

## Historical aspects of Skanderbeg with Zeten in the XV century

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### Abstract

Historical relations in the XV century between Montenegro since the Middle Ages known as Zeta, and the Albanians whose country in the Middle Ages was called Arbëri / Albani recorded many numerous events. Their relations conditioned by their neighborhood and the circumstances of the time, both these countries had pronounced political and economic problems with Venice. Venice, the most powerful state in the Adriatic Sea, had conquered and ruled important coastal places in both Montenegro and Albania. Also Zeta and Arberia in the XV century were found in the strong connection of the Ottoman conquests.

In the XV century, Montenegro, was led by the most powerful and influential Albanian family of Gjurasheve (who are also known as Černojević) in the years 1427-1516, while Upper Albania was led by the Kastrioti family in the years (1415-1468)

From the beginning of the XV century, the prominent Albanian prince, Gjon Kastrioti, established extensive principalities in Upper Albania, Dardania (Kosovo) and the medieval Lower Dibra, which included today's Pollogunand the hills and mountainous provinces that surround this fertile area, such as the Sharr highlands, etc. The principality of Gjon Kastriot owned important cities and economic roads from the port of Shufada to Prizren. With the ownership of the port of Shufada at the mouth of the river Mat, it was possible to trade with the main partner the city of Kotor in Montenegro. Their neighborly cooperation was crowned with the marriage of Stefan Cernojević (Gjurashin) to the daughter of Gjon Kastriot Mara, Skanderbeg's sister. The cooperation between princes Gjon Kastriot and Stefan Cernojević was also built in defense of common interests in the fight against the Ottoman occupation in years 1428-1430.

After the death of Gjon Kastriot, the Albanian principality was led by his son Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg in the years 1443-1468. Skanderbeg also had good economic and political relations with the prince of Zeta (present-day Montenegro) Stefan Cernojević (Gjurashi), who ruled in the years 1451-1465.

In the middle of the XV century the powerful feudal lord of Montenegro, Stefan Cernojević, managed to establish his control between Moraca, Lake Shkodra, Pashtrović and Budos. As the most powerful manor in Zeta, Stefan began negotiations with the Republic of Venice, which recognized him as the legitimate ruler of Zeta.

Relations between Skanderbeg and Stefan Cernojević were close. Stefan Cernojević, was a participant in the Assembly of Lezha in 1444 which was organized by Skanderbeg.

In the war of the Albanians against Venice in 1447/48 due to the city of Deça, Skanderbeg was helped by some soldiers of Stefan Cernojević. In 1448 Skanderbeg made important victories on the Drini River against the Venetian army. Skanderbeg's Albanian forces entered Zeta, and reached as far as Tivar, where the Albanians of Tivar joined Skanderbeg's army. However, there were other Albanian nobles who did not join Skanderbeg but sided with the Venetians and influenced the Venetian army to conquer the Highlands of Tivarit. The war between Skanderbeg and Venice ended with the agreement of year 1448.

Skanderbeg had set up a diplomatic mission in the medieval territory of St. Mary of Rotac near Tivar, under the Archbishopric of Tivar, in a seaside locality inhabited by Albanians. He was Gjergj Pelini, from the city of Novo Brdo in Kosovo, when he entered the service of

Skanderbeg, as abbot of this monastery (1438 - 1463) from 1448 he also performed the functions of Chancellor of Skanderbeg for relations with Venice.

At the time of the great Albanian resistance in 1466 in defense of Kruja, the center of the state of Skanderbeg, against the Ottomans, Gjon Cërnojevic with 15,000 fighters who were mobilized under the supervision of Venice, helped the Albanian resistance.

At the time of the Ottoman invasions on the city of Shkodra 1474-1478, the Albanian resistance was also aided by the military forces of Gjon Cernojevic who as a vassal of Venice attacked the Ottoman military forces at important road points from where the Ottoman supply caravans came, being caused great damage to the Ottoman army. In 1478, the Ottomans conquered the city of Shkodra, Drishti and Zabjak, the residence of Gjon Cernojevic, with which he left for Italy. After the death of Sultan Mehmed II, and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, Gjon Cernojevic returned to his homeland but now as a vassal of the Ottomans. His headquarters were now in Cetinje. One of his sons, Stanisha, who is also the last ruler of the Cernojevic family in Zeta, converted to Islam and took the name Skanderbeg, in memory of his uncle Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg. After the death of Skanderbeg Cernojevic, the province of Zeta rejoined the Sanjak of Shkodra.

These historical facts speak of historical aspects of the relations between Skanderbeg and Zeta, which were created depending on the political situation. On the whole, Skanderbeg's relations with the ruler Stefan Cernojevic were built on the interests of the war against the Venetian occupiers in 1430-1448 and the Ottomans in 1466-1467, 1477 and 1478.

**Keywords:** Zeta, Arberi, Montenegro, Albania, Gjon Kastrioti, Skanderbeg, Stefan Cernojevic, Skanderbeg Cernojevic, Venice, Ottoman.

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