

**“These were hard times for Skanderbeg,
but he had an ally,
the Hungarian Hunyadi”**

Episodes in Albanian–Hungarian Historical Contacts



Edited by
Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics



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Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Research Centre for the Humanities

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Research Centre for the Humanities,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences

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Portraits of John Hunyadi and Skanderbeg in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Prizren (© Photo made by Jeton Jagxhiu)

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Lajos Thallóczy and Albanian Historiography



Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics

I.1. Introduction¹

“On this day, 500 years ago, Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg, our National Hero, our legendary protagonist passed away. Many grand historical events have taken place in the 500 years since his death. However, the name of Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg has not been forgotten by the Albanian people and has been remembered by the historiographers of both Albania and Europe, because the bearer of that name led the Albanian people for 25 years in a heroic fight against the Ottoman Empire, the strongest power of his era. The legendary battle led by Skanderbeg made the Albanian people well-known in the 15th century. They were known as the people who would rather die fighting than live as slaves begging for their lives on their knees. A people that may be small but heroic. A people that never surrender and that have mastered the strategy of war. They are masters always ready to put up a fight with any enemy. Even though they are outnumbered by this enemy, they can emerge victorious. And the events of the 500 years that have passed since the death of Skanderbeg have proven infinite times this noble attribute of our people. Our people, once compelled to engage in constant struggle with the barbarous external enemies and to raise their sword to cut their way through centuries, have proven their viability and during their rich, long and great history have created several progressive traditions. Our Party as a Marxist-Leninist Party has always appreciated the patriotic, democratic and revolutionary traditions of our people, the traditions of legendary struggle for freedom and independence against foreign powers. In a similar fashion, the Party has appreciated the traditions of revolutionary movements that targeted liberation as well as social development. The

¹ The author received the Bolyai János Research Fellowship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences while working on this study.

Party has made masterful use of the people's great and progressive war traditions and has taken those to an even higher level: in the solemn spirit of patriotism the Party taught the workers freedom and progress, self-denial and commitment in order to protect the freedom and independence of the homeland and requested them to protect the interests of the people against all enemies. [...] It was [the Party] that utilized [the war traditions] as an inspiration to mobilize the population to free the homeland from the Nazi-Fascist yoke and to fight towards building a Socialist society. [...] Under such circumstances, which were critical and tragic not only for the Albanians, but for all the peoples of Europe, our people, the smallest on the Balkan Peninsula and in Europe, under the leadership of Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg, undertook the historic responsibility of liberating the country and offering resistance against the Ottomans and holding them off on Albanian soil at the gates of Europe. The Albanian people fulfilled this historic obligation for 25 years constantly and gloriously. All the time, while Skanderbeg was their leader. Many historians have yet to understand why the small Albanian people led by Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg risked rising up against the greatest empire of the era, in order to fight for 25 years and engage in a titanic war and then win such a glorious victory that shall fill the world with awe. We, Marxist-Leninists clearly understand where this "wonder" of our ancestors, of the Albanians led by Skanderbeg, stems from. The decisive factor and the only source of the heroic resistance and victory in this long and unequal fight was the people, and, first of all, the peasantry. The masses of people could balance the indecisiveness and betrayal of the feudal lords. It was these masses that seized the opportunity to rise, it was them who stood valiantly in the bloody combat, it is them the glory of victory shines upon, it was them who gave Albanian history the glow that radiated through centuries. The masses of our people were led by Skanderbeg against the Ottomans in the 15th century and they laid down the foundation of that invaluable moral heritage that the later generations forged into patriotic and revolutionary traditions, and that our Party has elevated even higher. Thus, the colossal power of the Movement came into being to achieve its [the Party's] goals: to liberate the country from the influence of foreign powers, to overthrow the exploiting class, to build socialism and to protect the historical victory of the people against all kinds of enemy. In that bygone era, the masses led by Skanderbeg threw themselves into the battle without reservations in order to protect their independent economic, social and cultural development and the freedom and independence of their country as well as to safeguard their accumulated material and intellectual wealth, and their national values. Everybody took part in the war against the Ottomans: Skanderbeg was the leader of men, women and children alike.²²

[...]

22 Shehu, Mehmet. '500-vjetori i vdekjes së heroit tonë kombëtar Gjergj Kastriotit-Skënderbeut.' *Studime historike* 5, no. 1 (1968): 27–40, 27–29. The quoted excerpt was also published in German: Schmitt, Oliver J. 'Genosse Aleks und seine Partei oder: Zu Politik und Geschichtswissenschaft im kommunistischen Albanien (1945–1991).' In *Beruf und Berufung. Geschichtswissenschaft und Nations-*

“Albania was a blessed land whose inhabitants, as descendants of the Illyrians, were proud of their ancient traditions and of the fact that, under the leadership of the legendary George Castriota, known as Skanderbeg, they withstood the advance of the Ottoman hordes for a quarter of a century. Because of their geographical position as a bridgehead between East and West, the Albanian people struggled and sacrificed for the West and for Christianity. Destiny was always cruel with them. I must note at this juncture that this view holds true throughout the Balkans. All of the Balkan countries regard themselves as bridgeheads between East and West. Their legendary heroes all defended a better fate than that accorded to them by history. It’s the same song everywhere.”

[...]

“I am referring rather to pedantic teachers who cannot abstract themselves from the subject matter they have taught all their lives and who are caught up in a vicious circle of arguments. No more good can be expected of them today than could be expected yesterday. They crouch in the same trenches and shoot of shells with the same clichés and stereotypes as in the past. Their tone is often malicious, with an unmistakable twinge of mockery toward their neighbours. And one thing is particularly worrisome. Their ‘patriotic’ writings were, and still are, well received by their readers. [...] What I find shocking is the fact that communities under certain circumstances – and the Balkan countries are eloquent examples of this – tend to crucify and even physically annihilate anyone daring to slaughter their ‘sacred cows’ – anyone who endeavours to uncover the bitter truth or to find solutions that conflict with traditionally accepted beliefs. Under pressure from certain forces such as politics and the media, these communities often do not even notice that those sacred values have lost their meaning and have disintegrated into empty phrases to be misused in power struggles and for the agendas of certain groups or individuals. They are waved in front of these communities like banners on a battlefield, [...] It must be realized that the cult of the nation, which was understandable and justifiable in late nineteenth-century Albania, was perfected by the Communist regime that lasted almost half a century. This concept was taken to the extreme, as was ethnocentricity in Albanian historiography, as many scholars have noted. The machinery that was put into place proved to be extremely effective, and the regime managed to plant collective thinking and Party ideology into people’s minds.”³

bildung in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, edited by Markus Krzoska and Hans-Christian Maner, 150–151. Münster: LIT, 2005.

3 Kongoli, Fatos. ‘Një e vërtetë e thjeshtë.’ When working on this study I used the English version of the text: Kongoli, Fatos. ‘A simple Truth.’ In *The Stranger Next Door: An Anthology from the other Europe*, edited by Richard Swartz, 126, 129–130. Evanston: Northwestern University, 2013.



Lajos Thallóczy (1856–1916) (National Széchényi Library)

The first quotation above is the written version of the speech delivered by Albanian Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu (1913–1981) on January 12, 1968, at the Second Conference on Albanian Studies. The passage is the perfect symbol of the year 1968, which may be regarded as the peak of 20th-century Albanian historiography, because from this year on, the substantial and conceptual system of the Albanian interpretative schemas hardly changed until the turn of the millennium.⁴ The historical self-image was of course not the intellectual product of Mehmet Shehu,

⁴ Schmitt, 'Genosse Aleks und seine Partei oder: Zu Politik und Geschichtswissenschaft im kommunistischen Albanien (1945–1991)', 148.

who later died under rather peculiar circumstances. Rather, it was the creation of Aleks Buda (1910–1993), the greatest historian of Tirana in the 20th century. The author of the present study, however, chose to start his work with Shehu's sentences and not Buda's, because the Prime Minister's speech offers a concise summary of the historic canons that shall be examined in this paper and that have been present to date as a burdensome heritage in Albanian historiography.

The second quotation reflects upon and criticizes the historical image portrayed in the first one. This essay, which was written at the turn of the millennium by literary scholar Fatos Kongoli (1944–), discusses the relations between such concepts as history, literature and historical identity. Therefore, Shehu's speech and Kongoli's essay shall represent the two major points of reference for the present study.

If one seeks to understand the position that Albanian historiography occupies between politics and society and if one seeks to interpret Lajos Thallóczy's role in the development of the historical self-image of the Albanians, one may need to briefly outline what is known about the history of Albanian historiography and about its most significant theoretician, Aleks Buda.

1.2. Albanian historiography

The history of Albanian historiography is yet to be researched in detail. Even though several studies have been published on certain sub-problems, no thorough, comprehensive investigation has been launched to date.⁵ Relevant information needs to be pieced together from book reviews, obituaries, personal experience and sources written in Albanian. Analytic studies on this topic, based on extensive archive researches will hopefully be conducted in the future.

5 The most significant writings on Albanian historiography and historical studies: Hoppe, Hans J. 'Hochschulen und Wissenschaft.' In *Albanien*, edited by Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, 555–586. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993; Duka, Valentina. 'Ten Years of Post-Communist Historiography in Albania. Reflections on the Past in the 90-ies.' and Pichler, Robert. 'Die albanische Historiographie seit der Wende.' In *Klio ohne Fesseln? Historiographie im östlichen Europa nach dem Zusammenbruch des Kommunismus*, edited by Alojz Ivanišević et al., 513–520, 521–524. Wien: Lang, 2002; Schmitt, 'Genosse Aleks und seine Partei oder: Zu Politik und Geschichtswissenschaft im kommunistischen Albanien (1945–1991)', 143–166; *Politische Kultur in Südosteuropa. Identitäten, Loyalitäten, Solidaritäten*, edited by Alois Mosser. Wien–Berlin: Lang 2006. 135–182; *Albanian Identities. Myth and History*, edited by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002. 3–25, 33–90; Bartl, Peter. 'Anmerkungen zu einigen Problemen der albanischen Geschichte.' *Südosteuropa* 36, no. 11–12 (1987): 676–689; Bartl, Peter. 'Zum Geschichtsmythos der Albaner.' In *Mythen, Symbole und Rituale – Die Geschichtsmächtigkeit der Zeichen in Südosteuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Dittmar Dahlmann and Wilfried Potthof, 119–139. Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2000.

Albanian historiography is characterized by a phase delay, a certain belatedness.⁶ The birth of the independent nation state in 1912–1913 failed to bring about the emergence of modern academia. As the state had not laid down the institutional foundation of scholarly work, no remarkable historical research was carried out before the end of World War II. There certainly were a few intellectuals, mainly among the teachers of the *Xaverianum*, a Jesuit secondary school in Shkodra that had been founded in the 19th century. These teachers had the language skills necessary for reading the relevant sources, but the scope of their scholarly interests never exceeded a certain threshold. Even though they had scientific achievements and conducted research that they could use in their educational work, their efforts may be regarded as a preface to modern academic work. In the Albanian diasporas of Italy and the United States a few authors emerged who were committed to a more studious investigation of history (Faik Konica, Fan Stilian Noli etc.), but they could hardly substitute for a modern and national academic institutional network. Until the end of World War II the vast majority of research related to Albanians had been conducted by international scholars, most of whom belonged to two generations of scientists in the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy (the second generation of such Albanologists were active in the interwar period).⁷

In the aftermath of World War II, radical changes took place in historical research. A new power elite emerged from the Tosk south, namely from the Muslim environs of Korça and Gjirokastra (Enver Hoxha's native region). After 1944 the new socialist power established a new academic structure from nothing, as they had had no foundations to build it on. They also created a new scholarly elite with the mission to advance sciences and to start the adaptation of international scientific and scholarly achievements. As for history, the organization of the state and the shaping of the “official” historical self-identity were simultaneous processes; Albanian historians have yet to face this professional heritage.⁸

6 Although Kosovar Albanian historiography also emerged in the 1960s, the present study focuses on the historiography of Albania.

7 The history of Austro–Hungarian Albanology has been researched by Kurt Gostentschnigg: Gostentschnigg, Kurt. *Zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik. Die österreichisch-ungarische Albanologie 1867–1918*. Diss. Graz 1996; Gostentschnigg, Kurt. ‘Die Verflechtung von Wissenschaft und Politik am Beispiel der österreichisch-ungarischen Albanologie.’ *Südost-Forschungen* 58 (1999): 221–245; Gostentschnigg, Kurt. *Wissenschaft im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Militär. Die österreichisch-ungarische Albanologie 1867–1918*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018; Gostentschnigg, Kurt. ‘Die albanischen Parteigänger Österreich–Ungarns. Ein Versuch der Rekonstruktion des Brückenkopf-Feldes an der Peripherie des habsburgischen Zentrums.’ *Sbëjzat* 1, no. 1–2 (2016): 119–170; Gostentschnigg, Kurt. ‘August Ritter von Kral. Aktori qendror i Austro–Hungarisë në territoret shqiptare.’ *Studime Historike* 53, no. 3–4 (2016): 49–71. For an Albanian overview on the history of science, see Çabej, Nelson. *Nga historia e zhvillimit të shkencës shqiptare*. Tiranë: “8 Nëntori,” 1980.

8 Schmitt, ‘Genosse Aleks und seine Partei oder: Zu Politik und Geschichtswissenschaft im kommunistischen Albanien (1945–1991),’ 148.

The organization of the academic institutional network, and of other state functions, followed Yugoslavian, and then Soviet patterns. Accordingly, the ranks of the newly established institutions were filled with cadres trained in Yugoslavia and in the Soviet Union. In 1947 the *Instituti i Shkencave* (Institute of Sciences) was established, followed by a pedagogical college in 1951 in Tirana and another one in 1957 in Shkodra. The real background institute of history as a modern science, the University of Tirana, opened in 1957, while the ultimate symbol of academic independence, the Academy of Sciences, was founded in 1972.

At the onset, Albanian historiography had considerable deficits due to the lack of modernization and was characterized by a compulsive drive to close the gap between the professional standards of Albania and those of the neighbouring countries. Until 1991 the study of history was based on doctrinaire socialist and Marxist thought and terminology.

After the foundation of the independent University of Tirana, the first historical overviews were soon published as a result of collaboration (*Historia e Shqipërisë I–II*, 1959/1965). The “History of Albania” reflects a view of history cultivated by Aleks Buda (1910–1993), who, as the *sefhistorian* (“chief historian”) of the Hoxh-era, provided the historical legitimacy for the party. Buda was born in Elbasan and was one of the few who had the opportunity to receive education abroad. In the 1930s, he spent years in European cities such as Vienna where he learnt history at the university.

Based on previous knowledge, researchers were led to believe that Buda established a historical tradition that had been virtually non-existent earlier. Buda applied Marxist-Leninist premises and methods when organizing and interpreting history, and never conducted primary research himself. He created an Albanian salvation history in line with the party’s wishes. He provided a uniform framework for the already existing historical topoi and proposed a system whose substance and concepts still make their presence felt in Albanian historical studies. Buda’s historiography reached its summit in 1968 on the 500th anniversary of Skanderbeg’s death, and the occasion allowed contemporary historians to start something that had been unheard of and belonged only to their country: the history of Albania turned into a transcendent history where fate made a superhuman, Enver Hoxha, lead his people with unwavering rigour into a future paradise.⁹

While the practice of historiography somewhat altered after the end of communism (e.g. the history of Albania was renamed the history of Albanians, old terminology was replaced with national slogans, and Catholic monks who had been omitted from the national pantheon could now occupy canonized positions in the

9 On Albanian historiography and Buda, see also Schmitt, ‘Genosse Aleks und seine Partei oder: Zu Politik und Geschichtswissenschaft im kommunistischen Albanien (1945–1991)’, 143–166.

corresponding era of national history¹⁰), no fundamental change took place before the turn of the millennium. One might conclude that the influence of Aleks Buda was indeed significant.¹¹

But what exactly were the tenets so strongly rooted in Albanian national consciousness? Albanian historians took interest in three major focal points of the national history:

- a. the history of the Illyrians in the antiquity (= “the ancestors”);¹²
- b. the history of Skanderbeg in the Middle Ages (the national hero *par excellence*);
- c. the period of the National Awakening or *Rilindja* (particularly the 1878–1912 period).

Certainly, there were other topics and periods in the focus of the researchers; however, these were less significant. The above three topics appear to have been interpreted along four axioms:¹³

1. the axiom of origin and primacy;¹⁴
2. the axiom of ethnic homogeneity and cultural purity;
3. the axiom of a permanent national fight;
4. the axiom of indifference towards religions.

Besides, the Albanian historical thought observed several other principles:

- autochthony (first of all in today’s Albania and Kosovo);¹⁵
- the Albanians are the descendants of an ancient people that was great, strong and powerful and once famous for its statehood;
- the continuity of the people’s history and culture (in spite of the German, Slav, Byzantine and Ottoman invasions);

10 *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar I–II*, edited by Kristaq Prifti. Tiranë: Toena, 2000–2002.

11 Schmitt, ‘Genosse Aleks und seine Partei oder: Zu Politik und Geschichtswissenschaft im kommunistischen Albanien (1945–1991)’, 165.

12 The first theoretician of the Albanians’ Illyrian origin: Thunmann, Johann. *Untersuchungen über die Geschichte der östlichen europäischen Völker*. Leipzig: Crusius, 1774. 245–246.

13 Malcolm, Noel. ‘Myths of Albanian National Identity: Some Key Elements, as Expressed in the Works of Albanian Writers in America in the Early Twentieth Century.’ In *Albanian Identities. Myth and History*, edited by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer, 72–79. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

14 Proving the Illyrian descent (and therefore the theory of autochthony) was the most important task for historiographers in the Hoxha period. Bartl, ‘Anmerkungen zu einigen Problemen der albanischen Geschichte’, 676.

15 Based on modern linguistic researches Austrian linguist Matzinger tends to believe that the Albanians were immigrants in their settlement area: “Die Albaner in ihren historisch dokumentierten Wohnsitzen sind nach Ausweis der Toponymie Albanien’s Zuwanderer aus dem inneren Balkan.” Matzinger, Joachim. ‘Die Albaner als Nachkommen der Illyrer aus der Sicht der historischen Sprachwissenschaft.’ In *Albanische Geschichte – Stand und Perspektive der Forschung*, edited by Oliver Jens Schmitt and Eva Anne Frantz, 36. München: Oldenbourg, 2009.

- despite their several religious conversions and denominational diversity, the community never lost the feeling of cohesion and togetherness;
- the heroic struggle of a small people for freedom, independence and a country on their own (Albanians have always been threatened by hostile nations and expansive empires);

- the struggle to protect their language and culture;
- the interpretation of Skanderbeg in a European context;
- protecting Europe and the European civilization against the barbarians of Asia;
- respectable national virtues that attract attention: virtues of the military and of loyalty, honour, perseverance, and keeping one's word of honour (*besa*) and so forth.

Also, Albanian historiographers of the 20th century were keen to project the modern ethnic-based national identities (“the conflict of nations”) retrospectively on the historical past.¹⁶ One may venture to say that a significant number of historical summaries written for the Albanian audience were propaganda literature rather than actual historiography.¹⁷

What proves the “amnesiac” nature¹⁸ of this kind of historical thinking is that it failed to provide answers for a number of questions: for instance, Albanian historians depicted the Ottoman Empire with dark colours, following the historiographic traditions of the neighbouring peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. They, however, did not account for the success of Islamisation in Albania, which had been far greater than in any other country in the peninsula (apart from Bosnia). Furthermore, Albanian historians never explained why there were so many Albanians making a career in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹

Another deficiency of most members of the Albanian community of historians was that they chose not to communicate with foreign scholars; they tended to circulate their works within their own modest circles. It appears as if they completely ignored universal historical studies (even those related to the Albanians). Further, “internal” methodological disputes were also sorely missing.

Buda's ideas and tenets are rooted in the *Rilindja* period. According to Noel Malcolm, the above listed interests and axioms had already appeared in the works

16 Schmitt, Oliver J. *Skanderbeg. Der neue Alexander auf dem Balkan*. Regensburg: Pustet, 2009. 351.

17 Schmitt, Oliver J. ‘“Die Monade des Balkans” – die Albaner im Mittelalter.’ In *Albanische Geschichte – Stand und Perspektive der Forschung*, edited by Oliver Jens Schmitt and Eva Anne Frantz, 65. München: Oldenbourg, 2009.

18 Misha, Piro. ‘Invention of a Nationalism: Myth and Amnesia.’ In *Albanian Identities. Myth and History*, edited by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer, 33–48. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

19 Bartl, ‘Anmerkungen zu einigen Problemen der albanischen Geschichte’, 680.

of American Albanian authors as early as the 1910s–1950s;²⁰ this means that these concepts must have existed at the time. In his article about the origins of the Albanian historical tenets, Peter Bartl argues that the activists of Albanian national thought had already constructed the foundations of the nation's historical identity by the turn of the century.²¹

Compared with the neighbouring countries, the national awakening started relatively late in Albania. During the Great Eastern Crisis in 1878 it became apparent that the Ottoman Empire was not capable of protecting its territorial integrity: ethnic Albanian territories were jeopardised (the empire even lost some of these lands). The Albanian issue became a concern for European diplomacy. At the end of the 19th century a handful of Albanian intellectuals attempted to prepare for secession from the empire. Domestically they had to forge a sense of unity and a common identity. Further, they had to prove that despite having two religions (four denominations) and two major dialects, Albanians are a *distinct* people (i.e. they are not Turks, Greeks or Slavs) with their own language and history. At the same time, internationally they had to formulate their claims to be recognized as an independent nation with independent statehood.²²

The foundations of the Albanian historical self-image were laid by the Italo-Albanians (*arbërëshët*). In the first half of the 19th century the Italian national revival movement (*risorgimento*) posed a serious challenge to the identity of the Albanian diaspora that had been living in southern Italy since the mid-15th century. In the works of Engjëll Mashi (1758–1821),²³ Zef Krispi (1781–1859),²⁴ Vincenzo Dorsa (1823–1885),²⁵ and Zef Rada (1814–1903),²⁶ there appeared several elements of the later theses. These works present a mosaic-like view of history, and there is no continuity in these from the beginnings to the Ottoman present. Apart from Dorsa, all the authors regard Albanians as an autochthonous people. As for their origins, most of the authors assumed that the Albanians were the descendants of Pelasgians (e.g. Krispi, Dorsa), but the Illyrians were also identified as ancestors (Mashi). These

20 Çekrezi, Kostandin. *Albania Past and Present*. New York: MacMillan, 1919; Dako, Kristo. *Zogu the First King of the Albanians*. Tirana: Luarasi, 1937; Konica, Faik. *The Rock Garden of Southeastern Europe*. Boston: Vatra, 1957 quoted by Malcolm, Noel. 'Myths of Albanian National Identity: Some Key Elements', 70–87.

21 Bartl, 'Zum Geschichtsmythos der Albaner', 120.

22 Bartl, 'Zum Geschichtsmythos der Albaner', 119–120.

23 Mashi, Engjëll (Angelo Masci). *Discorso sull'origine, costumi, e stato attuale della nazione albanese*. Napoli: Gaetano Nobile, 1807.

24 Krispi, Zef (Giuseppe Crispi). *Memoria sulla lingua albanese, di cui se ne dimostra l'indole primordiale e se ne rintraccia la rimota antichità sino ai Pelasghi ai Frigi ai Macedoni eagli eoli primitivi, che la costituisce in gran parte madre della lingua greca*. Palermo: Lorenzo Dato, 1836.

25 Dorsa, Vincenzo. *Su gli Albanesi. Ricerche e pensieri*. Napoli: Trani, 1847.

26 Rada, Zef (Girolamo de Rada). *Antichità della nazione albanese e sua affinità con gli Elleni e i Latini*. Napoli, Largo S. Marcellino, 1864.

Italo-Albanian works emphasize the distinct character (that is, not Turk, Greek or Slav) of the Albanians, their *own* “forgotten” and glorious history, and, consequently, their claims to be recognized by other nations as their equal. Some of the later works are more visionary in nature and focus on the importance of civilizing the Albanian people, discuss questions of the national awakening or attempt to capture the attention of the European public, while they often also feature fantastic, unrealistic elements.²⁷

Still, the greatest figures of the national awakening, the authentic theoreticians of the movement, only emerged in the aftermath of the Eastern Crisis. The two most important personalities were Pashko Vasa (1825–1892) and Sami Frashëri (1850–1904).

Vasa, who made the Albanian question known throughout Europe during the Great Eastern Crisis, started to write his book *The truth about Albania and the Albanians* in 1878.²⁸ The book was addressed to Western readers and examined its topics with scientific fastidiousness. It aimed to call attention to a “forgotten” people – to which the author himself belonged – and to the endangered heritage, character, traditions and culture of this people.²⁹ In summary, the three units of the book conveyed three important messages. Firstly, it puts forward historical and cultural arguments and emphasizes that Albanians are different from the Greeks. Secondly, the author attributes the internal tensions of Albania to religious discords and warns both his people and Western readers that religion does not equal the nation. In the part where Pashko sets out his programme, he never fails to emphasize the importance of being loyal to the Sultan (which is an important difference compared with the perspectives of the Italo-Albanian authors!).³⁰ He did not make claims for an independent state, but he demanded that all Albanian-populated areas be united as one administrative unit or vilayet and that Albanians be given the right to participate in their own self-governance. The ultimate objective was the unification of Albanian territories and the establishment of a uniform local government. Vasa also demanded support for the cultural awakening of his people and stressed the importance of taking advantage of the geographical features of the country which, in his opinion, could turn Albania into a second Switzerland.

It is beyond doubt that Pashko Vasa’s work had considerable influence on his friend, Sami Frashëri, and on the latter’s book published 20 years later in 1899.

27 For a more detailed analysis of the Italo-Albanian texts, see Bartl, ‘Zum Geschichtsmythos der Albaner’, 121–125.

28 Csaplár, Krisztián. ‘Pashko Vasa.’ *Limes* 17, no. 4 (2005): 40–49. When working on the present study I used a German-language edition of Vasa’s work: Wassa Effendi, *Albanien und die Albanesen. Zur griechische Frage. Eine historisch-kritische Studie*. Berlin: Springer, 1879.

29 Wassa, *Albanien und die Albanesen*, 68.

30 Wassa, *Albanien und die Albanesen*, 54.

However, Frashëri set out the programme of an autonomous Albania with a draft constitution which was regarded as modern even by European standards.

Similarly to Vasa's work, Frashëri's book is also divided into three parts that scrutinize the past, present and future of the Albanian people.³¹ When discussing the past, Frashëri followed in Vasa's footsteps with regard to the Pelasgian descent and the Albanians' distinctiveness from the Greeks.³² What is new was that Frashëri established a link between the Albanians and autonomy dating back to antiquity. He presents the history of the Albanians as an organic part of the history of the Balkans, while constantly emphasizing their detachment and territorial separation, which even the contemporary empires (Rome and Byzantium) respected. When evaluating Ottoman–Albanian relations, Frashëri takes an ambivalent stand: he juxtaposes the Albanians' resistance and struggle against the Ottomans with his people's active participation in the building of the empire. One of his important conclusions is that the Albanian heroes and officials always served the interests of other nations.

Frashëri also agrees with Vasa when discussing the present; he merely elaborates on his ideas. In the *Tanzimat* era, the Albanians became slaves to the empire: the taxes levied on them were almost unbearable and they had no say in how the Ottomans controlled their lives. What is more, they became enemies in the eye of the Ottomans. The local administration fell apart in the hands of corrupt officials sent from the capital, at a time when Albania suddenly became the empire's border region and was surrounded by countries that all wanted a piece of the Albanian lands. According to Frashëri, the Turks were no better than the Greeks, as both nations wanted to divide the Albanians along religious lines: they wanted to turn the Orthodox into Greeks and the Muslims into Turks.³³ But the Albanians are not Turks; they are not an Asian people, but the most ancient people of Europe. Frashëri, who was a member of the Bektashi order, claims that nothing in the world can be more precious and dearer than the motherland and he who does not love his nation or his motherland, has no honour at all and shall be considered a traitor.

As for the future government, Frashëri proposed a liberal draft constitution embracing modern European civil rights. This may indicate that Frashëri had conducted preliminary constitutional studies.³⁴ I would like to highlight one of his ideas. Frashëri proposed the introduction of fundamental reforms on religious

31 Frashëri, Sami. *Shqipëri – ç'ka qënë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhëtë*. Bukarest: Drita, 1899. In German: Frashëri, Sami. *Was war Albanien, was ist es und was wird es werden?* Wien: Hölder, 1913. For the Albanian historiographers' view on Frashëri's work, see Prifti, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, 289–293. When working on the present study I used a German-language edition of Frashëri's work.

32 Frashëri, *Was war Albanien, was ist es und was wird es werden?* 5–8, 13–17, 27–31, 34–38, 45, 49–60.

33 Skendi, Stavro. 'Albanian Political Thought.' *Südost-Forschungen* 13 (1954): 167.

34 On the draft constitution, see Prifti, Kristaq. 'Koncepti i Sami Frashërit për Lirinë dhe Pavarësinë e Shqipërisë.' *Studime Historike* 37, no. 1–2 (2000): 117.

matters. He emphasized the necessity of establishing autonomous churches and the importance of religious freedom as a fundamental human right (churches must be separated from the state, freedom of conscience must be granted, religious communities must be given the right to govern their members' lives etc.).

Frashëri clearly understood at the turn of the century that the days of the empire were numbered. Although the Albanians had a strong interest in the survival of the empire (for example, because at the time they would have been unable to govern themselves), Frashëri recognised that if the Ottoman Empire was to disintegrate, the Albanians could only count on themselves.³⁵ Albania and Turkey have common roots, but in order to avoid collapse, Albanians must understand that they are not Turks. All Albanians, regardless of their religion must unite under a common flag and join forces to fight to have their own government.³⁶

Frashëri's book was published during the time of the League of Peja (1899–1900). The author, who lived in the capital, realized that if the Albanians ignored the state of the empire and the changes in European mainstream politics, they would face dire consequences.³⁷ Frashëri's work is the true political manifesto of the Albanian national revival; it is more elaborate and with a more purposeful and solution-focused structure than Vasa's book; one of the peak Ottoman scientific efforts of the era. It is noteworthy that this Muslim author believed that the price of his people's survival was following Western models. The Albanian patriots at the turn of the century knew Vasa primarily as the author of patriotic poems; the most widely read work in that period, however, was Frashëri's tract.³⁸

Compared with Vasa's work, Frashëri's text represents a giant leap forward, as it provides an almost complete view of Albanian national history. Previous research results led scholars to believe that Frashëri's book was the last significant source Aleks Buda consulted when he reconstructed Albanian historical identity after 1945. Furthermore, the scholars thought that the gaps remaining in Buda's system were slowly filled in from the 1960s on, thanks to the efforts of historians and archaeologists.

Such views were regarded as quite legitimate until an Albanian historian named Raim Beluli found a source of singular interest in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv of Vienna (XIV. Albanien, Kt. 20–22.). Beluli took the research of Armin Hetzer

35 Frashëri, *Was war Albanien, was ist es und was wird es werden?* 39.

36 Frashëri, *Shqipëri – ç'ka qënë, çështë e ç'do të bëhetë*, 66. Interestingly, he also suggested the same thoughts and slogans for a potential modern Turkish nation under the pseudonym Şemşeddin Sami. This, however, has not been taken into consideration by Albanian historiographers, with the exception of Kosovar historian Hasan Kaleshi (1922–1976). Kaleshi, Hasan. 'Sami Frashëri në letërsinë dhe filologjinë turke.' *Gjurmime Albanologjike* 3 (1968): 33–108.

37 Prifti, 'Koncepti i Sami Frashërit për Lirinë dhe Pavarësinë e Shqipërisë', 110.

38 Mann, Stuart E. *Albanian Literature. An outline of Prose, Poetry and Drama*. London: Quaritch, 1955. 43.

and Nathalie Clayer³⁹ as his point of departure. Based on the documents revealed by him and Hetzer, Beluli published a book in Albanian in 2008.⁴⁰ This work is about a history book, a reader that was written in Albanian and published in 1898,⁴¹ with the aim of providing an easy-to-read text promoting the cause of the awakening national movement among its supporters. The original author was anonymous, and the work was printed in a printing house with a fictitious name. The national libraries of Vienna and Budapest, however, indicate Lajos Thallóczy as the author of the book.⁴²

II.1. Lajos Thallóczy

One characteristic of the first phase of the East-European nationalisms, in the so-called period of scholarly interest (if we accept the periodization of Miroslav Hroch), when the first efforts are made to develop the literary language and to collect the sources about the national past, is that intellectuals play a particularly important role.⁴³ Quite often those intellectuals have multiple national identities or sometimes they are not even citizens in the country they aid. However, the author of the present article could not cite another example from this era where a scholar plays a significant role in an East-European nation-building process even though he is not related to the nation in question either linguistically or ethnically; what is more he does not even want to belong to this nation (as he defines himself as a proud Hungarian), yet he assists its modern nation-building process, consciously and, at the same time, *anonymously*. The man who undertook to scientifically establish the framework of the Albanian historical consciousness was a Hungarian scholar and politician, a rather peculiar personality of his age: Lajos Thallóczy.⁴⁴

39 Hetzer, Armin. 'Ludwig von Thallóczy dhe përpjekja e parë shkencore për një Histori të Shqipërisë.' *Hylli i Dritës* 28, no. 4 (2008): 58–76; Clayer, Nathalie. *Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar – Lindja e një kombit me shumicë myslimane në Evropë*. Tiranë: Përpjekja, 2009. 375–376, 500–502.

40 Thallóczy, Ludwig. *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*. Përktheu nga gjermanishtja: Stefan Zurani. Transkriptoi, dokumentoi dhe komentoi Raim Beluli. Shkodër: Botime Françeskane, 2008.

41 *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*. Skenderie, 1898. (The real publication data of the work: Wien: Adolf Holzhausen, 1898.)

42 Reconstructing the history of Thallóczy's book may significantly alter views on the development of Albanian national thought. Yet, as far as I know, Albanian historians have not provided substantial answers to the questions raised by Raim Beluli. In the present study I wish to call attention to Beluli's important research.

43 Ring, Éva. *Államnemzet és kultúrnemzet választóján. A modern nemzetek születése Kelet-Közép-Európában*. Budapest: ELTE Eötvös, 2004. 30–33.

44 Thallóczy, Lajos (1856–1916): Hungarian politician, historian, Chairman of the Hungarian Historical Society (1913–1916), member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Studies on Thallóczy: Csaplár-Degovics, Krisztián. 'Ludwig von Thallóczy und die Albanologie. Skizzen eines Experiments zur Nationsbildung.' In *Lajos Thallóczy der Historiker und Politiker. Die Entdeckung der*

Graz historian Kurt Gostentschnigg gives an illustrative summary of the little information we have about Thallóczy in his publications written in 1996 and 2018 about the history of Austro–Hungarian Albanology.⁴⁵ As Gostentschnigg puts it, Thallóczy, the Hungarian politician, historian and father of Balkan studies in Hungary cooperated with Czech historian Konstantin Jireček⁴⁶ and Croatian scholar Milan Šufflay,⁴⁷ and the result of their joint effort was an unprecedentedly rich collection of Albania-related medieval sources (*Acta et Diploma res Albaniae Mediae Aetatis Illustrantia*⁴⁸). Thallóczy was the sole editor of the volumes of *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*,⁴⁹ even though the historical parts were written by the three historians mentioned earlier. Gostentschnigg briefly introduces the four volumes of the two books and he then briefly describes how the Tirana historians invited to the 1984 *Albanien-Symposium* in Kittsee, Burgenland, evaluated Thallóczy's scholarly achievements in Albanology. According to the Albanian scholars Thallóczy had indisputable merits as a researcher of Albanian history and they also appreciated his efforts to make Albanians known in contemporary Europe. There was, however, a critical edge to their praise. They said that Thallóczy's Hungarian nationalist perspective warped his approach to history, and that he was motivated by Hungarian aspirations to establish supremacy in the Balkans.⁵⁰ Gostentschnigg does not entirely share these views and emphasizes that Thallóczy's rich collection of sources is unbiased and his critical methods cannot be questioned. He views Thallóczy's death as the greatest loss to contemporary Balkan research.⁵¹

Vergangenheit von Bosnien und Herzegowina und die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft, edited by Andreas Gottsmann and Imre Röss, 141–164. Budapest–Sarajevo: Akademien der Wissenschaften von Bosnien und Ungarn, 2010; Tömöry, Márta. 'Thallóczy Lajos és az Országos Levéltár.' *Levéltári Közlemények* 47, no. 1 (1976): 25–60; Hauptmann, Ferdinand and Prasch, Anton. *Dr. Ludwig Thallóczy – Tagebücher*. Graz: Institut für Geschichte der Universität Graz, 1981.

45 Gostentschnigg, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik*, 182–186; Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft im Spannungsfeld*, 50.

46 Konstantin Jireček (1854–1918): Czech historian, Slavist and diplomat, one of the founders of modern Balkan research.

47 Milan Šufflay (1879–1931): Croatian historian and politician, an active participant in Austro–Hungarian Albanology research.

48 Thallóczy, Ludovicus, Jireček, Constantinus and Šufflay, Emilianus. *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia 1–2*. Wien: Holzhausen, 1913–1918.

49 *Illyrisch–Albanische Forschungen 1–2*, edited by Ludwig Thallóczy. München–Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1916.

50 *Fjalori Enciklopedik Shqiptar*, edited by Aleks Buda. Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPSSH, 1985. 296.

51 Gostentschnigg, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik*, 182–185.

II.2. Thallóczy and the Albanian nation-building process

At the turn of the 20th century, for a number of political and economic reasons, the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy decided to take on an active role in the Albanian nation-building process. From 1896 on, the Ballhausplatz regularly elaborated various “Albanian action plans”. Mostly the officials of the joint ministries and other Albania experts (bureaucrats) participated in these conferences, and the action plans always comprised sections on cultural, educational and religious affairs. It is known that Thallóczy was not present at these conferences, but he may have read the records and he clearly took part in the execution of the decided actions.

The History of Albania Written by a Gheg Who Loves His Country was first published in 1898, which is a symbolic date.⁵² The Monarchy launched its first large-scale Albanian action-plan in 1896 with the purpose of fostering and strengthening Albanian national sentiments among Muslim Albanians as well. The idea of creating or establishing and strengthening a historical consciousness was probably the brainchild of Theodor Ippen,⁵³ general consul in Shkodra. In 1897 he requested joint Minister of Foreign Affairs Agenor Gołuchowski to support the publication of a popular textbook on the history of Albania in the Albanian language. The purpose of the textbook was to present the glorious Albanian national history (which is not the same as the history of the Ottoman Empire), and to create a uniform Albanian alphabet and standard spelling rules. According to Ippen, the book was easy to prepare as for some decades Lajos Thallóczy, the archive director of the joint Ministry of Finance, had been collecting sources on the history of the Balkanian peoples, and therefore the necessary material was readily available.⁵⁴

Gołuchowski accepted and supported the proposal on two conditions: the history book could not be anti-Ottoman, and it could never come to light that the Monarchy had anything to do with it. Thallóczy was happy to take on the task and by September 1898 he had completed the German-language manuscript; a few months later 600 copies translated into Albanian had been printed. The book had

52 A Hungarian review on the book is also available: Zurányin, Stefan. ‘Albánia.’ *Ethnographie* XII (1901): 404–409.

53 Ippen, Theodor von Dejeuner (1861–1935): Austro–Hungarian diplomat and Balkan researcher, one of the Albania experts of the Ballhausplatz; in 1911–1912 he was department head in the joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Besides Thallóczy, he was the other theoretician of the Monarchy’s new Albania policy. He participated in negotiations on the creation of Albania at the London Conference of Ambassadors (1912–1913) as an expert of the Monarchy. On his life, see Wernicke, Anneliese. *Theodor Anton Ippen*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967.

54 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (ÖStA HHStA), Politisches Archiv (PA) XIV. Albanien, Kt. 20, letter of Ippen to Gołuchowski, Shkodra, May 18, 1897, No. 14: Abfassung einer albanesischen Geschichte. Published by Beluli in facsimile and Albanian translation: Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqipnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 25, 55–57.

no author's name on the cover; the only information was that the author spoke the northern dialect, that is, he was a "Gheg". The place of publication was indicated to be Alexandria.

Considerable sources can be found in the national archive of Vienna about the positive reception of the book and the religious and occupational composition of the readership.⁵⁵ It is, however, not yet known how this work affected the members of the contemporary Albanian national movement, but it was most certainly popular: the Albanian language borrowed many of its words and expressions, the national ideology utilized its ideas and, as illustrated by the development of 20th-century Albanian historiography, it could be the source of several historical theories.⁵⁶

Apart from writing the textbook, Thallóczy had another agenda through which he wished to externally influence the Albanian national movement. Being an expert on Albanian history and having read all the available sources in that era, he attempted to "create" the Monarchy's own Italo-Albanians. The Italo-Albanians originally fled from the Ottoman conquest in the 15–16th century and eventually settled in southern Italy. In the first half of the 19th century their highly educated intellectuals discovered their historic roots and consequently they launched the Albanian national movement (language cultivation, national literature, etc). At the turn of the century Italian diplomacy often used the Italo-Albanians to help carry out their political agenda in Albania.

Near the town of Zadar in Dalmatia there was a village called Arbanasi / Borgo Erizzo (in Hungarian: Orbonás), which later merged into the town. The village had been founded and inhabited by Catholic Albanians who, by the end of the 19th century had largely blended into the Croatian population. Thallóczy was well aware of the influence the foreign Albanian communities exerted on the old country, therefore he drew up a programme to awaken the Albanians' national consciousness in Borgo Erizzo and turn it to the advantage of the Monarchy. He also planned to launch a literary movement through which he hoped to develop the literary language and to accelerate the recognition of a uniform alphabet.⁵⁷

The journal *Albanie* published in Brussels in French and Albanian also stemmed from the literary programme. The periodical was supported by the Ballhausplatz, with the aim of informing the European public about Albanian affairs and of influencing the development of the Albanian national movement. The economic, political, literary and linguistic articles were published regardless of the authors' religious affiliations, some of whom were Albanians and others international experts on Albania. Ippen determined the list of authors, the content of the articles and the

55 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV. Albanien, Kt. 20, 1. note of the joint ministry of finance, September 15, 1897, concerning Thallóczy's 'Geschichte Albaniens', 2.

56 Dozens of copies of the book are kept: ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV. Albanien, Kt. 22–23.

57 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV. Albanien, Kt. 3, Borgo Erizzo.

target audience; Thallóczy reviewed the completed articles (the editorial work was done in Vienna); the publication process in Brussels was managed by an Albanian man called Faik Konica.⁵⁸ Before publication, a résumé was written in French about the contents of the next issue and the final versions of the articles were sent to the Ballhausplatz to be approved by Julius Zwiedinek von Südenhorst,⁵⁹ the official in charge of the Albanian affairs.⁶⁰

Thallóczy authored the two most important and most influential works of Austro–Hungarian Albanology entitled *Acta et Diploma res Albaniae Mediae Aetatis Illustrantia* and *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*. Even before finishing his popular history book, Thallóczy had planned to prepare for the scholarly audience a book by which he proposed to inspire modern historical research. To this end, he first needed an edition of primary sources supplied with a modern critical apparatus. Out of the four volumes Thallóczy originally had planned for *Acta*, he could only complete two with the help of Jireček and Šufflay. These two volumes contain 1646 documents (of political, economic, social and cultural relevance) dating back to between 344 and 1406 AD.

In the volumes of the *Forschungen*, Thallóczy wrote a number of articles, the most interesting of which is the one on the Albanian diasporas. In this study Thallóczy gives a summary of the history of three different Albanian communities: the Catholic Albanians of the Syrmia (today part of Croatia and Serbia, known as *Srijem* or *Srem*), the frontier regiment of Pétervárad (today: *Petrovaradin*), the Albanians of Borgo Erizzo and the Italo-Albanians.⁶¹ In all probability he planned to write the history of other colonies as well, because his estate kept in the Budapest National Széchényi Library contains a German language manuscript of a draft study about the Egyptian Albanian community.⁶²

58 Faik Konica (1875–1942): member of the Albanian national movement, between 1897–1909 the editor of the journal *Albanie* in Brussels.

59 Zwiedinek von Südenhorst, Julius Freiherr (1833–?); member of the permanent staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary between 1888 and 1906; at the turn of the century he was in charge of Albanian issues.

60 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV. Albanien, Kt. 18, letter of Ippen to Gołuchowski, Shkodra, May 18, 1897, No. 16. (The letter was published by Beluli as well: Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 27.); and letters of Ippen to Gołuchowski, Shkodra, June 29, 1897, No. 24 and September 3, 1897, No. 41.

61 Also published in Hungarian: Thallóczy, Lajos. 'Albán diaspora.' *Történeti Szemle* 1 (1912): 1–39.

62 Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Budapest (OSZK), Kézirattár, Fol. Hung. 1630.

II.3. Thallóczy and Albanian history

Ippen's letter to Gołuchowski written in 1897, in which he proposes to publish a popular history textbook, contains several phrases and expressions in connection with Albanian history that later became canonized by Albanian historiographers, which seems to indicate that Ippen had discussed the content of the book earlier with Thallóczy. In one of his letters Thallóczy himself proves that this suspicion is well-founded.⁶³ This letter is one of the most important documents of the history of Albanian historiography, because here Thallóczy laid down with scientific rigor the fundamental perspectives and tenets from which Albanian historiography has not yet deviated to date: 1. the Albanians are an independent people (they have always been an independent entity with a strong "tribal consciousness" and an explicit demand for autonomy), 2. their history is famous, 3. therefore they have a political future. As for the style of the book, Thallóczy says that in order to facilitate its translation and reception, he entirely adopted the Albanian perspective. What proves the modernness of Thallóczy's historical perception is that he managed to write a book that transcended religious disputes, and all Catholic, Orthodox, Sunni and Bektashi Albanians could identify with the events depicted therein. He thought it was important for the book to contain illustrations that might help create common national symbols (coats of arms, banners, symbols of Skanderbeg, the portrait of Ali of Tepelena, etc.).

One peculiarity of Albanian historiography is that it compensates for the lack of independent statehood traditions by including the biographies of noble Albanian families or of their most prominent members. This practice also stems from Thallóczy's popular history book and relates to his views on Hungarian history. In 1908 he was lobbying for permission to publish the charters of the Erdődy family in four volumes. In a memoir in Hungarian, he lists the great ordeals Hungary had to endure throughout its history and argues that the continuity of Hungarian statehood meant the continuity of the Hungarian aristocratic families and the traditions they nurtured. Therefore, he says, if one wishes to learn and understand the history of the country, it is of utmost importance to find the relevant sources and write the histories of such families.⁶⁴

By examining the genesis of the *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae* and the *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, one can enhance an understanding of Thallóczy's way of thinking. As revealed in one of his letters written to Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal,

63 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV. Albanien, Kt. 20, letter of Thallóczy to Kállay, Vienna, July 10, 1897, ad.Z. 937/Pr. BH ex 1897. Beluli publishes both the letter written in German and its Albanian translation: Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 62–74.

64 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (National Archive of Hungary), I 67, 4/g, memorandum of Thallóczy in 1908, 1.

the joint minister of foreign affairs, in 1911,⁶⁵ Thallóczy had purposefully collected data on the history of the Albanians from 1882, and his work had been regarded with considerable interest by the previous leaders of the Ballhausplatz, Gustav von Kálnoky and Agenor Gołuchowski. In this letter Thallóczy requested the minister to grant him financial support so that he could publish a collection of primary sources, as he believed it was indispensable for writing the history of Albania. As an editor, Thallóczy paid painstaking attention to professional aspects, and he planned to apply the highest methodological standards of the era (editorial policies, selection of relevant topics [sources relating to politics, economy, culture, social history, different ethnicities living together], preparation methods of the critical apparatus, etc.). Jireček and Šufflay were happy to support his cause (for more information about the professional objectives and the methodology, see the memoir in the appendix of the letter⁶⁶).

Why was it necessary to issue this collection of sources relating to medieval Albanian history and then to publish a history book? Thallóczy's answer was that the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula had a special outlook on history and their historical self-legitimation and argumentation reach back to and build upon their medieval statehood – even in the case of the Greeks. Therefore, any people without a written medieval history would not be regarded as an equal among the peoples of the peninsula. Consequently, medieval Albanian history had to be written: to this end, the first step was a source collection with a critical apparatus, and the second was a proper history book on the medieval history of the Albanians. This was a great challenge, because (as Thallóczy puts it in a manuscript kept in the National Széchényi Library of Budapest),

“We have long been engaged with Albanian history and literature, and thus we are familiar with those non-scholarly aspects which some exploit to retrospectively temper with certain parts of the history of the Balkans. The Albanian diaspora did much to contribute to this dimming of their history; these fragmented groups had departed from the old country and took refuge for

65 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV. Albanien, Kt. 21, Albanian printed works 1907–1918 (Pallium: Thallóczy's source book 'Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia'), letter of Thallóczy to Aehrenthal, Vienna, July 21, 1911, appendix of No. 2626.

66 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV. Albanien, Kt. 21, Albanian printed works 1907–1918 (Pallium: Thallóczy's source book 'Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia'), memorandum of Thallóczy, Jireček and Šufflay about the volume (Memorandum, pp. 6.): “Unsere Materialien, über die wir unten näher berichten, betreffen die Landschaften, in denen die primäre ethnische Schichte des adriatischen Küstenlandes fast ganz kahl unter den sekundären und tertiären griechischen, romanischen und slawischen Neubildungen emporragt gleich einem von Efeu schütter umrankten Granitmonumente des gewesenen großen Volkes des Illyrer. Ein Monument der einstigen Illyrer und zugleich die ‘Officina Albanensium!’” 1.

*centuries in Hungarian, Venetian and Neapolitan lands, yet, they have partly retained their own characteristics until the present day.*⁶⁷

That was why Thallóczy strictly observed the professional rules of historians when writing about life in the Albanian diasporas.

II.4. The first book on the history of Albania⁶⁸

The History of Albania Written by a Gheg Who Loves His Country is worthy of attention for a number of reasons.⁶⁹ The book intended to familiarize Albanians in a popular style with their own history and to aid them in their nation-building process. While Vasa also had foreign readers in mind, Thallóczy wrote his book solely for an Albanian readership. Since he aimed to create a uniform historical thinking and at the same time provide new common knowledge or a framework of reference for the whole community, the book had to be written in a style that was acceptable both in content and in form to all Albanians, regardless of their religion. To this end Thallóczy employed such tools that have been utilized by Albanian historiographers ever since. Regarding its phraseology and style, the text draws on the heroic epic songs that helped commit to memory the remarkable events of Albanian history in an era of illiteracy.⁷⁰ It seems certain that Thallóczy knew Pashko Vasa's literary activity, because Vasa's thoughts appear quite often in the book. Thallóczy adhered to Albanian traditions by using the first person plural throughout the text ("our ancestors", "our land" and so on).

The most challenging condition for creating a common framework of reference was to synthesize the different historical perceptions of the Christians and the Muslims. The followers of these two religions mutually had to be familiarized with each other's historical perspective and traditions. The greatness of Thallóczy's solution lies in the fact that he *did not create a concept of enemy* for the Albanians in order to unite them. The new sentiments of belonging therefore were not founded

67 OSZK, Kézirattár, Fol. Hung. 1630, data collection on the history of Albania, Albanian diaspora, 2–3.

68 Considering that my language skills will not allow me to analyse the book beyond a certain extent, hereby I would like to thank my former Albanian teacher, Dr. Jonida Xhyra-Entorf, for her kind help in interpreting the exact meaning of the texts. It is invaluable to have a friend like her who always readily answers all my questions.

69 Published in reprint by Raim Beluli: Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 85–203.

70 See the references in the book to the heroic epic songs: Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 87–88, or the phraseology of the book: "When the storm howls over the mountains with wild winds and lashing rain, then"; "Never did God make a promise"; "because of our sins"; "But out of God's will" Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 123.

upon ideas directed against neighbouring peoples; on the contrary, Thallóczy draws attention to the similarities between the Albanians and the other peoples of the Balkans, emphasizing their common destiny. This new sense of belonging is based on values connecting all Albanians: the origin, the language, the Albanian virtues and a thousand years of shared history.⁷¹

Thallóczy's periodization has been accepted by today's Albanian historiographers. Even though it is based on the Gregorian calendar, starting with the major medieval events, Thallóczy also indicates the dates of events according to the Islamic calendar. The book deals not only with the history of the Albanians; it also provides a bit of universal knowledge in a popular way that never fails to meet the standards and expectations of the era. The author reviews the history of the Balkan Peninsula and, to a lesser extent, Europe, from the Stone Age. By doing so, Thallóczy sets the geographical boundaries for Albanian history. He lists the peoples living and having lived both on the peninsula and in Europe (Pelasgians, Greeks, Celts, Thracians, Serbs, English and so on), names the territories they occupied (Dardania, Thrace, Britannia and so on) and introduces the most important concepts he uses and presents inventive explanations for those.⁷² In a similar manner, he makes mention of one or two major events in the history of the best-known European nations (the English, the French and the Germans). He explicates that empires never disappear without a trace, but their successor states or successor empires keep and pass on their most important political and cultural traditions. From this aspect the train of thought focusing on Rome, Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire is particularly relevant in this section of the book.⁷³ Thallóczy pays particular attention to briefly outlining the connections between Hungarian and Albanian history: the Illyrian presence in the Carpathian Basin, the Neapolitan campaigns of Louis the Great, John and Matthias Hunyadi's campaigns against the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁴ Of the great historical figures Thallóczy introduces military leaders and great conquerors like Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Napoleon. The content of the book clearly goes beyond a simple nation-creating function, and it is not secondary to the idea of promoting the Albanian nation-building process.

71 About himself the author writes as follows: "Unë po ju kallzoi púnët t'onë pá zbukurue e pa i shnjerezue, veç si i kam gjëtë ndër do shkrime të moçme që i diftojnë sakt si janë këné e s'i kanë rá kuj në darë deri tash. Edhe unë jam i gjakut tuej, o Shqyptarë, e e di prandej mirfillit ku na dhamb né; po mbasi s'jam njeri, që mban anë e as që don me ngatrrue, nuk kam tjetër, posë të drejtës me shkruë." Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 88.

72 For example, duumvir – 'the Roman name for bajraktar' Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 114.

73 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 131.

74 The author uses the *magyar* and not today's *hungarez* denomination for Hungarians. Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 90, 136, 157, 160, 165.

When summarizing the history of the Albanians, Thallóczy always provides the precise geographical and chronological framework for each period, and Albanian history is never presented as a detached or disconnected story, but rather as one blending into the context of the era and being part of a greater series of events. Thallóczy also tried to make his material as interesting for his readers as possible by discussing the following topics: the Albanians' origins and lifestyle (everyday life, trading, methods of production), changing settlement areas (list of towns, physical description of the areas populated by the Albanians' ancestors), the introduction of famous Albanian leaders or soldiers, the Albanians' relationship to different cults (places of cult, names of gods) and religions (archaic, Illyrian, Roman, Christian, Muslim), responses to the changing environment (migrations, imperial invasions), objects and artefacts from the past (Roman aqueducts, ruins and archaeological remains). In order to facilitate the reader's better understanding of his book, Thallóczy emphasizes the similarities between the past and the present: for example, Illyria had been a densely forested area, where the revolting Illyrian tribes that were fighting for their freedom could only be controlled by a strong and large army.⁷⁵

When talking about the Illyrian period, Thallóczy mentions that the similarly long-gone Thracians and the Greeks' ancestors, the Hellenes, were neighbours to the ancestors of the Albanians. The Albanian heroes of ancient times always protected their lands in heroic fights against aspiring conquerors: King (*mbret*) Bardhyl against Philip II of Macedon and Alexander the Great in the 360–350s B.C.,⁷⁶ Illyrian Queen (*mbretneshtë*) Teuta and her son Genti against the Romans at the turn of the 3rd century B.C.⁷⁷ Antiquity was not only about wars, however. It was the first period in history when a majority of the European peoples lived within a single empire. The Roman Empire was held together by its pan-continental commerce, the excellent road and water network, the network of ports and developed cities, Greek culture and Roman law, exceptional organizational skills and a powerful army. Even as early as in Roman times, a peculiarity of the Albanian history emerged: while Illyria successfully defended its territories in local battles against the Romans, it was also this region that provided the empire with the best (the bravest and most triumphant) warriors, troops and legions. The most talented generals and soldier emperors who had gone to Rome from the area were the ones who could secure Rome's continued existence and could safeguard and retain its power in the last centuries of the empire.⁷⁸

75 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 108.

76 The author writes about Alexander the Great as follows: "Mos t'harrojmë pra, se njeriu më i madhi që ka lé motit është nji Ilir, do me thanë nji Shqiptar!" Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 102.

77 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 95–105.

78 Ibid., 115–116.

The Migration Period caused massive upheaval on the Balkans. While the Roman Empire was slowly disintegrating, the peoples that currently populate the peninsula (*fqj tē t'onē*: “our neighbours”) started to settle down, either peacefully or after bloody battles. At the same time, religious diversity was replaced with Christianity. The ancestors of the Albanians were forced to withdraw to the mountains around Mirdita, Malësia and Debar, but they also clashed on multiple occasions with the Slavs seeking to find new territories for settlement. Albanian–Slav relations were not exclusively hostile: the new religion espoused by St Paul and embraced and spread by Byzantium connected the peoples of the peninsula, even though at that time the Albanians did not worship god in their own language. When writing about the Great Schism, Thallóczy brings to mind the history of the coastal church organization (for example, the foundation of the Bari Diocese in 1067), but he forgets to mention that as far as Kotor the coastal Catholics were not only Albanians, but also Dukljans, Dalmatians (“Latins”) and Serbs.⁷⁹

In connection with Byzantium, Thallóczy emphasizes two things: on the one hand, he says, the emperor of Constantinople had the best army in the era, with the most valiant soldiers coming from Illyria and *Arbni*.⁸⁰ These Illyrian soldiers and their homeland was the key to Constantinople: this was the place where the Normans attacking from the West had to be stopped. On the other hand, the ancestors of the Albanians lived freely only along the line connecting the towns of Kavaja, Elbasan and Ohrid. It is noteworthy how Thallóczy never says that the Albanians lived under Serbian, Greek or other rule. He only informs the reader of who was the ruler in the area in a given period. Considering the fact that Balkanian historiographers tend to deduce current ethnic conflicts from events that happened hundreds of years earlier, Thallóczy’s moderate approach definitely seemed to be ahead of his time.

The Serbian Tsar Dusan is depicted as a positive figure. Thallóczy mentions that similarly to Marko Kraljević, this “great spirited” ruler (*shpirti i madh*), who was also a “great warrior”, (*luftar i madh*) had his glorious deeds sung by *both* the Serbs *and* the Albanians. In his era the Serb Tsar was the most formidable enemy of Byzantium. It was under his rule that the first feudal Albanian families emerged: the Thopias, the Muzakis, the Shpatas, and so on. At the summit of his power in 1346, Dusan was elected the emperor of both the Greeks and the Albanians. After his death his empire fell apart, and in the power vacuum the Albanian territories gained independence and new families rose to power – the Dukagjinis, the Aranitis, Zenevitis, Kastriotas among others. The fall of medieval Serbian statehood is discussed in the part devoted to the Battle of Kosovo, where the author puts the

79 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 122–127.

80 “...ata kjenë ushtarët më të mirët e mbretnisë...” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 132.

Serbs in a good light. When Thallóczy discusses the period between the 13th and 15th centuries, it becomes obvious that he increasingly relies on archive sources.⁸¹

In the 14th century a new people, the Turks, appeared on the Balkan Peninsula and they profoundly and decisively influenced the future of the Albanians. Although Thallóczy often stresses that the Albanians are not Turks, by writing about the rise of the Ottomans and about the history of their state and of Islam, he successfully demonstrates why the history of these two peoples were so tightly intertwined. Also, this way the Christians gained information about the Muslim Albanians' spiritual connections to the Orient. The Turkic ethnic group (*fs*) appeared in the 10th century in Asia, which was then a Christian territory. There they converted to Muhammad's religion and in the 14th century began to build their own empire. The first Ottoman conquerors seized ever-larger areas of Byzantium and of the Seljuk successor states in Asia Minor. In 1326 they occupied Bursa and then soon set foot in Europe. After the Battle of Kosovo they started to infiltrate Albanian lands (Toskland) and they established their first "Albanian" sanjak.⁸²

It was Skanderbeg (*Skanderbeg*, *Skanderbeu*), the brightest star of (medieval) Albanian history, who brought the Ottoman advance to a halt. The particularly long and detailed subchapter devoted to him must have been written with the intention of strengthening the position of the national hero par excellence in the national pantheon through the power of historiography. It was necessary, because, contrary to popular belief, contemporary Albanians knew very little about Skanderbeg's real achievements. Although Skanderbeg was one of the favourite literary figures of the Italo-Albanians,⁸³ not many memories of him were kept in Albanian popular culture, or so it would seem from what is stated in a book by Johann Georg von Hahn published in 1854. While this was the work that gave rise to Albanology as a science, not one of the legends or epic songs collected in the book is about the legendary hero, which means that Hahn could not find anything about him during his expeditions.⁸⁴ Be that as it may, Skanderbeg's personality became the most important source of legitimacy, not only for Albanian history but also for the entire Albanian culture. This phenomenon dates back to the period of the *Rilindja*, when the prominent figures of the Albanian national movement (e.g. the Frashëri family,⁸⁵ Fan Noli and so on) realized that Skanderbeg had been a well-known figure in Europe

81 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqipnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 132–150.

82 Ibid., 142–147.

83 Girolamo (Jeronim) de Rada wrote his epic entitled *The Unfortunate Skanderbeg* (de Rada, Jeronim. *Scanderbeccu i pafaan*. Corigliano Calabro, n.d.) in the 1830s and until 1844 it was published many times. The epic depicted Skanderbeg as a brave, patriotic, just, hospitable and loyal man, King and Saviour of Albania, the commander who brought peace to Italy (sic!).

84 Hahn, Johann G. *Albanesische Studien*. Jena: Mauke, 1854.

85 Frashëri, Naim. *Histori e Skenderbeut*. Bukarest: Drita, 1898.

and had had a cult both as a diplomat and as a commander, so he could “promote” the Albanian national cause.⁸⁶ We must note, however, that his renaissance at the turn of the century could be, to a large extent, attributed to the fact that his direct descendants, one after the other, laid claim to the Albanian throne by virtue of their forefather’s achievements.⁸⁷

We can only suspect the role that Thallóczy’s book may have played in restoring the *historical Skanderbeg* to a respectable position among the Albanians. It is highly likely that Thallóczy added a few elements to Skanderbeg’s already existing cult: that he was the founder of the medieval independent Albania, the creator of the “modern” state, the representative of European culture and Europe’s final protector against the Ottoman invasion. Thallóczy consulted two different kinds of sources when working on this chapter: firstly, a book about the Beg written by Marinus Barletius and published in 1537, from which Thallóczy borrowed generously; not only individual scenes like the Sultan’s monologue or Lek Dukagjini’s eulogy, but complete sentences or even paragraphs. Secondly, he often quoted archive sources he had found in Italy and Vienna.⁸⁸

The chapter contains two contemporary illustrations of Skanderbeg, a photo of his helmet, and another of his sword.⁸⁹ Both items are kept in Vienna. The purpose of the illustrations and the photos are manifold: they provided a visual representation of the hero and they served as physical proofs of his existence. Also, the Beg won all his battles and his physical appearance, which was rather important for Albanians, was flawless, fit to be sung in the epic songs.⁹⁰ The young Orthodox Gjergj Kastrioti arrived in the Sultan’s Court as a hostage where he soon excelled and took advantage of his superior physical and mental abilities. The young nobleman converted to Islam and supposedly he chose the name Iskander on purpose.⁹¹ His outstanding military service earned him the rank Beg at the age of 18 (that is why he was called

86 Skanderbeg was discovered by several Greek and Southern Slav historians and litterateurs in the 19th century. He was often depicted as the harbinger of an all-Balkanian anti-Ottoman uprising or as the example of Illyrian heroism that could strengthen the historical legitimacy of the Southern Slavic national aspirations. Gkarpolas, Konstantinos. *Istoria Geōrgiou Kastriotou*. Athinai, 1848; Petrovich, Georges T. *Scanderbeg (Georges Castriota). Essai de bibliographie raisonnée; Ouvrages sur Scanderbeg*. Paris: Grüner, 1881; Vulić, Nikola. *Durađ Kastriotić Skenderbeg*. Beograd 1892.

87 For more on this, see Deutsch, Engelbert. ‘Albanische Thronbewerber.’ *Münchener Zeitschrift für Balkankunde* 4 (1981/1982): 89–150, 5 (1983/1984): 121–164, 6 (1990): 99–151.

88 Barletius, Marinus. *De vita, moribus ac rebus praecipue adversus Turcas, gestis Georgii Castroti*. Straßburg: Crato Mylius, 1537.

89 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 150–164.

90 “Ishte flokëzi, e parzmën e kishte si nji kosh hekrit. Ishte aq i fuqishëm ndër duer, sá kur i shtërngote kuj dorën edhe të vehsun me dorezë hekrit, si e kishin atëherë, i bâte me i dalë gjaku për thojsh.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 151.

91 The name Iskander is a reference to Alexander the Great, who, on his mother’s side, partly hailed from Epirus.

Skanderbeg). The young officer fell from the grace of the Sultan because of some vicious gossip, or at least Thallóczy thought so. He could not ignore the clash between the Sultan and Skanderbeg, yet he was careful not to hurt the feelings of his Muslim readers.

Skanderbeg returned to his homeland and started a war of independence against the Ottoman Empire. He invited the Albanian dignitaries to Lezha in 1444, where the members of the Araniti, Thopia, Balsha and Dukagjini families made a covenant. Even though the families belonged to the Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox religions, they were connected by their language and the fight for freedom. Thus, Skanderbeg came into a small, yet disciplined and heroic army.⁹² The successful and heroic defence against the Ottomans drew the attention of the popes, who regarded Skanderbeg as a new Alexander the Great, the leader of a future crusade. From time to time, the sultans sent enormous armies with tens of thousands and, from 1453, hundreds of thousands of men against Kruja, the seat of Skanderbeg, but they could never seize the city. The small Albanian army fought in Italy, too, where they had to secure the throne for Ferdinand I (1458–1494), the future father-in-law of Matthias Hunyadi (Corvinus), after the death of his father, Alfonso V of Aragon (1442–1458), King of Sicily. After the successful campaign, thousands of Albanian soldiers and their families settled in southern Italy. They became the ancestors of the Italo-Albanians. After the fall of Constantinople, Skanderbeg, who had converted to Christianity in the meantime,⁹³ wanted to continue the fight, but his sudden death prevented him from carrying out his plans (1468). After his death, discord set in among the Albanian noblemen, which eventually led to the fall of Albania (1478).

In Skanderbeg's time, more and more Muslim Albanians appeared in the Sultan's court. Similarly to the Beg, these children of noble families had been taken hostage at an early age (e.g. Pasha Balaban, Pasha Sinan) and they served their new lord as soldiers. Their skills and courage were great assets to the empire and, although they fought like lions for the Sultan, they never forgot their beloved motherland.⁹⁴ During the Ottoman conquest ("*Kur mori Osmanllija vendet t'ona...*" – "when the Ottomans occupied our lands") several Albanians fled to southern Italy, while the majority of the people converted to Islam. According to Thallóczy, both responses were aimed at allowing the Albanians to retain their freedom: those in Italy could

92 The small Albanian army that mastered partisan warfare and fought against the expansive, "imperialist" great power became, both ideologically and practically, a great precursor for Hoxha's Albania. Shehu, '500-vjetori i vdekjes së heroit tonë kombëtar Gjergj Kastriotit-Skënderbeut.' 27–40.

93 This way all four denominations (Orthodox, Sunni, Bektashi, Catholic) could regard the national hero as their own.

94 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqipëris prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 168, 177.

keep their faith, while the latter group secured their own freedom and their lands (*“our lands”*) by becoming Muslims.⁹⁵

In the new empire the Albanians adopted an attitude to the new order “in accordance with their traditions”. On the one hand, local wars of independence still broke out on a regular basis, especially among the Catholic mountain tribes: Gruda, Hoti, Kastrati, Këlmëndi and so on); on the other hand, the imperial elite forces consisted mainly of Albanians. Thallóczy resolves the contradiction by clearly separating the concepts of Sultan and empire: an Albanian can fight bravely and loyally for the Sultan, while he can rightfully rise against an oppressive empire. The representatives of the empire were oppressive Turkic pashas from remote corners of the empire (it was the so-called “bad official – good emperor” principle). When a pasha of Albanian origin was appointed to rule a sanjak or a vilayet, hostilities usually rapidly deescalated.

Christian Europe waged more and more wars against the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century and many of the Habsburg campaigns reached Albanian-inhabited lands. During the struggles, the majority of the Christian tribes revolted. These struggles earned quite a reputation for the mountain tribes (*malcorët* – “highlanders”), such as the mirditas. The then captains of the mirdita tribe (namely Gjon Marku, Prenk Leka, Llesh i Zi) had only one worthy descendant at the turn of the 20th century: Prenk Bib Doda, who lived in exile. When the uprisings had been crushed, some of the tribes always fled to another region where they founded several new settlements. Such a settlement was Borgo Erizzo in Dalmatia. And even though these people broke away from their motherland, “*they speak our language*” and “*they are the members of our nation*.”⁹⁶

At the turn of the 19th century, new Albanian families arose and brought honour and glory to their people. The members of these families were pashas attempting to unite certain parts of the Albanian lands. In Shkodra, the Bushattliu family organized and governed the surrounding sanjaks as their own country. The greatest merit of Kara Mahmut and his son Mehmet Bushattliu was that they attempted to unite all the lands inhabited by Ghegs (*Gegni*) and that in the area ruled by them they made peace between the Christian and the Muslim Albanians, and between the highlanders and those living on the plains; that is, they created unity. They were also great commanders, who never ceased to threaten Montenegro and Bosnia. They were also highly connected in European diplomacy and negotiated with France, the

95 “Në këtë mënyrë është mbajtur deri sot i lirë e i limem gjaku i jonë.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 173.

96 “Zoti na ruejtë ata e kombin tonë.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 180.

Habsburgs and Montenegro (in this section it is clear that Thallóczy was summarizing the relevant data on the basis of the archive sources he had consulted).⁹⁷

The true experience of statehood for the Albanians, however, took place under the rule of Ali Pasha of Janina (or of Tepelena). Thallóczy emphasizes his significance all through his work.⁹⁸ Thallóczy makes clear distinctions between Ali Pasha and the other officials of the Ottoman Empire: he is Muslim, but not a Turk; he belongs to Albanian history (*Ali t'one* – “our Ali”), not to that of the Empire. Also, Ali is the only Albanian in the book who has “activity” or “achievements” (*veprimtaria*), the others performed only deeds or acts (even when discussing Skanderbeg, Thallóczy never uses the word “achievement”). Ali Pasha was active in the Janina region; he united the Albanian-inhabited territories in the South (*Toskni*), while the Bushattliu family did the same in the North. As an ally to Napoleon's France he was an important participant in the diplomacy of the great powers and oftentimes negotiated with Russia (*Miskivi*) and England (*Hinglizi*). His objective was to unite the Gheg and Tosk lands and to gain independence. The High Porte was so deeply concerned that in 1822 the Ottomans had Ali killed. It is important to mention at this point that Thallóczy presents the Bushattliu family and Ali as the genuine and authentic representatives of Gheg and Tosk interests. Another important suggestion made by Thallóczy was that from the early 19th century on the Albanian issues had been parts of the international diplomatic negotiations.

Thallóczy summarizes the events of the 19th century in only a few pages.⁹⁹ As for the first half of the century he discusses the Greek war of independence and the resulting war of the great powers. He writes about the Greeks with compassion and draws parallels between the fights of the hetairias who also had European support and the battles of the Albanians and the Italian carbonari movement. He mentions the disbandment of the Janissary corps and the naval battle of Navarino. He provides two answers to the question why the Bushattliu (and the Albanians) did not aid the empire (why Mustafa Bushattliu did not march with his 35,000 soldiers to Adrianople). On the one hand, Thallóczy argues that the Albanians had to fight with the Serb and Montenegrin forces at the same time. On the other hand, the Albanians had vivid memories of Grand Vizier Mehmed Reşid Pasha who had committed several atrocities against the Albanians. (True, Mehmed Reşid Pasha had committed his greatest atrocity after the war: in 1830 in Bitola he had lured into a trap and massacred hundreds of Albanian noblemen.)

When writing about the *Tanzimat* period, Thallóczy includes less and less concrete facts but refers increasingly boldly to the Albanian grievances and demands

97 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 182–184.

98 Thallóczy even provides a portrait of him: Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 186–196, 187.

99 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 196–203.

that emerged around the turn of the century: hostile, cruel and incompetent Pashas; increasing taxes; lack of Albanian schools and newspapers, conscriptions and so on. The Albanian uprisings given in response were crushed one after the other. It happened that Christian and Muslim Albanians fought against each other (1844), which created a menacing threat for the future.¹⁰⁰ The reforms introduced in response to the Crimean War and the rising states of Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria backed by Russia and their newly gained independence, brought about a serious and grave situation for the empire.¹⁰¹ Decades of war ensued, during which the Albanians made heroic sacrifices. Yet, they gained nothing; in fact, they even lost some parts of their ethnic territories.¹⁰² Between 1875 and 1878 they lost Bar and the surrounding region, and the League of Prizren (*lidhje, besa*) organized by Christians and Muslims was suppressed in 1879–1882. Thallóczy does not mention the name of the League; nor does he narrate its history or the events of the recent past. (We must not forget that Gołuchowski forbade Thallóczy to write an anti-Ottoman book.) The historical part of the book ends here.

The author often turns to his readers directly.¹⁰³ This way Thallóczy probably wished to emphasize what he had to say and wanted to make his work sound more like a programme. He often addresses his readers as “beloved brothers” and he stresses time and time again that the Albanians do not know their own history and their own past, and that they are not aware of their own strength and significance – at least, not until this historical moment. But the time has come to learn about the ancestors and their lives, to learn about “our Christian and Muslim heroes” (sic!) – *burra idhujsh të Krishtenë a Muhamedana* – those sung about in the heroic songs.¹⁰⁴ It is also necessary so that the past could be connected and *compared* with the present. It is important to understand that Albanians are not Turks. Even though the fate of the Albanians and the Ottoman Empire had closely intertwined in the past few

100 “Në 1844 krisi, për rrezik të zi, një luftë e madhe ndërmjet vllazënve t’onë Muhametana e të Krishtën; e Ymer Pasha derdhi atëherë shumë gjak shqyptari në Kalkandele.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqyptaris prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 201.

101 Thallóczy does not even make mention of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy among the great powers holding an interest in the Balkans and earlier he only speaks about the Habsburgs, and, when it came to their empire, about Germany (*Nemci*). Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqyptaris prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 179.

102 “Vetëm na Shqyptarët i ndëjtëm në besë Stamollës, e derdhmë gjakun t’onë tue lufte me Miskov, me Malazezë e me Grekë; e në fund shka fituen? Pamë vetëm se ata, që u shkëputnë prej Turqisë janë tue shkue mirë, e tue u rritë me copa t’ona; e njatò që s’kanë mujtë kurrë me e qit me né, kqyrin sot me na marrë Shqyptarinë mbar!” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqyptaris prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 201–202.

103 “Shíptarë, vllaznit e dashtun! Na jena fisi mà i vjetër i Evropës.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqyptaris prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 87.

104 His thoughts relating to this topic include: “Pra, vllaznit e dashtun, ná do të dijmë mà parë se kush kena kënë motit, e kù jena sot. [...] Deri tash na s’i kena dijtë të ndodhurat e fisit t’onë.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqyptaris prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 87.

centuries and this relation had been stronger than the ones before, the Ottoman empire is still just one of the many powers in which the Albanians lived in their own, independent administrative units throughout their history. And like all empires before, this one will also come to an end,¹⁰⁵ and the Albanians will have a future after its collapse. Although their fate (that is, their present one) was hard, God gave them hands and heads, and they have to trust in and hope for his help. The Albanians have to understand their greatness, they have to wake up from their deadly dream and they have to fight for their freedom.¹⁰⁶ “*And I will tell you, heroes of Arbni, what is our history,*” says Thallóczy at the very end of the book.

Thallóczy’s book features the most important historical theses of the Albanian historical view and historiography. It may be possible that not all the theses can be found in the book, but it seems certain that most of the principles are listed here for the first time *together*.

Freedom is the alpha and omega of Albanian history. The Albanians and their ancestors always were, or wanted to be free, no matter how small a people they were.¹⁰⁷ Since they were ready to make the greatest sacrifice for the freedom of their families (people) and their lands, they lived in constant warfare and had gained a formidable reputation.¹⁰⁸ Another tenet was that the Albanians were the autochthonous inhabitants of the Balkans, and that there is only one other people that has been living in their homelands from ancient times: the Greeks.

The Albanians had always fought their wars alone. They could trust only in the strength of their arms and the help of God. They acquired everything they had with the sweat of their brow and the blood of their heart, holding a sword in their hand (*me shpatë në dorë*) at all times.¹⁰⁹ While the men fought on the battlefields, the women worked in the fields: they sowed, ploughed the land, and reaped. They gave

105 “Mos të kuptohet se kështu romakët e shtruenë menjherë vendin t’onë.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 102–103.

106 “Por punën e fisit t’onë si duhet, nuk j’au ka diftue kush endë; madhninë e gjakut t’onë nuk e dini deri tash. E prandej unë po due me ju qit ktu para sysh si kena shkëlqye ná ndër ató kohë, kur gjithsecili prej nesh ká dashtë gjakun e vet me zëmër, pa vështme se shka beson shoqi. [...] E as sot s’mundet me i rrahë ndryshe zëmra Shyphtarit, veç s’e ndiën, pse ka rá sin ë gjumë të dekës e shuma!” and “Shyphtar! t’dona shoqi shoqin, e atëherë vërtet n’a vjen liria.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 88, 203.

107 For example: “por Shqypitari vetë kje gjithmonë i lirë.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 92, 128.

108 For example: “Në tjetrën ânë këta e dijsin se Arnauti áisht ma trimi fis i botes; pse s’e kishin har-rue punën e Skanderbegut.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 175.

109 For example: “ë kto s’patnë asnji ndihmë prej mbretit o tjetër kuj, veç me krahë të vet e me shpresë në Zotin luftuen.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 122 (similarly, on pages 90 and 175).

birth to valiant boys and raised them in honour (*nder*) and taught them to be heroic (*trimni*). In times of need, they did not hesitate to take up arms.¹¹⁰

It is interesting how Thallóczy interprets Albanians' relations with the big expansive empires and their thirst for freedom. Whenever the Albanian lands were conquered by an empire (Rome, Byzantium, Ottoman Empire) the locals offered resistance immediately, and the incessant uprisings could only be suppressed temporarily and with a huge army. On the other hand, the Albanians serving in the imperial armies were the bravest and most successful soldiers; they played an important role in the survival of the empires against which they often revolted. Also, Illyria (*Shqypnia*) was the motherland of many famous commanders and monarchs (Roman emperors).¹¹¹

It is beyond doubt that one of the main elements of the contemporary Albanian view on history is the principle of belonging and togetherness. It is a significant change, because at the turn of the century the particularly heterogeneous Albanian society had no such values that could be utilized to create social cohesion, let alone to facilitate a modern nation-building process. Out of the possibilities offered by the historical context, Thallóczy's choices helped shape a national consciousness transcending religions and dialects. Such values were the common history, ancestry and origin (*gjaku i jonë* – “our blood”; *gjaku e Shqyptarit* – “the blood of the Albanians”), mother tongue, and such human virtues as heroism, the love of freedom or the “heart of Albanians” (*zëmër Shqyptarëve*).

When Thallóczy emphasizes the importance of the mother tongue, he can partly rely on popular literary works written in the *Rilindja* period (for example, Italo-Albanian texts or Naim Frashëri's poetry), but he still feels compelled to account for the difference between the Tosk and Gheg dialects.¹¹² He argues that certain communities had to abandon their homeland after their uprisings for freedom had been crushed, and this migration brought about the emergence of several dialects.

In his arguments about religion, he also relies on the classic works written by Pashko Vasa during the period of the National Awakening.¹¹³ The author suggests that it does not matter whether somebody is a Muslim or a Christian. What matters is that all Albanians are of one blood, and therefore they are all brothers. Thallóczy also quotes Vasa's heartening, yet at the same time renouncing words challenging

110 “Grueja e atëhershme, sikur Shqiptarja e mirë e soçe, ishte punëtore e shpijake, e dije me rritë fmijtë për nder. Burri shkote me gjã të gjallë në mal o delte në luftë, e grueja kqyrte shpinë e punote tokën: mbjellte, korrte, bâte drù e ngarkohej vetë, tue i dhënë edhe hji shpesh dy fmija. [...] Kjo grue ishte e mirë me të gjitha të mirat por ishte edhe trimnesh e delte si burrat me luftue.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 97.

111 For example: Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 107–108, 112, 115–116, 129, 132.

112 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 187.

113 On Vasa's works, see Csaplár, ‘Pashko Vasa’, 40–49.

his readers to congregate and raise their hands to protect their beloved homeland instead of fuelling religious hostilities. He demands that Albanians stand up for their brothers' rights and calls on them to fight for their rights even in Istanbul.¹¹⁴ It is time for the Albanians, the author says, to understand that they are not Turks but an autonomous nation (*komb*), and that there is nothing the empire fears more than the unification of the Albanians (see the story of Ali of Janina). The Albanians have already proved that they can join forces regardless of their dialect or religion.¹¹⁵

Those theses of Albanian historiography that Thallóczy did not borrow from works written in the times of the *Rilindja* came from the early modern period. Such theses are the constant struggle for freedom, the lonely resistance against expansive empires and conquering nations, the values of ethnic belonging (mother tongue, common ancestry, blood, customs) and, most importantly, the self-image (an identity clearly distinct and distinguished from that of their neighbours). These were not Thallóczy's own inventions, but the result of a thorough archive research during which Thallóczy could come across correspondence between Pjetër Mazreku and his Catholic Albanian contemporaries. This way Mazreku's thoughts about the Albanian national existence inspired by the Propaganda Fide (17th century) were not lost to future generations and instead of becoming a dead end, with the help of Thallóczy, they made their way back among the fundamental thoughts of the national awakening.¹¹⁶

The concepts and terminology of the book have created a tradition in Albanian historiography. The most important terms are the names of the lands inhabited by the Albanians. Although the names changed over time, the author highlights that the ethnic composition of the region remained unchanged. Be it Illyria, be it the Roman, Byzantine or Ottoman provinces thereof, or an independent country; behind the

114 “Na jena tue diftue si e ka shkue jetën i gjithë fisi i jonë, pa dá se ç'farë besimi ka pasë o ka njëni e tjetri. Në daç i Krishtën, në daç Muhametan, na jena të gjithë një gjakut, e prandej vllazën; e s'asht punë që besimi mund të dájë gjakun, veç gjithsecili e ka për shpirt të vet, e në këtë botë do të rrhojmë bashkarisht. Edhë Zoti i urdhnon gjithëkuj me dasht t'afërmin e vet. Pse mos të duhena pra na Shqyptarët, Muhametanë e të Krishtënë, pse mos të mblidhena të gjithë bashkë, me u mundue me i zgjatë dorën të dashtunit dheut t'onë, që na ka rritë me shjhtë të vet? Pse mos me ja folë na të drejtën vllaznive t'onë muhametana, tue thanë që këta kanë diftue gjithmonë burrninë e Shqyptarit në shërbim në Turkut? A thue do të na vijë marrë me kallzue se gjku i jonë ka mbrijtë ndër kâmbë e madhnitë nalta në Stamboll? Po të shikojmë hollë, e shofim atëherë që Muhametanve t'onë i dukena, sadó kudo, má të afërmin na, se ç'do tjetër komb i mbrenisë së Turkut. Na e dijmë të gjithë se jena të tanë shka flasim Shqyp, bijtë e një nanës që s'harrohet, të Arbnisë së shkretë, që ka mbetë pa djelm të thuesh, pse të huejt na kanë dá për me rregullue punën e vet, tue na shti fjalën e tue rritë mëninë ndër né brez mbas brezit.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 142–143.

115 Interestingly he does not cite the story of the League of Prizren as an example (probably because of the orders of the Ballhausplatz). He only makes reference to the aspirations of Ali of Janina and of the Bushatliu. Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej një Gege që don vendin e vet*, 189–194.

116 On Mazreku's ideas, see Antal Molnár's study in the present volume: ‘The Catholic Missions and the Origins of Albanian Nation Building at the Beginning of the 17th Century.’

names always the same reality emerged: “our lands”, “our national territory”, or “Albania” (*trualli jonë; territori kombëtar; Shqypnie*). Thallóczy discusses the different periods and refers to the regions accordingly. The Illyrian provinces were referred to as *Arbanas, Arbëria* (or its Gheg variety, *Arbni*) in the 11th to 14th centuries,¹¹⁷ and later, from the Ottoman conquest they were more and more often called *Shqypni*. The division of the Albanian lands into Toskland (*Toskni*) and Ghegland (*Gegni*) started in the 14th century: first the Tosks and their lands became separate entities, while the concept of *Gegni* appeared in the 18th century as part of the Bushattliu family’s political aspirations.¹¹⁸ The expanse of the two lands is precisely described by the author.

The next important group of concepts is connected to the ethnic self-designation. It is an interesting field for researchers, as it reveals much about the users of the Albanian language that had just accepted and used the European ideas of modern nationalisms. Thallóczy uses the names for the Albanian people that correspond with the name of the country in the different periods. The first sources referred to the Albanians as Illyrians. In the Middle Ages they called themselves *arbni/arbri*, while the Ottoman conquerors named them *arnaut*. Thallóczy uses the denomination *shqypetar* from the early modern period onwards, but he also reminds the reader that even though the designations for the people may change, these always refer to “us”, “the Albanians”.¹¹⁹

Thallóczy defines the Illyrians mainly as a *fis* (tribe).¹²⁰ Although the concept *vllaz(ë)ni* (its form and meaning in today’s literary language: *vëllamëri*; brethren, blood brothers, brotherhood) is used as an equivalent of *people* (e.g. *vllaznina Ilirës*), in the chapters discussing Albanian history from the early modern period onwards, the term *vllazni* takes on a new meaning: at places it can be interpreted as *nation*. The book, however, uses another word for nation, which is *komb*. This is interesting, as it reveals that the translator is a (Catholic) Gheg,¹²¹ because this word originally meant “tie” or “knot” in the Gheg dialect. Also, as a result of Sami Frashëri’s influence, the word *komb* eventually superseded the more traditional and more widespread word *milet* and came to be the only word denoting “nation”.¹²² The

117 Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 123–142.

118 Ibid., 146, 182.

119 For example, Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 175.

120 Within the conquering Slavs, the Serbs and Croats also form *fis*-es. Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 124.

121 Thallóczy wrote the book in German. It was translated into Albanian by Stefan Curani.

122 The word *komb* is used in a similar meaning here: Dozon, August. *Manuel de la langue Chlipe ou Albanaise*. Paris: Leroux, 1878, and also in Gustav Meyer’s work (Meyer, Gustav. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der albanesischen Sprache*. Strassburg: K. J. Trübner, 1891). Frashëri, in his book *Shqipëri – ç’ka që në, ç’është e ç’do të bëhëtë* also uses this word. After the turn of the century it was used in the sense “nation” by, for example, Kristoforidhi, Konstantin. *Lexikon tës glosses*. Athenais: Sakellapriu, 1904,

word *komb* first appears in the book at the description of the Ottoman conquest, but then it is used as a synonym for *fis*, *vllazëni* and *të parët* (“our ancestors”). The phrase that is used throughout the book, similarly to *Shqypni is të parë jonë*, or “the ancestors of ours”. All in all, the usage of “people” and “nation” is not yet consistent, and more than one phrase is used to denote certain concepts:

<i>concept</i>	<i>Thallóczy/Curani</i>
tribe	<i>fis</i>
people	<i>fis, vllazni</i>
nation	<i>vllazni, komb</i>
our ancestors	<i>të parët</i>

Even though the book centres around the idea that the Albanians are a unified people in view of their common ancestry and values and their shared history and language, as it turns out, there are certain differences that need to be accounted for, namely between the Ghegs and the Tosks.¹²³

People belonging to the two major dialects are hardly ever mentioned as a group; however, the geographical distinction (*Toskni, Gegni*) between the two areas is often referred to in the book. The Tosks are first mentioned when the author discusses the Slavic invasion of the 7th century, while the Ghegs are not mentioned before the chapters on the early modern period. The introduction of the Tosks somewhat confuses the meaning of *vllazni*. The speakers of the three major subdialects of Toskland are named Tosks, Labs and Çams¹²⁴ by the author (or the translator). Thallóczy says about the Tosks that “as we know” they are “somewhat different” and they are also orthodox, but heroism (*trimni*), (especially in the case of the Çams) and blood (*gjak*) still connects them with the rest of the Albanians. What matters is that “*we are all Albanians*.”¹²⁵

Pekmezi, Gjergj. *Albanisches Lesebuch*. Wien: Hartleben, 1914 and Weigand, Gustav. *Albanesische Grammatik im südgeegischen Dialekt (Durazzo, Elbasan, Tirana)*. Leipzig: Barth, 1913. It would be interesting to know if Thallóczy’s book contributed to the spread of this word.

123 Apparently, the book aimed not only to introduce Christian and Muslim communities, but also sought to clarify the Tosk–Gheg relationship.

124 “Toskërija dhëet ndër tri vllazni: Toskët vetë, Labt e Çamt.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 187.

125 “Sikur e dijmë, na s’kena asnji të dëmë prej Toskve, veç goja, që na ndreron pak. Por, me goditë na shkrimit e gjuhës s’onë në nji mënyrë që t’i pëlqejë të dy gojeve, mundena udob me u marrë vesht njëni me tjetrin. E besimi i Toskve, që janë ortodoks, nuk na dán gjakun e Shqyptarit që kena bashkë.” Thallóczy, *Të ndodhunat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 187.

Thallóczy's book often draws on the literary works of the *Rilindja* period, mainly on the works of Pashko Vasa and to a lesser extent on the poetry of Naim Frashëri and it is highly likely that it also influenced the contemporaries of the national movement. While there is no direct evidence, it may be assumed that in his writing entitled *Shqipëri – ç'ka qënë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhëtë* (1899), Sami Frashëri may have used the most important parts of Thallóczy's 1898 book.

Whether Aleks Buda could also have read Thallóczy's work cannot be proved without thorough research. I, personally, can hardly imagine that he did not; in part, because there are too many similarities between Thallóczy's and Buda's perspectives and in part because the collapse of the Monarchy did not disrupt the continuity of Albanology in Austria: Albanologists and expert officials remained the same until the end of the 1930s. Alongside state officials, the second generation of Austro-Hungarian Albanology was most active in Vienna in the interwar period (e.g. Norbert Jokl). The so-called *Albanienkomitee* (*Österreichischer Verein zur Förderung Albanien's*), founded in the summer of 1913, was also a part of the Monarchy's heritage. In the early 1920s the Committee was re-established and continued to bring together the social, political and economic groups that took an interest in Albania. This second generation of Albanologists took care of the Albanians who enjoyed a state scholarship. It is clear from the estate of state official August Kral¹²⁶ that beyond organizing the students' education and accommodation, the scholars also paid attention to their personal development. The students came to know the old Austro-Hungarian historical traditions as well as modern Albanology, the brainchild of the former empire. One of them, Sander Bushati, even earned a doctorate in Vienna on the history of independent Albania (1912–1913).¹²⁷ He may not have been the only one who searched the relevant archive and library sources.

III. An outlook on the future

After the fall of Communism, in the mid-1990s, Albanian society expected their historians to provide new points of historical reference. After decades of dogmatic historical discourse entrapped by politics and ideology, the people demanded a new “national” perspective that would adapt to international trends and include the history of Albanians living outside the country's borders. However, the new comprehensive works still reflected a rather centralist attitude, which, in turn, mirrored the state of Albanian internal affairs in the period. The strong resistance to the much-demanded paradigm shift stems from the fact that the body of historiographers remained unchanged after 1991. There were, of course, some perspectival changes, but the

126 ÖStA HHStA, 19. Nachlässe, Nachlass August Kral, Kt. 1–5.

127 Bushati, Sander. *Die Entstehung des Fürstentums Albanien*. Diss., Vienna, 1940.

fundamental characteristics of Albanian historiography, such as the glorification of national myths, events and personalities (“the glorification of an imaginary world”¹²⁸) stayed the same. Propagandistic rhetoric and elements of folklore continued to dominate Albanian historiography in the 1990s.¹²⁹ If we refer again to Fatos Kongoli’s text quoted at the beginning of the present study, we may say that it is time one posed to the Albanian (and other East-European) historians the same questions that were asked from the participants of a writers’ meeting in Thessaloniki: “*Do you think, with your writing, that you are serving your national identity? Do you think that all writers from the region have a common Balkan identity? What, in your opinion, is the difference between writing history and writing literature?*”¹³⁰

It is true, however, that Albanian historiography must face enormous challenges. It may take their historians decades to overcome certain towering obstacles. One of the greatest problems is that historical research is heavily underfunded, and historians often experience financial difficulties. A general framework for scholarships is also missing: the expenses of research conducted abroad must be covered by the researchers themselves. Another problem is that after the fall of Communism a number of social sciences were virtually non-existent in Albania and the scholarly community had to lay the foundations anew.¹³¹

Despite the above, a serious and wide-ranging theoretical debate is to be expected regarding the interpretation of Albanian national history. Muslim historians have already argued that Albanian historians have tended to depict the “Ottoman past” with too dark colours; this nearly 500-year-long period was not merely black and white, and certain views need to be revised.¹³² Besides the Muslim–Christian historical differences, the disparate regional traditions (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia) also play a role in shaping the new discourse which would undoubtedly mean a great leap forward for Albanian historiography. This is particularly true given that historical myths should be considered taboos only as long as a national community

128 Lubonja, Fatos. ‘Between the Glory of a Virtual World and the Misery of a Real World.’ In *Albanian Identities. Myth and History*, edited by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer, 91–103. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

129 Albanian historiography still considers the national history as a strictly internal affair, and does not seek to incorporate the results of international researches. Historians also neglect to reflect upon the East European embeddedness of Albanian history. This, however, to a certain degree, is true of Hungary, too. For Hungarian historiography the history of Hungary is, to date, a synonym for the history of Hungarians; the multinational character of the state was not even mentioned in public education before the 18th century. On the methodological and theoretical criticism of Albanian historiography after the fall of Communism, see: Duka, ‘Ten Years of Post-Communist Historiography in Albania. Reflections on the Past in the 90-ies’, 513–520.

130 Kongoli, ‘A simple Truth’, 125.

131 On staffing problems and other issues, see Pichler, ‘Die albanische Historiographie seit der Wende’, 521–524.

132 Pichler, ‘Die albanische Historiographie seit der Wende’, 525.

is insufficiently strong to address them; and the Albanian nation does now have the strength required.¹³³ There is evidence that Albanian society has been in need of an open debate of their history since the turn of the millennium.¹³⁴

Starting such a debate requires enormous courage and audacity, since an intellectual dispute is one thing and convincing the public is another. The average Albanian citizen, like his other Eastern European, thus Hungarian, fellows, has an intense, almost irrational, emotional and spiritual relation with his national history. Therefore, Albanians *automatically* interpret any criticism of the national history as a *personal* attack.

Kongoli in his already quoted essay puts it this way when reflecting upon Nikos Kazantzakis' *Freiheit oder Tod* (Frankfurt a.M., 1994),¹³⁵ a work that takes place in the 1880s and 1890s. One of Kazantzakis' heroes says:

“God is not an Albanian [‘Arvanite’] [...] He is an Orthodox Christian and will give me my rights someday.’ [Kongoli’s comment:] Indeed, I felt insulted. My first thought was to put the book aside. Into the depths of my indoctrinated brain flashed the word ‘anti-Albanian’, a term used quite often in the official propaganda of the time. But it was such a beautiful, masterfully written book that I obeyed an inner voice which told me to finish the novel despite the ‘anti-Albanian’ phrase in it. I was curious, and there were more surprises to me. The Albanians had committed crimes against the Greeks, too. The book described terrible atrocities carried out by Albanian soldiers in the Ottoman army against the people of Crete. That explained to me why the Albanians were objects of hatred for the protagonist of the novel. Yet, this was all in such contrast to my identity, my education, to everything I had learned as a child, and later from books. It was carved into my skull that Albania and the Albanians were the victims par excellence of hundreds of years of injustice committed by others.

133 Schöpflin, George. ‘The Nature of Myth: Some Theoretical Aspects.’ In *Albanian Identities. Myth and History*, edited by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer, 26–30. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

134 “Let us take a look, for example, at what the younger generation is now studying in history and which texts of traditional literature they are required to read in school. It is evident that curricula are in urgent need of revision – not to paint an unduly rosy picture of the reality of our relations with our neighbors – but to free our children from the spirit of hostility, hatred, and contempt. [...] Keeping with my oversimplified argument, conciliation between two individuals and consequently between two ethnic groups would, however, require compromise on both sides. Each side must be willing to forget something. To forget the past, or at least part of it. [...] There is not an easy solution. The only way forward is to explain the truth.” Kongoli, ‘A simple Truth’, 132–133. More on this topic: ‘Roli i miteve në historinë e Shqipërisë.’ *Përfaqëja* VI, no. 15–16 (1999); Schmitt, “Die Monade des Balkans” – die Albaner im Mittelalter, 9.

135 The title of the Greek original: Kazantzakis, Nikos. *Ho kapetan Michalēs*. Athinai: Diphros, 1955.

They had been subjected to five centuries of Ottoman rule and had then fallen prey to their rapacious neighbours, the Greek included. This other side of the coin was reflected in Greek memory, in the above-mentioned words uttered by Kazantzakis's protagonist."¹³⁶

At this point, the reader written by a Gheg who loves his country in 1898 may prove useful once again, because Thallóczy's historical concept features certain elements that may resolve the paradoxes of Albanian history and may lay the foundations to reshape the Albanian historical self-image.

Let there be no misunderstanding: Thallóczy did not resolve historical problems and did not predetermine Albanian historical thinking. He merely sought to provide the basic framework for a potential national historiography. Although Albania scientifically was falling behind its Balkan neighbours at the turn of the 20th century, the Albanian nation was given a chance to close the gap before it became fatal. Thallóczy wanted to create the conditions of scholarly work, thinking and development: *"All else will grow out of the developing national sentiment."*¹³⁷

136 Kongoli, 'A simple Truth', 129.

137 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV. Albanien, Kt. 20, letter of Thallóczy to Kállay, Vienna, July 10, 1897, ad.Z. 937/Pr. BH es 1897. The German letter and its equivalent Albanian translation are published by Beluli: Thallóczy, *Të ndodhurat e Shqypnis prej nji Gege që don vendin e vet*, 62–63.

