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**The Socio-political Meanings of the Conflict between the
Muslims and the Christians around the Western Balkan
in the 15th Century**

**Jayoung Che
Assistant Professor
Busn University of Foreign Studies
Korea**

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Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:
www.atiner.gr

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The Socio-political Meanings of the Conflict between the Muslims and the Christians around the Western Balkan in the 15th Century

Jayoung Che
Assistant Professor
Busn University of Foreign Studies
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Abstract

Georgi Kastrioti-Skanderbey (1405-1468) is known as an Albanian hero. He led the resistance against the Ottomans during the period 1443-1468, and became a paragon of wonder among the western Christians. Skanderbey has been defined as a hero who resisted the Ottoman's attack not only for Albania but for the entire European Christian world, i.e. a symbol of the Albanian populace, Albanian racialism, and the last fighter for Albanian independence, a protector of European culture, a warrior of the Renaissance, and a protector of freedom against the Muslims. Furthermore, his resistance has been compared even with the Greek partisans ("klephtoi") who, gathered in the Mountain area, fought the Turks later under the Ottoman Sultan's domination. According to another view, however, his resistance was regarded as standing for the interests of Albanian feudal lords. In my opinion, however, Skanderbey could neither be identified as a protector of Albanian racialism, nor a warrior of Christendom. It is chronologically preposterous to apply the concept of racialism or modern nationalism to the 15th century, the age of Skanderbey. Christendom as well as the feudal lords were never a unified entity, but were divided into several sects according to their own interests. Actually, aiming for his own freedom against the yoke of the Sultan, Skanderbey rose upon the militarism of the Western crusades which, not all but a part of the western feudal lords, as well as the Roman Popes, sought after. Skanderbey's military power was based on western feudalism which exploited the subordinate social class of populace-farmers. Skanderbey's resistance in pursuit of freedom did not promote but reduce the people's freedom. Skanderbey represented a cross section of society: He was one of those raised as a Janissary, then adapted to join the warlike feudal crusaders in order to enjoy freedom against the Sultan's yoke.

Keywords: Skanderbey, Albania, Greece, Ottomans, Roman Pope, Byzantine Empire, Muslims, Christians.

Introduction

Georgi Kastrioti-Skanderbey (1405-1468)¹ is known as an Albanian hero. According to G. Ostrogorsky, expert in medieval history, Skanderbey who led the resistance against the Ottomans during 1443-1468 became a paragon of wonder among the western Christians.² Actually, Skanderbey has been defined as a hero who resisted the Ottoman's attack not only for Albania but for all the European Christian world,³ a symbol of the Albanian populace,⁴ the last fighter for Albanian independence,⁵ a protector of European culture and a warrior of the Renaissance,⁶ and furthermore a protector of freedom against the attack of the Muslims (cf. Lezi). Moreover, the Roman Pope Calyxtus III defined him as "the Commander of the Holy Cathedral (i.e. Roman Church)".⁷ The memory of Skanderbey as a legendary Albanian hero survived into the 20th century, widely spread by various forms of novel, poem, movie and music. As a national hero, his fame could be compared with Jeanne d' Arc (1412-1431) of France in the same generation.⁸

On the other hand, there are different views on defining the social significance of Skanderbey's resistance. Partly, his resistance used to be compared with the Greek partisans ("klephtes") coming afterwards, who, thronged in the Mountain area and fought the Turks later under the Sultan's domination.⁹ According to another view, however, it was regarded as standing

¹ Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbey in Albanian, Georgios Kastriotis Skanderbeis in Greek, Iskender Bey (or Beğ) in Turkish, George Castriot Skanderbeg in English (or Skandarbej); in this paper spelled as Skanderbey, as a widely known name. Skanderbey means "Alexander the Lord", which is the second to Alexander the Great. Cf. C Moore, *George Catriot: Surnamed Scanderbeg, king of Albania* (N.Y.: 1850), 9; D. Moczar, *Islam at the Gates: how Christendom defeated the Ottoman Turks* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2008), 56.

² G. Ostrogorsky, *Gschichte des Byzantinischen Staates*, trans. in Greek by Ioannis Panagopoulos, *Istoria tou Byzantinou Kratous*, III (Athens: Patakis, 1993), 268; Cf. Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15ος αι.* [*Pages from the Balkan Reaction to the Ottoman Expansion, 14-15th century*] (Athens: Irodotos, 1991), 51-52.

³ J. Bury, "Wars with Albania," in *Cambridge modern history*, ed. A. W. Ward et al. (Cambridge, 1969), 70-71.

⁴ K. Amantos, *Σχέσεις Ελλήνων και Τούρκων απο τον Ενδεκατο Αιωνα μεχρι το 1821* [*Relations between Greeks and Turks from the eleventh century until 1821*], vol. I (1071-1571) (Athens: Archipelagos, 1955), 94.

⁵ G. Kordatos *Ιστορία Βυζαντινής Αυτοκρατορίας (1204-1453)* [*History of the Byzantine Empire (1204-1453)*], II (Athens: 1959), 399.

⁶ St. Pollo and A. Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours* [*History of Albania from the origins to the present day*] with the collaboration of Kristo Frashëri and Skënder Anamali, preface by Maurice Baumont (Roanne/Lyon, 1978), 100-104.

⁷ Radoni, 1942, 163 as cited in Inalcik "Iskender Beg." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam* ed E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat (Leiden, IV, 1978), 140.

⁸ Cf. A. Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg dans les lettres françaises de la Renaissance à l'Age Classique: Eléments d'une bibliographie critique" ["The Scanderbeg figure in French letters from the Renaissance to the Classical Age: Elements of a critical bibliography"]. *Balkan Studies* 37, no.1 (1996), 77.

⁹ P. Rodakis, *Κλέφτες και Αρματολοί, Η Ιστορικοκοινωνική Διαμορφωση του Ελλαδικου Χωρου στα Χρονια της Τουρκοκρατίας* [Klephtes and Armatoli, the Historical and Social Configuration

for the interests of Albanian feudal lords.¹⁰

Still more, P. Rodakis doubted the truth of Skanderbey's epic. Although he accepted Skanderbey as an Albanian hero in the Middle Ages on the one hand, he appraised his epic as exaggerated on the other. He argued that, while his story represented no more than Albanian racialism during his lifetime, it spread outside of Albania after his death. In addition, Rodakis maintained that Skanderbey's heroic resistance was founded on racialism which, having been outdated already, could not be an alternative in the age of the Ottoman's conquest over a hyper-wide area.¹¹

Recently, being opposed to Rodakis, O. J. Schmitt argued that it is anachronistic to connect the modern nationalism with Skanderbey, and that it should be focused why Skanderbey converted from a Janissary Muslim to a Christian. According to Schmitt, the answer is that Skanderbey's resistance was headed for the restraint of the advent of a new empire of the Muslims, and his failure was due to inferiority in the number of soldiers and military force.¹²

On the other hand, K. Paparrigopoulos pointed out that Skanderbey was not represented as loved by the people in contemporary sources. Furthermore, he was not a matter of much concern at all. The contemporary Byzantine authors of the 15th century, Chalkokondyles and Sphranzes (Phranzes), did not place a great deal of weight on him. According to Paparrigopoulos, Konstantinos Palaiologos, the last Byzantine emperor, earned the people's love and the deepest regret over his death rather than Skanderbey.¹³ G. Soulis suggested that the increase of the Europeans' special concern for Skanderbey originated in the 16th and 17th century when the threat of the Ottomans continued to exist still in a considerable degree.¹⁴

Fundamentally, however, dualism should be overcome in understanding the conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in the Balkan areas in the 15th century. This is why, there was no agreements among the feudal lords, as a part of them more or less supported the Muslims and some feudal lords did not support the banner of militaristic Crusades. Moreover, there was a severe antagonism among the Christians themselves, especially between the Orthodox and the Western Roman Church, and among the latter themselves.

This essay follows the opinion of Schmitt in the point that Skanderbey did not head for nationalism, but rejects his opinion that Skanderbey tried to hold the advent of a new empire in check and he was a convert from Muslim Janissary to Christianity. In my opinion, he tried to protect his private liberty

of the Greek Country in the Years of the Turkish Occupation] vol. I. (Athens : Ellinika Grammata, 1975), 88-90.

¹⁰ K. Kyrris, *Tourkia kai Balkania* (Athens: Estia, 1986), 83.

¹¹ Rodakis *Κλέφτες και Αρματολοί*, 87-92.

¹² Cf. O. J. Schmitt, *Scanderbeg: Der neue Alexander auf dem Balkan* [*Scanderbeg: The new Alexander in the Balkans*] (Regensburg, 2009), 7ff.

¹³ K. Paparrigopoulos, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* [*History of Greek Nation*] (Athens, 1932), V, 293.

¹⁴ G. Soulis "Αι νεώτεροι έρευναι περί του Γεωργίου Καστριώτου Σκενδέρμπεη" ["The Recent researches concerning George Kastrioti Skanderbeg"], *Epetiris Etaireias Byzantinon Spoudon* 28 (1958): 446.

rather than to challenge for military hegemony on a magnificent dimension. His conflict for freedom could not represent the interests of all the feudal lords of Europe, but a part of them who supported the jingoistic Crusades, being closely connected with the religious colonialism of the Roman Church.

Diversity of Interpretation and Appraisal of Skanderbey's Epic¹⁵

Appraisal on Skanderbey as a Modern National Hero

Recent concern has converged on the origin of Skanderbey who lived in the 15th century, whether he was Albanian or Greek. His name Kastrioti (Kastriotis) is Greek, and his father Ioannis Kastriotis was Greek and his wife also Greek, while his mother was Serbian.¹⁶ G. de Antonellis suggested Skanderbey was a Greek Christian,¹⁷ but according to Kordatos he was an Albanian by origin and became socialized as a Greek.¹⁸ Anyway, Marinus Barletius (1450-1513), the Albanian historian and Catholic priest from Scutari (Shkodra, Shköder), who wrote the first biography of Kastrioti-Skanderbey, contributed to the tradition identifying him as an Albanian.¹⁹

However, it is anachronistic more or less to apply the concept of nationality as a modern concept to the Medieval Ages when Skanderbey lived. Some of the modern historians defined his resistance as originating in racialism or nationalism, which, it seems, is mostly due to Skanderbey's own reference, cited in the novels, that he is fighting for "his people." But "his people" in this case does not necessarily refer to the people of modern nationalism.

As his tale spread out to every corner of Europe, at the beginning of the 19th century, Skanderbey attained the position of a paragon of the Greek (or Balkan) independence movement which was trying to get out from Turkish domination. An example is found in Byron, an English poet, who had been

¹⁵ Medieval Byzantine historians, such as Chalkokondyles, Sphranzes (Phranzes), handed down no more than brief information for Skanderbey in the 15th century, while Marinus Barletius, Albanian historian in the second half of the 15th to the beginning of the 16th century, wrote the biography of Skanderbey. Skanderbey's epics spread to other areas of Europe, esp. Italy, France, since the 16th century. Then, most of them took the genre of novel, and his tale had much diversity in detail. So, with the exception of the facts transmitted in the historical works, his biographical details in this essay are referred to on the basis of the secondary sources which have been concluded after more or less historical verification. For the research regarding the meeting in memory of the 500th anniversary of Skanderbey's death (1468-1968) and recent research in Italy, Albania, etc. cf. Z. Tsirpanlis & Demus (1968) 489-493 (esp. for Albania, 492-493); *Simposiumi per Skënderbeum [Proceedings of Simposium]* (1969).

¹⁶ Cf. Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.*, 56.

¹⁷ G. de Antonellis, "Ο Σκεντερμπηης και το μαγικο σπαθι του" ["Skanderbey and his magic sword"]. *Istoria Eikonographimēni*, 14 (1969): 25.

¹⁸ Kordatos, *Η μεγάλη ιστορία της Ελλάδας [The great history of Greece]* IX (1453-1821) (Athens: 1956-1959), 402.

¹⁹ M. Barletius, *Historia de vita et gestis Skanderbegi epirotarum principis [The story of the life and activities of the high Skanderbeg epirotarum]* (Rome, 1508-1510).

attracted by Greek culture. He came to Greece to help the independence movement (1823.8.-1824.4), only to die by developing a violent fever in Missolonghi in April 19, 1824. In his work, *Childe Harold' Pilgrimage* (v.2), he mentioned the virtue of Skanderbey's nation and country.²⁰ This means that Byron understood the tradition of Skanderbey's epic in a similar context to the Greek independence movement pertaining to modern patriotism as well as the value of freedom. Actually, in those days even a group of Albanian Muslims collaborated towards Greek independence.

According to Zotos, the tale of Skanderbey's exploits was, first of all, well known in Italy,²¹ and afterwards in the 16th to the 18th century spread so far as to France.²² Italy was fairly concerned about Skanderbey, as he acted in concert with the Roman Church as well as Alphonso V, the king of Napoli.²³ Additionally, after the victory of the battle of Lepanto (1571), the popularity of Skanderbey, as well as the monarch of Albania, increased as protectors of the Western Christian world. Zotos argued that the novel of Lavardin of France about Skanderbey prevailed, taking advantage of the trend of those days.²⁴ Still more, Skanderbey was mentioned in the *Essais* of Montaigne²⁵ in the same 16th century, and later in the *Essais sur moeurs* of Montesquieu²⁶ in the later 18th century.

Schmitt's Revised Theory Denying Skanderbey's Nationalism

About two centuries ago, E. Gibbon, the historian of the 18th century, described Skanderbey as fighting the two Ottoman rulers, Murad II and Mehmed II, for 23 years with meager arms unmatched to the enemy's, and appraised him positively as he made an effort to protect his religion and his country.²⁷ Recently, Schmitt, who authored a new book about Skanderbey, recognized that he kept concomitantly in contact with Orthodox, Islam and Roman Catholic authorities, resisted the Ottoman sultans for 25 years (ca.

²⁰ Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 104.

²¹ Actually, Skanderbey was closely related to Italy not only in his lifetime but after his death. After he died, his son Ioannis (Ivan) at 14 years old emigrated into Napoli with his mother [Cf. E. Gibbon *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, VIII [with notes by Dean Milman & M. Guizot; additional note by W. Smith] (London, 1881), 139; S. Runciman, *The fall of Constantinople 1453* (Cambridge: the University Press, 1965), 185]. And, in the 16th century Giovanni Musachi from Albania took refuge in the southern Italy. On the basis of his family's documents and the archives of Venice M. Carl Hopf composed Scanderber's biography [cf. *Chroniques gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues*, 1873, 315ff; as cited in Soulis, 1958, 450].

²² Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 77. Since Lavardin published *Histoire de Georges Castriot, surnommé Skanderbeg* (1576) in 16th century, 10 editions were introduced by 1621 [as cited in Ashcom, 1953, 16-29].

²³ Cf. Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 79f.

²⁴ Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 79.

²⁵ Montaigne, *Essais*, I, 1; II, 39. Cf. Zotos, 1996, 79.

²⁶ Montesquieu, *Essais sur moeurs*, 1963, I, 814-815 (chap. XC). Cf. Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 81.

²⁷ Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, VIII, 135f.

1443-1468), and that he has been described not only as an emblem of the antagonism between the Christians and the Muslims, but as a hero venturing his life in the rough mountains of the Balkans.²⁸ Nevertheless, Schmitt²⁹ suggested that Skanderbey's story has to be newly written, and he also highlighted a puzzling question as to why Skanderbey sought after a new direction converting from a converted Janissary Muslim Balkan aristocrat to a Christian again.

According to Schmitt, Skanderbey was neither a superman (Übermensch) nor a romantic (Romanzfigur).³⁰ That is, he was not a hero resisting for the sake of nationalism, or social or religious cause, but instead was just revolting against the establishment of a new empire. Schmitt declared that his purpose in writing about Skanderbey was not to describe him as a hero, even if he was currently admired in a part of southern Europe. He says, it is anachronistic to apply a modern ideology to him, and that it was due to a misunderstanding maintained for a few centuries that Skanderbey had been commemorated on a national level in the Balkan areas.

On the other hand, Schmitt provided as another example Owain Glyn Dwr in the western part of Wales in England at about 1400 A.D.³¹ R. Davies authored Owain Glyn Dwr's story in 1995, defining him as a national hero (Nationalhelden). According to Schmitt, Glyn Dwr resembles to Skanderbey in some respects. He resisted in vain the attack of Henry IV, the powerful king of neighboring England, being inferior in a number of soldiers and the scale of arms.³²

However, Schmitt initiated the viewpoint that historians should not just arrange the events according to chronological order but to "anatomize" the process of resistance.³³ He divided Skanderbey's life largely into two periods, the first half from 1405 to 1450 for his birth, growth, education as "a man originating from the Balkans", and the second half from 1450 to 1468, his death, as a "hero of Renaissance" (Helden der Renaissance). According to Schmitt, in order to analyze the traces of his resistance, one should consider the enemy's conditions and the powers which are combined with the subject of resistance, and the covert motives related to the social context should be discovered by reading between the lines.

Schmitt suggested the details which have to be discussed in relation with Skanderbey's revolt and his heroism: he resisted the neighboring country which had a centralized structure of policy and strong military power; eventually he failed being faced with the rival empire's superior power; the subject of resistance consisted of lots of straggled settlements and politically unstable communities; he was associated with the jingoistic church; he was

²⁸ Cf. Schmitt, *Scanderbeg*, 7f.

²⁹ Schmitt, *Scanderbeg*, 8.

³⁰ Schmitt, *Scanderbeg*, 10f.

³¹ R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dwr*. Oxford/ New York, 1995.

³² Even after his resistance failed, Glyn Dwr did not submitted to the hands of enemy, and afterwards he was not placated by Henry V's conciliation.

³³ Schmitt, *Scanderbeg*, 9.

allied with not only the neighboring communities but also internationally with remote countries; his dominance was based on the highland areas with its climates, economics of coastal trade; conservative mental structure, religious identity, mutual confidence among the populace of mountain areas, and emotional disposition in memory of heroes (Erinnerungskultur).

Then, a common way of consideration is shown, not only in the Gibbon of the 18th century but also the more recent Schmitt who tried to "anatomize" with a surgical scalpel, that Skanderbey's failure originated from the sultan's superiority of soldiers and military power. In my opinion, however, dualism could not explain the situation thoroughly. This is why the feudal lords in the Balkans themselves did not come to an agreement, and some of them passed over to the Ottomans. Moreover, internal discords among the Christians, especially between the Orthodox and the Roman Church, were no less than those between the Christians and the Muslims. The Roman church was absorbed in gaining hegemony over the Eastern Orthodox Church no less or more than instigating the Crusades against the Muslims. Thus, the cause of Skanderbey's failure was due to the political and social limitations of the Western structure of feudalism and the side-effects of the military Crusades sought after by the Roman Church and the feudal lords as well, rather than his inferior military power or the disorganized subject of resistance and the stragglng Albanian populace in the mountain areas.

The following is discussed from this point of view.

Ambiguity of Skanderbey's Religious Identity and His Desire for Freedom

Jean-Nicolas Duponcet, the Catholic priest,³⁴ defining the development of events as a providence of God, idealized the relationship between Skanderbey and the Vatican Church. He appraised Skanderbey as having played a decisive role to protect the Christian world, dissipating the dream of Mehmed II to advance to Italy and confronted his atrocity and brutality. Moreover, he was eulogized as a guardian not only of Christianity but liberty. Zotos commented that Duponcet as a Christian explained the deployments of the events according to the God's providence, idealizing the relationship of Skanderbey and the Roman Papacy, and complimented Skanderbey on his decisive role in protecting the Christian world.³⁵

In this way, according to the appraisal on the side of the Vatican Church and Italy, Skanderbey tended to be regarded as a Catholic, and not an Orthodox believer. However, the issue whether he was a catholic or Orthodox provides another ground for controversy. Recently, Schmidt-Neke sowed a seed of

³⁴ J.-N. Duponcet, *Histoire de Scanderbeg, Roi d' Albanie* [*History of Scanderbeg, king of Albany*] (Paris: J. Mariette, 1709), 484-485 [as cited in Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 83].

³⁵ Cf. Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 83.

discord defining Skanderbey as Orthodox, and not Catholic.³⁶ Actually, it is no easy job to make a conclusion regarding Skanderbey's religious standpoint. Although being affiliated with Greece, Albania or Serbia, where the tradition of Orthodoxy prevailed, he was brought up as a Janissary³⁷ from 9 years old in the Ottoman palace, trained by a strict education to be a Muslim. Thus, as a native of the Balkans where Catholic and Orthodox crossed symbiotically, as well as being raised as a Muslim, his religious individuality could hardly be identified. Furthermore, he himself, it seems, rarely manifested his religious creed as an aim of his struggle. Brankovitch of Serbia, an Orthodox follower, did not let Skanderbey take part in the battle of Varna, the main excuse being, it is said, that Skanderbey was schismatic.³⁸

On the other hand, Skanderbey has been described as a warrior for the people and freedom, and not a guardian of Christianity. In the novels which circulated in France from the 16th century and on, the ideal of freedom was brought into relief rather than that of religion. An unidentified person called Stefano Zannowich in the 18th century admired Skanderbey as a champion for the Albanian populace and freedom.³⁹

It is actually shown that Skanderbey himself referred to "people's freedom" in the novels of the 16th and 17th centuries. However, it should be pointed out that in context the so called "people's freedom" does mostly not concern the people of lower class. This is because the principle aim of his resistance was to get out from under the Sultan's yoke.

In the novel of Lavardin in the 16th century, Skanderbey told his sister:

"My people, like me, kept on fighting without interruption to get out from under the Sultan's yoke, having been tired by shameful subordination. If Murad opens hostilities against me, the Albanians would prefer death rather than chains. Then, if he desires our blood, he is to pay a high price."⁴⁰

³⁶ Schmidt-Neke, "Skanderbegs Gefangene: Zur Debatte um den albanischen Nationalhelden" ["Skanderbegs Prisoners: To debate the Albanian national heroes"]. *Südosteuropa. Zeitschrift für Politik und Gesellschaft* 58, n.2 (2010), 273-302.

³⁷ Cf. Janissary were the first ottoman standing army, created by Murad I (1362-1389) and enlarged by Bayazid I (1389-1402) to a sizable standing army [cf. D.J. Kastriçis, *The sons of Bayezid* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 10, 42]. At the moment of creation, it was an alternative to the tribal warriors (ghazis) whose loyalty and morale were not always guaranteed. Janissary was known to be composed mostly of enslaved non-Muslim, Christian boys, notably Anatolian and Balkan Christians.

³⁸ A. Bryer, "Scanderberg: National Hero of Albania." *History Today* 12 n.6 (1962), 429.

³⁹ S. Zannowich, *Le Grand Castriotto d'Albanie. Histoire [The Great Castriotto of Albania. History]* (Francfort: J.J. Kesler, 1779). Cf. G.T. Pérovitch, *Skander-beg (Georges Castriota), Essai de bibliographie raisonnée [Skander-beg (Georges Castriota), Essay of reasoned bibliography]* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1881), 99-100; Legrand, *Bibliographie albanaise [Albanian Bibliography]* (Paris: H. Welter, 1912), no. 109, 111, 114, 117, 133 [as cited in Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 101].

⁴⁰ J. de Lavardin, *Histoire de Georges Castriot, surnommé Scanderbeg*, II, 401. In the following 17th century similar expressions reappeared in the work of Urbano Chevreau (Paris, 1644), I, 3, 289-292, as cited in Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 95]

In the same novel, Skanderbey spoke to the ottoman Sultan who had treated him with favor:

"You, being born a monarch and independent from any exotic power, do not be surprised at the fact that yearning for freedom incites me to get out of the yoke of slavery. Me neither like you, I was not born to suffer under a yoke. So, do not denounce me as a traitor for the deed you also would sure have done like me, if God had taken you in my place."⁴¹

Yearning for freedom Skanderbey refers to concerns no more than the freedom of a monarch, being far from people's freedom or national liberation. If Skanderbey had succeeded in removing his yoke, freedom would never have come to the people of lower class. In all probability they would have continued to be exploited for the great cause of crusade under the yoke of feudal lords. So, it could be properly concluded that the "my people" Skanderbey mentions do not refer to the lower classes but to "the people" of the governing classes who could be aligned with him to wage war for freedom.

It is proved by Skanderbey's own speech in the novel of U. Chevreau (1644) that the freedom Skanderbey mentions is related to the relationship between lord and retainer.

"To speak briefly, he (Murad) is not my lord and I am not his vassal. I neither assisted him with my heart nor on duty. I was not publically his enemy, as I was not in a free state. And, the reason I practice my plan is not my courage but an accident. It is not my duty to keep the vow for him, which I cannot swear, as I should do it for my country. I am not a Turk but an "Epirotes" (from the region of Epirus). I am feeling still more duty for my nation, as my country is not the Murad's, and it is more worth doing it rather than being enslaved. And my loyalty is as much dishonest as my wiles."

Here, "my country" or "my nation" was contrasted just with the Turkish to which Murad belonged, having however, no connection with the ruled.

In this view, it is worth mentioning "*Les tambours de la pluie*" of Ismaïl Kadaré, an Albanian writer of high renown in the 20th century. Refusing the neo-classic style of novel which brings patriotism or heroism into relief as well as the traditional image of a saint safeguarding Christianity, he reduces Skanderbey to a warrior resisting tenaciously against the Turks.⁴² In this portrayal Skanderbey is described as just no more than an inflexible fighter which actually comes nearer to reality, that is, neither dogmatic nor tendentious.

In the following passage of this essay, it will be examined how Skanderbey,

⁴¹ Lavardin, *Histoire de Georges Castriot, surnommé Scanderbeg*, II, 403.

⁴² I. Kadaré, *Les tambours de la pluie* [*The drums of the rain*] (Paris: Hachette, 1972); Cf. Zotos, "La figure de Scanderbeg", 105, n.81.

as a fighter, aligned with the Western feudal lords, and made resistance to the Ottoman power.

Skanderbey's Betrayal against the Ottomans and the Tensions around the Balkan Peninsula

Schmitt argued that Skanderbey betrayed the Ottomans, leading the resistance because he was worried about the advent of a new empire. In my opinion previously discussed, however, his resistance originated in his desire for private freedom rather than as a refusal against the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Also it was not necessarily related to the ideal of national independence, the people's liberty or the protection of the Christian world. Hence, it will be discussed below how Skanderbey as a feudal lord stood against the Ottomans, allying himself with other feudal lords in neighboring territories or the Roman Pope.

The Growth of Skanderbey and his Rebellion against the Sultan

Katrioti-Skanderbey was born in north Albania in 1405, a fourth, and last born son of Ioannis Kastriotis.⁴³ Skanderbey's father governed Dibra and Mati of north Albania, and Baisava of Serbia. The north of Albania had already been conquered by the Ottoman Sultan Bagiazit I since 1394.⁴⁴ Defeated in the resistance against the Turks, Ioannis Kastriotis was subjugated to Mehmed (1413-1421), the Ottoman Sultan, who settled down in the capital, Adrianople, and he sent three (or four all) sons as hostages to the palace of the Sultan. Georgi Katrioti, nine years old then, was detained as a hostage by the Turks.

After two (or one) brothers of Skanderbey died without any apparent cause in Adrianople, the third Constantinos left to become a monk at the St. Ekaterini Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula. In contrast with his brother, coming in contact with Islam, and, according to Barletius, being circumcised,⁴⁵ Skanderbey belonged to the Janissary (New Soldier) of the Ottomans. E. Gibbon stated that from nine years old he learned the Koran, not having any knowledge of the Christian Bible.⁴⁶ He received education at the military school in Adrianople, and attaining the position of Bey (Beğ) took part in the expeditions of the Sultan to several regions in the Balkan Peninsula. The Sultan Mourat II (1421-1451) admired his exploits and called him "Iskender Bey" (Lord Alexander)', which equals Skandarbey (or Skanderbeg).⁴⁷

In 1443, when he was 38 years old, 29 years having passed since he left

⁴³ Sabbidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.*, p.51ff. The facts below not annotated in detail are based on this.

⁴⁴ H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600* (London, 1973), 16.

⁴⁵ Barletius, I, 1, 8f.

⁴⁶ E. Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, VIII, 136.

⁴⁷ J. Kramers, "Skanderbeğ," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma, et al. (Leiden, 1987), 466.

his homeland, Skanderbey abandoned the Turkish army came back to his homeland Albania. It is said that the turning point was given to him by the victory of Hungary over the Turks at Nis of Serbia.⁴⁸ There are different opinions about the process by which Skanderbey increased his influence in Albania. According to Kramers,⁴⁹ since the latter part of the decade of 1430, Skanderbey lived in Dibra, in the middle part of Albania, putting on the appearance of allegiance to the Sultan. However actually, he communicated secretly with Venetia and Hungary. In 1443 he publically expressed his antipathy towards the Ottomans, occupying by a trick Kroia (the capital of Albania), which was in the midway between Lezha (Alessio in Italian) and Dourachio (Durrës in Albanian) on the Adriatic coast. To the contrary, Pollo-Puto argued that, in 1438 he was appointed as a ruler (subaşi) of Kroia (Akçe Hissar in Turkish), and soon after, in 1440, he ascended to the position of "Sancak bey" in Dibra.⁵⁰

Anyway, he took part in the movement for Albanian independence, which, some scholars supposed, had already begun.⁵¹ There is also a view that, even before he left Murad II, he had communicated secretly with Ioannis Hunyadi of Hungary,⁵² or other leaders of the Christian Crusade.⁵³ So, he used to be appraised from modern Turkish historians as a betrayer against the Sultan's hospitality.⁵⁴

In 1443-1444, the representatives of the Albanian military and ecclesial aristocrats assembled in Lezha (Lezhe, Alessio or Lissos), at the parish of St. Nicholaos, to organize the Albanian Alliance (Lezha Alliance) and elect Skanderbey as their leader. Each representative was to be responsible for the maintenance cost of his own army. Skanderbey supplied funds by the income from his own fief and the salt mines.⁵⁵

Skanderbey resisted Ali Pasha dispatched by Murad, gaining victory several times around the Tourvulli valley and other places. On the other hand, having gained a victory over Hunyadi (Janos Hunyadi Korbinos) of Hungary in Varna (1444), Murad II requested Skanderbey to transfer Albania to him without reserve. Skanderbey resolutely refused to do so and afterwards

⁴⁸ Cf. J. Kramers, "Skanderbeğ," 466.

⁴⁹ Cf. J. Kramers, "Skanderbeğ," 466.

⁵⁰ Pollo and Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, 102.

⁵¹ According to Ostrogorsky [1993, 268; Cf. Noli, 1967], Skanderbey had already returned to Albania in 1438, and he did not keep durable residence as a hostage in the Ottoman's palace at Adrianople, but intermittently visited there to fulfil his retainer's duty. However, Pollo and Puto (1978, 101-103), the professors of Univ. of Tirana (capital of Albania) mentioned that he had been detained as a hostage, but a long time before 1443 he returned to Albania to make arrangements for independence.

⁵² Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, VIII, 136; F. Pall, "Les relations entre la Hongrie et Scanderbeg" ["Relations between Hungary and Scanderbeg"]. *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen* 10(1933): 127-131; Kramers, 1987, 466.

⁵³ Pollo and Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, 103-104.

⁵⁴ Cf. Inalcik, "Iskender Beg," p.139.

⁵⁵ Barletius, II, 44. Cf. Cf. Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, VIII. 137; Bryer, "Scanderberg: National Hero of Albania." 426.

repulsed the invaders twice.⁵⁶

Driving back the Ottomans in 1444, Skanderbey of Albania received the aid of Alphonso V, the king of Aragon-Napoli. The latter conquered Napoli in 1422, and transferred the capital to Napoli in 1443, which was, as said, closely related to his dream of resurrecting the Latin Empire of Constantinople with himself as emperor.⁵⁷ Still more, he was much interested in the situation of Albania, as he inherited the former Angevin Kingdom of Albania. The Venetians who had also their properties in Albania distrusted Alphonso of Napoli and regarded Skanderbey as a nuisance and a threat to themselves.⁵⁸

Instigation of the Pope for Crusade and the Discords among the Powers in the Balkan

Faced with the advance of the Ottomans, the Roman Pope took an active part, instigating persistently for military campaign, to result in a synergy in harmony with the ambition of the feudal lords. Kyrris defined Skanderbey's resistance as representing the disposition of the Balkan feudal lords,⁵⁹ but the fact that the latter were broken largely into two factions shows that his rebellion against the Ottoman sultan could not be regarded as a united volition on the part of the feudal lords. Actually, there were those who gathered around the Roman Pope under the banner of the Crusades on the one hand, and those who took the side of the Ottomans on the other. Furthermore, Skanderbey's own family was dismembered, and his cousins betrayed him turning to support the sultan.

Anyway, some of the feudal lords supported the Roman Pope's campaign for the Crusades. The latter attracted Alphonso V of Napoli, Hunyadi of Hungary,⁶⁰ and others to his side. The battles of Varna (1444) and Kossovo (1448), where Hunyadi took the leading part, could be reflected in such a context.

In 1444, while Skanderbey succeeded in holding off the Ottoman's attack, Hunyadi of Hungary suffered a severe loss to the Turks in the battle called "Crusade of Varna" in November, 1444. In this battle Ladislaus I of Hungary (= Ladislaus III of Poland) and the cardinal Cesarini suffered death in defeat, and Hunyadi withdrew beyond the Danube River.⁶¹ On the other hand,

⁵⁶ At the junction of Drino (1445) and Ottoneta (near to Dibra). Cf. Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.*, 67.

⁵⁷ D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A study in diplomatic and cultural relations* (Cambridge, 1988), 387.

⁵⁸ D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 387.

⁵⁹ Kyrris, 1986, 83.

⁶⁰ According to an anecdote, Hunyadi was actually not Voyk's child, but king Sigismund's illegitimate son [cf. Cartledge, 2011, p. 54]. Later Hunyadi became a member of seven Captains in Chief for the juvenile Hungarian king, Ladislaus (Laszlo) V (1446-1452) [cf. Cartledge, 2011, p.57]. Cf. Sigismund of Luxemburg (b.1468-d.1437), the son of Charles IV, dominated as a king of Hungary, Croatia, Bohemia, etc., and acceded to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire for 4 years before his death (1433-1437).

⁶¹ Chalkokondyles, 337; Doukas, 221. Cf. Moczar, *Islam at the Gates*, 60.

Georgios Brankovic of Serbia did not join this battle, nor cooperated with forces from either side.

After four years from then, in October, Murad II destroyed a Hungarian army under the command of Hunyadi in Kossovo (Polje), who had communicated with Skanderbey since 1447. Hunyadi suffered a severe loss in this battle.⁶² In the midst of engagement which lasted three days, lots of soldiers who were Vlachs (Romania) changed sides to the Turks at a crucial moment. To make things worse, in the midst of retreat Hunyadi was arrested and imprisoned by the Serbian general Georgios Brankovic, but he managed to escape.⁶³

On the other hand, since 1451 Hunyadi, in order to secure the independence of Hungary was obliged to get in touch with Mehmed II.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, he did not give up his efforts as well to protect southern Europe and the Byzantium from attack by the Ottoman Empire and made contact with the last Emperor of the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine emperor Palaiologos XII requested rescue forces and promised instead to transfer Sylimbria or Mesymbria on the Thracian coast to Hunyadi.⁶⁵ However, this grandiose Crusade plan was not actually realized. On the contrary, it is said that, according to the agreement with Mehmed II, Hunyadi collaborated with him to attack Constantinople by leading the Turkish artillerymen.⁶⁶

Since the battle of Kosovo, in the western Balkan two different axes pitted against the Ottomans. One is the alliance of the king of Hungary Ladislaus,⁶⁷ Skanderbey, the king of Napoli Alphonso V, and the other is that of Georgios Arianitis of southern Albania and Venice.

When Murad II raised an army to attack Kroia in 1450. Skanderbey drew Arianitis into the Lezha Alliance by marrying his daughter. At last, in 1451, seven years after the composition of the Lezha Alliance, Skanderbey succeeded in repelling the enemy, arranging the foundation of Albanian unity. It has been said that Murad II died of a contagious disease under the wall of Kroia at the

⁶² Chalkokondyles, 368-370.

⁶³ Chalkokondyles, 372.

⁶⁴ After a while, however, in 1456, the same year when Hunyadi was to die, discord broke out again. As the Sultan Mehmed II in Byzantium invaded to besiege Beograd [Belligrad (White Castle)], the Serbian capital, and blockaded the Danube River, Hunyadi succeeded in driving the enemy back. The battle of Beograd was known widely in Western Europe as another symbol of the achievement of keeping the Christian World from the Turks, as well as an exploit of Hunyadi's bravery. Just a few days after the victory, Hunyadi passed away infected by a contagious disease. Seventy years later, in 1526, Hungary was merged into the Ottoman Turk region, due to the loss of the battle of Mohax in Hungary by the Sultan Schleiman II (1520-1566) in 1526. [Cf. Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.*, 45f.].

⁶⁵ Phrantzes, 327.

⁶⁶ Doukas, (1834), 273; Cf. Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.*, 44.

⁶⁷ Chalkokondyles, 357ff. The Hungarian king Ladislaus intended to align with Skanderbey and Arianitis.

news of signs of defeat.⁶⁸ The next year after Skanderbey married off his daughter. However, Arianitis abandoned the Lezha Alliance and joined hands with Venice, the enemy of Skanderbey.

In 1450 Skanderbey fortified the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea against the potential attack of Venice, and the mountain area as well against the Ottoman's invasion.⁶⁹ The next year in 1451, the Gaeta Alliance between the Spanish Alphonso V, ruler of Aragon-Napoli, and Skanderbey was concluded, and Alphonso promised to send reinforcements. However, but a few mercenaries from Catalonia came.⁷⁰ In July, 1455, Alphonso V again dispatched rescue forces at the request of Skanderbey,⁷¹ but the battle resulted in defeat with the loss of half of the forces by the enemy's encircling operation. Since then, at last Alphonso gave up sending rescue forces, being harassed by the maneuvers of the Venetians who were displeased at the cooperation between Skanderbey and Alphonso V.⁷²

Furthermore, the cousins of Skanderbey turned their back on him to take the side of the Ottomans. Hamsa Kastriotis Bey, the cousin of Skanderbey himself, was in the van on the attack against Albania in 1452-1453.⁷³ In 1456, Georgios Stresios Balsa betrayed his uncle and delivered the acropolis of Modritsa on the border to the Ottomans and another cousin Hamsa Kastriotis Bey cooperated for the Ottomans.⁷⁴ The latter was appointed the governor of Kroia by Mehmed II and invaded Albania in 1457, but met defeat and was arrested alive by the Albanians.⁷⁵

The achievement of Skanderbey in 1457 was hailed again by the Western Europeans. The Roman Pope Callixtus III (1455-1458) admired Skanderbey as a "Powerful Protector of the Holy Capital (Rome),"⁷⁶ and stated that "Christ let you destroy the enemy's plan for the glory of Christ, you like a canon and almighty protector, for the land which otherwise might have been transferred to

⁶⁸ Barletius, *Historia*, VI, 188. Cf. However, Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, VIII, 138) insisted that it is uncertain. Cf. Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.* 71.

⁶⁹ Chalkokondyles, 432ff. Cf. Pollo and Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, 111-112.

⁷⁰ Cf. Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.* 72f.

⁷¹ Pollo and Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, 112f.

⁷² Pollo and Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, 112f.; de Antonellis (1969, 30-31) argued that even afterwards Venice dispatched reinforcements, but Savvidis (*Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.* 75, n.92) denied it. Cf. Those days the Pope Nikolaus V invited Frederick III, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and performed the coronation in March, 1452. Concurrently he provided war funds for managing 10 vessels to the king of Napoli, but after a while he broke it off by going over to the side of Venice. The coalition of the Pope with Venice was due to curb Francesco Sforza of Milano as well as the Genoans. Cf. Runciman, *The fall of Constantinople 1453*, 68f.

⁷³ Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.* 73.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁵ The Ottoman sultan from 1444 to 1446 and from 1451 to 1481.

⁷⁶ Radonič, *Djuradj Kastriot Skenderbeg i Arbanija u XIV veku. istorska gradja* (Belgrad, 1942), n.163 as cited in Inalcik, "Iskender Beg," 140].

the enemy."⁷⁷ Afterwards, the Pope Pius II (1458-1464), who more actively supported the crusade, commended the spirit of the Albanians and planned to dispatch military forces there by the decision of the Mandua Council (1459).⁷⁸

On the other hand, however, in 1456 Hunyadi who had cooperated with Skanderbey died. In 1458 Alphonso V and soon after his vassal Uranus died, too.⁷⁹ Involved in a deadlock, Skanderbey concluded a peace treaty for three years with the Sultan in 1460, and promised not to attack northern Albania which had already been transferred to the Ottomans, while securing the supremacy for southern Albania (north Epirus).⁸⁰

However, the military genius of Skanderbey did not remain dormant. After the death of Alphonso V, Skanderbey intervened in the Italian situation, as Ferdinando who succeeded Alphonso got involved in a dispute with the French René d'Anjou.⁸¹ When Skanderbey returned home in 1462 after having arranged the situation in Napoli, the circumstances in Albania took a turn for the worse. At last, in April 1463, he entered into a new peace treaty with Mehmed II for ten years. Then, Mehmed recognized the entity of Albania, although it was not an absolutely independent region.⁸²

Later, in 1467, just one year before he died, when Mehmed II invaded again to besiege Kroia, Skanderbey tried to revive the Lezha Alliance, summoning in vain the Albanian peers of power and ecclesial priests. The next year, however, he died, yielding to a contagious disease, as I have said.⁸³ When the general current of things is considered, it is quite uncertain whether he could have succeeded in organizing the Alliance again, if he had not met his abrupt death.

Constantinople and the Latin Church: Council of Ferrara and Firenze (1438-9)

In the 14th century, after the Avignon Papacy which spanned about 70 years (1309-1371), the Western Schism between Rome and Avignon began. Even if the Schism ended by the decision of the Council of Constance (Konstanz) (1414-1418) at the beginning of the 15th century, the authority of the papacy could hardly have been restored as it was before. It was emaciated day by day in the midst of the antagonism between Papal Supremacy and

⁷⁷ Pollo and Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, 114f.

⁷⁸ Pollo and Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, 114f.

⁷⁹ Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.* 76f.

⁸⁰ Pollo and Puto, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, 114; de Antonellis, 1969, 30-31.

⁸¹ Cf. Barletius, *Historia*, IX, X, *passim*.

⁸² Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.* 76f..

⁸³ Cf. Savvidis, *Σελίδες απο τη Βαλκανική Αντίδραση στην Οθωμανική Επέκταση, 14-15^{ος} αι.*, 82. According to Savvidis, Skanderbey died in January 17-18, 1468, 63 years old, insisting that it is wrong to say that he died in 1466 or 1467, in Lezha (Alessio) under the government of Venice. According to Phrantzes [= Sphrantzes, 430 (ed. Bonn)], Skandaris, the Albanian general, met a natural death.

Council Supremacy.

However, the memory of the past glory of the Papacy did not disappear with ease. On the one hand, those in authority in Constantinople and the Balkan Peninsula who were exposed to the attack of the Ottomans did not abandon hope for the help of the Vatican Pope. On the other, the Pope himself as well as the hierarchic priests of the Roman Church, it seems, did not realize his capacity and lived in a past-oriented delusion. It is shown from the facts below that those who resisted the Ottomans in Constantinople or the Balkans tried to win the court of the Pope, and the Pope himself pretended not only to have the competency to dispose of the situation, but all the more provoked a warlike crusade.

In July 21, 1424, a peace treaty was concluded between the Byzantine Emperor Ioannis VIII and Murad II.⁸⁴ However, Sigismund, the king of Hungary, and after his death, his son Hunyadi led the resistance to the Ottoman's advance. Confronting the threat, in 1430 Murad invaded to occupy Thessaloniki as well as Ioannina, and advanced to Serbia and Hungary.

Ioannis VIII, threatened by the success of Murad, was ready to step up mutual ties with the Western Church to protect the Byzantine Empire against the Ottomans. The bureaucrats and priests, in the belief that they could get help from the Roman Church, got in contact with the Roman Pope.⁸⁵ Then, before rendering help, the Roman Church requested the union of the Eastern and Western Churches in advance, and actually meant the subordination of the former to the latter.

It was Martinus V the Pope to whom Byzantium sent the envoy for negotiation in 1430. However, he died in 1431 and Eugenius IV succeeded him. The discussion began in the Council of Basel in 1431 but proceeded in vain. Then, in 1438, the council being moved into Ferrara, north of Italy, the negotiations were actively stepped up.⁸⁶ The Western Church dispatched a ship to bring the figures in authority to Italy. The Council of Ferrara commenced in January 27, 1438. The Greeks left Byzantium at the end of the previous year, 1437, and arrived in Italy on March 4, 1438. However, as an epidemic occurred when the 16th meeting was completed, the place of council was moved into Firenze.⁸⁷

The meeting of the two leading figures of the Eastern and Western Churches, the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Roman Pope, was a place of affectation, competing with each other for supremacy. According to the message dated March 14, 1438, which the Byzantine Emperor who had arrived a little earlier sent through a cavalry soldier to the Patriarch who followed shortly, the Pope claimed the Emperor's kiss on his foot, and the Emperor

⁸⁴ In those days there were two contradictory standpoints in Constantinople regarding diplomatic policy against the Ottomans. Cf. M. Pagoulatos, *Ι τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και τα επακόλουθα της* [*The Fourth Crusade and its aftermath*] (Athens: Georgiadis, 2006), 454φφ.

⁸⁵ From the previous 13th century, exposed to the Ottomans' attack, the Byzantine Empire turned its eyes to Western Europe for help. Cf. S.J. Joseph Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy 1198-1400* (New Jersey, 1979), 244.

⁸⁶ Pagoulatos, *Ι τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και τα επακόλουθα της*, 458.

⁸⁷ Pagoulatos, *Ι τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και τα επακόλουθα της*, 464.

denied it resulting in a mass for three days.⁸⁸

When he arrived at the ferry of Ferrara, the Patriarch did not even make a landing and welcomed the bishops of the Roman Church on the ship.⁸⁹ He protested against the request of the Pope for the kiss on his foot, and insisted that both sides should do it reciprocally as they were brothers. Additionally, he complained that it was a negligence of etiquette that the Pope sent the bishops to him, as the Pope should have sent the cardinals. On the same day, however, that the bishops came again to reclaim the courtesy of kiss, the Patriarch confronted them and raised a question, "What kind of law does it come from?" Then, the bishops answered, "Because the Pope is the successor of St. Petro." The Patriarch made a protest to say, "If the Pope be the successor of Petro, we are the successors of other Saints. Did the Saints ever kiss Petro on the foot? Did you ever hear of it?" Anyway, the bishops maintained that the courtesy of the kiss had been an old tradition, but the Patriarch did not yield and said, "I cannot accept it and neither will do it, as anything like this never happened before as far as I know. It is no problem to kiss with each other, otherwise I will go back."

In any event, the meeting of the two leaders occurred in the end, the Pope conceding to the Patriarch. However, the display of the Roman Churches' authority was revealed at the scene of the meeting, as the pope took the high seat and at the height of his right foot the seat of the cardinal, and at his left foot that of the Patriarch were arranged. After much meandering, in 1439 the younger brother of the Byzantine Emperor, Ioannis VIII, signed an agreement in Firenze for the Union of the two churches.⁹⁰

The interview of the leaders of the two churches for the purpose of common defense against the Ottomans wasted a lot of time and energy over psychological warfare regarding ostentation without any substance. After all, the Roman Church did not offer effective support for the survival of the Byzantine Empire and actually neither had the sincerity nor the capability to do so.

At that moment the views concerning the Union of the two churches were extremely divided in Constantinople.⁹¹ The Orthodox priest Genadios Scholarios held up the slogan, "We need neither union nor the Latin Church.

⁸⁸ Cf. Pagoulatos, *I τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και τα επακόλουθα της*, 462f. According to Pagoulatos, this story originated with Silvestros Syropoulos, the Byzantine scholar in the 15th century, later ascending to the post of Patriarch. He left the report in Greek on the meeting of the Pope and the Patriarch in Firenze, which was translated to Latin with annotations in 1660 with the title of *Vera Historia unionis non verae inter Graecos et Latinos, sive concilii Florentini narratio*.

⁸⁹ Pagoulatos, *I τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και τα επακόλουθα της*, 462ff.

⁹⁰ Pagoulatos, *I τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και τα επακόλουθα της*, 464. The meeting of the Pope and the Patriarch left its traces in the tomb of the Patriarch Joseph inside the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Firenze (He died in Firenze in 1439, due to the fatigue of travel and his declining years) and a wall painting in the palace of Riccardi.

⁹¹ For the figures of each side, cf. Pagoulatos, 2006, 459ff.

⁹² Insisting that the Union was a prerequisite for the assistance of the Western, he advised the compatriots not to spoil their own belief by expecting uncertain assistance.

According to the edition of Leipzig (1768) for Joseph Bryennios who opposed the Union in those days, he commented as following:

"May no one have the vain hope that the Latin allies might come to help us sooner or later. Even if actually coming, they would nothing but destroy our city (i.e. Constantinople), our race, and us ourselves with their armed forces."⁹³

This remark by Bryennios proved that he was seeing through the avarice of the Western feudal lords as well as the priests of the Latin Church.

In 1452, the year previous to the fall of 1453 at Mehmed's hand, the Byzantine Emperor Constantinos XI dispatched an envoy to the Pope Nicholas V to get help, and the latter requested the former to sign again the agreement of union.⁹⁴ This is because the agreement of Firenze composed in 1439 was signed not by the Emperor but his brother. To get the signature of the Emperor, the Pope dispatched the cardinal Isidorus, two bishops and 200 soldiers on several ships to Constantinople. In December 12 of the same year, Isidorus read mass in the Santa Sophia (Hagia Sophia) and took the signature of the Emperor. Even on the eve of the fall of Constantinople, the Roman Pope was absorbed in subjugating the Orthodox Church to the Roman. Naught but 700 soldiers on two ships were sent in January, 1453, from Genoa.⁹⁵

The Antipathy of Constantinople and the Balkan feudal lords against the Christian Crusades

During the 14th -15th century when the Ottomans advanced, the feudal lords of the Balkan Peninsula were annoyed not only by the Ottomans but the Western crusaders as well. The collision between the Western Christians and the Ottomans could hardly be defined as a competition of hegemony over military power. It is likely that for the feudal lords in the Balkans who took the

⁹² Doukas, 264, 5ff. Cf. Pagoulatos, 2006, 479; Runciman, *The fall of Constantinople 1453*, 69ff. Afterwards, when he made a triumphal entry into Constantinople, Mehmed II appointed him as Patriarch.

⁹³ N. Kalogeras, *Μάρκος ο Ευγενικός και Βησσαρίων ο Καρδινάλις : Ευθύνες, ως πολιτικοί του ελληνικού έθνους ηγείται, τη ιστορία διδόντες (οις προστίθεται και πραγματεία περί της εν βασιλεία Συνόδου 1433-1437)* [*Markos Eugenikos and Bessarion the Cardinalis: Responsible as politicians of the Greek nation, the history of dondons (which includes a treatise on the reign of Synod 1433-1437)*] (Athens: Typis Adelfon Perri, 1893), 70 (on the basis of a rare edition of the works of Joseph Bryennios published in Leipzig, 1768); W. Norden, 1958, 731 as cited in A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire 324-1453* (Madison, 1952), 672]; Pagoulatos, 2006, 461. Joseph Bryennios was a monk in the Monastery of Stoudio and died in the decade of 1430.

⁹⁴ Cf. Pagoulatos, 2006, 479.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 480.

side of the Ottomans the Western crusaders were as abominable as the Ottomans.

The hostility of the Balkan feudal lords towards the Crusade is shown by the Serbian Ruler, Georgos Brankovic. His greatest concern was the independence of Serbia and its territorial security, and for this he was ready to make peace with the Ottomans.⁹⁶ After having managed to be liberated from the Crusade, Serbia agreed to recognize the suzerainty of the Turks and to pay tribute. Thereby they might evade the burden of the occupation of a Turkish army and restore some part of their lost lands.⁹⁷ Previously Brankovitch offered his daughter to Murad as a wife, and his two sons, having been blinded by Murad, returned home.

After Brankovitch concluded peace with the Ottoman Turks, some leaders of the Crusade also followed him to make a ten year peace treaties with them. However, other Crusaders and the Pope's legate, Cesarini, impeded peace-making and provoked the Crusade expeditions against the Turks. Murad, being enraged, succeeded in destroying the Crusaders on the outskirts of Varna on November 10, 1444. Before the battle commenced, Brankovitch of Serbia announced neutrality. His concern was to maintain the peace treaty with the Turks to secure the liberation of Serbia and, alienating himself from the Crusaders, refused them passage through Serbian territory.⁹⁸

At the battle of Kossovo in 1448 the Blachi hastened the defeat of the Europeans changing sides from Hunyadi to the Ottomans. Inalcik argued that some of the Balkan feudal lords were in the league with the Venetians or the Ottomans, which was due to Skanderbey's ambition to expand exclusively his own family's power.⁹⁹ However, Treachery unfolded not only among different races but even inside a family. It is shown by Skanderbey's family, as his cousins betrayed him to go over to the Ottomans. That is, not to speak of races or kindreds, each followed his own tenet.¹⁰⁰

Actually, the economic burden of the Christian Crusades was imposed on the farmers, and the war funding was provided mostly by the income of fiefs or special taxes¹⁰¹ engaging the sacrifice of farmers.

Moreover, there was no less hostility against Western Europeans or Western Christians among the people in Constantinople than the feudal lords of the Balkan. For example, Loukas Notaras, the prime minister of the Emperor Constantinos XI, who opposed the union of the Eastern and Western Churches, revealed his enmity against the Western Christian World, saying,

"It would be better to see the turban of [a] Turkish governor rather than to

⁹⁶ Inalcik, *Cambridge history of Islam*, I (Cambridge, 1970), 282. The Ottomans promised Brankovitch that Serbia would be under his domination.

⁹⁷ Cf. Moczar, *Islam at the Gates*, 59f.

⁹⁸ Cf. Moczar. *Islam at the Gates*, 60.

⁹⁹ Inalcik, "Iskender Beg," 139.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, III, 3.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, VIII, 137.

see the Latin (priest's) hood."¹⁰²

Afterwards Notaras resisted the Ottoman's conqueror, and not only himself but all his family came to be exterminated,¹⁰³ but all the while his enmity against the Roman Catholic Christians was stronger than against the Muslims.

Still more, the populace under the Ottoman's rule used to be regarded as living in better conditions than those under Latin domination. On the eve of the fall of Constantinople, Genadios Scholarios, the Orthodox priest, who opposed the union of the two churches, commented that the lives of the apostates who betrayed Christianity ("*gkiaour*", "*apistoi*") under the Ottoman's rule were in better condition than the Greeks under the Latins.¹⁰⁴

The Ottomans, however, were different in that they did not have an ideology such as a militaristic Christian Crusade. As long as the conquered did not resist,¹⁰⁵ the Ottomans did not annihilate the aborigines as well as the feudal lords, and granted favor even to other religions.¹⁰⁶ As an example in the Balkan area, when he occupied Thessaloniki in March, 1430, Murad II pillaged the city and captured the residents. However they were released shortly after. In October of the same year, he advanced to Ioannina, where he promised to revere the traditions and not to the harm property as well as the churches. Then, the inhabitants of Ioannina were ready to surrender, being threatened by the precedent of Thessaloniki, so they were well treated for a while.¹⁰⁷ The Sultan's benevolent treatment of the Kastrioti's family could be apprehended in a similar context, and Skanderbey's betrayal against the Sultan's favor was a prerequisite in his struggle for "freedom".

On the other hand, in 1492 the Jews were expelled from Spain and the Sultan Bayazid offered shelter to them, and permitted them to settle in Thessaloniki.¹⁰⁸ This shows that the Ottomans were a relatively more open society than Western Europe.

¹⁰² Cf. G. Phrantzes. 291ff; Pagoulatos, 2006, 460; Runciman, *The fall of Constantinople 1453*, 71.

¹⁰³ Cf. G. Phrantzes. 291ff; Pagoulatos, 2006, 460.

¹⁰⁴ Doukas, 264, 5ff.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Loukas Notaras was killed accompanied with all his family by Mehmed II, since he denied decisively the Sultan's request not to send his son as a hostage to Constantinople (G. Phrantzes, 291ff.).

¹⁰⁶ The Ottoman's administrative structure was so open and elastic that, already at the end of the 14th century, the Byzantine bureaucrats as well as those from the Christian world around passed voluntarily over to the Ottomans to serve them. Some of the people of Constantinople as well as Thessaloniki preferred to surrender to the Ottomans. Cf. Kydones, II, n.320, lines 10-14: n.332, lines 29-31: n.360, lines 32-3; N. Necipoglu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 144ff.

¹⁰⁷ For the advance of Murad II (1421-1451) to the Balkan Peninsula, Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, *Istoria tou Byzantinou Kratous*, 267-271.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Moczar, *Islam at the Gates*, 54.

Conclusion

Georgi Kastrioti-Skanderbey (1405-1468) is known as an Albanian hero. He led the resistance against the Ottomans during 1443-1468, and became a paragon of wonder among the western Christians. Skanderbey has been defined as a hero who resisted the Ottoman's attack not only for Albania but for the entire European Christian world, a symbol of the Albanian populace, the last fighter for Albanian independence, a protector of European culture, a warrior of the Renaissance, and a protector of freedom against the Muslims. Still more, P. Rodakis argued that the heroic resistance of Skanderbey was based on racialism, which, as having already been outdated, could not be a positive alternative to the Ottoman conquest.

On the other hand, there are different views regarding defining the social significance of Skanderbey's resistance. Partly, his resistance used to be compared with the Greek partisans ("klephtes") who, thronged in the Mountain area and fought the Turks later under the Ottoman Sultan's domination. According to another view, however, his resistance was regarded as standing for the interests of Albanian feudal lords.

Then, concerning the meaning of Skanderbey's epic in the 15th century, the novels since the 16th century had disclosed at least two or three tendencies different from each other. One is that he was eulogized as a protector of Christianity, and the other is that he aimed to achieve freedom by resisting the restraint of the Sultan's yoke. This freedom, however, was not connected yet with the populace of the lower classes, but his own as a prince. The third is that he has been described first of all as a brave and unyielding warrior.

However, as the social role of the citizens, populace, race as a group or national state increased in modern times, the social meaning of Skanderbey's resistance tended to be altered as the concept of freedom came to refer to that of the populace or a nation. It is not absolutely denied that there could be a common factor between Skanderbey's resistance against the Sultan's yoke and the modern national movement for freedom. Nevertheless, in my opinion, there is a great difference between them. The difference is that the military power with which Skanderbey provided for the resistance was based on western feudalism which exploited the subordinate social class of the populace-farmers. Additionally, he collaborated with the warlike crusade pushed ahead by the Western Christian and feudal lords. The crusade against the Muslims was carried out guaranteeing the sacrifice of farmers, so Skanderbey's resistance for freedom did not promote but instead reduced the people's freedom. The example of Skanderbey could show a cross section of a society, who, having been raised up as Janissary, altered to join the warlike feudal crusaders resisting the Sultan's yoke for the purpose of enjoying greater freedom. The classes of Janissaries and crusaders were composed on different social bases with each other, as the latter being still more jingoistic.

In the last years of the middle Ages, a racial or regional community did not yet play a great role. Instead of it, the conflicts of interest among the feudal lords, hierarchic priests and the community of merchants secured the main

current of history. The common factor of these three kinds of social groups was that they all more or less pursued militarism. This phenomenon could be compared with the situation of the Latin Empire (1204-1261) after the fall of Constantinople.

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