

## Socio-Political and Economical Circumstances in the Albanian Territories

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### Abstract:

*On the eve of the 30s of XIX century, the territories inhabited by Albanians, although they began entering at the process of important socio- economic changes, but still kept the features of disadvantaged regions. However, in the Albanian historiography after World War II, or better to say a part of it holds great idea that the return to socio-economic life, but also in that of political and cultural, had already occurred. In other words, the Albanians in their lands were entering a new era in the history of their country that was named National Renaissance.<sup>1</sup>*

*It was the time when the monetary economy began to spread on a wider scale, while several Albanian cities with populations became a factor, becoming owner and developer of manorial economy, closely linked to the market. But preliminary division of Albania Pashallik, which constituted separate political and administrative units up to 30s of XIX century, become the major obstacle in creating a common market for all territories inhabited by Albanians. In fact, the domestic market remained divided on several major systems between districts, without any strong links to goods and material goods.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Kristo Frashëri, On the Albanian national movement, “Historical studies” I, Tiranë 1965, 106 - 107.

<sup>2</sup> Albanian historiography, noting that trading systems then identified based on the geographical area where extended Albanian population, as market in northern Albania, which was part of the Kosovo Plain of Dukagjin, that of central Albania, and Southern Albania. More broadly on this: Mr. Shkodra, Albanian City during the Renaissance, Tirana, 1984, 24.

**Key words:** Albania, Turkish (Osman), Political, Renaissance, National

## **PREFACE**

Cities, which in one way or another carried the functioning of the unifying socio-political centers, were: Shkodra in North Albania and Prizren in northeastern Albania. The first one established close economic relations, especially with Ulcin. Aristocracy of this seaside town that for a long time, being the owner of a large number of warships, had a special role in maritime trade with Albania. Apart from these cities, there were other important socio- economic centers. Thus, in Elbasan, in Middle Albania was the junction road linking Durrës to the eastern regions of Albania and the Balkans. While in the South, Berat and Janina were two other centers of administrative and economic importance to southern Albania.

## **NATIONAL RENAISSANCE**

The beginnings of the Renaissance took place among Albanian inhabited territories where they had tensed relations with the Gate. The disappearance of Albanian Pashalliks semi-independent of Ali Pasha and Mustafa Pasha Bushatit, and breakups old Albanian feudal-aristocratic families, create a atmosphere of war with the Ottoman Emperor. All this came as a result of despotic absolutism of Sultan, of the feudal anarchy and the robbery of arbitrariness and uncertainty in regions populated by descendants of the Illyrian-Arber.

In such circumstances, Sultan Mahmud II began efforts to strengthen its centralist rule. He continued to organizing regular army under the European model, and in 1832 abolished the timar system.

Seven years later, his ancestor, Sultan Abdul Majeed made the first desperate attempt of Ottoman hierarchy, aiming rehabilitation of the failed of political and economic system over the oppressed peoples.

Thus, as the first official act, that opened the era of reforms is considered "Holy Gjylhanesë Decree" ("Hatt-i Şerif-i Gül-hane"), promulgated on November 3, 1839 in the hall "Gül-hane" ("Rose hall"), where the old imperial building stood in Istanbul.

It is general opinion on international historiography, but also of Albanian, that Tanzimat started being applied before the promulgation of Decree Gjylhanesë. Of the same opinion is also the French traveler and historian, Engelhard. Having served more than twenty years as a French diplomat in the East, he ascertained that the "Decree Gjylhanesë" began in 1866. So, this reform began to be put into liquidation order immediately after the janissaries by Sultan Mahmud II, an order that a barrier of implementing these reforms<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps this view is supported by his compatriot, Georges Castellan<sup>4</sup>. However, there also exists a whole neighborhood of authors who see the commencement of "modern" reforms of Tanzimat earlier, as Gjevdet Efendi<sup>5</sup>, Muhammad Cefket<sup>6</sup>, Halil Inalçık<sup>7</sup>, and Enver Ziya Karal<sup>8</sup>.

In chronological contemplation the commencement of tanzimat's measures, the Albanian historian, Zija Shkodra, sees it also at the reforms of Sultan Selim III. He considers Nizam-i Cedid-in as the first step of the Ottoman Empire that led to the

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<sup>3</sup> Ed. Engelhardt, *La Turquie et le Tanzimat ou histoire des reformes*, Paris 1882, 8 - 9.

<sup>4</sup> Georges Castellan, *Histori e Ballkanit*, Tiranë 1996, 289 - 290.

<sup>5</sup> Cevdet-i Tahiri, *Istanbul 1309 (1893)*, vol.12, 289 - 290.

1. Muhamed Cefket, *Osmanli Teskilat ve kıyafet askeriye*, Istanbul 1325, vol. I, part II, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Muhamed Cefket, *Osmanli Teskilat ve kıyafet askeriye*, Istanbul 1325, vol. I, part II, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Gülhane Hatt-i Humayunda Batının Etkisi*, Nö "Belleten", Ankara vol. 28, nr.112, 1964, 856.

decree of 1839. Professor Shkodra recalls that proper steps, which led the Tanzimat way in Albania began to apply in the years 1821-1831, with tragic end to Ali Pasha and Mustafa Pasha Bushatli therefore with the destruction of the old feudo-Albanian doors<sup>9</sup>. Again, according to him the Gjylhanes decree was nothing but a meso event of the second phase of reforms of 1831 - 1848. Petrika Thengjilli, meanwhile, speaking about the Tanzimat reforms, ie the imperial decree of "Gjylhane" 1839, points out that preparations for it the began earlier and they began with the reform of the Nizam-i Cedit preferred by Sultan Selim III<sup>10</sup>.

However, almost a century historiography gives different judgments and estimates for the Tanzimat, sometimes contradictory. There is no doubt that the views of the Ottoman circuit feuds and clerical Ottoman collide with Albanian historiography generally. However, it is a constellation of foreign historians that see Tanzimat implementation in Albanian areas, even as a revolutionary phenomenon, whereby see secession of Ottoman imperial from the Middle Ages and its path towards European modernization<sup>11</sup>. Such estimates may be accurate, if seen in the context of the interests of the Ottoman Empire. But in essence, tanzimatist acts, even if the guarantee life, honor, wealth and confidence of all citizens of the Empire regardless of nationality<sup>12</sup>, religion, although, they did not recognize the principle of nationality<sup>13</sup>. In other words, these reforms will not recognize Albanians as the nationality or the right to education and schools nor any form of local

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<sup>9</sup> Z. Shkodra, Albanian at times of Tanzimat, Tiranë 1959, 3 - 4.

<sup>10</sup> Petrika Thëngjilli, National uprisings against otomans in Albania 1833 - 1839, Tiranë 1981, 17 - 18.

<sup>11</sup> Johann Georg Von Hahn, Albanische studien, Jene 1854, f. 52, 193; A. Galanti, L'Albania, Romë 1901, f. 217; Thodor Andon Ippen, Contribution a l'histoire de la Turquie aux XIX siecle et particulierement de l'Albanie, në Revue "Albania", Bruksel 1902, nr.4, 125 - 130; N. Jorga, Breve historie de l'Albanie et du peuple albanais, Bukuresht 1919, 63; A. Baldeci, L'Albania, Rome 1929,135.

<sup>12</sup> Albanian History II, Tiranë 1984, 43.

<sup>13</sup> Zana Lito, Albania and Tanzimat, Tiranë 2002, 19.

government. According to Renaissance distinguished ideologist, Sami Frasher, Tanzimat was a new submission of Albania<sup>14</sup>, where there was a wild administrative pressure, unbearable fiscal policy and prolonged military service.

There are historians of different countries, who, first of all, see the negative consequences of the reforms that brought Tanzimat for national liberation movements of peoples subjected to the Ottoman Empire. In this assessment it is part of the Albanian historiography. And all this, is best seen in resistance of the peasant masses, since the implementation of reform. Above all, this is noticed at the folk songs<sup>15</sup>.

In the same line of thought, with a deep critic, will stay Pashko Vasa, who in his book titled, "The truth about Albania and Albanians", spoke out against the reforms and misery, the Tanzimat brought Albanians in general. With the implementation of this reform, he wrote, the Albanian people looked on in disbelief the officials sent from Istanbul to govern with them, because those officials were not suitable to history, or customs nor the aspirations of the people<sup>16</sup>.

Consequently, the Albanian history enriches with the initiative of the phenomenon of organizing major population uprisings against oppression and antialbanian reforms, those insurgencies fuelled as results of new socio - economic new and political circumstances of Albanian territories, which were unfavorable. Thus, the years 1831 - 1877, are characterized with ongoing war against religion and against reform of Osman rule, where all ethnic Albania turned into a major hotbed of wars. From Kosovo and Dukagjin Plain and even up near the

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<sup>14</sup> Sami Frashëri, "Albania what was, what is and what shall become?", Tiranë 1962, 49 - 50.

<sup>15</sup> Anton Çetta, L'echo du Tanzimat dans la chanson folklorique "Le Clap lutte contre Arabe Pacha", në "Recherches albanologiques", 1985, nr. 2, Prishtinë 1987, 297 - 313; Qemal Haxhihasani, Rebellion of 1847-ës in our national poetry, "November", 1954, nr. 9, 138 - 146; Folk song of Tanzimat times, in "Our Literature", 1947, nr.10, 1 - 8, etc.

<sup>16</sup> Pashko Vasa, "La verite sur l'Albanie et les Albanais", Paris, Stamboll 1879, 73.

Gulf of Arta, armed movements erupted against Ottoman provincial local government. Their loving spirit was as strong as they were not quite fled deep impression of many foreign travelers, who recorded their impressions, in many countries there was a mood of deep liberator<sup>17</sup>. Even the English vice consul in Preveza, but also the Ottoman administration, confirmed that the beginnings of the 30s of XIX century, everything was in a state of war<sup>18</sup>. While describing the situation in southern Albania that of 1833, an imperial officer of Istanbul, wrote: "... Of course, for these (Albanians - F. Sh.) It is hard obedience and submission towards the Empire. They maintain the will to regain their previous status<sup>19</sup>.

## **RENAISSANCE DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE YEARS**

Thus, during the 30s and 40s of XIX century, cities such as Shkodra, Berat, Prizren, Peja, Dibra, Elbasan etc., Became the center of bloody combat against violence, robberies of the new brutal Ottoman administration. Shkodra 1835, for six months, becomes the center of anti-Ottoman uprising and, under Hamez Kazazi lead, they extended the uprising, in all areas of Northern Albania<sup>20</sup>. Also, a serious rebellion broke out in the district of Berat, this uprising in 1835 was extended to Preveza<sup>21</sup> Once again, the rebels had formed Besë-lidhjen (loyalty oath), which was tasked with organizing all the population against Tanzimat reforms, aiming to include all

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<sup>17</sup> Ami Boue, *Recueil d'itinéraires dans la Turquie d'Europe*, Wienue 1854, t. I, 327; Ed. Spencer *Travels in Turkey through Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania and Epirus*, London 1853, t. II, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Public Record Foreign Office (further PRO-FO), 195/97/X/y 6621, letër e W. Meyerit, Prevezë 25 gusht 1833.

<sup>19</sup> P. Thëngjilli, *Character and location of the popular uprisings of the years 30s of XIX century in the Albanian National Movement "Historic studies"* 4, Tiranë 1980, 161.

<sup>20</sup> Z. Shkodra, *Albanian at times of Tanzimat*, 30 - 32; P. Thëngjilli, *The character of the national uprisings ...*, "Historic studies" 4, Tiranë 1980, 165.

<sup>21</sup> More in details : Bedrush Shehu, *Albanian issue in '30s of the XIX century*, Prishtinë 1990, 269 - 275.

territories inhabited by Albanians. That the uprising was serious, it was confirmed immediately when Berat fell to the hands of rebels, led by Tafil Buzi.

English self based resource knew, then, that Tafil Buzi, being signing had become a "serasker of Albania" ("Commander in Albania")<sup>22</sup>. In that same year, Buzi called the Albanian population to organize a general uprising. Consequently, the Ottoman administration renounced violent recruitment, whilst another request for replacing the Ottoman officials, was not taken into account.

Anti reformist spirit continued in the 40s of XIX century, for which a witness of time, Austrian doctor, J. Müller (J. Mueller), claimed that the Albanian vilayets centers, "Gjylhanesë decree" was not announced up till 1843<sup>23</sup>. In other words, the Gate implemented reforms in Kosovo in 1843, in Shkodra in 1844, while in South Albania in 1845. So commencement of implementing those reforms at ethnic Albanian areas is done on different times, though possibly the Gate wanted to avoid immediate revolt of all Albanians at the same time.

But the 40s of XIX century are important for the history of the Renaissance and the Albanian National Movement, because, due to the severe socio-economic circumstances and political simulation comes to the Albanian uprising in Kosovo in 1844, and spread to the western Macedonia. According to the French consul from Ioannina, in the autumn of 1843 the center of the Albanian movement against centralization of the Ottoman and the administration Gate Ottomanism were becoming Sanxhak of Skopje and Prizren. The uprising in this case exploded in Pristina, including then Prizren, Gjakova, Skopje, Tetovo. To the Imperial government, it was disturbing, particularly the uprising in Western Macedonia, in which are mentioned four chiefs, as Dervish Cara, Dervish Poda, Dervish

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<sup>22</sup> PRO-FO, The report of W. Meyer form Preveza to London, 25 .08. 1834, 256.

<sup>23</sup> Z. Lito, Albanian and Tanzimat, Tiranë 2002, 117.

Kapo and another person, whose name still remains unknown in historiography. Moreover, the rebels had managed to liberate Skopje, Tetovo, Pristina, Çuprilina, and Prilep to approach the Manastir<sup>24</sup>.

Kosovo Albanian uprising of 1844, including a part of Macedonia, died with blood, but its echoes are felt almost the entire Albanian country. According to Austro - Hungarian Consul to Shkodra, Theodor Ippenit Andon, Albanian rebels since then demanded autonomy. However, Russian newspapers in November of that year thrust out that the Albanian insurgency leaders agreed to stop fighting, provided that the Gate to give them the same rights that are enjoyed by autonomous Serbia. As a result of complex social - political, economic circumstances, southern Albania will become deeper field of confrontation with Ottomans. It was the year 1847 when the uprising erupted in Kurvelesh, led by Zenel Gjoleka, then uprising of Berat surroundings under the leadership of Rapo Hekal. For some time, rebels under the leadership of the Gjoleka is set free Delvina and Butrint and create free territory around Gjirokastra. To the uprisings of Gjoleka and Rapo Hekal, later on will join also Labëria, Qameria, Myzeqeja, Vlora surroundings and Mati.

Although the rebellion was extinguished, they were precursor of Albanian Movement with emphasized national character. Of the similar event, even the Greek resources talk about, which, though essentially anti-Albanian, among other things, claims for traces of looting, violence and mass killings by Ottoman army in southern Albania. The Gate already implements the harshest of the new system of recruitment, and its obscurantist administration<sup>25</sup>.

The 50s of XIX century in the history of the Albanian people and the Albanian National Renaissance, namely the years 1856 to 1876, for Albanians were times of the

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<sup>24</sup> Po aty.

<sup>25</sup> Sh. Raça, Greek –Albanian relations, Prishtinë 1990, 63.



continuation of the deepening of the Movement of National Revival in unfavorable Balkan and international circumstances. It is the time when after the Crimean War and the Paris Peace, the Gate is forced to proclaim the continuation of Tanzimat reforms, thus further officialise the Hatihumajun, who essentially did not touch the agrarian relations in Albanian villages and in the Albanian city's fiscal policy. Thus, Albanians, somehow found themselves in an even more difficult position than at the time of Tanzimat, although they were already in a higher degree of their war of national consciousness. It's time when, because of the imposing emphasized obscurantism of Otoman Empire and anti-Albanian policy of Serbia and Greece, political and cultural movement began to gain great momentum.

Earlier, sources of time confirm the process of identification and emancipation in the national plan. Positive trends, although located in a narrow regional framework, begin to be seen inside the rich activity of Naum Veqilharxhi<sup>26</sup>. Sources in general and historiography in particular, talk more about a important that Veqilharxhi issued in 1844 and marking the advancement of political thinking and the national consciousness. This Vithkuq designs "Ëvetarin", however, by 1845, he invents the second one, for which the Albanian historiography rightly identifies this Ëvetar as programmatic document, which is identified with requests for emancipation of Albanians in the field of culture of education<sup>27</sup>.

Now is also the time where at the Albanian territories was affirmed more and more the usage of the term Albanian,

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<sup>26</sup> Stefanaq Pollo, Problems of Albanian National movement , " Historic studies " 1, Tiranë 1965,143; K.Frashëri, Commencemet of Albanian National Movement, "First conference of albanology studies " , Tiranë 1965, 58.

<sup>27</sup> For the importance of the first primer author Naum Veqilharxhin, more details : New Ëvetar in albanian for rebel sons issued and given now light for the first time , for young boys one chosen out of many good benefits , 1845; Rexhep Qosja, Ëvetari i Naum Veqilharxhit important document of Natinal renaissance, "Albanologic dvelvs" (Series of phologjic sciences), XIII - Prishtinë 1984, Not said , for the young albanian boys !, 228.

for people who spoke Albanian despite being gegë, Tosk, lab or Qam; already being used greatly the term Albania for regions inhabited by Albanians, from Tivar (Bar), Plava, Plane of Dukagjin, Kosovo, areas of Pollog, Ohrid lake and down form Qameria to Preveza.

It is a merit of National Renaissance that even in the 50s - 60s of XIX century will gradually raise awareness of Albanians of the danger that was facing them from politics of Serbia and Greece. Thus, no matter how close a historical literature refers to the risk that political power had presented a purely anti-Albanian in the South. It is Grekomanism as a political phenomenon and, as economic phenomenon, aimed wrinkling of the Albanian market operation and the fight against Albanian traders. In such circumstances, as sources tell us for that time, in '50 -'60 years of the nineteenth century, Renaissance shall oppose the disruptive activities of grekomanism and grekomans. This important mission will carry successfully the progressive bourgeoisie part of South Orthodox Albanian, posing as a primary duty determined to fight against grekomanism<sup>28</sup>.

In compliance with the assimilationist tendencies of grekomans, some Christian-Orthodox renaissance, showed unique thoughts of the risk of extending grekomanism. Among the first ones was Thimi Mitko, who, in addition to the permanent war against demagogic politics of the Gate, he adamantly insisted the fight against religious discord, coming from the Ecumenical Patriarchate and other Greek political and religious entities<sup>29</sup>.

Regarding socio-economic circumstances, it was known that in areas inhabited by Albanians had been abandoned the already degraded system of timars, while preserving the manorial property. Gradually, linking agricultural production

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<sup>28</sup> History of Albanian nation II, 80.

<sup>29</sup> Dhimitër Camarda, A. Dora d'Istria gli albanesi, Livorno 1870, 122; Qemal Haxhihasani, Thimi Mitko, Tiranë 1962,16.

with market fief, the active participation of landowners in trading activities and aspirations for investment in industry, had put them on the path of gentrification. Bourgeoisment of landowners owners in agrarian relations was expressed in more advanced forms.

Undoubtedly, that in the 60s of XIX century, historical literature identifies rapid growth of cities and at the same time the rapid growth of the local economy, which with the emergence and development of capitalist relations were increasingly fitting the way of the new production. The main centers of the local economy still remain Shkoder, Prizren, Elbasan, Berat etc. Especially leaving impressions was the development of handicrafts and small goods production in Prizren town<sup>30</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

A relatively rapid economic development will be felt in the 60s - 70s of XIX century, in southern Albania, which was administered under the Vilayet of Ioannina. Here are distinguished, markets of Gjirokastra, Delvina, then to Arta, Prevezës, Paramithia, Margëllic, Parga and Filat, these cities located in Qameria, known for inhabited by Albanian majority population. Also, in the early '70s, as cities known for commercial trade exchange are distinguished Preveza, Saranda and Vlora. According to the Albanian historiography, these town became dominant factors within exchange of goods in maritime trade, leaving little room to the other competitors, such as those of Malta, Livorno, France and other scaffolding Ottoman Empire<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères de France (further AMAE), report G. Wiet, for the Prizren province on 1866, 478.

<sup>31</sup> Z. Shkodra, Albanian city during the National Renaissance, Tiranë 1984, AMAE, Report of dep. Consul of France Moro for Epir, 1876.

However, by the end of 70s of XIX century, Renaissance was to face great challenges, such as:

1. Major administrative changes that were made by the Gate at the detriment of Albanian ethnicity; and
2. Trends in fragmentation of the Albanian lands form the Balkan alliances on detriment of Albanians and their National Renaissance.

The first challenge had to do with changes in the Vilayet of Prizren and the displacement of the center in Pristina and later with the abolition of the Vilayet of Monastir, whose territories came under the Vilayet of Thessaloniki, where Sanxhaks and kazat , could easily be subjected to assimilation of Christians - Orthodox Albanians to Greek. Thus, Albanians were again divided into four provinces, while the Gate officially denied the existence of Albania as ethnic expression, which seriously harmed national interests of Albanians, this way serving the chauvinistic aspirations of Balkan bourgeoisie, against Albania<sup>32</sup>.

The second big challenge for National Renaissance was exactly the opposition of Balkan neighbors, against territorial integrity and the preservation of Albanian ethnic being. Thus, on the eve of the Eastern Crisis, anti-Albanian inclination shows three neighbors countries of Albania: Greece, Serbia and Montenegro. In such circumstances, the formation of the national Albanian state becomes a matter of urgency; therefore it was the major goal of the Renaissance and the Albanian National Movement. The latter should do anything, in order to impose to the international community the unification of scattered ethnicity in a single Albanian vilayet. In this context, the minimal program of the Renaissance will appear, with other projects for political autonomy, cultural and administrative, implementation of which depended on the vagaries of the international community and less from the

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<sup>32</sup> K. Frashëri, *The Albanian League of Prizren 1878 - 1881*, Tiranë 1997, 21.

National Renaissance. Further resources will expose a series of difficulties and conspiracies against Albanians and their National Movement, before, during and after the Albanian League of Prizren.

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