

Illyrian-Albanian Continuity on the Areal of Kosova

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Abstract

In the present study it is examined the issue of Illyrian-Albanian continuity in the areal of Kosova, a scientific problem, which, due to the reasons of daily policy, has extremely become exploited (harnessed) until the present days. The politicisation of the ancient history of Kosova begins with the Eastern Crisis, a time when the programmes of Great-Serb aggression for the Balkans started being drafted. These programmes, inspired by the extra-scientific history dressed in myths, legends and folk songs, expressed the Serb aspirations to look for their cradle in Kosova, Vojvodina, Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Montenegro. Such programmes, based on the instrumentalized history, have always been strongly supported by the political circles on the occasion of great historical changes, that have overwhelmed the Balkans.

Key Words: Dardania and Dardans in antiquity, Arbers and Kosova during the Middle Ages, geopolitical, ethnic, religious and cultural concepts, which are known in the sources of that time followed by a chronological development.

The region of Kosova preserves archeological monuments from the beginnings of Neolith (6000-2600 B.C.). Since that time the first settlements were constructed, including Tjerrtorja (Prishtinë), Glladnica (Graçanicë), Rakoshi (Istog), Fafos and Lushta (Mitrovicë), Reshtan and Hisar (Suharekë), Runik (Skenderaj) etc. The region of Kosova has since the Bronze Age been inhabited by Dardan Illyrians; the territory of extension of this region was much larger than the present-day territory of Kosova.

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Illyrians were one of the biggest populations of Europe. About the importance of Illyrians and the European civilisation, the Zara Arbëresh (Albanian) scholar, A. Stipçeviq, says: “every story on the Balkans starts with Illyrians”.¹ Efforts have been made by some Balkan centres, especially in the recent times by the Serb Academy of Sciences, to narrow the territory inhabited by Illyrians.² In this course the Illyrian issue and the ethnogenesis of Albanians are being tackled noisily and, based on the occasional policy, attempts are made to “overthrow” the historical reality of Illyrians, in general, and, in particular, the reality of one of the most important Illyrian tribes, that of Dardans. However, Herodotus (V century B.C.), in his well-known *History*, let us know that the present-day territory of Kosova was an integral part of Illyrian territories.³ Polineus speaks of the organization of the Dardan state since the first half of III. Century A.D.¹ Also, the ancient time cartography, such as for example *Tabula Peutingeriana*, and the distinguished geographer, Ptolemy, offer facts about the geographical extension of Dardania, which can be followed through the northern frontiers Novi-Pazar-Nish, the whole region of Kosova and North-Western Macedonia with its chief town Shkup (Skopje).²

By the end of the III century, especially in the IV century A.D., the Roman Empire entered a period of a long crisis. After its division in 395, Kosova was included in the Province of Dardania, which, same as the other south Illyrian provinces, entered into composition of the East Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire. During this time, in many ancient settlements, new phenomena have been observed which had to do with the revival of the autochthonous population and with

¹ A. Stipçeviq, “Çdo tregim për Ballkanin fillon me ilirët”, *Bota e Re, Prishtinë*, 1985, p. 4-5.

² *Iliri i Albanci*, SANU, Odelenje Istorijiskih Nauka, knj. 10, Beograd, 1988, p. 3-4,7-8,9-76,361-367.

³ *Herodoti Historiarum*, libri IX ed. Henr. Rudolph. Dietsch, editio curavit curatamque emendavit H. Kallenberg, vol. I-II, editio steretypa. Lipsiae in aedibus B. G. Teubneri 1926, libri IV, 48.

¹ Polyaen, *Strategematon*, IV, 12,1,3; VII, 42,44.

² F. Papazoglu, *Srednjobalkanska plemena u predrimsko doba*, ANU BiH, Djela knj.XXX, Sarajevo, 1969, p. 143-161.

the strengthening of its ethnic character. At this time, also Dardania was also one of the less romanized Balkan provinces. Its local population seems to have preserved more than the other peoples the ethnic individuality and conscience. It should not be excluded, hence, the possibility that Dardans, who survived the Romanization, to have survived the Slav migrations and to have appeared in the Middle Ages with the name Alban (Arbër).³ To this time belong also the inscriptions of Dardania, which tell about a form of population resistance against the Roman rule. The maintained sources of this period speak about 20 known cities in the southern provinces of Illyria. Among them also the centres of Dardania are mentioned, such as Shkup and Ulpiana. Shkup, in its original Illyrian form, was preserved during all the centuries of our history. Therefore, many distinguished linguists explain, according to the form of Shkupi, the etymology of the ethnonym Shkypetar and therefrom the name of the land Shkypeni. Illyrian-Albanian phonetic form developed also the names of other cities of Dardania, such as Nish (Naissus), *Binça* (Arribantium), *Lipian* (Ulpiana), *Sharr* (Scardus) etc. From these onomastic facts, as well as from the fund of more than 200 preserved words from the plant lexicon, it results that Dardania was one of the herths of formation of Albanians and of Albanian language. Therefore, the very ancient presence of the Illyrian-Albanians in Dardania made many researchers to explain the intensive contacts of the Albanian of these regions with other old Balkan languages.

The present-day territory of Kosova, going back to the Middle Ages, faced Slav, Avar and Bulgarian expansions (VI-IX centuries). The sources of that time tell about their incursions until the vicinity of Durrës and Thessaloniki. The bigger centres of Dardania were also pillaged. In the work *De aedificis* of the distinguished historian Procopus (?-565) it results that the emperor Justinian (527-565) reconstructed 61 castles and cities and constructed 8 new castles.

³ *E vërteta mbi Kosovën dhe Shqiptarët në Jugosllavi*, Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, Tiranë, 1990, p. 21-45.

Starting from late antiquity until the early Middle Ages, the cities of Dardania continued to remain well-known centres of economic life and liaison ones in transmission of material and spiritual culture of the Illyrian antiquity in the Albanian Middle Ages. There were also cities whose life ended during the VI-VII centuries. Although still limited, we come across early Middle Ages Albanian cultural elements, such as work tools, weapons, earth dishes and certain jewelry, also in the areas of Kosova. Characteristic fibulas of Koman culture have also been found here. From this results that Dardans entered the Middle Ages with an advanced economic and social development. Albanian mediaeval cities had in common with the cities of late antiquity also the urban appearance. Temporary destructive incursions of Slavs did not leave a single trace in the material and spiritual culture of the autochthonous population. Since then, there was not any settlement of a wider range in Kosova.

In the history of Kosova, the early Middle Ages is one of the most important periods, because the formation of Albanian people, language and its culture. is related to it. It is a less enlightened period by written sources. Therefore, archeological and linguistic sources should absolutely be consulted. Then, in narrative sources of that time, the denomination of Dardania started being mentioned very rarely.⁴ The denomination Dardania, as an administrative and geographic concept, circulates in the documents of that time until XI century. The denomination Kosova, started being used after the Battle of Kosova (1389). We come across the said denomination, in official Ragusian documents, also in 1405. It refers to „boschi de Chossoua“ somewhere in the surroundings of Vuçitern.⁵ We come across the denomination *Kosova* also in Novobërdan humanist, *Martin Segoni* (XV century). Along with the denomination Kosova, Segoni uses, according to humanist fashion, also the denomination Dardania Moesia.⁶ The renewed

⁴ *Vizantinski izvori za istoriju narodna Jugoslavije*, tom. I, Beograd, 1955, p. 54-58, 60-61, 124, 195, 196, 211; V. Popović, „Grčki natpis iz Caričinog Grada i pitanje ubikacije Prve Justinjane“, *Glas SANU*, Odeljenje istorijskih nauka, knj. 7, Beograd, 1990, p. 78-87.

⁵ *Zbornik K. Jirečka*, I, SAN, Beograd, 1959, p. 419-420.

⁶ A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono di Novo Brdo vescovo di Dulcigno, Un umanista serba-dalmata dell' tardo Quattrocento, Vita e opera*, Roma, 1981, p. 109.

updating of denomination Dardania for Kosova is an expressing form also for the other Albanian and foreign humanists, who used in their writing well-known terms of antiquity.

Historical, archeological and linguistic evidence prove rightfully that Kosova cannot be considered the cradle of formation of Serb state, as it is claimed by some unserious historians, because this state did not arise and was not present here for most of the time of its existence, but in other regions with Serb population, such as the one of Rasha. As it was usually dealt in the Middle Ages, the centre of this stated moved from one territory to another. Only for a period of time, especially in the first half of XIV century, it made Kosova an epicentre. This time coincides with constructions or reconstructions of churches and monasteries by the kings of Rasha in this region, such as the one of Deçan, of the Saints Mikhail and Gabriel, of Peja, of Banjska and Graçanica, an issue aiming at intensifying more the Serb colonisation and ensure the conversion of Albanian population into Serb Orthodox one, as a way for its ethnic-cultural assimilation. The example that the region of Kosova represents, where for a time the political and ecclesiastic centre of Nemanjid state was located, and where an ethnic difference between the ruling class, the Serb state-military and ecclesiastic body and the autochthonous Albanian population existed, as the scholar S. Pollo states, is neither the first nor the only case in the European Middle Ages history. However, to equalize this segment upon this immigrant structure at a certain historic time, with the autochthonous population, as the Serb scholars do, means for example to extinguish the Austro-German land and all those territories of Croatia and Slovenia, or Turk ones, the whole Balkans (during the centuries of their rule), where only the ruling class, the sacral monuments, the urban bourgeoisie was German or Turk.

In the Middle Ages the Albanians appear as an old Christian population with a culture being more urban, which stood closer to the Greeks and Romans rather than to the newcomer Slavs. About the age (antiquity) of Illyrian-Albanian Christianity, some remains of the old Latin terminology in Albanian language and numerous toponyms derived from the names of

the saints witness. According to the evidence resulting from mediaeval documents, each Albanian held two names: the first one was a Christian name (rarely a Roman or a national one), whilst the second was often the name of kinship or of the village (rarelier the denomination of a personal feature).

It is known that during the early Middle Ages (VI-XI) Albanian territories were under the ecclesiastic jurisdiction of papacy, whilst in the administrative-legal aspect they were definitively related to the Byzantine Empire. Eventually, with the division of the church in 1054 into Western Church with its seat in Rome and Eastern Church with its seat in Constantinople, a part of Albanian territories remained under the influence of Catholic church, respectively of Western civilisation, whilst the other part remained under the influence of Eastern-Orthodox church. Since the Serb state had strongly embraced, not only the Byzantine rite, but also its laws, incarnated with the Great-Serbian Orthodoxy, it exercised a continuous pressure not only on Catholic believers, but also on Orthodox believers of Byzantine rite, to convert them into Serb Orthodox rite. About the conversion of Albanians it is spoken also in articles of the *Dushan Code*. This phenomenon, as well as the conversion of Catholic churches into Serb-Orthodox ones, is claimed also by the emperor Dushan himself in a letter of "repentance" bearing the date of the year 1354 to the Pope Innocent VI.⁷ By such a policy, the Serb kings, especially Dushan aimed in essence to expunge the cultural and religious barriers, that separated and distinguished the Albanians as such. Therefore, this policy led towards an ethnic-cultural assimilation. The consequences of this violent policy seem with a special clearness in the anthroponomic facts, which can be best seen from the chrysoboules of Nemanjid kings donated to the Monastery of Deçan, Banjska, Graçanica, Saint Mikhail and Gabriel in Prizren.

Such a policy was opposed not only by the papacy office, but also by the Albanian rulers, especially by the Ballshaj princes, who, after owning Peja, the centre of Serb church from the mid

⁷ C. Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, Gotha, 1911, p. 408.

XIV century, first made efforts to chair the ecclesiastic convents in Peja (1375, 1385), in order to take afterwards crucial steps in expulsion of the patriarch from the seat.⁸ Such an effort became reality after the year 1380, when the Serb church moved from Kosova to Zhiça of Rasha, whereof, it was earlier transferred here.⁹

It is well-known that the Serbs embraced Christianity very late, sometime around the end of IX century A.D.. Since this term of the beginning of Serb Christianity is known to us, a term that has not been opposed until the present day from any serious scholar, and that in XIII century this term symbolized the Serb power over the region of Kosova, it is not difficult to put a chronological border to the Catholic and Orthodox sacral constructions of Kosova, which can be divided into Pre-Serb and Serb ones during the. XIII-XIV centuries. However, also the sacral constructions of XIII-XIV centuries cannot be signed only as Serb sacral constructions, because, at this time even, many Catholic churches, convents (monasteries) and cathedrals, such as the ones in Janjevë, Novobërdë, Mitrovicë, Prizren, Prishtinë, Trepçë, Vuçitërnë etc. were constructed, which were completely ruined during the centuries of Serb, Ottoman rule, as well as between the two world wars. Traces of them are kept even nowadays in some ruins and in preserved documents of that time. It is also known that king Milutin funded the reconstruction of the cathedral church dedicated to Lady Prene in Prizren and the Monastery of Graçanica, known as Pre-Serb constructions, built sometime around the IV-XI centuries, which according to relevant sources, are considered Catholic sacral constructions. In the beginning of XIII century the Apostles' Church in Pejë was constructed. In fact, this church, which is nowadays within the compound of churches of Peja Patriarchy, same as these two first ones, is a reconstruction of an old construction, to which the form of a church of that time was given. The church of Deçan Monastery, which was built during the rule of Nemanjid kings Stefan and Dushan Deçani (1327-

⁸ P. Bogdani, "Kosova në shtetin feudal shqiptar të Balshajve", in *E vërteta mbi Kosovën...*, op. cit. 114.

⁹ P. Bogdani, op. cit., p. 118.

1335),¹⁰ is the largest work that preserves elements from the constructioal engineering coming from the coast. On the architrave of the south portal of nartex there was also an engraved inscription of the Albanian architect *Don Vita Cuçi*. It has also been preserved the fact that Don Vita with 30 stonedressers constructed the Monastery of Deçan. What attracts more attention is the fact that all the workshops of stonedressers are known, including the ones of Tivar, Ulqin, Kotorr and Korçula. On the other hand, one of the well-known stonedressers was *Miho (Mikel) the Tivarian*, a famous sculptor of XIV century, author of the claustre of Franciscan Monastery in Ragusa.¹¹

During the mediaeval centuries, due to the external political factor, the ethnic-geographical denomination *Arbanon*, did not always include all the Albanian territories, consequently it did not include the present-day territory of Kosova either. Although during the whole Middle Ages there were Albanian political formations, the denomination *Arbanon* appeared only in the documents of that time, sometime around the XI century. However, it can be said that the spread of denomination *Arbanon*, and after this period, was conditioned exclusively from the extension of the compact Albanian population, but in most cases, as it was the custom during the Middle Ages, it was also dependent on the political factor. If the appearances of denominations *Dardania and Arbëria* are traced, during the early Middle Ages, it is interesting to state that the denomination *Arbëria* replaces the denomination *Dardania* also in the part of the present-day territory of Kosova.

With the formation of the state of *Arbëria* (Albania) in the passage of XII century, many ethnic Albanian territories remained outside the state frontiers. Outside these frontiers remained also the largest part of regions of *Dardania*. However, going through centuries of Middle Ages, conditioned by

¹⁰ Đ. Bošković, „Travaux de consolidation, de censure et de restauration accomplis au monastère de la Patrijaršija à Peć“, extrait du *Starinar*, Tome VIII-IX; 1933-1934, p. 162-165.

¹¹ J. Drançolli, „Miho (Mikel) Tivarasi, skulptor me famë i shek. XIV“, *Fjala*, nr. 19-20, Prishtinë, 1985, p. 15.

compact ethnic areas, geographic denominations, such as Arbëria or Epirus, we came across quite often also their administrative borders. We come across such notifications at *Abbot of Diokle* from the second half of XII century, notifying that Rasha or Serbia extended until Arbëria (read: region of present day Llap)¹². As part of Arbëria (Albania), we come across Kosova in French chronicler of XIV century Philip de Mesier, who proves that the Battle of Kosova took place in the part of Arbëria (Albania).¹³ We read more or less same opinions in the volumes of *Annals of Forli* (Italy), from the XV century. Also according to the French traveloguer of the XV century, *B. de la Broquere*, the overwhelming part of Kosova was included within the concept of Arbëria (Albania).¹⁴ We come such notifications also in the Austrian, Italian and Ottoman documents of the XVI-XVIII centuries, such as notifications "Prishtina is located in Arbëria (Albania)", "Prizren, the capital of Arbëria (Albania)", "Peja and Shkupi are included in Arbëria (Albania)". Pjetër Bogdani was qualified „Archbishop of Arbëria (Albania)", etc.¹⁵ During the Austro-Ottoman wars, the largest part of Kosova and Dukagjini Plain was on the side of Austrian army. Hence, in November 1689, when the Austrian entered Prishtina, they were welcomed by 5000 Albanian insurgents, whilst in Prizren by another 6000 Albanian insurgents. Here the Austrian forces commander, general Piccolomini, conducted negotiations with the heads of insurgents, with the Archbishop of Shkup, Pjetër Bogdani.

Equivalently to the concept of Kosova a part of Arbëria or Albania, the documents of that time prove also about Kosova within the concept of Epirus. Such are the notifications: "Has, not very far from Prizren, a province in Epirus", "Piccolomini

¹² *Letopis Popa Dukljanina*, SKA, knj. LXVII, ed. F. Šišić, Beograd, 1928, p. 307; N. Banašević, *Letopis Popa Dukljanina*, Beograd, 1971, p. 217.

¹³ Biblioteka Kombëtare e Parisit, fonds français, N. 22, 542, fol. 366; Cfr. M. Dinić, "Dva savremenika o Boju na Kosovu", in *Glas SKA*, CLXXXII/92, Beograd, 1940, p. 135.

¹⁴ J. Drançolli, "Beteja e Kosovës në dritën e burimeve Ragusane", in *Gjurmime Albanologjike* (ser. e shk. historike), Prishtinë, 1991/21, p. 46; *Le voyage d'Outremer de Bertrand de la Broquiere* (1433), ed. Ch. Schefer, Paris, 1892, p. 214.

¹⁵ J. Drançolli, *The Albanian population of Kosova and other areas of former Jugoslavia during the XV - th - XVII - th centuries*, Tirana, 1996, p. 63 - 69.

came to Prishtina to conduct earlier started negotiations with the Epirots “, “Peja, in Epirus” (“Ipek liegt in Epirus/Peja lies in Epirus”), “Prizren (lies) in Epirus”, „Shkup (lies) in Epirus“, etc.¹⁶. In addition to concepts of Kosova as part of Arbëria and of Epir, we come across Kosova in various documents as a broader concept, such as the news about the First and the Second Battle of Kosova (1389, 1448), the letter exchange of Ragusan chancellery from 1474, the news that came from Kosova to Florence during the Austrian-Ottoman War 1683-1699.¹⁷

What draws more attention about the issue of extension of concept of Arbëria in the territory of the present day Kosova, is the fact that immediately after the collapse of Serb empire with the death of Dushan (1355), independent political formation were restored, such as the Shkodra principedom, Durrës principedom, Arta despotate, Berat despotate, etc. As it is known, this process of great historical relevance was interrupted by the Ottoman invasion, which poured upon the Albanian territories in the last years of the XIV century. During all this period, the territory of Kosova, almost on the whole, became an integral part of of Arbërian (Albanian) possessions of Ballshaj, Kastrioti and Dukagjini families. At that time, the population of Kosova became the subject of its own history and a factor of importance in the historical development of the West Balkans, where two ethnicities met: the Arbërian (Albanian) one and the South Slav one. The Albanian political-state factor gave the opportunity to the population of Kosova to promote further its language, culture and religion.

The presence of Arbërian (Albanian) population, as an important factor in Kosova, is confirmed also by their vast participation in great battles that took part against the Ottoman armies in 1389 and 1448. According to the historical sources the First Kosova Battle was not only a combat confrontation between

¹⁶ J. Drançolli, “Popullsia shqiptare e Kosovës dhe e trojeve të tjera në ish-Jugosllavi gjatë shek. XV - XVII”, in *Gjurmime Albanologjike* (ser. e shk. historike), Prishtinë, 1992/22, p. 73.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73 - 74; S. Gavrilović, *Izvori o Srbima u Ugarskoj od kraja XVII i početkom XVIII veka*, knj. II. Beograd, 1990, 47-51.

Ottoman invaders and the armies of Serb state, which at that time ruled Kosova, but a great battle of Balkan feudal coalition forces. The sources referring to this battle prove that on the side of coalition, apart from prince Lazar, the ruler of Rasha, the ban of Croatia, the king of Bosnia, also Arbërian (Albanian) princes, such as Gjon Kastrioti, Theodor II Muzaka (fell at the battle), Dhimitër Jonima, Gjergj Balsha, took part. The epilogue of the Battle of Kosova was the defeat of the Christian army and the death of two leaders: Sultan Murat was killed after the battle by the hand of Milosh Kopiliqi, whilst prince Lazar, after he was caught prisoner, was executed. This reconstruction of the event, done in general lines, is proved by the preserved relevant sources of the time, which was also admitted by all the serious historians of the world. However, the Serb thesis about the battle of Kosova (1389), which starts immediately from the last century supported insistently by the daily science and political writings, taking advantage of the lack of official documents, drawing it out of historical reality, and laying on the mythologic and legendary ground, was also preserved. Harnessing the scientific documents, it results that allegedly in Fushë-Kosovë in 1389 only Serbs fought against the Ottomans. Such viewpoints were opposed also by some great Serb historians, such as the Mediaevalist *M. Dinić*, who stated about this event: "In our overall past perhaps there is no event for which there would be necessary sources, in order to make the distinction between legendary and realistic elements". On the other hand, the historian *I. Ruvarac*, a representative of Serb critic school of the XIX century, speaking about prince Lazar, claimed: "the stories and short fairy tales", that were set up a long time after the Battle of Kosova, are only "well imagined stories", therefore, he suspects in their authenticity and points out " a present day author of history cannot make use of those "stories."¹⁸ The above examples speak convincingly about the fact that the myth about Kosova, which arose a long time after the Battle of Kosova and that is existing also nowadays, despite its literary and artistic value, does not have any historiographic values.

¹⁸ Ruvarac, "O knezu Lazaru, in Boj na Kosovu, starija i novija saznanja", *Književne Novine*, Beograd, 1992, p. 154-162; J. Drançolli, "Beteja e Kosovës", art. cit. p. 41.

Another historical issue that contradicts the historical reality, which is boisterously being imposed by the Serb political and scientific circles, is the use of the concept “Metohia” for the south-western part of the present-day Kosova. In the light of the present-day events it is becoming clear to us that a renewed updating of the denomination of Metohia is in the function of policy. It is interesting to emphasize that this artificial notion without any historical basis, in the papers that are nowadays printed for propagandistic purposes, takes even a broader meaning than it was fixed by the representatives of Garashanin school. Concretely when it is referred to the denomination “Metohija”, that is now present also in the official life of Serb circles, as a geographic remembrance that is related to a part of the present-day territory of Kosova, respectively, to the territory between Peja and Prizren, including also the said cities. In fact, in the terminology of mediaeval lexicon of Orthodox church source, the term “Metohia”, “Meteh”, according to the Slav, Latin and Greek mediaeval documents, does not content the attribute of a geographic notion, but always in the documents of that time it comes out (results) as a term that has the meaning of an ecclesiastic property (*metohion or terra monasterio*) or a property of a village, house, vine-yard, orchard, etc. Also in Ottoman documents of XV-XX centuries, there cannot be found any fact on the geographic notion of the term “Metohija”. It is of interest to mention here what toponyms were found in Kosova at the end of XII century until XIII century, before the Nemanjid kingdom administration was installed here, but we come across these first hand facts, also in biographies of Saint Sava and the Crowned Stefan, dedicated to their father Stefan Nemanja. In the biography of the first, we come across the following fact: “He took from the coast the location Zeta with cities, from Raban (Arbëria-J.D.) both Pults from the Greek land, whilst he took Patkova (the territory of the present-day Gjakova-J.D.), Kostërcë and Dërshkovina (villages on te territory of Peja-J.D.), Podrimë, Sitnica, Llap and Lipjan [...]”.¹⁹ On the other hand, in the biography of the second we come across the following fact: “He

¹⁹ *Stare Srpske Biografije, I*, ed. M. Bašić, Beograd, 1924, p. 3-4.

took [...] the territory of Prizren and both Pologues on the whole [...]”.²⁰ As it can be seen from the said documents, although all the parts of the region of the present-day Peja, Gjakova and Prizren are mentioned in them, at that time the geographic denomination or notion of “Metohija” did not exist at all. The said toponym is not even mentioned in Hilandar Chart (Map), compiled in 1200-1202, and in chrysoboules, hadjiographies, typics, biographies of Nemanjid time and afterwards, either. One should observe that also in most representative collections of Serb documents compiled and collected by Serb Mediaevalists, *St. Novaković* and *Lj. Stojanović*, the denomination “Metohija” can be found very often, but always in the sense of an ecclesiastic property and never as a geographic notion, which would have the meaning of the territory of Peja, Gjakova and Prizren.²¹ During all the time of Nemanjid rule (XIII-XIV centuries) and afterwards, along with the territories of Prizren, *Hvosno* and *Patkova*, which were mentioned above in the text, the territory of *Altin* is also mentioned, which included the areal between Dečan and Gjakova.

On the other hand, after the disintegration of the Nemanjid state (1355), in this part of Kosova the possessions of prince families of Balshaj, Dukagjini and Kastrioti started being extended. Upon the invasion (conquest) of the present-day territory of Kosova by the Ottomans (1455) and upon installation of Ottoman administration in this region, the territories of Peja and Gjakova started being called Dukagjin, respectively they entered within the framework of Dukagjini Sandjak, which used to extend between Adriatic and the Sandjaks of Hercegovina, Vuçitërna, Prizren, and later Shkodra.²² The territories of Peja and Gjakova were parts of this Ottoman administrative unit until 1783, when the Dukagjini Sandjak ceased to exist. At that time the geographic notion was

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²¹ *St. Novaković Zakonski spomenici srpskih država srednjega veka*, SKA, Peta knjiga, Beograd, 1912, p. 12-14, 32, 109, 256, 307, 311, 335, 364, 387, 707, 709, 719-720, 755, 763, 770; *Lj. Stojanović, Stari Srpski Zapisi i Natpisi*, I-VI, Beograd - S. Karlovci, 1902 - 1926, në më shumë vende.

²² *Turski Spomenici (1348 - 1520)*, knj. I, Sv. 1, ed. G. Elezović, SKA, Beograd, 1940, p. 780-781.

narrowed only into the region of Peja, which entered into the Shkodra Sandjak. With the inclusion of new Ottoman administrative units, respectively vilayets, Peja as a Kadi centre entered within the Sandjak of Prizren. In 1874, the said city entered within the framework of Kosova Vilayet.²³ It is important to emphasize that the word Dukagjin has since XIX century had a double meaning in Serbian. In the first place as a name of a person and principedom, then as a geographic notion. In this place, it is important to mention the fact that the Serb linguist *V. Karaxhiq*, in his dictionary makes a distinction between the personal name Dukagjin and the territory of Dukagjin. This scholar uses for the first time in his dictionary along with the toponym Dukagjin also the geographic notion "Metohija", which according to him, comprised Prizren, Peja, Gjakova and the Deçan Monastery.²⁴ In the early days of XX century, the Serb scholars, St. Novakoviq and J. Cvijiq, and some later supporters of their studies, without relying at all on historical sources, raised the thesis about the existence of the name *Metohija*, which had the meaning of the territory between Prizren and Peja. They based this thesis on the fact that the term "Metohion", respectively "Metohija" in Greek language has the meaning of monastery property and in this aspect many villages of the said territory were monastery property.²⁵ It is known that the Orthodox church possessed during the Middle Ages monasteries not only in this part of the present day territory of Kosova, but also on the whole Kosova and in Serbia, then in a part of Greece (Hilandar), of Bosnia, Montenegro, etc. According to this logic, the above mentioned scholars and their supporters (describers), had to call all the mediaeval territories of Nemanjid kingdom, where there were "Metohions" or

²³ Dr. L. von Talloczy, *Illyrische-Albanische Forschungen*, 1, Vindobonae 1916, p. 80, 84, 85, 115, 121, 129, 240, 243, 286; Dr. E. Sufflay, karta "Albaniae Mediaevalis", annex to the monumental collection, *Acta et diplomata Res mediae aetatis*, Vindobonae, 1913-1918; Tagut-tevarih, II, p. 228-239; K. Ulqini, "Prejardhja dhe zhvillimi i toponimit Dukagjin", in *Konferenca e dytë e studimeve Albanologjike*, II, Tiranë, 1969, p. 121-127; I. Božić, "O Dukadjinima", in *Zbornik Filozofskog Fakulteta u Beogradu*, Beograd, 1964/VIII-2, p. 385'424.

²⁴ V. Karadžić, *Srpski rečnik* (1852), *Sabrana dela* XI/1, Beograd, 1986, p. 217, 499.

²⁵ *Turski Spomenici*, p. 790-792.

“metohijas” of the Orthodox church, with a single common name *Metohija*. Taking into account all the known historical sources, we can say with our full mouth that the territory of present days Peja, Gjakova and Prizren, until 1945, has never had the geographic meaning of metohija. On the contrary, from XIV century until 1945, it preserved the geographical concept of the Dukagjin Plain, or shortly Dukagjin.

An important factor in the preservation of Illyrian-Albanian continuity in Kosova is also the development of scientific and cultural life. It is known that the history of science, culture and education development in Kosova preserves a far tradition. It shows that upon the appearance of an earlier European civilization, consequently from Illyrians, and later during the Middle Ages, in the shrunked Albanian territories, a big experience of knowledge, that was transmitted generation after generation, was created.

With the construction of the well-known cities of Europe, during the centuries of antiquity and Middle Ages, along with them, well-known cities of Kosova were also developed, which thanks to large natural resources, achieved a high level of economic and cultural development. These centres were in direct relationships with the known European cities, which was accomplished especially through the Ragusans, Venetians and the Pope’s relators, arrived in Kosova, on the one hand, and on the other hand, through migrated or educated Albanians (Arbërs) in bigger centres of European knowledge, such as, for example Bologna, Padua, Paris, Ragusa, Rome and elsewhere. These scholars were the carriers of progressive and humanist ideas of that time. Among them there were historians, philosophers, doctors, writers, artists and theologians, who made a name for themselves in Europe. From the series of these creators, it is worth mentioning: *Marin Segoni* from Novobërdë (XV century), the urologist *Milo* from Prizren (XIV century), *Valerian Novobërdan*, *Gjon Vaji* from Novobërdë, *Gjon Progoni* from Novobërdë (XV century), *Gjon Injaci* from Novobërdë, etc.²⁶

²⁶ The acknowledgement of the activity of these distinguished men of science, art and education, is a merit of original discoveries of the author of the present study through Italian and Croat archives.

What draws more attention, is the fact that the majority of the authors of the old Albanian literature of the XVI-XVII centuries, worked in the territories of Kosova and made efforts, among other things, also to spread the Albanian education and to open Albanian schools. The second writer to write in Albanian after Buzuku, *Pal Hasi* was a Kosovar from Has. *Pjetër Budi* in 1599 and later other early authors of Kosova were inspired from his works. Also *Pjetër Bogdani*, *Andrea Bogdani*, and *Lekë Bogdani*, who continued the tradition of writing the Albanian of Buzuku and Budi, were from the region of Dukagjini Plain. *Pjetër Mazreku*, another Albanian scholar, after completing his studies in Italy, around 1665 came to Janjevë, where he set down to teaching at the Albanian school of Janjevë.

The Albanian creators and activists, equipped with European knowledge and culture, together with local schools and churches, maintained the spirit of autochthonous civilization. All this enabled the presence of European culture and civilization not to lose its continuity even after falling under the five-centennial Ottoman rule.

Conclusion

In the time of large migrations, from VI century, the South Slavs had passed the Carpatas and Danube in order to settle down in the South of the said river. Here, during the early Middle Ages, the state of Bulgaria (IX century) arose and afterwards the state of Rasha (XII century, Nemanjid Serbia). Before the arrival of Slavs, on the Balkan Peninsula, an autochthonous population, consequently, Illyrians and Thracians, has lived. The successors of the Illyrians, the present-day Albanians, had preserved the language, the culture and Christian religion. The ethnic space of Albanians during the Middle Ages, although narrowed compared to the areal of their ancestors – Illyrians, according to mediaeval documents (consequently including Serb chryssoboules), comprised approximately the present-day ethnic Albanian territories. This population, during the whole Middle Ages, was faced with western Roman and Eastern Byzantine civilisations, as well as the later Serb invaders (from

XIII century). However, it achieved, during the Middle Ages, to preserve its ethnic-cultural features in order to enter as a separate people into Modern History.

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