

## The Role of Albanian Personalities in the Ottoman Empire

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### Abstract

*Albania was one of those countries whose physical and geographical position was tempting and favorable in the Western Balkans as well as South-Eastern Europe. Its position attracted many conquerors and empires through centuries who established their territorial and political hegemony. One of these was also the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, not only a political and economic power of that time, but also with the purpose of following the policy of territorial expansion, it intensified its efforts not only in the Balkans but also in other regions. The conquering policy was mainly focused on the linguistic, educational, cultural and religious unification including even the income, economy, taxes, the assets of this place, going even further aiming the use of the political elite as well as Albanian and Balkan leaders, who were soon under the subjugation and in the service of the Empire.*

**Keywords:** Albanian personalities, Ottoman Empire, expansion, viziers

### 1. Introduction

Albania was one of those countries whose physical and geographical position was tempting and favorable in the Western Balkans as well as South-Eastern Europe. Its position attracted many conquerors and empires through centuries who established their territorial and political hegemony. One of these was also the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, not only a political and economic power of that time, but also with the purpose of following the policy of territorial expansion, it intensified its efforts not only in the Balkans but also in other regions. The achievement of hegemony went through two phases, something which was also mentioned by the famous researcher Petrika Thëngjithi. The first phase was that of vassalage. It was conditioned by two factors:

- the endurance of the Balkan feudal states and the impossibility of the Ottomans to break them immediately
- also the Ottoman state and the governing class in the 14<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was still in its formation

The second phase was the conquest and the emplacement of an administrative military system in the conquered regions. In the Balkans the conquering directions were determined by the geographical conditions. They followed the direction of the historical route of Via Egnatia, towards the west, passing through Serez, Manastir and Ohrid until they reached the Albanian coasts in 1385.<sup>1</sup>

The conquering policy was mainly focused on the linguistic, educational, cultural and religious unification including even the income, economy, taxes, the assets of this place, going even further aiming the use of the political elite as well as Albanian and Balkan leaders, who were soon under the subjugation and in the service of the Empire.

We are all aware of its achievements, and hegemony of this empire, one of the biggest empires in the world, as well as its reforms and reformers, its political economic educational scientific cultural power, religious domination (Muslim religion and Islamic faith), the executing power of the legislation (Shariah), not only its military strength but also that of the countries which were under its dependence etc.

A great help for the development and increase of the Ottoman Empire in every direction, was also given by the human potentials of the invaded territories conquered by it during different periods of time.

If we look at the Turkish history, everybody would be amazed at the data that we would find concerning the number

<sup>1</sup>Petrika Thëngjithi "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Tiranë, 1997, page 20.

of Albanian personalities<sup>2</sup>, who on behalf of the Ottoman Empire have reached the peaks of the administrative, political and military **power**. We could mention 35 important viziers<sup>3</sup>, of Albanian origin. "...Out of these 35 viziers, we could mention Kara Murat Pasha who used to be prime minister twice. Another one was also Damat Ferit Pasha, who was appointed prime minister 5 times. Besides Ahmet Pasha from Dukagjini and Hysejin Pasha from Ohrid, Mehmet Pasha from **Ura**<sup>4</sup>, Mustafa Nail Pasha from Crete and Said Halim Pasha from Egypt are said to be Albanians. The two above mentioned prime ministers although from Crete and Egypt, according to the Ottoman official registers are said to have had Albanian origin. Damat Ferit Pasha was born in Istanbul. Shortly concerning the Albanian identity, the Ottoman official registers have determined even the deepest roots of origin."<sup>5</sup>

This caste of prime ministers, not only served the Ottoman Empire, but there were cases when they organized conquests even in the territories of their place of birth, due to the policy of the Ottoman expansion. Other prime ministers, of Albanian origin, would not accept to organize such conquests of their native land, sometimes even risking their lives.

As it is also mentioned by Shyqri Nimani: "During the Ottoman Empire of five hundred years, Albanians reached many achievements, giving in this way many prime ministers to this Empire, who sometimes would even destroy with no mercy the lands of their birthplace. But there were also prime ministers, such as Gedik Ahmet Pasha, who risked their lives because of refusing to lead military campaigns against their birthplace.<sup>6</sup> He also served as an admiral of the Ottoman fleet with a number of 300 ships and 700.000 soldiers. He refused to invade Shkodra, an invasion which the Ottoman Empire realized through the beylerbey of Rumelia the Albanian Koxha Davud Pasha, because of this refusal he was removed from the position of the prime minister and he was imprisoned. In 1480, the sultan sent him out of prison and entrusted him the army containing 100.000 soldiers and a fleet of 281 ships, which he would use to conquer Southern Italy, through Albania (Vlora). The invasion of Otranto castle was achieved, but after the death of the sultan Mehmet II, and since the conquered territories were inhabited by Arbëresh, Gedik Pasha gave them the castle together with Ottoman commanders (Albanian) who later on would serve as mercenaries of the Italian princes.<sup>7</sup> That was an act which would cost his life.

"I am Ahmet Pasha, the one who others also call with respect as Gedik. Because of my big deeds I am also known as Kreshnik (Knight), but when Padishah ordered me to invade heroic Shkodra, I refused and gave my life – by Jove I would never betray my country."<sup>8</sup>

The Ottoman Empire would reach its highest peak during 1520-1550, especially during the time of the Sultan Sulejman. We are not going to focus on his achievements which are already known worldwide but we are going to focus on the role of the viziers of Albanian origin, who were in his service such as: Ibrahim Pashë Pargalliu, Ajaz Pasha, Lutfi Pasha, Rustem Pasha, Kara Ahmed Pasha etc.

**Ibrahim Pasha** was a high vizier during the time of the sultan Sulejman, but he was also his loyal friend. His Albanian origin is thought to be from Parga, considering even his surname Ibrahim Pashë Pargalliu. Concerning his origin it is written that: "Ibrahim Pasha (1493-1536), of a slave origin, was assigned as a bey, but he also served as a prime minister for 13 years." While according to the Turkish researcher EsinAtil: " Ibrahim Pasha was kidnapped when he was a

<sup>2</sup> According to statistics of the Ottoman Empire, the number of Albanians was 1.500.000. These data belong to the year 1884, connected to the ethnic spread of the Ottoman population. This information was taken from the Research Centre for Islamic History, art and culture IRCICA. "Historia e shtetit, shoqërisë dhe qytetërimit Osman". Vol.I Tiranë 2009, page 503.

<sup>3</sup> Muzaffer Tufan "Toleranca Osmane që mbrojti identitetin e popullit shqiptar". Osmanli' Dan Arnautlik' a Tahirihoşgörüyleyazdik. "Nga Perandoria Osmane ne Shqipëri e shkruam historinë me tolerancë", Tiranë 2005, page 121-123. Gedik Ahmet Pasha, Davud Pasha, Dukagin-oglu Ahmet Pasha, Ayes-Mehmet Pasha, Lutfi Pasha, Kara Ahmet Pasha, Ohridi-Hysejin Pasha, Mere Hysejin Pasha, Yabani Yassi Mehmet Pasha, Kemankes Kara Mustafa Pasha, Cican-Kapucubasi Sultan Semin, Kara-Murad Pasha, Terhuncu-Ahmet Pasha, Zurnazen Mustafa Pasha, Koprulu Mustafa Pasha, Koprululu-zade Numan Pasha, HacıHalil Pasha, Hacı-Ivaz Mehmet Pasha, Ivaz-zade Halil Pasha, Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, Memis Pasha, Giritli-Mustafa Naili Pasha, Mehmet Ferid Pasha, Misirli Said Halim Pasha, Misirli Said Halim Pasha, Damad Ferid Pasha.

<sup>4</sup> According to Muzaffer Tufan "The village of Rodnik belonging to the sandzak of Berat had had four sons from Ura who used to be prime ministers. The term "from Ura" implies a neighborhood in the mini municipal unit of Amasje, where Mehmet Pasha had already built some places for public use through which he became well known. Moreover even Ahmet Pasha, Mustafa Pasha and Numan Pasha who belonged to the same family origin, they became well known creating in this way a family of prime ministers, something which was very rare in the Ottoman history." Toleranca Osmane që mbrojti identitetin e popullit shqiptar, Osmanli' Dan Arnautlik' a tahirihoşgörüyleyazdik. "Nga Perandoria Osmane ne Shqipëri e shkruam historinë me tolerancë", Tiranë 2005, page 113.

<sup>5</sup> Muzaffer Tufan, Toleranca Osmane që mbrojti identitetin e popullit shqiptar, Osmanli' Dan Arnautlik' a tahirihoşgörüyleyazdik. "Nga Perandoria Osmane ne Shqipëri e shkruam historinë me tolerancë", Tiranë 2005, page 113.

<sup>6</sup> Shyqri Nimani, "Amavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 14.

<sup>7</sup> Shyqri Nimani, "Amavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 54.

<sup>8</sup> Shyqri Nimani, "Amavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 40.

little boy, and he was given an excellent education." When the sultan Sulejman was assigned to the throne, Ibrahim Pasha was appointed Has Odabasi (prime guardian of treasure). He had taken part in the military campaign in Belgrade (1521), in Rhodos (1522), Mohaç (1526) and in Vienna (1529). He had improved the situation in Egypt (1523) and he had also pressed the uprisings in South-Eastern Anatolia (1527). He was also assigned a prime minister in 1523 and he was appointed a *serasker* (chief commander of the armed forces) in 1529, a position which was reserved only for the sultans.<sup>9</sup> Being thirsty for power and the continuous conflicts with the sultana Hyrrem, influenced his execution by her. He served the Ottoman Empire in many directions. He was assigned a High Vizier by the Sultan Sulejman, since he was his favourite one. "The close collaboration of Sulejman with his new friend brought lucky events for the empire. He was clever, realist, with great political skills and a strong personality. Ibrahim Pasha played an essential role, bringing back the time when he was a great vizier (1523-1536), the greatest period of the golden Ottoman century."<sup>10</sup>

**Ajaz Pasha** was the second vizier during the period of the sultan Sulejman, who loyally served him. He was sent by the sultan to press the uprising that had already been started in Egypt by the Ottoman vizier Ahmed Pasha, who had been self-assigned as the sultan of Egypt, no longer dependent on the sultan Sulejman. During his time he was assigned as bey of Anatolia and vali of the vilayet of Syria. He took part in the expedition of Moldavia, and in the entourage of Corfu. In 1535 he was assigned a prime minister instead of Ibrahim Pasha. His origin is thought to be from Vlora.<sup>11</sup>

**Lutfi Pasha** used to be a vizier, he was Albanian but there are discussions concerning his birthplace. According to researchers he might have been from Shkodra or Vlora.<sup>12</sup> During the period of the sultan Sulejman, he became a prime minister. He served as a chief military commander for the empire, in its expeditions in the regions of Poje, in the south of Italy and in Siujdhese of Corfu. He also used to be a vizier of the second and third rank. In 1537 he became a prime minister after Ajaz Pasha. He used to have great knowledge of Arabic literature as well as philosophic sciences. He was the writer of "The book of viziers" (Asaf-name), "The experience of researchers" in the philosophic field etc.<sup>13</sup> In one of his earliest writings known as Asafname, in which he describes the organization of the Ottoman state, Lutfi Pasha does not pay much attention to the *ulema*, even when he mentions them he does not show any particular consideration to them.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Rustem Pasha** (?-1560)

In 1554 he was assigned as a chief vizier, a position which he held for 14 years. His origin is thought to have been from Illyria<sup>15</sup>, where he was taken as *devşirme*.<sup>16</sup> He was a prime minister twice, from 1544 to 1553, and from 1555 to 1561. Together with his wife they used to be supervisors of the religious and charity objects. They were the gods of the famous architect Sinan.

**Kara Ahmed Pasha** used to be one of the most important viziers during the period of Kanuni Sultan Sulejman, a position which he held for two years. He started his career by being an agha, agha of the janissaries, *beylerbey* (governor-general) of Rumelia, and later on a vizier. He took part in the battle near the border with Iran, by destroying the army of the Shah Tahmasib. He also took part in the war of Temishvarin 1552, where the Kurdish were obliged to surrender. He was sentenced to death because of the intrigues made to the family of the sultan. According to Hammer, the reasons of his execution were: " ... Kara Ahmed Pasha, as an important vizier, changed Rustem Pasha who used to be the son –in-law of the sultan. In this way the main reason of his death was to fulfill the desire of the sultan's wife, to assign her son –in-law in the position of the vizier."<sup>17</sup>

**Dukagjin-zade Mehmet Pasha** used to be a vizier during the period of the sultan Selim Hanit. He served as a vali in Halep and Egypt. He was the writer of poverty. The dynasty of Qyperllinjve<sup>18</sup>, for several generations during the years 1656-1683, gave its contribution and help through its representatives, in the consolidation of the Ottoman state, which used to experience difficult situations during this period of time. Some of the most important representatives of this

<sup>9</sup>Shyqri Nimani, "Arnavad, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandori në Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 121.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Mantran, "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Dituria 2004, page 147.

<sup>11</sup>According to the Encyclopedia of Sami Frashëri "Kâmûs-al –a' l'âm", Istanbul, 1889.

<sup>12</sup>H. Kaleshi in "Roli i shqiptarëve ne letërsinë orientale", The seminar of Albanian culture for the foreigners, Pristina 1976, page 175 cited: "Lutfi Pasha was from Shkodra". Taken from: Shyqri Nimani, "Arnavad, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 129.

<sup>13</sup>According to the Encyclopedia of Sami Frashëri "Kâmûs al-a'lâm", Istanbul, page 1889.

<sup>14</sup>"The members of Ulema were jealous of each other. Nobody believed them. Lutfi Pasha, Asafname. Research Centre for Islamic History, art and culture IRCICA, "Historia e shtetit, shoqërisë dhe qytetërimit Osman", Volume I, Tiranë 2009, page 278.

<sup>15</sup>This has been cited from Nexhip Alpan (Alban) as well as the Turkish researcher Esin Atil.

<sup>16</sup>The practice by which the Ottoman Empire forcibly took boys from Christian families

<sup>17</sup>Shyqri Nimani, Hammer, vep. e cit, Volume I. page 132

<sup>18</sup>It was an Albanian feudal family from the village of Roshnik in Berat. Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë, "Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar", Volume III, Tiranë 2009, page 2191.

dynasty are:

**Mehmet Pashë Qypriliu**<sup>19</sup> comes into power at a time when the political situation was worsened and an iron hand was needed to establish stability within the empire. In this way he was appointed a prime minister when he was 75 years old.<sup>20</sup> Immediately after being assigned to this position, he got several measures. "During the early year of his governing he sentenced nearly 30.000 people. He sentenced to death even the orthodox patriarch, whom he hung. He also disciplined the army of Spahinjve. This led to the temporary expansion of the Sultan's power. All these actions taken by him, led to the reinforcement of the army especially the fleet. He also reinforced the authority of the central power."<sup>21</sup> In this way he ensured unprecedented peace and managed to achieve great success in the relationships with other countries. "He used the great power that he had, to break the Venetian blockade (1656), and he also retook the two islands Lemno and Tenedho. Order and peace had already been established although by force and bloodshed. Although it is to be admitted that authority was already established in these provinces and the central financial sources ensured the institutionalization of the structural changes in the Ottoman political life. This undoubtedly led to a new period of "revival", and the positive results would only be understood after the year 1683."<sup>22</sup> He was also a great admirer of culture.

**Fazli Ahmet Pasha** used to be a prime minister from 1661 up to 1676. He took the position of his father as a prime minister for 15 years, but he was not as severe as his father used to be. He paid great attention especially to the case of Transylvania which was an unsolved issue during his father's time. But he managed to achieve success including it in the Ottoman territory.<sup>23</sup> Fazli Ahmet Pasha was also well known as a protector of culture, writers and artists. He also opened a library which today holds the name of Qyprillinjve.

**Kara Mustafa Pasha** was another representative of the Qyprillinjve family (the son-in-law of Mehmet). He occupied the place of his forefather as a prime minister. He adapted himself to the new conditions already established in the Empire, because of the Christians' revolts and he acted more carefully. The actions and reforms taken by the Qyprillinjtë served to temporarily stop the crisis but it could not be definitely removed. All these led to the temporary improvement of the situation in the Ottoman Empire. Peace and order had been established, the central power was reinforced, the incomes had been improved, abuse of the villagers' taxes had been reduced etc. But of course this would not last for a long time, since the fight for power within the imperial court would cause the deterioration of the situation and the change of four sultans in a short period of time.

Albanian personalities were not always obedient soldiers of the empire. In many cases the rebellious spirit of Albanians was openly shown not only versus the highest leaders but also even versus the sultan. Regarding this issue the German researcher Hammer has cited: "the disobedient nature of the Albanians has always been openly shown through their hatred."<sup>24</sup> Through this action they would justify even the reaction of the Albanian prime minister Kara Mustafa Pasha, who would be directed to the sultan with the following words: "Padishah, is it worth inviting me for 500 wood loads from Divan and give an end to that? This blocks and drags some of the most important issues. So you are asking me about those 500 wood loads, instead of asking me about the begging of your people, about the borders and the treasure?"<sup>25</sup> His reaction after advice he had taken, was: "Is it for his good to be honest by telling the truth, and spoiling him? It is better dying by freely speaking than living as a slave."<sup>26</sup>

Restricted tolerance of the Ottoman state was one of the main characteristics of this empire versus the countries it had under its control and the absorbing of personalities from these states. This absorbing was mainly done by taking into consideration the skills, loyalty, and intelligence of these personalities despite their religion, that is despite being Muslim or Christian. In many cases the Ottoman policy based on the achievements, successes and loyalty of these personalities concerning the duties they had carried out, it would also determine the continuity of power and duty even to their descendants, their family members. If the duties had not been carried out properly it was again the Ottoman policy that would determine the sentences, persecutions and executions of those who abused with the loyalty and positions that

<sup>19</sup> He came from a poor family. He had worked in the kitchen of the sultan. Due to his willpower and his self-control he managed to get high state positions, although he didn't know reading and writing. He was energetic. Petrika Thëngjilli, "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Tiranë 1997, page 20.

<sup>20</sup> Petrika Thëngjilli, "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Tiranë 1997, page 149.

<sup>21</sup> Petrika Thëngjilli, "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Tiranë 1997, page 149.

<sup>22</sup> Research Centre for Islamic History, art and culture IRCICA, "Historia e shtetit, shoqërisë dhe qytetërimit Osman", Volume I, Tiranë 2009, page 73.

<sup>23</sup> Research Centre for Islamic History, art and culture IRCICA, "Historia e shtetit, shoqërisë dhe qytetërimit Osman", Volume I, Tiranë 2009, page 74.

<sup>24</sup> Shyqri Nimani, "Arnavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 28.

<sup>25</sup> Shyqri Nimani, "Arnavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 28.

<sup>26</sup> Shyqri Nimani, "Arnavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 28.



these personalities held on behalf of the Ottoman Empire (as it was mentioned above the case of Gedik Pasha). This can be confirmed through the help of the ottoman documents. Based on these documents we manage to learn that: "Mehmet Ferida Pasha was the son of Mustafa Nuri Pasha who was assigned to work in Vlora. He was born in **Janina** (Ioannina) in 1851. Mehmet Ferid Pasha, on his father's side came from the dynasty of Koygu Sinan Pasha. While from his mother's side he belonged to the family of Ali Pashe Tepelena."<sup>27</sup>

Through the strategies and policies that the Ottoman Empire realized in the conquered territories, including even Albania, it managed to get from the Albanian families healthy children and beautiful girls, realizing in this way what wars and campaigns could not do. This was clearly witnessed by Hoxha Sadedin who cited: "Before the Sultan went against the territories of Karaman, he would send Ali Bey Evrenozin to steal Albanian territories. Ali Begu had enslaved outnumbered males and females. It is also worth mentioning the sultana Gjylbehar, of the Sultan Mehmet II who was Albanian. We could also mention viziers who married with the closest people of the sultans (their daughters or sisters)."<sup>28</sup>

For example Mustafa Pasha<sup>29</sup>, who got the rank of the second vizier during the time of the sultans Sulejman Javuz Selim Hanit, and the Sultan Sulejman Hanit, he married the sister of the Sultan Sulejman. Dukagjin-zade Mehmet Pasha, a vizier during the time of the Sultan Selim Hanit later on even Sulejman Kanuniu, he was the son-in-law of the Sultan Selim Ibrahim Pasha, since he married with the sister of the Sultan Sulejman, Hatice in 1523. Lutfi Pasha married with the sister of the Sultan Sulejman Hanit. Rustem Pasha married with the daughter of the Sultan Sulejman and the sultana Hyrrem, Mihrimaha. Even their daughter married with the prime minister with Albanian origin (Semiz) Ahmed Pasha (who stayed for just one year as a prime minister, 1579-1580). All these personalities were from Albanian territories such as: Ohrid, Arta, Vlora, Berati, Manastiri etc. Out of these important people, three of them were the most prominent ones whose efforts raised Turkey in the military field. But the contribution of the Albanian personalities was seen even in other fields and functions : pashas, reformers, military commanders, governors, economists, poets, linguists, architects, painters, psychologists etc.

In the military field it is important to be mentioned Mehmet Pashë Bushatlliu, who was also the founder of the **Pashalik** of Shkodra. He was given the title of the vizier. He served the empire even as a commander of the Ottoman fleet for the protection of the Greek archipelago with the ships of Ulqin and Tivar.<sup>30</sup>

Mehmet Aliu of Egypt<sup>31</sup> and Mustafa Pashë Shkodrani were strong and powerful rulers. Mehmet Aliu leading a paid Albanian army went to Egypt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in protection of the ruler of this place. He became the commander of a cantonment due to his great leading skills in the military field. He got the position as the ruler of Egypt, a position which was known by the High Porte as the position of a vice king. He initiated several reforms in the military and economic field (agriculture, trade, fiscal system) which undoubtedly led to an obvious development of Egypt. He also asked the support of French specialists. He paid an annual charge to the central power. His efforts helped Egypt go towards an independent state. He helped the central power by pressing the Greek revolution, with the condition of giving Crete, Morenë and Syria. The last one would be taken by paying a huge amount of money to Russia, according to the Adrianople agreement. The Sultan did not keep his promise, and this obliged him to get into relationship with Mustafa Pasha.<sup>32</sup> The relationship would have some conditions which were: Mehmet Aliu would help Mustafa Pasha with money, while the last one would provide supply of wood and agricultural products. This agreement was not realized. Among other fleet captains of Albanian origin we could mention: Hamza Bey, Gedik Ahmed Pasha, Kemankesh Kara Mustafa Pasha, Kara Murad Pasha, Zurnazen Mustafa Pasha, Kilavuz/ Kose Ali Pasha, Amcazade/ Sarhosh Hysejin Pasha, Nasuh – yade Ali Pasha, Kilari Suleyman Refet Pasha. Among the most important reformers we could mention Koçi Beu from Mborja of Korça. In 1630 he introduced in front of the High Porte the project of reforms for the modernization of the Ottoman State. He was a worker of the Ottoman Empire, and the compiler of two tractates which were presented to Sultan Murat IV and Ibrahim I. He was of the opinion that religion and state could exist only in knowledge (otherwise known as *Ilm*). This *Ilm* was made by the

<sup>27</sup> Taken from A.g.e., Cilt.II s 1587; "Toleranca Osmane që mbrojti identitetin e popullit shqiptar". Osmanli' Dan Arnavutlik' a Tahirihoşgörüyleyazdik. "Nga Perandoria Osmane ne Shqipëri e shkruam historinë me tolerance", Tiranë 2005, page 115.

<sup>28</sup> Shyqri Nimanî, "Arnavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 25.

<sup>29</sup> He took part in the battles against Hungary. He was mainly distinguished for his loyalty and accomplishment of duties. In 1521 he was assigned as the vali of Egypt. He returned in Istanbul being awarded the rank of the second vizier. (According to the Encyclopedia of Sami Frashëri "Kâmûs al-a'lâm", Istanbul, 1889.

<sup>30</sup> Petrika Thëngjilli, "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Tiranë 1997, page 167.

<sup>31</sup> He is thought to be from the field of Korça. His family later on moved to the town of Kavalla. His father used to deal with the trading of tobacco.

<sup>32</sup> The ruler of Shkodra

religious officials otherwise known as *ulema*.<sup>33</sup> In the first tractate there was said: "The Ottoman Empire was falling, the Spahinjtë were lacking the desire to take part in wars, land possessions had passed to non-military people, bribery was present everywhere, there was noticed an exaggerated luxury... Many of these examples were taken from the Albanian environment by KoçiBeu in order to prove this situation. The only way to get out of this situation was turning back in time, during the period of the Sultan Sulejman when the system of Timar was blooming; reducing the number of soldiers serving with payment; confiscating the illegal land of religious institutions (otherwise known as *vakëfeve*) and giving it to the Spahinjve; reducing the taxes; assigning skilled people in the administration and army; reinforcing discipline in these fields; banning of bribery in the administration etc." These reforms undertaken by the sultan provided temporary results. While in the second tractate, which was similar to the first one, he appreciated the Albanians, and he suggested the sultan to rely on them. He is often referred to as the founder of historical literature in Turkey, as the "Montesquieu of the Turkish" or as "the Machiavelli of Turkey".<sup>34</sup> Among the main secretaries of Albanian origin in the Ottoman Empire we could mention: Ekmekçi / zade Ahmet Pasha; Prevezeli / Mustafa Pasha; Zurnazen Mustafa Pasha ; Kilavuz / Kose Ali Pasha; Defterdar / zade Mehmet Pasha.

A high number of Albanians became part of the Ottoman parliament created after the proclamation of the constitution by the sultan Abdyl Hamiti. There were selected 35 deputies from the Albanian territories such as: Abdyl Frashëri, Kostandin Kristoforidhi, Mihal Harito, Mehmet Ali Vroni, Jusuf Podgorica etc. There were treated different problems in the parliament concerning the situation of their regions but also concerning the status of the Empire. The deputy of Janina, Abdyl Frashëri asked for a draft concerning the educational reforms in 1878. He said: "The existence of a people relied on education, on the system of social justice and on the governing through officials. These three things do not exist in our case. In order to make progress in our society, these three duties need to be realized immediately."<sup>35</sup> In the parliament there were discussed many drafts concerning the governing of vilayets, municipal organization, administration, press, budget etc. The contribution of Albanian deputies was very important. At a time when the parliament stopped its work, and the parliament was faced with the obscure politics of the sultan Hamit II, all movements (with constitutional character) against him started powerfully. Many educated Albanians were involved in these movements, who believed that the constitutional movements were the only way of making progress. Ibrahim Temo was the Albanian who together with a group of medical school students created a Secret Committee against the despotic regime of the sultan. He had been baptized as the "Ottoman Union" consisting of 25 people. The committee created new cells and its members were known otherwise as the "Young Turks". Many Albanians inside and outside the empire joined this movement, such as: Ismail Qemali, Dervish Hima, Hamdi Ohri etc. The movement of this committee is well known inside and outside the empire, but this is not our objective. What we aim is pointing out the role of Albanians in it and its movement. In the Congress of the Young Turks, Paris 4-9 February 1902, among the delegates there took part the following Albanians : Ibrahim Temo, Ismail Qemali, Dervish Hima, Hamdi Ohri, Jashar Erebara etc. "During his speech Ismail Qemali opposed the program of the Young Turks, which aimed to reinforce the "centralized power" to the detriment of the rights of the other people of the Empire. He supported the idea of a decentralized monarchy which would provide equal rights to all the citizens of the empire in taking part in the local government. He also required the intervention of Europe concerning the control and implementation of the constitution as well as the implementation of the new reforms."<sup>36</sup> Ismail Qemali thought that the organization of a coup d'etat with the help of European countries could be the way of bringing down the absolute regime of the sultan. He was given the task of dealing with the financial and political aspect of this coup d'etat, but he failed because of the way chosen by him and the attitude held by France and England.

**Pashko Vasa** (1825-1892) , otherwise known as Vaso Pasha in the Ottoman archives, was another important Albanian personality (he was from Shkodra), whose powerful position could be distinguished within this empire. He served the empire with loyalty, holding important positions such as The Governor of Lebanon (1883-1892)<sup>37</sup>, but inside his spirit he remained Albanian. He used to be one of the most important personalities of the Albanian National Renaissance. He used to be Christian, he worked for an Ottoman state where Islam was the only religion, but he still remained a patriot. His conscience could find peace only through his call : "Albanians... ! ... Do not look at churches and mosques, Albanians' religion is Albania."

Albanians in the Ottoman empire used to play important roles not only in politics and army but even in other

<sup>33</sup> Research Centre for Islamic History, art and culture IRCICA, "Historia e shtetit, shoqërisë dhe qytetërimit Osman", Volume I, Tiranë 2009, page 279.

<sup>34</sup> "Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar", Volume II, Tiranë 2009, page 1196.

<sup>35</sup> Petrika Thëngjilli, "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Tiranë 1997, page 220.

<sup>36</sup> Petrika Thëngjilli, "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Tiranë 1997, page 224.

<sup>37</sup> Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë, "Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar", Volume III, Tiranë 2009, page 2857.

important fields such as education, science, literature, architecture etc.

It is worth mentioning the great scholar Hasan Tahsin (1811-1881), who was the founder and rector of the Istanbul University.<sup>38</sup>

**Sami Frasheri** (1850-1904) is also known as the compiler of 6 science volumes of the Turkish Encyclopedia "Kâmûs al-a'lâm", besides his contribution in other important aspects. It is also worth mentioning the founder of the classical ottoman architecture Sinan Atiku, otherwise known as Kristo Dullo from Berat; Shedefqar Mehmet Agai or Bitakçiu from Elbasan<sup>39</sup>. He used to be the architect and builder of the most famous mosque in Istanbul, the Blue Mosque. He was born in Elbasan in 1562. He was taken as *devşirme*, and he used to be the pupil and assistant of Koxha Mimar Sinani. He studied architecture in Istanbul. He took part in the building of the mosque Muradije in Manisa, near Izmir. He became the main architect of the empire, building many palaces and cult objects.

The poets: Mehmet Akif Pejani, Jahja Bej Dukagjini, Prishtinasi Mesih, Sun'ullah Efendiu from Skopje were mainly distinguished in poetry and they gave a great contribution in it.

In history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of the most distinguishing personalities who raised the issues of Turkish history at a worldwide level was Fuat Qypri<sup>40</sup>. The number of Albanians who greatly contributed in all fields of the Ottoman empire is endless.

One of the most distinguished personalities is also Scanderbeg, or otherwise known as Gjergj Kastrioti in Albanian. He was taken and educated in the school of *iç-ollganëve*, during the time of the sultans Mehmet I and Murat II. He was awarded the title *subash* (governor) of the vilayet of Kruja, due to his skills and services versus the empire. He was also given a feud of his own. After the events having happened in Albania, he sent him to a remote part of the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>41</sup>

However he never forgot his birthplace. He managed to find the right time to abandon his service and turn back as a liberator. The Albanian legendary hero, and the creator of the Albanian union had served with loyalty to the Ottoman empire, until he decided to turn back to his birth place and help Albanians. Among Albanians he was known as "the first among the equals".

Albanians are people who have values, virtues and *Besë* (the oath of honor). They have contributed for other nations, they have sacrificed their lives but they have never forgotten their birthplace. The Ottoman chronicler Hoxha Sadedin expressed: "This people is strange. They are quiet versus the faithful people, only when it comes to justice and faithfulness. But they settle accounts with swords to those who approach with hatred."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Shyqri Nimani, "Arnavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 14.

<sup>39</sup>Elbasani-Enciklopedi, "Në Panteon drejt Panteonit", Silver 2000, page 45.

<sup>40</sup> Research Centre for Islamic History, art and culture IRCICA, "Historia e shtetit, shoqërisë dhe qytetërimit Osman", Volume I, Tiranë 2009, page 23.

<sup>41</sup> "Fjalor Enciklopedik Shqiptar", Volume II, Tiranë 2009, page 2350.

<sup>42</sup>Shyqri Nimani, "Arnavud, Artistër shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Pristina 2003, page 21.

