Between Sword and Crown: Skanderbeg's League of Lezhë as a Proto-Albanian State

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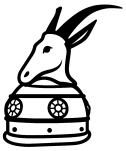

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Vienna, 20 May 2025

Lena Ibishi

EPIGRAPH

"Customs change with houses: ploughmen rise to crowns, and kings descend to ploughs. For there is no nobility more enduring than virtue. ...

And now you dare scorn our people, calling Albanians, as is your wont, beasts—speaking with insult as your custom dictates. But you seem ignorant of our lineage: our forefathers were Epirotes—from whom sprang Pyrrhus himself, whose fury the Romans scarce could bear. ... And if you say Albania is part of Macedonia, then you concede us an ancestry yet nobler—those men who, under Alexander, reached even unto India, casting down every nation they met in their path with astounding fortune. From such men spring these whom you now deride as sheep. But if we are sheep, and nature is unchanged—why do your men flee from sheep?

I have yet to meet a man who could endure my gaze. From your soldiers I have learned how well-armored their backs are; never yet have I seen a breastplate. I know no face of theirs—save those whom I have thrown in chains. ...

I do not covet your house, for my own suffices me: it is the work of my hands."

—Skanderbeg, *Letter to the Prince of Taranto*, in Pius II, *Commentarii rerum memorabilium* (1584, p. 304)

ABSTRACT

This thesis evaluates the League of Lezhë (1444–1479) as a proto-state, challenging its conventional portrayal as a transient military alliance. It argues that the League constituted a functioning political entity that exercised territorial authority, extracted fiscal resources, enacted legal norms, conducted diplomacy, and advanced an early articulation of Albanian sovereignty. To assess its state-like character, the thesis applies a six-dimensional analytical framework—governmental, legal, fiscal, military, diplomatic, and cultural—centered on the political theories of Weber, Tilly, Jackson, Philpott, Krasner, and Brubaker. Methodologically, it combines political theory with close historical analysis of primary sources and critical engagement with existing historiography. The thesis contests the dichotomy of empire and nation-state, positing instead a third political space: sovereignty without full consolidation, legitimacy without permanence, and governance without formal codification. The findings support the conclusion that the League of Lezhë functioned as a proto-state that institutionalized resistance and trained a stateless people in political endurance. Long after its dissolution, its legacy persisted: Albanian elites—socialized through the League's formative logic—would come to occupy key positions within the Ottoman imperial structure, diffusing its political imprint from the empire's periphery into its core and across the broader European continent.

DEDICATION

To my late uncle, Egzon Ademi. The pain never grows smaller, *dajë,* but neither does the love. The 27th of November is our darkest day, but the 28th is to honour all that you stood for.

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis the League of Lezhë (1444–1479) shall be examined not as a romanticized saga of medieval resistance, but as a federative political structure that, for thirty-five years (Brisku, 2013, p. 21), enacted the sovereign operations of proto-statehood across cultural, governmental, legal, fiscal, military, and diplomatic domains. Convened by Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg during a moment of geopolitical rupture in the Balkans, the League emerged from a time of imperial incline and regional fragmentation. It offered, for a time, a coordinated Albanian political subjectivity. This study does not ask whether the League approximates the institutional form of the modern nation-state, nor does it seek to validate nationalist mythology. Instead, it interrogates what the League actually *did*: how it governed, how it fought, how it extracted and negotiated, and ultimately, how it carved a space for Albanian sovereignty within a rather hostile imperial terrain.

The League of Lezhë has long suffered from historiographical distortion. Nineteenth-century Albanian thinkers such as Naim Frashëri and Pashko Vasa elevated the League to such a sacred, impeccable origin story of Albanian unity that it casts Skanderbeg as a proto-national liberator. In contrast, twentieth- and twenty-first-century revisionists such as Oliver Jens Schmitt and Halil İnalcık have questioned both the extent of Skanderbeg's support as well as the League's cohesion, interpreting it instead as a strategic but transient confederation of aristocratic interests. The aim of this thesis is not to reconcile these opposing views to one, but to reposition the League within a more precise analytical category: that of the proto-state.

To do so, this thesis develops a six-dimensional framework for assessing proto-statehood, derived from canonical texts in political theory and international law. Max Weber's typology of legitimacy (traditional, charismatic, legal-rational), Charles Tilly's

coercion-extraction model of state formation, and the Montevideo Convention's functional criteria for sovereignty provide the foundational criteria. Additional theoretical contributions from Daniel Philpott, Robert Jackson, Stephen Krasner, and Rogers Brubaker allow for a nuanced conception of statehood as both performed and recognized, contingent and contested. Each of the six dimensions—cultural, governmental, legal, fiscal, military, and diplomatic—is operationalized through these lenses and applied to the historical case of the League.

To employ this methodology, the thesis is structured across three analytical chapters. Chapter I situates the League within the broader geopolitical and historiographical landscape of the late medieval Balkans for temporally sensitive awareness. Chapter II reconstructs the League's formation, emphasizing the political imagination it enacted. Chapter III applies the six-dimensional framework formed to assess the League's functionality.

This methodological choice reflects the theoretical claim that proto-statehood must be understood as a functional yet contingent phenomenon. The League of Lezhë did not possess a standing bureaucracy, defined borders, or a unified legal system. Yet it governed territory, commanded armies, conducted diplomacy, and sustained a cultural-political imaginary of Albanian collective identity. In this sense, the League fits what this thesis defines as a proto-state: a political entity that performs core sovereign functions under conditions of historical constraint, without evolving into a fully consolidated state apparatus.

The League of Lezhë seeded a lasting ambition for political power that continued to shape the Albanian trajectory for centuries. Rather than dissolving under Ottoman conquest, this drive adapted to imperial structures, with Albanians excelling within the Ottoman order. By the mid-imperial period, they formed a disproportionately large segment of the ruling elite: as Noel Malcolm notes, and the Ottoman record supports, forty-two Grand Viziers were of Albanian origin—the highest per capita of any group in the empire, including Turks

(Malcolm, 1998, p. 96; Somel, 2010). This dominance persisted into the empire's final decades, with the Albanian Mehmed Ferid Pasha who was Grand Vizier from 1903 to 1908, swearing allegiance to the sultan by explicitly recognizing his ethnic identity in stating, "An Albanian who says besa [Albanian honor oath] once cannot in any way break [this] promise and cannot be unfaithful [to it]," (Gawrych, 2006, p. 193). Even in the post-Ottoman era, this influence endured with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic, being documented by numerous authors to have had Albanian paternal roots ('Ataturk', 1939; Mango, 2002, pp. 25–28; Jackh, 2007, p. 31). Albanians, via this chronology, helped close the Ottoman chapter, draft the opening of the Turkish Republic, and declare their own state in 1912. This arc—from League to Empire to Republic—is not pure coincidence birthed by random fate, but showcases the long afterlife of proto-statehood logic: structures collapse, change, disappear, but political habitus survives.

In recovering the League of Lezhë as a functional political entity rather than a symbolic memory or nationalist myth, this thesis seeks to clarify a formative but under-theorized moment in Albanian political history. It was, in the full gravity of the term, the beginning of a new Albanian political consciousness. Not yet a nation. Not quite a state. But already, unmistakably, alive—and unwilling to disappear.

METHODOLOGY - DEFINING PROTO-STATEHOOD THROUGH POLITICAL THEORY

This thesis asks whether the League of Lezhë (1444–1479) can be understood as an Albanian proto-state. To that end, this thesis developed a six-dimensional evaluative framework—cultural, governmental, legal, fiscal, military, diplomatic—which will enable this thesis to move beyond romanticized nation-building narratives or narrow legalism, and ask the harder question: *What did the League actually do?*

To build this framework, this thesis primarily draws on Max Weber's typology of legitimacy and bureaucratic order, Charles Tilly's coercion-extraction model of state formation, and the Montevideo Convention's legal criteria for statehood.

I. Theoretical Foundations for Statehood and Proto-Statehood

To theorize statehood and its proto-forms, this thesis employs a composite framework centered on legitimacy, coercion, and institutional function. Weber's concept of the state as a monopoly on legitimate force (1919) and his authority typology (1922) inform the reading of Skanderbeg's leadership. Tilly's coercion-extraction model (1992) grounds the League's rise in war-making and resource mobilization. The Montevideo Convention (1933), though anachronistic, provides a functional baseline—population, territory, government, and international capacity. To account for hybrid sovereignties, the framework also incorporates Philpott's recognition theory (2001) and Jackson's notion of quasi-states (1990), offering a historically rooted yet analytically precise and nuanced lens for evaluating proto-statehood.

II. Why Six Dimensions? Constructing a Functional Definition

To assess proto-statehood functionally and avoid nationalist romanticism or presentist bias, this thesis uses six domains historically tied to sovereign operation and proto-state formation: cultural, governmental, legal, fiscal, military, and diplomatic.

III. Definition of Proto-Statehood

Drawing from these frameworks, a proto-state is defined as:

> *A political entity that exercises de facto sovereign functions across multiple domains—governmental authority, legal order, fiscal coordination, military command, diplomatic agency, and cultural identity—without the permanence, bureaucracy, or full recognition of a consolidated state.*

This definition intentionally avoids both idealist-nationalist readings and reductive legalism. Proto-states are political formations that emerge under conditions of war, fragmentation, or imperial crisis, performing sovereignty without necessarily institutionalizing it into a linear modernity.

IV. Application to the League of Lezhë

To ensure analytic precision, each dimension is grounded in a specific set of intentionally applied theoretical anchors. The table below outlines how each section draws upon this methodology to assess the League's proto-state functionality.

Table 1: Theoretical Anchors by Dimension of Proto-Statehood

Chapter	Dimension	Theoretical Anchors and Application

II	Cultural	Benedict Anderson: Political communities are imagined through shared language, memory, and crisis. Rogers Brubaker: Ethnicity operates as a strategic political practice, especially under threat.
III.I	Governmental	Max Weber: Authority combined traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal legitimacy within a federative order.
III.II	Legal	Max Weber: Legal authority rested on traditional norms over formal codification. Jens Bartelson: Sovereignty relies on legal fictions that legitimize unwritten rule. Edith Durham: The Kanun functioned as a durable, socially upheld legal system.
III.III	Fiscal	Charles Tilly: Resource extraction during war drives early state formation. Fernand Braudel: Geography and supply networks shape economic coordination. Otto Hintze: Fiscal capacity lays the groundwork for centralized governance.
III.IV	Military	Charles Tilly: War-making builds state power through coercion and coordination. Michael Mann: Military structure expresses infrastructural power. S.E. Finer: Elite military leadership anchors emerging political orders.

III.V	Diplomatic	Robert Jackson: Quasi-states gain juridical recognition despite internal weakness. Stephen Krasner: Sovereignty is performative, revealed through strategic recognition. Daniel Philpott: External recognition constitutes proto-statehood in practice.

Each theoretical anchor was selected not only for its disciplinary relevance but for its capacity to illustrate the historical realities of pre-modern state function without imposing modern statist assumptions. Thus, ensuring a fairer evaluation.

CHAPTER I: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF MEDIEVAL ALBANIA

To comprehend the status of the League of Lezhë as a proto-state, one must have a thorough encapsulation of the state of the medieval Balkans. Fragmented, dissolute, and administratively anemic is only an oversimplification. The interjection of the Ottoman Empire into this geopolitical landscape did not merely exacerbate existing tensions but catalyzed a crisis of sovereignty across the entire peninsula (Bhardwaj, 2025). The local, and even then thoroughly fragmented, principalities and territories, each governed by noble dynasties, driven more by vendetta than vision, were compelled to scramble for survival (Ćirković, 2004, p. 86).

The death of Stefan Dušan in 1355 had already ruptured the fragile cohesion of the Serbian Empire (Fine, 1994, pp.337-340). What had briefly been a centralising force in the Balkans dissolved into spiralling centrifugal disorder. Dušan's successor, Stefan Uroš V, proved unable to contain the ambitions of provincial nobles, and thus, "did not distinguish himself by his abilities" (Ćirković, 2004, p. 64-75). Over in Albania, this catalysed the rise of independent lords—the Thopia, Balsha, and Dukagjini—whose inherited titles were increasingly decoupled from imperial legitimacy (Fine, 1994, pp. 535-536).

The Battle of Maritsa in 1371 marked the Ottomans' first major triumph against the Balkan Slavs (Fine, 1994, p. 378-379). The Serbian magnates Vukašin and Uglješa perished, and Ottoman forces asserted dominance across Macedonia (Fine, 1994, pp. 378-382). By the time of the pivotal Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, a more organised resistance under Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović had emerged. His alliance, often referred to as the Christian Balkan League, included Bosnian contingents under King Tvrtko I, Wallachians, Bulgarians, and Albanians, including Teodor II Muzaka (Fine, 1994, p. 384-398, Malcolm, 1998, p. 58-61). Sultan Murad I was assassinated during the battle, but this did not hinder the Ottoman army

from prevailing. Prince Lazar was also captured and executed the same day (Ćirković, 2004, pp. 84). Though mythologised in later centuries as a sacrificial triumph, the battle's consequences were concrete: Serbia's nobility was shattered.

The rest of the Balkans followed a similar suit. Albanian lands, fragmented and leaderless, were subjected to an escalating campaign of integration, with suzerainty first, and occupation later (van Egeraat, 2016). The Balkan power vacuum was now sitting duck to Ottoman pounce.

Thus, the process of *devshirme* intensified, most traumatically for Northern Albania (Malcolm, 2015, pp. 16–17). Christian boys, poor and noble alike, were taken from villages across the Balkans, trained rigorously in Ottoman institutions, some in the Ottoman Palace, and then pitted against their own homelands (İnalcık, 1973, pp. 77–79). Some, like Vlad Ţepeş and his brother Radu the Handsome, exemplify this bifurcation: one brother becomes an impaler of Turks; the other, a servant of the Sultan (Florescu and McNally, 1989).

This is where we find one of the primary characters and variables of this paper, Gjergj Kastrioti, more commonly known as Skanderbeg, who was one of the most distinguished and trusted Janissaries of the Ottoman military apparatus of the time (Fine, 1994, pp. 535).

Skanderbeg was the son of Gjon Kastrioti, lord of Mat. Gjon's domain stretched across central northern Albania, and he was known to oscillate between Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam, strategically adopting the creed most conducive to political survival, as evidenced in a saying attributed to him: "Where the sword is, there lies religion" (Licursi, 2011, p. 22). Following Ottoman expansion, Gjon was forced to send his four sons into the *devshirme* system as political hostages of considerable pedigree (Jelavich and Jelavich, 1963, p. 68).

Among Gjon's sons, Stanisha, Reposh, and Konstandin met either elusive or not extensively substantial fates, and were, thus, lost to history. Gjergj, however, rose to prominence within the Ottoman military-administrative apparatus, eventually attaining the rank of *Sanjakbey* and commanding troops across the Balkans and Anatolia (Frashëri, 2002, p. 86).

It is uncertain—indeed controversial—what precisely catalysed his eventual defection that would lead to the formation of the League of Lezhë. Interpretations diverge sharply. Some Rilindja authors, such as Naim Frashëri (1898) and Pashko Vasa (1878) portray Skanderbeg as a figure emblematic of the inescapable Albanian cultural drive to territorial and ethnic sovereignty. Others, particularly historians aiming to dismantle this nationalist canon—such as Schmitt (2009) and İnalcık (1973)—argue that his defection was a pragmatic realignment of noble interests. Others, like Fine (1994), are inbetween, conceding to the Albanian-ness of this defection, but not speculating on its state-formative nuances.

What is known, however, is that during the Battle of Niš in 1443—where Christian forces under John Hunyadi struck a critical blow to the Ottomans—Skanderbeg seized his moment. Dispatched with an Ottoman regiment, composed of approximately 300 loyal Albanian horsemen, he defected and turned toward his ancestral domain (Fine, 1994, p. 556). The very architecture of such a regiment, whether born of imperial patronage, logistical convenience, or regional cohesion, suggests the formation of a conditional identity. Tilly's theory of state formation points to how war operates as both forge and filter, as such organised violence not only consolidates institutions but catalyses collective belonging, even among those conscripted to serve (Tilly, 1992, pp. 70-71, 187). Here, identity materializes not as cause but as residue of state violence, and is shaped less by primordial ties than by proximity to power, death, and desertion.

With this force, Skanderbeg arrived in Krujë—possibly through Korçë or Elbasan—with a forged *firman* from Sultan Murad II, declaring him governor of the territory. The deception, despite all odds, worked. The Turkish garrison, caught between confusion, fear, and later, attack by local and Skanderbeg-led forces, ceded the fortress (Frashëri, 1964, p. 69). With his army behind him and a region bereft of centralised governance, his takeover unfolded with little resistance. Following the takedown of a few other surrounding fortresses, on November 28th, 1443, Skanderbeg raised a red standard with a black double-headed eagle on Krujë, close to identical to the flag Albania bears today, and proclaimed an independent Albanian principality (Frashëri, 1964, p. 70). Rilindja authors like Naim Frashëri (1898) and Sami Frashëri (1899) would later describe this moment as a national resurrection. Revisionist historians such as Schmitt (2009) and İnalcık (1994), however, emphasise resistance among Muslim-aligned Albanians.

It was not a nationalist uprising in the modern sense, but a case of political authority emerging where imperial infrastructure had thinned and allegiances were already fluid. Tilly's model helps decode this exact moment: what had begun as a fragment of military force—some armed men loyal to a defected commander—expanded into a political project precisely because the capacity to coerce was paired with symbolic legitimacy, even if this was partially forged (Tilly, 1992, pp. 70-73, 131). In Tillyan terms, Skanderbeg enacted the very transition from warband to proto-state: through seizure, he accumulated control; through confusion, he manufactured consent. His authority, like many before him, was born not from election or tradition, but from a convergence of arms, audacity, and induced administrative collapse.

The local lords were initially wary because, evidently, Skanderbeg's return disrupted existing hierarchies. He had not consulted them; he had acted entirely unilaterally. Yet they lacked the cohesion necessary to oppose him. In the meantime, Skanderbeg began a targeted

campaign of purging collaborators—specifically Muslim Albanians who had integrated into Ottoman administrative structures and were, for this reason, seen as impediments. He offered them conversion to Christianity, or death (Ramet, 1998, p. 209).

This is when the arguments and disparities between these feudal powers began to come to light. Who was this Skanderbeg? Why did he desire control over Albanian lands specifically? Why now? Was it a matter of vengeance, identity, or opportunistic sovereignty? And more crucially—was it better this way? These are, indeed, the questions that culminate in the League of Lezhë.

CHAPTER II: FROM KIN TO COLLECTIVE — THE FOUNDING OF THE LEAGUE

By the spring of 1444, having secured his territorial position and purged potential loyalists to the Ottoman administration, Skanderbeg convened a congress in Lezhë, then under Venetian supervision. The invitation was extended to the primary Albanian noble houses: the Dukagjini, Arianiti, Thopia, Spani, Dushmani, Muzaka, Zaharia, Crnojević, and Balsha. While some, especially the Crnojević, bore Slavicised nomenclature and roots, their affiliations, intermarriages, and landed possessions rendered them a necessary and indispensable part of the Albanian political circle. Later on, Crnojevići descendants would attempt to proclaim titles such as, "Prince of Albania", which further consolidates the argument towards growing cultural cohesion (Ćirković, 2004, p.149). To designate them as entirely foreign is to project anachronism when theirs was a transethnic aristocracy forged in the fluid frontier logic of the Middle Ages of the western Balkans. Identity was dynastic, territorial, and ecclesiastical, often overlapping and almost always contingent. But—and this is crucial—contingency does not equate to emptiness. To align oneself with an Albanian rebellion, under an Albanian leader, in defense of Albanian lands, constituted a political act of cultural belonging.

Here, the cultural dimension of proto-statehood begins to crystallise. As Benedict Anderson (2006) argues, political communities are imagined not because they are somehow false, but because they are symbolically constructed: "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (p. 6). Thus, in this perspective, the League marks a formative movement in which a pan-Albanian aristocracy imagined itself as a bounded political collective, a crucial step.

Anderson's model is especially useful because it highlights how political solidarity often precedes the cemented infrastructure of the modern nation-state. He situates the

emergence of national consciousness in the context of shared print languages and market systems, but his broader insight—that imagined belonging enables political cohesion among otherwise fragmented groups—applies powerfully to the Albanian case. The nobles at Lezhë may not have shared uniform dialects or legal systems, but they participated in a collective act of symbolic convergence. What united them was not a bureaucratic apparatus or even a unified military command, but a shared mythos of territorial stewardship and mutual recognition in the face of a growing imperial crisis.

The question of identity, too, must be addressed with more rigid precision with the launching of the argument towards the League's cultural conformity. Rogers Brubaker's (2004) notion of "situational ethnicity" is tempting but insufficient in this case. While ethnic categories in the Balkans were undoubtedly malleable at the time, the deployment of "Albanian" as a term of political mobilization in 1444 is evidence of more than contextual pragmatism. It was, in Brubaker's terms, a "category of ethnopolitical practice" (Brubaker, 2004, p. 10). So, not merely a label but a claim to inclusion and authority. If one is to assume that being Albanian had previously been a passive descriptor of rite, dialect, or even region, it now had re-emerged as a distinct principle of solidarity, a clear categorization of political allegiance.

As corroborating evidence of emerging ethnopolitical cohesion, Venetian patrician Giovanni Battista Giustinian noted in 1553, albeit a bit later, that "these Albanians… speak the Albanian language, which is utterly different from the Dalmatian [Slav] one," and commended their "extreme loyalty to their ruler" (Malcolm, 2015, p. 4). Historian Noel Malcolm reads this as proof of a coherent group identity, with both language and political allegiance reinforced. This cohesion did not collapse under Ottoman rule, most interestingly, it dispersed. Giovanni, Duke of Ferrandina—a descendant of Skanderbeg's circle—was "known to have spoken Albanian," maintaining the language as both memory and political

signal while operating abroad in Italy and Greece.That Albanian villagers still addressed his brother as “captain of Himarë and of Albania” decades after the League’s fall confirms that exile transformed Albanian cultural belonging into a mobile, diasporic sovereignty that extended the League’s legacy in unconventional terms (Malcolm, 2015, p. 89).

To return to the League’s inauguration, this moment of cultural construction was not abstract but had concrete political utility. As Philpott (2001) argues, sovereignty and recognition are not only untouchable legal concepts but fundamentally tied to identity claims. Thus, in convening the League around Albanian nobles, Skanderbeg was performing a claim to territorial and cultural sovereignty. The League thus initiated the symbolic infrastructure of sovereignty: a bounded leadership, a shared cause, and a language of legitimacy (Philpott, 2001, pp. 7, 17-21).

Nonetheless, it must be noted that Skanderbeg was no innocent idealist, either. His authority depended on a structure that could resist the Ottomans, gain the Venetians' respect, and justify further external diplomacy. He needed legitimacy, and Albanian identity—newly politicized, partly mythologized—offered that legitimacy he sought. But that does not nullify its authenticity. Strategic identity is still an identity. And as Barleti, Frashëri, and even Schmitt note, the League rebirthed a coherent idea of Albanian sovereignty, which is precisely what this paper argues towards (Barleti, 1508/1967; Frashëri, 1964, p. 71; Schmitt, 2009, p. 343).

Taking all the aforementioned into account, what Skanderbeg constructed at this moment in Lezhë was a deliberate enactment of political self-definition. He rode into Albanian-inhabited lands and summoned exclusively Albanian-rooted lords, which was neither purely incidental nor strategic. Rather, it was a foundational moment of cultural delimitation: an articulation of who belonged, and, as it pertains to this thesis, *why.* One may

speculate whether Skanderbeg sought to exalt this Albanian affinity or to exploit it, but either way, he acted within its frame.

Still, cultural affinity alone does not fully explain the League's rapid consolidation. As Charles Tilly (1992) continuously asserts, political cohesion often emerges not from shared identity in a vacuum, but from a shared peril. The founding of the League was a strategic response to the implosion of imperial order and the need for immediate collective defense. The alliance in Lezhë was not just imagined but also necessitated. Cultural solidarity enabled the alliance, but the sword forced its sharpening.

To fully ascertain the League's functions and its credentials as a proto-state, however, one must turn to the specificities of its structure—governmental, legal, fiscal, military, and diplomatic. Yet even in its formative moment, the League embodied the essential predicates of political cohesion: cultural solidarity, territorial consciousness, and hierarchical coordination.

CHAPTER III: THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE LEAGUE

This chapter serves to exemplify the League's proto-state features as they pertain to its internal and external functionality, as the title presumes. This thesis is cognizant of the historiographical risk of "beating history over the head with the blunt instrument of a hypothesis"—that is, forcing theoretical frameworks onto the past in a way that distorts rather than elucidates its complexity (Tosh, 2002, p. 208). However, this thesis has exercised due prudence by applying theory not as blind dogma, but as heuristic scaffolding, thus open to revision and restrained by empirical limitations. In doing so, it aims to evaluate the League of Lezhë on its own terms, while still situating it within broader theoretical debates concerning proto-statehood and the emergence of national consciousness in medieval Europe.

III.I Proto-State Governance and Weberian Legitimacy

With Skanderbeg's return to Albania and the convening of the League in Lezhë, a set of foundational arrangements was established. Skanderbeg would serve as *primus inter pares* and be entrusted with centralized military command, while the participating noble houses otherwise retained autonomy over their territorial and administrative affairs (Frashëri, 1964, p. 71). Concretely, at the League of Lezhë, Skanderbeg was proclaimed "Chief of the League of the Albanian People" (Frazee, 2006, p. 33). This framework, as Schmitt (2009, p. 127) affirms, was formalized in the League's founding agreement, which emphasized both mutual autonomy and collective defense.

Due more to intentional federative design than symptomatic of incoherence, the League functioned as a confederation of semi-sovereigns who were bound by oath and coordination. This indicates a negotiated, however flexible, political order that enabled concerted governance without abolishing or interjecting into local sovereignty in an already tenuous terrain. Dušan's Serbian Empire operated in a parallel fashion to the League, where

regional magnates would acknowledge Dušan's imperial supremacy but still continue to retain a significant portion of autonomy (Fine, 1994, pp. 312-326), as well as the early Swiss Confederacy, which endured for centuries without a centralized executive (Head, 1995, p. 55-58). Thus, this model was common for emerging robust governing structures across medieval Europe.

Weber's typology of legitimacy enables further assessment of the League's governmental structure, as it pertains to its leadership. As outlined in *Politics as a Vocation* (Weber, 1919), political authority derives from three principal sources: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal. Skanderbeg's rule exemplified, to various degrees, all three. His dynastic heritage and the reclamation of ancestral lands conferred a plausible scope of traditional legitimacy. His dramatic defection from the Ottoman ranks and his consistent military triumphs conferred a robust length of charismatic authority. However, and more significantly, Skanderbeg's non-autocratic rule in the League gave him a degree of institutional reinforcement which was affirmed through the aforementioned oaths of allegiance, power-sharing, and the coordinated military hierarchy. These constitute the rudiments of an early prototype of a rational-legal order (Weber, 1919, pp. 5-7).

The League's cohesion, furthermore, heavily rested on this negotiated authority. Governance was defined by power-sharing, rivalry, and recalibration. The tensions among the principal noble houses such as the Arianiti, Dukagjini, Zaharia, and Kastrioti reveal the internal logic of a federative arrangement that did not disassemble quickly, albeit faced structural challenges (Castellan, 1992). In 1456, Gjergj Arianiti's refusal to aid Skanderbeg and his engagement with Venice (Frashëri 1964, p. 78) exemplifies how precarious the balance of interests in the League was to maintain. Such episodes do not detract from its proto-state character, however, but prove a certain type of institutional maturity.

Decentralization, contestation, and negotiated leadership are not random aberrations but actually defining features of early political formation (Head, 1995, p. 109-128).

In sum, assessed through a Weberian lens, the League of Lezhë fulfills the core criteria of governmental legitimacy.

III.II Customary Authority and the Limits of Legal-Rationality

The legal dimensions of the League of Lezhë are trickier than most criteria to judge, primarily due to the lack of written record or sufficient evidence. As such it would be overstated to claim that the League possessed a codified, bureaucratic legal system, but it is equally reductive to suggest an absence of juridical authority of any kind. The existence and application of customary law—most notably the Albanian *Kanun,* which, in itself, possessed Ottoman implementary roots—point to a functioning, albeit decentralized, legal culture. Traditionally attributed to Skanderbeg's right-hand man, Lekë Dukagjini, but retroactively canonized during the Rilindja nationalist revival, the *Kanun* encompassed the corpus of customary norms that governed everyday Albanian life well before its full codification (Fischer and Schmitt, 2022, pp. 115–124)

The *Kanun* was most likely transmitted orally in Skanderbeg's time, especially due to the presence of Indo-European pagan rites, rules, and directions within it which mandate a timely procession that pierces through the League's Albanian population and reaches later centuries (Fortson, 2010, p. 212; Lafe, 2021, pp. 75–96; Joseph, Costanzo and Slocum, 2024; Yamamoto, 2005, p. 44; Trnavci, 2010, pp. 201–215). Furthermore, a range of early ethnographic and legal-historical sources confirm its operative presence. Edith Durham, writing in the early twentieth century, observed that many of the laws she encountered in northern Albania had pre-Ottoman origins and likely persisted from earlier orders (Durham, 1903-1944, pp. 10-13). Similarly, Gjeçovi's codification of the *Kanun*, while formalized later,

drew on longstanding oral traditions that governed key aspects of social and political life, including blood feuds (*gjakmarrja*), property inheritance, kinship obligations, and communal dispute resolution (Gjeçovi, 1933/1989).

Nevertheless, one must be cautious not to romanticize the role of the *Kanun* within the League. There is insufficient archival evidence to suggest that the League itself formally codified or institutionally enforced a unified legal code across its member territories. Its application was undoubtedly uneven, subject to regional variation, and dependent on local enforcement. Compared to more centralized medieval legal systems, such as Dušan's Code of 1349 (Fine, 1994, pp. 310-320), the League's legal framework was diffuse. In this regard, the League lacked legal-rational authority in Weberian terms because it did not institutionalize law through bureaucratic structures (Weber, 1919, p. 4).

Such reliance on tradition, however, raises theoretical questions. As Bartelson (1995) argues, all sovereignty is ultimately constructed through legal fictions: that is, through narratives that naturalize contested authority as coherent and continuous. The League's invocation of customary law can itself be viewed as a type of legal fiction. It did not constitute a state-backed judiciary but functioned as a socially legitimated structure for adjudicating disputes. What the League lacked in codified legal-rational structure, it compensated for through customary order grounded in tradition. Max Weber identifies this form as traditional authority—legitimacy not derived from statute or bureaucracy, but from sanctified custom and lineage (Weber, 1919, pp. 4–7). The *Kanun*, transmitted orally and enforced socially, offered precisely such a juridical substrate: it regulated inheritance, obligation, honour, and retribution, and was widely accepted across northern Albania as binding law (Gjeçovi, 1989, pp. xiii–xviii).

Comparative cases strengthen this reading: the Icelandic Commonwealth (930–1262) and the Swiss cantons of the late Middle Ages similarly operated with minimal central enforcement, relying instead on customary norms, collective arbitration, and distributed authority. These decentralized systems, as Head argues, represent functional legal orders rooted in negotiated legitimacy rather than codified institutionalism (Head, 1995, pp. 55–58, 109–128). Thus, it was a functioning legal order without formal codification.

III.III Fiscal Coordination and Extractive Capacity

Fiscal matters constitute the third pillar in the evaluation of the League of Lezhë's proto-state credentials. While this domain presents greater evidentiary challenges than others, the goal here is not to exaggerate limited data, but to assess the League's economic organization within its historical and theoretical context. Nonetheless, the League's fiscal architecture reveals distinct features of organized resource coordination (Fine, 1994, pp. 556-558).

It is well-documented that the League operated on a basis of collective financing. Member lords contributed men, arms, and provisions to a shared military effort while otherwise retaining jurisdictional sovereignty over their domains (Fox, 1993, p. 195). These contributions, while informal and negotiated, represented a coherent wartime economy not dissimilar to those seen in the Swiss Confederacy or the Lombard League during the same period (Head, 1995, pp. 45-61). These cases confirm that decentralized fiscal cooperation was a legitimate and common model in late medieval Europe.

From a theoretical perspective, Charles Tilly's model of extraction and protection proves particularly instructive. Early states, in his view, functioned as "protection rackets" with the advantage of legitimacy, and organised coercion and security in exchange for resources (Tilly, 1992, pp. 81-87). The League fits this pattern well: its financing mechanisms

were organized around existential threat, with lords contributing to collective defense as part of a reciprocal system of survival. This aligns with Hintze's (1975) assertion that fiscal modernization often begins with the ability to extract and coordinate wartime resources, even with permanent bureaucracies absent.

Yet to evaluate the League's fiscal legitimacy, one must also examine its underlying economic substrata. Fernand Braudel's (1972) conception of the *longue durée* points to the enduring influence of material conditions—like terrain, trade networks, provisioning routes—on the structural limits and possibilities of economic systems. In this respect, the League's mountainous geography, clan-based provisioning, and limited monetization constrained fiscal centralization, but simultaneously shaped alternative forms of contribution. What emerged was not taxation in the bureaucratic sense, but a system of distributed provisioning centered on kinship and customary obligations.

In sum, the League of Lezhë did not maintain a centralized treasury, nor did it issue currency or impose universal taxation. Nonetheless, it organized war finance through reciprocal obligation, social norms, and military provisioning. It fulfilled, in partial form, the conditions of fiscal functionality as articulated by Tilly, Hintze, and Braudel: the capacity to mobilize, extract, and coordinate resources under the pressures of collective survival. It was, in short, a functional wartime economy embedded in a proto-state logic.

III.IV The War Machine and Infrastructural Power

Of all the functions the League of Lezhë performed, none so fiercely forged and materialized its character as that of its military. Where other Balkan resistances flickered, whether caught between various regional egoisms or, otherwise, crushed under the rapid Ottoman succession, Skanderbeg's army managed to develop further coherence, endure, even expand (Housley, 1992).

The League, under Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, not only resisted the Ottomans but managed to develop a military machine durable enough to repel the Empire's most elite legions for over two decades, and that was precisely during its imperial apex (Frashëri, 2002, pp. 162–165). The League forced the Ottomans to concede near humiliating losses at Torvioll (1444) (Frashëri, 2002, p. 139), Mokra (1445), Otonetë (1446) (Francione, 2006, p. 310-374), Oranik (1448) (O'Connell, 2009, p. 34), Polog (1453) (Buda and Lloshi, 1985, p. 90), Krujë (1450), Albulena (1457), Ohrid (1464), Mokra (1462)—among many others (Hodgkinson, 1999).

To appreciate the scale of this resistance is to recall the historical context: this was not the senile Ottoman Empire of the 19th century, nor the confused administrative leviathan of later centuries. The League of Lezhë endured through one of the most formidable phases of Ottoman expansionism, including the fall of Constantinople in 1453—the Büyük Fetih—when Mehmed II cemented the Empire's imperial apex (Quataert, 2005). And yet, somehow, the Ottomans lost. Repeatedly. That Skanderbeg's revolt not only preceded this seismic conquest by a decade, but that the League itself persisted until 1479, stands for its extraordinary resilience amid a dramatic geopolitical transformation.

The early victory at Torvioll (1444), in which Skanderbeg's force of 15,000 defeated an Ottoman army of 25,000 under Ali Pasha, cannot be summarized as just a terrain-knowledge-meets-ambush summary. Hamza Kastrioti, a relative and soldier of Skanderbeg, performed a hidden cavalry maneuver during this battle which is a signal of organized command that followed through thousands of men (Rogers, 2010, p. 363). In political terms, this was a clear assertion of military cohesion and political unity. Further on, the Battle of Albulena (1457), in which 10,000 Albanians routed an Ottoman army of 80,000 troops remains one of the most decisive blows dealt to the Empire on European soil during the 15th century (Fine, 1994, p. 558).

Not once but thrice, the Sieges of Krujë (1450, 1466, 1467) held off full-scale Ottoman invasions. The first siege involved approximately 100,000 Ottoman troops under Sultan Murad II and his son, Mehmed the Conqueror. Despite overwhelming odds, the Albanian garrison of roughly 1,500 under Vrana Konti held out through strategic sabotage of siege equipment and the use of underground tunnels (Setton, 1978, p. 101; Hodgkinson, 1999, pp. 148-151).

What is militarily astonishing is the persistence and success of a decentralized, largely untrained army. These were not salaried soldiers like the Venetian mercenaries, nor conscripts from the devshirme system trained for decades. These were men bound by kin, language, and increasingly, by a political identity. That the League could secure such victories, and do so repeatedly over 35 years, signifies the emergence of an enduring military institution. In Tillyan terms, this constitutes a war-making project that was simultaneously state-making (Tilly, 1992, pp. 20-27).

Furthermore, this military order resisted two fronts, those of the Ottoman and Venetian forces. In the Albanian–Venetian War (1447–48), Skanderbeg also defeated Venetian troops at the Battle of the Drin (1448), which forced Venice to concede privileges via the Treaty of 4 October 1448 (Franco, 1539, p. 88).

This military prowess demonstrates proto-statehood via Michael Mann's theory of infrastructural power, which emphasizes the state's ability to organize and implement decisions across its territory. Skanderbeg's sustained military mobilization across fragmented terrain indicates the emergence of such infrastructural capacities which in this case manifested as command coordination, logistical reach, and operational discipline (Mann, 1986).

Whereas S.E. Finer's thesis on the political role of elite military leadership supports this reading from a different, more relational angle. Figures such as Vrana Konti and Moisi

Arianit Golemi functioned beyond the role of feudal magnates, acting as components of a militarized political elite whose authority derived as much from coordinated martial leadership as from inherited title. This foreshadows the type of political-military fusion Finer associates with formative state actors (Finer, 1975; Hodgkinson, 1999, pp. 148-160).

This is further supported by the fact that the military command of the League displayed moral and institutional sophistication. Vrana Konti's refusal of a 300,000 aspra bribe (Babinger 1992, p. 60), and Moisi Arianit Golemi's return to the League after defection, exhibit a martial ethos tied to political cause (Buda, 2002). The League produced more than victories; it produced a proto-state military culture grounded in loyalty, sacrifice, and national belonging.

Moreover, the military afterlife of the League extended well beyond the Balkans and its own livelihood. As Noel Malcolm documents, "Albanian light cavalry became a standard component of armed forces in most of Italy, and in other armies too" (Malcolm, 2015, p. 16). These stradiots, of which many descended from Skanderbeg's fighters, were deployed not just in the Italian wars, but in the service of England, France, and Spain. "Troops serving under Henry VIII included 'Arbannoises'," Malcolm notes, while "Albanian soldiers fought in the King of France's army... [and] the Spanish army in Flanders in the 1570s had Albanian stradiots" (Malcolm, 2015, p. 16). This was the continuation of a distinct military identity born in Lezhë and exported across Europe.

III.V: Diplomatic Recognition and International Legibility

In classical and contemporary political theory, the capacity to conduct diplomacy—particularly the capacity to enter binding agreements, receive foreign envoys, and be acknowledged as a juridical person in the international system—constitutes a hallmark of statehood. As Robert Jackson (1990) in *Quasi-States* and Stephen Krasner (1999) in

Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy argue, international recognition cannot pass over as a symptom of internally constituted legitimacy, but evolves as a formative constitutive act of sovereign political entities. It is through recognition by other states—particularly, at that, hostile or rival powers—that proto-states move from fleeting insurrectionary phenomena to diplomatic actors. That is precisely why the League of Lezhë exhibited such international legibility. This is all the more remarkable given that the diplomatic relations of the 15th century were characterized by dynastic entanglements, papal politics, and a highly exclusivist Christian-Muslim binary. As Schmitt observes, Skanderbeg was regarded by contemporaries as a "vital link" in Europe's Christian military coalition (Schmitt, 2009, pp. 324–325). The League via Skanderbeg managed to evade the perception of a simple rebellion, and began to increasingly assert itself as a sovereign belligerent—by its enemies, allies, and even those who oscillated between the two.

III.V.1 International Legal Personhood

Throughout its resistance, Skanderbeg and the League of Lezhë concluded at least five major treaties and several ad hoc alliances with powers including Venice, the Kingdom of Naples, the Papacy, and the Despotate of Morea (Marković, 2004, p. 207).

A key example of diplomatic autonomy was the Treaty of Gaeta (26 March 1451), concluded between Skanderbeg and Alfonso V of Aragon and Naples. Represented by two ecclesiastical envoys—Stefan, an Orthodox bishop, and de Berguçi, a Catholic Dominican—Skanderbeg recognized Neapolitan suzerainty in symbolic terms, securing in return a military alliance and protection pact (Frashëri, 2002, pp. 310–316). Yet the treaty's language, consistent with European diplomatic norms, granted the League direct military aid and affirmed its entry into the Latin Christian international order on equal terms (Tibbetts, 2016, p. 571).

Another critical moment was the Albanian-Venetian Peace Treaty of 1448, which ended a military conflict and resulted in Venice recognizing the League's territorial claims, paying an annual tribute of 1,400 ducats, and granting commercial privileges. It affirmed the League's capacity for territorial negotiation and diplomatic extraction (Noli, 1947, p. 40).

According to Daniel Philpott (2001), these treaties present *constitutive recognition* by affirming the League's sovereign identity within the European order. For Robert Jackson (1990), such recognition conferred juridical legitimacy that compensated for institutional underdevelopment. In both frameworks, the League functioned as a subject of international law.

Stephen Krasner's (1999) theory of *organized hypocrisy* also applies: though Venice and Naples did not formally recognize the League as sovereign, they nonetheless entered binding agreements with it. Such contradictions suggest that legal personality often emerges through practice rather than official acknowledgment, and for the League, this is a bonus.

III.V.2 Enemy at the Table: Ottoman Diplomacy

In sharp contrast to the many insurgencies that are merely suppressed or ignored politically by empires, the Ottoman Empire engaged diplomatically with Skanderbeg and the League, which then meant their recognition of it as a de facto separate military-political entity. While direct treaties were rare, the repeated negotiation of truces—including decade-long ceasefires in 1460 and 1463, notably by Mehmed II—demonstrates the Ottomans' acknowledgment of the League as a legitimate, problematic adversary (Langenheim, 2022). Notably, the Ottomans had no compunction about refusing recognition to other Balkan actors, yet they continually entered into communications and strategic calculations with the League (Noli, 1947, p. 35).

Here, Stephen Krasner's theory of *organized hypocrisy* once more comes into sharp focus. While the Ottomans officially maintained the fiction of imperial indivisibility, their actions betrayed a pragmatic accommodation of the League as a quasi-sovereign actor (Krasner, 1999). This selective diplomacy demonstrates Krasner's point: sovereignty in practice is often bent by necessity and geostrategic interest, even when official doctrine resists such concessions.

To further elucidate this point, this proto-diplomatic framing of Albania as a recognizable territorial subject persisted into later Ottoman-Venetian treaties, which explicitly referenced "the Albanian lands" (Arnavudluk) as a negotiated unit of sovereignty (Malcolm, 2015, p. 188).

III.V.3 *Athleta Christi* and Sanctified Sovereignty

The most robust form of political-theological recognition for the League of Lezhë, however, came from its ally, the Papacy. In 1463, Pope Pius II launched a new anti-Ottoman crusade and appointed Skanderbeg as *captain general* of the papal forces, cementing his role as *Athleta Christi*. This further placed Skanderbeg and his territories alongside sovereign rulers and princely commanders within the crusading coalition. The Pope's formal correspondence also treated him as an equal, if beloved, interlocutor, and Skanderbeg's access to papal military aid, indulgences for his soldiers, and ceremonial legitimacy marked clear recognition within Latin Europe's Canonico-political order (Pius II, 1584).

Even after Pius II's death, successive pontiffs continued their correspondence and material support. In 1466, Skanderbeg was received in Rome by Pope Paul II, who not only granted him funding but ceremonially crowned him "Alexander, King of the Epirotes," complete with a sword and helmet (Freely, 2009, p. 111). This alignment also enabled Skanderbeg to legally break Ottoman treaties without incurring the stain of perfidy. In 15th

century customary international law, Christian rulers were permitted to violate agreements with "infidels" when sanctioned by papal authority (Frashëri 2002, p. 427). Thus, the League operated with a form of diplomatic impunity, functionally equivalent to that of sovereign Catholic kingdoms.

In Philpott's terms, this presents *recognitional agency*—the ability of one sovereign actor to authoritatively define the international identity of another (Philpott, 2001). The Pope offered not just moral and popular endorsement but internationally formalized the League's inclusion in a Christian order of states. Likewise, Jackson's theory of *juridical recognition* explains how such affiliations compensated for institutional gaps, granting the League a legitimacy disproportionate to its internal consolidation (Jackson, 1990).

III.V.4 Gates Closed, Status Sealed

Far from the isolationist, Skanderbeg maintained consistent, direct correspondence with the courts of John Hunyadi in Hungary and with Serbian lords such as Đurađ Branković and Stefan Crnojević (Spremić, 2011, pp. 13–29). These were structured, multi-channel, and long-term diplomatic relations. Furthermore, envoys such as Pal and Andrea Gazulli handled everything from correspondence to the procurement of arms, grain, and mercenary support. Their travel routes, which were mapped across Apulia, Ragusa, and the Hungarian plain, formed a shadow foreign ministry operating beneath and alongside the League's military strategy. In 1456, Stefan Maramonte was dispatched as ambassador to Milan, where he was received by the Sforza court — again, not as a courtier, not as a noble, but as a diplomatic agent of a recognized political body (Schmitt, 2011, pp. 68–69).

But diplomacy, like any negotiation, often exposes fractures, and one of the clearest moments of this came during the 1448 Second Battle of Kosovo. Skanderbeg had pledged to support Hunyadi's anti-Ottoman crusade and personally organized an Albanian auxiliary force

to join him. But the Serbian Despot Đurađ Branković, who was ostensibly neutral, but wary of Skanderbeg's rising power, refused to grant passage. The Albanian troops were blocked at the gates of Serbia. Hunyadi, left without the expected reinforcements Skanderbeg had pledged and Branković had blocked, suffered a devastating defeat (Babinger, 1992, p. 40; Sedlar, 1994, p. 393).

At first glance, this appears as classical betrayal. But on a closer reading, it reveals something raw about diplomacy. Serbia saw the League as more than a military actor, indeed, as a potential regional hegemon whose coordination with Hungary could tilt the balance of Balkan power. But, within the realms of this thesis, Serbia's blocking of Skanderbeg's army was not a rejection of friendship, but a valuable act of recognition. It meant the League's intervention mattered.

More importantly, Skanderbeg's response was not vengeful. He did not sever ties with Serbia; he, instead, recalibrated. Relations with Stefan Crnojević continued, especially in Upper Zeta, where marriages and military coordination persisted through the 1450s (Spremić, 2011, pp. 13–29). This ability to absorb diplomatic setbacks is yet another marker of the League's proto-state resilience that extended beyond feudal or noble disagreements, and assumed a diplomatic, if impersonal, form that accounted for more than imminent interests.

In summary, the League of Lezhë exhibited clear markers of proto-statehood in the realm of diplomacy. To recount all subchapters, what indeed aligns, is that the League was not recognized in spite of its informality—it was recognized *because* its informal power was impossible to ignore.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that the League of Lezhë (1444–1479) constituted a proto-Albanian state—not a modern nation-state, but a historically constrained political formation that enacted sovereignty across six key domains. It governed through federative consensus, mobilized armies, enforced customary law, extracted wartime resources, brokered international treaties, and anchored a distinct Albanian political identity. While lacking formal institutions or codified legal infrastructure, its cohesion rested on oath-bound authority, kinship-based provisioning, shared norms, and diplomatic recognition from both Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

Critics may argue that the League was merely a confederation of noble interests, or a tactical wartime front. Yet to do so is to overlook the functionality it achieved: a structured military hierarchy with strategic command; negotiated fiscal contributions; juridical reliance on customary law; and diplomatic agency that secured treaties, tributes, and crusading honors. Rather than bypassing theoretical alternatives—such as Krasner's sovereignty-as-performance or Brubaker's ethnopolitical fluidity—this thesis integrates them to affirm that proto-statehood best describes the League's hybrid sovereignty.

The legacy of the League of Lezhë is not that it failed to become a state, but that it taught a stateless people how to govern, resist, and imagine themselves as sovereign. From its ashes rose a political reflex that would define the Albanian path for centuries, particularly within the Ottoman imperial apparatus. This is evidenced even decades later, when in 1551 a group of notables, from Himarë "up to the country of Dukagjin" met on the Rodon peninsula to continue the League's effort of coordinated resistance and strategic autonomy (Malcolm, 2015, p. 126). The League's structural logic did not vanish with its collapse, far from it. It adapted to new imperial contexts while remaining as it was: Albanian.

The League of Lezhë served its historical purpose as an Albanian proto-state. It enabled, in Fine's words (1994) " ... Albania [to] rest in peace for a few years" (p. 558). And that is why it deserves its place in the realm of medieval early state-formation historiography, that is, between sword and crown.

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