

NIVICA

THE LAND THAT PASSED THE GREAT TRAVELLERS

LOGOT:



François Pouqueville

(1770-1838)

I discovered near to Cosmari [Gusmar], the Roman road which led from Apollonia by Bullis and Amantia to Buthrotum.

In surveying this tract, it was Aly's purpose, to restore the Roman road, in order to obtain access to the forests of ship and house-timber in the environs of Cosmari.

In the account of the expedition of the Romans under Flamininus against Philip of Macedon, we are told by Livy (xxxiii. 6.) that “Athenagoras was sent by Philip across Epirus into Chaonia, to occupy the narrow passes at Antigonia, called by the Greeks *Stena*”. At the entrance of the strait on the right bank of the Aous, was situated Kleisoura [Këlcyra].

This communication across Mount Trebechina to Cleisoura is of importance, because it fully explains the operation of Flamininus, when by a secret, or at least an unsuspected path, he sent on a detachment, which, turning Philip's position on the Aous, compelled him to retreat.



Lord Byron

(1788-1824)

The name of the Pacha is Ali, and he is considered a man of the first abilities, he governs the whole of Albania (the ancient Illyricum), Epirus and part of Macedonia.

His Highness is sixty years old, very fat and not tall, but with a fine face, light blue eyes and a white beard, his manner is very kind and at the same time he possesses that dignity which I find universal amongst the Turks. He has the appearance of anything but his real character, for he is a remorseless tyrant, guilty of the most horrible cruelties, very brave and so good a general, that they call him the Mahometan Buonaparte.

I like the Albanians much, they are not all Turks, some tribes are Christians, but their religion makes little difference in their manner or conduct, they are esteemed the best troops in the Turkish service.

The formidable tyrant Ali Pasha of Tepelena (1744-1822), the so-called Lion of Janina.



Sir Henry Holland

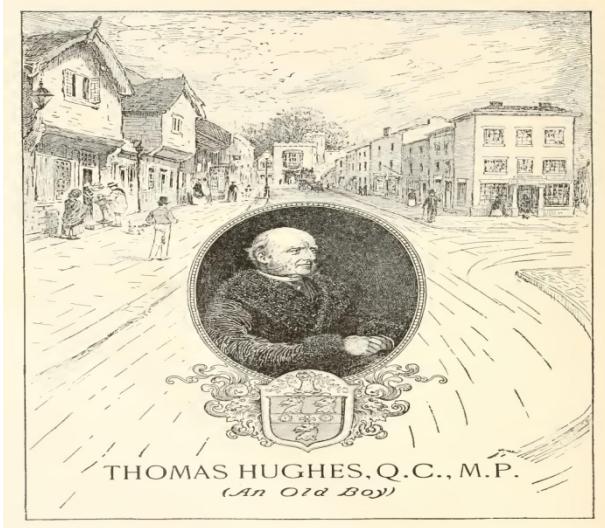
(1788-1873)

Ali Pasha was born, at Tepeleni [Tepelena], a small town of Albania, 75 miles to the north of Ioannina. The mother of Ali, indeed, was of Albanian birth.

As a landscape, the approach to Tepeleni is noble. The branch, which is called Viosa, previously to the junction of the two rivers, descends towards Tepeleni from the south-east, approaching its point of confluence through the vast mountain-defiles of Klissoura [Kēlcyrā], a scenery full of boldness and majesty. The Viosa passes the town of Permeti [Pērmet] and flowing through the defiles of Klissoura.

Bentza: Here the wife of Ali Pasha, mother of Sali Bey, has her residence, together with sixty other females, chiefly in the capacity of her attendants. Also, it was situated the Harem.

Some miles higher up the valley, and likewise in a very singular position is the town of **Nivitza [Nivical]**, containing more than 600 houses. At this place there are considerable ruins which from the description, I judge to be of Cycloean structure, and belonging to one of the ancient Chaonian cities.



Thomas Smart Hughes

(1786–1847)

At the distance of a mile from Tepeleni we passed that magnificent defile called anciently the Fauces Antigoneae, where Philip was attacked by the Consul Flaminius, and where the rapid Voïussa [Vjosa], the Aeas or Aëus of antiquity, receives the tributary stream of the Druno between the opposite heights of Asnaus and Aeropus.

The road led us for about a mile up the stream of the **Bentza** [Bënça], a small river which flows into the Voïussa below the town. At a village of the same name, its bed is contracted by two converging ridges of Mount Argenick, a branch of the great Acroceraunian mountains. Here the vizir has established extensive powder-mills, and the scenery is very romantic. We crossed the river by a handsome bridge of a single arch, and proceeded in an easterly direction to the object of our excursion.

The latter part of this route lay through a lovely plain under a magnificent mountain on the right called Trebesheena [Trebeshina], opposite to which we found the han destined for our resting place, situated in one of the most picturesque sites that can be imagined. Next morning, we resumed our journey for one hour through a beautiful

valley, under Mount Trebesheena to Klissura [Këlcyra], which is situated on a tremendous precipice of that mountain, where the Voïussa pours its foaming waters through the great defile, anciently known by the name of “Stena Aoi” or “Fauces Antigoneae.” The situation of this town is singular in the extreme. It lies at a considerable height up the mountain, which is a rock totally bare of vegetation, and beyond it appears a large fortress, built by Ali, to curb the spirit of this district.

Beyond the Trebesheena, upon which Klissura is situated, another lofty mountain runs parallel to it from north to south called Mesgourani [Mezhgoran], both of which form one side of this contracted defile. The opposite heights are called Melchiovo [Malëshova], and are branches of the vast chain of Mertzika. From this advantageous position the Roman Consul Flaminius drove Philip King of Macedon by means of treachery, and thus gained an inlet into the interior of his territories.

To this place Ali frequently sends his state prisoners as to one of complete security. Set forward again up the valley of Aous, taking the same road as that by which Philip fled from the Roman legions.



Edward Lear

(1812-1888)

After this long digression, I must remind the reader that we have left Argyro Castro [Gjirokastra], on our way to Scodra [Shkodra]. I arrived next at a place, the name of which calls up a thousand interesting associations, and which I entered with a feeling of respect which an Albanian would have been proud to observe in a stranger; - that place was Tepedelene [Tepelena], the Croya [Kruja] of the modern Skander Beg. Arriving at it from the south, the beauty of the position, and the effect of the castle, are lost. I came at once upon a heap of ruins, and wandered about among them for some time, and under a shower of rain, before I found the house of the Aga. On approaching it, I had been met by companies of peasants, dragging towards Janina the guns that once had frowned over its battlements. The once proud Tepedelene, now sheltered but one hundred and fifty Albanian, and eight Greek families, and, as if this amount of ruin and desolation were not sufficient, the troops there assembled were buried in leveling the fortifications to the ground. That work, however, had not yet commenced on the lines of white walls and towers that crowned the steep that looks to the north, and the base of which is encircled by a rapid, and not inconsiderable

stream; so that, as I left the place after being ferried across the water, I turned back to cast on Tepedelene, the last stranger glance which ever would fall on its doomed battlements and towers. This scene of surpassing beauty left me, forgetful of the coming night, to linger there I turned away, the evening sun gilded the snow-white walls, while the recent shower had brightened the deep winter green of the surrounding landscape, over which rose the brown steep sides of the hills, their crests powdered with snow. Tepedelene, on its rock, stood boldly forward in the midst of the picture, and the swollen torrent dashed foaming round its base.

But I must not leave this place, without some record of my visit to the Governor. He told me that twenty-four guns were to be dragged to Janina, but that the weather was so bad, and the country so difficult, that the labour was immense, that one heavy gun had fallen over the side and lodged in the river, and that it had been necessary to collect two or three thousand men to get it out. This, while it might appear on one side an Eastern metaphor, was, on the other, a real representation of Albanian mechanics. I took occasion, upon this, to extract a calculation of the labour requisite to drag these twenty-four guns to Janina, which amounted to one day's labour of ten thousand men. This being by his own admission, I suggested the advantage of constructing a road, which perhaps four times that amount of labour would suffice to do, which would not only enable them afterwards to drag these guns with oxen instead of men, but which would facilitate the transport of all they ate, wore, consumed, produced, bought, and sold. My logic was, however, superfluous, for the chief, and all the by-standers, had already arrived at the same conclusion, and the answer was, "Tell that to the Grand Vizir." The destruction of the Castle was, however, a sore subject, even to the victors, they asked me if I did not think it was dreadful to destroy what it had cost their fathers so much labour to build? I could only answer by

some commonplace remarks about the blessings of tranquillity and universal peace, and was asked, if we had not got a great many castles in England. Being tired of recurrence to these wooden fortresses, our superiority in which is so often quoted, only that our inferiority in all other material force should be inferred: - I answered that we had “a great many castles – our beasts!” and immediately arose an exclamation, in Turkish, Greek, and Albanian, one in sense, but diversified in sound, “*Doghru der,*” “*Kala lei,*” “*Mir thoet,*” or, “He says well!” of the same tchibouque with the Bey Manie of Croia, to find everywhere a friend and protector.”



William Martin Leake

(1777-1860)

The road from Tepeleni to **Nivitza** leads along the river **Bantza** (in Albanian Benja), through a hollow in the range of Griva, from which that river descends. This pass conducts to **Pregonati**, situated at the head of the valley of the Sutzista, which descends to **Nivitza** and joins the Viosa in the plain of Apollonia.

On the left bank of the **Bantza** 3 or 4 miles above Tepeleni, is a ruined castle, bearing the same name as the river.

On the opposite bank of the river, not a mile above the ruins, is the small village **Bantza**, which is said to have been built about 30 years ago by one of the fares, or family alliances of **Pregonati**, which, in consequence of the internal disputes of that town and the superiority acquired by their opponents, had been obliged to leave it. Several other small villages were founded at that time in the country around **Pregonati** from the same cause. It may be thought, perhaps, that **Bantza** is a corruption of Amantia, and that it proves that ancient city to have stood either at Bantza or at Tepeleni, but Amantia was certainly much nearer to Aulon, and Bantza, may perhaps, be the ancient name, with scarcely any

change. One hour from Dukai, is **Sarali**, distant half an hour from the left bank of the river, from whence there is a road across Mount Griva to **Nivitza**, by a ravine called Grobate Pliakes , or the vale of the old woman, so called because a woman was once frozen to death in passing.

If Amantia was at **Nivitza**, ascended the vale of the Sutzista to that position, and from the head of the valley crossed by **Pregonati**, into the plain of Arghyrokastro, which it followed in its entire length. It would, therefore, have passed exactly by the theatre, which stands not very far from the middle distance between Apollonia and Nicopolis.

From Khimara to Tepeleni is reckoned e four days journey, though the direct distance is not more than 20 G. miles. The first day is to **Kutzi**, the third to **Nivitza** on the Sutzista, which is difficult to pass in season of rain.

Nivitza is inhabited by Musulman Liape.



Sir Robert Graves

(1858-1934)

Tepeleni, the home of the celebrated Ali Pasha who played so large a part in the history of European Turkey in the early years of the nineteenth century.

See Ali Pasha's fortress just across the water, but there was no alternative but to follow the north bank through Klissura to the bridge some twenty-five miles up-stream from our starting point, and then turn back to Premeti.

At Argyrocastro we were confronted with a new problem in the rival propaganda of Greeks and Albanians, which found its chief manifestations in educational questions, the Albanians claiming that their language and the Latin alphabet should be made obligatory in their schools, which the Greek clergy forbade their children to attend.



Alexandre Dumas

(1802-1870)

In Tepeleni, Pacha of Janina, whose long resistance to the suzerain power preceded and brought about the regeneration of Greece. The figure of Ali Pacha: if not one of the most brilliant, at least one of the most singular in contemporary history. Albania was one of the most difficult provinces to manage. Its inhabitants were poor, brave, and, the nature of the country was mountainous and inaccessible. The pashas had great difficulty in collecting tribute, because the people were given to fighting for their bread.

His ancestors were Christian Skipetars, who became Mussulmans after the Turkish invasion, and his ancestry certainly cannot be traced farther back than the end of the sixteenth century.

By the aid of the French Ambassador, whom he had convinced of his devotion to the Emperor Napoleon, he succeeded in getting the pachalik of Morea bestowed on Veli, and that of Lepanto on Mouktar. Continually increasing his power, Ali endeavoured to consolidate it permanently. He had entered by degrees into secret negotiations with all the great powers of Europe, hoping in the end to

make himself independent, and to obtain recognition as Prince of Greece.

Ali Pacha invited the Lord High Commissioner of Great Britain, Sir Thomas Maitland, to a conference at Prevesa, a final conference was held at Buthrotum between Ali and the Lord High Commissioner.

His palace of Tepelen had been rebuilt at the public expense, and was larger and more magnificent than before; Janina was embellished with new buildings; elegant pavilions rose on the shores of the lake; in short, Ali's luxury was on a level with his vast riches. His sons and grandsons were provided for by important positions, and Ali himself was sovereign prince in everything but the name.

He had fortified and supplied with munitions of war Ochrida, Avlone, Cannia, Berat, Cleisoura, Premiti, the port of Panormus, Santi-Quaranta, Buthrotum, Delvino, Argyro-Castron, Tepelen, Parga, Prevesa, Sderli, Paramythia, Arta, the post of the Five Wells, Janina and its castles.

The ruins of Janina were still smoking when, on the 19th August, Pacho Bey made his entry. When, a few days later, he was informed that Mouktar and Veli, seduced by the brilliant promises of Dacha Bey, had surrendered Prevesa and Argyro-Castron. A great number of Suliots had joined the Ottoman army in order to assist in the destruction of him who formerly had ruined their country.



John Hobhouse

(1786-1869)

Ali was born in Tepellenè, about the year 1750; for he is now past sixty years old, though he carefully conceals his age; and, notwithstanding a disorder which he considered incurable, still carries the appearance of a healthy middle-aged man. His father was a Pasha of two tails, but of no great importance. The most considerable Prince at that time was one Cou' Pash, Vizier, and lord of a great part of Albania. At the death of his father, Ali found himself possessed of nothing but his house at Tepellenè; and it is not only current in Albania, but reported to be the boast of the Vizier himself, that he began his fortune with sixty paras and a musket.

By degrees, however, he made himself master first of one village, then of another, and amassing some money, increased his power, and found himself at the head of a considerable body of Albanians, whom he paid by plunder; for he was then only a great robber, or one of those independent freebooters, of whom there are so many in the vast extent of the Turkish empire.

Ali at last collected money enough to buy a pashalik (not that of Ioannina, but one of less importance), and being invested with that dignity, he was only more eager to enlarge his possessions; for he

continued in constant war with the neighbouring Pashas, and finally got possession of Ioannina, of which he was confirmed Pasha by an imperial firman.

The difficulties which Ali had to encounter in establishing his power, did not arise so much from the opposition he met with from the neighbouring Pashas, as from the nature of the people, and of the country of which he was determined to make himself master. Many of the parts which now compose his dominions, were peopled by inhabitants who had been always in rebellion, or had never been entirely conquered by the Turks; such as the Chimeriates, the Suliotes, and the nations living amongst the mountains in the neighbourhood of the coast of the Ionian Sea.

He has built bridges over the rivers, raised causeways across the marshes, laid out frequent roads, adorned the country and the town with new buildings, and by many wholesome regulations has acted the part of a good and great Prince, without perhaps a single other motive than that of his own aggrandisement.

The influence of Ali extends far beyond the limits of his dominions, and is feared and felt throughout the whole of European Turkey.

All the Albanians, even those who have not yet submitted to his power, speak with exultation and pride of their countryman, and, by a comparison with him, they constantly depreciate the merits of others.

In his younger years, Ali was not a very strict Mahometan; but he has lately become religious, and entertains several Dervishes at his court.



George P. Scriven

(1854-1940)

The case of Albania, the almost unknown country of the Balkans that now ask recognition of its needs and claims. It is a small country, not important to the world as a state but vastly important to the peace of the family of nations. A country whose needs and desires go hand in hand with the history and geography and ethnology. These are the Shkypetars, the "Men of the Mountain Eagle". "They have proudly preserved their independence".

The relics of historic Tepeleni, lying between the rivers in front of the gorge of Klisura where the Roman once checked the barbarian advance.

Nor can the pathetic ruins of the castle of the mighty Albanian, Ali Bey, be described here-a castle destroyed like others in the strife that followed the Balkan wars.



Lord Elgin

Ali Pasha, the Albanian tyrant who in 1787 rules Ipirus for the Ottomans from the town of Ioannina. His dream was to break away from the Ottoman Empire and create his own independent state in Ipirus, with the collaboration of Napoleon. But In 1798 he forms an alliance with the British and takes Preveza from the French. He is given Parga by the British who see Ali Pasha as a thorn in the side of the Ottomans. Even Lord Byron visits him, calling Ali Pasha a generous and cultured man and the 'Muslim Bonaparte'. The Ottomans find him useful too but when he orders the assassination of an opponent in Constantinople, Sultan Mahmud II has had enough and sends troops to depose him. 20,000 Turkish troops are diverted from fighting the rebellious Greeks in the Peloponessos finally forcing Ali Pasha to surrender after agreeing to pardon him. While waiting in the Pantelimon Monastery for his pardon to be read, he is executed, his head displayed for 3 days in Ioanina and then sent to Constantinople where it is displayed there as well. His body is buried in Ioannina, his head in Constantinople. Though a sick and perverted individual who murdered and tortured who he pleased, he was a ruthless and clever leader and played an important part in the independence of Greece from the Ottomans by engaging the Turkish troops when they might have been fighting the Greeks.



John Anthony Cramer

(1793-1848)

At some distance from the coast above Oricum was the town of Amantia. The ruins of Amantia have not been explored by any modern traveler, they are however lay down in some maps near the village of Nivitza, on the river Sutchitza, which falls into the Voioussa. This site agrees pretty well with the position assigned to Amantia by Scylax.

Gardiki, a fortress of great strength, which ones belonged to Suliots, but afterwards was taken and destroyed by Ali Pacha. The celebrated gorge of the Aous, near the fortress of Clissura, situated on a tremendous precipice of Mount Trebeeshna, where the Voioussa pours its foaming waters through the great defile anciently known by the name of Stena Aoi.

The valley of the Bentza, probably belong to this ancient Chaonian fortress.



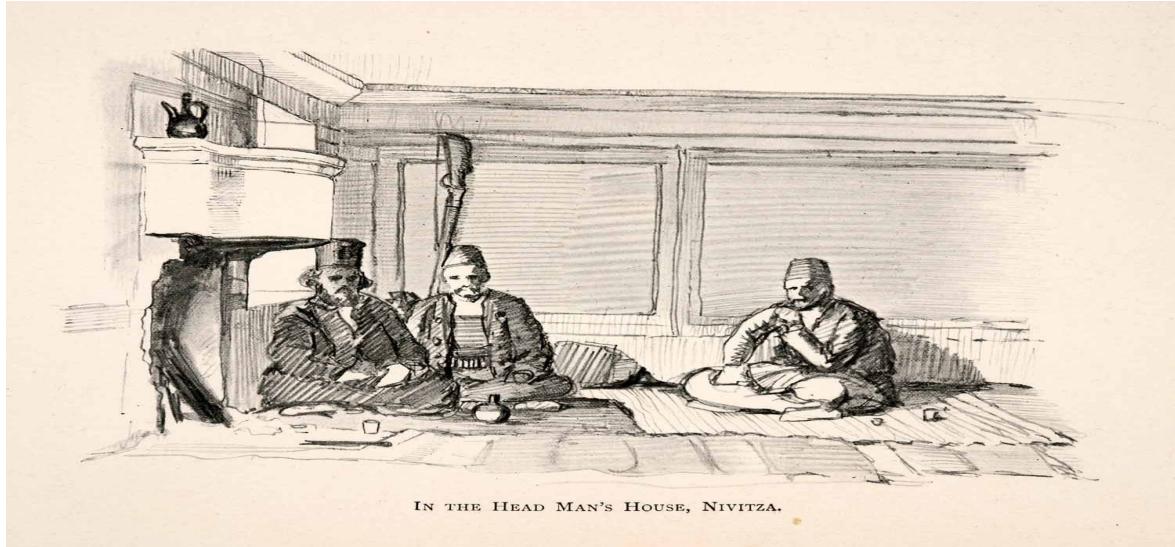
Edith Durham

(1863-1944)

The Albanians are descended from the tribes who dwelt in prehistoric times along the Western side of the Balkan peninsula - the Illyrians and the Epirots - before the arrival of either Romans or Slavs. They were not and are not Greeks.

The Illyrians and the Epirots are now known as the Ghegs and Tosks. They speak the same language, have the same customs and form a united nation.

Towards the beginning of the nineteenth century the subject peoples began to think of independence. Ali Pasha, a mighty chief in South Albania, born at Tepeleni in 1744, revolted, defied the Turks and for some fifty years ruled all South Albania from his capital at Janina; entered into diplomatic relations with Great Britain and France and received many distinguished visitors, notably Lord Byron and Sir Henry Holland. In his old age, he was overpowered by large Turkish forces and his head was carried to Constantinople as a trophy in 1822. I found his name still honoured when I was at Tepeleni in 1904.





Sir James George Frazer

(1854-1941)

The worship of the oak tree or of the oak god appears to have been shared by all the branches of the Aryan stock in Europe. Both ancient Greeks and Romans associated the tree with their highest god, Zeus or Jupiter, the divinity of the sky, the rain, and the thunder. Perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most famous sanctuaries in ancient Greece was that of Dodona, where Zeus was revered in the oracular oak. The thunder-storms which are said to rage at Dodona more frequently than anywhere else in Europe. In his latter capacity Zeus was the god to whom the ancients regularly prayed for rain. Nothing could be more natural; for often, though not always, he had his seat on the mountains where the clouds gather and the oaks grow. In ancient Italy every oak was sacred to Jupiter, the Italian counterpart of Zeus; and on the Capitol at Rome the god was worshipped as the deity not merely of the oak, but of the rain and the thunder. "The Celts," says a Greek writer, "worship Zeus, and the Celtic image of Zeus is a tall oak." In the religion of the ancient Germans the veneration for sacred groves seems to have held the foremost place, and according to Grimm the chief of their holy trees was the oak. It appears to have been especially dedicated to the god of thunder, Donar or Thunar, the equivalent of the Norse Thor; Jupiter's oak (*robur Jovis*), which in old German would be *Donares eih*, "the oak of Donar."



Harold William "Bill" Tilman

(1898-1977)

"It was a warm night in August 1943, when from the British aircraft Halifax I jumped with parachute on a pile of mountains unknown to me until then. Fires as signals for us, were quite away and we had to walk over to meet our hosts, Albanian partisans".

Tilman gave his contribution in support of the partisan forces during WWII. He fought also in the two World Wars while in the age of 45 in 1943, was parachuted behind enemy lines of Nazi in the mountains of Albania, namely in the area of Sheperit where he stayed more than ten months. Tilman has contributed to the partisan forces by training them and logistical support and assistance in different ways. Major Bill Tilman, in his memories wrote that was parachuted in the mountains of Zagoria in Gjirokaster in August 1943.

During the Second World War, for the rich experience he had in the recognition of the mountains and guerrilla warfare, he was appointed to serve in an elite group known as SOE, the precursor of the "Green Berets" of British commando forces.

As he was trained in the use of explosives and the creation of partisan groups, Tilman was parachuted in mountains of Albania to help the Albanian partisans in hitting the lines of German communication.

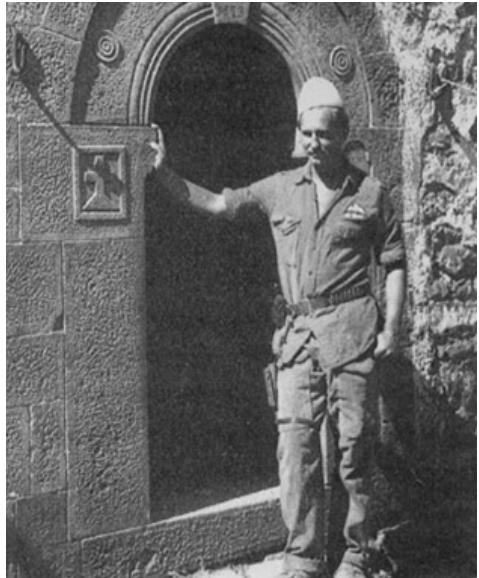
Throughout my stay among the partisans, I was quite impressed by their attitude to each other and the very strict discipline.

"Partisans, when they placed near a base, they spend their time with endless political debates and rolling cigarettes. Once they finished debates began to sing partisans songs, or danced, which I enjoyed their dynamic. Among them were a number of girls, who worked as a nurse, translator or typist. It was strange, but, as I discovered later, the volume of documents that circulated every day would not have disgraced a large army of well organized. A press machines I was assured them, increased the volume of letters and propaganda that they produce each day.

For the first time I took part in fighting the Partisans did in Libohovë. A small garrison where Italians lived in the castle. Libohova was the center of some of the known leaders of Balli.

Tilman, unlike some of the British officers who lived and worked in Albania during war, remained faithful to the principle of neutrality between political factions that he found in Albania.

Tilman notes that British aid was important factor for the formation of the first partisan brigades.



David de Crespigny Smiley
(1916-2009)

One of the most successful SOE operatives in Albania was David Smiley, an officer of the Royal Horse Guards. His account of the frustrations of organizing a simple ambush on a road used by German troops in August 1944, just before Hitler ordered a complete withdrawal from the Balkans, exemplifies the nature of the guerrilla war in southern Europe.

Smiley was to find his experience of this country a bittersweet affair. He excelled in the art of guerrilla warfare, demonstrating outstanding leadership and bravery in training Albanians, gathering operational intelligence, ambushing German convoys and, in a subsequent mission to Albania, destroying a strategic bridge at Gjoles.

But the political sectarianism that defined Albanian society meant that organising resistance to the Axis forces often came second to trying to prevent civil war erupting between the Communists, led by Enver Hoxha, and the Nationalists and Royalist forces loyal to the former monarch King Zog.



Luigi Maria Ugolini

(1895-1936)

Ugolini must have appeared as the perfect choice for the type of mission the foreign ministry had in mind, cheap, effective and easy to control. Ugolini's home town had a tradition of liberal politics, in a region where the socialist movement had been strong. Ugolini was a fascist, he specialized in prehistory. He had studied under Etruscologist at the University of Bologna. He undertook his first exploratory mission to Albania in 1924. Following his initial visit to Albania in 1924, Ugolini personally reported to Mussolini in the first of a number of meetings between the two men. Paribeni proposed the inexpensive excavation of some Illyrian tombs: satisfy up to a point the fanatical and puerile national pride of the Albanians. They desire to be able to know and illuminate their ancestors the Illyrians.

In November 1921, he met Prime Minister Benito Mussolini in Bertinoro, who was keen to extend Italian influence in Albania. The Italian Ministry of Foreign affairs intended to undertake an archaeological survey of Albania, in particular to offset to influence of the French archaeological mission in Apollonia, and asked Ugolini, who was to become a shining model of Italian pioneer spirit for the fascist regime, to head it.

In 1926-1927, Ugolini began his archaeological survey in Phoinike, where he excavated the Hellenistic treasury, several Roman cisterns, and an early Christian Basilica. In December 1927, he sent a letter to the Albanian ministry of education, informing them that the Italian archaeological mission intended to explore Butrint in 1928. Excavation work began there in February 1928 and brought to light a late Roman Baptistry and the famed Venus of Butrint, which was later identified simply as a bust of Apollo. He was promoting Butrint as Albania's major archaeological site. King Zog awarded him the Order of Skanderbeg. By February 1932, his team completed the excavation of the theater of Butrint.



Aubrey Nigel Henry Molyneux Herbert
(1880-1923)

Impeccably aristocratic and eccentric in a uniquely English tradition, Aubrey Herbert was at first sight an incongruous champion of Albanian nationalism. Since 1904 until 1923, he was indefatigable in campaigning for the Albanian cause.

Albanian Committee which was founded at the initiative of Herbert, the first meeting of which was held on December 17, 1912. The Committee assembled a significant number of British dignitaries. Herbert, after independence and serious condition that plagued Albanian lands, he further expanded the activity by becoming spokesman of the Albanian issue. Before the formation of this committee, Herbert was a member of the Balkan Committee that had great influence in British politics, from which he left because the committee supported the Slavs and Greeks by refusing to accept the massacres that were made to Albanians.

The work on the creation and establishment of the borders of Albania will go worse if it lacked the impact of the Committee headed by Aubrey Herbert.

Since the government of Albania has not internationally recognized, the aid that Herbert offered and the Committee delegation was great. An incomparable help was offered during the Conference of Ambassadors, when in London (April 29, 1913) came the interim government's delegation of Albania. The delegation was headed by Ismail Bej Qemali, who was accompanied by Isa Bey Boletini which press and British public knew him as the leader of the Kosovo Albanian guerrilla.

In early 1918, Albanian Committee became Anglo Albanian Society, which was joined by Edith Durham who together with Herbert Aubrey remained the main power of this organization which exists today.



Frédéric Guillaume de Vaudoncourt
(1772-1845)

The Emperor Joseph II kept up a large number of emissaries in Albania, a province then as independent of Turkey as it is at present, and of which all the inhabitants, as well Musselmans as Christians, have the most marked aversion for the Osmanlis. This brave people are as jealous of their independence as they were when Scanderbeg, at the head of a few thousands of these intrepid soldiers, triumphed over the Ottoman power, at a time when the whole of Europe trembled before it.

The Senate of Venice, had adopted with regard to Turkey, and the jealousy with which it viewed the establishments of Ottoman subjects on the Adriatic. Being no longer able to retake from the Ottoman Empire the ports of Dulcigno, Alessio, Durazzo and Avlona, the three first of which they lost with the inheritance of Scanderbeg, though possessed by them some years, the Venetians had endeavored, at least, to prevent the Turks from establishing themselves there.

They had succeeded in their projects, and the barbarity of the Northern Albanians, as well as the difficulty of the communications of Dulcigno, Alessio, Durazzo and Avlona with the interior of Turkey, having

prevented the Ottomans from turning these places into entrepôts of commerce, they had not been able to enter into competition with the Venetians on the Adriatic.

The establishment and increase of the power of Ali Pacha had become a subject of a new and real inquietude to the Venetians. The extraordinary fortune, genius and ambitious character of this new neighbor appeared to them extremely dangerous to the security and tranquility of the Ionian Islands.

The Russian government was to give Ali Pacha access to the sea coast, which he had so long and ardently desired. This new position enabled him to surround the Souliots and to make himself master of their country. As soon as he obtained possession of Bucintro he carried his views towards Agioi-Saranda, whose inhabitants, upheld by the vicinity of the Chimariots, had hitherto resisted his authority.

Become master of Agioi Saranda, Ali formed an establishment in Porto Palermo and erected a small fort at the entrance.

Due to the administrative distribution established by the Turks, our attention goes to Albania. This province, whose appellation goes no further back than the time of Scanderbeg, being formed out of several of the neighbouring ones, we shall endeavour to convey an accurate idea of the origin of the different people now known by the name of Albanians, and of the manner in which they were united and formed into a distinct nation of Greeks and Ottomans. In more remote times, that is previous to the establishment of the kingdom of Macedonia, Illyria extended along the whole of the Adriatic coast, as far as beyond Avlona, and to the foot of the Acroceraunian mountains, comprising in her southern part, the valley of Vojutza, as far as Klissoura.

Owen Pearson

Greek forces, advancing in the center from Gjirokaster and Permet, were gradually forcing the main body of the Italian Eleventh Army back toward Kelcyre and Tepelen. At Kelcyre the Italians were digging themselves in strongly defended positions, in the Tepelen area their forces were continually harassed and groups of Italians were being cut off and captured with important materials.

The Greeks, were stated to have crossed the river Bence near Tepelen and advanced three miles, capturing 12 guns, 20 machine guns and 500 prisoners. The Greeks began to eat into the Kelcyre Position. The road between Tepelen and Kelcyre was under Greek fire but there was little traffic on it as the Italians were using the direct routes from the north for their supplies and they had their artillery strung out in a string of villages north of the Kelcyre-Tepelen road.

However, in the past forty eight hours the Italians attacked six times in the Kelcyre sector. To the north of the Kelcyre sector the Italians appeared to be still in full retreat and important heights fell to the Greeks. After the capture of Kelcyre the Greeks were cleaning up round the Kelcyre-Tepelen line, the "Zog Line" of the days of Albanian Independence. The important line of defenses prepared long before the war with Italian aid, including deep 6 foot trenches, dug outs protected by sandbags, machine-gun nests, and positions for artillery all established in excellent geographical positions.

Defying heavy snowstorms and intense cold, the Greeks continued to push the Italians back in the Kelcyre area. The Italians were resisting stubbornly in the mountains, but two counter-attacks failed to halt the Greek drive towards Berat.

American medics and nurses who crashed-landed in Nazi-occupied Albania in 1943 and survived German attacks.

The story of 13 female nurses, 13 male medics and the four-man crew of a medical evacuation plane who were stranded behind enemy lines for nine weeks, hiding in villages and caves in wintry mountains, afflicted with lice and dysentery, often near starvation and hunted by German patrols.

Their odyssey was classified during the war and for years afterward to protect partisan fighters, Allied agents and villagers who gave them food, shelter and guidance. Some were shot by the Germans for their acts of kindness.

The perilous adventure began two months after Italy surrendered and Allied forces invaded Italy to begin pushing the Germans back across Europe. On Nov. 8, 1943, the nurses, medics and fliers of the Army Air Force's 807th Medical Air Evacuation Transport Squadron took off from Catania, Sicily, bound for Bari, on Italy's east coast, where hundreds of wounded troops awaited air evacuation.

An hour into the flight, the plane became lost in a huge storm over the Adriatic Sea. Its compass and communications failed. Blown 100 miles off course, it crossed the coast of Albania and was intercepted by German fighters and attacked by antiaircraft guns. It plunged to a belly landing in a marsh 25 miles inland.

The disoriented Americans had no idea where they were. Fearing a fuel explosion, they scrambled out of the plane and encountered their first bit of luck. Striding out of a woods was a band of rugged-looking men with rifles and daggers. One spoke a little English. He was Hasan Gina, an anti-German partisan leader. He told the Americans they were in Albania.

Later, they would learn that they were 150 miles east of Bari, on the wrong side of the Adriatic, surrounded by German forces that had occupied Albania for months, and were caught in a civil war between rival partisan groups.

The Americans knew almost nothing of Albania, a small, mostly Muslim country that had changed little in centuries. The mountainous terrain was dotted with impoverished villages. There were no railroads and few roads. Mules and horses were the main transportation. There was little running water or electricity. Winters were brutal, food was scarce, and blood feuds were common among the ferociously proud peoples.

With only a general plan to reach the west coast and somehow cross the Adriatic to Italy, the Americans began walking in the wrong direction. Over the ensuing weeks, guided by the partisans, they trekked through mountains and valleys, sometimes cutting back or traveling in circles to avoid German patrols, living in the open or sheltering in villages and sharing cornbread with peasants.

On Nov. 27, British intelligence in Albania learned from partisans that the American plane had crashed and that the nurses, medics and crew were alive, trying to reach the coast. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied commander in Europe, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the families of the missing were told.

In December, an American rescue plan was developed, led by an Army captain, Lloyd G. Smith, 24, precursor of the Central Intelligence Agency. Under cover of darkness, he slipped onto the heavily guarded Albanian coast by boat and set up a base camp in a cave in the cliffs overlooking the Adriatic. Others joined him, and they moved inland to find the Americans.

The British, meantime, organized a second rescue effort under Lt. Gavan Duffy, a secret agent who with a small team had reached Albania months earlier by parachute and on foot. Through partisan contacts, he found the Americans in eastern Albania and began leading them westward, intending to reach the coast.

But halfway there, at Gjirokaster, German troops blocked the way, and the Americans were too sick and exhausted to go on. He radioed for an American air rescue. Two C-47 cargo planes flew in with fighter escorts. But the Germans disrupted the landing, and Lieutenant Duffy called it off.

The Americans, after the euphoria of nearly being rescued, were crushed. But they resumed their journey, and with American and British help reached the coast. On Jan. 9, after a 63-day ordeal, 27 Americans — 10 nurses and 17 medics and fliers — boarded a British launch and crossed to Italy.



Robert Elsie



Bejtullah Destani

Chameria is a mountainous region of the southwestern Balkan Peninsula that now straddles the Greek Albanian borders. Most of Chameria is in the Greek Province of Epirus, but It also includes the southern most part of Albania. As an historical region, Chameria, also spelled Chamuria or Chamouria or Tsiamouria, is sometimes confused with Epirus which is in fact much larger area that includes more inland territory in northwestern Greece, for example the city of Ioannina.

The Chams, known in Greece as Tsamides, were no other than Albanians living in the extreme southern part of Albanian speaking territory. The Chams are the southern most group of Tosks Albanian speakers. When Greek forces took possession of Chameria and southern Epirus in the Balkan War of 1912, the Chams suddenly found

themselves in Greece, cut off from the rest of Albania. In the following decades, in particular 1920s, 1930s, 1940s the vast majority of the Chams emigrated or were expelled from Chameria and now live for the most part in southern Albania.

By the end of 14th century, Chameria and much of Epirus had been taken over by the Turks, who seized Janina in 1430. In the late 18th century, Epirus and Chameria within it, fell under the sway of the Albanian ruler, Ali Pasha Tepelena (1744-1822) also known as Ali Pasha of Janina.

At the Conference of Ambassadors in London 1913, the representatives of the six great powers (Great Britain, Germany, France, Austro-Hungarian, Italy, Russia) were unable to agree on whether Epirus would be given to Albania or Greece and if divided where the borders would be drawn. An International Boundary Commission was set up in 1913 and sent to the region to divide the undividable. The ethnic identity of the population was to play the determining role in fixing the border, but other factors were weighed as well. The results of this Commission were put to paper in the Protocol of Florence, signed in December of 1913, which left Chameria, with its majority Albanian population, on the Greek side of the border, and left a substantial Greek minority on the Albanian side.

The use of Albanian language was forbidden in public and in private, and Albanian books were periodically tolerated. Albanian language-education had been rigorously banned in Chameria since 1913.