

Grabiela Rojas Molina

**PLACING IDENTITIES? SOCIO-SPATIAL RELATIONS IN SHKODER
IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY**

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Central European University

Budapest

May 2015

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(Venezuela)

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

Chair, Examination Committee

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I, the undersigned, **Grabiela Rojas Molina**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 20 May 2015

Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Central European University. Here I found constant support to grow up as a scholar, engage with a variety of research interests, and face all the ups and downs that arose in these two years. Anabella Pál, Daniel Ziemann, Chrys Margaritidis and Fatime Plotar helped me beyond the call of duty and deserve here a very special mention. I am most thankful to my supervisor Gerhard Jaritz for his patient and careful reading of the numerous drafts of the manuscript. I also consider myself exceptionally fortunate to have had the laughs, conversations, and encouragement of my fellow students of the Medieval Studies Department in our shared struggles. Particularly to Zachary Rothstein-Dowden I am grateful beyond words.

I dedicate these pages to my family. To my mother and her capacity to despise the current hardships with wise disdain. I hope she will condone the flaws in this work and take it as a tribute to her strength during the present and past times; to my sisters, who have sent me their confidence in spite of the perils, violence, and misery they themselves are endlessly exposed to; and to my father, the mere recollection of whose daring sense of humour pulled me out of both bitterness and hopelessness, even from afar. My life-time friend Andreina, who fights for the life of her patients in the most adverse circumstances was also an inspiration when the thesis-writing seemed an unsurmountable task. My final thoughts of gratitude and love go out to all of them and to my far-off friends, Piero, Adel, Ednodio, who day by day fiercely struggle to hang on to their dignity and survive in a country that so closely resembles an open-air prison.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AAV Valentini, Joseph, ed. *Acta Albaniae Veneta saeculorum XIV et XV*. 25 vols. Palermo: Typis Josephi Tosini, 1967-1979.
- AD Šufflay, Milan, Ludwig von Thallóczy, and Konstantin Jireček, eds. *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia. Vol. II, Annos 1344-1406 continens*. Vol. II. 2 vols. Vienna: A. Holzhausen, 1913.
- ASA *Acta Studia Albanica*. Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 1964–
- LCD Tadić, Jorjo, ed. *Pisma i uputstva Dubrovacke Republike. Litterae et commissiones Ragusinae*. Vol. I. Fontes rerum Slavorum meridionalium 2. Belgrade: Srpska kraljevska akademij, 1935.

INTRODUCTION*

“For the largest part of his existence, man has been a being that dwells, but not a being with a homeland.”

-Vilém Flusser¹

“It was a strange city, and seemed to have been cast up in the valley one winter’s night like some prehistoric creature that was now clawing its way up the mountainside. Everything in the city was old and made of stone, from the streets and fountains to the roofs of the sprawling age-old houses covered with grey slates like gigantic scales. It was hard to believe that under this powerful carapace the tender flesh of life survived and reproduced.”

-Ismail Kadare, *Chronicle in Stone*²

Like Kadare’s city, Shkoder was a mountainous “creature” surrounded by everlasting valleys and forests. Existing enigmatically for several centuries in the minds of travelers, chroniclers, and statesmen, its medieval stone walls contained and created life. Yet, it differs from the writer’s city in the fact that it did not have the hard resemblance of stone. In the late Middle Ages, life in Shkoder reproduced not under a heavy carapace, but thanks to the imaginary of the mountainous tenacity that made possible autonomy and dependency, openness and isolation, identity and anonymity. It had, of course, an existence of its own with a well-defined location next to the Lake of Shkoder, but it was also part of the cultural life of north Albania, which, paradoxically, had a rather loose geographical meaning.³

* The names of many Albanian cities have not only adopted a variety of forms in Albanian, Serbian, and Italian, but they have also undergone modifications over the centuries. In this work, all the names will preferably follow the rendering that is at present use in the English language and their location will be referred to in relation to the country they currently belong. In the cases where the resemblance between the name used in the fourteenth century and the English form is not so clear, the Italian or Latin name will be given in parenthesis. Regarding the translations of primary sources and secondary bibliography, they are all mine unless otherwise stated. Any mistake, then, is my sole responsibility.

¹ Vilém Flusser, “Dwelling in Exile,” in *Migration: Joseph Beuys, Alighiero Boetti, George Brecht, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Constant, Robert Filliou, Olafur Gislason, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Mona Hatoum, Nicolas Humbert, Werner Penzel, Mario Merz, Marcel Odenbach; Eine Ausstellung im Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein vom 29. Juni - 2. November 2003*, ed. Friedemann Malsch and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Cologne: Walter König, 2003), 1.

² Ismail Kadare, *Chronicle in Stone*, trans. Arshi Pipa (Edinburg: Canongate, 2007), 1.

³ Like Romania or Sclavonia, “Albania” was one of the popular names of the medieval regions in the Balkans. For instance, in the *Itinerarium Symonis Simeonis et Hugonis Illuminatoris ad Terram Sanctam* of around 1322 has “Albanya est provincia inter Sclavoniam et Romanyam”: Robert Elsie, “Two Irish Travellers in Albania,” in

Kadare's chronicle offers a good contrast to the sources that helps to understand life in a city inasmuch as literature sometimes helps to formulate pieces of reality when historical knowledge falls short. But if Kadare's "tender flesh of life" breaths through the crevices of the old city, in this investigation medieval life leaks out of Shkoder through the pages of the city statute. The variety of affairs the code deals with are like the small pieces of a precious mosaic. Taken together, they will hopefully transmit a picture in which the patterns that produced spaces and identities will be clearly discernible.



Important cities and fortresses of northern Albania in the late Middle Ages, adapted from: Schmitt, Das venezianische Albanien, 80.

Albanien in Vergangenheit Und Gegenwart: Internationales Symposium Der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft in Zusammenarbeit Mit Der Albanischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Winterscheider Mühle bei Bonn, 12.-15. September 1989, ed. Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, Südosteuropa Studien 48 (Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1991), 26. The terms "Albania" (*Arbanun*, *Albanum*) or "Albanians" (Lat. *Albanensis*, It. *Albanese*, *Arbanesi*, Serb. *Arbanas*) were not used in medieval sources with a uniform meaning. According to Schmitt, these names spread during the late Middle Ages and reflect social and political changes in the greater area of the Western Balkans: Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien: (1392-1479)* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2001), 47.

Political Situation of the North-Albanian Territories by the Fourteenth Century

From the rise of Epirus and the emergence of new Slav powers in the second half of the thirteenth century onwards, the situation of the Albanian territories was characterized by precarious political stability.⁴ In Alain Ducellier's analysis, the constant wars between the rulers of Epirus and the Slav lords that began around 1205, together with the harsh fiscal-policy of the Angevins, produced a considerable decline of the Albanian ports and led to the separation of the coastal cities, particularly Durrës (Durazzo), and the interior.⁵ The Albanian littoral, however, continued to have a considerable naval and commercial significance for Greek, Venetian, Hungarian, and Ragusan foreign policy. Afterwards, when the Serbian expansion to the southern Adriatic became a reality, the annexation of the Epirus and the Albanian territories in 1346 was an important gain for the Serbian king Stephen Dušan, at least momentarily.⁶ After his death nine years later, the empire broke up and prominent Albanian lords assumed the control of cities while chieftains controlled the countryside.⁷ In Shkoder, a city in northern

⁴ Alain Ducellier, "Albania, Serbia and Bulgaria," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: 1198 - C. 1300*, ed. David Abulafia, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 785. This instability was also owing to the fact that, despite the attempts made by the Angevins, there was nothing like a politically or culturally unified Albania; such an idea would only materialise in modern times. Following Schmitt, I will refer to the "Albanian realm" or "Albanian space," and the cases where only "Albania" appears are solely due to stylistic purposes: Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 47.

⁵ Ducellier, "Albania," 794. A coup de grâce was the earthquake in Durrës in March 1271, which left this city destroyed, abandoned and defenceless: Donald Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros 1267-1479: A Contribution to the History of Greece in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 15. Ducellier, however, dates the earthquake to July 1267: Alain Ducellier, *La Façade Maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Âge: Durazzo et Valona du XIe au XVe siècle* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1981), 294. See the description of the earthquake by George Pachymeres, a Byzantine historian, in: Robert Elsie, *Early Albania: A Reader of Historical Texts, 11th-17th Centuries* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2003), 12–13.

⁶ Bariša Krekić, "Le relazioni fra Venezia, Ragusa e le popolazioni serbo-croate," in *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV: atti del I Convegno Internazionale di Storia della Civiltà Veneziana. Venezia, 1 - 5 giugno 1968*, ed. Agostino Pertusi, vol. 1 (Florence: Olschki, 1974), 398.

⁷ In the course of 1350, John Bova (Buji) Spata and Peter Liosha (Losha), two Albanian chieftains, gained control over Epirus and Aetolia; John Comnenus established his principality in Valona and Berat; the Balšići (Balša) brothers, a western noble family, held Zeta (southern Montenegro and northern Albania); and three main families—the Balšići, the Matarangos and the Thopias—disputed the region between the Lake of Shkoder and Durrës: John Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 357–368. Between 1363 and 1396, the Balša gained solid control over North Albania and the coast of Budva and Bar. Then, they surrendered their territories to the Venetians: Alain Ducellier, "Genesis and Failure of the Albanian State in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *L'Albanie entre Byzance et Venise: Xe - XVe siècles* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), 10, originally published in: Arshi Pipa and Sami Repishti, eds., *Studies on Kosova* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1984).

Albania, the Balša dynasty began to rule from about 1360 until 1392, year in which the Ottomans took George Stracimirović Balšić prisoner and released him only after he surrendered Shkoder to them, first, and to the Venetians four years later.⁸

And yet, in spite of this volatile political situation, from at least the second half of the thirteenth century, Shkoder and the surrounding villages had experienced a successful agricultural development and by the time the Balša took over, the city counted with a consolidated local economy. Additionally, the codification process of local city laws in the Albanian cities that took place in the first half of the fourteenth century allowed a form of local administration centred in the resolution of the affairs of the commune by means of a citizen's assembly.⁹ However, parallel to the increase of the commune's authority, the dismemberment of the Serbian Empire into local principalities also facilitated the Ottoman advance in the Balkans. In 1362 they had taken Erdine (Adrianopolis) and continued their advance into European territories. The Serbian King Vukašin Mrnjavčević and his brother, the despot Jovan Uglješa, in an attempt to stop the Ottoman campaign in the Balkans, faced them at the Maritsa River near the village of Chernomen (today's Ormenio in Greece) in 1372, but the Serbian forces suffered a bitter defeat and the two brothers were killed. Thereafter, the onrush of the continuous Ottoman assaults would become inevitable.¹⁰

⁸ Konstantin Jireček, "Skutari und sein Gebiet im Mittelalter," in *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. Ludwig von Thallóczy, vol. 1 (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1916), 105.

⁹ Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Un monumento dell'Albania medievale," in *Statuti di Scutari, della prima metà del secolo XIV con le addizioni fino al 1469*, ed. Lucia Nadin (Rome: Viella, 2002), 30.

¹⁰ Indeed, after this defeat the Ottomans penetrated Macedonia and Albania, whereas the more famous Battle of Kosovo in 1389 only "legalized the establishment of the Ottoman domination in the Balkans and marked the beginning of the Ottoman-Hungarian rivalry over the area between the Balkans and Central Europe: Dritan Egro, "The Place of Albanian Lands in the Balkan Geopolitics during the Ottoman Invasion (the 14th – 15th Centuries)," *ASA* 1 (2005): 82. A further discussion of the situation shortly before the Ottoman invasions would go, however, beyond the scope of the present investigation. For this, see: Halil İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," in *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1978), first published in *Studia Islamica*, no. 2 (1954): 104-129; Elisabet Zachariadu, "Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania (1380–1418)," in *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans*, ed. Elisabet Zachariadu (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007); Koço Bozhori, ed., *Lufta shqiptaro-turke në shekullin XV: burime bizantine [The Albanian-Turkish War in the fifteenth century: Byzantine sources]* (Tirana: Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1967); Selami Pulaha, ed., *Lufta Shqiptaro-Turke ne shekullin XV: burime Osmane [The Albanian-Turkish War in the fifteenth century: Ottoman Sources]* (Tirana: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1968).

Before, or rather side-by-side the Ottoman takeover, the Venetians looked up to Shkoder with the intention of securing this area for their commercial purposes. They recovered Durrës and dominated Lezhë (Alessio) in 1392, and Shkoder and Drivasto in 1396. Their expansion “was to form a cordon” based on alliances with local Albanian lords,¹¹ but this was a patchwork of unstable possessions.¹² Indeed, up to the Morean war (1684-1699), in which the Republic of Venice ended up victorious and significantly increased its possessions, “more than half of the existence [of their Albanian territories] was spent in a state of war, and with the exception of Shkoder and Durrës, there was not a single city that the *Serenissima* did not lose at some point.”¹³

Scholarship, Analytical Framework, and Research Aims

The fourteenth century is particularly relevant for the study of a very important political unity, the city, which was a nearly autonomous space that modelled the interactions of individuals, the production of cultural space, and the establishment of centres of power.¹⁴ Yet the study of Albanian cities has remained partly isolated from the research perspectives of other parts of Europe, where the city as a conceptual entity has been at the cutting edge of current modern urban studies. That is to say, the degree to which the Albanian realm can be understood

¹¹ Oliver Jens Schmitt, “Le Commerce Vénitien dans l’Albanie vénitienne: Mécanismes et conjonctures d’un espace économique au XV siècle,” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 33, no. 2 (2003): 883.

¹² Lovorka Čoralić, “Letters and Communications of the Rectors of Budva, Bar and Ulcinj as a Source for the Diplomatic and Political History of Venetian Albania in the Sixteenth Century,” *Etudes Balkaniques* 3 (2009): 91. The limits of this investigation are marked by the beginning of the “Venetian Albania.”

¹³ Schmitt, “Le Commerce Vénitien,” 882.

¹⁴ Literature about medieval cities encompasses a wide range of topics, but the study of Albanian cities has remained alien to this scholarly discussion. Recent contributions tend to emphasise comparative or multidisciplinary approaches, see, for instance: Marc Boone and Peter Stabel, eds., *Shaping Urban Identity in Late Medieval Europe*, Studies in Urban Social, Economic and Political History of the Medieval and Modern Low Countries 11 (Leuven: Garant, 2000); Edith Ennen, *The Medieval Town* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1979); Jan Hirschbiegel, ed., *Städtisches Bürgertum und Hofgesellschaft: Kulturen integrativer und konkurrierender Beziehungen in Residenz- und Hauptstädten vom 14. bis ins 19. Jahrhundert* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2012); Michel Pauly and Martin Scheutz, eds., *Cities and Their Spaces: Concepts and their Use in Europe* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2014).

with the conceptual framework of city has not been sufficiently explored and calls for its own considerations.

Scholarly research has certainly touched upon cardinal aspects of Shkoder's political and historical evolution. To mention but the most prominent examples, Milan von Šufflay insisted on the idea of a multi-layered Albanian cultural milieu, Ducellier wrote extensively about the cultural and political configuration of central and south Albania, Bariša Krekić and Sima Ćirković were very interested in the presence of Albanians in other cities and the commercial contacts they maintained and, more recently, Oliver Schmitt thoroughly analysed the mechanisms by which the Venetians managed to organise the heterogeneous Albanian province in political, administrative, demographical, and economic terms.¹⁵ Additionally, in the last decades of the twentieth century, Albanian social and economic historians expanded the scholarly knowledge about the economy of Albanian villages,¹⁶ and in the last few years there has also been an increasing interest in the amount and structural reasons of Albanian migration in the late Middle Ages, particularly towards Venice.¹⁷

¹⁵ Milan von Šufflay, "Das mittelalterliche Albanien," in *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, ed. Ludwig von Thallóczy, vol. 2 (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1916), 282–87. For a thorough discussion of Šufflay's views and political motivations, see: Oliver Jens Schmitt, "'Die Monade des Balkans' - die Albaner im Mittelalter," in *Albanische Geschichte. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung*, ed. Oliver Jens Schmitt and Eva Anne Frantz (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009), 61–80; Ducellier, *La Façade Maritime*; Alain Ducellier, "Kotor as a Meeting Point for Albanian Emigrants in the 14th and 15th centuries?," in *Città e sistema Adriatico alla fine del Medioevo: Bilancio degli studi e prospettive di ricerca; Convegno di studi, Padova 4-5 aprile 1997*, ed. Michele Pietro Ghezzi (Venice: Soc. Dalmata di Storia Patria, 1998), 121–40; Bariša Krekić, *Unequal Rivals: Essays on Relations between Dubrovnik and Venice in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2007); Sima Ćirković, "Les Albanais à la lumière des sources historiques des Slaves du sud," in *Iliri i Albanci. Les Illyriens et les Albanais: Série de conférences tenues du 21 mai au 4 juin 1986*, ed. Milutin Garašanin, Colloques scientifiques 39 (Belgrade: Académie serbe des Sciences et des Arts, 1988), 341–59.

¹⁶ Luan Malltezi, *Qytetet e bregdetit shqiptar gjatë sundimit venedikas, 1392-1478: aspekte të jetës së tyre [The Albanian coastal cities during the Venetian rule, 1392-1478: their characteristics]* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, 1988); Ivan Božić, "Le système foncier en 'Albanie vénitienne' au XVe siècle," *Bollettino dell'Istituto di storia della società e dello stato veneziano* 5/6 (1964): 65–140; Spiro Shkurti, *Der Mythos vom Wandervolk der Albaner: Landwirtschaft in den albanischen Gebieten (13. - 17. Jahrhundert)* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997).

¹⁷ Lucia Nadin, *Migrazioni e integrazione: Il caso degli Albanesi a Venezia (1479-1552)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008); Ermanno Orlando, *Migrazioni mediterranee: Migranti, minoranze e matrimoni a Venezia nel basso medioevo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014); Brunehilde Imhaus, *Le minoranze orientali a Venezia: 1300 - 1510* (Rome: Il Veltro, 1997); Alain Ducellier et al., *Les Chemins de l'exil: Bouleversements de l'Est européen et migrations vers l'Ouest à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: A. Colin, 1992); Paolo Petta, *Stradioti: Soldati albanesi in Italia (sec. XV - XIX)* (Lecce: Argo, 1996); P. F. Bellinello, "Aspetto storico-demografico e socio-economico degli Albanesi in Italia,"

Another aspect, that is, the development of identities in the spatial context of the city, also requires further attention. In Shkoder, the problem of overlapping identities bears a distinct importance and it will be a recurrent point in the analysis. As an example, whereas *Albanenses* can lead to an ethnic reading, the term *Scutarenses* seems to refer specifically to the affairs of the city.¹⁸ Here, however, the question about identity or identification of people in a given space will not be a synonym for the ethnic characteristics of those people. In consequence, controversies about the autochthony, presence, continuity or distribution of the Albanian *ethnos* in the Middle Ages will not be at the core of the present investigation.¹⁹ Rather, this work will consider the way social relations and power structures acquired their physical dimension and were actually mediated by the experience of accessing and sharing the urban and non-urban space. This experience is also a central problem to look at anew given that only recently the conceptual analysis of the relationship between town and country ceased to be a binary

Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata 40 (1986): 3–56; Lovorka Čoralić, “Od Ulcinja do Drača – Albanski Uселjenici u Mlecima (14.-18. stoljeće) [From Ulcinj to Durrës – Albanian Immigrants in Venice (from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Century)],” *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 29 (2011): 39–82.

¹⁸ According to Schmitt, the name “Albanian” can be: 1) a mere appellation that refers to the origin; 2) the assignment of a person to the Albanian-speaking ethnic group in the Western Balkans; 3) the designation of a person who is not in possession of the citizenship of the Dalmatian and Albanian municipalities, and 4) a semi nomadic group: *Das venezianische Albanien*, 60.

¹⁹ For literature having “Albanian ethnicity” as a central research problem, see: Hasan Kaleshi, “Das türkische Vordringen auf dem Balkan und die Islamisierung- Faktoren für die Erhaltung der ethnischen und nationalen Existenz des albanischen Volkes,” in *Südosteuropa unter dem Halbmond: Untersuchungen über Geschichte und Kultur der südosteuropäischen Völker während der Türkenzeit.*, ed. Georg Stadtmüller (Munich: Trofenik, 1975), 125–38; Kasem Biçoku, “Les Régions Ethniques albanaises au moyen âge et la propagation du nom national ‘Arber,’” *ASA* 1/2 (1992): 11–23; Pëllumb Xhufi, “The Ethnic Situation in Epirus during the Middle Ages,” *ASA* 1–2 (1994): 47; Pëllumb Xhufi, “Regard sur les noms Albanie et Albanais au Moyen Âge,” *ASA* 1 (2002): 3–21.; Ilijaz Rexha, “Shtrirja e vendbanimeve mesjetare mbi bazën e etnonimit Arban-Alban në Ballkan [The Extension of the Medieval Dwelling- Places on the Basis of the Ethnonym Arban- Alban in the Balkans],” *Studime Historike* 3–4 (2005): 7–30; Muhamet Qerimi and Muhamet Mala, “Paraqitja dhe shtrirja e etnonimit Arbër, Arbanon në Bizant [The presence and extension of the ethnonym Arbër, Arbanon in Byzantium],” *Studime Historike* 1–2 (2009): 7–26. A comment on earlier mention of ethnic groups in the Balkans can be found in: Peter Schreiner, “Ethnische Invektiven in der spätbyzantinischen Händlerwelt zum anonymen Poem im Marcianus gr. XI, 6 aus dem 3. oder 4. Jahrzehnt des 14. Jahrhunderts,” *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta* 2, no. 50 (2013): 763–78. For a discussion about the different ethnonyms used and applied to Albanians, see: Bardhyl Demiraj, *Shqiptar – Albanian* (Tirana: Naimi Printing House, 2010).

opposition and, in the specific case of Shkoder, it is virtually impossible to study its urban realm separated from the villages, arable lands, and mountains surrounding it.²⁰

Half way between prominent cities like Durrës and the smaller villages with no centre of administration or market, Shkoder was connected with both “international” and local communication routes. In this sense, even though one should not exaggerate the importance of Albanian trade for the Venetian administration, this interconnectedness of towns and villages along the shore of the Lake of Shkoder did pour a great deal of vitality into the city life and its surroundings.²¹ As pointed out recently, reconceptualization of the urban history of the Late Middle Ages needs to go beyond the city walls and beyond the merchant class.²² Precisely, to bring to the fore the constituent elements of Shkoder in the troublesome years that followed the disintegration of the Serbian kingdom may prove to be a fruitful way to explain the polysemous relationship of landowners, clergymen, diplomats, merchants, land workers, and craftsmen that troop one after the other in the statute of the city and other contemporary documents.

To put it briefly, this investigation seeks to define, assert, and present the relationship among the physical environment of Shkoder, the spaces associated with urban institutions and, if applicable, the identification of the people connected with those spaces. The present work will look at this dynamic in a twofold manner, and the structure of the investigation will reflect this dynamic. On the one hand, a first chapter will address this problem in the context of the *outer* part, that is, the countryside, natural resources, and the relationship of “Albanians” with that environment—at least to the extent to which the information may be gleaned from the

²⁰ A revision of the separation between town and country can be found in: Neil Christie and Paul Stamper, eds., *Medieval Rural Settlement: Britain and Ireland, AD 800-1600* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2011); Steven Epstein, *Town and Country in Europe, 1300-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²¹ According to Schmitt, the importance of trade in Albanian lands was actually quite modest: Schmitt, “Le Commerce Vénitien,” 888.

²² Caroline Goodson, Anne Elisabeth Lester, and Carol Symes, eds., “Introduction,” in *Cities, Texts, and Social Networks, 400-1500: Experiences and Perceptions of Medieval Urban Space* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 11.

sources. On the other hand, the second chapter will give a closer look to the *inner* city life as it appeared in Shkoder's city statute and will try to understand the flux of people in connection to the urban elements of the city.

A word about the sources

Recent contributions have profited from archaeological and topographical research but, in Shkoder's case, the Ottoman conquest modified the structure of the city in such a way that heavily blurred its medieval shape. However, city space is also a conceptual tool, and because of its importance for the living experience of medieval people, it is inextricably linked to the documents and news about city life. Moreover, metaphorically speaking, a city is less a passive dwelling place and more a living organism, and thus one capable of producing an image of itself. For Shkoder, this image can be discovered in the written regulations of the statute of the city. As it is stated in the statute itself, there had to be two exemplars with identical content, one kept in the *thesauro* of the Municipality and the other in court to be used at trial.²³

According to Schmitt, the *Statuti di Scutari* dates back to the first decades of the fourteenth century, before Stephan Dušan was crowned emperor in 1346.²⁴ Its compilation was, on the one hand, part of the long jurisprudential tradition that helped to organise the life in the Albanian and Dalmatian cities and established the set of norms in the administration of justice and public affairs.²⁵ On the other hand, it was also the result of the north Albanian tradition on customary law that kept alive the memory of the principles of justice that structured social life.

²³ Lucia Nadin, ed., *Statuti di Scutari della prima metà del secolo XIV con le addizioni fino al 1469*, trans. Pëllumb Xhufi (Rome: Viella, 2002), art. 4. It goes without saying that we also keep in mind the normative character of the text, which does not necessarily exemplify the

²⁴ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 113.

²⁵ Miloš Milošević and Sima Ćirković, "On Kotor Statute," in *Statuta Civitatis Cathari. Statut Grada Kotora: prevod originala iz 1616. godine sa naučnim aparatom*, ed. Jelena Antović (Kotor: Državni arhiv Crne Gore, 2009), 513. Even though they have not survived, it is known that similar law books were written down in Bar (Antivari) (1369), Ulcinj (1376), Durrës (Durazzo) (1392), and Drisht (Drivasto) (1397): Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 110. They were a common element of the Albanian space and they held authority also in the Venetian period. In Dalmatia such law books were also a principle for city life, see: Marija Karbić and Damir Karbić, *The Laws and Customs of Medieval Croatia and Slavonia: A Guide to the Extant Sources*, ed. Martin Rady, Studies in Russia and Eastern Europe (London: UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2013).

The statute, as Gherardo Ortalli puts it, “it is a monument to a past whose memory one wants to rescue.”²⁶ Indeed, there was virtually no trace of the code until Lucia Nadin made the fortunate discovery of the only surviving manuscript of the *Statuti*, which had remained unnoticed in the library of the Museo Correr in Venice.²⁷ Together with the integral text of the statute, the manuscript contained several additions from the years 1391 to 1469. *Marinus Dulcichius*, Slav of origin, had copied the text *fedelmente* from the original, kept among the documents of the Council of Ten in Venice.²⁸ Even though there is no date affixed to the manuscript, Nadin assumes it was elaborated at some point between 1479 and the very first years of the *Cinquecento*.²⁹

In addition to the statute, a source for the study of north Albania in the late Middle Ages is the large amount of reports, petitions, council decisions, letters, and other types of documents issued by legal authorities (notaries, rectors, counts, captains, castellans, treasurers, etc.). Despite the vast quantity, the information regarding Shkoder prior to the fifteenth century is actually very scarce. Ducellier and other historians have worked extensively in the state archive of Venice and Dubrovnik and catalogued the most important archival series and published editions.³⁰ The present investigation will take into account the legal documents in three of these published editions. Ordered by date of publication they are, first, the *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia* edited by Ludwig von Thallóczy, Konstantin Jireček and

²⁶ Gherardo Ortalli, “Gli statuti, tra Scutari e Venezia,” in *Statuti di Scutari, della prima metà del secolo XIV con le addizioni fino al 1469*, ed. Lucia Nadin (Rome: Viella, 2002), 22.

²⁷ Lucia Nadin, “Il codice degli statuti e l’edizione,” in *Statuti di Scutari, della prima metà del secolo XIV con le addizioni fino al 1469*, ed. Lucia Nadin (Rome: Viella, 2002), 79.

²⁸ Lucia Nadin, “Il testo Statutario,” in *Statuti di Scutari, della prima metà del secolo XIV con le addizioni fino al 1469*, ed. Lucia Nadin (Rome: Viella, 2002), 50.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁰ Ducellier, *La Façade Maritime*, XXXII–XXXIII; Oliver Jens Schmitt, “Sources vénitiennes pour l’histoire des cités Albanaises au 15e siècle,” in *Οι Άλβανοί στο Μεσαίωνα*, ed. Charalambos Gasparis (Athens: Εθνικό Ιδρυμα Ερευνών, 1998), 307–23. Bariša Krekić, “Albanians in the Adriatic Cities: Observations on Some Ragusan, Venetian and Dalmatian Sources for the History of the Albanians in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Οι Άλβανοί Στο Μεσαίωνα*, ed. Charalambos Gasparis (Athens: Εθνικό Ιδρυμα Ερευνών, 1998), 209–33.

Milan Šufflay, published between 1913 and 1918.³¹ Additional information, mainly about citizens of Shkoder living in Ragusa (Dubrovnik), will be taken from the *Litterae et commissiones Ragusinae*. It contains records of the *Reformationes Litterae* and *Commissiones Levantis* and was edited by Jorjo Tadić in 1935.³² Finally, in the second half of the twentieth century, Giuseppe Valentini carefully edited a large amount of documents concerning Venetian administrative and diplomatic affairs in Albania and published them under the title *Acta Albaniae Veneta*.³³ The collection consists of 25 volumes divided in three parts, but for the present investigation only the first three volumes of the pre-Scanderbeg period are relevant.³⁴

³¹ Milan Šufflay, Ludwig von Thallóczy, and Konstantin Jireček, eds., *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia*, 2 vols. (Vienna: A. Holzhausen, 1913). Relevant documents come from second volume, covering the years between 1344 and 1406.

³² Jorjo Tadić, ed., *Pisma i uputstva Dubrovacke Republike. Litterae et commissiones Ragusinae*, vol. 1, *Fontes rerum Slavorum meridionalium* 2 (Belgrade: Srpska kraljevska akademij, 1935). The records reunited in the first volume cover the years from 1359 to 1380.

³³ Josephus Valentini, ed., *Acta Albaniae Veneta saeculorum XIV et XV*, 25 vols. (Palermo: Typis Josephi Tosini, 1967-1979).

³⁴ Part 1, *Saeculum 14 complectens*, vols 1-4 (1301- 1406); Part 2, *Praescanderbeganam periodum complectens*, vols 5-17 (1407-1442); Part 3, *Scanderbeganam periodum complectens*, vols 18-25 (1443-1463). The earliest document from this collection used here comes from 1364, and the last from 1406.

CHAPTER 1. SCUTARI ET CONTRATA: SPATIAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

In the fourteenth century, Shkoder followed the pattern of the majority of medieval cities and consisted of two main parts: one represented by the citadel and used for housing and the exercise of economic activities (crafts, trade, and gardening), and another consisting of arable land, forests, grassland, vineyards, etc., that were in the immediate outskirts of the city. Shkoder's connectedness with the surrounding villages was not exclusively physical. The relationship between the city and the countryside was carefully regulated and legally sanctioned by the creation of communes which had the right to administer themselves on the basis of statutes, regulations, and ancient local customs.³⁵ Here, the active engagement of local traders played an extremely important role in the urban centres because it allowed to "establish contacts, links, and domestic and commercial relationships between cities, villages and regions of the country, which turned into rules, traditional norms and customs."³⁶ In consequence, pursuing an integral understanding of the space circumscribed to Shkoder one is allowed to understand better the relations of the "three worlds of South-Eastern Europe: that of the city, the villages, and nomadic pastoralism."³⁷

In Shkoder, norms were sanctioned by the city statute, which was, for that matter, the primary cohesive factor between *civitas et contrata*. Already the first two articles of the *Statuti di Scutari* refer to the variety of social and legal groups that inhabited the city: *citadini*, *sclavi*, *arbaneses*, and *stranieri*.³⁸ One could easily divide these groups into ethnically suggestive terms and terms that refer to a legal status. Yet, *sclavi* and *arbanese* may also be contextualised

³⁵ Luan Malltezi, "La ville et la campagne dans la société Albanaise des XIe - XVe siècle," *ASA* 2 (1990): 102. For scholarship on the consuetudinary law of the mountaineers and (sometimes highly idealised) anthropological descriptions, see: Shtjefën Gjocov, ed., *Kanuni I Leke Dukagjinit: The Code of Leke Dukagjini*, trans. Leonard Fox (New York: Gjonlekaj, 1989); Giuseppe Valentini, *La legge delle montagne albanesi: nelle relazioni della missione volante 1880-1932* (Florence: Olschki, 1969). For anthropological descriptions, see: Edith Durham, *High Albania* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000); Helmut Eberhart and Karl Kaser, eds., *Albanien: Stammesleben zwischen Tradition und Moderne* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1995).

³⁶ Malltezi, "La ville et la campagne," 101.

³⁷ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 93.

³⁸ *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 1-2.

in relation to the circumstances in which they are used and the activities people engaged in, at least inasmuch as it is possible to infer it from the articles of the city statute. As it will become evident in the following pages, such an analysis will give a better understanding about the different levels of relationship that the inhabitants maintained with one another and with their environment. In order to do so, this chapter will, firstly, briefly describe the geographical setting and natural resources of the city. Then, it will ponder the tension between the physical and social space by referring to the activities in the physical environment of the countryside and the descriptions and characteristics of the people dwelling there.

1.1 The physical setting of Shkoder

Shkoder belonged to the Upper Zeta. Since at least the twelfth century, Zeta was the usual denomination of the region previously called “Διοκλεία” [Diocleia] (Serb. *Dioklija*, *Dioklitija*).³⁹ It owed its name (Lat. *Zenta*, *Genta*) to the Zeta River, which starts in the Nikšić field in today’s Montenegro and confluences into the Morača River in the north side of Podgorica. The Upper Zeta laid in the mountains of Njeguši above Kotor and extended up to the eastern side of the Shkoder Lake. The Lower Zeta encompassed the area between coastal lands of the territory of the tribe of Paštrovići in Budua and the Monastery of St. Sergius along the Bojana River.⁴⁰

By the fourteenth century, Shkoder was the most important city of the upper Zeta, but this importance should be understood in its proper measure. Although it never reached the political, economic, religious, and cultural prominence of other Albanian cities in the previous centuries,⁴¹ it was nevertheless the geographical and political centre of the region.⁴² Its location

³⁹ Jireček, “Skutari,” 98.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The most recurrent point of comparison is, of course, Durrës: Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 95.

⁴² On January 29, 1369, Stracimir, George, and Balša II, in presence of the bishops of Šas (Suacium) and Drivasto, sent a letter to Pope Urban V in which the three brothers presented their joint seal. The letter is headed with “Apud Scutarum, principale eorum domicilium”: AD II, 253.

made it the “natural focal point” where the roads connecting Bar, Ulcinj, and Lezhë (*Alessio*) in the coast, the upper Zeta, and the southern routes running towards Durrës crossed.⁴³ Compared to the southern lowlands, the high mountains of the Malësia e Madhe region provided a physical medium for highlanders to reach the southern extremities in an almost uninterrupted downwards movement.⁴⁴

The mountains were also the dwelling place of different nomad groups which were described in the *Anonymi Descriptio Europae Orientalis* of 1309 as inhabitants who “do not have cities, camps, fortifications and farms, but live rather in tents and are constantly on the move from one place to another with the help of their troops and relatives.”⁴⁵ Despite the anonymity of wondering highlanders, they were part of the seasonal rhythm of the mountains, and even though it is hard to prove whether these groups constituted a real menace to local producers, the fear of their barely contained presence around arable lands had been felt for long.⁴⁶ Be that as it may, landowners and producers profited from Shkoder’s mountainous setting as they were able to sell their products to foreign merchants who were in any case eager to avoid the taxes collected in Durrës or other ports of bygone importance. In fact, from the thirteenth century onwards, “the Albanian coast becomes a sieve where Venetian and Ragusan trade flourishes everywhere except in the traditional ports.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 95.

⁴⁴ Ducellier et al., *Les Chemins de l’exil*, 24.

⁴⁵ Elsie, *Early Albania*, 23–25. Translation by Elsie. This report is actually one of the few medieval news about north Albania and its inhabitants. That the Albanians were, or at least called, nomads, was a *topos* in the Balkans. According to Ducellier, “J. Kantakuzen (*sic*) speaks of the meeting of the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus III with the ‘nomadic Albanians’”: Alain Ducellier, “Have the Albanians Occupied Kosova?,” in *The Albanians and Their Territories*, ed. Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë (Tirana: 8 Nëntori Publishing House, 1985), 200. Ethnographic and geographical descriptions became fairly common during the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century, and milestone research works were latter on published in the two issues of the *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen*. See also: Theodor Ippen, *Skutari und die nordalbanische Küstenebene* (Sarajevo: Daniel A. Kajan, 1907); Herbert Louis, *Albanien: eine Landeskunde vornehmlich auf Grund eigener Reisen* (Stuttgart: Engelhorn, 1927).

⁴⁶ Ducellier et al., *Les Chemins de l’exil*, 25.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 39. This liveliness is proved not only by trade itself, but also by its interruption. Thanks to reports about the troublesome salt market in Kotor, one can also discover the presence of merchants coming from Albanian lands: “(1361, 8. iulii. Ragusii) Consilium maius statuit, ut galea communis eat ad culphum Cathari et discurrat usque Antibarim; intromittat omnia bona subditorum imperatoris Sclavoniae, capiat omnia navigia parva et magna

Agriculture was, then, the main economic activity but the spread and amount of trade it fueled was surely modest. Not only was the production meant to be locally consumed,⁴⁸ but also the limited access to the region, possible only by land, was a hindrance to extensive exchanges of merchandise. The Çermenika, a thick forest, made difficult the pass on the southern side, sealing off the Mati pool facing south.⁴⁹ On the eastern side, the canyon of the Black Drin was also hostile to traffic and forced the passengers to navigate on steep slopes and deep river valleys.⁵⁰ Additionally, the region was partly cut off from the coast. Also the Drin (Lat. *Lesii, Alexii*), which was such an important medium for communication in the Balkans, was in this region so difficult to navigate that, instead of building up connexion networks between coastal and inland areas, it was a dangerous obstacle.⁵¹

Protruding from this peculiar setting, the city of Shkoder was actually conveniently located in the western shore of the Lake of Shkoder, in a hill just eighteen meters above sea level. An anonymous description of 1570, probably by a Venetian *proveditor* in Kotor, gives the reader a vivid image of the location of the city:

Let us come back now to describe the other borders [of Albania] in the north and the east. From Ulcinj, one sets off in a southeastern direction to Scuttari (Shkoder), a mighty city with regard to its site and which once belonged to the most illustrious Signoria of Venice. [...] The city is situated between two noble rivers, for the Buna flows from the lake they call that of Shkoder, at the mouth of which the city is situated. After a course of a mere twenty four miles, the Buna flows into the sea, the outlet of this river being between Ulcinj and Lezha with the river Drin.⁵²

inimicorum 'salvo quod non debeat offendere illis de Budua, de Dulcinio, de Antibaro et de Scutaro et liominibus illorum de Balsa'." AD II, 159.

⁴⁸ According to the statute of Shkoder, citizens and foreigners were equally forbidden from buying goods such as cabbage, garlic, shallot, flax wool, fish, and cheese (*cevoli, ali, mertina, lino, lana, pesce, formaio*) to resell them. They were allowed to buy only the amounts necessary for domestic consumption: *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 69.

⁴⁹ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 80.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 68.

⁵² "A Physical Description of Albania and the Defence of Ulcinj," translated by Elsie, first published in: Elsie, *Early Albania*, 61.

The fortress that crowned the hill had a strategic view of the lake and the surrounding lands, including the high mountains of Montenegro and Albania. According to Jireček, there had been a fortress there since “the earliest” times, that is, since Shkoder or *Scodra* was a prominent Roman city in the southern part of the province of Dalmatia or *Praevalitana*, as the Emperor Diocletian later named it.⁵³ Recent archaeological research revealed that the walls of the fortification, together with the five towers situated to the North and West, had a length of 263 meters.⁵⁴ In Jireček’s description, the fortress (*castrum*) was accessible only from one side. It was surrounded by double walls and the entrance opened up through three gates, each located in a separate tower and leading to three different courts. In the central courtyard there was a church, the famous *ecclesia cathedralis Sancti Stephani de Scutaro*. There was also a palace that housed the Serbian and later the Venetian offices, as well as the dungeon.⁵⁵

The Lake of Shkoder together with inland waterways allowed fairly active communication networks between Shkoder and Šas (Suacium), Dagnum, Shurdhah Island (Sarda), Sati, Sappa, Drisht (Drivasto) and Baleč/Baleš (Balezo), to name but the most important examples.⁵⁶ Balezo, Žabljak and Podgorica, towns around the lake, are mentioned in the archival records of Dubrovnik as the hometown of many craftsmen, carpenters, and shoemakers,⁵⁷ and Prizren and Novo Brdo, to mention but a couple, were important given the lively trade of wax and silver export as well as the cloth, sea salt, and salted fish they imported from Shkoder.⁵⁸

Prior to 1396, further details about the ways citizens, merchants or landowners used to communicate are scarce, and so are the descriptions pertaining the inner arrangement of the city. According to the *Catasticum* of 1416 written by the Venetian notary Petrus de Sancto

⁵³ Jireček, “Skutari,” 100.

⁵⁴ Ols Lefe, “Archaeology in Albania, 2000-2004,” *Archaeological Reports* 51 (2004): 120.

⁵⁵ Jireček, “Skutari,” 106.

⁵⁶ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 96.

⁵⁷ Jireček, “Skutari,” 101.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

Odorigo de Parma,⁵⁹ Shkoder was divided in two districts: *sotto* and *sopra Scutari*, with a total number of 104 villages (40 in the upper district and 64 in the lower district), and 1,230 houses.⁶⁰ By this year, Shkoder extended “from the coast between the deltas of the Bojana and the Drin to the village of Tuzi near Podgorica.”⁶¹ The ratio of houses per village was of 11.8 or 10.8, although a village could be counted as such even with one single house.⁶² Reports about Shkoder increased exponentially only after the Ottoman threat had become imminent and the Venetians took control of the city.⁶³ Indeed, in the beginning, Shkoder’s location away from the sea shore—and given the difficulties for access and defence—made it less attractive to the *Signoria* and would diminish the interest of the Venetians in acquiring it.⁶⁴ In this sense, Arbel wonders “what made Venice decide to buy the town of Scutari, which could not be reached directly by sea-going vessels,”⁶⁵ but actually the Venetians took good advantage of the lands that belonged to the commune⁶⁶ and used Shkoder’s strategic location to secure the loyalty of the families in the Zeta province.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Ibid., 110. The full register is included in the , see: AAV VII 2045.

⁶⁰ Shkurti, *Mythos*, 38. Jireček gives a slightly different number: 114 villages with a total of 1.237 houses, in: Jireček, “Skutari,” 110.

⁶¹ Jireček, “Skutari,” 110.

⁶² Shkurti, *Mythos*, 38.

⁶³ Upon the death of Stephan Dušan, the Venetians were most concerned about the safety or help their merchants could get in the coastal cities of Upper Zeta. In 1369, for instance, they order that “cum per ser paulum fquirino, et ser franciscum Rucini, ac alios nostros mercatore, dicatur, quod per Joram de balsce, armantur in buda, dulcigno, et tiuari, aliqua ligna, et barche, cum quibus damnificantur, Nauigia euntia per mare, Et bonum sit super hoc pro bono et securitate nostrorum mercatorum et nauigiorum providere”: AAV I 218; also: AAV I 224-226, 241, 253. In this sense, Scutari ranked lower in the list of their concerns. The first appearances of Shkoder in the AAV date from 1392 and are motivated by the willingness of the Balša to surrender his possessions.

⁶⁴ Such was the argument given to the Bishop of Shkoder in 1394 after the offering of surrender: “Considerato quod dicta Loca non sunt ad Marinam immo ualde remota et forent pocius damnosa nobis, quam utilia”: AAV II 530. They finally reached an agreement in 1396, despite the controversy it generated in the Senate, as reads a senate deliberation held on January 14, 1396: “quae possent errores, diuisiones, aut scandala generare cuiusmodi esse possent negocia, quae nobis proponuntur per Ambassiatores Domini Georgij Stracimiri”: AAV II 606. Of course, concerns about the arrangements to keep the *castrum* and the city safe were always present: AAV II 455, 567, 604, 615, 628.

⁶⁵ Benjamin Arbel, “Venice’s Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period,” in *A Companion to Venetian History: 1400 - 1797*, ed. Eric Dursteler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 138.

⁶⁶ (1404, 19. novembris. Venetiis) “Multe et diverse possessiones, pheuda, pischerie, perizia et alia territoria spectantia nostro communi collata fuerunt quampluribus fidelibus et habitatoribus locorum predictorum cum manifeste damno nostri communis”: AD II, 756.

⁶⁷ As when in 1406, Venice sent a commission to Shkoder to recover the loyalty of the brothers George and Alexis Jurguras (from the Jurassevich or Durašević family) in the Upper Zeta, “ut per ipsos tota Xenta superior et montanea Budue et Antivari veniant ad nostrum oboedientiam”: AD II 788.

The mixture of difficult mountainous conditions and inter-regional connections constituted a fundamental element of the physical environment of Shkoder. Most importantly, this setting came to be a constituent element of the city since it also played a role in the social—and spatial—relations of the inhabitants of the city. Rather than attempting to define the criteria by which *scutarenses* or the *bolcho* understood their identity, the following section will try to spell out those elements that gave a spatial dimension to the living experience of the different social groups living in Shkoder.

1.2 *Contrata*: Social-Spatial relations around the city

The *contrata*, that is, the territory that fell outside Shkoder's city walls, spread in a radius of about 5-10 kilometers around the city.⁶⁸ A common element in the countryside of Shkoder and of other parts of Albania was the strict demarcation of the limits of each piece of land, which gave space a very physical sense of territoriality. Unlike the southern plains, disputes concerning territorial division were considerably less common in the north, where it was not difficult to find natural landmarks that served as reference points. The capacity to account for specific trees, springs, etc., could remain in the memory in a given community for generations and the demarcation of land was an important part of their oral tradition and customary laws.⁶⁹ The physical inclination of the city territories also influenced the outcome of disputes: the statute stated that the land situated between two vineyards, two fields or two gardens, belonged to the vineyards, fields or gardens situated in the upper part, except when the owner of the lower parts could prove he or she held a title of ownership.⁷⁰ The boundaries of the lands and districts gave way to controversies not only between citizens, but also between

⁶⁸ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 96.

⁶⁹ Shkurti, *Mythos*, 28–29. The statute was not inattentive to customary law and also stipulated that, in ambiguous cases (particularly regarding land-related issues), one should follow the state of things “*como steti antiquamente*”: *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 21, 47, 48.

⁷⁰ “*Ordinatu è de li terreni intra le vigne, campi et orti, vulemo che quilli terreni sia de la vigna aver de li campi aver de li orti, vulemo che sia de quilli de la parte sovrana, salvo se la parte zò provasse per breve como è soy li dicti terreni*”: *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 37.

land owners and the commune, or between cities. According to the city statute, “stealing land” by modifying fences or any other sign of property was forbidden and entailed a fine of three *perperi*.⁷¹ It could also happen that two different cities claimed a given village, for example, bitter rifts divided the people from Drivasto and Shkoder, quarreling about some border villages.⁷²

Actually, the boundaries of lands and villages were an important issue for the commune. The city, together with the church, owned the majority of lands around the walls and directly profited from them.⁷³ So, for instance, the city code stated that if a citizen owned grains (*blava voy prassa*) outside the city, he should bring it to Shkoder to sell them there and not elsewhere.⁷⁴ This would be particularly relevant in the fourteenth century, a “period of prosperity” for the Albanian economy in the production of grain, wine, oil, products of farming and fishing, timber, and salt.⁷⁵ Shkurti insists in the fact that in Albanian cities of the Middle Ages viticulture was a “massive public activity” and the lands near cities were covered with vineyards.⁷⁶ He brings up a reference to Evliya Çeleb, who in the seventeenth century would note that “the population of Shkoder is composed of several classes: fishermen, intellectuals, merchants, sailors, soldiers, and *labourers of vineyards*.”⁷⁷

⁷¹ Ibid. art. 210. Because of the large amount local currencies—about 20 types—that circulated in north Albania during the time of George II. Balsha (1385-1403), the accounting was kept in *perperi*: Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 147–148; Milan von Šufflay, *Städte und Burgen Albaniens, hauptsächlich während des Mittelalters*, Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 63 (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1924), 67–68. The *grossi*, the *moneda de Balsa*, was the common currency in Shkoder. Another type, the *grossi de Catharo* appears only once in the statute, in the addition 269 from 1391. In the fifteenth century there would be in Shkoder a quick depreciation of the *grosso* as a consequence of the Venetian trade policies. In 1432, the price of one *ducato* was 32 *grossi de Balsa*, but after the “currency crisis” of 1436, the value of the ducat increased to an exorbitant rate of 84 to 90 *grossi*: Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 334–335.

⁷² Božić, “Le système foncier en ‘Albanie vénitienne’ au XVe siècle,” 97, as quoted in: Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 143.

⁷³ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 142.

⁷⁴ “Ordinemu chi havissi blava voy grassa de fora de la cità nostra citadino che ello sia tenuto a portar la dicta grassa ne la nostra citade et non in altre parte”: *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 68.

⁷⁵ Nadin, “Il testo Statutario,” 55.

⁷⁶ Spiro Shkurti, “Recherches dans la vie économique de la ville Albanaise du Moyen Age,” *ASA* 1 (2001): 136.

⁷⁷ Shkurti, *Mythos*, 127. Emphasis by Shkurti.

However, two centuries before the Ottoman traveller arrived to Albanian territories, the lands were producing a considerable variety of products. This certainly must have been a factor that encouraged the Venetian and Ragusan interest in trade, thanks to which the city could be provided with cloths and other goods.⁷⁸ The lands belonging to Shkoder included forests, pastures (*pra de comun*), fields (*campi de comun; terrenj de comun aratorij da la banda de soura scutarj*), vineyards on the mountain and in its surroundings, gardens (*zardini*), extensive wastelands, and grazing areas that served to breed cattle, sheep and pigs.⁷⁹ Shkurti, who thoroughly analysed the register of the Shkoder district concessions of 1416-1417, pins down the characteristic features of the different types of land:

The soil was cultivated in three ways: as a field, vineyard and garden. These three species differed clearly from each other in terms of the cultivated products, services performed, soil quality, the distance from the village, etc. In the lands the growing of bread grain was more usual than that of plants such as flax or hemp; vegetables (onions, garlic, spinach, broad beans, chickpeas, etc.) and various fruit trees were mostly cultivated in gardens. It is not all unlikely that in the vineyards, besides vines, also fruit trees and vegetables were also grown, especially beans and chickpeas.⁸⁰

Olives and grapes seem to have been the most important crops. According to the statute, if it was proved with reliable evidence that someone had intentionally cut or burned an olive tree or a vineyard belonging to somebody else, the fine was as high as 50 *perperi*, whereas cutting any other fruit tree carried a fine of only two *perperi*.⁸¹ Similarly, if there were branches

⁷⁸ “Consilium maius permittit ser Andr  e Bon  i de Veneciis, quod possit extrahere de Ragusio causa portandi ad Scutarum pecias IIII pannorum” (1361): AD II, 163. The commune took active care in the control of goods that were taken outside the city. The city statue had a prohibition to export food (“De non trazer grassa fora de la terra”) and foreigners or citizens caught outside the territory carrying wheat, flour, barley, rye, meet or cheese should pay a fine of 50 *perperi* and seizure the goods (“Ordinemo chi se trovasse che trazesse grassa de la terra, oy forestieri aver citadino zo   grana over farina, voy orzo oy meio oy carne aver lardo over il formazo, chi paghe per pena perperi L de grossi de Sclavonia et chi perda la blava”). An exemption from paying could be granted if the person was able to name the seller (in which case the seller should pay the fine) or if he was condoned by the judges or councillors (“consiglieri”): *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 67.

⁷⁹ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 143.

⁸⁰ Shkurti, *Mythos*, 56–57. For the in-depth study in Albanian, see: Injac Zamputi, *Regjistri i kadastr  s dhe i koncesioneve p  r rrethin e Shkodr  s 1416-1417 [Cadastre and register concessions for the district of Shkoder 1416-1417]* (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e Republik  s Popullore Socialiste t   Shqip  ris  , Instituti i Historis  , 1977).

⁸¹ “Ordinemo cui se trovasse per bona prova chi taiasse arbor de olivar stranio voy incendisse studiosamente, chi paghi per pena perperi L de Sclavonia et paghi lo damnazo (...) et cui taiasse vide voy viti de vigna studiosamente,

of a tree extending over the neighbour's yard, the fallen fruits could be divided between the neighbour and the owner of the tree. Olives seem to have been an exception again: they all belonged to the owner of the tree and the other was not entitled to collect any.⁸²

The surrounding lands were not exclusively productive lands. That space was also destined to the deposit of rubbish⁸³ and even to be the habitual place for thieves and wrongdoers.⁸⁴ From the point of view of Venetian senate decisions and official communications, the fields surrounding the city did not always have a defined spatial demarcation. Moreover, the name *Albania* could also appear as a somehow unspecified designation for a place that was surrounding a given city.⁸⁵ As a generic name applied to people, "Albanian" more often than not designated those living *around* and not *in* the cities.⁸⁶ Following a decision of the senate in Venice dated April 20, 1396, Jacobo Gradonico was appointed to travel to Shkoder and examine the whole country (*contratam*), and also the parts

che paghi la dieta pena et paghi lo darnnazo; et cui taiassi altrui arboro pomifero, chi paghi per pena perperi II de Scлавonia": *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 42.

⁸² Ibid. art. 41.

⁸³ After building or renovating a house, the person was not allowed to throw the remaining materials in the public road. Instead, rubble had to be disposed of outside the city ("ordinemo che nisun possa zitar in omni via terra de fundamenti e di celaro cui volissi far casa da novo voy renovar"): Ibid. art. 25.

⁸⁴ It was stated that villages or hamlets in the Shkoder district should not accommodate thieves ("nisuna villa over casale che sta nel destrecto de Scutari non debia tenir latrone intra sé"). Proven that they did, the village or hamlet should take responsibility and pay 25 *perperi*, half to the Count and half to the Commune: Ibid. art. 223. It is difficult to assess how dangerous it actually was to travel by land from one city to another, but if hostilities around the Bay of Kotor were not totally unheard (and with the increase of the Ottoman presence, piracy: AAV II 415, 434; III 708, 932), it would not have been surprising to be attacked in scarcely populated areas. In this respect, the *Statuti* commands that, if a company departs together from the city to go to the woods, the market or any other country ("in selva over in merchadantia over in altro lago in conserva"), nobody could leave the group because in case that "se fossi per forza robati siando insieme per la via," he should be held responsible for the damages: Ibid. art. 80.

⁸⁵ AD II 561, 563, 652, 762; AAV III 831, 924, 1105, 1176. It goes without saying that this meaning had very little to do with the *Regnum Albaniae*, the rather artificial political entity established ca. 1272 that went to Karl Topia's hands in 1368. Between 1372 and 1383, Louis of Navarre, duke of Durazzo, fulfilled his ambition of "acquirere totum regnum Albanie" (AD II 286), after which Karl Topia "recovered" it: Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 384. See also: Etleva Lala, "Regnum Albaniae, the Papal Curia, and the Western Visions of a Borderline Nobility," PhD Diss., Central European University Budapest, 2008.

⁸⁶ It is clear that this only applies when the name is used as a plural name or adjective, not when it formed part of a proper name. In a senate meeting on May 14, 1364, it was decided that: "Quod scribatur ser Andree geno capitaneo culfi in hac forma videlicet. Nuper Intelleximus quod quidam Albanenses circa partes Dirachij male dispositi, armant certas galeas et ligna ad dannum, illorum de Durachio, quod nobis ualde displiceret, si sic est, tum quia predicti de Dirachio sunt nostri Intimi amici, tum eciam quia nollemus ullo modo, quod Nec ipsi albanenses, nec alii tenerent nauigia armata in mari, quia custodia Jstius culfi ad nos spectat et pertinet de iure, et bene scitis, quantas expensas substinemus pro securitate omnium nauigantium." AAV I 196.

surrounding it (*partes circhaucinas*). Apparently, the Venetians had been informed that they had no way to enter the city except from certain paths which were in the hands of “some Albanians.”⁸⁷ Later in this same letter, the envoy is entrusted to make sure that the roads for merchants and commerce were safe on their way to St. Sergius, and so he should meet the Slav and Albanian lords who had the power to ensure their safety.⁸⁸

In a similar tone, according to a decision of the senate in Venice, George Thopia is said to have “sold illicitly certain properties and territories together with the people living in them” to *aliquibus albanensibus* in the outsidess of Durrës.⁸⁹ By doing so, these Albanians owned these people, who were “from Durrës, Christians and with special rights, as servants and slaves.” For this reason, the explanation continues, they were forced to go begging to Apulia and to other foreign lands, to the greatest detriment of Durrës, and because of the harshness of these Albanians, who wanted to treat these poor people in such a way, [the city] remained uninhabited. By the authority of the council, the governor of Durrës had to summon these Albanians and convince them “with most effective reasons and arguments” that these people could not be made either servant or slaves under any circumstance because they were not servants or from a *sclauī natione*, and “the divine law prohibits a Christian nation to be sold as

⁸⁷ “Volumus etiam quod debeatis bene et diligenter examinare totam contratam que nobis datur, et situm eius, et etiam partes circhaucinas, quia informati sumus, quod in illa intrarj non potest, nisi per certos passus qui sunt in manibus, aliquorum Albanensium seu aliorum.”: AAV II 630.

⁸⁸ “Item quia inter alia est vtile et necessarium, quod strate et caminj, mercatorum et mercationum, securi sint, [...] Volumus et committimus vobis, quod sumpta illie de hoc informatione, cum illis dominis Sclauis et albanensibus, qui ad hoc haberent potentiam.”: AAV II 630.

⁸⁹ “(1393, 17. augusti. Venetiis) Conqueruntur, quod dominus georgius tobia quondam dominus suus, tempore vite sue, alienauit indebite aliquas possessiones et loca aliquibus albanensibus, dando, et alienando dicta loca cum hominibus existentibus super eis, et etiam dando de dictis hominibus propter quod dicti albanenses, habent dictos homines, qui sunt durachinij, christicole, et boni homines esse seruos, et sclauos, ob quam causam coguntur ire per partes apulee, et alienas terras, mendicando, cum maximo danno Ciuitatis nostre durachij que propter duriciem aliquorum albanensium uolentium sic tractare, istos pauperes homines, remanet inhabitata, Vadit pars, quod scribatur, et mandetur baiulo et capitaneo nostro durachij, quod debeat ad se conuocare istos albanenses, qui alienauerunt, et tenent, extra durachium, et loca predicta, tales homines, asserentes eos, esse seruos, et sclauos, ostendendo eis, cum efficacissimis rationibus, et verbis, quod non sunt neque esse possunt serui nec sclauī, ullo modo, quia non sunt serui, nec sclauī natione, Et licet dominus georgius, quondam dominus suus, eis donauerit territoria, et loca, que tenent, de quibus eis. lis aliqua non mouetur, et ipsa territoria, et loca, eis dederit cum hominibus, existentibus super eis, hoc tamen facere non potuit, quia lex diuina prohibet, quod christiani natione uendi non possint pro seruīs.”: AAV II 510.

servant.” Although in the first example, where Albanians are mentioned as land owners and an ethnic element is inferred, in the second communication the emphasis in that element is considerably less important.⁹⁰ In both cases, however, the contrast is possible thanks to the opposition with the physical⁹¹ and administrative⁹² center of the city.

Precisely the second decision shows that these terms had more than just one meaning. Here, “Albanian” appears in relation to a quarrel in which legal rights, and not ethnic origin, were in dispute. The distinction between *Durachinij* and *Albanenses* had little to do with ethnicity. The people of Durrës were of Greek, Latin, Slavic, and Albanian origin and they formed a community conscious of these differences.⁹³ It would be by all means inadequate to straightforwardly assume that, *natione* means “nation” or “national unity” in a modern sense.⁹⁴ Possibly, what is implied here is a reality in which ethnic elements, economic activity, and social status were intertwined, but that also involved a specific relationship with the space of the city.

References to shepherds (*bolco*, *bolcho*, *bulgo*, *bulcho*) are also illustrative in this respect. This is the group that first springs to mind when one refers to economic activities in a mountainous setting. In all the places where they are mentioned in the statute of Shkoder, they are supposed to be outside the city.⁹⁵ Moreover, on the only occasion they are to be found inside (i.e. when they wanted to “attend a festivity, coming back late at night”), the statute determines that they had to pay either the damages for losing an animal (if any), or a fine if

⁹⁰ Naturally, the use of ethnically-suggestive terminology may be taken as a proof that there were indeed ethnic differences among all levels of the social strata both inside and outside the cities. In Shkoder, the six landowners belonging to the feudal hierarchy were: Stefan Spani, Flor Jonima, Pjetër Koja, Stefan Milotini, and Paul Marin Bonci Kuirino: Shkurti, “Recherches,” 132.

⁹¹ “Debeatis examinare partes circhaucinas”: AAV II 630.

⁹² “Mandetur baiulo et capitaneo nostro durachij, quod debeat ad se conuocare istos albanenses”: AAV II 510.

⁹³ Ducellier, *La Façade Maritime*, 530.

⁹⁴ As an example of literature where ethnic components of the “Albanian nation” are linked with state structure, see: Aleks Buda, “Mittelalterliche Staatenbildungen in Albanien,” *ASA* 2 (1986): 1–14.

⁹⁵ *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 72-77, 251.

there was none.⁹⁶ Here there was a clearly specified space to perform an activity but it also makes clear that certain people were out of place in a given space, at least when the activity in question was involved. In a way, an analogous reasoning could apply to other groups, like the Ragusan merchants, who did not live in the city but in *Sotto Scutari*, close to the church of St. Blasius.⁹⁷

A communication about a fight between *ragusini et albanenses* in a place close to the village of St. Sergius (Shirgj), where the former Benedictine monastery dedicated to St. Sergius and Bacchus was located, gives additional information about the last point. On April 1, 1383, Radoslauus Chranoeuich gave his testimony about the incident. According to his narration, he conducted Pripchus Zoranouich, the owner of a cargo ship, and some of his men just outside St. Sergius. They were doubting about unloading the goods from the ship and, while they were basking around, they heard the screams of one of the servants. They all ran there thinking something had happened to their horses, which were grazing in the fields, but actually there were some *albaneses*, the guardians of the corn (*custodes bladi*), pillaging the servant and taking the horses. According to the Albanians, they proceeded in this way because the horses were eating the grain. Afterwards, one of the guards wounded Pripchus in the head and hurt another merchant in the hand.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ “Ordinemo che zaschadun bolco che venisse la festa in citade che lo vada ad hora de vespero a li bovi e se non andasse a ricevere li bovi de li soi insieme del suo compagno e in quella nocte fosse niguno manchamento de li bovi voy de altra cosa, che sia tenuto a pagar ogni damno; e se damno non fossi chi paghi grossi XXI, la mità al conte e la mità a lo Comune.”: Ibid. art. 73.

⁹⁷ Jireček, “Skutari,” 108.

⁹⁸ “(1383, 1. aprilis. Ragusii). (...) Qui Radoslauus supradictus suo sacramento dixit se tantum scire, quod, dum ipse conduxisset ipsum Pripchum et alios mercatores ibi in Drino ad dictum locum fori Sancti Sergii, dictus Pripchus et alii mercatores rogaverunt me, quod deberem ipsos expectare, donec ipsi invenirent equos et honerarent statim ipsos equos pannis suis extrahendo ipsos pannos de barcha, quia dubitabant ipsos pannos extrahere de barcha ne aciperentur eis. Et sic dum solaciaremur ibi, audivimus unum famulum dicti Pripchi exclamantem et tunc ipse Pripchus et alii cucurrerunt illuc credentes, quod aliquis violenter acceperet equos suos, quos ipsi mercatores habebant ibi et pasculabant ibi; et quando ipsi Pripchus et alii applicuerunt ibi, ubi erant dicti equi in pasculo, invenerunt, quod Albanenses, qui erant ibi custodes bladi, accipiebant dictes equos et spoliabant famulum dicti Pripchi, quia dicebant, quod dicti equi pasculaverant granum, quod erat ibi et sic dictus Pripchus fuit ibi vulneratus ad caput per unum dictorum custodum et Vlachota mercator eciam fuit percussus ad manum.”: AD II 384.

The commune took active care in protecting the fields from thieves and damages caused by animals, and for that purpose a *guardator* was supposed to watch over the city, vineyards, lands, and pastures.⁹⁹ If, like in the previous example, a damage occurred to the land, the guardian was considered responsible and thus he himself had to pay for the damages. Interestingly, if a custodian of the grazing lands of the city encountered a “sclavo oy arbaneso voy scutarino” with sheep, cows or pigs, he should take him to court together with two or three guards, and the owner of the animals should pay a fine of 50 *perperi*.¹⁰⁰ A mirror translation of the phrase of the statute into “Slav, Albanian or person from Shkoder” detracts from the multiplicity of meanings these terms have. Conversely, it would certainly give ground for debate if, instead, one decides to interpret it as “farmer, mountaineer, and citizen of Shkoder.”¹⁰¹ Another controversial solution is to insist in ethnic characteristic and, consequently, assign these names a unilateral linguistic connotation. For example, according to Valentini, despite the vast flood of Bulgarians, Serbians, and the long Byzantine rule, the population of Shkoder, Durrës and Vlora were *latinofone* with an Adriatic type of language, while people in the immediate hinterland spoke Albanian, and so, he concludes, ‘Albanian’ and ‘farmer’ could be used interchangeably.¹⁰² If the differences had been so categorical, the Ragusan merchants and the Albanian *guardatori* quarrelling in St. Sergius would have had

⁹⁹ *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 81-84.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* art. 84.

¹⁰¹ This is the interpretation adopted by the Albanian translator of the statute, who understand these terms as: “një bujk, një malësor ose një shkodran”: Pëllumb Xhufi, trans., “Statutet e Shkodrës,” in *Statuti di Scutari della prima metà del secolo XIV con le addizioni fino al 1469* (Rome: Viella, 2002), 193.

¹⁰² Giuseppe Valentini, “L’elemento vlah nella zona scutarina nel sec. XV,” in *Südosteuropa unter dem Halbmond: Untersuchungen über Geschichte und Kultur der südosteuropäischen Völker während der Türkenzeit; Prof. Georg Stadtmüller zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. Peter Bartl and Horst Glassl (Munich: Trofenik, 1975), 270. Muljačić studied extensively the dialectal differences of toponyms, anthroponyms, appellatives, verbs, and adjectives in the Eastern Adriatic language, the *dalmatico*, by comparing historical sources from (mainly) Osor, Cres, Rab, Zadar, Trogir, Split and Kotor. In 2000 his studies were gathered in one single publication under the title: *Das Dalmatische. Studien zu einer untergegangenen Sprache*. Additionally, he studied the particularities of the Albanian-Romance variation spoken in Bar, Ulcinj, Shkoder and Drisht: Žarko Muljačić, “Sul dalmatico meridionale (o labeatico),” in *Das Dalmatische. Studien zu einer untergegangenen Sprache* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 325–44. Diego Dotto’s recent monograph analyses the Ragusan *scriptae* using the categories of “venezianeggiante” as opposed to “volgare”: Diego Dotto, *Scriptae venezianeggianti a Ragusa nel XIV secolo. Edizione e commento di testi volgari dell’Archivio di Stato di Dubrovnik, Interadriatico. Culture dell’Adriatico. Lingua e letteratura 7* (Rome: Viella, 2008).

troubles understanding one another, but, at least according to this report, one cannot make such a conclusion.

Marin Dulcich, the transcriber of the *Statuti*, continuously fluctuates between “Italian, Venetian, Dalmatian forms, forms of Slavic derivation, as well as Latinizing forms and real Latinisms.”¹⁰³ Yet the lack of “indigenous” sources does not allow to describe in detail the linguistic complexity of the Albanian space or to reach any decisive conclusion. Away from Cirvovic’s conviction, for whom sources reflect “ideas about the past, which were at that time, as in our own, a substantial component of ethnic self-consciousness,”¹⁰⁴ one has to be very careful in pretending to assign ethnic-linguistic identities on the sole basis of legal or notarial documents.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, documents show that the experience of space acquired in the *contrata* a variety of forms. It appears in the purposeful division of productive lands according to their distance from the city, the strict territorial demarcation of those lands, the differentiation of activities that should (or should not) take place in certain locations, a place that offered no guarantee of safety, and the references to people in which ethnicity, social status, an economic activity are combined.

¹⁰³ Nadin, “Il codice degli statuti e l’edizioni,” 79; Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 112.

¹⁰⁴ Sima Ćirković, “Tradition Interchanged: Albanians in the Serbian, Serbs in the Albanian Late Medieval Texts,” in *Oi Albanoi Sto Mesaiouva*, ed. Charalambos Gasparis (Athens: Εθνικο Ιδρυμα Ερευνων, 1998), 195.

¹⁰⁵ See: Žarko Muljačić, “Conflitti linguistici a Dubrovnik (Ragusa) nel Medio Evo,” in *Das Dalmatische. Studien zu einer untergegangenen Sprache* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 131–38; Dotto, *Scriptae venezianeggianti*, 69.

CHAPTER 2. CIVITAS SCUTARI: SPACE AND URBAN ELEMENTS IN CITY IDENTITY

The dynamic between late medieval cities and their surroundings was not restricted to the economic sphere, but also existed “in terms of immigration, landholding (adjacent property owned by city dwellers), education policy, procession and pilgrimage, origin of convicts, hospitals, and so forth.”¹⁰⁶ The study of social relations in connection with the places people dwelt in is particularly relevant for the understanding of city identities because these two elements actively influenced one another. Together with architectural landmarks such as churches, markets, neighborhoods, squares, or ports, the urban space was also composed of intangible interactions and networks of communication that, in turn, assigned meanings to these places and shaped its social topography. In Pierre Bourdieu’s words:

It is true that one can observe almost everywhere people who are close together in social space tending to find themselves, by choice or by necessity, close to one another in geographic space; nevertheless, people who are very distant from each other in social space can encounter one another and interact, if only briefly and intermittently, in physical space.¹⁰⁷

As seen in the previous chapter, Shkoder’s hinterland was an intrinsic part of the city. It was permanently connected with it by means of property revenues, exchange of goods and services, and it also bore characteristic elements that promoted a process of identity (or identification) of the people living there. However, this process of identification of social groups arose not only in relation to land and agricultural goods, but also—and one could also say primarily—to the circumscription of the city.

Scholars have reiteratively asserted that the urban characteristics of Shkoder and other Albanian cities hinged upon three main overlapping processes: the influence of religious

¹⁰⁶ Michel Pauly and Martin Scheutz, “Space and History as Exemplified by Urban History Research,” in *Cities and their Spaces: Concepts and their Use in Europe*, ed. Michel Pauly and Martin Scheutz (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014), 26.

¹⁰⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 16.

institutions,¹⁰⁸ the Italian, Dalmatian, and Serbian organizational forms,¹⁰⁹ and the wealth brought about by the increase of trade.¹¹⁰ The differences and boundaries among social groups sprang up in close connection with these city institutions, particularly as a consequence of the inside-outside movement of people and goods that resulted from commerce, war, religious affiliation or economic activities.

In Shkoder, the urban space and a good number of social issues—employment, public affairs, house arrangements, settlement of offenses, punishment of crimes, etc.—were regulated by the city statute. In spite of the numerous conventional legal expressions and a seemingly dreary language, the *Statuti di Scutari* is far from being a lifeless document. Quite the contrary, by reading closely its dispositions, one realises how much information is crammed into concise articles that, in turn, allow to picture the plurality of spaces in which citizens and inhabitants interacted with one another and developed their (self)-recognition. Following the terminology of the statute, the space inside the city walls gathered nobles (*zentilhomeni*), people working in the public administration (*zaschaduno che fosse electo per lo comun*), soldiers (*ustadores*), master craftsmen (*maestro de ogni arte*), wage-earners (*rogatieri*), servants (*servitor*), and people with a varied range of economic activity and way of life.

Additionally, the apparently clear-cut social structure in Shkoder may lead to the conclusion that there was a categorical identification of a given social group with a space in the city. Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether the physical and social space always overlapped or if, in fact, various social groups dwelt in the same space but took advantage and

¹⁰⁸ Milan von Šufflay, “Die Kirchenzustände im vortürkischen Albanien. Die orthodoxe Durchbruchzone im katholischen Damme,” in *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, vol. 1, ed. Ludwig von Thallóczy (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1916), 188–287. Even though this element falls away from our analysis, if one were asked to come up with a unifying criterion for the North-Albanian space, the closest one would come from the religious sphere. Resemblances of a “unified” Albania as “episcopus Albanie” before 1420 appear in AAV II 598; III 639, 841.

¹⁰⁹ According to Šufflay, from the twelfth century onwards, glossators and lawyers reawakened the teachings and beliefs of the classical Roman law, and implemented them into administrative practices. These practices heavily influenced the city laws of Dalmatia and North Albania: Šufflay, *Städte und Burgen Albaniens*, 70.

¹¹⁰ This was a recurrent topic in the literature about the revival of city life after the twelfth century. A classic example is: Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948).

related it with themselves in different ways. In order to answer these questions, this chapter will look into the city institutions and the formal aspects of the urban space. From there, it will associate these formal aspects both with the social interactions they allowed and with the legal and social criteria that made up the social identity of city dwellers.

2.1 Spatial Relations inside the city

A city statute did not only set the limits of the jurisdiction of each community, but as such, it provided the first organisational principle for the life in the city. In consequence, in Shkoder, the *Statuti* was the first element in the chain of definition of identities in the urban context. Since it belonged to the legal tradition of municipal laws, its territorial jurisdiction applied to the city's territories and, most importantly, it pertained to the affairs of the body of citizens.

Although, nominally, the Serbian king was the sovereign of the city and his representative was the count (*conte*), the latter appears in the statute almost exclusively as the recipient of the fines imposed by the Municipality.¹¹¹ In practice, the commune had a high degree of autonomy and ruled itself in almost every legal affair.¹¹² It was formed by the adult male citizens, that is, the patricians (*zentilhomeni*, *nobiles*, *sacra nobilitas*) and the *populo*.¹¹³ The citizens' assembly gathered on the day of Saint Mark (April 25) to elect the commune's Council that would govern the city for one year. However, not the whole assembly but only the

¹¹¹ Ermal Baze, "Institutional and Governing Organization of the Municipality of Shkodra during the First Half of the XIV Century (According to 'The Statutes of Shkodra')," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 1 (2014): 166. In many cases, the money coming from the "collection of duties, customs, units of measurement and weight, fines, confiscation of traitors' properties, the assets of citizens who had no heirs, etc., was accumulated and saved in the treasure of the municipality," and it was used for its internal needs: *Ibid.*, 168.

¹¹² Four issues were reserved to the Serbian king's sole authority: treason (*infidelitate*), murder (*homicidio*), and rights of servants (*servo*, *ancilla*) and horses (*cavalli*): *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 2. However, if somebody killed either a man or a woman, the murderer had to be taken in front of the king only if he had no money to pay the fine, otherwise he had to pay five *perperi*, of which half would go to the king and half to the relatives of the victim: *Ibid.*, art. 224.

¹¹³ In an addition of the year 1391, the commune is referred to as "toto lo Comun de Scutari, tanti grandi quanti picoli": *Statuti di Scutari*, (add.) art. 271.

bishop and three noblemen were entitled to select the three judges, eight councillors and two municipal accountants that would be in office for the aforementioned period.¹¹⁴

The members of the most influential families held the higher offices—judge (*zudese*), notary (*notario*), chancellor (*cancelier*), councilor (*consigliere*), prosecutor (*procurator*)—but probably other citizens also took part in the different organizational needs of the commune by occupying judicial positions of lesser rank (*semecio*, *otargo*).¹¹⁵ Moreover, even though the statute is silent about the amount of assistants or servants that people in these positions were entitled to hire, it is not difficult to suppose that less important employees took care of the administrative trifles.¹¹⁶

Both metaphorically and physically, the Council was at the core of the affairs of the city and its surroundings teemed with people coming from many levels of the social strata: high magistrates, judicial officers, assistants and, of course, with all the men and women involved in legal disputes, either as plaintiffs, defendants, or guarantors.¹¹⁷ Amid such a hustle and

¹¹⁴ “In lo di de sancto Marco evangelista se debia poner tre zudesi, consiglieri octo, et do spendadori in tal forma chi se debia sonar la campana de Sancto Stefano et congregar lo povolo et chiamar lo vescovo nostro chi vada cum III zentilhomeni ad elezere i soradicti officiali”: Ibid. art. 89. Not all the cities along the Adriatic reserved the election to noblemen. In Kotor, for instance, the nobles and the popular party (“tam nobiles quam populares”) were summoned “via jure modo et forma quibus melius sciuerunt et potuerunt tam de Jure quam consuetudine cuislibet seruari crearunt.”: AAV I 266.

¹¹⁵ *Senecio*, *semencio*, *semezio*, *semecivo*, *sernecio*; *otacho otago*: *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 56, 103, 106, 137, 158, 176, 179, 232.

¹¹⁶ Some of these offices certainly required the services of different types of employees: “notarius cum famulo, cochus et interpres”: AD II 553. After 1396, when the Venetians assumed the control of Shkoder, they would allow the commune to take care of its internal affairs, although they did bring servants with them and thus added another layer to an already diverse social mixture: “Et ex nunc sit captum, quod ille capitaneus (...) venire debeat ad sanctum Nicolaum de litore, ad leuandum dictos prouisoires et portandum eos cum sua familia ad locum predictum.”: AAV II 615, 621. The growing complexity of the administrative structure would also become part of “the question of continuity and discontinuity pre-Venetian structures in space, that is, the question of the conscious and specific configuration of the communication space by the Venetian state”: Oliver Jens Schmitt, “Das venezianische Südosteuropa als Kommunikationsraum (ca. 1400-ca. 1600),” in *Balceni occidentali, Adriatico e Venezia fra XIII e XVIII secolo / Der westliche Balkan, der Adriaraum und Venedig (13.-18. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Gherardo Ortalli and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Venice/Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 81.

¹¹⁷ Women could make their testament (art. 196, 198), be called to court in their husband’s absence (art. 117), or give testimony in certain issues: “Volimo che femena possa esser guarenta se questione fosse de zomo de molino, voy de etate de anni de fanti, voy de fantulina, voy in virginitade.”: *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 130. Moreover, the feminine form of a name sometimes followed the masculine, implying that women shared with men social status and several occupations: “*baron voy femina, laico over femena, rogatiero voy rogatiera, servitor voy serviciala, patron over patrona, proximale over proximala*”: Ibid., art. 112, 121, 186, 198, 221. Moreover, the fine for insulting a *bona femena* calling her *putana*, *latrona*, *ruffiana*, *et erbera* was the same as the one imposed to somebody calling a man *latrone*, *fiol de putana*, *ravalioso*, *spuro*, *asino*, *sperzuro*: Ibid., art. 255. See also: Etleva Lala,

bustle, it should not be surprising that the level of conviviality sometimes subsided. In relation to the behaviour in the tribunal, the statute imposed fines of seven to thirty *perperi* for beating up judges, chancellors, the notary or any other official during a court case, and of four if one attacked or insulted one's adversary.¹¹⁸ If the incident happened outside the court the fine was usually lower, but fights could unfold in a variety of ways, and the statute distinguishes between injuring somebody with a rod, stick, stones, fist, knives, swords, arrows, iron, or by pulling out somebody's beard.¹¹⁹

Even though the legal space in the physical sense was not reserved to one social class exclusively, it is interesting to note that the statute did have a criteria by which certain people could not take part in all aspects of the judicial procedures. In order to be considered a reliable guarantor in court, one had to pay 10 *perperi* or present a notary authorization and be at least 14 years old. In addition, there were two further requirements, one "subjective," that is, dependant on the parties involved in the dispute, and another "objective" or independent. Hence, on one hand, close relatives (father, brother, cousin of blood, nephew, grandparent, brother-in-law, son-in-law, mother-in-law— this applied for male and female relatives) or business partners of any of the litigants could not be accepted as guarantors.¹²⁰ On the other hand, the objective restrictions that forbade people from being a guarantor had to do with the social status of the person, that is, if one fell into the category of servant (*servi poveri*) who did

"Women's Status in Medieval Albanian Laws," in *East Meets West: A Gendered View of Legal Tradition. Sixth Conference of the International Research Network "Gender Differences in the History of European Legal Cultures," Budapest, March 10th – 12th, 2011*, ed. Grete Jacobsen and Heide Wunder (Kiel: Solivagus, 2014).

¹¹⁸ *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 230-233, 237, 246.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, art. 238-242. The last case entailed the highest fine: "Ordinemo che zaschaduna persona pellasce ad alcun homo la barba e provar li podissi, chi paghi per pena perperi L, la mità a lo conte e la mità a quillo che domanda": *Ibid.*, art. 239. Threats of pulling out or cutting the beard were relatively common in criminal registers of several Italian cities since at least the thirteenth century, and "in the criminal law and practice of Dubrovnik, this act was primarily employed to sanction negligence of public duty": Nella Lonza, "On Cutting off Noses and Pulling out Beards: Face as a Medium of Crime and Punishment in Medieval Dubrovnik," in *Our Daily Crime; Collection of Studies*, ed. Gordan Ravančić (Zagreb: Hrvatski insitutit za povijest, 2014), 69.

¹²⁰ "Over pari, over fratelli, over cusino carnale, over nevodo, over avunculo, over cugnata, over zenaro, over li socero cum socero; et questo se intende tanto de lo barone quanto de la femena": *Ibid.*, art. 130.

not own more than 20 *perperi* in wealth, murderer (*inimico de sangue*), godfather,¹²¹ Slav (*sclavo*), Albanian (*arbanese*), woman,¹²² dishonest man (*sperzurio*), or traitor of the city.¹²³ It would be unreasonable to understand the terms *sclavo* and *arbanese* in an ethnic sense. Here, together with *servi poveri* and wrongdoers, they may have belonged to those relegated to the bottom of the social scale and even confined to live in the peripheries of the city.

Many issues related to the administration of justice and city affairs involved personnel and litigants as well as physical infrastructure. For instance, there had to be sufficient space to keep judicial records: every time somebody presented a case in front of the judges (*domandassi avanti de li zudesi sua rasone*), the chancellor had to write down the testimony of each person involved in the trial.¹²⁴ Even more sporadic events, like the visit of a messenger of the Serbian king or any other man from his courtier, required space to make an appropriate feast.¹²⁵

Along with the legal space, religious institutions had an enormous importance in north Albania, and laic and religious functions complemented one another in certain ways. Both the notary's office and the church were a *sine qua non* of the urban constituency. In northern Albania even the smallest cities counted with a central notarial office, and religious buildings densely covered this area.¹²⁶ Notaries were ready to render certificates and serve as a source of

¹²¹ *Compare*, here, seems to be out of place. Cf. with: "cusino carnale, fratello, avunculo, zenero. socero, nepoto, cognado, compare" in art. 112.

¹²² See note 117.

¹²³ To infringe the rules of the city and be considered a traitor was a notoriously serious offense. The statute imposed an exorbitant (one may also say inconceivable) fine of 500 *perperi* for those who falsely accused someone of treason against the sovereign or the commune. Compared to the 5 *perperi* imposed to murderers, 50 for smuggling goods outside the city or 100 to those who falsified the seal of the municipality, 500 for a false accusation is truly bewildering: Ortalli, "Gli statuti, tra Scutari e Venezia," 24; Schmitt, "Un monumento dell'Albania medievale," 33; Nadin, "Il testo Statutario," 57. Elsewhere in the code it is stated that if somebody was proven to be *infidel de la citade*, all his property became public domain and he was beheaded; if the traitor managed to escape, he was perpetually banned from the city: *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 228.

¹²⁴ "La testification de zaschaduno se debia scrivere per lo cancellier": *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 131.

¹²⁵ "Ordinemo che quando vegnisse alcuno gentilhomo de lu re over altro bon homo chi fossi, per farli honor, che li zudesi cum lo consiglio possano spendere et farli honore de manzar et de bere." Ibid., art. 149.

¹²⁶ Despite being subject to the Serbian kingdom, Shkoder and all the important cities in north Albania and the Adriatic coast—Kotor, Budva, Ulcinj, Driht (Drivasto), Danje (Dagnum) and Lezhë (Alessio)—had Roman Catholic bishoprics: Marka Tomić Đurić, "The Isles of Great Silence: Monastic Life on Lake Scutari under the Patronage of the Balšićs," *Balkanica* 43 (2012): 83–84. For studies about the interplay of the different religious denominations in the Albanian space see: Schmitt, "Die Monade des Balkans."; Šufflay, "Die Kirchenzustände."

authority, and priests sometimes took over the function of the notary.¹²⁷ In Drisht, the known notaries from the period of 1353-1442 were *presbyteri*, also in Ulcinj in 1376, and in the fifteenth century in Bar, two canons also worked as notaries and Chancellors of the commune.¹²⁸ In social terms, together with the Grand Council, the central cathedral was a reserve of the urban patricians. The clergy could elect itself and thus secure its rigid social composition.¹²⁹ No wonder, then, that across Albania numerous clergymen were forced to emigrate to Dalmatia, where they nevertheless could keep their relationship with their hometowns.¹³⁰

In and around Shkoder, there were apparently so many churches, that a cat could have gone all the way from Shkoder north-westwards to Drisht just by jumping from one church roof to the next,¹³¹ and their maintenance must have required the work of builders, carpenters (*maestri marangoni*), and craftsmen of all types (*maistri d'ogni arte*).¹³² According to the statute, the issues of the clergy followed the laws and the *usanzi* of the city, but clergymen did not seem to enjoy an excessively privileged situation.¹³³ So, if a woman *de bona fame*, married or single, accused *alcuno clerico* of rape, physical violence or theft, she had to be believed even if there were no witnesses.¹³⁴ Similarly, just as it applied to any other citizen, if a clergyman was caught walking around the city without a torch after the third bell, that is, after dusk fell,

¹²⁷ Šufflay, *Städte und Burgen Albaniens*, 78.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹²⁹ Schmitt, *Das venezianische Albanien*, 136.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹³² *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 50-53. Craftsmen did not always belong to the lower classes. Probably like in Venice in the late fourteenth century, the salary they received “could vary considerably according to their skill and fame, the type and quality of work to be done, the time of the year, that is, according to the length of the working day, and, at times, whether or not the employer would provide a ration of wine”: Frederic Lane and Reinhold Mueller, *Money and Banking in Medieval and Renaissance Venice: Coins and Moneys of Account*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 658. While the statute did not impose a maximum earning for craftsmen, carpenters could charge a maximum of three *grossi* per day with a sufficient meal, and two *grossi* from the day of St. Sergius in late September onwards. Wage-earners who worked the land or gardens inside the city —tree trimmers (*spambanator voy legator*), grape-pickers (*vendemator*), reapers or collectors (*sigilator oy adunador*)—received a similar amount if there were men (art. 57-61), but one *grosso* less if they were women (art. 62).

¹³³ *Statuti di Scutari*, art. 144, 145, 148, 154, 155, 200.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, art. 200.

he was charged with the damages that may have occurred during the night or with 12 *grossi* if nothing had happened.¹³⁵

Finally, together with legal, social, and religious matters, the statute also touched upon strictly urban issues. They are dealt with in the first pages of the statute, just after the enforcing power of the statute, that applied to citizens and foreigners equally, and other general remarks are stated.¹³⁶ The section refers in details to the space between houses,¹³⁷ the permissions and amount of time one had to wait before building a new house or start any renovation¹³⁸ or the procedure to follow when foundations, walls, fences, basements or cellars happened to be between the areas of two houses.¹³⁹ A similar principle applied to new constructions with windows or balcony (*con solar o con pediculo*) in the city square or in the central streets of the city (*le vii de fora de la cita*), for which residents had to adhere and apply to the laws (*usanzi*) honestly.¹⁴⁰ Specific regulations such as the prohibition to place the front door of each house facing the neighbour's door¹⁴¹ or the prohibition of spilling water over the neighbour's roof¹⁴² may suggest the special attention paid to maintain a good level of conviviality among the neighbours. Similarly, if somebody wanted to build a *pediculo* (roof, roof terrace, balcony), the person could do it only if it did not represent any harm for the neighbours or the commune.¹⁴³ Other important communal affairs, like the access to water by opening up holes in the ground (*voltar aqua*) had to be done "in the habit of old."¹⁴⁴ It is very likely that the noblemen's houses were located in specific areas that were not suitable for the activities of other inhabitants. Prostitutes (*rufiana*), for instance, were forbidden from *habitar in vicinanza de zentildonne*, in

¹³⁵ Ibid., art. 81.

¹³⁶ *Statuti di Scutari* art. 5.

¹³⁷ Ibid. art. 8.

¹³⁸ Ibid. art. 9.

¹³⁹ Ibid. art. 17, 18.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. art. 32.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. art. 12.

¹⁴² Ibid. art. 21.

¹⁴³ Ibid. art. 23.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. art. 47.

order to maintain the moral and social order.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, if a *meretrice* was proven to have committed some wrongdoing (*maleficio*), she had to leave within three days, whereupon she was supposed to be fined with eight *perperi*, chased in the roads of the city, beaten with a stick, and expelled permanently.¹⁴⁶

2.2 Mobility and Access to the Public Space

In Ducellier's words, migration is one of the *tartes à la crème* of Mediterranean history.¹⁴⁷ This constant migration of people had significance for the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that were involved in the process of developing city identities. Yet in recent academic publications there has been a tendency to classify urban people by presenting citizens as opposed to strangers and outsiders, insisting, for instance, on the need of developing "genealogical investigations on citizenship from the perspective of its alterity."¹⁴⁸ This view, however, is incompatible with late medieval city life and misdirects the analysis towards a confusion of terminology. In consequence, before proceeding further, some precision regarding late medieval cities in general is necessary to avoid a misinterpretation of the identity and presence of foreigners in Shkoder.

In Italian legal texts there were two ways to designate the people belonging to the same social rank in the urban context: *citadino* and *abitatore*. The former referred to city dwellers as such and the latter designated the ones who were not born in the city, but were permanently domiciled there and protected by its laws.¹⁴⁹ To refer to those who did not belong to this

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., art. 87. The case of shepherds mentioned in the previous chapter is another example: see note 95.

¹⁴⁶ "E se la fosse trovata più de lo termeno, chi paghi per pena perperi VII, e chi se frusti per tota la terra e sia bandizata e per nisun tempo che non sia ricevuta ne la nostra terra né torni zama." Ibid., art. 87.

¹⁴⁷ Ducellier et al., *Les Chemins de l'exil*, 76.

¹⁴⁸ Engin Isin, *Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 3.

¹⁴⁹ Diego Dotto, "Per il veneziano fuori di Venezia: due livelli d'ibridismo in un contratto marittimo raguseo della metà del Trecento," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 124, no. 2 (2008): 275–76. To put another example, Stephan Epstein and Maarten Prak made the point that when guilds directed pleas and actions against "foreigners" they rarely conducted them against immigrants as such, but rather against foreign non-members or non-residents of the city: Stephan Epstein and Maarten Prak, eds., *Guilds, Innovation, and the European Economy: 1400-1800*

restricted social group, Cerutti opposes the condition of being a “foreigner” to the *condition d’extranéité*.¹⁵⁰ For her, the concept of an outsider can be explained less by territorial demarcations and more by appealing to other contexts such as ownership, occupation, and justice.¹⁵¹

Shkoder was not a hermetic city and the inner dynamic described in the previous section was especially significant because it facilitated the incorporation, and up to a certain point also assimilation, of people coming from beyond the physical borders of the city. The condition of “foreignness,” then, did not affect “foreigners” but rather the people belonging to an inferior social status and who, additionally, did not have an easy access to urban institutions and facilities. According to the code, foreigners enjoyed a good amount of legal rights in the same terms as the rest of citizens. It would not be a surprise if they leased land as it is registered some years later, in the *cadaster* of 1416, which Shkurti analyses as follows:

Among sixteen tenants of land, one can say with great certainty that nine of them were not citizens of Shkoder, but they were there on duty or with the purpose of working (officers, guards, military, craftsmen), while on the other seven there is no information in the registry. 22 of 27 gardens belonging of the town were taken by immigrants to rent in the city (soldiers, artisans, translators, officers), while for the other five gardens the data are not clear.¹⁵²

Foreigners who came to Shkoder to live (*abitare*) as citizens were exempt from the payment of taxes for an entire year and the municipality had the duty to protect them from any aggression (*agoridio*) of the patron, irrespective of his religion.¹⁵³ Unlike *bolchi* or *albanenses*, they could not be beaten up neither inside nor outside the city,¹⁵⁴ and if any person, whether foreign, townsman or farmer (*frustiera de fora over cittadina over bolcho*) hurt somebody, on

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). As quoted by: Simona Cerutti, *Étrangers: Étude d’une condition d’incertitude dans une société d’Ancien Régime* (Montrouge: Bayard Jeunesse, 2012), 170.

¹⁵⁰ Cerutti, *Étrangers*, 11.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵² Shkurti, “Recherches,” 126.

¹⁵³ *Statuti di Scutari* art. 262. The statute reads “*over latino over sclavo over chadauna persona*,” a clear reference to the variety of religious denominations in the city.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, art. 236. The attacker had to pay 8 *perperi* if the victim was a foreigner and the assault happened inside the city and 4 if it was outside. If he *pelasse over batesse* a citizen, the fine was 12 *grossi*.

the street, vineyards, fields or elsewhere, he was forced to pay a sum of four *perperi* and repay all damages.¹⁵⁵

Also regarding trials and legal affairs, the same regulations applied to foreigners and citizens: on Sunday or during Christmas, Carnival, Epiphany or the feast of St. Mary, judges could not be called to set trials between citizens, foreigners or between citizens and foreigners.¹⁵⁶ When a citizen brought to court an issue connected to debts, it proceeded as follows: if the debt was taken in Shkoder, the foreigner had to be judged in the city, but if the citizen gave a loan elsewhere, he had to go there and demand what the other owed him.¹⁵⁷ Likewise, in trials between a citizen on the one hand, and a Slav (*sclavo*) or Albanian (*arbanesco*) on the other hand, the guarantors were supposed to belong to both parts in equal numbers.¹⁵⁸ In this last example becomes particularly clear that a foreigner did not belong to the same social status as the other two. Moreover, the statute even commanded notaries to be as efficient as possible when foreigners requested documents.¹⁵⁹

The statute makes explicit the two main circumstances in which foreigners (*stranieri*, *frustieri*, *forestieri*) were expected to be in the city for short periods. The first was on the occasion of religious festivities. St. Stephen's feast was one of these occasions, and the safety of the visitants had to be assured even if they did not stay too long.¹⁶⁰ The other obvious space connected with a visit or a short stay was the market, which was also meant to guarantee a reasonable equal footing for citizens and foreigners. So, if a citizen with good guarantors bought a horse, mule or any other animal, and a foreigner (*homo de fora*) came to take the animal claiming it had been stolen, the citizen was not obliged to return it, but he had to say

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. art. 251.

¹⁵⁶ "Ordinemo che nesun zudese debia zudegar de dominica a citadino cum citadino, né de Nadale, né de carnevale, né de Epiphania Domini, né de tuti li festi de sancta Maria, né de Ascensione, no ma a stranierii cum strainerii et citadini cum stranieri." Ibid. art. 113.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. art. 153.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. art. 136.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., art. 144.

¹⁶⁰ "Zaschadun forestier che vinissi a la sua festa tre zorni ananti et tre dappoi, che sia libero et francho da ogni offensione in quelli sei zorni." Ibid. art. 7.

the name of the seller if he knew it or, if not, to swear he did not know it when he bought the animal. If the man insisted the animal belonged to him, he could have it back as long as he gave the citizen whatever sum he swore he had spent on the animal.¹⁶¹

Just as not every person that goes to another city has the intention to settle there, people travelled from and to Shkoder not only to live but also to form part of a floating population occupied in various activities. Mobility is acknowledged in the statute in several ways. There could be short and official absences, such as those of an *ustador* (soldier) called by the king,¹⁶² of somebody elected to go on a trip as ambassador,¹⁶³ or coming to Shkoder as one.¹⁶⁴ Short and somehow unofficial were related, as seen before, with trade, festivities, and activities such as prostitution, or robbery.¹⁶⁵ Prolonged absences were probably related to business that required attention in more than just one city or to the decision to look for another place to practice a given profession. We know, for instance, that a person could be imprisoned, and his goods confiscated, while in the territory of Shkoder,¹⁶⁶ and that the mobility of peoples around Ragusa, Bar, and Shkoder was not uncommon.¹⁶⁷ A certain *Petru de Scutari*, as shown in a book record on December 1, 1350, went to Ragusa to work as a shoemaker,¹⁶⁸ but another citizen, *Stephanus de Rosamasa de Scutaro* travelled there to borrow the considerable amount of 111 gold ducats from *Martinus de Sorgo*, committing himself to pay back the debt within

¹⁶¹ Ibid. art. 178.

¹⁶² Ibid. art. 85.

¹⁶³ Ibid., art. 91.

¹⁶⁴ *Statuti di Scutari* art. 96.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. art. 87. Women working as prostitutes may have come and go on (relative) regular basis before they were permanently forbidden to get in. See above note 145.

¹⁶⁶ (September 11, 1368) “Nobilis Ulciniensis Ragusino ducatos mille solvet. Et quod possit ipsum Peruossium et omnia bona sua capi, incarcerari et detineri facere pro ipsius solutione in ciuitatibus Dulcinii, Antibari, Scutari, Ragusii et Cathari et ubique locorum ita, quod habeat integram suam solutionem.” AD II 250.

¹⁶⁷ (June 12, 1376) “Nuy adunqua che per lo nostro offiçio a nuy commesso non potemo ne devemo denegare la rason a zascheduno a chi da nuy la domanda, a peticione delo detto Giue ti zitemo et chomandemo che se saray trovado in Antibari infra di XV, et se saray trovado in scutari infra uno mese proximo che vignera, scomenzando dalo di chi ti sara presentata questa nostra lettera, debi comparere legiptimamente dinançi da nuy a Ragusa a rispondere alo detto Giue et defendere la tua rason.”: LCR 306.

¹⁶⁸ (December 1, 1350) “Petre de Scutari facit manifestum quod locat se et opera sua in arte chalegariorum ad standum cum Dobre chalegario hinc ad -1- annum pro yperperis VIII.”: AD II 80.

three months, as stipulated by a contract of March 13, 1369.¹⁶⁹ In any case, if a person did not intend to leave permanently but would be absent for more than a year, he had to elect somebody to be his representative in front of judges or notary.¹⁷⁰ Permanent stay outside the city could follow any of these circumstances or, in the case of women, they could be sent to a different city following pre-marital arrangements.¹⁷¹

This mobility is relevant for the establishment of identities in the context of spatial relations because it helps to clarify the content of those identities. At least according to these documents, it is clear that the city, both in terms of legal jurisdiction and physical territory, gave its citizens the criteria according to which they would present themselves elsewhere. One crucial element of these criteria was the fact that names attest to provenance, and not exclusively or necessarily to ethnicity. That is, a *Petru de Scutari* or a *Goyslavi de Albania* are not necessarily migrants but *habitatores* of the second or third generation.¹⁷² Ducellier's argues in a similar way:

Who was the pirate called Bogdan Petrovich Albanensis de Budua in Dubrovnik in 1427? When using the word Albanians, it is more prudent to mean people coming from Albania, when we have no better means of verifying their definite ethnic provenance.¹⁷³

As it has been suggested before, one should not think that a great amount of people were attracted by Shkoder's market. Shkoder was not a booming economic centre, and people also left the city to escape from a variety of economic and historical contingencies. In some sense, as the end of the fourteenth century approached, the borders of the city became increasingly blurred. This was due, firstly, to the modest but nonetheless significant amount of

¹⁶⁹ "Ego quidem Stephanus de Rosamasa de Scutaro confiteor, quod super me et super omnia bona mea usque ad tres menses proxime futuros me obligo dare et soluere Martino de Sorgo ducatos auri CXI et grossos XVIII et sit de presenti viagio.": AD II 255.

¹⁷⁰ *Statuti di Scutari* art. 96.

¹⁷¹ "(October 5, 1377) 'Dobrussa filia Goyslavi de Albania' promittit stare annos 6 'cum Jançe Albanensi' se obligante dare 'victum et vestitum et tenere ipsam pro filia carnali et in fine termini ipsam maritare': AD II 346.

¹⁷² Ducellier et al., *Les Chemins de l'exil*, 129.

¹⁷³ Ducellier, "Kotor as a Meeting Point?," 125.

commercial and legal affairs that involved northern Albanians cities, southern Dalmatia, and eventually Venice. Secondly, the Ottoman campaigns in the Balkans triggered later on the forced migration of people who preferred to flee rather than to accept the new lordship. The Albanian emigrants were not necessarily poor land workers or servants. Quite the contrary, they were people who at some point had enjoyed a life comfortable enough to have access to a particular occupation, technical skill, or wealth. Yet, in 1388, probably influenced by the first Ottoman attacks, Albanians flee in masse to Ragusa, where unscrupulous citizens seized and sold them as slaves.¹⁷⁴

Regretfully, legal and notarial sources fail to offer evidence regarding the sharing of urban space in these new conditions and the scarcity of source material before 1392 makes very difficult to precise the way in which the urban space was shared when the migration waves began to increase. Later on, upon the Venetian take over, the *Signoria* would set up consulates and send ambassadors, but overall no more than a hundred men—including merchants, soldiers, and officers—dwelt in cities like Durrës, Lezhë or Shkoder, whereas in the countryside their influence hardly had any real impact.¹⁷⁵ Whether this increasing dynamism was also going to affect the innermost structure of Shkoder will remain speculative because the construction of identities in that space was about to take a very different path and be left at the mercy of the forces of history.

¹⁷⁴ Ducellier et al., *Les Chemins de l'exil*, 119. In fact, that helps to understand the “constant presence of servants of Albanian origin in Dubrovnik” Krekić refers to. He writes: “Dusanka Dinic- Knezevic has found for the period between 1281 and 1445, 40 contracts for servants of Albanian provenance in Dubrovnik, out of these 22 for men and 18 for women. Seven of them were from Drivasto, five from Valona, two each from Scutari and Durazzo, sixteen just from ‘Albania.’”: Krekić, “Albanians in the Adriatic Cities,” 218.

¹⁷⁵ Schmitt, “Le Commerce Vénitien,” 893.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Shkoder at the end of the Middle Ages, the appropriation of spaces within the city by different social groups was not carried out in a unidirectional way. Despite the paucity of source material, the statute of the city as well as contemporary acts and reports do offer enough indication of the multidimensionality of elements that intervened in the process. The present investigation paid special attention to the term *albanensis/albanenses* and tried to use space as an additional explanatory category for the plethora of meanings this term had. The main concern was not to define who Albanians *were* but to explain the identity of a social group in the context of life and activities in the city. Of particular interest was to understand the city as the political and administrative form of Shkoder and from there read the terms used to signify different levels of self-identification and identification of the others in this period. By doing so, it became clear that *albanenses* involved different ranges of generality that applied to members of a given cultural space, speakers of the same language, people taking part in the same profession, sharing a similar social and legal status, or inhabiting a particular space.

The last point of inhabiting a particular space was further developed in relation to the space of the city in Shkoder, which involved not only the space within the walls but also the surrounding areas. In fact, these territories provided natural resources, promoted (and limited) the migratory movements to and from Shkoder, and generated symbolic, cultural, and physical contrasts to what was supposed to constitute the space of the city. *Albanenses* were directly linked with this physical setting inasmuch as they were referred to as an outside element. In the sources there are not enough indications that point to the existence of exclusive ethnic elements, language or a way of life connected with pastoral activities, and so, as has been demonstrated in this thesis, “space” becomes a useful category to understand how social dynamic and natural setting interacted with one another.

With respect to the city and its inner space, it became evident that the authority of important families revolved around their participation in the council, notaries, and the clergy. Despite lacking direct source material, it is not difficult to suppose that each of these institutions combined an official and explicit involvement of the elites with lesser-rank workers and other people with lower social status. In this inner space, the term *albanenses* did not appear in connection with the affairs of the city but, precisely, to mark their distance. If in the first chapter this situation could be understood by actual physical distance from the city, it could then also be interpreted in social terms. Additionally, this division helped to tackle the fallacy of assuming the presence of an opposition between citizens and foreigner. While the latter had virtually unrestricted access to the city, the activities of other social groups were highly regulated.

What made an analysis in these terms possible was mainly the statute itself, which embodied the connection between physical and social space by means of the jurisdiction it exercised over *civitas et contrata*. The language of the statute was not understood as a mere sum of conventional expressions. On the contrary, its terminology invited the reader to explore patterns of significance that went beyond the visible surface. This led to an understanding in which the complex reality of legal affairs produced more than one system of meaning: it was possible to find references to space, social structure, and economic activities that had gone mostly overlooked by previous scholarship. And yet, rather than conclusive, this work meant to be stimulating. Ultimately, despite the fact that the sources and documents used here were a product of the life and government of *citizens*, the goal was to make sure that *Albanenses* are not rendered voiceless. In the multiplicity of linguistic forms and variety of life affairs the statute demonstrated the reader that this was not a monolingual society and their lives, like ours, was constructed by multidimensional realities.

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