

to be published in: Ruthner, Clemens/Reynolds, Diana/Reber, Ursula/Detrez, Raymond (Eds.): *Wechselwirkungen. The Political, Social and Cultural Impact of the Austro-Hungarian Occupation on Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1878-1918*. New York: Peter Lang 2008

Introduction

It is common knowledge that the Austro-Hungarian empire concentrated much of its diplomatic attention on the Balkans from the second-half of the 19th century in large part to thwart Russia's expansion into the region. The controversial occupation and subsequent administration of the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in late 1878 served as the strategic centerpiece of this agenda for the next 35 years. What is not so clear within this context, however, are the mechanisms put into action during this crucial period of imperial history that ultimately intensified the importance of the Balkans to old and new imperial regimes alike. Not only did the administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina itself serve as a new political and economic force in the Balkans, but the entire region also became a crucial stage on which Austro-Hungarian authorities in Sarajevo, along with their Russian, Ottoman, and Italian rivals actively operated.

At the center of this growing imperial rivalry over the Balkans were efforts to cultivate a strong relationship with Albanians, who, as a major multi-faith group of peoples spread throughout the Balkans, were to become key players in the extension of Austro-Hungarian, Italian, and Russian influence along the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. It is argued here that by studying Austro-Hungarian reactions to the changing dynamics of the Ottoman empire and its Albanian subjects, we may appreciate better the myriad of new concerns that the Dual Monarchy, in particular, faced as a Balkan power. Accordingly, the policies adopted to directly address Austrian authorities' concerns along the newly acquired border regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina reveal an increasingly complex shift in diplomatic practice and territorial governance that bring to the center of Balkan history a new appreciation for the underlying factors behind the struggle to control the Adriatic Sea. Among the key elements to this struggle must include the contribution of Albanians as actors rather than objects of imperial manipulation.

Exploring the extent to which Austrian officials patronized Albanian-speaking people in Ottoman territories during the 1878-1908 period may prove an instructive way of observing how the administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Austro-Hungarian imperial interests are directly linked. From their base in Sarajevo, diplomats like Theodor Ippen and Franz Kraz and Albanologists such as Franz Baron Nopcsa translated a personal affinity for the Albanian peoples living throughout the region into an often complex policy that led to subsidizing Albanian resistance to Ottoman, Greek and Slavic rule. Through institutions such as schools, seminaries and social clubs funded by the new administration in Sarajevo, the increasingly personal relations between Austro-Hungarian authorities and Albanians, as well as the growing concern Vienna had with its neighbors in regard to its own strategic agenda in the Balkans, we begin to see Austria's administration of Bosnia in a new light. Furthermore, the role that Republican Italy would play in undermining Austrian attempts to exploring close relations with Albanians, this essay introduces another set of terms by which the late Austro-Hungarian imperial history can be integrated into Balkan history.

Austria-Hungary's Evolving Policies in the Balkans

In order to understand the monumental shifts in the lives of the inhabitants of the Balkans and how the Austro-Hungarian state could operate there, we need to quickly review the impact of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1876-1878 on Southeastern Europe. For one, the rise of Russian ambitions in the Ottoman Balkan territories threatened a fragile balance of power established in continental Europe over the previous half of the century.¹ In response to Russia's victories, both governments in Vienna and Istanbul adopted measures to improve the administration of a more precisely defined body of constituents.² Central to assuring this authority was the reinvention of territorial sovereignty imposed by the Berlin treaty of 1878. No longer the regions of ambiguous co-habitation where Christians and Muslims interacted, the frontiers imposed in 1878 demarcated peoples with conflicting cultural traditions and contradicting ambitions.

¹ On Metternich's balance of power principle as it applied to the Balkans, cf. Rich, Norman: *Great Power Diplomacy, 1814-1914*. New York: McGraw-Hill 1992, pp. 28-44, pp. 167-183.

² Wiebe, Robert: *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*. Westport/Conn.: Greenwood Pr. 1967, pp. 13-29.



3 Joseph, Sarah: Resolving Conflicting Claims of Territorial Sovereignty and External Self-Determination. In: The International Journal of Human Rights 3/1 (Spring 1999), pp. 40-61.

4 It is important to note that Austria's occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina concerned not only Russia, but the Italians, an ally in the Triple Alliance which included the Austrian-Hungarian empire. Vienna's moves in the Balkans required that Rome invest heavily in the Balkans as well in order to secure what the Italians saw as its legitimate commercial and strategic interests. Cf. Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI), Seconda Serie, V. X., Doc. 434, Di Robilant a Corti, dated Vienna, 16.08.1878.

5 For details of this crucial development cf. Blumi, Isa: The Commodification of Otherness in the Study of the Balkans. How to Look at the Albanian. In: East European Politics and Societies (Fall 1998), pp. 527-569.

6 The Berlin Congress along with the European intervention in Lebanon in 1860 may have been the origin of a long progression in liberal theory as practiced in Britain and France during the first-half of the 19th century. Cf. Mehta, Uday S.: Liberal Strategies of Exclusion. In: Cooper, Frederick/Stoler, Ann Laura (Eds.): Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World. Berkeley: California UP 1997, pp. 59-86.

7 Text of report may be found in Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA) Vienna, Politisches Archiv (PA), XII/256, dated Scutari, 20.06.1877, 1r-25r.

Unfortunately, for many of Europe's powers, Russian military ascendancy in the Balkans imposed this principle of ethnic difference before it could be firmly established along the redrawn Ottoman frontiers. From the early 1850s Russia began to assert its military advantages in poorly defended corners of the Balkans (and Central Asia) by establishing channels of patronage among Orthodox Christian Slavs, while at the same time asserting the new and dangerous principle of military domination over previously recognized Ottoman territories in the Balkans. What was ostensibly happening in the crucial 1876-1881 period was the imposition of an idea of territorial expansion justifying the forced expulsion of Muslim and Catholic populations in order to realize the expansionist ambitions of Orthodox Christian states in the Balkans.

The subsequent attempt to establish a new set of 'universal legal principles' during the course of the events in the Balkans in 1878-1881 was a direct reaction to Russia's patronage of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and, to a lesser extent, Greece, as they all openly sought to expand territorially at the expense of the indigenous peoples of the region.³ As is well known, in response to Russia's growing influence in the region, Vienna ordered the Austro-Hungarian army to march into Bosnia-Herzegovina on July 22, 1878. By occupying both provinces, Vienna contributed to the creation of tensions in the region that ultimately shaped new spaces of action for local and regional powers.⁴ Key to understanding these tensions is the inclusion of an analysis of Republican Italy's fundamental interest in securing its role in the scramble for territory after 1878.

With these new dynamics on the ground, the requirements of enforcement became essential. Proxies of empires – states such as Serbia, Greece or Montenegro – were to become central mechanisms for projecting imperial power in the region. The more it became clear that these imperial agents were not capable of developing new strategies of domination, however, greater pressure was put on the imperial state in Vienna, Rome, Istanbul and St. Petersburg to supplement local inadequacies. At times, such interventions required costly direct involvement; on other occasions, it was the patronage of other groups in the region that provided the necessary leverage.

Herein lay the conundrum of the region after 1878: Local politics ultimately determined the direction in which the great powers could go. This forced powers to invest resources they did not have into an imperial project that actually empowered previously marginal people like some Albanian-Ottomans. For Austrian authorities based in the new regional capital of Sarajevo, cultivating relations with Albanians during the crucial 1878-1913 period would become a central, if largely unstudied, extension of imperial policy. This would be accomplished through a sophisticated network of institutions that specifically geared themselves to strengthening Austro-Hungarian influence in Ottoman territories. Much in the same way, Italian efforts to creatively engage their Albanian-speaking neighbors can actually help historians rethink the dynamics of state power in the modern age as well as Austria-Hungary's administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The most important contribution this period of rivalry between regional powers has had on modern Balkan history can be reduced to the shift in how modern diplomacy has inscribed »otherness« to human beings.⁵ At the forefront of this new pattern of talking and acting on the world through ethnicity, religion and class, imperial officers began to commission ethnographic reports that would end up in policy recommendations and ultimately help support the rationale for dividing territories in certain ways. In adopting a diplomatic principle that asserted territorial sovereignty to so-called ethnic nations on the basis of assumed ethnographic facts, the Balkans became the centerpiece for imperial machinations and brutal campaigns of historical erasure and ethnic cleansing.⁶

The Austro-Hungarian consul in İşkodra (Scutari/Shkodër), Fredrich Lippich (1838-1913), for example, took part in a common imperial exercise of cataloging the Balkans. This project aimed to more carefully delineate spheres of influence between respective powers in the Balkans. His 1877 *Denkschrift über Albanien*, in particular, served as a comprehensive ethnographic survey of the inhabitants of the border areas under consideration during the Berlin Congress of 1878.7 Lippich produced »ethnographic« maps in order to guide and determine the drawing of borders at the Congress, which arbitrarily defined ethnic, religious or racial groups. Importantly, such studies actually failed to accommodate the contingencies that often blurred the lines expected to distinguish one ethno-religious group from another.



8 Blumi, Isa: Contesting the Edges of the Ottoman Empire. Rethinking Ethnic and Sectarian Boundaries in the Malësore, 1878-1912. In: International Journal of Middle East Studies 35/2 (May 2003), pp. 237-256.

9 Among the more important studies are Ippen, Theodor: Novibazar und Kosovo (das alte Rascien). Eine Studie. Wien: A. Hölder 1892; Skutari und die nordalbanische Küstenebene, Sarajevo: D.A. Kajon 1907; and Alte Kirchen und Kirchenruinen in Albanien, Wien: A. Hölder 1900. Works by Franz Nopcsa, include: Das katholische Noralbanien. Wien: Holzhausen 1907; Aus Šala und Klementi. Albanische Wanderungen. Sarajevo: D.A. Kajon 1910; Haus und Hausrat im katholischen Nordalbanien. Sarajevo: B.H. Institut für Balkanforschung/Landesdruckerei 1912; Jokl, Norbert: Linguistisch-kulturhistorische Untersuchungen aus dem Bereiche des Albanischen. Berlin: W. de Gruyter 1923.

10 Medlicott, William N.: The Congress of Berlin and After. London: Methuen 1938, p. 162, p. 192, p. 221.

Ironically, so-called experts like Lippich did not approve of the justifications for the establishment of frontiers in 1878 based on their ethnographic surveys. In the process of collecting »vital intelligence« about those who lived within contested regions, Lippich realized that these ethnographies and statistical surveys limited his understanding of what locals actually wanted. Among his most important conclusions was that the populations living in the Malësia e Madhe (the present-day mountainous border region separating Montenegro, Novi Pazar, Albania and Kosovo) were prone to act in ways that made their »ethnicity« ambiguous: Orthodox Christian »Montenegrins« may in fact have been people who adopted Slavic family names but were still seen as related to Catholic or Muslim »Albanians« living in the same region. Indeed, as Austrian officials would be able to predict (and often exploit), the local Malësore (the Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim inhabitants of the *Malësia e Madhe*) refused to accept the borders that the great powers sought to impose on the grounds that the people designated to be ethnically different from them were in fact close relatives but of a different faith. As argued elsewhere, the contradictions (and resistance) to newly established diplomatic conventions demonstrates the transitional, and still highly malleable, nature of the Balkans at the end of the 19th century.⁸ As Lippich predicted, local idiosyncrasies would have a dramatic impact on the way Austria-Hungary could pursue its interests in the region for the next thirty years. After 1878, the heart of these policies was Sarajevo and the administrators, such as Lippich, operating out of the city.

As Bosnia, Herzegovina and Novi Pazar became the centers from which Austro-Hungarian agents infiltrated Albanian-Ottoman areas to both gather ethnographic data and begin to cultivate political alliances, so too would Sarajevo become the home of some of the most important Albanian activists of that era. Many of these activists, initially evicted by Serbian expansion and forced to settle under Austro-Hungarian protection in Bosnia, became part of an emerging field of scholarship – Albanology – that influenced Austrian policy in the southern Balkans. Refugees streaming into Austrian-held Bosnia from Niš and the Morava Valley, areas newly captured by Serbia, contributed to solidifying Austro-Hungarian military control over key areas of the province during the 1878-1916 period, and their most important contribution was assisting in formulating a policy for the Ottoman territories. In particular, exiles such as Mati Logoreci (1867-1941) cultivated ties between the Albanian diaspora living in Sarajevo and other Bosnian towns and locals within Ottoman Albania. Logoreci and others like him proved to be crucial for instituting programs in Ottoman Albanian areas that would remain under Austro-Hungarian direction. At the center of this Sarajevo-based policy were highly regarded Albanologists such as Theodor Ippen (b.1861), Norbert Jokl (1877-1942) and Franz Nopcsa (1877-1933) who all published influential studies on Albanian language, geography, archeology and history through state-funded institutes in Budapest, Sarajevo and Vienna.⁹

In this respect, it is instructive that Austro-Hungarian authorities based in Sarajevo invested heavily in patronizing Albanians at a time when ethnicity and religious affiliation became a means for uninformed delegates at the Berlin Congress to redraw the borders of the Balkans.¹⁰ Those who knew better immediately questioned the rationale adopted by the diplomats in Berlin. Men like Lippich and others rightly predicted that the attempt to conduct an »orderly« transfer of sovereignty from a multi-cultural Ottoman empire to numerous homogeneous nation-states created the conditions for more violence, not less. Paradoxically, the imposition of such a diplomatic solution to the Balkans proved advantageous to authorities in Sarajevo. The chaos resulting from the creation of new nation-states opened the door for authorities to promote the Austro-Hungarian administration as an ally for those facing new forms of persecution. In the case of the Albanologists based in Sarajevo, the uncertain future of the region's Albanians gave them an opportunity to bring a significant non-Slav population closer to the Austrian-Hungarian sphere of influence. One key area in which this was carried out was the direct patronage of Albanian education, both through the Catholic Church under its policy of *Kulturprotectorat* and later through Vienna and Sarajevo's direct investment into secular, Albanian-administered schools throughout the Balkans. As we will see below, however, the activities of Italian Republicans in the Balkans would significantly challenge Vienna's Albanian policy, forcing them to adopt a far more flexible understanding of their interests in the region, which included openly catering to Albanian Muslims.

The Italian Factor

11 For reports of Austro-Hungarian activities inside Bosnia and its relations with the Slav population after its occupation cf. Başbakanlı Osmanlı Arşivi (BBA), Y.PRK.T.Ş.F 1/14, Vienna Embassy to Porte, 8 Cemaziyevvel 1296 [01.05.1879].

12 As far as Austria-Hungary was concerned, the Reichstadt Agreement of 1876 with Russia clearly articulated Vienna's opposition to the formation of a great Slavic state in the Balkans. Cf. Sumner, Benedict Humphrey: *Russia and the Balkans, 1870-1880*. Oxford: Oxford UP 1937, pp. 586, 588.

13 Cf. Sandona, Augusto: *L'irredentismo nelle lotte politiche e nelle contese diplomatiche italo-austriache*. 3 vols. Bologna: N. Zanichelli 1932-1938, vol. II, pp. 17-28; Wandruszka, Adam/Furlani, Silvio: *Austria e Italia. Storia a due voci*. Bologna: Cappelli 1974, pp. 34-51.

14 Cf. Ippen, Theodore: *Das religiöse Protektorat Österreich-Ungarns in der Türkei*. In: Ippen, Theodore: *Die Kultur III*. Wien 1902, pp. 298-310. The British Consul at Shkodër, Green, was also aware of the fluid value religious identities had in the region, cf. Public Records Office, Kew Gardens, London/Foreign Office (PRO FO), 78/2628, N. 15, Consul Green to Foreign Office, dated Scutari, 03.03.1877.

15 For how Ottoman officials in İşkodra interpreted the impact of Italian schools and how they initially attempted to keep local children from attending them, cf. BBA, Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbatakları (MV) 68/25, 12 Rebiyülahir 1309 [15.11.1891].

16 DDI, Second Series vol. 10, Document 387, R. 359 Berio to Corti, Ministeri Affairs e Estare (MAE), dated Scutari, 04.08.1878.

17 A series of letters exposes the concerns Austrians had for the »secular« schools being set up by unsanctioned Catholic and Italian state operations. Albanian State Archives (AQSH), F.132.D.23.f.1-56. This source contains various types of correspondence between Scutari's Archbishop, the Propaganda Fide, and the Austrian consul in Scutari throughout 1889.

On the surface, the central dynamics in the Balkans were the Russian ambitions to fill in a political void among Slavic-speaking peoples and Austria-Hungary's counter measures.¹¹ The initial efforts to create a set of institutions in Sarajevo that would help strengthen Austro-Hungarian influence over Albanians in the region could be interpreted as an extension of this struggle between Russian and Austria-Hungary.¹² Parallel to the growing influence which Russia and Austria-Hungary asserted in the Ottoman Balkans during the early 1870s, was the heightening of diplomatic tensions between the other regional powers. Italy in particular created a new range of possibilities for the indigenous population and transformed politics in Albanian lands. Italian interests in the Balkans connected nascent imperial aspirations in Rome with the ongoing success of individual merchants who secured lucrative trade links in the region.¹³ Both would-be imperialists and merchants from Italy saw Austrian expansion in the Balkans as a direct challenge to their interests.

Secular vs. Catholic Education

As a consequence, the region was transformed into a strategic battleground between what were, in formal terms, two Catholic allies. Perhaps most instructive in this regard, the Catholic card (the *Kulturprotektorat*) used by Austria-Hungary to claim exclusive rights over the Balkans (and its Catholic Albanians) persuaded secular Italian political leaders like the Italo-Albanian Francesco Crispi to seek a more robust Italian role in the Balkans throughout the 1880s which veered away from religion. This strategy of deemphasizing religion and cultivating Albanian non-sectarian identity claims, ultimately transformed the way Austria-Hungary administered Bosnia and how it would extend its policies in the Balkans. Italian advisors such as Luigi Majnoni (based in Vienna) were particularly instrumental in this regard. Majnoni saw an ill-defined international system and convinced Rome and its merchant allies that their rivals' vulnerabilities gave them an opportunity to win over Albanian favor. Such growing involvement in Balkan affairs instilled a new sense of urgency in Sarajevo that ultimately secured political and commercial leverage for Albanian communities.¹⁴

In this respect, a number of elements contributed to giving locals more leverage over outside powers. As was already observed, perhaps the most influential factor proved to be the Italian secular state, which openly challenged the exclusive claims of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires to, among other things, educate Northern Albanians.¹⁵ For much of the 19th century, the Catholic Church and the Austro-Hungarian Government had the exclusive right to fund religious schools in Albania. It was widely assumed that these institutions were built and sustained not to educate children but to inculcate loyalty among community leaders. What confounded this system, initially based on an assumed role for a local social elite, was the growing Italian presence in the region from the 1870s onwards. By 1878, the Austrians felt the pressure as Italian government and privately funded schools secured important links to key clusters of Albanian Catholics.

The reason for Austria-Hungary's concern was an apparent undercurrent of anti-Austrian sentiments developing among many locals. According to evidence collected by Father Pierbatista da Verolavecchia in 1878, in a matter of three years, Italian influence and anti-Austrian rhetoric was having an impact on the children of Kosova. Sent by Vienna and the Vatican to report on the status of their joint efforts in Ottoman Albanian territories around Prizren, Kosova, Father da Verolavecchia reported that local Albanian Catholics were demonstrating open hostility to the Austro-Hungarians. The report, which also passed through Italian diplomatic channels, confirmed that the activities of Italian liberals hoping to pull local Albanians away from the influence of the Catholic Church and its Austrian ally were working.¹⁶ It became clear to Austrian and Vatican authorities that liberal Italians offered another channel of exchange from which the trust and loyalties of Albanians in the region could be solicited. It was no longer assured that Albanian Catholics would naturally align with the empire that had formal connections to the Vatican. Put differently, religious affiliations did not automatically translate into loyalty. The emergence of anti-Austrian sentiments among many Albanian Catholics in strategic regions such as Prizren would become the cornerstone of Austro-Hungarian counter measures for many of the remaining years of the century.¹⁷

18 Austria initiated a program to get Albanian students based in Prizren to attend seminaries in Austria in order to keep them well away from the influence of Italian »usurpers« found to be teaching in the region. Cf. an Ottoman report on this program in BBA, Haricye Nezareti Siyasi (HR.SYS) 115/68, Vienna Embassy to Porte, no. 13369/503, dated Vienna, 21.12.1882.

19 Cf. Duce, Alessandro: L'Albania nei rapporti italo-austriaci, 1897-1913. Milano: A. Giuffrè 1983. Duce's discussion of the rivalry between Italy and Austria over Albania fails to discuss this aspect, however.

20 HHStA, PA, I/710, Generalia, provides a list of German language schools in all of the Balkans on pp. 1-12, and in pp. 19-68 one may find a list of all the Catholic schools in Albania.

21 Such ambitions were even translated to the establishment of several faculties in Italian universities which taught the Albanian language and its literature. The first two universities to benefit from Crispi's largess were Napoli and Roma. AQSH, F.24. D.54/3. f.72, dated Rome, 01.11.1895.

22 Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari e Esteri, Serie Affari Politici (ASMAE), Serie Affari Politici (SAP), Pacco 664, no. 326/78 consul to Rome, dated Janina, 15.10.1900.

23 Priests used to try to police the community, threatening parents who sent their children to the Italian schools that they would be refused sacraments. The Albanian-born Archbishop responded with demands directly to the Vatican which ultimately ruled priests had no right to object to the schools. Cf. PRO, FO, 195/2057, no. 2, Hallward to Currie, dated Scutari, 25.02.1899.

24 On how aggressive a local Catholic Church in Prizren approached the completion of an Austro-Hungarian-funded school and Ottoman fears it would be used to educate Albanians in the Albanian language, an innovation discussed later. Cf. BBA, Yıldız Tasnifi: Mütenevvi Mâruzât Evrakı (Y.MTV) 247/143, summary report from Ministry of Interior, 1 Temmuz 1319 [15.07.1903].

25 PRO FO 195/1619, no. 25, Consul Lamb to White, dated Scutari, 07.12.1888. Lamb described the strategy as such: »[...] signs are already apparent that the whole of the powerful influence of the Catholic Church in this place will be exerted to prevent its [a particular Italian school] success while from another side, efforts are being made to excite the suspicions of the local authority with regard to its objects.«

Austrian authorities realized that a message communicated to a broader audience beyond the confines of their religious affiliation (most Albanian Christians in the south were Orthodox) was a key to their own long-term strategic interests. This quickly transformed Italian and Austro-Hungarian policies towards the region. A number of new strategies were introduced in order to win the loyalties of local communities, including the construction of more schools and bringing students to study in either Rome or Vienna on scholarships.¹⁸ Realizing that alliances could be forged by expanding the base of instruction to a wider group of Albanian children, Austro-Hungarian administrators transformed the schools they had previously funded from being a mere link between Catholic elite families to being a recruitment tool requiring innovative ways of attracting diverse students to attend.¹⁹

Despite the fact that, by the beginning of World War I, Austria-Hungary funded 24 Catholic-based schools scattered throughout Northern Albania, including 19 schools in the city of Scutari (Shkodër) itself, Italian influence in the region was greater.²⁰ The fundamental reason for this was Rome's liberal distribution of funds and promises for potentially lucrative commercial opportunities among those living outside the Catholic community. During the 1880s, and especially after the rise to power of Prime Minister Francesco Crispi in 1888, Italy invested state resources into creating a solid political, economic and cultural hold on the area that emphasized the trans-sectarian quality of Albanian commercial as much as political ambitions.²¹ Specifically, the schools established by Italy were seen as both »modern« and well-financed by their patrons while, at the same time, they did not exclude non-Catholics. Clearly Rome had begun to successfully attract students away from the Orthodox, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian schools. By 1890, the Italian schools monopolized education in most Albanian-populated regions, largely for the reason that they actually trained students in commerce and finance and did not restrict the curriculum to religious doctrine. The success of Italian schools thus caused alarm in the Austrian consulate, which, in response, instituted its own trade schools (*Handelschulen*) with the intention of attracting students away from the Italian evening schools established in Preveza, Yanina and later Draç.

This marked an important shift in policy and constituted a most impressive innovation that gave students' parents an opportunity to expand their long-term commercial prospects. According to Italian reports, by 1900 Austro-Hungarian authorities were attracting many important families in southern Albania by linking family economic interests with their children's education at Sarajevo-managed schools. The Italian consul in Yanina reported that while visiting Preveza he came across an Albanian Catholic from north Albania who, carrying an Austro-Hungarian passport, was distributing Austro-Hungarian »propaganda« written in Albanian that made such offers to local families. Another Albanian was reportedly put in prison for disseminating similar Austro-Hungarian propaganda in the Përmeti region around the same time. These reports suggest that by 1900, Austro-Hungarian authorities had begun to understand what needed to be done in order to maintain influence in the region.²²

Authorities based in Sarajevo aggressively campaigned to win over the students flocking to Italian-funded schools by offering local Albanians an alternative in both curricula and opportunities upon graduation. At the same time, the Austro-Hungarians tried to close down its competitors. Vienna lobbied the local Archbishop and even Ottoman officials for help in closing Italian »secular« schools that threatened the moral values of Catholic children.²³ The effort was driven by the activities of local priests directly under the pay of Austria-Hungary.²⁴ At one point, Austria-Hungary's appointed archbishop of Shkodër, Perlet, personally intervened in seeking to halt a »policy of differentiation« between Austro-Hungarian-funded Catholic schools and those supported by Italian money.²⁵ Ostensibly, the policy of differentiation was meant to secure exclusive access to the Catholic population, threatening to punish with excommunication any family who sent their children to schools not sanctioned by the Church. This represented a policy of intimidation on the part of administrators in Sarajevo that aimed to reassert a sense of exclusive right to administer the interests of the Catholics of the region, a remnant of the 18th-century doctrine of *Kulturprotectorat*, in which Vienna claimed exclusive rights to represent the Ottoman Empire's Catholic population.²⁶

These efforts were unsuccessful because Italy's »free schools« provided, for the first time in the history of the region, an opportunity for poor local children to earn an education, as well as to establish commercial links with the outside world. In February 1889, the British consul reported on the active work of the Italian consulate in Shkodër, suggesting that their policies concerning educating the poor resulted in an »unexpectedly large number of children having



26 As late as 1885, strong resistance from the Church, represented by Cardinal Prelet based in Scutari, hampered the ability of the Austrians and the Propaganda to reach out beyond its traditional sphere of influence. Cf. BBA, HR.SYS 125/23, correspondence no. 13878/108, Mihran to Afsim Paşa, dated Rome, 24.03.1885. For more on how the capitulations and Austria's claim to protect Albanian Catholics, cf. Blumi, Isa: Capitulations in the Late Ottoman Empire. The Shifting Parameters of Russian and Austrian Interests in Ottoman Albania, 1878-1912. In: *Oriente Moderno* 83/3 (2003), pp. 635-647.

27 PRO, FO, 195/1646, no. 2, Lamb to White, dated Scutari, 09.02.1889.

28 Sponzilli, Mariannina: *Storia della scuola Italiana dal 1859 al 1919*. Firenze: L'Autore Libri Firenze 1992, pp. 23-41.

29 For details about this school cf. the letter exchanged between two key earlier figures in education in the Balkans, AQSH, F.24.D.54/2.f.124-136, N. Gergomilas to Jeronim de Rada, no date.

30 PRO, FO, 195/1930, no. 4, dated Scutari, 18.03.1896.

31 Cf. AQSH, F.102.D.82.f.1-2, dated Korça, 01.01.1893.

32 For a recent study on the developments that ultimately led to the establishment of the first series of Albanian schools in Ottoman Albania, cf. Myzyri, Hysni: *Shkolla Normale e Elbasanit (1909-1912)*. Tiranë: NP 2004, pp. 11-33.

33 For more on how the Italians would continue to introduce schools in key regions of the empire, cf. BBA, I.MF 7/5.Za.320, Şura-yi Devlet report no. 1792, 5 Zilkade 1320 [04.02.1903].

34 This is manifested in the start of local efforts to fund and administer autonomous, Albanian-based educational centers. BBA, Yıldız Tasnifi: *Sadâret Hususî Mâruzât Evrakı (YA HUS)*, 493/61, Dar-i Hariciye no. 2153, 21 Recep 1323 [22.09.1905].

been collected in the new class rooms«.27 There was an elementary class for boys, one for girls, and an *asilo infantile* for children between 3 to 8, classes that recorded an attendance of 120, 70 and 150 students respectively. This new style of education amounted to the beginnings of a social revolution in the region where, in the past, only the male members of elite families were given the privilege of being educated in foreign-funded schools. By adding girls to the Italian-funded schools' student body, it may be deduced that much of the efforts by Republicans in Italy to usurp elitist social structures dominated by the Church were the underlying principles behind investing in education in the Balkans as well.²⁸

The Catholic Church was interested in matching the efforts of their secular Italian rivals, and initiated a program that would ultimately educate large numbers of Albanian-speaking boys and girls. For example, through the Sarajevo bureau, the Austro-Hungarian state paid the Jesuits in Shkodër 2000 francs for grants to 40 local students.²⁹ Apparently, they also provided additional money for the Franciscan elementary school that opened its doors to the masses in 1888. Vienna also formally responded by funding Catholic education for a growing number of the poor.

Despite the support of the Archbishop and modest investments in financing Catholic education, the Austro-Hungarians could not stop the flow of local children to 'secular' Italian schools during the late 1880s. As the British consulate reported in March 1896, a good eight years after the formation of the Italian schools, the Church had again reverted to threatening Albanian Catholic families with the policy of differentiation.³⁰

By 1896 these harsh measures inspired a new wave of Albanian cultural activism. Many leaders of Albanian communities throughout the region began to openly challenge the exclusive right proclaimed by leading states to educate a select group of children. Under the guidance of Italian schools, an explosion of local Albanian cultural clubs initiated the transmission of nationalist sentiments by way of irregular and often impromptu classes. Cultural clubs like *Vllazëria [Brotherhood]* based in Korçë began to demand the construction of Albanian-administrated schools, a campaign, which first Italy and later Austria-Hungary would support.³¹ By mobilizing a broad interest in the education of Albanian children, the Italians and later their Austro-Hungarian rivals had succeeded in engendering new forms of organization that would ultimately contribute to the reconfiguration of the loyalties of Albanians, a hitherto essential component of regional stability.³²

The Catholic Church, while by no means losing its importance for the spiritual lives of Catholic Albanians, was nonetheless beginning to lose its political and economic clout, and this resonated in Sarajevo and Vienna.³³ As Italian activities in the region demonstrated, Catholic communities were willing to secure new forms of linkages with the outside world if they were deemed to benefit their community at large. Such a realization eventually resulted in new strategies of interaction that the Austro-Hungarians installed in Albania for the rest of the Ottoman period. Collectively, these innovations constituted a revolution for Albanian intellectuals and, for the first time, permitted Northern Albanians to claim a role in starting the slow process of articulating a regional identity to counter the expansionist ambitions of their Slav and Greek neighbors.³⁴

Promoting the Albanian Language

Seeing large numbers of Albanians Catholics and Muslims flock to the well-funded Italian schools, Austro-Hungarians and their consular staff based in the region devised new methods of attracting and sustaining their influence over the local population. The most important contribution made in this regard and, perhaps most revolutionary with respect to Albanian lives at the time, was the use of language. Indeed, Vienna's growing patronage of activists who sought the development of the Albanian language and its use in Ottoman schools created new possibilities for action in the region. One of the primary advocates for the reform of the Albanian language, Sami Frashëri (1850-1904), for example, would find much of his most important nationalist work printed by Austro-Hungarian publishers. As the author of numerous dictionaries and encyclopedias that made him the intellectual force behind the modernization of the Ottoman-Turkish language, Frashëri understood the importance of securing a place for the Albanian language in the lives of Albanians who were showing signs of nationalist ambitions beyond the Ottoman empire. In 1875, for example, Frashëri asserted, »[...] Albania cannot exist without the Albanians, the Albanians cannot exist without the Albanian



35 Turhan, Dağlı Oğlu Hikmet, Semsettin Sami Bey. Hayati ve eserleri. İstanbul: Resimli Ay Matbassı 1934, pp. 14-15.

36 Frascheri, Sami Bey: [Sams-al-din Sami]: Was war Albanien, was ist es, was wird es werden? Gedanken und Betrachtungen. Vienna: A. Hölder 1913, p. 46.

37 AQSH, F.2.D.73.f.11, Aleksander Stavri Drenoves to Dija, dated İškodra, 01.01.1907 and AQSH, F. 2 D.74.f.301-302, Hil Mosin to Dija, dated Peja, March 29, 1907. As for Mati Logoreci, he made frequent attempts to generate support through the numerous Albanian-language newspapers published by the diaspora in Vienna, AQSH, F.34.D.29.f.19-20, Mati Logoreci to Nikolla Ivanajt, dated Vienna, 10. 11. November 1907. Cf. also BBA, HR.SYS, 118/37, 20.06.1908.

38 HHStA, PA, XIV/28, Albanien XX/3, Mémoire über Albanien (Ende 1901 bis Anfang 1905), pp. 13-19.

39 BBA, Y.MTV, 267/22, Interior Ministry Report, 17 Şaban 1322 [28.10.1904].

40 BBA, DH MUI, 27-1/4, Ministry of Interior Report no. 23, 11 Şevval 1327 [27.10.1909].

41 AQSH, F.12.D.10.f.83-84, Dervish Hima to Nikolla Naço, 22.05.1897.

42 Kraja, Musa: Mati Logoreci. Tirana: 8 Nentore 1987, pp. 20-26.

For an extensive collection of letters between Mati Logoreci and local Albanians wishing to assist in his project to expand education in Albanian, cf. among others, AQSH, F.2.D.74.f.299-308, Hil Mosi to Mati Logoreci, 14.03.1907 and AQSH, F.2 D.77.f.21-22, Aleksander Stavri Drenoves to Mati Logoreci, 10.10.1907.

43 HHStA, PA, XIV, 28, Albanien XX/7-8. Memorandum, Szomolany, 04.10.1907. Already by 1881, an Albanian language grammar book written in Arabic letters by Daut Borici was being promoted by Austrian-backed local (Muslim) agitators for Albanian education.

For a copy of the grammar, cf. AQSH F.65.D.21. For a copy of one of the first published dictionaries of Albanian and the Ottoman language by Hafiz Ali Ulqinaku, cf. AQSH, F.25.D.2, 20.01.1897.

44 Not only in İškodra, but in regional centers in Kosova like Prizren, there is evidence of Austrian-funded institutions educating both Muslim and Catholic Albanians. BBA, Y.MTV, 259/34, Yildiz Saray Copy of Şakir's Report, 6 Safer 1322 [23.04.1904].

language, and the latter cannot exist without its own alphabet and without schools.«³⁵ In full recognition of this need for an educational infrastructure, authorities in Vienna and Sarajevo advertised the empire as the ideal imperial patron needed to assure Sami's success. In this regard, the Austro-Hungarian Albanologists based in Sarajevo played key roles. Ippen and Nopcsa openly advocated funding efforts to solidify the cultural ambitions of nationalist leaders, resulting, for instance, in the translation into German and distribution of Sami Frashëri's works.³⁶ The funding of such publications further solidified Vienna's integral role in the emergence of an Albanian nationalist movement that had the potential of securing long term success for Austria's long-term interests in the Balkans.

In time, Vienna helped the Albanian diaspora in Sarajevo and beyond to organize and help coordinate these education programs. The Austro-Hungarian intelligence community based in Sarajevo was particularly interested in the development of education in Northern Albania by using the exiles Mati Logoreci and Gjerg Pekmezi to develop an Albanian-led curriculum that would attract families increasingly drawn to proto-national symbols. The social club *Dija*, for instance, proved to be an important tool and small subsidiary offices in Shkodër and Ipek (Peja/Peć) were established by 1907 to help project a campaign that combined Albanian nationalist interests and promoted strong ties to Vienna.³⁷

The interest in propagating pro-Austrian sentiments led to actively promoting the use of the Albanian language as a medium of instruction in Austrian-funded schools. In accordance with resolutions drawn up in Vienna under the direction of an Albanian from Ohrid, Gjerg Pekmezi, an educational committee created a »program of action« that established a curriculum in Albanian, which adopted a single alphabet and a set of goals that did not exclude the search for political independence from the Ottoman Empire.³⁸ More importantly, this process quickly spread to all Austro-Hungarian charitable activities, such as having scripture translated into Albanian and the distribution of the story of Jesus' resurrection (*neşretmesi*) in Albanian by posting copies on the walls of Austrian-funded hospitals.³⁹ Similarly, orphanages became a crucial place for Austrian attempts to educate children in their own language.⁴⁰ This effort meant empowering local educators, who were also increasingly encouraged to promote »nationalist« agendas in the Austrian-funded schools.⁴¹ An alternative »Prizren program«, also emerged under the careful direction of Mati Logoreci, who integrated the use of Albanian into the curriculum of many Austro-Hungarian schools.⁴²

Importantly, Austro-Hungarian Albanologists insisted that their language policies would attract not only Catholics, but prominent Muslim children as well.⁴³ The strategy to cross sectarian communities was finally approved in Vienna and proved successful in both stemming the tide of migration from Austrian-funded institutions to Italian schools. In time, this strategy to finally abandon the patronage of Catholics exclusively led to a large number of Albanian Muslims to also publicly champion the Austrian state as the key ally of Albanians in the region.⁴⁴ Such measures proved so successful that Kosova's governor, Mehmed Faik, complained to Istanbul that the Archbishop of Üsküp (Skopje) was actively recruiting Muslim families in Ipek, Yakova (Gjakova) and Prizren to send their children to Austrian-linked schools.⁴⁵ Istanbul, seeing the success of both the Italian and Austro-Hungarian programs, reluctantly amended its agenda to fit local needs with regard to cultural and social identity politics. This resulted in a greater emphasis on universal education that incorporated, in the city of Shkodër at least, a neighborhood's Catholic and Muslim Albanian children. The response here originated with what officials saw as the threat of Muslims being converted (*hristiyanlaşlamak*) by going to Italian or Austrian schools.⁴⁶

Clerical Activism

In many ways, Vienna's approach of winning over local communities through a policy that enabled Albanian intellectuals in the Church to at once thrive and to begin to lead proto-nationalist movements secured Austria-Hungary's place in the region's affairs until World War I. Paradoxically, at the same time they were building capacities among local communities to openly negotiate on their own terms the future of their territories with other powers. Such autonomy often left Vienna vulnerable to marginalization. The importance of Albanian-speaking clergy becoming a part of the process meant new power for local priests who were able to translate influence over local communities into new political power for members of that community. Ceding increasing local autonomy to Albanian clergy such as Prenk Doçi, an



45 Cf. BBA, Y.MTV, 39/32, Kosova Vali report, 18 Şevval 1306 [17.06.1889].

46 BBA, Y.MTV, 302/216, report no. 83, dated Işkodra, 28 Şaban 1325 [05.10.1907].

47 HHStA, No. 2A-B, Beilage, PA XIV/7, Albanien V/1, Ippen an Gofuchowski, dated Scutari, January 31, 1901. Doçi's influence in Mirdita would translate into a great deal of power for his primary patron and the Catholic Church's central ally in Northern Albania, Prenk Bib Doda Paşa.

48 For full details cf. PRO, FO, 195/2057, no. 1, Hallward to Currie, dated Scutari, 05.02.1899. In another case in neighboring Skopje, the Austro-Hungarian authorities again used their influence in the Vatican to dilute the parish of Albanian-born clergy in the hope of maintaining full control over the regional policies of the Church. Cf. details of how locals, in response to the removal of Albanian clergy, blocked the construction of a church in Skopje. PRO, FO, 294.24, no. 14, dated Uskub, 15.05.1900.

49 BBA, Y.MTV, 53/15, ruling signed by Military council, 4 Muharrem 1309 [11.09.1891].

50 For analysis of this sense of empowerment in the south, cf. Federico Guicciardini, an influential Italian politician at the turn-of-the century. Guicciardini, Federico: *Impressioni d'Albania*, II. In: *Nuova Antologia* XCIV (01.07.1901), pp. 1-32.

51 HHStA, PA, XIV/10, Abschrift des Briefes von Derwisch Himas, Kral an Aehrenthal, dated Scutari, 10.07.1910, p. 1a. Report discusses funding for schools as promised by Austrian Consul Kral.

emerging figure in the mostly Catholic region of Mirdita, was necessary in Vienna's eyes so that their efforts to maintain influence through educational reform continued to produce greater political influence in the region. The process of lending more immediate power to local leaders like the priest Doçi, however, had dramatic consequences in the region that often went beyond the ability of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to control. One of Doçi's primary allies in subsequent years, the claimant to an independent Catholic kingdom in the highlands of the Albanian Alps, Prenk Bib Doda Paşa, would prove to be critical to actually undermining Vienna's efforts at key moments leading up to the Balkan wars of 1912-1913.⁴⁷

In other words, by giving Albanians a greater say in the way they conducted their institutional lives, Austrian assistance may have also led to conflicts of interest. This last point is especially clear in the case of Prizren's Archbishop Trokshi, who resisted what he viewed as efforts to limit his and other Albanians' capacity to operate freely in the region. Vienna had persistently insisted that because they funded most of the Catholic institutional development in Kosova, they had the right to send Austrian-born staff, especially nuns, to help maintain the region's Church facilities. Over time, Trokshi became the target of a campaign led by the Austrian authorities to have him removed from his position as Archbishop of Prizren, a move which the Vatican ultimately resisted.⁴⁸

This phenomenon went beyond the inner-workings of the local Catholic Church to activist imams in Shkodër mosques, who, like their Catholic Albanian counterparts, began to challenge long-held prohibitions against using local dialects in religious ceremonies. According to reports from Işkodra, the local imam used the Friday *khutba* to introduce the use of the local Albanian dialect after the Arabic version.⁴⁹ While the local *imam* engaged in regional politics of the most controversial kind, it is clear that the sense of local agency was growing, emerging from the actions of both local Muslims and Catholic and Orthodox Albanian clergy who promoted Albanian language and cultural rights.⁵⁰ Eventually, the use of the vernacular in daily religious practice became so wide-spread among Northern Albanian Muslims that the Ottoman state was forced to develop its own educational program that specifically addressed the influences Austro-Hungarian and Italian schools had on many of the most important Muslim Albanians in the region.

Conclusion

One of the interesting consequences of local interests often contradicting presumed sectarian loyalties was that third parties, such as Italy and Austria-Hungary, found room to maneuver beyond their often self-imposed ideological and spiritual limitations. Here the local perspective sheds new light into the dynamics operating in the Balkans and offers us a new opportunity to consider the impact that Austria-Hungary's administration in Sarajevo had on the region. Not only is the Ottoman state left to scramble for information by modifying its administration, Austria-Hungary's privileged role in protecting Ottoman Catholics is also questioned with the ascendancy of Italy.

It is clear that this was not always left to the Albanians themselves. Officials recognized that many prominent Albanians exploited the rival ambitions of patron states by sometimes declaring themselves loyal to institutions and/or states that seemed improbable because of different religious affiliations. Muslim Albanians often solicited the aid of outside, so-called Christian powers as much as Catholic Albanians were comfortable operating within the Ottoman Empire. In the case of Austro-Hungarian efforts to secure influence in the region, Albanians connected with Austrian consuls and officials in Sarajevo, such as Mati Logoreci and Dervish Hima, openly lobbied for the construction of Albanian-run schools.⁵¹ Their ability to both gain a hearing and effect the construction of schools by tying Austro-Hungarian interests to Muslims as well as to Catholic Albanians served as an important political asset for individuals who were active in Albanian community politics at the time. In addition, the active lobbying of Austrian consuls and partnerships that developed in Sarajevo resulted in some degree of political clout for the factionalized Albanian diaspora. These political and cultural channels of exchange demonstrated how local and external, state and society were at once interdependent but also required the imperial patronage that Sarajevo in the 1878-1916 period provided.



SEEING BEYOND THE RIVER DRIN
by Isa Blumi (Atlanta)

Dr. Isa Blumi received his PhD from NYU's Joint History and Middle Eastern Studies program in 2005, writing on the late Ottoman Empire and its territorial frontier regions of Albania and Yemen between 1872-1912. Since working under the guidance of Talal Asad, Charles Tilly and Eric Hobsbawm at the New School for Research (MA 1995), Isa Blumi has worked more broadly on issues of comparative empire, state centralization, state violence and nationalism. Author of numerous articles on the modern history of the Balkans and the Middle East, in particular events concerning Albania, Macedonia, Kosova and Yemen, he is also the author of monographies on the late Ottoman empire, ethnic borders in Kosova, and the Ottoman era in Albania. He has taught at Trinity College in Hartford, American University of Sharjah and Yeshiva University, Isa Blumi is currently assistant professor of history at Georgia State University.
Contact: isablumi@yahoo.com

