New York: International University Press, 1947):7.

⁷ Kristo Frasheri, “Trojet e Shqiptareve ne Shekullin e XV,” *Studime Historike I* (November,1989): 14-15; Edmond Dulaj, “Koncepti Epir dhe Epirot ne Shekullin e XII-XIV”, *Studime Per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, Vol.I (March, 1989):29.

⁸ Marin Barleti, *Historia e Jetes dhe e Veprave te Skenderbeut*, trans. Stefan Prifti, (Tirane:Tirane University Press,1967):37,44,55,60, 69.

⁹ Nelo Drizari, *Scanderbeg: His Life Correspondence Orations, Victories and Philosophy*, (California: National Press,1968): 23, 64.

Albanian history the land has always been a frontier zone; first between Byzantium and Rome, Orthodoxy and Catholicism, then between Christianity and Islam, and even more recently between Communism and the Western world. The mountainous territory has been advantageous to the Albanian people because it preserved their identity as a people and allowed them to withstand a series of invasions from the East and West without losing their distinctive traits as a nation, but at the same time the mountains proved a barrier to development. Constant warfare and political divisions made it hard for the Albanian people to form both political and economical stability.

Between the tenth and fourteenth centuries there did not exist a proper 'Albanian nation.' There were lands inhabited by Albanian people but the framework for a proper state did not exist. The land was divided into many principalities, and the Albanian nobles more often fought one another. Their main concern was not the establishment of an independent state but the weight of their purse. The only surviving evidence are the records of trade between these nobles and their counterparts in the Commonwealth of Venice, the city of Ragusa and the Neapolitan kingdom. One historian, Dimitri Obolenski, suggests that the disappearance of Albanians from the sources was a product of their retreat to the mountains. Perhaps the Albanians moved to the highlands before the Slavic invasions where they, "...exchanged their life of farming for that of shepherds."¹⁰ Then, with no real explanation Obolensky maintains, they came down from the mountains in the fourteenth century and invaded the lands of their neighbors to the south, the Greeks,

¹⁰ Dimitri Obolenski, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453*, (London: Phoenix Press, 2000):8, 21, 22.

and those to the north, the Serbs. Conveniently, this move concurred with the span of time in which the Serbs formed their national and religious identity in a land that is none other than present day Kosovo—an Albanian land currently inhabited by Albanian people. The irony continues today more than seven centuries later. The Serbs maintain that the land belongs rightly to them: “ Why should these Muslim foreigners, who came only 300 years ago to Old Serbia, the historic heartland of our nation, have autonomy there? Never!”¹¹

History, however, dictates the contrary. Albanians did not just reappear during the fourteenth century. They were there all along, before the Slavic invasions and after the dissolution of the Serbian Empire in the fourteenth century. According to William Armstrong, Albanians were, “...autochthonous...Their appellation as Albanians in these lands dates from the year 1079.”¹² The earliest revolts of the Albanians against the Byzantine rule date as far back as the eleventh century. It was not until the twelfth century that the Albanian nobles took sole possession of their lands. Even though a consolidated state did not exist, these nobles were able to keep foreign invaders out of their lands until the rise of the Ottoman Turks during the fourteenth century.¹³

¹¹ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1996):39.

¹² William Jackson Armstrong, *The Heroes of Defeat*, (Ohio: The Robert Clarke Company, 1905): 195.

¹³ Universiteti Shtetëror në Tiranë, *George Kastriot-Scanderbeg and the Albanian-Turkish War of the XV Century*, (Tiranë: Tirane University Press,1967): 5.

George Castriota Scanderbeg

This prolonged detour in Albanian history is important to place the figure of Scanderbeg in a historical context of the times in which he lived. Scanderbeg did not just emerge in the fifteenth century to fight for the Albanians without a sense of national pride. Before Scanderbeg took the center of the Albanian politics, there were three predominant principalities in Albania during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: the Balshas in the north with their capital in present day Shkoder or Scutari; the Thopias in the center with their capital in Durres or Durrachium; and in the south the principality of Comnenis with Vlora or Valona as the capital. A century later, Scanderbeg entered in alliance with the Comnenis by marrying one of their heirs, Donica Comneni.

Of these noble families the Balshas were the first to unite the country and made Christianity the religion of the state. They joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1368, and the country became Catholic.¹⁴ After the invasion by the Ottoman Turks, the Balshas were reduced to a small principality between Turkish and Venetian interests. While the Balshas fought the Bosnians, in the south Ghin Bua Shpata of Arta won a victory against the combined Greek, Serb and Neapolitan troops in 1379.¹⁵ As a result, the seige over his capital ,Arta, was lifted; and Nicephorus II, Despot of Epirus and Thessaly failed to assert Greek rule over the land.

Another great leader, who was a predecessor and contemporary to Scanderbeg,

¹⁴ Fan Stylian Noli, *George Castrioti Scanderbeg:1405-1468*, (New York: International University Press, 1947):8-13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

was his father-in-law George Araniti Thopia Comneni leader of the Comneni principality. He was one of the first rulers to resist Turkish forces with an open military resistance in 1433, slightly ten years before Scanderbeg. George Comneni's military victory over Ali Bej Evrenoz, a Turkish general, earned him credit and support from the rulers of the west and the Pope. Pope Eugene IV, and the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund were among the foreign dignitaries who offered George Araniti their protection and support.¹⁶

These three prominent families foreshadowed the entrance of the Castriota family into Albanian politics. The Castriotas were first mentioned in sources in 1394 and 1410 when John, Scanderbeg's father, notified the Republic of Venice of his decision to send his son over to the Turks as hostage.¹⁷ According to the Turkish sources, the Castriota family originated from the village of Kastrat in northeastern Albania. Unlike the Thopias and the Comnenis, the Castriotas did not have a long history as members of the aristocracy. In fact, their elevation of status began with Scanderbeg's grandfather, Paul Castriota, who initially owned two villages named Sinja and Lower Gardi.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., 11; Noli cites sources: Laonicos, Book V pg. 251. Also *Diplomatarium Ragussamun*, 1434, Aug.16 pg. 386-7: "...accerrimum bellum ipsi Albanenses commiserunt, adeoque res succesit, quod ex Turcis multi et multi ceciderunt; similiter et Albaneses damnum receperunt ex suis, sed tamen in campo cum victoria remanserunt..." and C.O, *The Conduct and Character of Count Nicholas Serini, Protestant Generalissimo of the Most Prudent and Resolved Champion of Christendom with his Parallels Scanderbeg and Tamberlain*, (London: Rainbow in Fleet Street,1664): 120.

¹⁷ Kristo Frasheri, "Nga ishin Kastriotet? Ku lindi Skenderbeu? Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut, V.II(Tirane, 1989): 473-474.

¹⁸ Selami Pulaha ed., *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne Shekullin e XV, Burime Osmane* (Tirana University Press, 1968): 53; Kristo Frasheri, "Nga ishin Kastriotet? Ku lindi Skenderbeu? Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut, V.II(Tirane, 1989): 469.

Scanderbeg was born in 1405 in Albania as the youngest son of Prince John and his wife, Vojsava Castriota. When Albania was invaded by Turkey in 1413, George Castriota went as a hostage in the Ottoman court where he was educated in the Muslim faith and received the name Iskander, after Alexander the Great. While in Turkey, he excelled in his military training and Sultan Murad II rewarded him with the title Beg and an army command hence the name Scanderbeg. In 1443, when the Ottomans planned to attack Albania, Scanderbeg escaped to his homeland, renounced Islam, and after forming a league of princes among the Albanian chieftains, he proclaimed himself prince of Albania. The sources first mention the Castriota family in 1394 and 1410 when John, Scanderbeg's father, notified the Republic of Venice of his decision to send his son over to the Turks as hostage.¹⁹

Modern historians and chroniclers of his time have attributed Scanderbeg's qualities of leadership and ingenuity to his father John. Scanderbeg's actions, in his resistance against the Ottoman Turks, are rightly understood in light of his father. John Castriota extended his political influence in Albania by his marriage connection to Vojsava, the daughter of one of the neighboring nobles. Later, John did the same with his children. He married his daughters within neighboring noble families and became grandfather to future leaders of Albania. Scanderbeg, following in his father's footsteps, married into the Comneni family, which was one of the most influential noble family at the time in Albania, and made sure that his nephews and nieces were married in families with whom he formed political alliances. When he married Donica Comneni in 1451, Scanderbeg added the south principality to his holdings,

¹⁹ Kristo Frasheri, "Nga ishin Kastriotet? Ku lindi Skenderbeu?" *Studime per Epoken e Skenderbeut*, V.II(Tirane, 1989): 473-474.

and just a couple years earlier in 1445, when he married his sister, Mamica, to the heir of the Thopia principality he added the center portion of the country to his alliance system.²⁰

Scanderbeg was John's youngest son. According to Turkish records, he joined his brothers as a hostage to the Sultan in Adrianople in 1423. Initially Scanderbeg's hostage status to the Porte was beneficial to his father, who realized that the Ottoman threat would not disappear for years to come. His presence in Turkey, allowed his father, John, to keep his lands intact. While in the Sultan's court, Scanderbeg was educated at the Palace School in military arts. Like his father, Scanderbeg realized the importance of outward conversion to Islam in order to gain the trust of the Sultan, but upon his return to his homeland, he made his intentions clear, in a speech which he delivered to the Albanian people upon seizing the Castle of Kroya.

“Although we lived together as a family, as it were, in one and the same course of life, although we ate at the same table and though we did in a manner breathe the jointly with one and the same soul, nevertheless, neither they, nor any man alive ever heard me mention my country... Neither was there any man that heard me use any speech, or utter any word at any time, which might reveal me to be a Christian or a free man.”²¹

When Scanderbeg returned to Albania in 1443, his main goal was to regain the lands his father had lost and to unite the country against the Ottoman Turks. His call to the Albanian people was not to take the cross and repel the infidels, but to, “...lead on and conduct in the recovery of the rest of our country...,”²² by all means

²⁰ Ibid., 41; Fan Stylian Noli, *George Castrioti Scanderbeg: 1405-1468*, (New York: International University Press, 1947):39.

²¹ Nelo Drizari, *Scanderbeg: His Life Correspondence Orations, Victories and Philosophy*, (California: National Press, 1968): 2.

²² Ibid., 3.

available, "...art, cunning and strategy, by pains and toil, by patience and the sword..."²³ Scholars argue about Scanderbeg's motives for his return in 1443. Fan Noli and Kurt Treptow, biographers of Scanderbeg, both agree that Scanderbeg was deeply shaken by the news of his father's death earlier that year. John Castriota, after his rebellion against the Sultan in 1430, was defeated in 1436 and lost most of his lands. He died a broken man in 1443, never to witness his son's success. Even so, he played an enormous role in Scanderbeg's early development as a military strategist and politician.

Upon John Castriota's death, all his lands were transferred to the Sultan. Nevertheless, Scanderbeg's outward loyalty to Sultan Murad was convincing enough, that he granted Scanderbeg a *timar* in his father's holdings.²⁴ Scanderbeg, capitalizing on this opportunity, acted on two occasions to regain his father's lands. His first chance came with the news of his father's death, when the Sultan offered Scanderbeg the governance of his castle. Eventhough he outwardly remained faithful to the Porte, as soon as Scanderbeg became Governor of Croya, he immediately entered in secret negotiations with the Republic of Venice and Ragusa, in hopes of creating a system of support for future action. Scanderbeg's second chance came earlier than he expected. After taking command of the Ottoman troops from the Sultan, Scanderbeg deserted them in the battlefield of Nish in 1443, which Sultan Murad I, sent to crush John Hunyadi of Hungary, and with three hundred troops Scanderbeg fled to Albania. He forced the Sultan's seal bearer to sign a *firman*, which gave Scanderbeg the

²³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴ Universiteti Shtetëror në Tiranë, *George Kastriot-Scanderbeg and the Albanian-Turkish War of the XV Century*, (Tiranë: Tiranë University Press, 1967): 43.

authority to take over the Turkish garrison in Croya, his father's capital city,²⁵ and with that seal Scanderbeg became an adversary to the Sultan, and assumed the leadership of the Albanian troops.

When Scanderbeg arrived in Croya, he took the castle peacefully. On November 28, 1443 he raised his father's red flag with a black double-headed eagle, and announced to the Albanian people his conversion to Christianity. Afterwards, he offered the Ottoman soldiers the opportunity to convert to the Christian faith or die as martyrs for Islam.²⁶ By this act Scanderbeg broke all ties with the Porte. The role of Scanderbeg as a national figure stands undisputed in Albanian history.²⁷ Without him there would not have been a resistance movement against the Ottoman Empire, and the sense of unity among Albanians would not have been achieved. His impact on the country turned into a legend, and even though Albania was invaded again by the Ottomans in 1481, Albanian folk songs and oral traditions kept alive the memory of his stand against the Turks for centuries to come. "He became the focus of an ethnic identity, whereby Albanians realized that they were a distinct group of people with a unique heritage."²⁸ Albanians before Scanderbeg did not have a medieval state formation; they lived separately divided into principalities with no common laws

²⁵ Camil Muresanu, *John Hunyadi: Defender of Christendom*, trans. Laura Treptow, (Portland, 2001):37.

²⁶ Anthony Bryer, "Scanderbeg, National Hero of Albania", *History Today* 12(June 1962): 128.

²⁷ Michael Schmidt-Neke, "Nationalism and National Myth: Scanderbeg and the Twentieth Century Albanian Regimes," *European Legacy* 2 (1): 1997, 2.

²⁸ Kurt William Treptow, *Of Saints and Sinners: Native Resistance to Ottoman Expansion in SouthEastern Europe: 1443-1481: George Castriota and Vlad II Dracula*, Ph.D. diss., (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995): 338.

and state structure. Scanderbeg was the cornerstone of the foundation of the Albanian state. Based on the groundwork he laid, four centuries later Albanians rallied again under his flag and claimed independence for their country from the Ottoman empire on November 28, 1912.

One of the first actions which Scanderbeg undertook in his plan to form an independent Albanian state was to create the League of Lezha in March of 1444²⁹. The League was an alliance of both political and military resources between the noble families of Albania. Under the provisions of the League of Lezha, Scanderbeg was elected leader of all military affairs, which meant that only in times of war did he have the power to exert his authority over other nobles and their possessions in Albania.

Since war between Albania and Turkey was inevitable in the summer of 1444, the League served as the first institution through which Scanderbeg solidified his basis of power. Initially the nobles who pledged their loyalty to Scanderbeg, were free to withdraw from the League if conflict of interests arose between them and Scanderbeg. Such was the case of two nobles Pjeter Span and Gjergj Dushmani in 1447, who withdrew their troops and monetary resources from the League, when Scanderbeg was engaged in military actions against the Republic of Venice for possession of Danja.³⁰ Other nobles who began to waiver in Scanderbeg's ability to

²⁹ Kristo Frasheri, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu: Jeta dhe Vepra 1405-1468*, (Tirane: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqiperise, Botimet Toena, 2002): 177. On his speech to the Albanian nobles Scanderbeg said: "Up then, noble and most Catholic Princes, let us not delay even for a moment. Let us set up good laws and orders and discipline. Let us levy and muster our soldiers. And let us make known unto all ages to come that we are men worthy of a Christian Nation." (Nelo Drizari, *Scanderbeg: His Life Correspondence Orations, Victories and Philosophy*, (California: National Press, 1968): 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

defeat the Turkish troops also began to enter in agreements with the Porte. Such were Gjergj Arianiti and Pal Dukagjin. In a letter to the Pope, Scanderbeg's ambassador to the Republic of Ragusa, Gjon Gazulli, wrote that some of the Albanian nobles has already turned their loyalty to the Turkish Sultan.³¹

However, as Scanderbeg began to have success after success against the Turkish troops especially in defeating the Ottoman army in front of the walls of Kruja, many nobles reconsidered their alliance with the Porte. Scanderbeg, won the support of the nobles in Albania primarily because he capitalized in one of the provisions of the League of Lezha: military support. His army even though small in numbers was very loyal to Scanderbeg, which meant that he had sole control of the troops. By controlling the military, he began to exert his power over the other nobles, at times stripping them of their titles and lands and awarding them to his loyal officers. As Scanderbeg's influence over the military and nobles grew, he annexed into his property the lands of the Thopia, Stresi and Balsha families, and thus with control of the military and expansion of territory, Scanderbeg brought into existence the first unified Albanian state.

Demetrio Franco, one of the first biographers of Scanderbeg noted in his work, that when Scanderbeg began to solidify his control in Albania after the battle of Kruja, his control extended also to lands of his relatives, as much as it extended to other nobles.³² Thus the League of Lezha, in the beginning of Scanderbeg's war against

³¹ Ibid., 178.

³² D. Franco, *Commentario delle Cose de Turchi et del S. Georgio Scanderbeg, Principe di Epyrro*, (Venetia, 1539): 19, 20, 24.

“.. e dopo che fu stato Capitano generale delli Signori d'Albania...tende desegno d'insignorirse de tutto quello paese, fe prigione il signor Giovanni e il Signor Coico Balsa...e li tolse il

Turkey served both as a legislative and judicial body of the Albanian State. By 1451, however, at a time when Scanderbeg solidified his power over Albania, the League lost all of its power and became non-existent in its entirety, which explains its disappearance in all the sources.

Another important feature of Scanderbeg's consolidation of power in Albania was also the establishment of the first codes of law or the *Kanun*³³. For Albanians the establishment of the *Kanun* is closely related to Scanderbeg's reign in Albania, but there is no historical evidence that directly links the authorship of *Kanun* to him. Although the *Kanun* is referred to as *Scanderbeg's Law Code*, sources ascribe its authorship to one of Scanderbeg's generals, Leke Dukagjin. In fact, in Northern Albania the law code is often referred to as *Lek's Kanun*.³⁴ The codes, however were seen as progressive especially those that directly dealt with property and women's rights to own property. Under Scanderbeg's laws when the patriarch of the family died the property did not get transferred to the oldest son, but to the member of the family who was most able to manage it.

stato loro che era tra Croia et Alessio... Tolse anco il Signor Moise Comnino il stato suo, quale era in la Dibra...Et essendo morto mio padre, ce tolse anco a noi la Tomonista, cioe Mosachia minore et similmente as altri Signori il paese de Comni e de Randisia, che non se ne possevano ajutare, per che lui gia se ritrovava apoterato delle gente de Guerra, et il Turco c'era sopra ad ogn'hora."

³³ Scanderbeg's law code in Albania, also known as the Code of Lek Dukagjin, is most commonly known as Kanun which is the Code of Customary Law.

³⁴ Syrja Pupovci, "Origjina dhe Emri i Leke Dukagjinit," in *Studime Historike* 26: 1 (1972): 114-115. See also J. Swire, *Albania the Rise of A Kingdom*, (New York: Arno Press, 1971):22-23. Also in Edwin Jacques, *The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1995): 176-177.

Also, with regards to women Scanderbeg's codes provisioned that a woman had the right to the land she was given upon marriage and if divorce occurred she had the rights to half of her husband's property.³⁵

It would be futile to write of Scanderbeg's success in his stand against the Ottoman Empire, without emphasizing the help he received from the Vatican and the popes. George Castriota realized that to fight the Ottomans and regain his possessions in Albania he had to have the monetary support of the popes and unlike his father, Scanderbeg, placed importance to religion. His outward practice of Christianity was a key factor in collecting Christian support from the West. Upon summoning the bishops to pray for the deliverance of Croya, Scanderbeg had reportedly seen a vision of Saint George the Patron State of Albania.³⁶ His religious behavior did not go unnoticed by the West. Indeed, when he visited Vatican in 1451, *Te Deums* were sung in his honor.³⁷ In December 1457, Scanderbeg's primary ally was Pope Calixtus III. Their relationship was close.

³⁵ Haxhihasani, Qemal, *Tregime dhe Kenge Popullore per Skenderbeun*, (Tirane: Universiteti Shteteror i Tiranes, 1967): 34.

"Femija qysh se len e ka tenin nja per nja me te madhin." ... "Me kanun te Skenderbeut, grueja mundet me u nda pa hise vetem per bracallek e per pune te panershme, per ndreshje grueja merr zhimsen e tokes se burrit dhe pjesen e gjas se ene jo ka mundin e vet per plang te shpajs."

³⁶ Anthony Bryer, "Scanderbeg, National Hero of Albania", *History Today* 12(June 1962): 430.

³⁷ Kurt William Treptow, *Of Saints and Sinners: Native Resistance to Ottoman Expansion in SouthEastern Europe: 1443-1481: George Castriota and Vlad II Dracula*, Ph.D. diss., (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995): 339.

The pope referred to Scanderbeg as his “*vero dilecto filio.*” In Rome he was recognized as an important commander against the infidel and appointed Captain-General of the Holy See but Scanderbeg was more commonly known by the popes as “*Christ’s Athlete.*”³⁸

In December 1466, Scanderbeg traveled for the last time to Rome to obtain help for his war against the Ottoman empire. He received a great welcome by Pope Paul II, but the Romans were disappointed by his appearance. As the defender of Christendom, Scanderbeg, presented himself not as a powerful ruler but as a commoner. He appeared in front of the Pope and Roman public dressed in a soldier’s outfit and without an entourage.³⁹ Even though Scanderbeg received the needed monetary help from the Pope, after twenty three years of fighting, he had aged considerably. He continued his war against the Ottomans, and during one battle in 1468, he acquired pneumonia and died shortly afterwards. It is ironic that for a hero like Scanderbeg, his death lacked the epic proportions of his life. Even so, Albanians carried his memory and defied Turkish occupation for more than a decade afterwards. Although the West considered Scanderbeg a crusader he was not one. In the traditions of his predecessors he fought to preserve independence and protect his people.

³⁸ Mateo Sciambra, Giuseppe Valentini and Ignazio Parrino, *Il “Liber Brevium” di Callisto III: La Crociata, L’Albania e Scanderbeg*, (Palermo: Scuola Graphica Salesiana, 1968), B(325):43, 44, 46. [Siamo molto ansiosi di saper notizie sullo stato dell’Albania e su quel glorioso cavaliere e atleta di Dio Scanderbeg.]

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 434.

It was these memories that Albanians clung to as they began their exile to neighboring Italy, when faced once again with the threat of Turkish occupation. As Albania fell under Ottoman control, it was the Arberesh who settled in Italy that became the protectors of Scanderbeg's memory and heritage.

Immigration of Arberesh in Italy

The roots of the Albanian Diaspora in Italy date as far back as the late fifteenth century. After resisting Turkish occupation for nearly 25 years under George Castriota Scanderbeg, Albanian resistance against the Ottoman Empire weakened and many Albanians chose Italy for refuge rather than surrender themselves to Turkish hands. Italy proved to be a safe haven for Albanians escaping Turkish occupation of their country, not only because of its traditional geographic proximity, but also because Albanians and Italians have been bound to one another through trade throughout their existence.

Since the eighth century sources document the presence of Albanians in Italian lands, whether they were there as traders, soldiers, slaves or called on by the Byzantine emperors to tend to their possessions.⁴⁰ This relationship between the two countries intensified in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries when the kingdoms of Napoli, Ragusa and the Republic of Venice invested in Albanian lands and held Albanian assets.

⁴⁰ Luigi De Rosa, "The Balkan Minorities (Slavs and Albanians) in South Italy," in *The Journal of European Economic History* 29: 2-3 (Fall/Winter,2000):249.

This exchange in property explains in part why ,Albanians when they immigrated to Italy, they settled predominantly in the southern part of the country. Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries there have been documented seven waves of Albanian emigration to Italy.⁴¹

In the middle of the fifteenth century Albanian mercenary soldiers were fighting for the kingdom of Napoli on behalf of King Alphonse V against Robert III from the house of Anjou. The Anjou and the Aragons were continuously disputing each other's claims in southern Italy around 1445.⁴² The Albanian mercenaries fought under the command and leadership of Demetrio Reres and his two sons Giorgio and Basilio. Together they led three Albanian squadrons against the French troops. After King Alphonse V consolidated his claims when he defeated Robert III of Anjou, he made Demetrio Reres governor of Calabria Ultra and permitted the Albanian soldiers to settle there. This event marked the first Albanian emigration to Italy. Since the proper name for Albania during the Middle Ages was Arberia, the first Albanian settlers kept their name Arberesh, and continue to be recognized as such even today.

The first Arberesh initially settled in modern day Catanzaro, where they established seven villages. Demetrio Reres served as governor of Calabria, where as his sons Giorgio and Basilio went to Sicily where they established more Albanian military communities among them Contessa Entellina, Palazzo Adriano, and

⁴¹T. Morrelli, *Cenni storici sulla remeta degli albanese nel regno delle due Sicilie*, (Gutenberg, Napoli, 1842): 13.

⁴² Michele Famiglietti, *Educazione e cultura in Arberia*, (Roma: Mario Bulzoni Editore, 1979):63. See also Peter Bartl, *Albanien. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, trans. Eni Papa (<http://www.albanovaonline.com>).

Mezzoiuso.⁴³ The first Arberesh settlements in Italy were founded around 1448. In his study of Albanians in Southern Italy Francesco Giunta, found that in a short amount of time the Arberesh, were well adjusted in the Italian society and this allowed for future Albanian migrations to Italy.⁴⁴

The relationship between Albania and the Neapolitan kingdom continued to flourish when Scanderbeg, took control of Albania. Alphonso V along with the Papal state were among his greatest supporters in his fight against the Ottomans. Among the Albanians who had fought along side Dimetrio Reres in Napoli was also Scanderbeg's best commander Count Vrana Altisferi, who often served as a diplomatic envoy between Scanderbeg and Alphonse. On March 26, 1451 Scanderbeg and Alphonse concluded a treaty between Albania and the Kingdom of Napoli. Under this treaty Scanderbeg's family and many members of the Albanian nobility were placed under the guardianship of Alphonse, who reserved the right to grant them any fiefdom he pleased.⁴⁵

The second emigration of Albanians into Southern Italy occurred from 1460-1462, where they were invited at the request of king Ferrante I. After king Alphonso V died, King Ferrante I, who was Alphonso's illegitimate son, inherited the crown.

⁴³ Ibid., 64; and also see, Luigi De Rosa, "The Balkan Minorities (Slavs and Albanians) in South Italy," in *The Journal of European Economic History* 29: 2-3 (Fall/Winter, 2000): 252.

⁴⁴ Francisco Giunta, "Colonie Albanesi in Sicilia," in *Economia e Storia*, 21: 1 (1974): 16-17.

⁴⁵ Fan Noli, *George Castrioti Scanderbeg*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1947): 48-49.

The Anjou renewed their claims to the kingdom and Ferrante called on Scanderbeg to help him fend the Anjou's off. In 1460 Scanderbeg, was tied with the war effort in Albania, but he sent to Ferrante troops under the command of his nephew John Stressi Balsha.⁴⁶

In this war, Ferrante of Aragon, did not have very many advantages. Not only was he an illegitimate son, but almost all of his barons had sided with the Anjou. This was clearly evidenced in the correspondence of the Prince of Taranto, Giovanni Antonio Orsino, and Scanderbeg.⁴⁷ Despite Orsino's efforts to dissuade George Castriota from aiding Ferrante, Scanderbeg came to Ferrante's aid when the king of Napoli needed him the most. Ferrante was besieged at Barletta, by Giacomo Piccinino, one of the most known commanders of his time, and Jean D'Anjou, the duke of Calabria; the main contender for the throne. Together they had managed to confine Ferrante to Napoli, Trani and Barletta. According to Vincenzo Dorsa, upon arrival Scanderbeg and his troops defeated Piccinino and the siege of Barletta was

⁴⁶ Ibid., 57. See also Michele Famiglietti, *Educazione e cultura in Arberia*, (Roma: Mario Bulzoni Editore, 1979):68; and Luigi De Rosa, "The Balkan Minorities (Slavs and Albanians) in South Italy," in *The Journal of European Economic History* 29: 2-3 (Fall/Winter,2000):254.

⁴⁷ Giuseppe Schirò, *Gli Albanesi E la questione balkanica*,(Napoli: A Spese dell'editore Ferd. Bideri, 1904): 600-601.

"Spectabilis Magnifice et strenue vir amice noster carissime.- Avengadio che prima ce fosse dicto voi havere mandato a dire a Don Ferrando, che se luj ve mandava galee che sopra de quelle voi faraste montare gente che verriano as ardere Brundusio et correre lo paese nostro facendoli grande offerte de venire o de mandare per subvenire ali bisogni soj, non havemo possuto credere lo dovessivo fare tenedove per savio, e per prudente, fin che non ne havemo visto experientia. Al presente simo advisati voi havere mandato de le vostre gente da pede et al cavallo in Puglia et quelle discorrere at dannificare le terre de la Maesta de Re Ranieri e nostre, de la qual cosa ne meravigliamo perchè de la prefata Maestà ne da noj non receveste mai iniuria nè, despiacere alcuno. Anco ne possete sperare più beneficio et piacere che non recevesti mai dal Re de Ragona per memoria del quale dicite movervi a fare quello facite: perchè dovete essere certo che sono più catholici christiani li Regali de Franza che altri principi del mondo, et dovete pensare che essendo gia quasi tucti li principi et populi del Reame tornati a la fidelità de questo Signore che voi non bastati con Albanesi ad aiutare don Ferrando ne manco offendere tanti possenti inimici come luj teme, et per tanto ve pregamo et exortamo vogliate desistere dali proposti vostri et per la bona via revocare le vostre gente..."

lifted.⁴⁸ Scanderbeg's actions were not lost to the Italian people, leading Giovanni Pontano to write: "His name and his arrival not only confounded the plans of the enemy but filled all Italy with his fame and glory."⁴⁹ In return for his help against the Anjous, Ferrante gave George Castriota a large territory which included the cities of Puglia, Trani, Siponto and the castle of S. Giovanni Rotondo. The Arberesh settled in these lands and today they comprise the municipalities of Campomarino, Portocannone, Greci, Ururi, and Montecilfone.⁵⁰

The largest Albanian immigration in Italy occurred after Scanderbeg's death in 1468. According to the Arberesh oral tradition it was George Castriota's wish before he died that Albanians go to Italy, rather than surrender to the Ottomans. In the song Scanderbeg leaves for battle and encounters death who shows him the end of his life. After he is able to see the bleak future for his family and his country, Scanderbeg turns to his son and says: "Abandoned flower, flower of my heart, take your mother and three of your best ships, leave quickly from here, because if the Turk knows of it, he will kill you and will shame your mother."⁵¹ The song does not stray too much

⁴⁸ Vincenzo Dorsa, *Su gli Albanesi, ricerche e pensieri*, (Napoli: Dalla Tipographia Trani, 1847):54.

⁴⁹Johannes Jovianus Pontanus, "De bello Neapolitano, quod Ferdinandus Rex Neapolitanus Senior contra Ioannem Andegaviensem Ducem gessit," in *Opera Omnia*, V. II Book II (Venice: Aldi e Andrea Socero, 1519): 279. See also Appendix No. 46. "Hujus igitur nomen atque adventus non hostem modo, ejusque turbavit consilia, verum Italian omnem opinionis suae fama implevit."

⁵⁰ Luigi De Rosa, "The Balkan Minorities (Slavs and Albanians) in South Italy," in *The Journal of European Economic History* 29: 2-3 (Fall/Winter,2000): 255.

⁵¹ Vincenzo Dorsa (1847), Giuseppe Schiro (1905), Fan Noli (1924) Rosolino Petrotta (1941), and Salvatore Petrotta (1966), all make mention of this song, in their recounting of the third Albanian emigration to Italy. It is the account of Rosolinno Petrotta in 1941, however that refers to Italy as the place of salvation for Albanians. The song as recorded by Dorsa in Vincenzo Dorsa, *Su Gli Albanesi, Ricerche e Pensieri*, (Napoli: Dalla Tipographia Trani, 1847): page 126, does not mention it. In the newest anthology collection of the Arberesh oral tradition transcribed in 1998 by Francesco Altimari,

from the truth. After his father's death, John Castriota, his mother Donica and most of the Albanian nobles, fled Albania and settled on the Italian lands that King Ferrante had given to his father. Ferrante gave John Castriota the Duchy of S. Pietro a Galatina, near Taranto, maintaining the status of nobility for the Castriota family. The Albanians who settled there formed communities in Carosino, Roccaforzata, San Crispieri, Monteparano and San Marzano. The settlement of the Arberesh in Calabria Ultra however occurred in the latter part of the fifteenth century when Irene Castriota, sister to John Castriota, married Prince Pietro Antonio Sanseverino of Bisignano. Many Albanian nobles and their families followed Irene and settled in S. Demetrio, Macchia, S. Cosmo, and Cosenza.⁵² These centers continue to be part of a thriving Arberesh community in Italy today.

In 1533 the town of Corone fell in Turkish hands, after Charles V signed a treaty with Solimen. The Arberesh who settled there were permitted to move in the

the text of the song is similar to the one found in Dorsa's book. Anton Nike Berisha, *Antologia della Poesia Orale Arbereshe*, trascrizione a cura di Francesco Altimari, trad. Vincenzo Belmonte, (Catanzaro: Rubbettino Editore, 1998): 312-315. Rosolino Petrotta wrote his book in 1941, at a time when Albania was under Italian occupation and it was fashionable to view Italian presence in Albania not as occupation but a fulfillment of Scanderbeg's wish.

Version of Vincenzo Dorsa (1847): “Ducagino, menami qui mio figlio quel vaghissimo figlio, acciò ch'io l'avverta. *Fiore abbandonato, fiore dell'amor mio, prendi tua madre e prepara tre galee, delle migliori che n'hai, che se saprallo il Turco, verrà a impossessarsi di te e insulterà tua madre.*”

Version of the Anthology (1998): “Ma mio buon Ducagino, conducimi qui mio figlio perchè devo parlargli. Gli condussero il figlio dai capelli d'oro, innocente. *Fiore abbandonato, fiore del mio cuore, prendi tua madre e tre galee, le migliori che hai, e fuggi subito di qua. Chè, se il Turco verrà a saperlo, ti ucciderà e tua madre condurrà con sè.*”

Version of Rosolino Petrotta (1941): E rivoltosi al figlio esclamò: “*Fiore abbandonato, fiore dell'amor mio, prendi tua madre e prepara tre galee delle migliori che hai, vanne alla spiaggia del mare e partì, perchè se lo saprà il turco verrà a impossessarsi di te e insulterà tua madre.*” E additò *L'Italia!*.

⁵² Michele Famiglietti, *Educazione e cultura in Arberia*, (Roma: Mario Bulzoni Editore, 1979):71.

Kingdom of Napoli and this movement marked the fifth wave of Albanian migrations in Italy. A little more than a thousand Arberesh from Corone moved in Napoli, Palermo, in Messina and other villages along the Adriatic coast and formed new Arberesh communities.⁵³

The last two migratory waves of the Arberesh in Italy occurred in 1647 during the reign of Phillip IV of Spain. The Arberesh were uprooted from Morea, as it too, fell to the Ottomans, after the Albanian population made a last stand there in 1646. The Morea Arberesh moved in Barile.⁵⁴ The seventh Arberesh emigration to Italy happened during the reign of Charles III from the house of Bourbon. The Albanians who ultimately settled in Villa Badessa in the commune of Pescara in 1744, came from Himara, a province south of the city of Vlora in Albania. Southern Albanians banned together during the seventeenth century and rose in revolts against the Ottomans. Ultimately all of the rebellions were put down by the Turkish troops who retaliated in harsh measures against the Albanian populations, leaving them little choice but to look across the Adriatic for refuge.⁵⁵

⁵³ Salvatore Petrotta, *Albanesi di Sicilia: storia e cultura*, (Palermo: Editori Stampatori Associati, 1966): 36.

⁵⁴ Michele Famiglietti, *Educazione e cultura in Arberia*, (Roma: Mario Bulzoni Editore, 1979):81.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 81. See also Luigi De Rosa, "The Balkan Minorities (Slavs and Albanians) in South Italy," in *The Journal of European Economic History* 29: 2-3 (Fall/Winter,2000):260 and also Salvatore Petrotta, *Albanesi di Sicilia: storia e cultura*, (Palermo: Editori Stampatori Associati, 1966):36.

Pope Paul II in a letter to Duke of Borgogna, makes note of the desolate situation that Albanians experienced in the hands of the Turks: "Gli Albanesi in parte sono uccisi con la spada, in parte sono ridotti in schiavitù. Quelle cittadelle, che avevano sostenuto in nostro favore vigorosamente l'impeto dei Turchi, si dovettero a loro consegnare. Le vicine genti rivierasche dell'Adriatico atterrite dalla paura tremano. Ovunque paura, ovunque lutti, ovunque si presenta ai nostri occhi la morte e la schiavitù. È spettacolo veramente misero...È doloroso scorgere le imbarcazioni dei fuggenti, che si riversano sulle spiagge d'Italia, avendo abbandonato le loro case. Si scorgono sdraiati sul litorale, con le mani alzate verso il cielo."

The Arberesh and Italians

The Arberesh communities in Italy were able to blend with the native Italian populations, but at the same time they continued to keep their distinct traditions and religious institutions intact. Italian accounts from historians and anthropologists however vary in their interpretations. Most of the scholarly debates fall in two categories: those in support of a friendly exchange between the Arberesh and Italian natives and those who believe the contrary. Salvatore Petrotta and Michele Famiglietti in their respective research make the case for a friendly exchange between the Arberesh and Italians for several reasons.

First Albanians were invited in the country by the Italian rulers who gave them lands, second they were active participators in the Italian economy as they had an established landowning class, and third the catholic church supported their settlement in Italy by virtue of their religion. These Albanian emigrants were their Christian brothers.⁵⁶

Luigi de Rosa and the majority of the Italian scholars, on the other hand, view the role of the Catholic church toward the Arberesh as anything but supportive.

Luigi De Rosa notes in his article that the Catholic Church did not encourage the

⁵⁶ Salvatore Petrotta, *Albanesi di Sicilia: storia e cultura*, (Palermo: Editori Stampatori Associati, 1966):37. In an article on Italo-Albanians Gaetano Petrotta notes: “ Per le antiche relazioni di amicizia dei principi albanesi con i re di Napoli, per la collaborazione militare tra i due paesi, sebbene non mancassero manifestazioni di ostilità delle popolazioni costiere terrorizzate dai progressi e dalle feroci rapresaglie dei Turchi, gli esuli albanesi protetti dai pontefici come vittime, e quasi martiri della fede e favoriti dai sovrani, venivano come in una seconda patria a colonizzare e a bonificare larghe zone spopolate a causa dei terremoti, delle pestilenze e delle continue guerre. Per questi indiscutibili vantaggi demografici ed economici anche i baroni e i vescovi furono larghi di concessioni ai nuovi coloni che godettero sempre i diritti di cittadinanza ed esercitano il culto religioso nel rito greco indisturbati nelle loro chiese e con clero proprio senza che si elevassero mai sospetti sulla loro cattolicità.”

See also Michele Famiglietti, *Educazione e cultura in Arberia*, (Roma: Mario Bulzoni Editore, 1979):81-82.

exchange between Italians and the Arbereshe. More so, the majority of the Italian people did not think very highly of the Arberesh. Albanians were known to Italians as “robbers,” violent and warlike people.⁵⁷ Norman Douglass, a British writer, who traveled in Calabria in the nineteenth century noted that the Arberesh who had settled there had,

“ [arrived] ...solely ‘with their shirts and rhapsodies’ (so one of them described it to me)-that is despoiled of everything they indulged in robberies and depredations somewhat too freely even for those free days, with the results that ferocious edicts were issued against them, and whole clans wiped out.”⁵⁸

The Italian populations of Calabria, were rightly afraid of the Arberesh, because they initially came as paid mercenaries. These feelings of hate and fear were best captured by an Italian proverb, which underlies the uneasiness that Italians felt toward the Arberesh: “If you see an Albanian and a wolf, kill the Albanian and let live the wolf.”⁵⁹ These exchanges were often reciprocated by the Arberesh, toward their Italian neighbors. The Arberesh discouraged their daughters from marrying Italians. The common advice to unmarried women was to “be aware of Italians like the woodcutter the axe.”⁶⁰ Yet, even so, the Arbereshe communities managed to

⁵⁷ Luigi De Rosa, “The Balkan Minorities (Slavs and Albanians) in South Italy,” in *The Journal of European Economic History* 29: 2-3 (Fall/Winter,2000):260-263.

⁵⁸ Norman, Douglass, “ *Old Calabria*,” (New York : Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956);182-183.

⁵⁹ Giuseppe Carlo Siciliano, “ Politica e rivolte: dall’ utopia al contributo unitario,” in Caterina Brunetti, Giuseppe Cacoza, Piera L. Oranges and Giuseppe Carlo Siciliano, *Chi dona, tramanda: Studi su alcuni aspetti della vita sociale, culturale e politica degli Italo-Albanesi in Calabria*, (Calabria: Calabria Letteraria Editrice, 1988): 103.
“Si vidi lu gjegjiu e lu lupu, ammazza lu gjegjiu e lassa vivu lu lupu.” (se vedi l’ albanese e il lupo, ammazza l’ albanese e lascia vivo il lupo.)

⁶⁰ Koli Xoxi, *Shqiptaret dhe Garibaldi*, (Prishtine: Rilindja, 1983): 38. “Ruaju nga Italiani, sic ruhet druvari nga sepata.”

thrive in Italy. They held on to their values and traditions, by immortalizing the memory and figure of George Castriota Scanderbeg, which by the end of the nineteenth century had reached its height and become a rallying symbol for all Albanians in Diaspora and the homeland.

CHAPTER I
THE MYTH OF SCANDERBEG IN THE
MEMORY OF THE ARBERESH AND ALBANIA:
AN INTRODUCTION TO METHODOLOGY

Annon from the castle walls
The crescent banner falls,
And the crowd beholds instead,
Like a portent in the sky,
Iskander's banner fly,
The Black Eagle with double head;
And a shout ascends on high,
.....
And the loud, exultant cry
That echoes wide and far
Is "Long Live Scanderbeg!"¹

Introduction

Since his death in 1468, Scanderbeg's life served as the source of many tales and myths in Albania and Europe. It is my contention that even though Albanians and the Albanian diaspora in the world kept his memory alive, it was not until the nineteenth century, that Scanderbeg's memory was resurrected by Albanian intellectuals, who lived outside Albania, as a rallying point toward the achievement of Albanian independence from the Ottoman empire. Before developing the evolution of the Scanderbeg myth it is important to provide the framework under which I study the evolution of Scanderbeg's

¹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Scanderbeg,"
[<http://www.readbookonline.net/read/3148/12702>, Copyright 2003-2004].

memory in Albania and its diaspora in southern Italy in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. I will thus focus my study around three main themes: first I will study the establishment of the historiographical trends and methods of approach that have permeated studies on Scanderbeg since the beginning, second I will provide the basis in which the Scanderbeg myth develops and operates in the diasporic community, but also define who comprises the Albanian diasporic community of Southern Italy and how it relates to Albania, third I will study the importance of the Diasporic intellectuals in their response to the homeland by their use of Scanderbeg's myth as a means of altering Albania's destiny from a Turkish colony to independent entity, by comparing how Scanderbeg's memory develops in Diaspora and Albania.

The study of Scanderbeg in Albania continues to flourish because both the figure and the idea of Scanderbeg as a national hero, continue to remain central to the Albanian historical narrative, which during the course of the nineteenth century was constructed through the work of Albanian intellectuals living abroad. Intellectuals such as Girolamo de Rada, Giuseppe Scura, Giuseppe Serembe, Dora D'Istria, the brothers Frasheri, Ismail Qemali, Fan Noli and many others who lived and worked outside Albania, began to record and construct Albanian history, with Scanderbeg as its centerpiece in hopes of reaching the Albanian people and achieving Albanian independence from the Ottoman empire. Every Albanian history book, recognizes these individuals first and foremost as Albanian nationalists who happen to live outside Albania, underscoring their importance as diasporic intellectuals. I suggest we re-examine their role and contribution toward the achievement of Albanian independence as members of the diaspora first, and Albanians second. First, their experience and intellectual pursuits abroad, made it possible for them

to evaluate Albania in the context of the larger European framework. Second, as intellectuals they were able to gain the respect of other European intellectuals and use their influence toward the construction of an independent Albanian state, to be seen in the European arena both as a product and triumph of modern ideas. Third, their position as members of the aristocracy and or clergy, in their host countries allowed them access to European politicians, as was the case during the Conference of Berlin in 1878, when they had the opportunity to lobby for Albanian independence. Their position as intellectuals and members of the Albanian diaspora abroad, was crucial in giving these individuals not only the tools, but the freedom to pursue their goals unfettered from Ottoman control, something that in the reality of nineteenth century Albanian society would have been impossible to accomplish.

Under these premises, it is obvious to conclude that the Albanian movement for independence is primarily a phenomenon of the Albanian Diaspora. It was the work of intellectuals like Girolamo De Rada, Giuseppe Scura, Zef Serembe, Dora D'Istria, Naim and Sami Frasheri, Ismail Qemali and Fan Noli who used the memory of Scanderbeg to revive and bring to fruition Albanian independence in 1912. Many Albanians intellectuals from Diaspora, returned to Albania in the late nineteenth century to create an independent Albanian state. While many Diasporic intellectuals lived in the Arberesh communities in Southern Italy, many others lived in Egypt, Romania, Turkey, and the United States. Their efforts toward the achievement of Albanian independence were a direct response and reflected the changes that were occurring in their respective geographic domiciles of the time.

The nineteenth century has been aptly named the century of revolutions and nationalism. For the Arberesh intellectual community of Southern Italy, the events of the late nineteenth century in Italy did not go unnoticed. Indeed it is my contention that it was their participation in the unification of the Italian state that paved the way for Arberesh intellectuals, to frame and consolidate a clear platform by which to pursue Albanian independence. Much like Italian nationalists evoked the memories of the glorious Italian past, for the intellectuals of the Arberesh diaspora the memory of Scanderbeg became the center of rally for the creation of Albanian national identity. In their efforts to achieve this goal, Arberesh intellectuals like Girolamo de Rada, Zef Serembe and Giuseppe Schiro who had participated in the Italian war of independence, extended their friendship to other intellectuals of Albanian Diaspora in the world, like Dora D'Istria, Naim and Sami Frasheri, Ismail Qemali and Fan Noli to work together for their homeland.

While the Albanian Diaspora with its center in Southern Italy fervently worked to construct the frame and platform of the independent Albanian state, Albanians inside Albania in the absence of intellectual leadership and absence in development of their native language for four centuries, resorted to oral commemorations of their identity to resist Turkish occupation. Even though, they lacked the means to share Albanian traditions in writing, oral memories of Scanderbeg remained prevalent in Albania. Generation after generation passed on stories about Scanderbeg and his stand against the Ottoman empire. For four centuries, since the death of Scanderbeg, Albanians in Albania and Albanians of Diaspora had co-existed in separate spheres from one another. It was not until the late nineteenth century when the two sides began to engage in a dialogue

with one another and found Scanderbeg's memory a common ground upon which Albanian national identity was built. Thus Albanian memories of Scanderbeg, although prevalent in Albania, did not become politicized until Diasporic intellectuals used them to evoke memories of the past and build a strong basis for Albanian nationalism, which served as a context for the movement toward Albanian independence and its achievement on November 28, 1912.

Methodology: Theoretical Foundation

Before identifying the occupants of the Albanian diaspora and their role in passing on the memory of Scanderbeg it is necessary, to construct a theoretical lens through which one can better examine the power of Scanderbeg's memory with relation to nation-state formation and nationalism. Nationalism, diaspora, and national memory are all themes which help to explain why Scanderbeg continues to be remembered in Albania and its diasporic communities outside Albania.

A popular folk song sung by the Arberesh in Calabria from the nineteenth century, describes the emotive force of an imagined homeland and the relationship which ensues between the diasporic individual and the homeland: "*We are like swallows, we are like eagles, We are united, because we have common roots.*"² While, the emotive power of the song is inescapable it raises important questions to the process of one's displacement and issues of self identification. Under this premise it becomes important to identify what constitutes a diaspora and how do diasporic individuals relate to their country of origin.

² Shkurtaç, Gjovalin, "*Kenge Popullore te Arberesheve te Italise,*" Studime Filologjike, 33:1(1979):172.

What is Diaspora? The term itself is as ambiguous as it is complex. The moment one hears it, images of Jewish exile flood the mind. Even though it is closely related to the Jewish experience, “Diaspora,” as a word has no roots in the Hebrew lexicon, and its genesis in the English vocabulary is fairly modern³. The term Diaspora derives from the indo-European root ‘sper-‘ meaning ‘to sow’, which later evolved to mean scattered and dispersed, or people in exile and a place in exile. The term embodies feelings of separation, longing, melancholy of a home lost, of memories left behind, and of the eternal hope of a return to one’s roots, to the glorious homeland.

Although, this definition of Diaspora carries powerful, emotive meaning, in light of new insights about nations, and national identities, it has become outdated. Benedict Anderson’s ideas of nations being ‘imagined communities,’ both inherently limited and sovereign,⁴ challenge the importance of the nation-state, and raise new questions about Diaspora and the role of the diasporic intellectual in the promotion of national identity.⁵

My definition of Diaspora is that of a community which embodies several common traits such as dispersal from a specific region, retention of a collective memory, vision or myth about the original homeland; a community that regards the ancestral homeland as the true, ideal home, where it would eventually return; it is committed to the restoration and maintenance of the homeland; and it continues to relate personally, or

³ Howard Wettstein, “Coming to Terms with Exile,” in Howard Wettstein ed., *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002):47. According to the OED, the term first appeared in 1876, and by 1881 was used by Wellhausen, in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, in reference to Jewish dispersion.

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin, and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 1983): 6.

⁵ In my construct of Albanian Diaspora, I employ features set forth by other intellectuals engaged in the study of diaspora and diasporic intellectuals and national identity such as William Safran, Rey Chow, Benedic Andersen, E.J. Hobsbawm, Khachig Tololyan, Gayatry Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Hamid Naficy.

vicariously to the homeland.⁶ This definition is very useful in the study of the Albanian Diaspora in Southern Italy because the Arberesh of Italy are an Albanian community who left Albania after the death of Scanderbeg, they continue to maintain their culture and Albanian language, and are committed to the restoration of their homeland. Borders have always defined the relationship between Diaspora and the nation-state. However if nations are real yet imagined entities, the border itself also becomes an imagined entity. Benedict Anderson's work on nationhood fits well with the trends exhibited in Albania and the struggle for Albanian independence on the part of the Albanian Diaspora.

In the modern world, ideas of national economy, become useless, since modern nations are moving toward globalism and global economies. The classic Wilsonian-Leninist form based on the slogan for self-determination is outdated and offers no platform for the twenty-first century. In this construct Diaspora no longer occupies a peripheral space, instead it becomes the hybrid which embodies the Other. This third space to use Khachig Tololyan, definition is a "land, a territory , a place that functions as the site of homogeneity, equilibrium,[and] integration."⁷ As such Diaspora becomes the center, the place where discourse flourishes; and the exchange of ideas sets the frame for political and social change in the homeland. The role then of the diasporic intellectual becomes defined, first in relation to the place of origin and second to the place of domicile. In the first case it is a question of a consciousness that resists the "submission to consanguinity," that is demanded by nationalists, and instead inhabits the borders

⁶ My definition of diaspora is closely aligned with William Safran's work in diasporic communities as developed in William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," in *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 87.

⁷ Khachig Tololyan, "The Nation-State and Its Others, In Lieu of a Preface," in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny eds., *Becoming National, A Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996):429.

between hegemonic fields. In the second place, the diasporic intellectuals are called to function as “spokespersons for the natives.”⁸ Under these premises Diaspora and the diasporic intellectual become quite important in understanding nations and nation-building. Indeed, under this premise it is the role of Diaspora, and more precisely the diasporic intellectual, to define a nation’s consciousness and set the pace for change.

Since nations, nationalism, national memory and identity are transnational and reconstructed modern constructs what then, happens to diaspora and what is its role in the modern community? Many scholars, like Rey Chow, Homi Bhabha, Ngugi and Spivak, are all concerned with the question of the “Other,” the peripheral, the subaltern which is the Third World in relation to the First World, or the West to describe the direction in which societies are moving presently. They offer different views on what diaspora is and how it affects the nation-state. For this study, I rely heavily on the model presented by Rey Chow, in understanding the role of the Arberesh in Albanian ideas of national identity and nationalism.

The contribution of the Diasporic intellectual to national identity can be clearly traced in the Albanian case. It is in light of Diaspora that we can understand the Other, and explain the relationship between colonizer and the colonized. Furthermore, I argue that it was the work of the diasporic intellectuals in the nineteenth century that altered the relationship between Albania and the Ottoman Empire through the establishment of the formal written Albanian language.

⁸ Chow, Rey, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 9-14, 24, 99, 118.

It was their pressure in the Ottoman court that legalized the teaching of Albanian inside Albania in 1908. In fact it was the input from the Diasporic intellectuals which created the conditions for Albanian independence in 1912.

The roots of Albanian nationalism and the role of Diasporic intellectuals are better understood by examining the importance which memory and politics of national identity play in Albanian history. Sectoral memories on the myth of Scanderbeg in Albania function much in the same way, that French memories on the myth of Joan of Arc are constructed in France. According to Pierre Nora, these sectoral memories have restructured the way the relationship between past, present and future is experienced and they have reshaped the forms of collectivity that now cohabit the national space. For Nora national memory is not a monolithic mental image of the past which is internalized the same way by all members of a given society but as the diverse representational modes by means of which communities imagine, represent and enact their specific relationship to the past. In the modern world, it is the society rather than the nation state that has become the linchpin of social organization. The idea of Nation and nationhood remains the nostalgic and enduring figure of the larger social collectivity. It is the emotive force of national memories argues Nora that has given them their magnetic, contagious and volatile character in the life of modern nation-states.⁹

Like Joan of Arc in France, for Albanians, Scanderbeg and his memory serve primarily the nationalist cause and its proponents. Even though he lived in the fifteenth century, it is not until the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century that images of Scanderbeg become prolific. The idea of collective amnesia applies well to Scanderbeg's

⁹ Nora, 11.

memory in the twentieth century Albania. In Communist Albania it became pivotal to view Scanderbeg as the national hero, a man who came from the masses and fought for them; while conveniently forgetting his relationship with the Vatican, or that he was part of the nobility and his unifying struggle aimed at creating his own monarchical order over Albania. Yet to this day he continues to be remembered as the savior of Albanian national identity. When this occurs what happens then to a nation's identity?

In Albania and its Diaspora in southern Italy, Scanderbeg's memory is perpetuated by images and texts that have been accumulated since his twenty-five year heroic stand against the Ottoman Turks. He has inspired many works ranging in quality from vile to the sublime, and often times they spill beyond the Albanian borders. Monuments, museums, plazas, street names, schools, money and flags bear either the name or insignia of Scanderbeg. Novels, poems, songs, school books, movies, and paintings continue to keep the memory of Scanderbeg alive. These images are more profound in Albania and its diasporic communities in Kosovo and Southern Italy.

Under this analysis the Albanian nation is an imagined construct. It is also a product of the modern era. Albanian independence from the Ottoman Empire was achieved in 1912. The language did not evolve until the beginning of the twentieth century. Previous to 1912 Albanians were to be Turcofied but never to join in as equals. They were always to be seen as the Other. After achieving independence the twentieth century witnessed the Albanian plunge into communism and fifty years later its liberation from communist ideology. It became important then for Albanians to reach back to its diaspora and identify themselves through ethnicity. In all scenarios, pre-independence, communism and post-communism one individual; Scanderbeg and his memory, are

prevalent. Writing in 1941, Vandeleur Robinson after visiting Albania in 1913 and 1926 noted a most peculiar fact. Albanians regarded the greatest event in their history Scanderbeg's stand against the Turks in the fifteenth century.¹⁰ This observation is hardly surprising since the Albanian nationalist movement which began in the middle of the nineteenth century had as its main goal the fulfillment of Scanderbeg's dream: Albanian independence.

Scanderbeg's return to Albania and his first declaration of independence has been dated November 28, 1443. This date of independence is significant in Albanian history. When Ismail Qemali declared independence in Vlora in 1912 he resurrected Scanderbeg's flag. The date for this declaration of independence was also November 28. Since 1912 every regime in Albania, has rooted itself on the memory of Scanderbeg to gain legitimacy, and November 28 has become a date pregnant of emotive meaning.

Derek Hall, a British journalist who has written extensively on Albania, also recognizes the importance of Scanderbeg as a national symbol especially during the communist regime, 1941-1990. The communists in Albania viewed Albanian liberation from Nazi Germany as another kind of independence. They claimed Albania liberated from foreign rule on November 29, 1944. But the connection to Scanderbeg was not lost. Indeed the communist regime used the figure of Scanderbeg to its advantage. The Day of the Flag, November 28, was restored as a national day; the main square of the capital, Tirana, became Scanderbeg Square; Kruja, Scanderbeg's capital was made into a Hero City; and on the ruins of the old fortress, in 1980, the newest Scanderbeg Museum,

¹⁰ Robinson, Vandeleur, *Albania's Road to Freedom*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1941):13-15.

designed by the dictator's daughter Pranvera, was built.¹¹ It is impossible to be in Albania and not know about Scanderbeg. Upon visiting Albania in 1968 two Swedish tourists wrote, "*Scanderbeg's statue stands in the main square in Tirana. Scanderbeg's statue is all over the country. People sing about Scanderbeg. Write poems about Scanderbeg. Build Museums to Scanderbeg.*"¹² Clearly memory and commemoration play an important role in the permeation of Scanderbeg's Myth in the modern times.

New nations as well as old states require ancient pasts. As soon as Albanian independence was declared, its elites also felt a need to commemorate. The role of the elites in Albanian national memory will be explored in greater detail on the last chapter but the basis for most of this commemoration however was directly linked to the evolution of language and the print technology. Previous to these two key changes, commemoration was kept alive through songs, ballads and tales. This thesis, however, is better understood within the construct of the Albanian nation. Scanderbeg's memory, changes significantly when it serves the needs of the diasporic community, whether it is Kosovo or Southern Italy. Diaspora as a construct is more fluid and thus allows for changes in perception and mentality to the Scanderbeg Myth which would be hard to achieve in Albania proper. It is clear that diaspora often times controls the means by which Scanderbeg's memory is channeled in the Albanian society.

¹¹ Hall, Derek, *Albania and the Albanians*, (London, New York: Pinter Reference, 1994): 36-37.

¹² Myrdal, Jan and Gun Kessle, *Albania Defiant*, trans. Paul Britten Autin, (Monthly Review Press, reprinted 1976):34-35.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE STUDY OF SCANDERBEG

Herefore doth vaine antiquitie so vaunt
Her ancient monuments of mightie peeres,
And old Heroes, which their world did daunt
With their great deedes, and fild their childrens eares?
Who rapt with wonder of their famous praise,
Admire their statues, their Collossoes great,
Their huge Pyramids, which do heauen threat.
Lo one, whom later age hath brought to light,
Matchable to the greatest of those great:
Great both by name, and great in power and might,
And meriting a meere triumphant feate.
**The scourge of Turkes, and plague of infidels,
Thy acts, ô Scanderbeg, this volume tels.¹**

Since the sixteenth century, writings on Scanderbeg have been prolific, as he inspired many contemporaries who kept his memory alive, through diaries and printed book. The bulk of historiography on Scanderbeg, runs through several methodologies. Historians, biographers, and literary critics both inside and outside Albania have undertaken studies on the topic and drawn from different aspects of the hero's life. From the beginning the earlier publications, during the fifteenth century were biographies or commemorations of Scanderbeg's war against the Turks. Most of these works were

¹ Spenser, Edmund, *Historie of George Castriot, surnamed Scanderberg, King of Albanie: containing his famous actes, etc. Newly translated out of French into English by Z. I., Gentleman. Imprinted for W. Ponsonby, 1596 (folio)*. [<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/sonnets.html>.] This HTML etext is based upon *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Edmund Spenser* [Grosart, London, 1882] by Richard Bear at the [University of Oregon](http://www.uoregon.edu/~rbear/). The text is in the public domain. Markup is copyright © 1995 University of Oregon; this version is distributed for nonprofit use only.

written by priests and Arberesh Albanians who wanted to claim back Scanderbeg's heritage to the exiled Albanian community living in Southeastern Italian peninsula.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the works that were devoted to Scanderbeg were literary poems or epic ballads. As the printed press developed in Europe, more and more novellas and epic poems that glorified the ancient past became prominent. Elizabethan poets like Edmund Spenser and Zachary Jones commemorated Scanderbeg's war against the Ottoman empire in direct response to British dominance in the European continent. In all the works of the time the figure of Scanderbeg was fashioned after the ideal romantic Christian hero who fought valiantly against the Ottoman armies.

It was not until the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that Scanderbeg's commemoration as a national symbol was really developed by the Albanian Diaspora, Italian, British, and American writers. Europe and the world were ripe with revolution during the nineteenth century and for many European writers Scanderbeg was more than an exotic figure. In a time when patriotism and national identity took paramount importance, Scanderbeg became the European leader that saved Christendom. Literary figures from Byron and Benjamin Disraeli in England, Vivaldi in Italy, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in America, all wrote about Scanderbeg and made his memory immortal through their writings.²

² Terpatsi, Peter J. ed., *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage by Lord Byron, Selected Verse Depicting Albania*, (Peter Terpatsi, 1958.)

Disraeli, Benjamin, "The Rise of Iskander," in "Popanilla and Other Tales, Volume III," in *The Bradenham Edition of the Novels and Tales, of Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield*, (London: Peter Davies, 1926.)

Vivaldi, Antonio, and Antonio Salvi, Anton Maria Albizzini, Richard Macnutt, *Scanderbeg : drama per musica da rappresentarsi in Firenze nel Teatro degl' illustrissimi signori Accademici Immobili posto in via della Pergola, nell'estate dell'anno MDCCXVIII sotto la protezione dell'Altezza Reale del serenissimo Gran Principe di Toscana*, (Firenze : Da Anton Maria Albizzini da S. Maria in Campo, 1718.)

Alongside prominent authors that wrote about Scanderbeg during the nineteenth century Albanian intellectuals as members of the Albanian Diaspora began to recall and write more about the memory of Scanderbeg as an Albanian leader. Writings from Girolamo De Rada, Giuseppe Scura, Zef Serembe, Naim and Sami Frasheri, and Andon Zako Cajupi sought to place Scanderbeg's memory at the center of Albanian consciousness. As such, Scanderbeg was no longer the celebrated Christian hero who fought to save Europe from Islam, but he became the Albanian hero who fought to liberate his country and establish the first Albanian independent state. It was during the nineteenth century at the hands of the Diaspora intellectuals that Scanderbeg's memory became historic memory with an agency for Albanian independence.

Historians, anthropologists and linguists did not begin to critically study Scanderbeg's figure as an Albanian until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even at this juncture the studies were minimal and did not stray from revisiting past biographies of the hero. For most of the twentieth century Albanian history witnessed the independence of Albania, the experience of both World Wars, Albanian descent into communist dictatorship and by the end of the century the establishment of a democratic form of government. Through all these important political changes, the country's enduring symbol for Albanian identity remains Scanderbeg and his legacy. As such, it is important to highlight how the study of this topic has developed through time.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, "Scanderbeg," [<http://www.readbookonline.net/read/3148/12702>, Copyright 2003-2004].

The study of Scanderbeg dates back to at least four centuries, but one of the first works and primary source documents in the written form which commemorates Scanderbeg is Marin Barleti's biography of the hero³. The book is dedicated to Don Ferrante of Naples, who is believed to have been the nephew of Scanderbeg. Since its publication this work by Marin Barleti has been translated in many European languages.⁴

Marin Barleti tried to write an accurate history of the life of Scanderbeg. During the time he wrote however, no one was writing about Scanderbeg. Barleti noted in his introduction that one of the incentives to write the book was to bring back to life the

³ Barleti, Marin, *Historia e Jetes dhe e Veprave te Skenderbeut*, [The History of the Life and Actions of Scanderbeg] trans. Stefan Prifti, (Tirane: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1967.)

Unfortunately, Barleti does not provide any detailed information about himself as the author. The only secure dates on him are the publication of Scanderbeg's biography in 1504 and another work in 1512. Apart from these two instances the only clue about Marin Barleti is that he was a priest from Scutari modern day Shkoder, who lived in Italy. Even though there is much debate on the importance of Marin Barleti as a historian, he himself notes on the introduction of his work that his primary goal is the "pursuit of truth." He writes to Don Ferrante, Scanderbeg's nephew for whom the book is published, that he is aware that much of the history of the past is influenced by the present, but he has tried to base his work on solid sources." This is the closest statement where it is clear that Barleti viewed himself as a historian and that he regarded his work as a historical monograph rather than fiction. This biography produced by Marin Barleti is one of the most authentic sources on the life of George Castriota and it is also the first professional biography on Scanderbeg. The book was written in Latin titled: "*Historia de Vita et Gestis Scanderbegi, Epirotarum Principis.*" The original, does not have a publishing date, but it is agreed that it was written during 1508-1510.

⁴ G. T. Petrovitch and F. Pall are two historians who have traced most of these translations of Marin Barleti's work. Much of the contribution from F. Pall can be found in: Noli, Fan S., *George Castrioti Scanderbeg*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1947): 140-142. The work by G.T Petrovitch can be found in the following volumes:

Pétrovitch, Georges T., *Scanderbeg (Georges Castriota) Essai de bibliographie raisonnée*, Book XXIV, XXIX (München: Trofenik, 1967.)

Pétrovitch, Georges T., *Scanderbeg (Georges Castriota). Essai de bibliographie raisonnée. Ouvrages sur Scanderbeg écrits en langues française, anglaise, allemande, latine, italienne, espagnole, portugaise, suédoise, et grecque, et publiées depuis l'invention de l'imprimerie jusqu'à nos jours*, (Amsterdam, B. R. Grüner, 1972.)

The work in German was translated by Johan Piciani and was published seven different times first in 1533, 1561, 1577, 1578, in Augsburg, then in Frankfurt 1597 and in Magdeburg 1604, 1606. Petro Rocca translated it in Italian and it was published in Venice 1554, 1560, 1568, and 1580. F. de Andrade translated it in Portuguese and it was published in Lisbon, 1567. Jacques de Lavardin translated it into French and it was published in Paris 1576, 1597, and 1621, in La Rochelle 1593 and in Geneva 1604. The book was also published in English in 1596 as noted in Biçoku, Kasem and Jup Kastrati, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu : bibliografi, 1454-1835*, (Tirane: Biblioteka Kombetare, 1997): 234-237.

memory of Scanderbeg to the Albanian community in Southern Italy.⁵ Even though Barleti's data in the book is exaggerated in terms of casualties during the battles, Scanderbeg's oratorical skill and the dates when Scanderbeg was sent as a hostage to the Porte, his is the only work that provided the foundation upon which the Albanian exiles in Italy would continue to commemorate the memory of Scanderbeg. Even in acknowledging the deficiencies in Barleti's work it is important to note that it is his work that carried for many Albanians the images of Scanderbeg as a man, a husband, a father and a warrior. Perhaps of most importance is to realize that while Barletti's work should be examined closely, most of the scholarly analysis on Scanderbeg's speeches comes directly from Marin Barleti's records.⁶

Another quoted source on Scanderbeg and contemporary of Marlin Barleti was Raphael Volaterranus. He published his work in 1506, *Thirty Eight Commentary Books on the History of Rome*⁷, which provided detailed information about the time Scanderbeg spent in the Ottoman court. The volumes also contain information about the death of Scanderbeg's father John, Scanderbeg's return to Albania, and his betrayal by his nephew

⁵ Barleti, Marin, *Historia e Jetes dhe e Veprave te Skenderbeut*, [The History of the Life and Actions of Scanderbeg] trans. Stefan Prifti, (Tirane: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1967): 51. The debate over the accuracy of Barleti's work continues even today. G. T. Petrovic views the book as a good starting block in the study of Scanderbeg, but another historian, Pal Jovi on the other hand disputes the importance of Barleti, since [Barleti] gave much praise to Scanderbeg. Other historians like Gibbon and Jorga subscribe to this view as well as noted by Fan Noli in Noli, Fan S., *George Castrioti Scanderbeg*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1947.)

⁶ The most quoted line in every story goes back to one of Scanderbeg's speeches that later served as the rallying cry for Albanian independence. When Scanderbeg returned in Albania and repossessed his castle from the Ottoman Turks he held a speech in front of his soldiers and people. He is quoted by Barleti as saying:

"I did not bring you freedom, I found it amongst you. ...The kingdom and this city I did not give you; you delivered it to me. I did not bring you weapons, I found you already armed. You have freedom all around you, in your chest, in your forehead, in your swords and spears..." (Barleti, 76.)

⁷ Bicoku, Kasem and Jup Kastrati eds, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu: Bibliografi 1454-1835*, (Tirane: Biblioteka Kombetare, 1997): 62.

Hamza. This work by Volaterranus led the way for Georgius Pontanus in 1609 to further elaborate on the details of Scanderbeg's life. Pontanus, who was a Czech priest, was the first author to comprise an anthology about Scanderbeg. Pontanus used Barleti's work and his citations to put together some of Scanderbeg's speeches to his troops and his people. When Pontanus wrote his work on Scanderbeg the Ottoman threat was imminent. Pontanus' aims in his book were to discredit and stereotype the Ottoman Turks as faithless and barbarians. During a time when the very safety of Europe was endangered by invasion, Pontanus wanted to rally the people of central Europe behind the memory of Scanderbeg and his deeds. Perhaps if they followed the example of Scanderbeg these nations would be able to hold off invasion from the Ottoman Turks. Under such a context it is not surprising then, that Scanderbeg's memory in the early modern period was used as a symbol of freedom and resistance to foreign occupation. All these three works by Barleti, Volaterranus and Pontanus complement one another and help modern readers to understand how the first historians treated the figure of Scanderbeg.

Another historian, Jacques de Lavardin, published in 1604 a biography of Scanderbeg.⁸ In the book, Lavardin explored the military activity of Scanderbeg, as well as the records of Scanderbeg's victories against the Turkish troops. The book ends with the death of Sultan Mahomet II. Lavardin, unlike Marin Barleti, included in his work a full Turkish chronology of events, which strengthened his claim on many disputed dates such as Scanderbeg's birth, his time in the Turkish court, and his death. Lavardin's work has been critiqued by many historians. Petrovich believed that Lavardin published his

⁸ Lavardin, Jacques De, *Histoire de Georges Castriot, surnomme Scanderbeg, roy D'Albanie*, [History of George Castriota Scanderbeg, King of Albania], (Paris: Par P. De La Roviére, 1604).

biography of Scanderbeg under three different names.⁹ Since Lavardin was a protestant, it would have been difficult for him to publish the same work in a Catholic country, hence Petrovich suggested, he changed names in order to facilitate publication. The problem with the publication in 1604 is the lack of a sponsorship. There exist no documents which show Lavardin's permission to publish the book, nor is there any permission given by the state administration. This has led many scholars to conclude that perhaps the book was not an original but a copy of the original text. Unlike the other two publications which contain Scanderbeg's portrait, the publication of 1604 does not contain any portraits. In this publication however, Lavardin made extensive use of Marin Barleti's work. In fact he used most of Barleti's description when he wrote about the Ottoman siege to the fortress of Shkodra. Based on Lavardin's extensive use of Barleti's work, many historians concluded that his biography of Scanderbeg was a loose translation of Barleti's work.¹⁰

A century passed before another historian critically examined Scanderbeg's life and legacy. Apart from the works of Barleti, Antivarino and Lavardin. Giammaria Biemmi, an Italian priest, published in 1742 his history of Scanderbeg.¹¹ In his book Biemmi claimed that his history of Scanderbeg surpassed those written by Barleti and

⁹ Pétrovitch, Georges T., *Scanderbeg (Georges Castriota). Essai de bibliographie raisonnée. Ouvrages sur Scanderbeg écrits en langues française, anglaise, allemande, latine, italienne, espagnole, portugaise, suédoise, et grecque, et publiés depuis l'invention de l'imprimerie jusqu'à nos jours*, (Amsterdam, B. R. Grüner, 1972): 34,38.

¹⁰ Ibid., 153. Albanian historians of Scanderbeg such as Fan Noli, Jup Kastrati and Kasem Bicoku agree with Georges Petrovitch's view that most Lavardin's biography of Scanderbeg is a translation of Marin Barleti's text. Noli, Fan S., *George Castrioti Scanderbegh*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1947.) and Bicoku, Kasem and Jup Kastrati eds, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu: Bibliografi 1454-1835*, (Tirane: Biblioteka Kombetare, 1997.)

¹¹ Biemmi Giammaria, *Istoria di Giorgio Castrioto detto Scanderbegh*, (Brescia: Dalle Stampe di Giam-Batista Bossino, 1742).

Lavardin because his book contained more accurate historical data. Biemmi claimed that he stumbled upon his discovery of Scanderbeg. He claimed that he ran upon a work entitled, “ *Explicit Historia Scanderbegi, Edita per Quendam Albanensem. Venettis Impresa Industria, Atque Impensa Erhardi Radolt de Augusta Anno Domini 1480, die 2 Mensis Aprilis Ducante Joanne Mocenyco, Inchito Duce*¹². According to Biemmi, an Albanian priest from Tivari, who served as an officer in Scanderbeg’s army, wrote this work. Since the name of this man was not available , Biemmi called him Antivarino. Biemmi claimed that the discovery of this work was more important than Barleti’s treatment of the figure of Scanderbeg. Later, historians who continued to write about Scanderbeg, such as Babinger, Fallmerayer, and Noli, carefully studied Biemmi’s work and concluded that Biemmi’s work was a product of exaggeration and misuse of sources.¹³ Initially Biemmi’s work left much room for doubt, but under careful examination it became apparent that what the author attributed to Antivarino was a combination of names, dates and fictional events juxtaposed to the reality of other sources who were contemporary to Scanderbeg; Barleti, Frangu, and the use of the diaries of Popes Calixtus III and Pius II who helped Scanderbeg in his work against the Turks. However the work of Biemmi is often times used alongside the work of Barleti and Lavardin to put together the life and deeds of George Castriota.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century two prominent historians undertook studies on the figure of Scanderbeg separately: Jakob Philip Fallmerayer and Georges T. Petrovitch. Jakob Philip Fallmerayer a German traveler and historical investigator, best

¹² Ibid., 2

¹³ Noli, Fan S., *George Castrioti Scanderbegh*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1947): 21.

known for his opinions in regard to the ethnology of the modern Greeks, became famous for his contributions to the medieval history of Greece.¹⁴ Though his theory that the Greeks of the present day are of Albanian and Slav descent, with hardly a drop of true Greek blood in their veins, has not been accepted in its entirety by other investigators, it has served to modify the opinions of even his greatest opponents. Fallmerayer also wrote also about Scanderbeg¹⁵ and his work is one of the first historical criticisms of other historian's work on Scanderbeg. He disputed Biemmi on several issues and regarded Barleti's work both as a historical and literary work. Fallmerayer was one of the first historians to discover Scanderbeg's death in 1468 through the sources. The bulk of Fallmerayer's work dealt with the expeditions of the Ottoman Turks against Albania. He was among the first historians to critically analyze Scanderbeg's war as a war of resistance. Fallmerayer also gave Scanderbeg the credit he deserved, when he wrote about the military campaigns and defended his war and military tactics in the war for independence.¹⁶

Fallmerayer's contemporary George T. Petrovitch, a French scholar, was the first historian to publish an exhaustive bibliography on works about Scanderbeg.¹⁷ He collected French, German, British, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, and Greek published works about Scanderbeg and produced a book that contains a wealth of

¹⁴ Bicoku, Kasem and Jup Kastrati eds, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu: Bibliografi 1454-1835*, (Tirane: Biblioteka Kombetare, 1997.): 244-47.

¹⁵ Fallmerayer, Jakob Phillipp, "Das Albanesische Element in Greicheland," in *Abhandlungen der Historischen Klasse der Koeniglich Bayrischen Academie der Wissenschaften*, 8, no., 3 (Munchen: G. Franz, 1860) 657-736.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 546-9.

¹⁷ Petrovitch, Georges, *Scanderbeg* Georges Castriota: Essai de Bibliographie Raisonee, (Paris, 1881, and Amsterdam, 1972.)

information for scholars engaged in research in the field. Petrovitch included one hundred and eighty published works on Scandereg in 1881. Presently, approximately one thousand works have been published on the topic of Scanderbeg, and new works continue to be discovered in previously unavailable libraries and archives.

In the first part of the twentieth century, a decade after Albania became independent from the Ottoman Turks, an Albanian bishop Fan S. Noli, educated in the United States, was the first Albanian scholar since Barleti to write a history of Scanderbeg.¹⁸ His first edition of the book came out in 1921; however, Noli published it again in 1947 after a series of corrections. The first part of the book presents a short biography of Scanderbeg, while the second part is a critical analysis of the sources on Scanderbeg. This work by Noli is used by other historians as one of the cornerstones in the study of George Castriota's historiography.

By the middle of the twentieth century more Albanian and Eastern and Western European scholars began to write about Scanderbeg. Most of the Albanian historians wrote about the figure of Scanderbeg as the national hero and tried to link Scanderbeg's memory to the Albanian renaissance in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ At the same time Italian scholars wrote about the Arberesh minorities in Southeastern Italy and their preservation of Scanderbeg's memory in popular folklore.²⁰ More books were published in 1967 in Albania about Scanderbeg than at any other time. 1967 marked the 500th anniversary of

¹⁸ Noli, Fan S., *George Castrioti Scanderbegh*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1947.)

¹⁹ Pollo, Stefanaq, "Mbi Disa Aspekte Ideologjike e Politike te Rinlindjes Kombetare Shqiptare," *Studime Historike [Albania]* 22 no., 1 (1968): 95-100.

²⁰ Kasem Bihiku, "Traditat e Epokes se Skenderbeut ne Historine e Arbersheve te Italise," *Studime Historike [Albania]* 22 no., 1 (1968): 113-119.

Scanderbeg's death and the Albanian communist government sought to legitimize its power in Albania by drawing parallels between Scanderbeg's struggle against the Turks in 1444 with the War of Liberation from Nazi Germany in 1944.

Karl Gollner and Joseph Macurek were two historians that continued to write about Scanderbeg in 1967. Karl Gollner, a Romanian scholar, focused on Scanderbeg's military engagements.²¹ While Gollner specifically examined published sources of the latter half of the sixteenth century. Joseph Macurek, a Czech historian, studied the relationship between Scanderbeg and Czechoslovakian rulers.²² Both scholars offered new insights about Scanderbeg's abilities as a military commander and head of state.

During the seventies and eighties much of the work done on the subject changed dramatically. Biographies on Scanderbeg were rare, and much of the work in the field was done by literary critics. A majority of the studies on Scanderbeg tended to focus on different aspects of his life and tried to make it relevant to the experience of the people. Francesco Altimari wrote an article in 1980 about Scanderbeg's role in the oral literary traditions of the Albanian communities in Italy.²³ Also, Aleksander Zoto published in 1982 an article which studied the figure of Scanderbeg in French literature.²⁴

²¹ Gollner, Karl, "Veprat Luftarake te Skenderbeut ne Botimet nga Gjysma e dyte e Shekullit XVI," *Studime Historike [Albania]* 21 no., 4 (1967): 75-80.

²² Macurek, Joseph, "Gjergj Kastrioti: Skenderbeu, Shqiperia dhe Vendet Ceke," *Studime Historike [Albania]* 21 no., 4 (1967): 37-44.

²³ Altimari, Francesco, "Mbi Figuren e Skenderbeut ne Letersine Gojore Arbereshe," *Studime Filologjike [Albania]* 34 no., (1980): 73-80.

²⁴ Zoto, Aleksander, "Figura e Skenderbeut ne Letersine Frenge te Shekujve 16, 17 e 18," *Studime Filologjike [Albania]* 36 no., 2 (1982): 129-157.

In the nineties, new questions on the historiography of Scanderbeg resurfaced. New books and articles tended to focus on issues dealing with culture, political legitimacy and history of memory. Lorant Balla's work in 1990, *Scanderbeg, the Historical and Literary Hero*, examined the historiography of George Castriota Scanderbeg between 1405-1468 and the successful war he led against the Turks.²⁵ Balla noted that literature on Scanderbeg is divided into various categories: Western, Albanian, Turkish, and Greek. He views the latter as the most objective of all, but since this publication many questions have risen to challenge his findings.

Another work, written by Kurt William Treptow written in 1995, compared George Castriota with Vlad the Impaler.²⁶ Treptow relied heavily on the research done by Noli, Jorga and Petrovitch. There is very little analysis to compare the differences between Vlad and Scanderbeg. Treptow's work on Scanderbeg is general and resembles a biography. Micheal Schmidt-Neke's study of Scanderbeg tended to focus on more political trends such as nationalism.²⁷ His article examined the extent to which Albanian regimes since 1912 have drawn on the figure and symbolism of Scanderbeg and presented themselves as his heirs in the struggle for independence. On a more broader scope of study two Albanian historians Kasem Bicoku and Jup Kastrati published in 1997 a comprehensive bibliography on Scanderbeg which drew heavily on the work done by Petrovitch.²⁸ This is one of the best available collected bibliographies to date about

²⁵ Balla, Lorant, "Szenderbeg, a Tortenelmi Es Irodalmi Hos," (Fall –Winter, 1990: 76-85.)

²⁶ Treptow, Kurt William, *Of Saints and Sinners. Native Resistance to Ottoman Expansion in Southeastern Europe, 1443-1481: George Castriota Scanderbeg and Vlad III Dracula*, Ph.D. diss. (University of Illinois, Urbana- Champaign, 1995): 1-380.

²⁷ Schmidt-Neke, Michael, "Nationalism and National Myth: Scanderbeg and the Twentieth Century Albanian Regimes," *European Legacy* 2 no. 1 (1997): 1-7.

Scanderbeg. The book is divided in three parts which contain published works, unpublished works, and questionable work, as well as a wealth of indexes, which examine authors, artistic publications, cities where works are published, cited authors, libraries, abbreviations and illustrations. The book covers published works on Scanderbeg between 1454 and 1835.

In 2002 the newest study in Albanian social history appeared. *Albanian Identities*, is a compilation of the most recent scholarship on the study of Albania and its national mythology²⁹. Derived from a conference on Albania, the book is the first comprehensive work in the field of history and memory which focuses on Albanian myths. It offers great insight to the current debates that deal with Albanian nationalism and state identity. Also, it provides some of the best comprehensive historiographies in the study of Albania. This is one of the few books that directly puts forward concrete models about the theory behind the figure of Scanderbeg in the memory of the Albanian people.

Another forthcoming work, the most recent on this topic, is being conducted by Dimitris Livanios at Cambridge University. *Heroes Are for Ever: The Life and Afterlife of Scanderbeg in Greek and Albanian Historiography, 1800s - 1920s'*. The author offers an examination of the mechanisms of appropriation of the medieval 'Albanian' hero George Kastriotis/Castriota/Scanderbeg by the Greek and Albanian historical imagination, exploring how he developed from Christian hero into 'Greek' and 'Albanian' national.

²⁸ Bicoku, Kasem and Jup Kastrati, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu: Bibliografi 1454-1835*, (Tirane: Biblioteka Kombetare: 1997).

²⁹ Schawndner-Sievers, Stephanie and Bernd J.Fischer, ed., *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002).

Clearly as the historiography suggests, though much analysis has been provided with regards to Scanderbeg as a historical figure, very little has been written in terms of his memory in the culture of Albanian people in Albania and Southern Italy. Furthermore, historians have neglected to look at the role of Diaspora in shaping Scanderbeg's mythology for the purpose of national identity.

By not framing this topic as a biographical sketch new conclusions can be drawn about George Castriota Scanderbeg and his descendants. Scanderbeg's image continues to resist the test of time. He remains alive in the memory of the Albanian people and the Diaspora. Aside from his place in Albanian history as a national hero, he has become an icon in the popular culture of the Albanians and the Arberesh of Italy. His life and actions continue to pass on from generation to generation, and each time they carry the agency of those that use them for the achievement of their own ends.

CHAPTER III
TACTICS OF INTERVENTION:
DIASPORA AND THE USE OF SCANDERBEG'S
MEMORY IN THE CREATION OF ALBANIAN
NATIONAL IDENTITY

Kruja O blessed town,
Wait, O wait for Scanderbeg,
He is coming as a golden dove,
To save the motherland¹

Since most of the Albanian intellectuals engaged in the movement for Albanian independence were either part of the Arberesh Diaspora in Southern Italy, or lived outside of Albania in Europe and America, it is important to distinguish them from one another. While the Arberesh intellectuals recognized themselves, as members of the Diaspora they differed from Albanian intellectual nationalists living abroad who dreamed of a return to an independent homeland as was the case with the brothers Frasheri and Fan Noli. For the intellectuals of the Arberesh community however, a return to the homeland was not an option, as for most of them and their families, they had lived in Southern Italy for over four centuries. Their position, both geographically and intellectually, between the homeland and the European community, gave the Arberesh

¹ Naim Frasheri, *Histori e Skenderbeut*, Vepra, 2, (Tirana: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, republished in 1967).

Note: Unless otherwise noted, author does all translated work.

intellectual community a central role on the movement for Albanian independence because they became the bridge between Albanian nationalists living abroad, and the homeland. This chapter will focus on the role of the Arberesh intellectual diaspora in the formation of national consciousness in Albania through the use of Scanderbeg's memory. I will heavily rely on three Arberesh intellectuals who through their works together show how the myth of Scanderbeg has permeated both Albanian and Arberesh cultures. The first intellectual Girolamo de Rada with his work, *Ill-fated Scanderbeg (1837-1884²)*, raises questions of identity for the Arberesh diaspora in Italy. De Rada turns to the story of Scanderbeg to give answers to these questions, but also to spark the movement for independence inside Albania. The second intellectual Giuseppe Serembe, is another important figure from the Arberesh intellectual community to evoke the memory of Scanderbeg for Albanian independence in his writing. Another Arberesh intellectual who worked tirelessly for Albanian independence was also Dora d'Istria, one of the first women intellectuals who used the memory of Scanderbeg in her writings with clear nationalist motives. Together these three Arberesh intellectuals gave the memory of Scanderbeg its nationalist agency and founded the network between other Arberesh intellectuals and other Albanian intellectuals abroad, to work together toward the establishment of the independent Albanian state.

Jeronim de Rada, or Girolamo de Rada was born on 29 November 1814 in Macchia a province of Cosenza in the region of Calabria in Italy. Macchia Albanese as the village was known otherwise became an Arberesh colony in the fifteenth century

²Rada, Girolamo de., *Poesie Albanesi, Scanderbeccu iPa Faan*, Prefazione 1870, (Corigliano Calabro, 1872):5 -8.

when the Arberesh of Albania emigrated there after the death of Scanderbeg in 1467.³ Raised in an intellectual home, his father was a teacher of Latin and Greek while his mother came from a long tradition of folklorists, the most noted Francesco Avati who held the chair of humanities at the University of Urbino, de Rada spent his childhood in a state of *liberi paludibus*, pursuing studies in Greek and Latin but also collecting Arberesh tales and songs from the people in the village.⁴

An important aspect on the education of Jeronim de Rada had to do with his ability to write in Albanian. While the Albanian language was not developed as a written language in Albania, outside its borders especially in Calabria, the Arberesh continued the tradition and taught Albanian to their children. In 1849 the Arberesh established at Saint Adrian College the teaching of the Albanian language as a subject. The first teacher assigned by the college was De Rada.⁵

This opportunity signaled not only the development of the written language but at the same time allowed for research to be undertaken by other European scholars, making Cosenza one of the first centers for Albanian studies. The Albanian language flourished outside its borders, and scholars like De Rada, Giuseppe Serembe, and Giuseppe Schirò were key in bringing about a *Risorgimento* in Albania. Stefanaq Pollo, furthers this claim and notes that De Rada's contribution with his epic work on Scanderbeg was important to the nationalist cause in Albania.⁶

³ Rada, Girolamo de., *Autobiologija*, Book I, (Cosenza, 1898,) 3.

⁴ Kodra, Ziaudin, "Ne Gjurmet e De Rades," *Drita IV*, vol 37 (Tirane , 13 September, 1964): 194. Varfi, Andrea, "Reth Formimit Kulturor Artistik dhe Shoqeror Patriotik te De Rades, ne Prag te Krijimit te Poemes 'Kenge te Milosaos' ", *Nentori* 20 (Tirane, February 1973):2, 37.

⁵ Kastrati, Jup, Jeronim De Rada: Jeta dhe Veprat IV, (Prishtine: Rilindja, 1980):124-5.

De Rada's work toward the formulation of a standardized Albanian alphabet was key in his work for Albanian Risorgimento. In an article to *La Nazione Albanese* in 1897, a newspaper from the Arberesh community in Catanzaro, Girolamo de Rada in defense for a standardized Albanian alphabet wrote:

“The language and its sounds are born with the nation who speaks. Its expression fiksated in signs, develops through time as its skills heighten. It [the alphabet], is always artificial and well developed if it is capable to reflect the sounds of the words....When our abandoned nation, will rise again, to breathe freely, regardless of outside conditions, then it will be able to have its own alphabet, an expression of its full and free existence.”⁷

De Rada lived and worked in the nineteenth century, a time known in Europe as the birth and consolidation of nationalism and the nation-state. He noted in his biography that the time which he spent in college had immense influence in his involvement in the Albanian movement for independence.⁸ Italy during this time was one of the bastions of European culture, and romanticism was a popular trend. Following in the footsteps of other romantic writers, De Rada began his career by collecting and publishing Arberesh folklore from the region of Calabria and Sicilia. This schooling in the oral tradition helped him later to develop his own style in his writings.⁹

His noted work, *Skanderbegu i Pafan*, took de Rada forty two years to write. He began writing it in 1837 until 1879 in different places in Italy beginning in Macchia

⁶ Pollo, Stepanaq, and Arben Puto, *The History of Albania: From Its Origins to the Present Day*, trans, Carol Wiseman and Ginnie Hole, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981): 113-116.

⁷ Rada, Girolamo De, “The National Alphabet,” in *La Nazione Albanese*, Nr. 6 Marzo 23, 1897; taken from Zihni Sakaj, ed., *Mendimi Politik e Shoqeror i Rilindjes Kombetare Shqiptare (Permbledhje artikujsh nga shtypi) Vellimi I, 1879-1908, Dokument 108*. (Tirane: Universiteti i Tiranes, Instituti i Historise dhe I Gjuhesis, 1971): 230-231.

⁸ Rada, Girolamo de., *Un Autografo Inedito*, (Trani, 1909): 19.

⁹ Shala, Demush, *Jeronim de Rada: Vepra*, (Prishtine, Rilindja 1969): 10-11. Shuteriqi, Dhimiter, *Jeronim De Rada*, Tirane: Universiteti i Tiranes, 1965):26.

Albanese, and Napoli. In a letter to Gustav Mayer, a German scholar who criticized the author's structure and form, De Rada noted the reasons for publishing this work, "...*more than artistic value, my primary goal [in writing this work] was to awaken in the Albanian people a national consciousness.*"¹⁰ De Rada would include in other published versions of *Scanderbegu i Pafaan* prefaces in which he would defend his works not as literary writings, but primary works which were aimed to serve the independence movement in Albania, since he was aware that the Albanian language was continuously developing.¹¹

A significant feature in the book has to do with the title; *Ill –Fated Scanderbeg*. *Scanderbeg* however is mentioned conservatively throughout the book. De Rada, ascribes to the hero a few songs, throughout the five books. The main story is set in the fifteenth century which for the Albanians in Calabria and Albania proper was known as the century of Scanderbeg. As glorious as Scanderbeg's memory was for the Albanians, De Rada calls it ill-fated because it ended with Turkish colonization of Albania. Therefore he calls on Albanians to reclaim their freedom, regardless of the sacrifices by asserting:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>E c'na duhet jeta e kote</i> | "... <i>For what do we need to live for,</i> |
| <i>Ne nje dhe q'e shtyp Armiku</i> | <i>In a country occupied by the enemy?"</i> ¹² |

The figure of Scanderbeg even though used sparingly evokes feelings of pride and unmatched strength. De Rada tried to resurrect in his readers the electric feelings of national pride, by creating a memory of Scanderbeg as the warrior who valiantly fights

¹⁰ Rada, Girolamo de, *All'illustre prof. Gustavo Mayer* in Kastrati, Jup, *Jeronim De Rada: Jeta dhe Veprat IV*, (Prishtine: Rilindja, 1980):166-1667.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 168 -169.
Prefazione Decemebra 1870, Scanderbeccu i Pa-faan. Also in *Taluni Brevi Schiarimenti, 1877, Scanderbeccu i Pafan*. Napoli.

¹² Shala, Demush, *Jeronim de Rada: Vepra*, Book 1 Song 1 (Prishtine, Rilindja 1969):94.

for his country, but also the kind leader using the same language of Marin Barleti, who is “always hopeful and never gives up.” De Rada writes of Scanderbeg, as a “brave warrior,with the strength of a lion,” but also, “merciful toward his enemies.”¹³

The importance of this work does not rest within the confines of literary criticism. Its importance lies in its use of Scanderbeg as a symbol, in literature for a specific purpose: the glory of Albania under Scanderbeg. This is the first trend where Scanderbeg’s image is politicized for nationalism. Jeronim De Rada is important because he was the first to use Scanderbeg’s memory for political reasons. He permeated the flourishing of Albanian nationalism through Scanderbeg’s memory. His writing influenced other intellectuals in diaspora to use Scanderbeg’s memory to achieve independence. One of them was the beloved poet Giuseppe Serembe.

Giuseppe Serembe was born on March 4, 1843 in San Cosmo Albanese an Arberesh town in the vicinity of Cosenza, a Calabrian province. Very little is documented in sources about his childhood but Serembe did attend the College of Saint Adrian where he met Girolamo de Rada who taught at the school Albanian language and literature.¹⁴ Both men struck a close relationship with one another, and De Rada recognizing Serembe’s talent allowed him to publish in his magazine, *Fjamuri i Arberit*. It was during the years spent at Saint Adrian under the tutelage of De Rada that Serembe became interested in the Arberesh movement for Albanian independence.

¹³ Kastrati, Jup, *Jeronim De Rada: Jeta dhe Veprat IV*, (Prishtine: Rilindja, 1980):174-175. Also in Shala, Demush, *Jeronim de Rada: Vepra*, Book 4 Song 4 (Prishtine, Rilindja 1969):123-125.

¹⁴ Gunga, Fahredin ed., *Zef Serembe: Vepra IV, Studime dhe Kritike, Monografi*, (Prishtine: Redaksia e botimeve Rilindja, 1985): 19.

His efforts alongside De Rada and other arberesh focused toward the establishment of a standardized Albanian alphabet. In a letter to Girolamo de Rada, Serembe wrote of his ambitions to someday publish “a comprehensive book on Albania.”¹⁵

Like Girolamo de Rada, for Giuseppe Serembe, Scanderbeg became a central figure in his writings on Albania and its political condition. Initially the use of Scanderbeg’s memory was linked to two main themes which dominated Serembe’s early career. The first theme was that of freedom understood as freedom for his homeland, and the second theme, was the theme of love understood in the patriotic sense: as in love of one’s country. In his early poems in 1860 Serembe writes:

“Beautiful birds sing in happiness,
But my heart will explode inside me.
Poisoned I lead my life in this country [Italy],
I am saddened in the loneliness of the village.
.....
Arberia, beyond the sea reminds us
That we are foreigners in this land,
How many years have passed! The heart cannot forget
That the Turks rendered us [Arberesh], with no homeland.
.....
Because the Arberesh forgot what he was before
And is not ashamed, but sits and sleeps.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶ Serembe, Giuseppe, “Vrull,” in Kadare, Ismail ed., *Fjalet e Gjuhes se Zjarre: Antologji e poeteve te Rilindjes*, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Naim Frasheri, 1982): 141. This poem is titled Vrull, which means Vigor in English. It is one of the first poems in which Serembe directly calls on the Arberesh to wake up and defend their homeland.

Zogj te bukur kendojne me hare,
Por zemra do te me plase mua ne gji,
I helmuar e shkoj jeten tek ky dhe,
Merzitem ne katund, ne vetmi.
.....
Arberia matane detit na kujton
Se net e huaj jemi tek ky dhe
Sa mote Shkuan! E zemra nuk harron,
Qe nga turku ne mbetem pa memedhe.
.....
Se Arbereshi harroi c’ish me pare
Edhe nuk ka turp e rri e fle.

This poem very aptly documents three dramatic shifts which for Serembe encompassed his feelings about the situation in Albania. As a member of the intellectual diaspora he was conflicted about the role of the diasporic individual in relation to the homeland. The first shift prevalent in his writing and through this poem is that he recognized the need for political change inside Albania, but understood that the inferior conditions in Albania would hamper the movement for independence. Secondly he identified with the drama of the diasporic individual who remembers the homeland with feelings of longing and nostalgia, and thirdly he recognized his own drama as an intellectual who wants to figure out a way to actively benefit the nationalist agenda. Klara Kodra, a biographer of Serembe noted that the complex feelings among many Arberesh intellectuals and Giuseppe Serembe in the middle of the nineteenth century were a reflection of the socio-political realities of life in Italy; furthermore she noted that, “ the Arberesh , who had for so long... kept the native Albanian language and traditions alive sought the independence of their homeland from Turkish occupation, much the same way the Italian masses sought independence of their country from Bourbon control.”¹⁷

Another important theme in Serembe’s work was also the treatment of the Italian realities and their importance in the development of a platform for independence in Albania. Giuseppe Serembe in his poem, *For the freedom of Venetia*, expressly noted his desire to participate in the revolution led by Garibaldi.¹⁸ In the poem he likens Garibaldi to Scanderbeg, a memory which would certainly resonate with the Arberesh. However,

¹⁷ Kodra, Klara, *Vepra Poetike e Zef Serembes*, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Naim Frasheri, 1975):15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

unlike Girolamo de Rada's agency for Scanderbeg and his heritage, Giuseppe Serembe insisted on focusing on one central aspect of the memory of Scanderbeg: the idea that the spirit of heroism which defined Scanderbeg in his war for freedom is present to his descendants in Albania proper and the Arberesh of Italy. It was indeed that heroism according to Serembe which gave the Arberesh strength and perseverance in the war for Italian independence and which would guide them in their efforts for Albanian independence.

“Scanderbeg rejoices,
In the heavens where he rests,
[He] sees that we are the hope,
Of Albania, the country to which we were not born.”¹⁹

Giuseppe Serembe throughout his writings whenever he returned to the memory of Scanderbeg he did so to enforce one central idea: Scanderbeg was first an Albanian who fought for the independence of his country first and the salvation of western civilization second. In a poem dedicated to Dora D'Istria, Serembe wrote of Scanderbeg:

“Scanderbeg appeared like lightning
After he parted the darkness,
He is ours [Albania's], our history dictates
Because he overwhelmed the Turks.
.....
When that fire is put out
Bring you the flag in the House
Because the country who was in the grave
Is now in dance and freedom.”²⁰

¹⁹ Gunga, Fahredin ed., *Zef Serembe: Vepra IV, Studime dhe Kritike, Monografi*, (Prishtine: Redaksia e botimeve Rilindja, 1985):66 The following is an excerpt of the poem “For the freedom of Venetia.”

Skanderbeku edhe gezon,
Te parajsii ku pushon:
Shf se shpresa jeemi e kjeem
T'Arberii, ku o s'u ljeem...

Giuseppe Serembe, thus became one of the first Arberesh diasporic intellectuals to write about a day when Albania would indeed be free from the Ottoman yoke like it had during the time of Scanderbeg. By 1870 the Arberesh movement for Albanian independence was in its early stages of organization and development, but the contribution and vision of Serembe for the homeland remained unshaken. Because, throughout his entire life Giuseppe Serembe remained, “an exiled and afflicted son of the undefeated Albanian hero George Castriota Scanderbeg.”²¹

While most of the Arberesh intellectuals involved in the movement for the Albanian Risorgimento, were men, women also contributed to the efforts for Albanian independence. Among them, the most noted and the most outspoken was Elena Gjika, otherwise known as Dora D’Istria. As an individual Dora D’Istria blurred the lines between Arberesh diasporic intellectuals and Albanian nationalist intellectuals abroad, because she frequented both circles.

²⁰ Gunga, Fahredin, ed., *Zef Serembe: Vepra III, Vjersha te tjera, Nga Leterkembimi, Nga Doreshkrimi (facsimile,) Dokumente (facsimile,) Bibliografi*, (Prishtine: Redaksia e botimeve Rilindja, 1985):81, 89.

This is an excerpt from the poem “*Elegy for Elena Gjika*.” First published by Serembe in 1870.

Skanderbegy shkoi si shqote
Pasi qe shperndau erresiren
Eshte I yni historia thote,
Se permbyysi Turqerine.
.....
E pra kur te shuhet ai zjarr,
Sill flamurin Ti ne Shtepi
Pse Katundi, q’ish ne varr
Eshte ne valle e liri.

²¹ Gunga, Fahredin, ed., *Zef Serembe: Vepra II, Poezi Italishte dhe Kenge Origjinale, Ushtari I Kthyer, Sonete te Ndryshme*, (Prishtine: Redaksia e botimeve Rilindja, 1985): 65.

She lived long enough in Italy to be part of the community there, but also frequented other Albanian communities outside of Italy as well. In an editorial to the *Shqipëria* newspaper, an organ of the Albanian community in Bucharest, on May 10, 1897, the editor of the paper writes enthusiastically concerning Dora D'Istria:

“...This brief study of the movement for Albanian independence would be too brief if one were to not include an event, a very fortunate event for the Albanian nation. This nation is very fortunate indeed to have a woman occupied with its cause, a beautiful woman, of high esteem born into the highest circles of society, a woman with an Albanian heritage. She is the excellent Dora D'Istria. The Gjika family never denied their Albanian heritage. Dora D'Istria is their daughter, who with her pen provoked Benloew's devotion to the Albanian nation,...making it possible for books to be published in the Albanian language.”²²

Dora D'Istria was born in Constance, Romania on January 22, 1828 to Albanian parents. Her family had settled in Romania in the latter part of the seventeenth century but kept their heritage as Albanians. In 1841 Dora D'Istria, began her studies in Berlin and then continued to study also in Dresden and Vienna. By the time she completed her studies Dora D'Istria had mastered French, Italian, German, English, Russian, Greek, Albanian and Romanian languages, which made her very prolific in her writing.²³

Throughout her life Dora D'Istria worked to maintain her independence as a woman and a writer in her own right. Many accounts of her biography faithfully trace her marriage to Alexander Kolcov Masasky a prominent Russian aristocrat, and all describe the Russian court too backward, which prompted Dora D'Istria to dissolve her marriage

²² Artikull i Redaksise, *Shqipëria*, Bukuresht: Nr. 1, 10 Maj 1897 in Zihni Sakaj, ed., *Mendimi Politik e Shoqëror i Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare (Permbledhje artikujsh nga shtypi) Vëllimi I, 1879-1908, Dokument 16*. (Tiranë: Universiteti i Tiranës, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, 1971): 89.

²³ Kondo, Ahmet ed., *Dora D'Istria Per Cështjen Kombëtare Shqiptare*, (Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese 8 8 Nentori, 1977):3.

This work edited by Ahmet Kondo is a compilation of the letters exchanged between Dora D'Istria and Girolamo de Rada.

in 1855, and return to live in Europe as an independent writer and a publicist. Among the many homes she made for herself, Dora spent the rest of her life between Belgium, Switzerland, Venice and Florence.²⁴ During the thirty years she spent in Europe Dora D'Istria struck close friendships with Arberesh intellectuals, especially Girolamo de Rada and Giuseppe Serembe, the latter in 1870 immortalized her in an elegy dedicated to her work for Albania.

Even though Dora D'Istria was the author of more than one-hundred and fifty articles on Albania and the Albanian movement, it is in her correspondence with Girolamo de Rada that the memory and use of Scanderbeg's image becomes predominant. Almost in every letter she mentions or refers to Scanderbeg either in passing or in direct relation to the present events of the time. In a letter from Livorno, on 19 February 1865 she writes to De Rada:

“...Like you, I hope that the day of freedom will come to the legendary land, from which our parents came from... It is the job of all Albanians to resolve the most heavy burden—the Eastern Crisis, but before they do so it is important that they realizethey are devoted sons of the same country, ready to march as one body under the flag of Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus, and Scanderbeg.”²⁵

In another letter to De Rada, after she returned from her travels to Eastern Europe in March 21, 1865 she wrote, “..I prayed to the heavens to be able to see the day when the Albanian flag would fly free upon the grave of Scanderbeg, the flag which he [Scanderbeg], fought to protect in a hundred battles.”²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 4.

²⁵ Ibid., 40-41.

²⁶ Ibid., 42.

Albania and the movement for Albanian independence defined most of Dora's life. They were central themes not only in her correspondence with De Rada but also in her critical writings. Before too long other Albanian intellectuals in Diaspora began to quote her as a source in Albanian history. Alexander Stavre Drenova was an Albanian intellectual who lived in Romania and later became the author of the Albanian national anthem, in his response to an article on Albania quoted Dora D'Istria, by noting her contribution to Albanian history:

“ Let it be accepted,” says Dora D'Istria, “ that Albanians are pellasgian amalgations, let it be accepted as some say that they have come from Caucasia, but it is entirely true that the grandfathers of Albanians filled the military garrisons of Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great, Pyrrhos, Queen Teuta, and Scanderbeg, and they invaded Greece and the empire of ‘the king of kings,’ They made Italy tremble, they withstood the fury of Rome, and blocked Sultan Muhamed II march toward the West.”²⁷

Dora D'Istria like many other intellectual diaspora, realized that if there was going to be a solution favorable to Albanian independence, Albanians had to be aware of their own history. She used the memory of Scanderbeg's stand against the Ottomans, as a basis from which Albanians could reclaim back their identity. Under this premise, Scanderbeg and his memory became really an agent of Albanian nationalism, which was further developed through the Albanian intellectual diaspora, with the dawn of the twentieth century. Even though Dora D'Istria witnessed the formation of the League of Prizren in 1878, which was the first Albanian political structure recognized by the

²⁷ Drenova, Alexander Stavre, “Pergjigje Gazetes ‘Pirros,’ Prej nje Ortodoksi, in *Drita*, nr. 52 (Sofje: Novemeber 5, 1904) in Zihni Sakaj, ed., *Mendimi Politik e Shoqeror i Rilindjes Kombetare Shqiptare (Permbledhje artikujsh nga shtypi) Vellimi I, 1879-1908, Dokument 189*. (Tirane: Universiteti i Tiranes, Instituti i Historise dhe I Gjuhesise, 1971):

European Powers since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, she did not live to see the day in which all her work toward independence came to fruition. Nevertheless she passed away on November 17, 1888 saying, “Though I die without seeing Albania free, please tell me in my grave the day freedom arrives.”²⁸

²⁸ On November 21, 2002 under order 3567, President Moisi of Albania gave Dora D’Istria the title “Nderi I Kombit,” [Honor of the Nation].
[[http://www.president.al/shqip/docs/dekorime/U\[1\].%20Nderi%20i%20Kombit.doc.](http://www.president.al/shqip/docs/dekorime/U[1].%20Nderi%20i%20Kombit.doc.)]

CHAPTER IV
THE POLITICS OF NATIONALISM:
THE USE OF SCANDERBEG'S IMAGE
IN THE SERVICE OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY

“There is none like Scanderbeg.
He was a man with wings.
His beard was four feet long.
When he fought in battle his eyes
turned red and smoke came out of his mouth.”
Macukull, Mat, 1929¹

If the Arberesh intellectual community actively perpetrated the memory of Scanderbeg for Albanians, it was the work of Albanian nationalists living abroad who brought the memory of Scanderbeg to the homeland. Even though the Albanian intellectuals could also be considered members of the diaspora, because they were born and spent the majority of their lives outside of Albania, they differed from the Arberesh intellectuals because unlike them, they actively worked toward an actual return to Albania. However, it was in their exchange with the Arberesh intellectuals, that Albanian nationalists defined and shaped their plans for the homeland.

¹ Haxhihasani, Qemal ed., *Tregime dhe Kenge Popullore per Skenderbeun*, (Stories and Folk Songs about Scanderbeg), (Tirane: Instituti i Folklorit, Shtypshkronja: Mihal Duri, 1967): 113.
Author does all translated work unless otherwise noted.

Scanderbeg's memory has had its alterations and variations in time and space. Therefore it becomes necessary to examine George Kastrioti's memory in the oral traditions of the Albanian people from the mid- nineteenth century to the modern era. From its conception, Scanderbeg's myth has served nationalism in Albania. It has come to define who the Albanians are not only to the Albanian people but also to Eastern and Western Europe. Even in the modern era, Albanians continue to hold on to Scanderbeg as the central figure that represents them, to one- another and to the world.

The oral preservation of Scanderbeg's memory is very important because it provides the basis in which much of Albanian academic work is founded. The primary reason for this, concerns the development of the written Albanian language. The Albanian language did not become formulated until the middle of the nineteenth century, and its alphabet became standardized later in the Congress of Manastir in 1908.² Even though the first document in old Albanian dates back to 1555, the language was never developed since Albania was colonized by the Ottoman Empire for five hundred years and the official language was Turkish. This lack in language development, led to a prolific oral tradition. It is this tradition which is the point of origin for the creation of the Scanderbeg Myth in Albania.

Under this analysis the Albanian nation is an imagined construct. It is also a product of the modern era. Albanian independence from the Ottoman Empire was achieved in 1912. The language did not evolve until the beginning of the twentieth century. Previous to 1912 Albanians were to be Turcofied but never to join in as equals. They were always to be seen as the Other. After achieving independence the twentieth

² Pollo, Stefanaq; Arben Puto, *The History of Albania: From its Origins to the Present Day*, Trans. Carol Wiseman and Ginnie Hole, (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981): 133-137.

century witnessed the Albanian plunge into communism and fifty years later its liberation from communist ideology. It became important then for Albanians to reach back to its diaspora and identify themselves through ethnicity. In all scenarios, pre-independence, communism and post-communism one individual; Scanderbeg and his memory, are prevalent.

Three Albanian nationalists and members of the Diaspora Naim Frasheri, Fan Stilian Noli and Ismail Kadare base their writing on the oral traditions and commemoration of Scanderbeg. The first work, *History of Scanderbeg*,³ by Naim Frasheri, was published in 1898, at a time when Albania was looking for legitimacy and independence from the Turkish Empire. The second book, *Scanderbeg*⁴, by Fan Stilian Noli, an archbishop educated in America, was published in 1921 before the Zogist government was overthrown in Albania during the July revolution. The third book written by Ismail Kadare, *Kesh tjella (The Castle) in 1974*⁵ was written during a time when Albania was under a communist regime. Kadare returns to the story of Scanderbeg in his book, to explore why the past affects the present. Together these works lend insights not only on the culture of the Arberesh and the Albanian people but they offer greater understanding on the role that diaspora, commemoration and national mythology play in the ways that people perceive themselves and the others.

³ Frasheri, Naim, *Histori e Skenderbeut*, Vepra, 2, (Tirana: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, republished in 1967).

⁴ Noli, Fan, *Historia e Skënderbeut (Gjërë Kastriotit), mbretit të Shqipërisë 1412-1468*, (Boston, 1921).

⁵ Kadare, Ismail, *The Castle*, trans., Pavli Qesku, (Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2002).

Naim Frasheri and his brothers Sami and Abdyl Frasheri together with Jeronim de Rada worked to create the Prizren League on June 10, 1878. The Prizren congress convened at the same time the Congress of Berlin was in session. Most of the Albanian intellectuals living abroad used the League to appeal to the European powers to secure independence from the Ottoman Empire. The situation was particularly delicate in the summer of 1878 because Greece and Serbia had already declared independence from the Ottoman Empire and as their rule was drawing to an end, the Albanian lands could be available as additions for these states. The Albanian diaspora continued to press the case for Albanian legitimacy and independence and Naim Frasheri published two important works, *The History of Scanderbeg* and *A History of Albania*. His brother Sami Frasheri, published *Albania What It Was, What It Is, and What Will Become of It*, a work that would embody all the feelings of the Diaspora intellectuals for independence.

Naim Frasheri was born on May 25, 1846 in Frasher, a village near the region of Permet in Albania. He was the son of Halit and Emine Frasherit, and brother to seven other siblings. He was raised as a Muslim and attended elementary school in Turkish and Arabic. His father and mother died in 1859 and 1861. From that time Naim and his younger siblings were raised by their older brother Abdyl Frasheri. Under the care of his brother the family moved from Albania to Yanina a Greek province in northern Greece. Naim and his brother Sami attended high school in Zosimea where they learned old and modern Greek, French, Italian, while at home under the tutelage of Abdyl they learned Arabian, Persian... and the natural sciences.⁶

⁶ Xholi, Zija, Naim Frasheri: *Midis te Kaluares dhe Se Sotmes*, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Luarasi, 1998): 13-14.

After finishing school in Zosimea in 1871, both Naim and Sami Frasheri moved to Istanbul. Two important events took place in Naim's life which changed the course of his activities for the future. First he was diagnosed with consumption which he would battle until his death in 1900. Due to his ill- constitution Naim went to Vienna to seek treatment. While he was there he visited the National Museum of Austria where Scanderbeg's sword and crown were held. The visit had a deep impact on Naim who would later remember it in verse:

Lum ti moj Shqiperi thashe
Armet e Tij kur I pashe

“Blessed are you Albania, then I said
When I saw His [Scanderbeg's] Weapons

Nde Belvedere, ne Vjene
Sikur pashe Skenderbene

In a coffeeshop in Vienna
I thought I saw Scanderbeg.”⁷

Between 1882 and 1892 Naim stayed in Istanbul. This was a period in his life where he chose to champion education and Albanian literature. During this time all the Frasheri brothers sacrificed most everything to the Albanian cause. Abdyl was the leader of the Prizren League and continued to work with foreign diplomats and connect with Albanian diaspora to champion the Albanian cause. Sami the younger brother worked to put together an Albanian society in Istanbul so the Albanian intellectuals had a place to meet and submit their works on Albania but also to awaken Albanian consciousness. In 1892 after being imprisoned and interned Abdyl Frasheri died. This event greatly impacted Naim's direction for his life. He chose to dedicate all his efforts and energy to the work for the independence of Albania. His brother Sami did the same.⁸

⁷ Frasheri, Naim, *Veptra te Zgjedhura*, vell. I, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Naim Frasheri, 1967): 219-220.

Naim Frasheri is best known for his work with Jeronim De Rada and Gjergj Fishta for the formulation of a curriculum for schools in Albania and the development of the Albanian alphabet. He put together several elementary text books and worked with the Ottoman authorities to get the permissions that would allow the teaching of Albanian language in schools. He called on Albanians to remember “Scanderbeg’s Language” and his verse became immortal when he described the Albanian language:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Gjuha jone sa e mire, | “Our Language how good, |
| Sa e embel sa e gjere | How sweet, how deep, |
| Sa e lehte sa e lire | How light, how free, |
| Sa e bukur sa e vlere! | How beautiful and worthy!” ⁹ |

His efforts in this endeavor were successful which spurred Naim to work even harder toward independence.¹⁰ It was that strong desire which led him to work on an epic work called *History of Scanderbeg*. Like Jeronim De Rada before, him Naim saw in Scanderbeg a common memory which all Albanians shared. This same memory could be evoked again among the Albanian people and it could be used to unite all the Albanians in their fight for the freedom of their country. Even though his health was rapidly deteriorating, Naim finished the epic which included twenty two chapters and over ten thousand verses.¹¹

⁸ Shuteriqi, Dhimiter S., *Naim Frasheri: Jeta dhe Vepra*, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese 8 Nentori): 127-128.

⁹ Frasheri, Naim, *Vepra te Zgjedhura*, vell. I, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Naim Frasheri, 1967): 152.

¹⁰ Xhiku, Ali, “Naim Frasheri dhe Shkollat e Romantizmit Shqiptar,” in Bulo, Jorgo and Enver Hysa eds., *Naim Frasheri dhe Kultura Shqiptare*, (Tirane: Akademia e Shkencave Instituti I Gjuheise dhe I Letersise, 2001):86-87.

¹¹ Xholi, Zija, *Naim Frasheri: Midis te Kaluares dhe Se Sotmes*, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Luarasi, 1998):206-207.

Naim Frasheri based his epic on Scanderbeg on Marin Barleti's biography of the hero. He connected the memory of Scanderbeg to other "Albanian heroes" from antiquity like Pyrrhus, and Alexander the Great, to modernity through names like Marko Bocari and the Suliotes in Greece. Naim's aim in writing this history first had to do with rekindling Scanderbeg's memory to Albania, but he also wanted to make clear that the Albanian nation had its own history independent of other nations. The author makes two arguments in his work. First that Albanians have their own language, and second that they have a national history.¹²

Naim's Scanderbeg is the traditional hero who is admired by his people. He is the personification of Albanian heroism and bravery. Scanderbeg has qualities that distinguish him from others. He is the sort of leader that is primarily concerned with the well being of his people. He is a man who dresses simple, is kind and very intelligent. The image of Scanderbeg that Naim tried to convey to his readers is that of a typical romantic hero, who serves his homeland selflessly.¹³

Throughout the twenty-two songs/chapters Naim analyzes different aspects of Scanderbeg's image. Scanderbeg is often depicted as the Albanian king but he does not embody royal characteristics. He is a good king, he is aware of the condition of his people and does not live above his means.

¹² Mallezi, Luan, "Legjenda dhe Historia ne Poemen Istori e Skenderbeut te Naim Frasherit," *Studime Filologjike* 44, 4 (1990): 113.

¹³ Bullo, Jorgo and Bujar Hoxha, "Figura e Gjergj Kastriotit—Skenderbeut ne Letersine Shqipe," in *Simpozium per Skenderbeun*, (Prishtine: Instituti Albanologjik I Prishtines, 1969):319-20.

Like Barleti, Naim portrays Scanderbeg as a human with a touch of the divine. He refers to him as an angel many times in the epic.¹⁴ In his description of Scanderbeg, the hero embodies all the qualities that Naim idealized about Albanians. Scanderbeg thus was a :

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Ish burre I gjalle e I gjate | “.... a lively and tall man, |
| E ne shpatualla | I gjere Broad shouldered, |
| S’ish I ligur e I thate | He was not sickly and weak, |
| Po ish si lulja ne vere | He was like a flower in the summertime... |
| Ishte mbret I bukurise | He was the King of all that was beautiful, |
| Si dielli epte drite | And the sun gave him light, |
| Fytyren e kish te mire | His face was gorgeous, |
| Zene te embele si mjalte | His voice was sweet as honey, |
| Zemerene plot meshire | His heart was full of mercy.... |
| | |
| Lufta posa zij te ndizej | As soon as the battle called |
| Ajy s’duronte aspake | He never stayed behind, |
| I hipen kalit e hidhej | He jumped on his horse |
| Permbi armiket si flake | And turned on the enemy like a flame.” |

Scanderbeg also was a man who could be “distinguished in a crowd.” He was interchangeably described like an eagle, and like a dove.¹⁵ Even though through out the epic Naim’s image of Scanderbeg is romanticized, he also politicizes Scanderbeg’s memory. At the end of the epic, Naim Frasheri calls on Albanians, to never forget Scanderbeg, for he remains alive in every Albanian heart.

¹⁴ Qosja, Rexhep, “Skenderbeu ne Visionin e Naim Frasherit,” in *Simpozium per Skenderbeun*, (Prishtine: Instituti Albanologjik I Prishtines, 1969): 338.

¹⁵ Frasheri, Naim, *Vepra te Zgjedhura*, vell. I, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Naim Frasheri, 1967). [<http://www.albasoul.com/letersia/Rilindja/nfrasheri/kreu3.htm>].

Since the Albanian national destiny has been derived from myths of the national past, the past and the future can no longer be seen as interdependent factors. Instead infers Pierre Nora, it has the effect of making past and future into virtually autonomous instances.¹⁶ To this day, Naim's verse continues to resonate with Albanians, for it has become part of the Albanian heritage.

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| A e shihni Skënderbenë? | Do you see Scanderbeg? |
| Mbren' e mirë, trim e burrë? | The good King, brave man? |
| U përpoq për mëmëdhen | He worked hard for his motherland, |
| Pa s'i vdes emëri kurrë. | And his name will never perish. |
| Skënderbeu është' i gjallë, | Scanderbeg is alive |
| Rron e mbretëron përjetë, | He lives and reigns in eternity ¹⁷ |

After Naim Frasheri published his *History of Scanderbeg*, his brother Sami in 1898, published in Albanian his book, *Albania: What It Was, What It Is and What Will Become of It*. In it Sami highlighted the history of Albania by mentioning key events of the glorious past, the present situation under Turkish domination, and his ideas of the future. Like his brother Naim, Sami Frasheri tried to commemorate the existence of the Albanian state under Scanderbeg. Both works of the Frasheri brothers, were key documents in legitimizing the claims for the creation of an independent Albanian state.¹⁸

On 28 November 1912 Ismail Qemali opened the National Assembly with delegates from every province in Albania. He proposed that Albania declare independence from the Ottoman Empire, form a temporary government and send a commission in Europe to plead the Albanian case before the European Powers.

¹⁶ Wood, Nancy, *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe*, (New York: Berg, 1999): 31.

¹⁷ Ibid., [<http://www.albasoul.com/letersia/Rilindja/nfrasheri/kreu22.htm>].

¹⁸ Xholi, Zija ed., *Sami Frasheri, Vepra 2*, (Tirane: Instituti I Historise, 1988): 27-28.

After the acceptance of these proposals, all the delegates signed the petition and on that day Albania was declared independent. As a symbolic gesture Ismail Qemali, raised in Vlore the Flag of Scanderbeg, fulfilling thus the dreams of people like Jeronim De Rada and the brothers Frasheri.¹⁹

Among the supporters of the new Albanian state was Bishop Fan Noli, also known as Theofan Stilian Noli, who has become one of the most renowned figures in Albanian history. Fan Noli through out his life supported Albania and made lasting impact to its politics, diplomacy, history, poetry and literature. He was the first scholar to write a history of Scandberg from a historian's perspective and like other intellectuals of the Albanian diaspora, he created a role for Scandbeg's memory in the modern Albanian state.

Noli was born in the village of Ibrik Tepe (Alb. *Qyteza*), south of Edirne in European Turkey on 6 January 1882. His father Stylian Noli had been a noted cantor in the Orthodox church and had instilled in his son a love for Orthodox music and Byzantine tradition. Fan Noli attended the Greek secondary school in Edirne, and in 1900, after a short stay in Constantinople, settled in Athens where he managed to find occasional and badly-paying jobs as a copyist, prompter and actor.

In April 1906, with a second-class steamer ticket, Fan Noli set off via Naples for the New World and arrived in New York on May 10. After three months in Buffalo where he worked in a lumber mill, Noli arrived in Boston. There publisher Sotir Peci gave him a job at a minimal salary as deputy editor of the Boston newspaper *Kombi* (The nation), where he worked until May 1907 and in which he published articles and

¹⁹ Ermenji, Abaz, *Vendi Qe Ze Skenderbeu ne Historine e Shqiperise*, 2nd Ed., (Tirane: Botime Cabej, 1996): 323.

editorials under the pseudonym Ali Baba Qyteza. These were financially and personally difficult months for Noli, who did not feel at home in America at all and seriously considered emigrating to Bucharest. Gradually, however, he found his roots in the Albanian community and on 6 January 1907 co-founded the *Besa-Besën* (The pledge) society in Boston.²⁰

In 1908 Noli became an orthodox priest and enrolled at Harvard University. He received his BA in 1912, and did not return back to school until 1938, and in 1945 Noli received his Ph.D. from the University of Boston. His doctoral dissertation was on the history of Scanderbeg, which later he revised and published as a book in 1946.²¹ This was not his first attempt at writing a history of Scanderbeg. Noli first published a *History of Scanderbeg* in 1921.

His first visit in Albania was in 1913, and since that time he took an active interest on Albanian political life. He returned to Albania in 1921 and his presence did not go unnoticed by Edith Durham, a British traveler, who was visiting Albania during that time:

“...a great procession with lights and songs came to do honour to me...I was thunderstruck. I went on the balcony and heard a speech in English given by a young American Albanian (Fan Noli) but was too overpowered to reply properly...”²²

²⁰ Elsie, Robert, *Albanian Authors in Translation*, 2003. [<http://www.albanianliterature.com/html/authors/bio/noli.html>].

²¹ Noli, Fan S., *Autobiografia*, trans, Abdullah Karjagdiu, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Elena Gjika, 1994):72.

²² *Kralica e Malesorevet / Queen of the Mountains: The Balkan Adventures of Edith Durham*, (London: The British Council, 1996).

Noli became active in Albanian politics and was elected as a deputy on the Congress of Lushnja. He became a leader in Ahmet Zogu's party and led the July Democratic Revolution in 1924 against the government of Ahmet Zogu. Noli's government failed to materialize on his promises and the revolution failed. Fan Noli left Albania in December 1924 never to return; where as Ahmet Zogu reclaimed power, proclaimed himself king and Albania became a monarchical state.²³

After the failure of the July Revolution Noli returned to the United States where he spent the rest of his life in religious and academic activity. It is during this time that he revised the *History of Scanderbeg* for the third time since his first publication in 1921 and republished it in 1949. He continued to appeal to Albanian patriotism by evoking memories of Scanderbeg and his Flag in his poetry. In an elegy to "Scanderbeg's Flag," Noli wrote:

O Flamur gjak, o flamur shkabë,
O vënd e vatr' o nën' e babe,
Lagur me lot, djegur me flage,
Flamur i kuq, flamur i zi.

O flag of Blood, O flag of Eagles,
O land and home, o mother anfather,
Wetted by tears, burned in flames
Red Flag, Black Flag.

Fortesë shkëmbi tmerr tirani,
S'të trëmp Romani, as Venecjani,
As Sërp Dushani, as Turk Sulltani,
Flamur i math për Vegjëli.

A rocky fortress, horror to the tyrant,
You were not afraid of Rome or Venice
Or the Serb Dushan, Or the Turk Sultan
A great Flag for the Masses.

Flamur që lint Shën Kostandinin,
Pajton Islamn' e Krishtërimin,
Çpall midis feve vllazëri,
Flamur bujar për Njerëzi.

A flag that bore Saint Konstantin
Unites Islam with Christianity
Declares brotherhood among religions
A good Flag for Human Kind.

²³ Tako, Piro, *Fan Noli ne Fushen Politike dhe Publicistike*, (Tirane: Shtepia Botuese Naim Frasheri, 1975): 68, 104-5, 152-4.

Me Skënderben' u-lavdërove
Dhe në furtun' i funtmi u-shove,
Me Malon prapë lart vrapove,
Yll i pavdekur për Liri.

With Scanderbeg you were elevated
and in battle you were the last to fall
with Ismail again you were raised high
Undying Star for Freedom.....²⁴

Noli, like Naim Frasheri and Jeronim De Rada, saw in Scanderbeg a figure that could help Albania transition toward democracy in the twentieth century. Scanderbeg could offer Albania and the Albanian people a new memory, a different heritage than the inheritance of colonialism. For post-colonial Albania national memories required a forgetting of turkish colonialism for four hundred years and a commemoration of Scanderbeg's stand for a quarter of a century. When Fan Noli undertook the study of Scanderbeg as a historian, his goal was to give Scanderbeg back to Albania. Thus Scanderbeg entered the academe, particularly the Albanian academic life, and Albanian scholars began to write the history of Albania in the backdrop of Scanderbeg's memory.²⁵ During the nineteen sixties and seventies, when Albania was under communism, new memories and collective amnesias about Scanderbeg began to infiltrate Albanian national memories. Scanderbeg was remembered more and more as a man of the people, a true revolutionary, whose dreams were fulfilled by his communist descendants. It is under this political climate that Ismail Kadare published his book, the Castle in 1974.

²⁴ Noli, Fan, *Hymni I Flamurit*, [<http://www.albasoul.com/letersia/PAVAREZIA/Noli/hymni.htm>].

²⁵ Ermenji, Abaz, *Vendi Qe Ze Skenderbeu ne Historine e Shqiperise*, 2nd Ed., (Tirane: Botime Cabej, 1996. The first edition of the book was written in 1968. Abaz Ermenji wrote a monograph of the Albanian history through the memory of Scanderbeg.

Ismail Kadare is one of the few Albanian modern writers that is widely known outside his country. Born in Gjirokaster in 1936, Kadare attended the University of Tirana and the Gorky Institute in Moscow. He was one of the first intellectuals to leave Albania in 1990 and seek political asylum in France. His defection to the West started a series of reforms which ultimately led to the fall of Communism in Albania.²⁶

Most of Kadare's work merges Albanian nationalist thinking and socialist thought.²⁷ Ismail Kadare's fiction is often based on historical events, or traditions. *The Castle* tells the story of the first stand Albania made against the Ottoman Empire under the leadership of Scanderbeg. Kadare in the novel does not develop Scanderbeg as a character. He is only referred to by name a few times throughout the novel. The Turks surround the castle but are unable to break in, and thus the fortress becomes a symbol of the stand against the Turks.

Arshi Pipa, a critic of Kadare, has suggested that Scanderbeg in the novel serves as a mirror to the Hoxha cult. Just as the Scanderbeg fades in the novel, so will the Dictator Enver Hoxha.²⁸ Eventhough *The Castle*, is set during the fifteenth century the novel offers insights about Albania during the 1960s. This was a time when Albania severed the relations with The Soviet Union and in turn suffered under a blockade imposed from the members of the Warsaw Pact. The book serves as a reminder to Albanians because it proposes that they stand together just like they stood with Scanderbeg.

²⁶ Rosen, Roger and Patra McSharry eds., *Border Crossings, Emigration and Exile*, (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, INC., 1992):60-61.

²⁷ Byron, Janet, " Albanian Nationalism and Socialism in the Fiction of Ismail Kadare", *World Literature Today* 53, 4 (1979): 614.

²⁸ Pipa, Arshi, " Subversion vs. Conformism: The Kadare Phenomenon," *Telos* 73 (1987): 49.

The parallel's seem to favor the stand, rather than the debunking of the Hoxha myth.

Throughout the novel Scanderbeg's role is implied. He is never questioned as the leader, nor are any references to suggest that the author underscores Scanderbeg's role and importance.

The castle is a fictive story which retells the glory days of Albania, under Scanderbeg. Unlike other authors who have used Scanderbeg's image in their writing, Kadare does not indulge in the physical attributes of the hero. He develops an image of Scanderbeg that is deeper and more complex. There are no long battle scenes to show Scanderbeg's heroism. Kadare accomplishes that by simply using his name or placing Scanderbeg in the context of the story. Lines like "Scanderbeg, harasses them every night," "The Albanians's have embarrassed us greatly," and "...Scanderbeg ...Have you seen him?"²⁹ are all abundant in the novel.

Kadare like Jeronim de Rada and Naim Frasheri, has based *The Castle* on the oral traditions of Albanians. There are many tales that circulate in Albania which allude to Scanderbeg and to the heroic stand against the Turks. This characterization of the Albanian people as warriors, lovers of freedom brave and self—sacrificing, willing to die for their country is abundant in many songs and tales. In a story derived from Dibra, a city that belonged to Scanderbeg, the men tell Kastriota that "they will follow him wherever he leads." In other tales not only the men but also the women are willing to die fighting than surrender to the Turks. In a story in South Albanian, after the Turks take the city of Sopot the battle is fought inside the castle. The women are asked whether they are willing to leave and save themselves. They respond in unison that they will stay and fight

²⁹ Kadare, Ismail, *The Castle*, trans., Pavli Qesku, (Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2002): 258, 124, 126.

for Scanderbeg's Flag.³⁰ By using these traditions Kadare created an image of the Albanian people that permeates the myth. In the novel Albanians are tall, strong, steadfast, resilient, and undefeatable, just like their leader Scanderbeg.

The lines between fact and fiction become blurred in the story. Kadare uses the history of Albania in the fifteenth century to explain the present history of the country. The idea of Nation and nationhood remains the nostalgic and enduring figure of the larger social collectivity. It is the emotive force of national memories that gives them their magnetic, contagious and volatile character in the life of modern nation-states.³¹ When faced with the reality of a blockade from the Soviet Union, Albanians needed to reinvent the past and embrace it with the present. In the process Scanderbeg becomes a myth with an agency.

It is thus, in the backdrop of nation and nationalism, memory and diaspora that one can understand Scanderbeg's impact on Albania and the Arberesh. Indeed after closer examination Scanderbeg himself becomes diasporic. He was an Albanian native who spent the majority of his life abroad. His education was completed in Turkey which at the time held the position of a First World power.

³⁰ Haxhihasani, Qemal ed, *Tregime dhe Kenge Popullore per Skenderbeun*, (Tirane: Instituti I Folklorit, Shtypshkronja Mihal Duri, 1967): 114, 117, 213.

³¹ Nora, Pierre, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Vol.3, Trans.Goldhammer, Arthur, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): 11.

These works by Albanian intellectuals are also evidence that the memory of Scanderbeg varies in time because it was not until the nineteenth century that Scanderbeg's memory served primarily the nationalist cause and its proponents. Although he lived in the fifteenth century, it is not until the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century that images of Scanderbeg become prolific

Indeed, Naim and Sami Frasheri, Fan Noli and Ismail Kadare are all intellectuals who were educated abroad. It is significant in terms of Albanian history that all these writers/intellectuals are remembered as Albanians nationalists when in reality they are all part of the Albanian diaspora, and they all have had a deep impact in the formation of Albanian identity, along with the contribution of the Arberesh intellectuals. In this context the concepts of power and hegemony take an agency of their own with regard to Albanian political history. Since modern nations have no boundaries it is the role of the diaspora to define a nation's consciousness and set the pace for change.³² As such, for the twenty first century it is the job of the diasporic intellectual to loosen Scanderbeg's memory as a nationalist construct and ultimately alter the rhetoric of patriotism and nationalism in Albania.

After the fall of Communism in Albania, in 1991, the Albanian nation needed to reinstate its point of origin, by toppling anything that was connected to communism, the communist party or the dictator, Enver Hoxha. The newly elected government decreed on November 12, 1993 to change the date of Liberation from 29 November, to 28 November

³² Chow, Rey, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 91-92.

1944.³³ Clearly the chief objective for this change was to reinstate once again, the connections between Scanderbeg and his war of independence to the modern political system in Albania. Scanderbeg has become once again the rallying point for Albanians everywhere. Presently the memory of Scanderbeg has become more popularized and it has received new parameters in its definition.

This detour in Albanian political history is necessary because the oral traditions that commemorate Scanderbeg run along the same lines of chronology. Studied in light of national Independence, Communism and post-communism, one can better perceive the change and yet at the same time the constancy which has come to define the figure of Scanderbeg. Parallel these lines run the oral traditions from outside the Albanian borders. Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and the Arberesh in Italy are more nostalgic about the memory of Scanderbeg but at the same time they have the freedom to be more elastic with it in a variety of ways.

Survival of Oral Tradition

The primary source on which most of the oral tradition on the memory of Scanderbeg is based upon is Marin Barleti's biography of Scanderbeg. This biography produced by Marin Barleti is one of the most authentic sources on the life of George Castriota. It is also one of the first biographies on Scanderbeg. The book was written in Latin titled: "*Historia de Vitat er Gestis Scanderbegi, Epirotarum Pricipis.*" The original, does not have a publishing date, but it is agreed that the book was written during 1508-

³³The World Factbook, 1994. *Albania*
[<http://brain.mhri.edu.au/text/references/cia94fb/country/2.html>.]

1510.³⁴ The book is dedicated to Don Ferrante of Naples, who is believed to have been the nephew of George Castriota. After Scanderbeg's death in 1468 many Albanians emigrated to Southern Italy to escape the Ottoman occupation.

If everything that Barleti writes is taken literally, Scanderbeg cannot be human. Beginning with the story of Scanderbeg's birth. Barleti writes that when his mother Vojsava was pregnant, a dragon the size of the Ottoman Empire appeared on her dream. When Scanderbeg was born he had a sign on his right arm that resembled a sword. As a toddler, he used to play with his father's swords. As a teenager he spent most of his time riding horses, and shooting arrows.³⁵

As a child Scanderbeg always thought of bigger things. He was very sharp and in a short period of time he was able to learn Turkish, Arabic, Greek, Italian and the Slavic languages. He always wanted to prove himself in battle and sought opportunities to achieve glory. He was never under the weather. He barely slept two hours a night, this due to his divine body and a never-ending strength.³⁶

According to Barleti Scanderbeg's physical appearance was without match in relation to other men. Barleti appeals to Greek ideas of male beauty and describes young Scanderbeg as a man who was "very tall, with beautiful arms like no other, strong neck like an athlete, broad shoulders, beautiful white skin, strong gaze, not sleepy, but very pleasant."³⁷ For Barleti Scanderbeg represented the ideal, the unattainable.

³⁴ Fan Noli, *Historia e Skenderbeut*, Tirana (1962): 127-128.

³⁵ *Ibid*, Book 1, 44.

³⁶ *Ibid*, Book 1: 76

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Book 1: 53-59.

Often times Barleti compares Scanderbeg to Moses and attributes him divine qualities. His body could not be wounded since he was “divine” or “almost divine.” God himself would not allow for Scanderbeg to die. Scanderbeg is patient and merciful. He was loved by his enemies to the degree that they welcomed being taken over by him. Not only that but they wanted to touch him so that part of his immortality could be transferred unto them. According to Barleti Scanderbeg was “the miracle of the century.”

Clearly Barleti is the first diasporic intellectual to perpetuate the memory of Scanderbeg in mythical proportions. Many of the legends and songs about Scanderbeg that surface during the Albanian Renaissance/ Independence movement accentuate Scanderbeg’s divine qualities, his bravery, skill and national zeal. They represent every part of Albania even from areas where Scanderbeg never set foot. The most quoted line in every story goes back to one of Scanderbeg’s speeches that later served as the rallying cry for Albanian independence. When Scanderbeg returned in Albania and repossessed his castle from the Ottoman Turks he held a speech in front of his soldiers and people. He is quoted by Barleti as saying:

“I did not bring you freedom, I found it amongst you. ...The kingdom and this city I did not give you; you delivered it to me. I did not bring you weapons, I found you already armed. You have freedom all around you, in your chest, in your forehead, in your swords and spears...”³⁸

This characterization of the Albanian people as warriors, lovers of freedom brave and self—sacrificing, willing to die for their country is abundant in many songs and tales. In a story derived from Dibra, a city that belonged to Scanderbeg, the men tell Kastrioti that “they will follow him wherever he leads.” In other tales not only the men but also the women are willing to die fighting than surrender to the Turks. In a story in South

³⁸ Barleti, 74.

Albanian, after the Turks take the city of Sopot the battle is fought inside the castle. The women are asked whether they are willing to leave and save themselves. They respond in unison that they will stay and fight for Scanderbeg's Flag.³⁹

Another aspect of Scanderbeg's memory which served the nationalist cause during this time was the issue of his death. In many tales Scanderbeg is aware that he is dying and his dying wish always concerns his country and the preservation of the Albanian state. In one tale his dying wish is that, Albanians love one another, and stay united, because "if you are united no-one will be able to divide you".⁴⁰

National unity was a major theme of the early movement for independence in the twentieth century as the Ottoman Empire was nearing its collapse. The proponents of the Independence movement sought to fulfill George Kastrioti's dream of Independence. The only way the Albanians could achieve it was in their capacity for unity.

While the tales from Albania are deeply concerned with nationalism, the oral traditions of the Arberesh in Southern Italy focus on other memories. The stories and songs refer primary to family ties, who the Arberesh are and the preservation of their traditions going back to the time of Scanderbeg. In a ballad that describes Scanderbeg's wedding, George Kastriota is offered many beautiful women from royal European houses

³⁹ Haxhihasani, Qemal ed, *Tregime dhe Kenge Popullore per Skenderbeun*, (Tirane: Instituti I Folklorit, Shtypshkronja Mihal Duri, 1967): 114, 117, 213.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

but he only wants “an Arberesh wife, that speaks Albanian and knows the Albanian traditions.”⁴¹ A common trend that is prevalent in Arberesh sources has to do with their identification with Albania. This memory however is more nostalgic than nationalistic. A popular folk song sung in Calabria describes the emotive force of an imagined homeland:

We are like swallows, we are like eagles,

*We are united, because we have common roots....*⁴²

The memory of Scanderbeg in Calabria is primary connected with tradition and language. As an Arberesh saying goes: When he is happy an Arberesh sings in Albanian and Italian, but when he is sad, he only cries in Albanian.⁴³ Even though the Arberesh are more closely associated with Scanderbeg, their memory of him is more fluid and is less politicized than in Albania, especially during communism.

⁴¹ Ibid., 222.

⁴² Shkurtaj, Gjovalin, “Kenge Popullore te Arberesheve te Italise,” Studime Filologjike, 33:1(1979):172.

⁴³ Zllatku, Rexhep, *Me Arbereshet*, (Kosove: Shkup, 1996): 110.

EPILOGUE
THE MEMORY OF SCANDERBEG
CONTINUES TO REMAIN POPULAR

Since the creation of the Communist Party in Albania in 1941, Scanderbeg's figure was initially used to legitimize the partisan movement against German occupation. The Scanderbeg flag inherited the Communist star, and Scanderbeg's memory became solely identifiable in Marxist terms and class theory. At the same time clear lines of identification were drawn between Scanderbeg and the dictator Enver Hoxha. Scanderbeg could only share in the spotlight if it strengthened the position of the Party and the dictator. The folk tradition came to embody these themes as well. In a song that commemorates the founding of the communist party, Scanderbeg's importance can be understood only in relation to communism and Enver Hoxha:

...That day the Party was born,
Albania saw the light,
Rays of freedom exploded,
The fate of the Motherland
Stands on the hands on Scanderbeg's nephews
And today in Enver's hands,
Rests the sword of Scanderbeg.¹

In another song Scanderbeg is depicted as the leader of the fight against class and capitalism:

Rise up men and women,
To war against slavery
To free our motherland

¹ Haxhihasani, Qemal ed, *Tregime dhe Kenge Popullore per Skenderbeun*, (Tirane: Instituti I Folklorit, Shtypshkronja Mihal Duri, 1967):267.

From the shackles of dependence
From the bourgeoisies and land owners
Lets unite again as we did with Scanderbeg
Under the leadership of the Party
And the Command of Enver
To send away the remnants
Of Duce and Hitler
Like our grandfathers before us
Against the myriads of Turks
with Scanderbeg as their leader
the great son of Albania.²

During communism the image of Scanderbeg became one dimensional. Its worth depended on the collective amnesia to his memory. He came to be identified with the masses, when in reality George Kastrioti was a member of the nobility. Monuments, paintings, museums glorified the warrior, by casting aside his Christian upbringing, his noble heritage, and the connection with the Vatican.

With the fall of communism, came down also these constructed memories of Scanderbeg. As people did away with books, literature, paintings, and their myths which glorified the dictatorships a need was created to return to the place of origin. That place for Albanians and Albania is still with Scanderbeg.

A new Scanderbeg and memory of Scanderbeg was born. The need to give Scanderbeg back to Albania in his “authentic state,” was done primary as a response to the political environment, and was reflected in the oral traditions as well. The newly elected Democratic Party wanting to gain legitimacy through Scanderbeg, turned the Day of the Flag, November 28 into the Day of Independence for Albania. To this day depending on which party is in control 28 and 29 November continue to be debated as

² Ibid., 262.

days of Independence.³ The Communist star was removed from the Flag and any government publication, so that Scanderbeg's memory could continue to live on without being linked to Communism.

In 1999, Naum Prifti, a very well known Albanian writer, republished a collection of legends and stories on Scanderbeg, tailored toward the elementary school students.⁴ Before these children can process or interpret ideas, these ideals of Scanderbeg myth are paraded to them, and the outcome is clear in terms of creating and perpetuating another construct of national identity. With this regard the audience of Naum Prifti is no different than that of Stephen Heathorn. His study focused on the construct of Englishness in the elementary school system at the turn of the twentieth century in Britain.⁵ The nationalities here differ, but the model can be useful to the Albanian case.

Even though these stories are collected, a few common myths become prevalent. First is the idea that Scanderbeg lives on, second the love of country, and lastly the idea of using Scanderbeg's powers as a tool to bring people together for the greater good of the country. In one tale a girl Albana, tells her grandfather that she knows when Scanderbeg died. Her grandfather then tells Albana the stories which he has heard from his own father that refute the death of Scanderbeg.⁶ Elementary school children are the target of the tale, which tells the historian that the Albanian nation is not interested in the

³ BBC News, 28 November 2002, *Socialists and Democrats divided on the Issue of Independence*, [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/albanian/021129103422.shtml>].

⁴ Prifti, Naum, *Legjenda dhe Rrefime per Skenderbeun*, (Tirane: Horizonti, 1999).

⁵ Heathorn, Stephen J., *For Home, Country and Race: Constructing Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914*, (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2000): 5.

⁶ Prifti, Naum, *Legjenda dhe Rrefime per Skenderbeun*, (Tirane: Horizonti, 1999): 128,131, 140-143.

story of the Real *Scanderbeg*, but becomes an agent in the longevity of the myth. The Real Scanderbeg is no longer the national symbol because the tale has taken over. People want to believe the tale, and they want to keep it alive, because the tale unlike reality has the power to make people identify with one another, and rally around the flag i.e.

Scanderbeg's Flag.

The warrior like image that this tale commemorates, did not appear until Albania needed a hero for its independence. The written Albanian language did not appear in print until the nineteenth century. Yet this tale suggests that Albanians have a long history, hence the association to the Illyrian roots. That is why the oral history/legend becomes important. It is the carrier of agency because it helps to formulate an identity that defies time and space, and when used in service to nationalism can legitimize the claims for a nation's point of origin.

The Albanian history is not a peaceful one. Albania is surrounded by neighbor countries who continue to challenge its borders. By permeating the Scanderbeg Myth to the youth, the very tale becomes a power tool and has an agency of its own. The myth evokes emotive feelings that become harder to overthrow.

A different tale evokes the idea that the motherland is more important than even one's family. In the tale Scanderbeg has heard that his nephew has betrayed him and given a fortress to the Turks. Scanderbeg, who could have saved his nephew, sends him back to Napoli and orders his imprisonment.⁷ Since Scanderbeg is the model for every Albanian, it is only natural that he would put the interest of the country above his own, which is what every good Albanian should do.

⁷ Ibid., 69-78.

The idea of collective amnesia applies well to Scanderbeg's memory in the twentieth century and is very apparent in the tale. In Communist Albania it became pivotal to view Scanderbeg as the national hero, a man who came from the masses and fought for them; while conveniently forgetting his relationship with the Vatican, his religious practice, or that he was part of the nobility and his unifying struggle aimed at creating his own monarchical order over Albania.

Much more telling is the simple truth that Scanderbeg died in his bed from a fever. Even in the present day Albanians have a hard time reconciling to that truth. Perhaps because this reality makes Scanderbeg human and it is more powerful when one thinks of him as an extraordinary being rather than ordinary. And yet to this day he continues to be remembered as the savior of Albanian national identity. In this tale the imagery abounds. Scanderbeg is almost supernatural. He is given Messianic like qualities. He feels no pain. He is magnanimous. At the same time, he is simple; he interacts with his friends on an equal level. More importantly He lives on!

These recent trends in Albanian popular tradition, seem to suggest that the memory of Scanderbeg continues to change in Albania and often times it is a product of the political climate in the country. People want to recall and perpetuate the myth, in the absence of stability. There is a neutralizing element to the Scanderbeg myth, because it allows for Albanians, to remember who they are in a period of difficult transition to democracy. As evidenced in a most recent publication, by resurrecting Scanderbeg back to the center, it seems to suggest that things will be well, for the people and the country, because now they are being led by a "*King who's crowned by the angels*".⁸

⁸ Meca, Hamdi, *Scanderbeg : King Crowned by the Angels*, (Kruje: Shtypshkronja Emal, 2003.)

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