

# From the Austrian-Hungarian Point of View: *An der schönen blauen Donau* and the Accursed Black Mountain Wreath in the Balkans

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In this paper, I contribute to the debate about hegemonic relations between the West European “core” and southeast European “margins” by showing the links between political institutions and knowledge production in the metropolitan Austrian-Hungarian areas on peripheral southeast European societies, including Albania. In particular, I address new aspects of a continuous resonance in the politically instrumentalized theories of the Illyrian origins of the Albanian language and the traditional tenets of Albanian history, culture, and society. In the course of discussion, I address their promotion in the works of key scholars from Leibniz to Thalloczy and Nopcsa serving the pervasive hegemonic and expansionist interests of Austrian-Hungarian imperial colonialism. Arguably, the effects of methodological imperialism are reproduced later to legitimate other, similar purposes of political, economic, and social control by means of cultural and political engineering in national-communist and post-communist Albania.

Keywords: knowledge production, Illyrian theory, Albanian studies, history, cultural traditions, Leibniz, Thalloczy, Nopcsa, Austria-Hungary, Albania

## *Introduction*

The focus on the history of institutions, the careers of particular individuals, and intellectual biographies, trajectories, and followers is crucial to understanding scholarly networks between metropolitan Austrian-Hungarian areas and peripheral southeast European societies, including Albania, much as it is similarly indispensable to any discussion of the relations between mainstream and local traditions. The number of solid studies that address the ideological foundations and political practices of scholarly production in and on southeast Europe has also been rising steadily, at least since the 1990s. The critical handling of ethnographic-historical sources and the actual contributions by practitioners in the discipline produced within certain methodological and theoretical

frameworks involving Austrian-Hungarian intellectual influence may also be of equal importance in assessing the development of Albanian studies.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the absence of an actual West European colonial presence in southeast Europe and Albania, the expansion of the parameters of imperialism and colonialism are nevertheless applicable and, if contextualized, they are useful and fruitful categories of interpretation. The many arguments for a “metaphorical” or “surrogate” understanding of colonialism and pseudo-imperialism demonstrate the rich symbolic possibilities of a specific political system which in its very development points immediately to manifest Western imperialist moorings.<sup>2</sup> Often such arguments have contextualized the disguised “supra-colonial,” “crypto-colonial,” or “self-colonizing” conditions,<sup>3</sup> which are arguably new terms for the old concepts of internal colonialism, post-colonialism, and neo-colonialism, which elsewhere I have shown to have permeated public life in Albania and Kosovo.<sup>4</sup> Such a contextualization is crucial in the historical and the current production of any knowledge at a given time and in a given place, as any knowledge or “theory is always for someone and for some purpose.”<sup>5</sup> This can also contribute substantially to a more nuanced understanding of how Austrian-Hungarian colonialism maintained and continues to maintain a surprising degree of cultural and political influence far beyond its official spheres of power.

The critical review of the scholarly production on Albania and southeast Europe offers a reconstruction of the shifting ideological foundations of the cultural particularism and cultural determinism in the writings of Austrian-Hungarian scholars on Albania and the Albanians. As with German-writing “non-traditions” more specifically,<sup>6</sup> the task is therefore not simply to summarize previous and established insights and opinions, but rather to question the previously established opinions that today seem to be one-sided or condemnable. Ultimately, we need to consider how to engage constructively with the past in ways that may develop a vision for renewed approaches within Albanian studies

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1 I am grateful to Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics and Gábor Demeter for their invitation to write this article for the *Hungarian Historical Review* and for constructive comments and suggestions helping improve my arguments and bringing to my attention a number of Hungarian details.

2 Fleming, “Orientalism.”

3 Pandolfi, “L’industrie humanitaire”; Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the looking-glass*; Kiossev, “Self-Colonizing Metaphor.”

4 Doja, “Démocratie et stabilité.”

5 Cox, “Social Forces,” 128.

6 Gingrich, “The German-Speaking Countries.”

from the perspective of those critical and internationally oriented positions that we need to strengthen and promote today.

### *Illyrian Theory of Albanian Ethnogenesis*

Among the classical earlier cases are the reflections of prominent polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), who, with a show of unusual intuition, first speculated on the Illyrian origins of the Albanian language. He showed sporadic interest in Albania and Albanians since his first writings, namely in March 1672, in relation to his broader encyclopedic interests.<sup>7</sup> He involved himself more directly in Albanian issues during his first stay in Vienna (1688–1689), when he tried to attract the attention and interest of the Austrian emperor. The fall of Ottoman-captured Belgrade to the Austrian imperial army on September 6, 1688, gave him the opportunity to address Emperor Leopold I with a memorandum known as *De Albania occupanda*,<sup>8</sup> in which he advised the continuation of the military offensive until the Ottomans had been forced out of the Balkans.

In his later writings, Leibniz was interested and participated in the intellectual discussions regarding philological and historical issues about the Albanian language. Namely, he was in doubt about the Slavic origins of the Albanian language. “As this language prevails along the Adriatic coast, it is incorrectly called *lingua illirica* [i.e. Slavic language],” whereas the language of the ancient Illyrians must have left a mark in the Epirus highlands.<sup>9</sup> He then assumed an Illyrian origins of Albanian, “from where we learn what the language of the ancient Illyrians was,”<sup>10</sup> “whose remains survive in the today’s special language

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7 Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, vol. 4, *Politische Schriften*, part 1, “Consilium Aegyptiacum” 15, “Justa dissertatio” II, “De Zaimis et Timariotis,” 318–21; “De primo Visiro,” 324–26; “De Christianis in Turcico Imperio agentibus,” 331–37. <https://leibniz.uni-goettingen.de/files/pdf/Leibniz-Edition-IV-1.pdf>.

8 “Leopoldus Primus Austriacus Imperator turcas Europa divulsos opprimet armis,” *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, vol. 4, part 3, 27–38.

9 “Quant à la langue des Albanois j’ay peur que ce ne soit une espece d’Esclavon; car cette langue regne le long de la mer Adriatique. On l’appelle par abus *linguam illyricam*. Mais je crois que la langue des anciens illyriens estoit toute autre chose s’il y en avoit un reste dans les montagnes de l’Epire, cela seroit tres curieux, et tres digne de nostre recherche.” Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, vol. 1, part 24, 414. Leibniz to Maturin Veyssiere De La Croze, Hanover, June 25, 1705, 736. <https://leibniz.uni-goettingen.de/files/pdf/Leibniz-Edition-I-24.pdf#414>.

10 “Vous m’avez fait beaucoup de plaisir, en me mandant d’avoir reçu un livre & un Dictionnaire de la Langue Albanoise; par là nous apprenons quelle étoit la langue des anciens Illyriens.” Leibniz, *Opera Omnia*,

of the Epirots.”<sup>11</sup> He preferred to refer to Albanian as an Epirotic language, i.e. the language of inhabitants of Epirus.<sup>12</sup> Current critical readings often notice the formulation in less than a single line of Leibniz’s assumption of the Illyrian origins of Albanian language as an *opinio communis* of the intellectual quarters of the time, which must have led Leibniz to a “pseudo-identification of Albanian as an Illyrian language.”<sup>13</sup> It was also considered “an extraordinary intuition of the genius Leibniz” in the history of *Albanologie*,<sup>14</sup> which “might be weighed up to be correct according the standards of today’s knowledge.”<sup>15</sup>

Leibniz inferred his assumptions from a polyglottic situation in which Albanian-speaking people lived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries under Ottoman rule. Though largely confined to the domain of oral expression, since at least the sixteenth century, Albanian language nourished several ecclesiastical literatures.<sup>16</sup> Writings in Albanian were more frequent in the North, facilitated by the major Catholic evangelization efforts launched under the patronage of Propaganda Fide. They included publications in Albanian of a Catholic Missal by Gjon (John) Buzuku in 1555, the *Christian Doctrine* by Luca Matranga in 1592, and another *Christian Doctrine* and the *Roman Ritual and Mirror of Confession* by Peter Budi in 1618 and 1621. In addition, a first Albanian Dictionary was published by Frank Bardhi in 1635, and a first substantial work of religious literature not translated but originally written in Albanian was published by Peter Bogdani in 1685.

Despite their limited dissemination, texts written in Albanian at that time may have stimulated the cultivation of the Albanian language, which, in combination with ecclesiastical rivalries and a differential opposition to Ottoman rule, must have promoted an inherent cultural process of differentiation among Albanian speakers in the western Balkans. I have argued elsewhere that the contradicting motivations of language politics, political resistance, Enlightenment ideas, Orthodox evangelism, ecclesiastical friction, and missionary confrontation must have created the conditions for a boundary work of the social reorganization

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vol. 5, 36. Lettres à M. Maturin Veyssière La Croze, Lettre XV: De la langue albanoise, Hanov. 10. Decemb. 1709, 494. <https://books.google.fr/books?id=KWxkAAAAcAAJ>.

11 “Et credible est, ejus reliquias in peculiari quâdam linguâ Epirotarum hodiernâ superesse, cujus specimina edita vidi.” Leibniz, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 6, Epistola insigni viro Johanni Chamberlaynio, Vienna, 13 Januarii 1714, 197. <https://books.google.fr/books?id=B-o8AAAAcAAJ>.

12 B. Demiraj, “Si ta lexojme Lajbnicin,” 166.

13 Reiter, “Leibniz’ens Albanerbrieft,” 88.

14 Kastrati, *Historia e albanologjise*, 171–72.

15 B. Demiraj, “Si ta lexojme Lajbnicin,” 164.

16 Hetzer, *Geschichte des Buchhandels*.

of linguistic and cultural differences.<sup>17</sup> From the second half of the sixteenth century, this boundary work may have placed great value on belonging to a linguistic-cultural community, engendering a distinctive consciousness that the Catholic missions deliberately strengthened.

Leibniz addressed his memorandum known as *De Albania occupanda*<sup>18</sup> in these circumstances, just as he anticipated later his assumption of the Illyrian origins of Albanian based on the Albanian linguistic material produced precisely in this context. He clearly stated this when he showed particular pleasure concerning “a book and a dictionary of Albanian language, from where we learn what the language of ancient Illyrians was.”<sup>19</sup> Leibniz must have based his speculations about Albanians and the Albanian language on Albanian texts by authors like Peter Budi in 1621 and Frank Bardhi in 1635, who considered Albania and Epirus, Albanians and Epirots, or Albanian and Epirotica language as simply one and the same country, people, and language.

At that time, the modern term “Epirus” was used as a synonym for “Albania” (*Epirus sive Albania*, or *Epirus hodie Albania*). More precisely, before 1622, “Upper Albania” was identified with “Western Macedonia” and “Epirus” was identified with “Lower Albania,”<sup>20</sup> which was used as an alternative to Epirus until the nineteenth century,<sup>21</sup> while the Epirots and the Epirotica language were identified with the Albanian people and Albanian language. In Skanderbeg’s own words in October 1460, “se le nostre croniche non menteno noy ne chiamamo Epiroti.”<sup>22</sup> In 1483, the main Epirot character in a Venetian play used swearwords in native Albanian (*Epirota* 11.803).<sup>23</sup> In 1593, Pope Clement VIII equated Epirots with the Albanians (*opera Epirotarum, quos vocant Albanenses*).<sup>24</sup> Again in 1685, Peter Bogdani equated Epirus with Lower Albania (*Arbëni Poshtëri*).<sup>25</sup>

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17 Doja, “Ecclesiastical pressures.”

18 Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, vol. 4, part 3, 27–38.

19 Leibniz, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 5, 494.

20 According to Philip Cluver (1580–1622), “Albania distinguitur in *Superiorem*, quae Macedonia pars occidentalis; & *Inferiorem*, quae olim Epirus & exigua pars Helladis.” Cluverii, *Introductio in universam Geographiam*, 361–62. [https://archive.org/details/philippicluerii00clve\\_7/page/360/](https://archive.org/details/philippicluerii00clve_7/page/360/)

21 Lorentis, *Νεωτάτη Ἀδακτιζή Γεωγραφία*, 434; Aravantinos, *Χρονολογία της Ηπείρου*, vol. 1, 121.

22 Arch. St. Milano, *Carteggio Sforzesco*, Albania, cart. 640. Published in Monti, “La spedizione”, 159.

23 B. Demiraj, “Mallkimi i epirotit (1483).”

24 Brief from Pope Clement VIII to Felipe II, March 27, 1593. Published in Floristan, “Jerónimo Combis”, 179. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5709678>.

25 For more details and related sources, see Xhufi, *Arbërit e Jonit*, 10–21. I am also grateful to Kosta Giakoumis for providing further information in a personal email communication, November 6, 2021.

The marginal annotations on the linguistic material that Leibniz thumbed through in the Albanian text of the *Christian doctrine* by Peter Budi were taken, quite literally, from the “Remarks on the Epirotic, i.e. Albanian, Language and Letters” introducing the *Latin-Albanian Dictionary* by Frank Bardhi.<sup>26</sup> Among the first texts, Leibniz observed undoubtedly Bardhi’s remark that “the special idiom of the Epirotic people or Albanian language is different in the way of speaking both from the Greek and from the Illyric, or Slavic, even though it spread out between the two; people’s boundaries and the environment seem to have been obtained [from it].”<sup>27</sup>

While in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term “Illyrian” remained distinct from “Albanian” as a people and language name, and was rather used as a synonym for “Slavic,” Albanian prelates and intellectuals forcefully insisted on the distinction between the Albanian language and people on the one hand, and the Greek and Illyrian (i.e. Slavic) languages and peoples on the other. In addition, Albanian linguistic and cultural distinction grew stronger through the more political rather than the religious resistance among Albanian-speaking Catholics to Dalmatian bishops,<sup>28</sup> which is clear evidence of a boundary work of opposition to both Slavic Catholicism and Orthodox Slavic speakers.

Alongside the observations noted by Leibniz in the *Dictionarium Latino-Epiroticum (seu Albanesarum)*, Frank Bardhi also published a substantial apology of Skanderbeg in 1636, intended against Slavic megalomaniac and brash historical fabrications, in order to restore George Kastrioti the Epirot, known as Skanderbeg, as the invincible Epirotic prince of Albania.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Peter Mazreku, Albanian archbishop of Antivari (1624–1634) and apostolic administrator of Serbia (1634–1642), called on the Holy See for a full mission program, including the establishment of an Albanian college, distinct from the “Greek” (Orthodox) and “Illyrian” (Slavic) colleges in Rome.<sup>30</sup> He clearly advocated the construction of Albanian Catholicism in connection with the Catholic universality and in distinction and separate from the Slavic Catholicism

26 Reiter “Leibniz’ens Albanerbriefe”; B. Demiraj, “Si ta lexojme Lajbnicën.”

27 *Annotationes de lingua, & litteris Epirotarum, seu Albanesarum*: “Proprium Epiroticae gentis idioma, seu Albanesia lingua à Graeca, & Illyrica, seu Slavonica loquendi ratione planè diversa est, licèt inter vtriusq; gentis confinia veluti media constituta conspicitur.” Bardhi, *Dictionarium latino-epiroticum*, BKSJ An.IV.R.1. <https://books.google.fr/books?id=EPtJAAAAcAAJ>.

28 Molnár “The Catholic Missions,” 76–77.

29 Bardhi, *Georgius Castriotus*.

30 APF, SOCG, vol. 263, fol. 266r-284v.

known at that time as “Illyrianism.”<sup>31</sup> In turn, as Albanian Catholic Archbishop of Skopje Peter Bogdani reported, Slavs denounced the Catholic religion as *arbanas̃ka ijera*, the “Albanian faith.”<sup>32</sup> Overall, similar ideas and actions set the conceptual and substantial framework for how to think about Albanian linguistic and cultural distinctiveness in the seventeenth century.

At about the same time as Leibniz, the learned Father Giorgio Guzzetta (1682–1756), who was from Piana degli Albanesi near Palermo in Sicily, made similar assumptions about Albanians and their language.<sup>33</sup> He used the same texts written by these North Albanian authors such as Peter Budi, Frank Bardhi, and Peter Bogdani, whom he called “modern Macedonians,” while Frank Bardhi identified as “Epirot” (*Franciscum Blanchum Epirotam*) and Peter Bogdani as “Macedonian” (*Pietro Bogdano Macedone*) to distinguish themselves from the Slavs and from the Greeks. They were well educated in Latin at the Propaganda Fide College, and they took the initiative to write many books in their own language.<sup>34</sup> For Guzzetta, modern Albanian was a mix of Latin and ancient Albanian, which he identified with Ancient Macedonian,<sup>35</sup> while he insisted that Albanians should be distinguished from the Greeks and from the Slavs and be recognized instead as the direct descendants of ancient Macedonians and Epirots.<sup>36</sup>

In his earlier memorandum *De Albania occupanda*, Leibniz highlighted with sound arguments the appropriate geostrategic position and the political and economic advantages of the Habsburg House, were this superpower of the time to orient its expansion toward the Albanian-speaking areas in the Balkans.<sup>37</sup> In addition, according to Leibniz, the Habsburg Empire would be welcome as a liberator, not an invader, because the Austrian possession of the western part of the Balkans would enable and ensure in compensation the much sought freedom

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31 Fine, *When ethnicity did not matter*, 255–61.

32 “Schiete per antonomassi Fesse Cattolice i thone arbanasca vera,” Bogdani, *Cuneus prophetarum*, BKSH An.V.a.10, <https://www.bksh.al/details/113182>.

33 Guzzetta, *L'osservanza*, 45.

34 “Da lodare sono quindi i moderni Macedoni che, ben istruiti nelle lettere latine nel Collegio de Propaganda Fide, presero l'iniziativa di scrivere in questo idioma piissimi libri ad uso della loro gente e di consegnarli ai nostri tempi nei caratteri tipografici noti.” Guzzetta, *L'osservanza*, 42.

35 “Stando così le cose, una sì grande varietà di voci, sia latine sia barbare, di cui è ricca l'odierna lingua vernacola degli albanesi, si andò componendo a tal punto che noi diciamo che essa non è del tutto latina, ma un misto di latino e di macedonico antico.” Guzzetta, *L'osservanza*, 45.

36 While a hostage in the Ottoman court, George Kastrioti had chosen the name Iskander (Skanderbeg) as a reference to Alexander the Great of Macedon, whose mother hailed from Epirus, and as noted above, he used to call himself Epirot (“noi ci chiamiamo epiroti”).

37 B. Demiraj, “De Albania Occupanda,” 65–66.

and prosperity of these areas. At first glance, Leibniz acted as an encyclopedist, but he also believed that “close to the very mighty there are various opportunities for useful enterprises.”<sup>38</sup> Actually, his intention was to gain the sympathy of the Austrian Emperor, as well as a suitable position as a political advisor to the Habsburg court, which he ultimately obtained in 1712.

Leibniz’s speculations coincided with the political and military developments experienced by the central and western Balkans at the end of the seventeenth century during the Great Turkish-Austrian War. It is perhaps not a mere matter of coincidence that just one year after his memorandum, in September 1689, the Holy League army established its main military camp in Kosovo.<sup>39</sup> This also coincided with the Albanian anti-Ottoman movements of the seventeenth century, which culminated in the important part played by the aforementioned Archbishop of Skopje Peter Bogdani (1630–1689), who had already organized anti-Ottoman resistance among the Albanian Catholics during the 1684–1687 Morean Ottoman-Venetian war. In 1689, the Albanian archbishop was again at the head of the North Albanian Catholics who joined the Austrian army in Kosovo against the Ottomans.<sup>40</sup>

Current critical readings often make note of Leibniz’s interests in and speculations on the Illyrian origins of the Albanian language, focusing only on his interest in Albanian from the perspective of language history,<sup>41</sup> while ignoring the political implications. These implications are treated simply as the “personal traits of any human character,” as is assumed for instance with his intention to obtain a promotion in his personal career as political advisor to the mighty ruler of the time, which would enable him to fulfill his long-term plans in his intellectual-scientific career.<sup>42</sup> This kind of intellectual-scientific collusion with “the personal interests of a human character” is ignored as being necessarily oblivious to the ways in which it serves the hegemonic political aspirations of the superpower of the time. In addition, these issues are deemed as overcoming the limits of a very *albanologische* research discussion, as long as the social engagement and intellectual activity of the scholar remains within the parameters of the moral and ethical code of scientific research of the time.

38 “Bey einem grossen Potentaten sich weit andere Gelegenheiten zu nützlichen Verrichtungen finden.” Hirsch, *Der berühmte Herr Leibniz*, 221.

39 Bartl, *Albanien*, 71.

40 Malcolm, *Kosovo: a short history*, 140–47.

41 B. Demiraj, “Si ta lexojme Lajbnicin.”

42 B. Demiraj, “De Albania Occupanda.”

Viewed from this perspective, the hegemonic policies of any European great power at any time might have supported in one way or another speculations similar to those by Leibniz on the future of Albanian-speaking areas after his suggestion of their inclusion within the Habsburg Empire. Of course, Leibniz cannot be faulted if the speculations he ventured for the sake of his own personal career contributed to the tragic exodus of Christian populations from Kosovo and North Albania during the Turkish-Austrian War. Nor can he be faulted for the future relationships between the possible instrumentalization of Austrian-Hungarian *Albanologie* and the hegemonic policy of political, military, economic, and cultural expansion of the Dual Monarchy in the Albanian-speaking areas in the second half of the nineteenth century until its dissolution after the end of World War I. Again, it is not Leibniz's fault if his assumption on the origins of the Albanian language as the "language of the ancient Illyrians" is stigmatized in our time as the "official thesis" that is said to have shaped the cultural-mythological foundations of *albanologische* studies.

### *Austrian-Hungarian Kulturpolitik and the Foundation of Albanologie*

The context of Habsburg Austria-Hungary shows clearly the extent to which imperial interests informed the politics of knowledge on southeast Europe. The particular Habsburg brand of imperial expansionist energies were of short distances,<sup>43</sup> and they were projected into the Ottoman territories in southeastern Europe rather than overseas. In the nineteenth-century context of the hegemony of Russia in Eastern Europe, the displacement of Austro-Hungarian political and economic interests out of Germany and Italy brought the concentration of the foreign policy of the Habsburg Monarchy on southeast Europe as the only way to resist Pan-slavism and Italian imperialism.

A premier "colonial situation" for Austria-Hungary was located in the former Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were occupied in 1878 and finally annexed by the Monarchy in 1908. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade or so of the twentieth, the continued weakening of the political and economic position of Austria-Hungary in the other southeast European states, which were becoming increasingly independent, fostered a particular interest among Austro-Hungarian policy makers and thinkers in Albanian-speaking areas. Austria-Hungary played an important role

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43 Feichtinger et al., *Habsburg postcolonial*.

in the formation of an Albanian independent state in 1912, and Albania acquired political independence only at the cost of massive economic dependence.

Surely, Austrian-Hungarian objectives were hidden behind a discourse of a “duty” to “civilize” the southeast European peoples, “improve” their living conditions, and bring the region “back” to Europe.<sup>44</sup> The Monarchy had carefully worked out a strategy to survey Albanian natural and cultural resources, as evidenced, for instance, by typical actions of a policy of colonial rule at the initiative of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The *Balkan-Kommission* was founded in 1897 at the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Academy, followed by an *Albanien-Kommission* in 1914. In 1904, the *Institut für Balkanforschung* was established in Sarajevo Landesmuseum (*Zemaljski Muzej*) under the leadership of Carl Patsch. While it was a “domestic” institution in the Monarchy’s occupied territory, the Sarajevo institute focused its research attention on Montenegro and Albania rather than on Bosnia. With the joint sponsorship of Foreign and Trade Ministries, an *Albanerkonvikt* was founded in 1908 in Vienna, followed by an *Albanien-Komitee* in 1913 within the *Österreichische Verein zur Förderung Albaniens*. The General Staff of Austro-Hungarian Armies in the occupied territories finally urged a census in Bosnia in 1879 and Albania in 1918. After all, the annexation of Bosnia in 1908 was “justified” by the considerable investment in infrastructure and education, and the railway of the *Balkanbahn* project in the late nineteenth century was intended to include northern Albania in the Austrian-Hungarian expansionist policy.

In addition, regular research expeditions were organized by the Austro-Hungarian Academies of Sciences,<sup>45</sup> and several scholars traveled to southeast European territories to explore the countries and the peoples. They took an interest in medieval Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Bulgaria, including the supposed ancient features of the history and culture of the Albanian-inhabited areas. The intensive exploration of southeastern Europe must be seen as an expression of the Austrian-Hungarian claim to face competition from Italy and take the leading role in southeast European studies, which came to be branded *Balkanologie*. It was influenced by the discursive conjunction of nationalism and linguistics and was dominated by philological approaches. The so called “Balkanologists” were mainly concerned with ethno-linguistics and historical linguistics, as the languages of southeastern Europe were still in a process of standardization as

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44 Stachel, “Der koloniale Blick.”

45 E.g. Haberlandt, *Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge*.

part of the process of linguistic nation-building. Additionally, through the de-hierarchization of culture in romantic nationalism, folk literature and customs became a legitimate subject of academic research, and in the late 1800s, folklore studies had become the major part of *Balkanologie*.

At the same time, the intensification of Austrian-Albanian relations in the fields of politics, commerce, culture, education, and research contributed to the emergence of a network of maritime lines, railway projects, post offices, consulates, trade companies, social welfare institutions, and credit banks. It is argued that this was a form of informal imperialism based on structural violence.<sup>46</sup> Structural violence affects people differently in various social structures, and it is very closely linked to social injustice, widely defined as the systematic ways in which some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from achieving their full potential. It seems more persuasive to see here a form of “cultural imperialism,”<sup>47</sup> the main thrust of which is “cultural violence.”<sup>48</sup>

Habsburg aspirations and actions intended to secure and strengthen Austrian-Hungarian political, economic, and cultural influence over Albania are a good indication of the creation and maintenance of unequal civilizational relationships. They put emphasis on the practice of promoting and imposing aspects of culture that could be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. Methods of Austrian-Hungarian cultural imperialism and cultural violence included the instrumentalization of religion, ideology, language, art, research, and education. These methods took various forms, such as an attitude or a formal policy of academic influence and research preferences aimed at reinforcing the cultural hegemony of Austria-Hungary, which would then determine Albanian cultural values (*Volkskultur*) in the margins of Europe and modern civilizations (*Kulturvölker*).

The Monarchy had earned the right to provide religious and cultural protection (*Kultusprotektorat*) to Ottoman Catholics in general and more specifically to North Albanian Catholics in successive agreements with the Ottoman Sublime Porte in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in the mid-nineteenth century also in agreement with the Vatican and the Propaganda Fide.<sup>49</sup> The main target of religious, educational, and cultural activities under the cover of *Kultusprotektorat* was to empower a wide emancipatory and civilizational process among Catholics

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46 Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft*, 17–26.

47 Tomlinson, *Cultural imperialism*.

48 Galtung, “Cultural Violence.”

49 Deusch, *Das k.(u.)k. Kultusprotektorat*.

in North Albania. Especially after the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), the political and diplomatic engagement of the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs intensified in order to strengthen religious and cultural identity politics and promote an Albanian Catholic unit under an Austrian protectorate. Since “Albanians are a strong and totally anti-Slavic people,” they could be united into a Catholic Albanian block, which, together with Muslim Albanians, could be used as a stronghold to prevent the expansion of the Slavic Orthodox block on the eastern shores of the Adriatic.<sup>50</sup>

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Austro-Hungarian *Kultusprotectorat* played a prominent role in the Albanian national awakening and in expanding its own vital interests in the Balkans. However, Russia also aimed to expand in the Balkans as a protective power of the Orthodox Slavic population. With the ongoing weakening of the Ottoman Empire and growing opposition to Russia and Serbia, the Albanian question became the main objective of Austria-Hungary, which had to rival with Pan-Slavism and Italy, which since 1891 had become a new power interested in the Balkans.<sup>51</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, internal and international political and economic reasons to preserve its vital interests prompted the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to take an active and increasingly prominent role in the Albanian nation-building process.<sup>52</sup> From 1896 onwards, inspired by the same cultural and religious policy applied earlier to Bosnia, the *Ballhausplatz* (Foreign Office) regularly elaborated various so-called *Albanische Aktionspläne*.<sup>53</sup>

These massive action plans went beyond the *Kultusprotektorat* mandate over the Catholic Albanians and sought to foster and strengthen a common historical consciousness among both Christian and Muslim Albanians with the intention of securing and strengthening the political, economic, and cultural influence of the Dual Monarchy over the whole Albanian population. They would help foster, it was hoped, a preference not only among Catholics but also among Muslim Albanians for the Habsburg Monarchy over other Powers, as both Christian and Muslim Albanians may appreciate Austro-Hungary for its religious tolerance and its resistance to Pan-slavism. By means of extensive financial support of

50 ÖStA HHStA, PA XII/256 Türkei IV, “Denkschrift über Albanien,” Memoir by F. Lippich, Consul in Shkodra, Vienna, June 20, 1877.

51 ÖStA HHStA, PA I/473 Botschaftsarchiv Konstantinopel, “Die albanesische Action des k.u.k. Ministeriums des Äussern im Jahre 1897,” Memoir by Zwiedinek, Albanien-Referent in Ballhausplatz, Vienna, January 11, 1898.

52 Toleva, *Der Einfluss Österreich-Ungarns*.

53 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV Albanien.

educational and cultural activities, Austro-Hungarian policy seemed to boost the strong sense of honor and the national consciousness among Albanians, which generated a general and superficial perception that Austria-Hungary would be one of their main supporters when Ottoman rule had eventually to crumble. As a result, Albanians would have a sense of gratitude toward the Habsburg Monarchy, which in turn could give Austrian interests in Albania an advantage over other political and economic competitors, including Italy.

These plans included the development of a subset of *Balkanologie*, known as *Albanologie*, which encompassed research on Albanian history and language, including the folkloric studies (*Volkskunde*) of people's culture and life worlds. A group of Austrian and Hungarian writers, with a strong interest in Albanians and their history, language, and culture, mobilized themselves to this end, and this led to the emergence of the founding generation of Albanian studies. Research expeditions in Albania undertaken by several of these scholars were intended to provide a clear picture of cultural, social, economic, and political life in the region, which could then be exploited for investment opportunities by the Dual Monarchy. Surely, there was no concrete political program for instrumental research but rather a generous stimulation of *Albanologische* studies, so that in a more serious situation, such as World War I, the leaders of this field of study and their findings could be put at the disposal of the Austrian state interests.

Austrian and Hungarian research institutions exploited every possible way to promote themselves systematically as the future centers for the study and presentation of southeastern Europe and Albania. They presented an agenda for continued research that promised the production of knowledge that would be useful to the military, economic, and political interests of Austria-Hungary.<sup>54</sup> Research and publishing activity by the leading figures of Austro-Hungarian *balkanologische* and *albanologische* studies experienced a boom that paralleled the political interests of the Dual Monarchy in the height of its political and commercial rivalry with Italy and in the course of World War I, which bore witness to the military occupation and administration of the region.<sup>55</sup> With an implicit attempt to gain recognition by the state and achieve a footing as a university discipline, the leading scholars of this movement showed an intensive interest in the study of the occupied territories in southeastern Europe, including Albania.

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54 Marchetti, *Balkanexpedition*.

55 Schwanke, "Zur Geschichte."

Albania itself as a political entity was the joint success of the *Ballhausplatz* Foreign Office and the Austro-Hungarian pioneers of *albanologische* studies, who functioned as an Albania lobby to train and prepare activists for the Albanian national movement to establish an independent Albanian nation state. The importance of the Austrian and Hungarian pioneers of *albanologische* studies in the imperial periphery, however few in number, together with other adventurers, travelers, traders, soldiers, and colonial consuls, is reflected and, indeed, was intensified by the development of the imperial center. Their influence can be shown not only on local people, especially the elites, but also in their decisive influence over imperialistic processes.<sup>56</sup> The structural character of this influence reflects, as elsewhere, a growing unease with the moral, economic, systemic, cultural, and temporal facts of imperial powers.<sup>57</sup>

Scholarship went hand in hand with collaboration, if not collusion, with the military occupation and political administration of these areas, and some renowned Austrian, Hungarian, and other scholars worked on Albanian issues both for academic research and for the expansionist policy of the Dual Monarchy. Unlike Leibniz, who was an independent intellectual hoping to gain the attention and support of the Habsburg Crown, the same cannot be said of many diplomats, politicians, civil servants, and secret agents.

Among them, Johann Georg von Hahn (1811–1869) was the first but not the last diplomat in the Austro-Hungarian foreign service to work extensively on Albanian history and the Albanian language and cultural traditions.<sup>58</sup> He was followed by a number of learned diplomats, such as Theodor Ippen (1861–1935), Alfred Rappaport (1868–1946), and August Kral (1869–1953), but also high-ranking officials of the Dual Monarchy, such as Ludwig von Thalloczy and his associates, who published the first major research and source collections on Albania.<sup>59</sup> Others, such as Ferenc von Nopcsa (1877–1933), Carl Patsch (1865–1945), and Franz Seiner (1874–1929), were in constant contact with Habsburg political, diplomatic, and military authorities as intelligence/liaison operatives on the ground. The work of many others may also have been exploited for political and commercial strategic objectives.<sup>60</sup> Some eminent scholars, such as Gustav Meyer (1850–1900), professor of comparative linguistics at the University of

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56 Mommsen, *Theories of imperialism*.

57 Proudman, “Words for Scholars.”

58 Hahn, *Albanesische Studien*.

59 *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen; Acta et diplomata res Albaniae*.

60 Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft*, 244–45.

Graz, may have continued undisturbed academic research on Albanian language history. In turn, Norbert Jokl (1877–1942), senior librarian (*Oberstaatsbibliothekar*) at the University of Vienna, was persecuted as a Jew, discharged from his job, arrested, deported, and ultimately perished in a Nazi concentration camp. Conversely, Maximilian Lambertz (1882–1963) managed to become a member of the East German Communist Party and thrived as a professor of comparative linguistics and dean of the Faculty of Education at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig.

From the 1830s to the aftermath of World War I, many of these scholars dealt with language history and archaic cultural features of the Albanian society, including customary behavior and the so-called tribal organization. Their preferred topic was Albanian ethnogenesis, which included the question of Illyrian heritage and the extent and results of successive processes of the Hellenization, Romanization, Slavicization, and Islamicization of present-day Albanian-inhabited areas.<sup>61</sup> In the German-speaking tradition of folklore studies (*Volkskunde*), they often investigated buildings, costumes, implements, customary laws, and archaic structures to elaborate survivalist theories of historical continuity and autochthony.<sup>62</sup> Among the pioneers of *Albanologie*, prominent Hungarian scholars and officials such as Ludwig (Lajos) von Thalloczy and Baron Ferenc von Nopcsa were the most active Albanian lobbyists, and they both played significant roles in Austro-Hungarian politics in the Balkans. As they became leading theoreticians of both Austro-Hungarian *Albanologie* and the Albanian nation-building process,<sup>63</sup> they both represent typical cases of the speculations that were ventured on Albanian history, Albanian culture, and the Albanian state and society.

### *Albanian Medieval History*

Lajos Thalloczy had wide-ranging Balkan interests and collected significant historical sources on the Balkan peoples, especially on Bosnian medieval history, at a time when securing Bosnia, after its occupation in 1878, became a central aim of Austro-Hungarian Balkan policy.<sup>64</sup> From the outset, he took over covert spy missions, first in Russia and then, in the spring of 1882, in Serbia,

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61 E.g. Hahn, *Albanesische Studien; Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*.

62 E.g. Nopcsa, “Beiträge zum Vorgeschichte”; “Die Herkunft”; *Albanien; Pëkëpamje fetare; Fisët e Malësisë*.

63 Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft im Spannungsfeld*; Csaplár-Degovics, “Ludwig von Thalloczy.”

64 Okey, “A Trio of Hungarian Balkanists.”

Bulgaria, Istanbul, Greece, and finally coastal Albania. Thalloczy was sent on behalf of Hungarian political circles who were concerned by the increase of reports on foreign agitations that appeared between 1878 and 1882 in these areas. Under the cover name of a travel correspondent, he was charged with the task of providing intelligence about the attitudes of Albanian highlanders and sending secret political and economic reports, primarily to the Hungarian Minister of Trade in Budapest.<sup>65</sup> He seems to have successfully incited several Catholic and Muslim groups in the North Albanian Highlands to revolt in 1883 against Ottoman rule, which further complicated Austro-Hungarian status quo policy in the aftermath of the fall of the Albanian League of Prizren.<sup>66</sup> This mission nevertheless allowed Thalloczy to take a liking to the Albanians and start collecting historical data about them.

Educated in history, economy and law, Thalloczy became a history professor at the Theresianum in Vienna and the University of Budapest, and he became a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He also served in multiple positions as a senior court official (*Hofrat*) and director of *Hofkammer* archives, which came under the jurisdiction of the joint Ministry of Finance and Bosnian Affairs. From this privileged position, he pursued his interest in the medieval Balkans by publishing and analyzing document records. He was most interested in medieval Bosnia and Dalmatia, and he started to deal with Albanian issues only as a result of his interest in medieval Bosnian studies.<sup>67</sup> At the time of the massive Albanian action plans launched by the *Ballhausplatz* Foreign Office at the turn of twentieth century, he may have not participated in the secret ministerial meetings, but he may have read the records and he clearly took part in the implementation of the planned actions.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was no comprehensive overview of Albanian history and therefore no interpretation of Albanian identity from the perspective of its history from Antiquity to modern times. In the framework of the Albanian action plans developed by the Dual Monarchy with the intention of furthering the cultivation of an Albanian historical consciousness, Thalloczy was recommended by his fellow scholar and diplomat Theodor Ippen, who at the time was serving as the Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkodra, to write

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65 Csaplár-Degovics and Jusufi, "The Birth of the First Hungarian–Albanian Dictionary (1913)," 259–60.

66 Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft*, 333–37.

67 Takács and Langó, "Archaeologia Hungaroalbanica," 314.

(anonymously) the first history book in Albanian.<sup>68</sup> The task was to provide an easy reader that could create a unified understanding of the history of the Albanian people and a common framework of reference for the Albanian-speaking community as a whole.<sup>69</sup> By July 1897, Thalloczy had completed the German-language manuscript, which he identified as a *Populäre Geschichte der Albanesen*.<sup>70</sup> It was translated into Albanian as *T'ndodhurat e Shqipërisë* (or “Albania Events”) by Stefan Zurani, a well-known agent of the Dual Monarchy and at that time a subordinate of Thalloczy in the *Hofkammer* archives.<sup>71</sup> A few months later, 600 copies were printed under an unnamed North Albanian identified as a “Gheg who loves his country” (*prei gni Ghegëvet ç'i don vënnin e vet*) in a printing place with a fictitious name.<sup>72</sup>

The *Ballhausplatz* Foreign Office approved of and supported the plan on the provision that the history book must not be anti-Ottoman and must contain nothing suggesting that the Monarchy was in any way involved.<sup>73</sup> In his narrative of Albanian history, Thalloczy replaced the myth of Pelasgian origin with a notion of Albanian descent from the Illyrians and created a history of the Albanians as a distinct people. He explicitly affirmed that Albanians had always had their own individual identity (*selbstständige Entität*), a strong “community awareness” (*Stammesbewusstsein*), a pronounced need for autonomy, and even a glorious history, which should make them hope for a political future.<sup>74</sup>

While it is impossible to know how this book affected the Albanian national movement, it was certainly quite popular as a product of “literary propaganda.”<sup>75</sup> To facilitate its reception, Thalloczy explicitly adopted the Albanian perspective and deliberately used a declamatory and sermonic style of moral exhortations to national unity, which in principle would be quite unexpected of a history book.

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68 Hetzer, *Geschichte des Buchhandels*, 129; for more detail see Hetzer, “Ludvig von Thalloczy.”

69 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV/20, General Consul Ippen to Foreign Minister Goluchowski from Shkodra on the “Abfassung einer albanesischen Geschichte,” May 18, 1897.

70 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV/20, Thalloczy to Finance Minister Kallay from Vienna, July 10, 1897.

71 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV/20, note of the joint ministry of finance on Thalloczy’s “Geschichte Albanien,” September 15, 1897; Finance Minister Kallay to Foreign Minister Goluchowski from Vienna on the printing costs of the book and invoices paid to Thalloczy, February 16, 1898; PA XIV/22–23, copies of the book; PA I/8/774, on regular secret payments to Stephan Zurani.

72 [Ludwig Thalloczy], *Të ndodhurat e Shqipërisë, prej një Gege që don vendin e vet* [translated by Stefan Zurani], Skenderie [Vienna: Adolf Holzhausen], 1898; new edition by Raim Beluli, Shkodra: Botime Françeskane, 2008.

73 Csaplár-Degovics, “Ludwig von Thalloczy und die Albanologie,” 145–46.

74 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV/20, Thalloczy to Finance Minister Kallay from Vienna, July 10, 1897.

75 Hetzer, “Die Funktion des Skanderbeg-Mythos”, 112.

He managed to write a history book in a popular style, acceptable both in content and in form to all Albanians. The writing and publication of the history book in Albanian was seen as stepping stone in a broader literary movement to accelerate the recognition of a unified Albanian alphabet,<sup>76</sup> which the *Ballhausplatz* Foreign Office would later continue with the establishment and organization of the Literary Commission of Shkodra in 1916–1918 for the promotion of a common standard Albanian language.<sup>77</sup> More importantly, to transcend religious, regional, and dialectal divisions in Albanian society, which was particularly heterogeneous at the turn of the twentieth century, Thalloczy combined in a coherent whole the different historical perceptions of both Christian and Muslim Albanians in both North and South. To this end, he focused on periods in which there were shows of national unity and provided illustrations of a common Albanian history, common ancestry and origin, a common language, common Christian and Muslim heroes, and common Albanian virtues of bravery and heroism. He aimed to fabricate common national symbols and principles of common belonging and togetherness, which could be utilized to create social cohesion and further a modern nation-building process.

Consistent with the recommendations of *Ballhausplatz* Foreign Office, Thalloczy did not narrate the events of the recent past, and he did not even mention the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy among the great powers with an interest in the Balkans. In turn, he provided a clear periodization of Albanian history, insisting on Albanian autochthony, historical continuity beginning with the era of the Illyrians, and steady relations with western realms in order to show a sense of belonging to the West and a possible backup that would bring an advantage to Austria-Hungary. In doing so, he offered a brief outline of the connections between Hungarian and Albanian history, emphasizing the Illyrian presence in the Carpathian Basin and identifying the Hungarian Janos Hunyadi and his son Matthias Corvinus as allies of the Albanian Skanderbeg in the hard times fighting against the Ottomans.<sup>78</sup>

Thalloczy may have played an important role in restoring the historical Skanderbeg to a respectable position among the Albanians as the founder of a medieval independent Albania, a builder of the modern state, and a representative of European civilization who made Albania the last European defensive bastion

76 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV/20, Thalloczy to Finance Minister Kallay from Vienna, July 10, 1897.

77 Omari, “Çështja e gjuhës.”

78 Csaplár-Degovics, “Lajos Thallóczy and Albanian Historiography,” 128.

against the Ottomans.<sup>79</sup> He also described Ottoman rule with emphasis on the freedom fighters in Catholic North Albanian areas, and he replaced the lack of an independent Albanian state tradition with the biographies of noble families and the rise of outstanding Albanian individual personalities in the Ottoman military and political elite. This is congruent with his own view, according to which the continuity of statehood in Hungarian history was due primarily to the steadiness of the Hungarian aristocratic families and the traditions they had cultivated.

Thalloczy had begun collecting primary data in 1882 which he intended to use to prepare a definitive Albanian history for a scholarly audience, and he sought financial support for the publication of a collection of sources on medieval Albanian history, without which the history of Albania could not be written.<sup>80</sup> The successive tenants of the *Ballhausplatz* Foreign Office took a considerable interest in his work, and when Austro-Hungarian interests in Albania increased during World War I, Thalloczy again hit the mark with the publication of two monumental and unsurpassed collected works of Albanian-related medieval sources and historical research.<sup>81</sup> These works are considered the first scientific collective works on Albanian historiography, and they remain the most important and most influential works of Austro-Hungarian *Albanologie*.<sup>82</sup> While he paid painstaking attention to professional aspects, supplying his edition of primary sources with a modern critical apparatus and applying the highest methodological standards of the era, the positivist spirit in which Thalloczy worked made historical synthesis a task for later generations.

### *Albanian Archaeology and Lifeworlds*

Another remarkable record of this period came with the work and activity of Ferenc Nopcsa, who spent much of his time in northern Albania at the beginning of twentieth century. He provided a myriad of fascinating observations on Albanian life and customs, most of which were recorded in his memoirs, which are recently published both in German and in English translation.<sup>83</sup> A Hungarian

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79 Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft*, 380.

80 ÖStA HHStA, PA XIV/21, Thalloczy to Foreign Minister Aehrenthal from Vienna, July 21, 1911.

81 Thalloczy, *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen; Acta et diplomata res Albaniae*.

82 Csaplár-Degovics, “Ludwig von Thalloczy und die Albanologie,” 148.

83 Nopcsa, *Reisen in den Balkan*; Nopcsa, *Traveler, Scholar, Political Adventurer*.

nobleman and secret agent of the Dual Monarchy, he was also active in politics, and he interfered actively in Austrian-Hungarian foreign and military affairs.

Among many things, he took an active part in the so-called Albanian campaign of 1908–1909 in the course of the annexation crisis, which was intended to relieve Austro-Hungarian troops in Bosnia and Dalmatia by helping Albanian armed bands break into Montenegro.<sup>84</sup> In the years to come, while for Ottoman authorities he was an Austrian-Hungarian spy and agitator, he exploited any opportunity offered by *Ballhausplatz* Foreign Office, always pursuing his own aims, however, which made the opponents of the Monarchy see him as one of their most dangerous agents. Nopcsa had become an influential person in the political forces in North Albania, which also facilitated his research work because of the support he enjoyed among the local population. He became an Albanophilic hero for most North Albanians, and in 1913, he even self-nominated himself for the selection of a European peer to become the crowned head of the newly independent Albania.<sup>85</sup>

As a Hungarian nobleman apparently with distant kinship relations to the old Hunyadi family, Nopcsa made frequent references to the historical alliance between Skanderbeg and Hunyadi, if for no other reason than to build his own personal following among the Albanians.<sup>86</sup> In 1916, when the Army Supreme Command needed to appoint Austro-Hungarian officers with language skills and knowledge of local life and traditions, Nopcsa served as a military officer to recruit and command the Albanian volunteer forces in the course of Albanian operations.<sup>87</sup> He received a military decoration “in recognition of the excellent services executed in front of the enemy,” even though his military service was ultimately a total failure,<sup>88</sup> as his plan was rather to get back his position as an intelligence officer, which was more suitable for him.

Nopcsa excelled in paleontology and geography, he established a genuine archaeological interest in the Balkans, and he is often lauded as the leading scholar of the *albanologische* studies of his time. His heartfelt love for the Albanians made him an important and romantic chronicler of Albanian people’s lives and archaeological heritage, and he provided important and ambitious works of

84 Robel, *Franz Baron Nopcsa und Albanien*, 48–69.

85 Elsie, “The Viennese scholar.”

86 Csaplár-Degovics, “Introduction,” 10.

87 Pöllmann, “Baron Ferenc Nopcsa’s participation.”

88 ÖStA HHStA KA, Neue Feldakten, K.u.K. XIX. Korpskommando Op. Nr. 727/13 (March 30, 1916; May 31, 1916). See also ÖStA HHStA KA, Neue Feldakten, K.u.K. AOK Op. Nr. 24112 (April 20, 1916).

a sound scholarly quality in the fields of geology, natural history, prehistory, medieval history, geography, and ethnology.<sup>89</sup> They focus on the remains of monumental architecture and the Illyrian origins of domestic implements, cultural traditions, and customary laws. As a whole, they were meant to surpass the *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen* published by Thalloczy in 1916, to which Nopcsa, to his frustration, had not been invited to contribute.

Nopcsa was the first scholar to draw attention to the similarities between the Albanian Koman culture and the Transdanubian Keszthely culture in the Carpathian Basin, and he was also first to recognize the late Antique Illyrian features that appear to be related to the tenth-century Byzantine items recovered in Albania.<sup>90</sup> Nopcsa left a number of substantial ethnological works unpublished which were probably completed before 1923 in manuscript. Focusing on the Highland communities of North Albania and their customary laws and religious beliefs and practices, they are widely used by Albanian scholars in early Albanian translations which are only recently published.<sup>91</sup>

Whereas Hahn focused his investigations on southern and central Albania,<sup>92</sup> the Highland areas of North Albania were central to Nopcsa and his generation of scholars. Since the mid-nineteenth century, several diplomats pursued cultural and research activities in the northern areas, after the Monarchy installed constant representation in Shkodra, the intellectual and political center of North Albania and the center of Albanian Catholicism, in which Austro-Hungarian foreign policy took an increasingly prominent part, culminating in 1916–1918. In this context, Nopcsa secured the support of the Austrian government, after explicit intervention by the Hungarian government, to have full access to official documents and a free hand in his research.<sup>93</sup> His focus on North Albanian Catholic areas may also betray an earlier inducement of Austro-Hungarian policy aimed to separate Catholic Albania and create out of it a distinct political unit as a protectorate of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>94</sup>

However, taking into consideration his wide academic interests and his systematic publications, it can be assumed that Nopcsa might have planned

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89 Nopcsa, “Beiträge zum Vorgesichte”; Nopcsa, “Die Herkunft”; *Albanien: Bauten, Trachten und Geräte Nordalbanien; Geographie und Geologie Nordalbanien*.

90 Takács and Langó, “Archaeologia Hungaroalbanica,” 311–13.

91 Nopcsa, *Pikëpamje fetare, Fiset e Malësisë*.

92 Hahn, *Albanesische Studien*.

93 Nopcsa, *Fiset e Malësisë*, 67.

94 Krasniqi, “Oscilimet e identitetit shqiptar,” 15–16.

to extend similar investigations in central and southern Albania.<sup>95</sup> In addition, he based his findings on actual observations of people's behavior, rather than on scholarly presumptions and conclusions concerning religious identification. Furthermore, the religious indifference of both Muslim and Christian Albanians on the ground offered a strong argument against the idea of some isolated *Ballhausplatz* officer for installing a Catholic Albania in a northern restricted territory. More importantly, Nopcsa's efforts as an agitator in the planned Albanian campaign of 1908–1909 in the course of the annexation crisis of Bosnia were based precisely on the coordination of Muslim and Catholic Albanian communities, which the Austro-Hungarian Consul of Shkodra in charge of this operation supported explicitly in terms of the future autonomy of a larger territory regardless of religious denominations.<sup>96</sup> Definitely, from today's perspective, Nopcsa provided a valuable contribution to Albanian ethnography, the importance of which lies not only in the empirical evidence he recorded but also on his well-grounded comparative analyses.

### *Disaffected Austrian and Hungarian Albanologische Studies*

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Albanian studies were shaped by a deliberate effort to involve them in the successive cultural-ideological programs of imperial-colonialist and national-communist state propagandas. They were fueled first by the decisive claims to colonial expansion and the influential rivalry between Habsburg Austria-Hungary and other great powers<sup>97</sup> and later by the affirmative determination of national state regimes in Albania.<sup>98</sup> They have been dominated progressively by the obsessions of antiquarianism, autochthonism, continuity, authenticity, antecedency, and exclusive idiosyncrasy, and they have elaborated several theories on Albanian history, language, culture, and society.

In this context and for that purpose, Lajos Thallocy, Ferenc Nopcsa, Theodor Ippen, Carl Patsch, and many other Austrian and Hungarian scholars traveled in Albania and the Balkans. Their inquiries were closely linked to the diplomacy and politics of the Dual Monarchy, which encouraged and funded them in the hopes of acquiring better knowledge of the Albanian language, history, culture,

95 Eberhart, "Von Ami Boué zu Hugo Adolf Bernatzik," 17–18.

96 Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft*, 656.

97 Doja, "The Beautiful Blue Danube"; Doja, "From the German-speaking point of view"; Doja, "Lindja e albanologjisë."

98 Doja "From the native point of view"; Abazi and Doja, "From the communist point of view."

and tradition. This research activity was part of the Austro-Hungarian political project to strengthen its influence on Albanians and anticipate expansion into the Albanian areas under Ottoman administration. The programmatic and theoretical limitations of these studies can also be explained as a consequence of Austro-Hungarian vital interests, which expected research assistance in fulfilling the political project for Albania and Albanians.

In the work in which Thalloczy saw himself and his contemporaries engaged in, the goal he set more narrowly for himself was to establish the sources illuminating Hungary's relations with its Balkan neighbors,<sup>99</sup> and one of his main editorial series covered sources and documents about the territories annexed to the kingdom of Hungary.<sup>100</sup> Thalloczy shared the Hungarian patriotism and the dual allegiance of Hungarian-minded Habsburg officials in the attempt to make the Balkans a source of strength rather than a potential threat for their dual loyalty. He saw history as an important dual task, both Hungarian (national) and Austro-Hungarian (imperial).

His historical work later came to acquire almost prophetic power as the record of a Magyar empire, and he is often accused of having espoused and expressed historical views that have no validity beyond Hungarian national narratives and are little more than historical justifications for Hungary's political claims in the Balkans.<sup>101</sup> Thalloczy may have stressed his doubts about the late nineteenth-century imperialist school or the glib nationalism of Hungarian celebrations. He nevertheless remained the Hungarian who best understood the Balkans, acknowledged the valor of the Balkan peoples, and, in no small part out of his sympathy for them, served as "our man in the Balkans" in the sense that the nationalist age required "experts" for the areas that nationalists sought to hegemonize.<sup>102</sup> Even shorn of the semi-fascist rhetoric with which they were later invoked, Thalloczy's Balkan studies show the patriotic self-absorption of the age, in which a Hungarian geopolitical vision dominated.

In Thalloczy's hands, Bosnia appeared as a triangle between the Adriatic and the Danube, its more densely populated northern lands opening towards the Danube plain of the Hungarian "mother territory," while Croatian and Serbian noble lineages were of interest chiefly for their loyalty to their Hungarian and

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99 Okey, "A Trio of Hungarian Balkanists," 256.

100 *Magyarország Mellékartományainak Oklevéltára. Codex Diplomaticus Partium Regno Hungariae Adnexarum*, 4 vols., edited by Lajos Thalloczy, and Antal Áldásy (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1903–1915).

101 Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft*, 174.

102 Okey, "A Trio of Hungarian Balkanists," 258.

later Habsburg sovereigns. Similarly, his Albanian concerns were bound up with the question of Albanian viability as a barrier to Serbian designs. Namely, in the words of his Croatian associate Milan Sufflay, as part of a “high Catholic living dam” along the Adriatic against the assaults of both Slavic and Greek Orthodoxy.<sup>103</sup> All this does not quite harmonize with the repeated “appeals to the tremendous substantial knowledge, critical method, and strict objectivity of his scientific activity” that are usually claimed by Austrian and Hungarian historians.<sup>104</sup>

At the time of the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia in 1908 and again during the Balkan Wars in 1912, Thalloczy submitted proposals to the Hungarian government recommending state-organized academic research in order to improve cultural communications with the peoples of the Balkans. He contended that the primary prerequisite was an excellent knowledge of local languages, and he urged for the compilation of modern, up-to-date dictionaries of Balkan languages as a best possible reaction in order to profit from the new political and economic conditions. The first Albanian-Hungarian dictionary published in 1913 harmonized both with Thalloczy’s relevant recommendations and with Hungarian imperialistic aspirations,<sup>105</sup> clearly acknowledging the role played by the Dual Monarchy in Albanian nation building and state formation.

In that mixed nationalist and imperialist age, Thalloczy’s historical research was characterized above all by a conjunction of positivist method and ingrained bias.<sup>106</sup> Objectivity became a grim readiness to recognize obstacles to national and imperial goals, not an attempt at emotional distance from them. Undoubtedly, however, like Leibniz in his time and despite the possible interests of their intellectual and professional career, Thalloczy and his fellow scholars working on Albanian history, language, and society were not colonialist collaborators, and they may not have been aware of the political purpose and motivation of their theoretical and methodological choices. Nevertheless, the formation and development of their intellectual-scientific convictions were necessarily enabled within a philosophical and worldview framework that was defined by the fundamental premise of Austrian-Hungarian imperial-colonialist policies.

The ideological premises and the political conditions of this framework dictated both research issues and their theoretical and methodological choices.

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103 “Die Kirchenzustände im vortürkischen Albanien,” in Thalloczy, *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, 189.

104 E.g. Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft*, 174.

105 Csaplár-Degovics and Jusufi, “The Birth of the First Hungarian–Albanian Dictionary (1913),” 267.

106 Okey, “A Trio of Hungarian Balkanists,” 259.

These choices limited the methods used for research, in particular the methods used for collecting, identifying and outlining the empirical, factual, philological, and folkloric data that were needed for the verification or the opposition of some readymade arguments and not others. In this context, sociological imagination, comparative research, and critical analysis as foundations to theoretical explanations were not necessary. As had been true in the case of Leibniz, ideological premises and political conditions motivated assumptions and arguments about the Illyrian origins of the Albanian language and Albanian history and culture, obviously regardless of whether these arguments proved misleading or mistaken after further research or whether they would be regarded as useful findings in the present-day state of research.

The Illyrian theory of Albanian origins was promoted in the nineteenth century by the Austro-Hungarian pioneers of *Albanologie*, who aimed to make it possible, as Leibniz had done in his time, to extend a direct link with the provinces already placed under the supervision of the Dual Monarchy. Like the encyclopedic and intellectual speculations of Leibniz and his contemporaries, the Illyrian assumption of Albanian origins is not merely a matter of research, but above all a political issue, conditioned by imperial-colonialist aspirations. In the context of Austro-Hungarian vital interests, which sought to counter Pan-Slavism and compete with Italy in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the Illyrian theory was endorsed as a reaction to the Pelasgian theory initially supported by Greek and Italian politics. It emerged in the lively intellectual atmosphere of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Vienna, when Austro-Hungarian political aspirations inspired the first workshops of *Balkanologie* and *Albanologie*<sup>107</sup> and the joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported the first research expeditions in the Balkans.<sup>108</sup> Definitely, the Illyrian theory of Albanian ethnogenesis, forcefully established in the history book written by Lajos Thalöcy and translated into Albanian by Stefan Zurani and as well in the ethnological investigations by Ferenc Nopcsa, must have served Austro-Hungarian politics of colonial expansion, which sought to gain supremacy over Italy and oppose Slavic penetration into the Balkans.

That this research activity evolved within the same framework of Austro-Hungarian vital interests in the Balkans is not a value judgement but a fact claim. Within the context of political utilitarianism, the passion for research

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107 *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen; Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia.*

108 Haberlandt, *Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge*; see Marchetti, *Balkanexpedition.*

among Austrian and Hungarian scholars like Thalloczy and Nopcsa and their genuine sympathy for Albanians are out of the question. Their writings remain a serious and important contribution to highlighting Albanian linguistic, historical, cultural, and social issues. In addition, the merits of their theories are beyond the framework and aspirations of the inquiry here, especially as contemporary historical-philological accounts have accumulated sufficient empirical evidence to assess the probabilities of the Illyrian origins of the Albanian language and Albanian history and culture. The evidence for a comprehensive picture is primarily linguistic, and its significance became clear only with the development of modern historical linguistics in the second half of twentieth century.<sup>109</sup> Long before that, however, theories and arguments of the Illyrian origins of the Albanian language and the traditional tenets of Albanian history, culture, and society served the hegemonic and expansionist interests of Austrian-Hungarian imperial-colonialism, just as they are embraced later for other, similar purposes.

In the aftermath of World War I, although Austrian scholarship claimed scholarly hegemony in and on southeastern Europe, the demise of the Dual Monarchy can be seen as the demise of the regional scope of Austrian scholarship, which was now compromised by a new political order.<sup>110</sup> Professional institutions such as the *Balkan-Kommission* and *Albanien-Kommission* of the imperial Academy and the *Balkan-Abteilung* of the *Museum für österreichische Volkskunde* became relics of a bygone imperial past.<sup>111</sup> Their fate is indicative of what was left of the great Danube Monarchy, politically unstable, suddenly of marginal international influence, and without any of the pomp of empire.

The contexts of the geopolitical position of Austria-Hungary towards Albania and southeastern Europe in the decades before World War I and the position of Austria towards this area in the interwar period and during World War II shaped respective research activities and public opinions. Scholars, travelers, adventurers, and experts either followed or furthered the multilayered economic and political interests of their state community. Austrian interests in southeastern Europe, including Albania, lost priority due to differing geopolitical contexts and a reshaping of the state's character and size. They never totally broke down, however, and the same experts and officials remained in place until the late 1930s. Parallel with Nopcsa, a new generation of *albanologische* scholars,

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109 Hamp, "The Position of Albanian"; S. Demiraj, *Prejardhja e shqiptarëve*; Matzinger, "Die Albaner als Nachkommen der Illyrer."

110 Gruber, "Austrian contributions."

111 Marchetti, *Balkanexpedition*.

such as Norbert Jokl and Maximilian Lambertz, were active in Vienna in the interwar period and expanded the focus of research on Albania.

In this context, the scientific approach rebranded under the more sanitized term “Southeast European Studies” (*Südostforschung*) was transformed “from a discipline of Austro-German national revisionism into a tool of National Socialist geopolitics” in which Austrian expertise also played a considerable role.<sup>112</sup> In particular, Albania seemed to become a refuge where one could escape the sad realities of interwar and Anschluss Vienna. No longer the victim of a Byronic fantasy of an untamed wildness, interwar Albania emerged as a projection screen for nostalgic fantasies of any number of disaffected Austrian and German writers, a miniature of either a great imperial past or a grand European future.<sup>113</sup> The production of fictional literatures set in the Balkans, featuring Balkan and Albanian protagonists, or otherwise concerned with southeastern Europe was a means whereby the Austrians and Germans, like their fellow British and French, supplied their literary entertainment industries and their political ideologies through the “imperialism of the imagination.”<sup>114</sup> Now, the interest in Albania increasingly shifted from imperial expansionism and acquired the character of a pure exoticism.

Nopcsa traveled to North Albania at practically the same time as Edith Durham (1863–1944), a Victorian British traveler and human-rights activist, and Margaret Hasluck (1885–1948), a Scottish scholar and British intelligence operative from World War I to World War II. They all selected and reported observations exclusively from the North Albanian areas, and they all singled out certain seemingly “archaic” phenomena, which they labeled and reified as “Albanian.” In particular, they provided important and easily accessible ethnographic sources of interesting information on Albanian life worlds and the functioning of customary laws, more specifically about the North Albanian variant known as the *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*. They all regarded these local customary laws based on blood relations, known in a short-cut designation as *Kanun*, as the very essence of the Albanian *Volksgeist*, though very different genres are represented in the multifarious works that resulted from their documentation.<sup>115</sup> In particular, they all addressed the sustainable archaic structures, although they often recorded the eclectic nature of customary laws and insisted on identifying

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112 Promitzer, “Austria and the Balkans.”

113 Hemming, “German-speaking travel writers.”

114 Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*.

115 Reviewed in detail elsewhere, Doja, “Customary laws.”

elements of Illyrian origins and any association with Roman law and with certain traditions of various German tribes.

### *Native Albanian Studime Albanologjike*

The overall picture of ambivalent and conflicting perceptions of customary laws in North Albania, together with readymade arguments about Illyrian heritage and Illyrian-Albanian continuity, are taken over by native scholars to boost an intellectual discourse of national pride. In particular, many members of the Franciscan and Jesuit monastic communities in North Albania felt attracted to the past and made it their personal mission to save and collect archaeological items. They facilitated archaeological activity to record and collect antiquities in the Catholic schools and monasteries in Shkodra and often took an active role in searching for promising findings. Among them, Father Stephen Gjeçov (1874–1929) was an Albanian Kosovo-born Franciscan priest and freedom fighter who dedicated himself at the turn of the twentieth century to recording North Albanian traditions and collecting archaeological artifacts, which Nopcsa also processed for his own research.

In Nopcsa's footsteps, Gjeçov began to publish his research from 1913 onwards in the Franciscan journal *Hylli i Dritës*, which was printed in Shkodra. After his tragic death at the hands of nationalist Serbs in Kosovo,<sup>116</sup> the stylized text of customary law based on his research was published in 1933 by his fellow Franciscans of Shkodra.<sup>117</sup> The Albanian native movement culminated in this traditional collection of revitalized customary law and the writing of *Labuta e Malcis* by Father Gjergj Fishta (1871–1940), a major national epic poem of Albanian literature published in 1937 and also promoted by Maximilian Lambertz among German-speaking audiences.<sup>118</sup> They both glorified the customary practices of North Albanian Highlanders as a strong element of identity, especially alongside the century-old Albanian resistance to Slavic penetration. While Nopcsa, Durham, and Hasluck left a series of travel writings of genuine value to posterity,<sup>119</sup> Gjeçov and Fishta provided remarkably authoritative

116 Mata, *Shtjefën Gjeçovi*.

117 Gjeçov, *Kamuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*.

118 Lambertz, *Gjergj Fishta*.

119 Durham, *High Albania*; Durham, *Some tribal origins*; Nopcsa, *Fiset e Malësisë*; "Die Herkunft"; Hasluck, *The unwritten law in Albania*.

works in which customary social institutions are either described with textbook precision or idealized with epic poetry heroism.

Another part of the Monarchy's heritage was the so-called *Albanien-Komitee* founded in the summer of 1913, which was reestablished in the early 1920s and continued to bring together the social, political, and economic groups that took an interest in Albania. In addition to organizing the education and accommodation of Albanian students who enjoyed state scholarships, they paid attention to their personal development, enabling them to know the old historical traditions of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire in Albanian nation building and state formation, including *albanologische* studies.<sup>120</sup> Among them, Alex Buda (1910–1993) and Eqrem Çabej (1908–1980) would later become the emblematic figures of native Albanian studies. Even a graduate engineer in botany like Ilia Mitrushi (1904–1986) was encouraged by Norbert Jokl to compile a dictionary of Albanian plant names recorded in the regional variations of their taxonomic, morphological, anatomical, and ecological aspects.<sup>121</sup> As a result, the topics of *Balkanologie* and *Albanologie* broadened in southeastern Europe and in Albania.

Notwithstanding the authorship, imperial-colonialist purposes, and literary propaganda upon which Austrian and Hungarian works of *albanologische* studies were produced, they provided an archetype model for Albanian studies both in interwar and in communist Albania. Thalloczy, in particular, is considered to have proposed and laid down with scientific rigor the most important views of Albanian history and the fundamental perspectives and tenets of the historical myths from which Albanian historiography has not yet deviated. It is possible that not all the Albanian historical theories can be found in his work, but it seems certain that Thalloczy listed most of them for the first time together.<sup>122</sup> Although some of his observations may have turned out to be wrong, biased, or misleading, his contributions still provide a short expedient for further speculation by native scholars in Albania. Similarly, Nopcsa's intuitive insights have led Albanian historiography to identify early medieval Albanian culture with Koman culture and to focus on the Illyrian heritage and early medieval research with the aspiration of proving on archaeological grounds the existence of Illyrian-Albanian continuity into the early Middle Ages.

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120 Csaplár-Degovics, "Lajos Thallóczy and Albanian Historiography," 142.

121 I was a young, aspirant scholar in the 1980s, but privileged that late in his life Ing. Ilia Mitrushi trusted me to publish his dictionary, which unfortunately remains unpublished as I handed it down to his family after his death.

122 Csaplár-Degovics, "Lajos Thallóczy and Albanian Historiography," 137.

At the turn of twentieth century, the rapid and unquestionable adoption of Austrian and Hungarian theories and arguments of Illyrian origins of Albanian language and the antiquated traditions of Albanian history, culture, and society were clearly a reaction to Slavic nationalism, which eventually contributed to reifying the opposition between Slavs and Albanians.<sup>123</sup> In the second half of twentieth century, the communist regime adopted and supported the same theories with the explicit aim of relocating the center of *Albanologie* from foreign figures and institutions to local scholars in Tirana, which was nothing than the capitalization on imperial-colonial *albanologische* studies, now transformed into national-communist *studime albanologjike*.<sup>124</sup> Notwithstanding the introduction of a sense of academic distance and professional discourse structured by the jargon of Marxist-Leninist ideology and methodology, a significant number of these *studime* may have served largely as propaganda for Albanian public opinions rather than as actual research for academic audiences. They aimed to glorify and further mystify a narrative of Albanian history punctuated by continuous revolt and uprisings against foreign despotic rule and by the role of the Albanian working masses as freedom fighters and state makers.

More than anyone else, the faithful native epigones of Austro-Hungarian *Albanologie* applied Marxist-Leninist premises and methods in line with Party directives to create a salvation *Albanologji*, provide a uniform framework for existing historical and linguistic topics, and propose a system the substance and concepts of which are still present in Albanian studies. Aleks Buda is believed to have established a historical tradition that had been virtually non-existent, while he is also argued to have heavily based this tradition on the historical patterns established earlier by Thalloczy in his anonymous Albanian history published in 1898.<sup>125</sup> Similarly, Eqrem Çabej moved backward to Indo-Europeanist historicism and the descriptivist regularities of diachronic sound changes (*Lautgesetze*) advocated by the old school of *Junggrammatikers*. The historicism of this methodological choice reduced linguistic investigation to the descriptivist empiricism of surface phenomena, such as an essentialist description of the historical changes that the Albanian language underwent. This proved essential for compromising Albanian studies as a whole in order to comply with party ideology, which aimed at the essentialization of Albanian ethnogenesis.<sup>126</sup>

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123 Doja, "From the native point of view."

124 Abazi and Doja, "From the communist point of view."

125 Csaplár-Degovics, "Lajos Thalloczy and Albanian Historiography," 113–20.

126 Abazi and Doja, "From the communist point of view," 174.

Even the myth of Skanderbeg differed slightly from the original archetype of a unifying national hero in order to highlight his leadership abilities as a terrific military commander, a virtuous cultivated leader, and a great politician and diplomat, which was meant to parallel the communist supreme leader and legitimate the communist regime. More importantly, versions of the Illyrian theory of Albanian origins developed in competition with other hypotheses, some of which are revitalized anew in the social and political conditions of post-communist Albania.<sup>127</sup> Readymade theories concerning the Albanian language and Albanian history, culture, and society still provide a short expedient for further studies by native scholars in Albania, which continue both to dominate academic efforts and to exacerbate interethnic and international relations in the Balkans.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Austro-Hungarian efforts to promote Illyrian theories of Albanian ethnogenesis might have served as an effective obstacle to the Illyrianism of Slavic nationalism. At the same time, Slavic nationalism and chauvinism adopted more exaggerated, more aggressive, and more virulent strategies against Albanian identity politics. In turn, it can be argued that the overthrow of Pelasgian theories gradually facilitated the conventional use of the ancient term “Epirus,” which replaced and obscured the historical concept of “Lower Albania” in the modern historiography. After the fabrication of modern Greece out of the joint efforts of German, European, and Greek “megali ideas,” the language, people, and country names “Epirus” and “Epirotic” increasingly signified the Grecized habitat of the area. The homogenizing identity politics that followed was intended to root out the Albanian people as a cultural entity, the Albanian language, and Albanian history and cultural heritage from the border areas of Epirus in present-day northern Greece, while the irredentist claim of Greek nationalism over so-called “North Epirus” in present-day southern Albania still prevent emancipation from old Balkan megalomanias.

In backlash, many publications by professional and amateur historians and linguists revitalize again the Pelasgian theory, first among the Albanians of Greece (*Arvanites*) and then in the Albanian context of the 1990s and 2000s. They are widely read and commented on, linking in various ways Pelasgians, Epirots, Illyrians, Etruscans, Greeks, and Albanians in a single historical genealogy,

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127 Doja, “Customary laws.”

according to various motivations and using various kinds of evidence,<sup>128</sup> most of which is nothing more than fanciful linguistic acrobatics intertwined with folk etymologies. Pelasgian theories clearly play the role of a counter-discourse in opposing mainstream and well-established views of origin and ethnogenesis, which allow Albanians to transform their actual socioeconomic and geopolitical marginality into an imagined cultural centrality and superiority.<sup>129</sup> In turn, they prove again that ideological premises and political conditions dictate both research issues and the choice of theoretical and methodological approaches.

### *Imperial Exoticism and Distortion of Life Worlds*

The funding of religious, literary, educational, and publication activities for a long time and the intensification of research inquiries and expeditions in Albanian areas may reveal another specific methodological disaffection with many imperial writers of the old generation of *albanologische* studies. They were supposed to discover and domesticate the Albanian “noble savage,” which was barbarized in the Oriental reality of Ottoman rule but was waiting to be emancipated, transformed, and civilized in a new Euro-centered Austro-Hungarian reality. More importantly, they considered their own reconstructions and descriptions organized and codified in collected texts as a hardly reasonable but given evidence of life practice and historical continuity.

In particular, they consciously or unconsciously promoted the idea that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the “unknown” Albanians were still at the stage of the last “undiscovered” people in the Balkans. They lived in “Accursed Mountains” (*Bjeshkët e Nëmuna*), or like their fellow Montenegrins surrounded by a “Black Mountain Wreath” (*Crna Gorski Vijenac*).<sup>130</sup> They were so close geographically to mainstream Europe and yet so distant culturally, relegated to the southeastern “margins of Europe,” to recall a phrase coined to refer to Greece, the other southeastern European neighbor.<sup>131</sup>

128 B. Demiraj, “De Albania Occupanda.”

129 Gefou-Madianou, “Cultural polyphony”; Rapper, “Pelasgic encounters.”

130 The “Balkans” are first a geographical notion of a mountain range on the Balkan Peninsula that comes in a variety of forms, including the “Accursed Mountains” (*Bjeshkët e Nëmuna*), a local term for the mountain range in North Albania, and the “Black Mountains” (*Crna Gora*), the name of Montenegro alluded to in the “Mountain Wreath” (*Gorski Vijenac*), a masterpiece of Montenegrin literature written and published in 1847 by the Prince-Bishop of Montenegro Petar II Petrović-Njegoš.

131 Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the looking-glass*.

As current critical approaches to German-speaking *Albanologische* studies acknowledge,<sup>132</sup> the Orientalizing and Balkanizing images of former Austrian and Hungarian writers put emphasis on the so-called Albanian “tribes” and their primitive laws, archaic blood revenge, the primitiveness and purity of indigenous people, Spartan simplicity yet incomparable hospitality, and so on. In particular, a special genre of accounts on blood feuds developed. These narratives were inspired in particular by the Austrian and Hungarian travelers whose writings, typical of a travelogue, were primarily aimed not at providing information or conducting scholarly work, but at making sensational discoveries,<sup>133</sup> which could be brought back “home” to satisfy the insatiable desire to acquire artificial prestige similar to what is known today in network ratings.

Some of these writers depicted Albanians as “tribesmen” in their “Accursed Black Mountain Wreath,” either as savages and barbarians or as outstanding virile and heroic “sons of the eagle.” The impression was always given that the Albanian life was one of “barbarism,” concerned with blood feud and nothing else. Otherwise, a very appealing sentiment of heroism was used as part of a definite tendency towards an idealization of Albanians, especially the northern mountaineers, depicting local life and customs in a heroic and glorious light, idealizing patriarchal society and its manly features, such as bravery, honor, and hospitality. A well-known example from the nineteenth century is the portrayal of Albanians by Gustav Meyer, one of the most important representatives of Austrian *Albanologie*. “No one should be surprised that among Albanian people, where writing and reading is a rare luxury, and where rifle—and what an ancient and adorned flint-lock rifle—is often the most precious possession of a man, a Dante or a Luther has not yet emerged to bring them the benefits of a written language.”<sup>134</sup>

Similarly, Thalloczy ironized after a Sarajevo conference with Bosnian educational officials in 1907, wondering why Bosnian youths did not learn more. He commented sourly that liberal views would be fine somewhere in southern Germany, and he believed that in Bosnia “the fist was more appropriate than the pen.”<sup>135</sup> Again, in the final stage of his career as Civil Commissar in the Habsburg

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132 E.g. Gruber, “Austrian contributions”; Kaser, “Albania: Orientalisation and Balkanisation”; Hemming, “German-speaking travel writers”; Marchetti, *Balkanexpedition*; Promitzer, “Austria and the Balkans”; Gostentschnigg, *Wissenschaft*.

133 Kaser, “Albania: Orientalisation and Balkanisation.”

134 Meyer, “Della lingua.”

135 Okey, “A Trio of Hungarian Balkanists,” 262.

military occupation of Serbia in World War I, his goal for the occupation was to show Serbs how much better Habsburg administration was than their own, an aspiration and arrogance which anticipated the racial arrogance to come.

More seriously, Nopcsa embarked to investigate and promote the special values of “the free but savage people of North Albania,” whom he considered a distinct “highland people with a specific character developed outside the modern world.”<sup>136</sup> Arguably, his detailed descriptions of cultural traditions, customary laws, and life worlds were intended to represent a typical Albanian “noble savage” who needed to be discovered, domesticated, and emancipated once entering the works of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As such, they offer a direct link of Austro-Hungarian *albanologische* studies to the Albanian policy of the Dual Monarchy, especially with regard to the typical imperial-colonialist representation of “other” peoples as subjects of Austro-Hungarian investigation and civilization.

In the second half of twentieth century, native *studime albanologjike* in Albania followed in the same footsteps to justify the class struggle launched by the communist regime against the “backward customs” of a certain people.<sup>137</sup> In their rush to obey party directives in adopting a socio-class exclusive understanding of the “people,” these studies must have inadvertently paved the way to the much-abused considerations of much Albanian history, culture, and politics. As a result, many simply believe or deliberately assert that in Albanian society, customary laws, archaic structures, patriarchal gender relations, and religious and regional divides necessarily play important roles.

Many of the social, economic, demographic, cultural, educational, and gender transformations in Albania under socialism, including the folklorism of cultural traditions and Albanian studies,<sup>138</sup> in spite of their achievements, must have had a devastating effect for many people. Much of Albania was depopulated and repopulated, north and south, rural and urban, *pa dallim krabine, feje dhe ideje* “notwithstanding regions, religions, and convictions,” as the watchword of the time went, along with a full and open-ended “circulation” policy (*qarkullimi*) that in many ways kept all the people under the control of the regime. The social and cultural agendas adopted by the communist regime were by no means selective, and the often violent programs to modernize whichever people were deemed less culturally or ideologically advanced cannot substantiate the perception

136 Nopcsa, *Fiset e Malësisë*, 19.

137 Abazi and Doja, “From the communist point of view.”

138 Doja, “Évolution et folklorisation”; Abazi and Doja, “From the communist point of view.”

and specific isolation of a “backward” rural, tribal, patriarchal, and customary Catholic North.

Rather than specific North Albanian traditions that are often said to rely on parallel legitimacy structures or be the source of resistance to the communist regime, it can be argued these traditions are the unintended consequence of the imperial-colonialist representations of North Albanian society and culture that were first worked out by Austro-Hungarian *albanologische* studies. As mentioned earlier, Thalloczy presented his wide-ranging Albanian history as a work written by an unnamed North Albanian “Gheg that loves his country,” while Nopcsa regarded the image of Catholics in North Albanian Highlands as a “free, but savage” people. Prototypical backward representations of North Albanians were adopted by communist policies, and they were further reified in the ideological struggles against supposedly “conservative” and “regressive” perceptions of people’s culture that are legitimated in the discourse of native *studime albanologjike*.<sup>139</sup> By promoting the national-communist “further revolutionization” and cultural engineering campaigns to build the “New Man” in Albanian socialist society, these studies may have been responsible for the further reification of many essentialist views on Albanian history, culture, and social behavior.

As I showed elsewhere more specifically in relation to the “instrumentality of gender and religious categories,”<sup>140</sup> generalized views on Albanian society came all too often to essentialize gender relations and regional differences between life worlds shaped by different religious cultures, between North and South, between mountains and plains, and between urban and rural settings. They reify gender relations and customary behaviors, they alienate so-called “backward” people, and they act as instrumental political resources with which to establish hierarchical relations.

### *The Rediscovery of a New Exoticism*

After World War II, the early twentieth-century image of the Albanians, mainly elaborated within a German-speaking tradition of Austrian and Hungarian scholars,<sup>141</sup> was frozen until about the end of the century. Like other East European countries that were rediscovered as “new exotic lands” in the aftermath

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139 Abazi and Doja, “From the communist point of view.”

140 Doja, “Instrumental borders.”

141 Doja, “The Beautiful Blue Danube.”

of the demise of socialism,<sup>142</sup> the exotic image of Albania and the Albanians was reasserted when the country opened again to foreign travelers. The mountains in North Albania were exploited from the early to the late twentieth century in very similar ways, open to discoverers and adventurers.<sup>143</sup> Reports of a traditional social structure based on kinship, together with the blood feud and the archaic customary and legal institutions, aroused the enthusiasm of many Western scholars and journalists.

Many of these scholars are contemporary experts and commentators within what I refer to as the New German-speaking School of *Balkankompetenzen*.<sup>144</sup> Some of these writers put under the spotlight and conventionally describe purported Albanian customary laws, blood feuds and honor killings, religious beliefs, hospitality, marriage codes, archaic family structures, sworn virgins, and patriarchal customs.<sup>145</sup> Others do not hesitate to mount virulent rhetorical attacks of denigration and vilification on the ground of a presumed “irrationality” of a “culture-bounded” people who are believed to be caught into their supposed tribal organization and tribal laws.<sup>146</sup> They continue to flock to the highlands of North Albania, ready and willing to believe that Albanians still live by the strict laws of the *Kanun*. They are in search of what they imagine, again, to be the distilled essence of the mountain spirit, a barbarous and splendid anachronism embodied in a sort of primitive and fearless mountain people living according to an ancient code of honor enforced by “tribal” law on the margins of modern Europe.

The continued strength of this kind of imperial exoticism in Western scholarship is shocking. Since the 1950s, as I have shown in detail elsewhere,<sup>147</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss in his *Tristes Tropiques* bitterly deplored similar stances in travel writing and anthropology.<sup>148</sup> To borrow his terms, the literature on Albania and the Balkans would represent another instance of the same mistake of an entire profession or an entire civilization in believing that humans are not always humans. Some of these humans, by implication, are more deserving of interest and attention merely because in the midst of Europe they seem to astonish us, if not by their “monkey tails” then by the apparent strangeness of their customs, attitudes, and behaviors.

142 Skalnik, “West meets East.”

143 Kaser, “Albania: Orientalisation and Balkanisation.”

144 Doja, “The New German-speaking School of *Balkankompetenzen*.”

145 Kaser, “Albania: Orientalisation and Balkanisation”; Kaser, “Family and Kinship in Albania.”

146 Krasztev, “The price of amnesia.”

147 Doja, “From Neolithic Naturalness.”

148 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*.

Many accounts produced in the modern *Balkankompetent* tradition of the New German-speaking School may show a great concern for ethnographic approach and historical source-criticism or a high level of academic sophistication. Yet, as I have shown in detail elsewhere, they are characterized by inner mechanisms of exclusion and hierarchies, which necessarily reproduce substantive empirical and methodological flaws in research outcomes, yielding to strategic othering, methodological essentialism, dubious deconstructionism, and outright misinterpretation of Albanian foundational myths, national history, social structures, and cultural behavior.<sup>149</sup> Arguably, this methodological imperialism reproduces a discourse of Western superiority that serves to legitimate political, economic, and social control.

A curious mixture of identification and exoticization has characterized depictions and descriptions of Albanian culture, history, and society from an external Western point of view, as for instance in the case of pervasive German-speaking traditions. In turn, the foreign attitude became crucial from a native point of view, since there was both an unequal power balance and an internalization of external ideas. Ultimately, Albanian culture and self-image are very much influenced by a fundamental division between what is associated with the civilized world and what is associated with a peripheral position within the Western system, and thus Albanian culture and society are compelled to navigate between the two. The outcome culminated in a conflict between the idea of the Illyrian ethnogenesis and the eternal nation, embedded in Albanian nationalism, and the actual shortage of political sovereignty for much of Albanian history. This meant that the focal point of the constrained nation became an aggressive negotiation of the political supremacy of Western ideas about the validity and free development of what is conceptualized as national culture and heritage.

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