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**THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE,  
THE BALKANS,  
THE GREEK LANDS:  
TOWARD A SOCIAL AND  
ECONOMIC HISTORY**

**STUDIES IN HONOR OF JOHN C. ALEXANDER**

**EDITED BY**

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To John C. Alexander  
by his colleagues, friends and students  
on the occasion of his retirement  
from a long and fruitful career of teaching

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## ALBANIANS IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN BALKANS\*

Antonis ANASTASOPOULOS

The earliest recorded wave of massive Albanian expansion to the southern Balkans dates from the fourteenth century. Then, as four centuries later, Albanians shocked state authorities and Balkan communities with their military and destructive capabilities.<sup>1</sup> What sedentary societies of the late Byzantine and Ottoman periods found disturbing about Albanians was what was seen as their disrespect for established order, as well as their rapacity, which was made worse by what was thought to be a 'natural' inclination to violence. According to Süleyman Penah Efendi, an eighteenth-century Ottoman bureaucrat who penned a work with suggestions about how to cure various weaknesses of the Ottoman regime, Albanians from the districts of Delvine and Avlonya, as well as those Albanians outside Albania who had not yet been assimilated in their places of residence, were rough, ill-bred, unruly, and undisciplined, engaged in trouble, brigandage and plunder, and were totally ignorant of commerce and the crafts.<sup>2</sup> Without denying the fact that bands of

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<sup>1</sup> V. D. Psimouli, *Souli kai Souliotes* [Souli and Souliots], 2nd ed., Athens 2005, 27ff; D. A. Zakythinos, *Le Despotat grec de Morée*, vol. 2: *Vie et institutions*, ed. C. Maltéizou, London 1975, 30-31. For the fifteenth century, see A. Ducellier, "Les Albanais dans les colonies vénitienes au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Studi Veneziani* 10 (1968), 49-52.

<sup>2</sup> "Mora İhtilâli Tarihçesi veya Penah Ef. Mecmuası", ed. A. Berker, *Tarih Vesikaları* 2/9 & 10 (1942-1943), 239-40, 309. Süleyman Penah proposes particular measures for disciplining and civilizing the Albanians (ibid., 239-40, 309-12). A few decades later, in the 1820s, Albanians still were in very bad repute with Ottoman officials: H. Erdem, "'Perfidious Albanians' and 'Zealous Governors': Ottomans, Albanians, and Turks in the Greek War of Independence", in A. Anastasopoulos and E. Kolovos (eds), *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760-1850: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation*, Rethymno 2007, 214-20, 229-33. For a seventeenth-century expression of anti-Albanian prejudice, presumably inspired by this group's success in Ottoman administration, see M. I. Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment", *IJMES* 5 (1974), 237-38. In this context, it may not be coincidental that the perpetrators of a crime in sixteenth-century Istanbul were *levends* according to Celalzade who composed his work in that century, but Albanians according to Peçevi who wrote in the seventeenth century (*Geschichte Sultan Süleymân Kânûnis von 1520 bis 1557 ... von Celalzâde Mustafa ...*, ed. P. Kappert, Wiesbaden 1981, 67 and f. 175b-176a; *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 2 vols, Istanbul 1261-1263 [1864-1866], vol. 1, 127) (I owe this observation to Dr Marinos Sariyannis).

armed Albanians often upset the life of or even wreaked havoc in whole regions either for their own purposes or in the context of providing their services to provincial notables as mercenaries – Ottoman and other sources provide evidence of both<sup>1</sup> – I propose to treat them as more than this, namely, as individuals and groups of people who laid claim to local power in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire to the detriment of older, established elites (who too, in some cases, were Albanians). In this context, this paper centers on Albanians who, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, sought to acquire the three basic traits of the elite, i.e., status, power, and wealth, through establishing their authority in a given region outside their native lands.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Albanians referred to in this paper are Muslim Albanians, whose religion allowed them to claim *ayan* positions and tax farms.<sup>3</sup>

The eighteenth century, in particular its second half, appears to have been a propitious time for the bold and the ambitious in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. One of the basic features of this period was the relative weakness of appointed state agents and the reliance of the state instead on provincial elements for managing the affairs of its provinces, collecting taxes, and providing troops and supplies in wartime. Thus, provincial notables and strongmen were able to acquire power over their regions as well as a considerable degree of autonomy from strict state control. However, as the procedure of establishing oneself as the local power-holder was largely

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, J. K. Vasdravellis, *Klephts, Armatoles and Pirates in Macedonia during the Rule of the Turks (1627-1821)*, Thessaloniki 1975, 143-44 [1755], 148-49 (1766), 149-50 (1780), 152-53 (1779). Cf. A. Vakalopoulos, *Historia tes Makedonias, 1354-1833* [A History of Macedonia, 1354-1833], Thessaloniki 1969, 278-82, 295-97, 302-12, and P. M. Kontogiannis, *Hoi Hellenes kata ton proton epi Aikaterines B rossotourkikon polemon (1768-1774)* [The Greeks during the first Russo-Turkish War under Catherine II (1768-1774)], Athens 1989 (reprint of the original edition, Athens 1903), 479-80. Armed Albanians were readily available for hiring by Balkan provincial notables, and were often involved in local power struggles; furthermore, various brigand bands were composed of Albanians: F. F. Anscombe, "Albanians and 'Mountain Bandits'", in idem (ed.), *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830*, Princeton 2006, 90-91, 103.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the notion of 'provincial elite' in the Ottoman context, see A. Anastasopoulos, "Introduction", in idem (ed.), *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire (Halcyon Days in Crete V: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 10-12 January 2003)*, Rethymno 2005, xi-xxviii. It is Peter Burke who defined elites as "groups high on three criteria; status, power and wealth" in his *Venice and Amsterdam: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Elites*, London 1974, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Tax farming had been heavily dominated by Muslims since the sixteenth century (M. Çizakça, *A Comparative Evolution of Business Partnerships: The Islamic World and Europe, with Specific Reference to the Ottoman Archives*, Leiden, New York, Cologne 1996, 153-54). In 1714, non-Muslims were barred from *malikâne* auctions (A. Salzman, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State*, Leiden and Boston 2004, 114), but they were not altogether excluded from tax-farming networks; see, for instance, M. V. Sakellariou, *He Peloponnesos kata ten Deuteron Tourkokratian (1715-1821)* [The Peloponnese during the Second Period of Turkish Rule (1715-1821)], Athens 1978 (reprint of the original edition, Athens 1939), 75, 77, and E. Kolovos, *He nesiotike koinonia tes Androu sto othomaniko plaisio* [The Island Society of Andros in the Ottoman Context], Andros 2006, 135-36.

unofficial and unregulated, it allowed room for power struggles which sometimes could evolve into violent conflicts.<sup>1</sup> Albanians were often prominent in such struggles in two capacities: as power claimants and mercenaries. It has been argued that political life in eighteenth-century Albania was marked by armed clashes among competing elite families and groups,<sup>2</sup> and, if the use of force and violence really was such a prominent feature of politics in the Albanian territories of the Ottoman Empire, it can be claimed that local conditions had 'trained' Albanians for their participation in power struggles in other Balkan provinces, too.

It is reasonable to assume that there was an ulterior motive in the representation of Albanians by their antagonists or victims as troublesome rabble and brigands,<sup>3</sup> since such epithets de-legitimized their presence in a given region and, furthermore, this was how it was hoped that the state could be motivated to take action against them lest anarchy should prevail. In a way, the weakest party demanded protection from the state against an aggressive (and more dynamic) newcomer, an outsider. Twentieth-century scholarship sometimes uncritically adopted the picture non-Albanian sources of the Ottoman period drew about Albanians. This attitude can to a large extent be attributed to the prevalence even in scholarly circles of stereotypes about neighboring peoples in the context of Balkan nationalistic antagonisms,<sup>4</sup> but occasionally not even Albanian scholars have distanced themselves from clichés, only they have presented them in a much more positive light.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, there are scholars who have dissociated Albanians from what, as noted above, was implied or claimed to be a propensity to violence and disorder, and have interpreted Albanian expansion into other Balkan regions, its causes and characteristics in a more meaningful fashion. For instance,

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, F. Adanır, "Semi-Autonomous Provincial Forces in the Balkans and Anatolia", in S. N. Faroqi (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, 170-78. For violence as a means of achieving political supremacy, see V. P. Mutafchieva, "L'institution de l'ayanlık pendant les dernières décennies du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *EB* 1965/2-3, 235-40.

<sup>2</sup> G. L. Arsh, *He Alvania kai he Epeiros sta tele tou 18ou kai stis arches tou 19ou aiona: ta dytikovalkanika pasalikia tes Othomanikes Autokratourias* [Albania and Epirus in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: The Western-Balkan Pashaliks of the Ottoman Empire], trans. A. Dialla, Athens 1994, 63-67.

<sup>3</sup> State decrees often referred to Albanians as brigands (*haydud eşkıyası*) and rabble (*haşarat*); see, for instance Karaferye Sicils (KS) no. 85/p. 425/entry no. 2 (1764) and 85/301/2 (1765) (the *kadı* registers of Karaferye are kept at the Imathia branch of the Greek General State Archives). Boğaç A. Ergene has criticized the uncritical adoption of the state's depiction of its opponents in his "On Ottoman Justice: Interpretations in Conflict (1600-1800)", *Islamic Law and Society* 8/1 (2001), 70.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Vasdravellis, *Klephts*, 42-43.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, R. Marmullaku, *Albania and the Albanians*, trans. M. and B. Milosavljević, London 1975, 15: "The Albanians were good soldiers and much preferred an adventurous life to the drudgery of work". This view echoes J. C. Hobhouse, *A Journey through Albania, and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople, during the Years 1809 and 1810*, 2 vols, 2nd ed., London 1813, vol. 1, 140.

Alain Ducellier attributes the 'nomadization' of certain sections of Albanian society in the pre-Ottoman period to social, economic, and political developments in twelfth and thirteenth-century Albania, notes that it was "une 'mobilité acquise', un 'nomadisme de misère'", and points out that when circumstances allowed, as in the Peloponnese, Albanians became again sedentary land cultivators.<sup>1</sup> Then, Vaso Psimouli, in her overview of fourteenth-century Albanian expansion, notes that involvement in banditry and raids was to be expected from a population which did not engage in agriculture and was in need of agricultural products, and puts emphasis on the necessities of pastoral economy as a reason for Albanian expansion. Being for the most part nomadic pastoralists, Albanians were in constant search of pasture for their animals, while rough living conditions and the requirements of successfully managing their herds contributed to placing the display of 'bravery' and 'prudence' high in their value system.<sup>2</sup> In his analysis, Frederick Anscombe also cites pastoralism as a reason why Albanians emigrated in considerable numbers to the eastern and southern Balkans, and beyond, in the eighteenth century, and adds to it several other reasons centering on the difficulties of living in their original bases, which were largely unsuitable for agriculture, offered limited resources, and were fraught with disease.<sup>3</sup>

In an empire where the state only seldom used ethnic names in order to describe its subjects, Albanians were one of the few groups which were defined by their rivals and the state through such a name (*Arnebud*, *Arnavud*), which suggests that they were seen as a group with particular characteristics.<sup>4</sup> Clearly Albanians were renowned for their military capabilities,<sup>5</sup> and notorious for their attacks and raids against towns and villages. Furthermore, they exhibited a high degree of mobility, and adaptability to circumstances, while they also were accused of or were indeed lacking in loyalty: they often seemed to decide on which side they would be solely on the basis of who the highest bidder or the most reliable employer was (in terms of honoring his

<sup>1</sup> A. Ducellier, "Les Albanais du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Nomades ou sédentaires?", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 7 (1979), 23-36.

<sup>2</sup> Psimouli, *Souli*, 19-111, 166. See also V. Panagiotopoulos, *Plethysmos kai oikismoi tes Peloponnesou 13os-18os Aionas* [Population and Settlements in the Peloponnese, Thirteenth-Eighteenth Centuries], Athens 1985, 73.

<sup>3</sup> Anscombe, "Albanians", 92-103; cf. Arsh, *He Alvania*, 38-39. It is worth noting that Süleyman Penah Efendi himself did not consider Albanians to be inherently evil ("Mora İhtilâli Tarihçesi", 239-40, 309-12), and attributed their "improper actions" to their large population in connection with the nature of their lands (*ibid.*, 239).

<sup>4</sup> Anscombe, "Albanians", 88 and n. 5.

<sup>5</sup> According to Hobhouse's exaggerated (and romantic?) description, the Albanians' "love of arms is so ardent, that those who may fear too long an interval of peace in their own country, enter into the service of the Pashas in every part of the Turkish empire" (Hobhouse, *A Journey through Albania*, 155).

financial commitments towards them).<sup>1</sup> An incident cited by Anscombe is rather telling in this respect: in 1792, a certain Matlı Osman, leader of a band of some 300 armed Albanians, set his eyes on the post of military commander in Pirlpepe, but, when the local people refused to admit him into their town, he adapted to circumstances: he extorted a considerable amount of money from them, and moved further east to provide his services to a claimant to the *ayanlık*. However, his departure did not fully deliver the people of Pirlpepe from their predicament, as another band of Albanians (800 men this time) arrived late on the invitation of the town's leading administrator in order to defend it against Osman, and they, too, refused to leave without payment. At the same time, several other groups of Albanians roamed about and pillaged the district.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that even though Osman and his men appear to be acting as vagrant warriors, bandits, and mercenaries, their leader apparently aspired to a somewhat more sedentary future by claiming the post of military commander in Pirlpepe (even if this was to be given to him for a fixed, thus limited, period of time). In fact, there was at least a portion of Albanian warlords and band leaders who attempted or did manage to carve out small or larger dominions for themselves in the Balkans beyond the rather vague borders of eighteenth-century Albania.<sup>3</sup> Tepedelenli Ali was perhaps the most successful among them,<sup>4</sup> but there were many more smaller-scale provincial notables or heads of districts who were of Albanian descent.<sup>5</sup> Another famous Albanian, Mehmed Ali, whose family was already established outside Albania, in Kavala in south-eastern Macedonia, even managed to successfully establish his rule in faraway Egypt in the early nineteenth century.

Besides, one should not forget that Tepedelenli Ali, a scion of a family which had produced *beys* and *pashas* but was subsequently hit by adversities, started his illustrious career as a brigand and a patron of brigands, and used

<sup>1</sup> For this last point, see Anscombe, "Albanians", 92, 103. Cf. Erdem, "'Perfidious Albanians'", 214-15, 222.

<sup>2</sup> Anscombe, "Albanians", 89-90.

<sup>3</sup> Anscombe (*ibid.*, 107 n. 3) notes that "Ottoman 'Albania' or *Arnavudluk* ... included parts of present-day northern Greece, western Macedonia, southern Montenegro, Kosovo, and southern Serbia"; see also *EP*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Arnavudluk. 6. History" (H. İnalçık) and Arsh, *He Alvania*, 31-33, 39-40. For the Byzantine period, see Psimouli, *Souli*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Buğatlı Kara Mahmud Paşa also worked towards expanding his authority outside Albania, in Bosnia and Montenegro; see *EP*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Kara Mahmud Paşa" (C. J. Heywood) and Arsh, *He Alvania*, 92-134, 174-202. For Ali Paşa, see K. E. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte: Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha's Greece*, Princeton 1999 and Arsh, *He Alvania*, 144-73, 203-354.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, M. Lascaris, *Salonique à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après les rapports consulaires français*, Athens 1939, 33-36 (Şahbenderoğlu Abdil Aga is identified as Albanian by J. K. Vasdravellis, "He Arvanitokratia sten Anatolike Makedonia kai he katastole tes" [Albanian Rule in Eastern Macedonia and its Suppression], *Serraiika Chronika* 3 [1959], 235-39). A state decree of 1779 prevented Albanians from claiming *ayanships* (Mutafcieva, "L'institution de l'*ayanlık*", 237).

violence and looting as part of his strategy to obtain the governorship of the Yanya (Gk. Ioannina) district,<sup>1</sup> while Mehmed Ali first arrived in Egypt as a deputy-commander of provincial troops sent against the French invaders.<sup>2</sup> In other words, even though both could rely on a certain family background, they in general shared the same relatively humble, so to speak, beginnings with other Albanian chiefs and warlords who did not succeed equally well. Yet another well-known late-eighteenth-century rebel-pasha, Osman Pazvantoglu, who was of Bosnian descent, spent precious time in Albania as a brigand before recovering part of the family fortune and consolidating his position in the Vidin area as one of the most powerful figures in the Balkans in that period.<sup>3</sup>

The scale and circumstances obviously were very different, but an analogy might be drawn here – at the risk of being accused of historical reductionism – between Albanians expanding to the central and southern Balkans in the eighteenth century and Turks swarming into post-Manzikert Asia Minor from the late eleventh century onwards, when in fact state-formation processes were taking place under a crust of chaotic instability.<sup>4</sup> Both Turks and Albanians were nomadic, mobile, renowned as warriors and mercenaries who provided their services to the highest bidder, and generally were treated by their opponents as little more than marauders and trouble-makers; in both cases, several ephemeral principalities were established, and very few among them survived for considerable periods of time; in both cases, the central state's involvement in provincial affairs was not as pronounced as it used to be, thus allowing significant latitude for the use of arms as a means of imposing one's authority.

In 1779 the Ottoman government organized a military campaign against Albanians. The main objective of this operation, which was led by the then Grand Admiral (*kapudan paşa*) Cezayirli Hasan Paşa,<sup>5</sup> was the expulsion of Albanians from the Morea, but the Ottoman troops also dealt with Albanians who had established their authority along the way, in Macedonia and Thessaly: according to a contemporaneous Greek source, “the Pasha

<sup>1</sup> D. N. Skiotis, “From Bandit to Pasha: First Steps in the Rise to Power of Ali of Tepelen, 1750-1784”, *IJMES* 2 (1971), 219-44; Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte*, 40-44; Arsh, *He Albania*, 144-73, esp. 147-48.

<sup>2</sup> On Mehmed Ali, see *E<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. “Muhammad Ali Pasha” (E. R. Toledano).

<sup>3</sup> R. Zens, “Pasvanoglu Osman Paşa and the Paşalık of Belgrade, 1791-1807”, *IJTS* 8 (2002), 91.

<sup>4</sup> S. Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1971, 96-287.

<sup>5</sup> On the eve of the campaign, Hasan was appointed governor of the Morea (*Mora valisi*) and commander-in-chief of the Balkan provinces (*Rumeli seraskeri*) (Sakellariou, *Peloponnesos*, 202).

ordered that all Albanians be shot on sight”.<sup>1</sup> However, not all Albanians were mere brigands, as is demonstrated by the various stops that the Ottoman official and his army had to make along the way in order to persecute, execute or force to submission provincial notables and tax farmers of Albanian origin, such as those of Menlik, Demirhisar, Petriç, and Katerin.<sup>2</sup> Katerin, for instance, had been under the authority of Arnavud (=Albanian) Hasan Ağa and his two sons, Halil and Mehmed, for at least twenty years; Hasan, furthermore, was a major landowner and tax farmer in the neighboring district (*kaza*) of Karaferye.<sup>3</sup>

The final destination of the campaign, the Morea, was somewhat different from the southern Balkans in that those Albanians who were targeted by the state had arrived there not on their own initiative and at various times, but as troops summoned in by the Ottoman authorities for a particular reason. Albanian forces were used to quell the Russian-instigated rebellion of 1770,<sup>4</sup> but it was not long before their presence in the Morea developed into a serious problem both for the local elite and population and the Ottoman government,<sup>5</sup> thus, in a letter to the Grand Vizier dated as early as 31 August 1770, the governor of the Morea Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa expressed his exasperation at his inability to check the Albanians and applied for his transfer to another region.<sup>6</sup> After the crushing of the revolt, Albanians did not withdraw from the peninsula, but instead stuck around for almost a decade.<sup>7</sup> This period of *Alvanokratia* (period of Albanian rule), as it is known in Greek historiography, was marked by the marginalization of the pre-1770 elites, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, by a new stratum of Albanian strongmen, whose main characteristic appeared to be a culture of violence and brutality

<sup>1</sup> T. A. Gritsopoulos, *Ta Orlophika: He en Peloponneso epanastasis tou 1770 kai ta epakoloutha autes* [The Orlov Incident: The 1770 Revolution in the Peloponnese and its Aftermath], Athens 1967, 153 n. 1 (*eipen ho pasias hopou eglepon Arvanite na ton varoune*).

<sup>2</sup> Lascaris, *Salonique*, 36, 37-40; N. G. Svoronos, *Le commerce de Salonique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1956, 29-31; see also K. D. Mertzios, *Mnemeia makedonikes historias* [Monuments of the History of Macedonia], Thessaloniki 1947, 425-26.

<sup>3</sup> Lascaris, *Salonique*, 39; A. Anastasopoulos, “Lighting the Flame of Disorder: Ayan Infighting and State Intervention in Ottoman Karaferye, 1758-59”, *IJTS* 8 (2002), 84.

<sup>4</sup> They formed the backbone of troops led by *ayan* of Thessaly and Macedonia (Y. Nagata, “Greek Rebellion of 1770 in the Morea Peninsula: Some Remarks through the Turkish Historical Sources”, in idem, *Studies on the Social and Economic History of the Ottoman Empire*, Izmir 1995, 111-12, 114-15).

<sup>5</sup> An earlier, much more peaceful, phase of extensive Albanian settlement in the Morea occurred in the late fourteenth and in the fifteenth century with the consent of the local Byzantine, Venetian and Frankish authorities (Panagiotopoulos, *Plethysmos*, 59-100; Ducellier, “Les Albanais dans les colonies vénitiennes”, 47-56). For Albanian vagabonds in the eighteenth-century Morea, see J. C. Alexander, *Brigandage and Public Order in the Morea 1685-1806*, Athens 1985, 45-46.

<sup>6</sup> Y. Nagata, *Muhsin-zâde Mehmed Paşa ve Âyanlık Müessesesi*, Izmir 1999, 92. Mehmed Paşa's office is cited as either *serasker* or *muhafız*, apparently due to war conditions.

<sup>7</sup> A new wave of Albanians arrived in 1777 (Arsh, *He Albania*, 95).

through which they imposed their rule on the region.<sup>1</sup> Concrete information about the situation in the Morea during this period is scarce, but it is attested that Albanian leaders, besides using strong-arm tactics in order to extort money and valuables from the Moreots,<sup>2</sup> claimed or obtained tax farms, *ayan* positions and local police/military posts, which must have been a severe blow to the interests of the local elite.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, it is interesting to note the existence of instances of co-operation between Moreot Muslims and non-Muslims against the Albanian 'intruders' who had upset the pre-1770 balance of power and rhythm of life,<sup>4</sup> while their extermination or expulsion in 1779 was prompted by and carried out with the co-operation of the local Muslim and non-Muslim population. On the other hand, Süleyman Penah suggests some (class?) tension among Albanians, namely, between the 'wretched' Albanians who made their fortunes in the Morea and the Albanian 'aristocracy' (*beyzadeler*) in the Albanian provinces, the latter being quoted as disapprovingly describing those who profited from the Morea campaign as "our shepherds".<sup>5</sup> It would be interesting to know if this observation of Penah Efendi echoed a more general distinction made by Ottoman Balkan society between 'decent' Albanian 'aristocratic' families and 'troublesome' aspirant 'nouveaux riches' who looked for opportunities to the east and south, or

<sup>1</sup> For a vivid account of the events of this period, see Sakellariou, *Peloponnesos*, 177-206; Kontogiannis' and Gritsopoulos' accounts are sensationalist, but the latter contains several excerpts from eighteenth-century Greek sources (Kontogiannis, *Hoi Hellenes*, 357-77, 430-44; Gritsopoulos, *Orlophika*, 82-169); for an account based on Ottoman sources, see Nagata, *Muhsin-zâde Mehmed Paşa*, 55-94. According to Sakellariou, up to 15,000 Albanians invaded the Morea in 1770 (Sakellariou, *Peloponnesos*, 193 n. 2); however, Nagata estimates the total Ottoman forces which gathered for the critical battle of Tripolige at 10,000 men (Nagata, "Greek Rebellion", 112). For a testimony to the negative effects of the events of the 1770s on the commerce of the Morea, see Sakellariou, *Peloponnesos*, 216.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, K. Lappas (ed.), *Hagia Laura Kalavryton: A'. Keimena apo ton Kodika tes Mones* [Agia Lavra of Kalavryta: I. Texts from the Monastery Codex], Athens 1975, 64-82, esp. 72-75 and 80-81. Süleyman Penah Efendi attributes acts of oppression in the Morea to the fact that the forces used to suppress the rebellion of 1770 were not regular troops, but groups of wretched Albanians ("Mora İhtilâli Tarihiçesi", 310-11).

<sup>3</sup> KS 97/878 (1779); Kontogiannis, *Hoi Hellenes*, 368; Sakellariou, *Peloponnesos*, 194, 199; Alexander, *Brigandage*, 52-53 and n. 10; see also Lappas (ed.), *Hagia Laura*, 71 and n. 103. Skiotis discusses the antagonism between "Greek *armatoloi*" and "Albanian *bölüks*" on a wider scale (Skiotis, "From Bandit to Pasha", 233-34). Sakellariou notes that the Albanians also appropriated several rural properties, which, I think, indicates that they had in mind more than a predatory exploitation of the resources of the Morea (Sakellariou, *Peloponnesos*, 204, 229).

<sup>4</sup> Gritsopoulos, *Orlophika*, 148; Alexander, *Brigandage*, 54-55; Kontogiannis, *Hoi Hellenes*, 369-71.

<sup>5</sup> "Mora İhtilâli Tarihiçesi", 310-311; a few decades later, Hobhouse noted that Albanians of Albania despised Christian Albanians of other Balkan districts and the Aegean islands who had been reduced to being "nothing but miserable labourers" (Hobhouse, *A Journey through Albania*, I: 157). To my knowledge, very little has been written about the Albanians' own image and self-identification in the period studied here, that is, prior to the 1790s.

between northern Ghegs and southern Tosks,<sup>1</sup> or if Albanians were invariably treated as a nuisance.<sup>2</sup>

Generally speaking, we could say, on the basis of information from sources of the Ottoman period, that a certain pattern emerges: first, an Albanian leader would claim power in a given region, often by taking advantage of circumstances such as those of the second half of the eighteenth century, when arms and violence were not an insignificant factor in determining the wielders of local power. 'Indigenous' or established local notables would at a certain point feel unable to resist Albanian pressure, and would turn to the state for help. The state, in its turn, might eventually decide not to content itself with decrees demanding that order be restored but to take action against the Albanians with the aim of pushing them out of the region from which complaints had been voiced. As the Matlı Osman incident suggests, there might be an intermediary stage, when local notables might try to circumvent the involvement of state authorities by solving the 'problem' through their own, informal means, but, then, they ran the risk of confronting one band of Albanians through the services of another, which was not an ideal solution, as the hired Albanian band did not necessarily have to be more amenable than the first one.

As for the official Ottoman response towards curbing the involvement of Albanians in the affairs of the Balkan provinces, I think that two points are worth making:

First, the Ottoman government repeatedly issued orders aimed at restricting the free movement of Albanians.<sup>3</sup> Such orders were neither unusual nor exclusive to Albanians;<sup>4</sup> what was special in their case was the use of an ethnic name for defining the group at which these decrees were aimed.<sup>5</sup> In these documents, Albanians were branded 'outlaws' and 'brigands' with a disruptive effect on public order, but the meaning of such terms was extremely broad in Ottoman administrative jargon. It is worth noting, in this respect,

<sup>1</sup> I. Blumi, "The Dynamics of Identity: Albanians in the Ottoman Empire", in M. Köhbach, G. Prochazka-Eisl and C. Römer (eds), *Acta Viennensia Ottomanica: Akten des 13. CIEPO-Symposiums (Comité International des Études Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes) vom 21. bis 25. September 1998 in Wien, Vienna 1999*, 52-54.

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, state decrees referred to 'Albanian brigands' without any further specification.

<sup>3</sup> Anscombe, "Albanians", 102-06.

<sup>4</sup> Christine Philliou, "Mischief in the Old Regime: Provincial Dragomans and Social Change at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century", *New Perspectives on Turkey* 25 (2001), 108, 117; Anscombe, "Albanians", 104.

<sup>5</sup> For an anti-Albanian decree from as early as 1731, see E. Ginio, "The Administration of Criminal Justice in Ottoman Selânik (Salonica) during the Eighteenth Century", *Turcica* 30 (1998), 189, and J. K. Vasdravellis (ed.), *Historika Archeia Makedonias: A'. Archeion Thessalonikes, 1695-1912* [Historical Archives of Macedonia: I. Archive of Thessaloniki, 1695-1912], Thessaloniki 1952, 188-90.

that one of the restrictions instituted against them was on acquiring tax farms outside of their homeland,<sup>1</sup> which confirms that not all Albanians aimed at by the decrees were brigands in the strict sense of the word; certain were tax farmers, that is, participants in a formal sedentary political/fiscal culture, regardless of whether they had acquired their tax farms by legal or illegal means.

Second, notwithstanding their rowdiness and troublesome behavior, the Albanians' military charisma was beyond all doubt. In a period of extensive reliance of the state army on provincial troops recruited by provincial notables, the Ottoman government could not afford to totally alienate such able warriors as the Albanians. Besides, it was time and again proved that it was unrealistic for the state authorities to expect to completely eradicate Albanians from the central and southern Balkans and force them to restrict themselves to the Albanian provinces.<sup>2</sup> Thus, there was in fact room for ambitious Albanian leaders to realize their ambitions, depending on their political cunning, bargaining ability and military capability.<sup>3</sup> Tepedelenli Ali, and later on Mehmed Ali, imposed their rule on sizeable territories outside Albania, and their authority was willy-nilly legitimized by the Ottoman state, which conferred the ranks of pasha and vizier on both.

To recapitulate, I believe that the expansion of Albanians out of their original base to the east and south in the second half of the eighteenth century can be treated as a case of a 'new elite' emerging within an 'old regime'. Especially if we consider tax farming as one of the basic pillars of the Ottoman 'old regime', as Ariel Salzmann has convincingly argued,<sup>4</sup> we cannot overlook the fact that antagonisms involving Albanians often revolved around the control of provincial tax revenues and surpluses (usually in the forms of tax farms and positions of military/police commanders), which means that the great mass of Albanian elite individuals sought to benefit from the arrangements of the 'old regime' and be part of it rather than break away from it or subvert it<sup>5</sup> (it goes without saying that it would be very interesting to explore the networks through which they established and maintained their rule

<sup>1</sup> Anscombe, "Albanians", 102; Vasdravellis, *Klephs*, 152. Cf. KS 97/878.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Anscombe, "Albanians", 92 and n. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Skiotis notes, for instance, that in the course of the 1779 campaign against the Albanians, Tepedelenli Ali withdrew to Tepedelen and adds that "this move reflected his reluctance to engage in combat with Imperial troops led by a high-ranking Ottoman dignitary from the capital, since Ali was at this time negotiating with the Porte for a new post in provincial administration" (Skiotis, "From Bandit to Pasha", 238). See also *ibid.*, 241-42 for other signs of Ali's cunning.

<sup>4</sup> A. Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited: "Privatization" and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire", *Politics and Society* 21 (1993), 393-423; see also her *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*. According to Salzmann, "tax farming should be considered state formation by other means" (*ibid.*, 11).

<sup>5</sup> Buşatlı Mahmud and Tepedelenli Ali may have considered or even attempted to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire, but these figures were of a totally different scale from most Albanian strongmen and notables in the Balkans.

in a region<sup>1</sup>). Albanians were a 'new elite' in terms of claiming ground previously occupied by other elites, but maybe in another respect, too: they upset established elites and their patrons in Istanbul, because they often seemed disrespectful of the status quo and the 'rules of the game' as set by 'native' aristocracies and their patronage networks. Instead, they could storm the local scene quite unexpectedly and use force and terror as bargaining cards and means of turning the balance of power to their advantage, which in itself was not unusual for the Balkan 'old regime', but was unwelcome when coming from hard-to-control outsiders.

In their attempt to mobilize the central state against them, 'indigenous' antagonists of the Albanians highlighted their opponents' unruliness and violent disposition, but also the fact that they were foreigners in the districts where they were trying to establish themselves. It is interesting to note that even in the eighteenth century, that is, four centuries or more after their original expansion out of their native lands, Albanians were still considered 'different', 'aliens', who could not be assimilated and should, therefore, be pushed back to an (ill-defined?) 'homeland' where they belonged and to which they were expected to restrict themselves and their activities.<sup>2</sup> The fact that Albanians were defined, even in Ottoman state documents, by an ethnic term and not as Muslims or non-Muslims, like most other subjects of the Sultan were, was a formal reminder of their 'otherness'; in fact, what was peculiar about them was that, unlike other contemporaneous Ottoman 'new elites' which were identified through a shared political, economic, professional, or social profile,<sup>3</sup> they were bound together by their ethnic identity (or at least this was their primary common trait in the eyes of their rivals).

Bands of armed Albanians seemingly spread disorder throughout the Balkans, but reducing their activity and aspirations to this alone does not do them justice. Finding themselves in a rather fluid political environment which favored military vigor as a means of consolidating one's position, they, in many cases, aimed at gaining access to and control of regional resources and local power. Their endeavor was facilitated by the fact that the central government often decided to intervene directly only when it felt that order, fiscal revenues or its authority were seriously threatened, otherwise entrusting provincial forces with clearing up problems. And mighty warriors who could clear up problems the Albanians were ...

<sup>1</sup> Tepedelenli Ali Paşa's case is very instructive in this respect (see Skiotis, "From Bandit to Pasha").

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, a sultanic decree in KS 81/381 (1759). As noted above, Süleyman Penah Efendi was very specific in naming the districts from which unruly Albanians poured out to the Balkans: Delvine and Avlonya ("Mora İhtilâli Tarihi", 239).

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Philliou, "Mischief".