

Insights on the national and religious war character of Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg

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Abstract

Regarding the anti-Ottoman war of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, various scientific circles but also theological ones have often laid the dilemma as to what character was this war - religious or national one. Based on relevant sources, this paper concludes that the anti-Ottoman war of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg proved to be a successful combination of national and religious elements due to the support of Papacy but also due to Christian religious affiliation of Albanians. Albanians belonged to two Christian religions, namely Orthodoxy and Catholicism, and therefore Skanderbeg maneuvered successfully on the religious aspect by overcoming distinctions between these two religions; thus maintaining the internal unity as opposed to external dissention of these religions, he granted to the war a national character as well. At this time, the orthodox Byzantium was almost entirely defeated causing the Catholic Church to take over the role of organizing the defense. For the organization of a successful defense, Papacy supported the Albanian resistance led by Skanderbeg, but it also tried to benefit in terms of religious aspect, seeking unification of Orthodoxy with Catholicism. Under these circumstances, Albanian territories, just where Orthodoxy and Catholicism met, were found in a position that required cautious handling to avoid eventual dissention within the Christianity and at the same time to organize an effective anti-Ottoman resistance. Hence, Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg became the main mastermind of inter-Albanian Christian religious tolerance maintaining the same position both versus Catholicism and Orthodoxy thus giving rise to a powerful Albanian inter-religious unity in favor of the defense from Ottomans and successfully intertwining the national war with the religious one.

Keywords: national, religious, war, Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg.

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