

**FROM FACTIONALISM TO REGIONAL ORDER: MERCHANTS,  
ARTISAN GUILDS AND THE BUSHATLI FAMILY IN  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SHKODRA**

by  
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Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Sabanci University  
December 2024

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ARTISAN GUILDS AND THE BUSHATLI FAMILY IN  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SHKODRA**

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Date of Approval: December 20, 2024

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## ABSTRACT

### FROM FACTIONALISM TO REGIONAL ORDER: MERCHANTS, ARTISAN GUILDS AND THE BUSHATLI FAMILY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SHKODRA

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History, Ph.D Dissertation, December 2024

Dissertation Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Ozil

Keywords: Shkodra, factionalism, provincial order, *ayans*, early modern Ottoman  
Empire

This dissertation examines the formation of local power structures, with a particular emphasis on the case of Shkodra during the eighteenth century. This era witnessed significant transformations due to the implementation of new fiscal and administrative reforms by the Ottoman central government, which profoundly influenced the sociopolitical landscape in the provinces. Consequently, a structural shift emerged within the Ottoman state, transitioning from a vertical to a horizontal model, wherein local elites and communities collaborated with central authorities. Through a comprehensive micro-study of this province, this research investigates the local, regional, and imperial forces affecting the province and analyzes how the province, in turn, impacts these layers. The primary objective of this study is to illuminate these layers and their interrelationships, thereby clarifying their collective contribution to the establishment of a provincial order. This dissertation contributes to the understanding of provincial order construction through a detailed case study that explores the dynamics of power within a specific area situated at the intersection of local, regional, and imperial networks. It seeks to identify the key actors involved in this process and to analyze the interplay of power among them, thereby elucidating the formation of the provincial network. The research traces the emergence of the *ayan* (local notables) and contextualizes this phenomenon within specific historical circumstances, articulating the mechanisms that facilitated this development. To support this analysis, the thesis makes a comparative examination of primary sources from Ottoman, Italian, and Albanian historical archives.

## ÖZET

### HİZİPÇİLİK TEN BÖLGESEL NİZAMA: ON SEKİZİNCİ YÜZYIL İŞKODRA’SINDA TÜCCARLAR, ESNAF LONCALARI VE BUŞATLI AİLESİ

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Tarih, Doktora Tezi, Aralık 2024

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Ayşe Ozil

Anahtar Kelimeler: İşkodra, hizipçilik, bölgesel nizam, ayanlar, Yeniçağ Osmanlı  
İmparatorluğu

Bu tez, on sekizinci yüzyılda İşkodra örneğine üzerinden yerel iktidar yapılarının oluşumunu incelemektedir. Bu dönem, Osmanlı merkezi hükümetinin taşradaki sosyopolitik manzarayı derinden etkileyen yeni mali ve idari reformlar uygulaması nedeniyle önemli dönüşümlere tanıklık etmiştir. Sonuç olarak, Osmanlı devletinde dikey bir modelden, yerel elitlerin ve toplulukların merkezi otoritelerle işbirliği yaptığı yatay bir modele geçiş yapan yapısal bir değişim ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu araştırma, bölgenin kapsamlı bir mikro incelemesi yoluyla, bölgeyi etkileyen çeşitli yerel, bölgesel ve emperyal katmanları araştırmakta ve vilayetin bu katmanları nasıl etkilediğini analiz etmektedir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, bu katmanları ve bu katmanların birbirleriyle olan ilişkilerini aydınlatmak ve böylece bir taşra düzeninin kurulmasına yaptıkları kolektif katkıyı açıklığa kavuşturmaktır. Bu tez, yerel, bölgesel ve emperyal ağların kesişme noktasında yer alan belirli bir bölgedeki iktidar dinamiklerini araştıran ayrıntılı bir vaka çalışması aracılığıyla bölgesel nizamın inşasının anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu süreçte yer alan kilit aktörleri tanımlamayı ve aralarındaki güç etkileşimini analiz etmeyi, böylece taşra ağının oluşumunu aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, ayanların ortaya çıkışının izini sürmekte ve bu olguyu belirli tarihsel koşullar içinde bağlamsallaştırarak bu gelişimi kolaylaştıran mekanizmaları ifade etmektedir. Bu analizi desteklemek için Osmanlı, İtalyan ve Arnavutluk arşivlerinde yer alan birincil kaynakların karşılaştırmalı bir incelemesi yapılmıştır.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this PhD thesis would not have been achievable without the invaluable support, guidance, and encouragement provided by numerous individuals to whom I am profoundly indebted. First, I would like to thank Professor Tülay Artan for welcoming me to Sabancı University and serving as my supervisor for five formative years. I am deeply grateful to Professor Ayşe Ozil, who kindly stepped in as my supervisor and provided me with unwavering support, insightful guidance, and constant encouragement. She reviewed my draft multiple times with immense patience. Thanks to her mentorship, I was able to complete this thesis in a remarkably short period. Words cannot fully express my gratitude to her.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Ferenc Péter Csirkés for his invaluable teachings and unwavering support, particularly during the challenges of the pandemic. His departure from our history program was a great loss, as many students were deprived of the opportunity to benefit from his expertise. I am deeply grateful to Professor Abdurrahman Atçıl for his insightful feedback on my project presentation, which greatly contributed to the refinement of my research. I also extend my sincere appreciation to Professors Akşin Somel and Hülya Canbakal for their constructive insights, which significantly enriched this dissertation. Professor Tommaso Stefini, whose arrival to our program enhanced its academic quality, provided invaluable feedback and rigorous critiques during thesis presentations, playing a crucial role in shaping my work. Likewise, I am indebted to Professors Nedim Nomer and Oya İklil Selçuk, whose comments during my dissertation defense provided valuable perspectives that further enhanced this study. I am also profoundly appreciative of Professor Özgür Oral, whose expertise in Ottoman-Venetian relations and Mediterranean commerce proved essential for my research. His guidance and feedback were instrumental in refining my arguments.

I am profoundly grateful to the distinguished faculty of İstanbul Şehir University, where I pursued my MA studies. Despite the university's unfortunate closure, the intellectual foundation it provided continues to shape my academic pursuits. Special thanks are due to Professor Kahraman Şakul, whose unwavering support since my MA years has been invaluable. His insightful feedback and exemplary dedication to academia have been a guiding light throughout this journey. I am also deeply indebted to Professor Hasan Bello, whose extensive assistance and provision

of resources from Albania significantly enriched my research. Beyond his academic contributions, his friendship has been a source of encouragement, especially during my visits to Albania.

I would like to formally express my profound gratitude to the staff of the Ottoman Archives, the Central State Archives in Albania, the Albanian National Library, the State Archives of Venice, ISAM, and the Information Center at Sabancı University for their invaluable support and for providing access to essential resources. I am also grateful to the staff of the FASS Dean's Office, particularly Sumru Küçüka and Tuğcan Başaran, for their assistance in navigating administrative processes and providing procedural guidance. Furthermore, I wish to convey a special thanks to Sedef Uluğ, whose patience and assistance were essential during the concluding stages of my PhD, facilitating the completion of this dissertation.

Among my colleagues and friends at Sabancı University, I am especially grateful to İsa Uğurlu, who has been a steadfast companion since my arrival. His unwavering support, patience, and expertise in Ottoman paleography have been invaluable throughout the various stages of my PhD. His guidance and generosity played a crucial role in the successful completion of this dissertation, for which I am profoundly thankful. I am deeply thankful to Seven Taştan, Abdullah Güloğlu, and Zeynep Öztürk for their unwavering support during challenging times at Sabancı University. Their kindness and encouragement have been a constant source of strength. I am also grateful to my dear friends Bahadır Yolcu, Cevat Sucu, Fatih Zeybek, Fırat Köklü, Mehmet Sezgin, Deniz Ali Uyan, Meryem Yetkin, Nimet İpek, Oğuzhan Doğan, Oğuzhan Duru, Samer Sharani, and Şeyma Nur Temel for their companionship and support. They made academic life more enjoyable, and for that, I am deeply appreciative.

Special thanks go to my longtime friends from my undergraduate years at MS-GSÜ, Yunus Emre Doğdu and Berkay Yekta Özer, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been invaluable throughout this journey. I am especially grateful to Rizwan Jahangir, one of my closest friends during both the challenging and rewarding years at Sabancı University. His and his family's constant kindness, generosity, and positivity provided me with much-needed strength during critical times. Rizwan's technical expertise in LaTeX, along with his selfless act of offering me his dormitory room as a workspace, played a crucial role in the successful completion of this dissertation. For his meticulous proofreading and editorial assistance, I extend my sincere gratitude to Stephen J. Schalm. His careful attention to detail and invaluable suggestions have greatly improved the clarity and coherence of this dissertation.

I want to express my gratitude to my friend, Zeyd Koytak, whose companionship and encouragement during the final months of my thesis writing have been a constant source of motivation. My heartfelt gratitude extends to Damla akmak, one of my first friends at Sabancı University, whose unwavering support and companionship were invaluable during the challenging months of dissertation writing. A special thank you is owed to Mine Arslan, whose steadfast belief in me, constant encouragement, and unwavering readiness to offer help and kindness were a source of immense strength. Her support was instrumental in seeing me through this journey, and I could not have accomplished it without her.

I am also indebted to Francesco Navarra, Samer Sharani, and Mert Pekdođdu for their assistance in resolving accommodation challenges during 2024. During my final year, I received invaluable financial support from Xhoni Qoku, Ahmet Yařar Aıkgöz, and Arber Qerimi, for which I am profoundly grateful. I am especially grateful to Abdullah Karaarslan and Fatih Dođan for their generosity, unwavering support, and willingness to share their resources. Their kindness and assistance played a crucial role in easing my journey and greatly contributed to the successful completion of this dissertation. The generosity of these persons enabled me to remain in Turkey during the most critical phase of my dissertation, without which the completion of this work would have been significantly more challenging.

Lastly, I extend my deepest gratitude to my parents, Ismet and Servete, and my sister, Flavia, for their unconditional love, boundless patience, and unwavering faith in me. Their steadfast support has been the cornerstone of my academic journey, providing me with the strength and determination to persevere through challenges. Without their sacrifices, encouragement, and belief in my aspirations, the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible.



*To my beloved family*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This dissertation introduces an innovative framework that explores the emergence and development of Ottoman provinces, with a particular emphasis on the formation of local power structures in the eighteenth century. Through an in-depth case study of Shkodra, it examines the intersection of the socio-economic, political, military, and administrative dynamics of the Ottoman Empire and the effect that these dynamics had on the transformation of the provincial landscape. The new circumstances resulted in a power vacuum that prompted significant local developments, particularly the competition between the urban and rural elites of Shkodra for resources and dominance over the governorship position. During this process, two significant developments occurred: the disruption of the social order and the emergence of bilateral factionalism. Consequently, the fighting factions from various backgrounds were aligned with the two most influential artisan guilds in Shkodra: the tanners and the tailors.

Factionalism significantly shaped the political landscape of Shkodra between 1722 and 1757. This influence resulted from a complex process that involved, and sometimes excluded, local and interregional actors. Despite the divisive nature of this political phenomenon, the society of Shkodra managed to adapt to the situation and utilize it as a means of political participation. Initially, the government viewed these factions as mere bandits, but the central authorities later recognized them. During the eighteenth century, occurrences similar to those observed in Shkodra were also observed in several other cities within the empire. So, the question arises: what role did the factions play within the wider context of Ottoman provincial politics? What was the stance of the central authorities regarding the emergence of local political organizations, and how did these organizations influence the dynamics of center-periphery relationships?

Shkodra is a compelling case study of the Ottoman Balkan provinces, particularly because it offers insights into a context where factionalism has not been documented or studied until now. In this context, factionalism refers not to informal conflicts or rivalries among prominent figures but rather to a structured and resilient political and social competition system. The faction comprised groups and individuals with common objectives and a unified identity. The organization was structured according to the participants' patron-client relationships and common interests. From this perspective, Shkodra is identified as a distinctive case within the context of the Ottoman Balkans. Nevertheless, this contrasts with the numerous studies on Arabic-speaking regions and Anatolia, highlighting Shkodra's uniqueness within the broader research landscape. This study may serve as a reference for other provincial examinations on the Ottoman Balkans during the same timeframe.

In comparison to the other case studies, the factions in Shkodra were established primarily around the two principal guilds of tanners and tailors. The two factions delineated the sociopolitical landscape of Shkodra, with the tailors deriving their influence from the commercial side of the town. Conversely, the tanners were established in the old town of Shkodra and held a power base within the rural political structures of the region. In addition to the two guilds, the most prominent members of the factions were merchants, who historically were members of the tailors. The political leadership of the various factions was predominantly assumed by members of established households with historical connections to Shkodra. Specifically, the Çavuşzades, originating from the commercial side of the town, emerged as the leaders among tailors. In contrast, the Yusuf-beg-zades and their affiliated branch, the Bushatlis from the town of Bushat, were recognized as the leaders of the tanners. Their competition for the governorship position in Shkodra marked a notable political development, as various local groups collaborated within factions to secure an official role. These alliances based on factions introduced a new dimension to the relationship between the province and the imperial center. It symbolized a new provincial order, where the central actors had to collaborate with local elites and communities.

Shkodra played a significant role as a commercial participant in the trade of the Adriatic Sea and maintained a close relationship with Venice, which functioned as its primary importer of goods. During this period, Barbary corsairs from the African coast operated from the coastal town of Ulcinj, part of the Shkodra *sandjak*. Collaborating with local captains, they engaged in piracy that disrupted trade in the Adriatic Sea, leading to considerable economic damage and navigation security concerns for the non-Ottoman subjects. This situation resulted in diplomatic conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and various foreign powers, particularly in-



volving Venice. This prompted Venice to intervene directly in the factional conflicts in Shkodra to neutralize the town of Ulcinj, thereby securing control over the Adriatic Sea trade. How much influence did Venice have, and in what ways did they engage with the factions? What were the responses of Ulcinj and the Barbary corsairs to both central and external pressures, and how did these responses manifest in the local political and economic landscape of Shkodra?

The tanners' faction, led by Bushatli Mehmed, emerged victoriously from the factional clash. He successfully secured the allegiance of both rural powerholders, including marginalized Catholic tribesmen<sup>1</sup>, as well as the merchant class represented by the Tailors factions. Consequently, Bushatli Mehmed assumed the role of governor of Shkodra, from which he initiated efforts to establish a regional order. He achieved this by exercising substantial political and economic influence across various districts, ultimately emerging as a significant power magnate. A significant development associated with the Bushatlis was the establishment of a regional order—a political formation that encompassed neighboring districts—under the leadership of Mehmed Pasha. The Bushatlis were pioneers in this endeavor within the Ottoman Balkans, followed subsequently by Ali Pasha of Tepelen in Yanya and Osman Pasvanoglu in Belgrade. Under the leadership of Mehmed, the Bushatlis from the year 1757 until 1775 managed to consolidate their power in the region, before even the initial rise of the two most known figures among the Ottoman power magnates.

What was the role of factionalism in the rise of local *ayans*, such as Bushatli Mehmed, and how does this phenomenon enhance our understanding of the formation of the local power structures? In what ways did the Bushatlis emerge and establish a regional order, and how did they legitimize this order about the prevailing circumstances of that period? This dissertation seeks to address these two significant questions that serve as the foundational pillars of its exploration.

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<sup>1</sup>In this context, the terms "tribe" and "tribesmen" are used to describe socio-political entities that predominantly inhabited the northern regions of present-day Albania. Owing to their military capabilities, these individuals were employed as mercenaries by local landlords to engage in various conflicts. Through this involvement, they progressively integrated into the Ottoman provincial system during the eighteenth century.

## 1.2 Historical Context

Shkodra<sup>2</sup>, situated on the northern coast of Albania, has historically served as a significant political and commercial hub, acting as a capital for various ancient and medieval states. The city's strategic location adjacent to Lake Shkodra and its surrounding fertile lands have created optimal conditions for social and economic flourishing. Additionally, the proximity to key trade routes, both terrestrial and maritime, has fostered a robust community of craftsmen who have played a pivotal role in the city's economic activities. The presence of a castle situated on a hill at the city's entrance has provided vital protection for Shkodra and its inhabitants against external threats. The combination of geographical advantages and human factors has facilitated the enduring development of Shkodra, establishing it as one of the oldest settlements on the Balkan Peninsula.

Prior to the Ottoman conquest, Shkodra was incorporated into the Venetian dominions in the Adriatic, specifically within an administrative unit referred to as Albania Veneta. This transition took place in 1395 when the Balsha family transferred control of the city to Venice. Subsequently, Shkodra became politically and economically integrated into the Venetian state. The aristocratic families of Shkodra acquired citizenship in Venice, thereby retaining their privileges in return for their allegiance to the Venetian authorities. With the expansion of commercial activities, Shkodra developed into a significant market for the exportation of agricultural products to Venice, thus establishing itself as an integral component of the Venetian Adriatic trade network. To protect their interests in Shkodra, the Venetian government implemented its own administrative framework, appointing Venetian officials who supplanted most local rulers.<sup>3</sup> However, despite this intervention by central authorities, Shkodra in the fifteenth century maintained its own statutes that regulated the social and economic life of the city.<sup>4</sup>

In the late fifteenth century, the Ottoman Empire's expansion towards the Adriatic coast brought them proximity to Shkodra. During the 1470s, Shkodra emerged as a contested frontier zone between the Ottomans and the Venetians. The strategic

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<sup>2</sup>The city's name has its roots in antiquity, though it has been transformed through various iterations over time. In Italian sources from the Middle Ages, the city has been known as "Scutari," a designation that remains in use today. In contrast, Slavic sources refer to both the lake and the city as "Skadar." Following the Ottoman conquest, the city was designated as "İskenderiye" (Alexandria) until the late eighteenth century, mirroring the name of the renowned Egyptian city. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Ottomans adopted the name "İşkodra," which is more closely aligned with the city's original name.

<sup>3</sup>Oliver J. Schmitt, *Arberia Venedike (Venetian Albania) 1392-1479*, (Tirane: Fjala Publishing, 2014).

<sup>4</sup>Lucia Nadin, *Corpus statutario delle Venezie: Statuti di Scutari della prima metà del secolo XIV con le addizioni fino al 1469*, (Roma: Viella, 2002).

significance of the city, along with its castle, made it a key target for the Ottomans, as it controlled crucial routes leading to Montenegro and the Venetian territories along the coast. The capture of Shkodra would thereby undermine Venetian influence in Albania. In 1479, following a protracted siege of the castle, the Ottoman forces successfully compelled the defenders to surrender through an agreement with the Republic of Venice.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, a large portion of the city's population, including a significant number of aristocrats, relocated to other Venetian regions. This mass exodus precipitated a demographic crisis, resulting in a steep decline in Shkodra's population and a profound loss of its urban identity. This process of depopulation continued until the turn of the sixteenth century when hostilities between the Ottomans and Venice came to an end.<sup>6</sup>

Following the conquest, the Ottoman central government established the sanjak of Shkodra, designating the city as its administrative and political center. Moreover, the government implemented measures to revitalize the city, including tax exemptions and initiatives to encourage public investments.<sup>7</sup> The city experienced a gradual recovery during the sixteenth century, characterized by a relatively low population and restricted trade primarily conducted via maritime routes. At this time, Shkodra's exports primarily consisted of agricultural products, indicating a deficiency in manufactured goods produced by local artisans.<sup>8</sup> The trade routes linking the city to the inner Balkans became obstructed due to the activities of rebellious Catholic highlanders, who engaged in acts of pillaging and banditry. Furthermore, the city's proximity to the conflict zone involving the Ottomans, Habsburgs, and Venetians, where these empires were engaged in military confrontations, significantly impeded its development.<sup>9</sup>

In the seventeenth century, Shkodra experienced significant recovery and accelerated development, driven by an increase in both population and economic prosperity. Following the departure of the Catholic population from the Venetians during the

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<sup>5</sup>The conquest had a considerable impact on both the Venetian public and the Vatican clergy, subsequently becoming a popular subject for literary works of that period, see: Marin Barleti, *The Siege of Shkodra: Albania's courageous stand against Ottoman conquest, 1478*, trans. and ed. by David Hosaflook, (Tirane: Onufri, 2012).

<sup>6</sup>Stavri Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres nen Sundimin e Bushatllijve* [The Paşalık of Shkodra under the Bushatlis] (1757-1796), (Tirane: Instituti i Historise dhe Gjuhesise, 1964): 35-36.

<sup>7</sup>For more information, see: Selami Pulaha, *Defteri i Regjistrimit te Sanxhakut te Shkodres 1485*, (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave, Instituti i Historise, 1974).

<sup>8</sup>Naçi, Ibid, 37.

<sup>9</sup>Ermanno Orlando, "Tra Venezia e Impero Ottomano: Paci e Confini nei Balcani occidentali (sec. XV-XVI)", in *Balcani occidentali, Adriatico e Venezia fra XIII e XVIII secolo / Der Westliche Balkan, der Adriaraum und Venedig (13-18. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Oliver J. Schmitt, G. Ortalli, (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti and Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 2009): 109-147.

Ottoman conquest, the subsequent Muslim settlers played a dominant role in shaping the city's social, political, and cultural dynamics, as documented by contemporary travelers.<sup>10</sup> Among the notable figures of that period was Evliya Çelebi, who, during his visit to Shkodra in the 1660s, underscored the city's Islamic identity. He highlighted the significant presence of mosques and madrasas, alongside a predominantly Muslim population. In his observations, Çelebi systematically categorized the residents, dividing society into distinct groups comprising military personnel, merchants, fishermen, artisans, clergy, and farmers.<sup>11</sup> The accounts from the seventeenth century provide compelling evidence that Shkodra emerged as a prominent urban center and a significant hub for commerce during this period.

From both administrative and military perspectives, the governorship of Shkodra emerged as a significant reference point for the Ottoman authority, particularly during the Habsburg Wars (1683-1699). The proximity of the province to the Habsburg front rendered the governors of Shkodra a vital component in the administration of military resources. As a result, many of the western districts of the Rumeli province, such as Ohri (Ohrid), Avlonya (Vlora), Prizren, and İlbasan (Elbasan), were directly overseen by the governor of Shkodra. The Ottoman records reveal that these governors were also designated with the title of vizier, underscoring the pivotal role that Shkodra and its leadership played during periods of conflict.<sup>12</sup>

In the early years of the eighteenth century, Shkodra's trading influence extended well beyond its immediate region, marked by a substantial increase in its commercial activities. The city emerged as a significant trading hub within the Adriatic, attracting attention from several Italian city-states, particularly Venice, which served as the primary importer of agricultural and manufactured goods. The establishment of a vice-consulate office in Shkodra in 1706 further highlights the strategic importance of this city to Venetian interests. Reports generated by Venetian officials stationed in Shkodra provide valuable insights into the export volume from this port, as well as the variety of products dispatched to Venice.<sup>13</sup> The significant increase in commercial traffic can be attributed to the expansion of Venetian industries during the

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<sup>10</sup>For a detailed narration of the city during the seventeenth century, see: Rossana Vitale D'Alberton, "La Relazione sul Sangiaccato di Scutari: Un Devoto Tributo Letterario alla Serenissima da Parte di un Fedele Suddito Cattarino", in *Studi Veneziani*, Vol. XLVI, (Pisa, Roma: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 2003).

<sup>11</sup>Robert Dankoff and Robert Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid)*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000): 28-30, 40-45.

<sup>12</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 98, 675-677-678-692-694-695.

<sup>13</sup>Archivio di Stato di Venezia (shortly, A.S.Ve), Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Lettere di Consoli di Scutari, b. 744-5.

eighteenth century, which led to a heightened demand for affordable raw materials.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, Shkodra emerged as a pivotal supplier and exporter to Venice, as well as to several other cities along the Adriatic Sea.<sup>15</sup>

The local merchants of Shkodra were instrumental in the city's commercial development. During the eighteenth century, they engaged actively in Adriatic trade and competed effectively with merchants from various other regions. Reports indicate that, in Venice, the number of merchants from Shkodra increased significantly, reaching approximately eight hundred from the seventeenth century through the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, the majority of these merchants adhered to the Muslim faith, which underscores an interesting characteristic that challenges the prevailing paradigm of commerce being predominantly influenced by Christian elements. This observation suggests that at least in the context of Shkodra, the dynamics of trade were not solely dominated by Christian factors.<sup>16</sup> During the eighteenth century, the merchants of Shkodra established an extensive network of trading agencies in Venice to safeguard their interests and facilitate commerce between the two cities. Additionally, they expanded their influence to neighboring districts and ports. According to reports from Venetian officials published in Durrës, the principal trading port in the southern Adriatic, the tradesmen from Shkodra held the majority of the exported merchandise.<sup>17</sup>

During the commercial rise of Shkodra, artisans held a pivotal role in production. They were responsible for manufacturing the majority of goods exported by merchants, with approximately one thousand artisan workshops operating in the city during the eighteenth century. Invoices issued by the Venetian vice-consul reveal that the primary products produced and exported to Venice included wool, leather, fabrics, and wax. Additionally, the designation of certain products, such as "scutarina," illustrates how the artisans of Shkodra set themselves apart from their counterparts in other cities.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the aforementioned products, artisans in Shkodra were renowned for their diverse craftsmanship, which included the production of silk fabrics, intricate filigree works, weaponry, and various ornamental

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<sup>14</sup>Walter Panciera, "The Industries in Venice in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in Paola Lanaro, *At the center of the Old World: Trade and Manufacturing in Venice and on the Venetian Mainland, 1400-1800*, (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2006).

<sup>15</sup>Stavri Naçi, "Rreth tregtisë së Sanxhakut të Shkodrës me Republikën e Venedikut gjatë shek. XVIII", në *Buletini i Universitetit të Tiranës*, (Shkencat Shqiptare, nr. 1. 1963).

<sup>16</sup>Zija Shkodra. 'Problemi i tregut shqiptar në shekullin XVIII (Problems of the Albanian Market in the 18th Century)'. *Studime Historike* 20 (3):61–100. (Tirane: 1966): 79.

<sup>17</sup>Stavri Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodrës nën Sundimin e Bushatllijve* [The Pashalik of Shkodra under the Bushatlis] (1757-1796), (Tirane: Instituti i Historisë dhe Gjuhësive, 1964): 43-44.

<sup>18</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 4 Agosto 1733.

objects. Apart from the products mentioned above, artisans in Shkodra produced many other things, such as silk fabrics, filigree works, weapons, and ornamental objects. Research indicates that Shkodra was home to a total of eighty distinct crafts, which were further organized into thirty separate guilds.<sup>19</sup>

At the outset of the eighteenth century, Shkodra emerged as one of the most populous and economically prosperous cities along the eastern coast of the Adriatic, primarily due to its thriving trade activities. However, the ongoing military conflicts involving the Ottomans against the Venetians, Habsburgs, and Russians during this period adversely affected the city. The Ottoman-Venetian confrontation from 1714 to 1718 significantly disrupted the trade relations between Shkodra and Venice. Furthermore, the wars against the Habsburgs from 1737 to 1739 provoked the Catholic tribesmen in the highlands surrounding Shkodra to revolt against Ottoman rule, resulting in assaults on the city itself. The engagement of Shkodra's governors in warfare along the western and eastern frontiers against the Safavids and later the Afsharids contributed to a power vacuum within the city, further destabilizing its governance.<sup>20</sup> This disruption of the social order in Shkodra led to the emergence of influential individuals and groups that sought to exert control over the political landscape in the region.

Commencing in the 1720s, the city of Shkodra became entangled in internal conflicts characterized by turmoil among artisan guilds and armed groups led by members of influential households. The Yusuf-beg-zade family, originating from the town of Bushat in southern Shkodra, along with the Mahmud-bey-zades from Dukakin, represented the established military administrative, and significant landowning households. Subsequently, the political landscape of Shkodra experienced the emergence of the Çavuşzade family, a distinguished household within the city. Furthermore, guilds of tanners and tailors surfaced as competing factions, with the tanners situated in the 'old town' and the tailors in the 'new town' of Shkodra. Hence, the period was characterized by considerable social unrest as different groups competed for power and influence within the community.<sup>21</sup>

Subsequently, society became polarized, resulting in the division of the city into

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<sup>19</sup>Zija Shkodra, *Esnafet Shqiptare [Albanian Artisans]*, (Tirane: Akademia e Shkencave te Shqiperise: Instituti i Historise, 1973): 122; Petrika Thengjilli, *Shqiptaret midis Lindjes dhe Perendimit [Albanians Between East and West]* (1506-1750), (Tirane: Botimet Toena, 2003): 228.

<sup>20</sup>Marko Jacov, *Le guerre Veneto-Turche del XVII secolo in Dalmazia (Atti e memorie della Società Dalmata di Storia Patria; XX)*, (Venezia: Società Dalmata di Storia Patria, 1991): 225, 232; A.S.Ve. CSM, Lettere di Consoli di Scutari, let. data. 04 Marzo 1748 03/04/1748.

<sup>21</sup>Stavri Naçi, "Mbi gjendjen Politike ne Sanxhakun e Shkodres Gjate Çerekut te Dyte te Shek. XVIII, Gjer ne Ardhjen ne Fuqi te Mehmet Pashe Plakut" (The Political Situation in Shkodra Sandjak Through the Second Quarter of the XVIII Century), ne *Buletini i Universitetit te Tiranës, Shkencat Shoqerore*, nr. 4, (1961): 42-65.

two distinct factions: the tanners and the tailors. These designations originated from the two artisan guilds that were the most economically and socially influential among their peers during that period. From a central authority's perspective, these factions were perceived as the primary contributors to the unrest in the region, prompting the issuance of orders to neutralize their influence. In the Ottoman documents, the term *tayfa* or *fırka* is utilized to refer to various factions, while their actions are categorized as *eşkıyalık*, indicating banditry. As a result, these factions were accused of engaging in banditry in Shkodra and its surrounding areas.<sup>22</sup> Local primary sources provide a differing perspective on the situation. Rather than being characterized as 'bandit artisans,' these factions comprised local groups engaged in a struggle for dominance in Shkodra. Therefore, these groups were incorporated into the factions to protect their economic and political interests and tried to take the governor's seat.<sup>23</sup>

The faction of tailors was led by the Çavuşzades and enjoyed support from merchants as well as the majority of the city's artisans. Furthermore, this household maintained strong connections with influential bureaucrats at the Ottoman center. Consequently, these circumstances provided the tailors with a distinct advantage over their competitors. In contrast, the tanners' faction was led by the Bushatli family, which was a branch of the Yusuf-beg-zade lineage originating from Bushat. The primary supporters of this group consisted of members from the tanners' guild, along with powerholders from the rural areas surrounding Shkodra. The continuous friction between the two parties has resulted in significant unrest within the city and the district of Shkodra. The conflict adversely affected the economy and disrupted the established social order. Moreover, the involvement of external households, such as the Mahmud-bey-zades from Peja, and their subsequent appointments as governors of Shkodra further deteriorated the situation. Ultimately, due to insufficient support from the local populace, the Mahmud-bey-zades withdrew, leaving the place to the Bushatlis and Çavuşzades, along with their respective factions.<sup>24</sup>

The conflict ultimately concluded with the triumph of Bushatli Mehmed and the faction of the tanners. By securing alliances with the Catholic tribesmen, the Bushatlis achieved a significant victory in 1757 over the Çavuşzades and the tailors, thereby bringing an end to the internal factional discord in Shkodra. Following the removal of key opponents within the city, the leader of the Bushatli household successfully restored order by dismantling various factions and eliminating potential

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<sup>22</sup>BOA DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (17 May 1730).

<sup>23</sup>See the letters issued by the Venetian vice-consuls of Shkodra in the year 1730-1750s.

<sup>24</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres nen Sundimin e Bushatllijve*, 48-58.

rivals. Consequently, he was appointed to the position of governor by the central government. In less than ten years, the new governor's measures revitalized the region's economic and social life. The effectiveness of Bushatli Mehmed's policies attracted a range of influential groups, including guilds, merchants, and prominent notables from the city. This support ultimately established him as the sole authority in Shkodra. Subsequently, through negotiations with the central government and leveraging social networks, he formed alliances with other prominent figures. This strategic approach enabled him to appoint his sons to the surrounding districts and establish a sphere of influence that included the *sandjaks* of Shkodra, Dukakin, Üsküp, and Ohri.<sup>25</sup>

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, Shkodra's significance as a political center and commercial hub reached its zenith. The city's merchants established extensive networks across the Adriatic Sea, with Venice serving as the primary export port. A majority of these merchants operated as agents, conducting business on behalf of patrons who were invested in trade, similar to the local powerholders. Within this patron-client dynamic, the Bushtatlis of Shkodra played a prominent role, offering protection to their allies and to the agents responsible for managing their commercial activities.<sup>26</sup> In certain circumstances, the Bushatli family engaged in conflicts with influential families from other regions to safeguard the interests of their clients. As a result, the governor of Shkodra established a regional order within a factionalized city, creating a social and political network that served to advance the interests of the Bushatli family and their clientele.

The political and economic ascendance of Shkodra under the Bushatli family drew the attention of Venice regarding the Adriatic Sea. Initially, the commercial influence of Shkodra's merchants expanded significantly, enabling them to compete effectively with their Venetian counterparts. Furthermore, the ports governed by Bushatli Mehmet supplied Venice with a substantial portion of the raw materials essential for its industrial operations. Nevertheless, the imposition of increased tariffs or the diversion of exports to other Italian ports posed a significant threat to Venetian trade in the region. Additionally, the governor of Shkodra utilized the services of Ulcinj's corsairs as a strategy to safeguard his commercial interests and reinforce his authority over maritime activities. As a result, the presence of a fleet under the control of the Bushatli family led to a shift in the balance of power in the Adriatic in favor of Shkodra.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Lettere di Consoli di Durrazzo, let. Dt. 29/03/1772.

<sup>26</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Lettere di Consoli di Durazzo, let. Dt. 28/02/1766.

<sup>27</sup> At Zef Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatli te Shkodres (At Erasmo Balneo)* [The Friar of the Bushatli



### 1.3 Literature Review

The current body of literature regarding Shkodra in the English language is notably limited, with the majority of significant publications available in Albanian. The earliest studies addressing the history of Shkodra predominantly rely on local sources, many of which were authored in Italian, Latin, or Ottoman Turkish. One notable example is Injac Zamputi's graduation thesis, which, while not exclusively focused on Shkodra, incorporates numerous Italian and Latin texts, some originating from the Shkodra region. This work provides valuable insights into the socio-political landscape of eighteenth-century Ottoman Albania. Consequently, Shkodra is prominently featured in this research owing to its considerable significance during that historical period.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the high presence of primary sources about the Albanian coastal cities and their role in commerce with the Italian city-states drew the attention of other historians from Italy, who mainly focused on trade activities. These works show the connection of the Ottoman cities in the Adriatic Sea as the main suppliers of raw materials for the Italian city-states.<sup>29</sup>

During the 1960s in Albania, Stavri Naçi published a set of monographs on Shkodra and the Bushatli household during the eighteenth century. He was among the first to use the Ottoman primary sources that were found in Albania or taken from the archives of Turkey. Furthermore, his studies were primarily focused on the Bushatli household, and by using a nationalist approach, he depicted the late eighteenth-century developments as an attempt at separation from the Ottoman Empire. In addition, Naçi neglected the general picture regarding the development of the empire at that period and presented the Bushatlis with a nationalist tone and who aimed to create an Albanian state. Despite contextualizing and approaching issues with anachronism, Naçi's work constitutes an important scholarship for eighteenth-century Shkodra.<sup>30</sup>

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Pashas of Shkodra (Pater Erasmo Balneo)], (Shkoder: Botimet Franceskane, 2007).

<sup>28</sup>Injac Zamputi, 'Il settecento Veneziano e l'Albania, Tesi di Laurea', Trieste: Università di Trieste, 1941.

<sup>29</sup>Marco Moroni, "Mercanti e fiere tra le due Sponde dell'Adriatico nel basso Medioevo e nell'Eta Moderna", ne *La pratica dello scambio: Sistemi di fiere, mercanti e città in Europa (1400-1700)*, ed. Paola Lanaro, Venezia: Marsilio. 2003; Cristian Luca "The Dynamics of the Commercial Activity in the Ottoman Port of Durrazo during the Consulate of Zorzi (Giorgio) Cumano (1699-1702)", ne *Small is Beautiful?* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2011); Rossana V. D'Alberon. "La scala di Durazzo negli anni del console Rosa (1705-1733)", in *Studi Veneziani*, Vol. XXXIV, (Pisa, Roma: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 1997).

<sup>30</sup>Naçi Stavri. 1964. *Pashalleku i Shkodres nen Sundimin e Bushatllijve [The Paşalık of Shkodra under the Bushatlis] (1757-1796)*, Tirane: Instituti i Historise dhe Gjuhesise; 1960. Ibid. 1961. "Çeshtje te çiflikut feudal ne Shqiperi ne shekujt XVII-XVIII", ne *Buletini I Universitetit te Tiranes*, Shkencat Shoqerore, nr. 3; Ibid. 1967. "Mbi gjendjen politike ne Sanxhakun e Shkodres gjate çerekut te dyte te shek. XVIII, gjer ne ardhjen ne fuqi te Mehmet Pashe Plakut", ne *Buletini i Universitetit te Tiranes*, Shkencat Shoqerore, nr. 4; Ibid. 1958. "Pashalleku i Shkodres i pare ne kuadrin e zhvillimit te tij ekonomik e shoqeror ne shek XVIII", ne *Studime Historike*, nr. 2; Ibid. 1958. "Rreth familjes se madhe feudale te Bushatasve te

Zija Shkodra is another important scholar who researched Ottoman Albania's economic and social history. His main studies were on the artisan guilds and their function as production forces and socio-political formation during the eighteenth century. He has emphasized the supremacy of the Tanners' guild in the region over the other guilds, which helps in understanding the origin of their faction in the city of Shkodra. Furthermore, Zija Shkodra has studied the characteristics and problems of the market in eighteenth-century Albania from an economic historian's perspective. The author used a Marxist historiographical approach with a nationalist nuance in his inquiries. Hence, the factions of Shkodra were regarded as social "classes" formed in the Ottoman feudal system.<sup>31</sup>

There exists a substantial body of research concerning the commerce and merchants of Shkodra during the early modern period, which elucidates the trade dynamics and economic significance of the city. Among the earliest historians who emphasized the rise of Shkodra and Ulcinj's maritime fleet was Traian Stoianovich. He wrote numerous studies on the Ottoman Balkan cities and society in general. As a member of the *Annales* school of historiography, he shed light on different socio-economic aspects of the Balkan cities during the early modern Ottoman era. In his research, Stoianovich used an interdisciplinary approach to explain the developments that took place in the Balkan regions. Furthermore, he analyzed the different segments of society from a bottom-up perspective, thus giving valuable information about common people and their relationship with the ruling elites. Although the primary focus of his study is the rise of Orthodox merchants, Stoianovich also underscores the significant role of Muslim merchants from Shkodra and the corsairs of Ulcinj, highlighting their considerable influence in the Adriatic Sea.<sup>32</sup>

Alvin Saraçi's study on trade relations between the city of Shkodra and Venice during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries presents significant quantitative data and critical insights into the merchant class of Shkodra. The author meticulously analyzes a substantial portion of the official Venetian records related to

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Shkodres", ne *Buletini i Universiteti Shtetëror të Tiranës*, nr. 4; Ibid. 1976. "Rreth koceptit 'Shqiperi' në gjysmën e dytë të shek. XVIII", ne *Studime Historike*, Tiranë, nr. 2; 1963 "Rreth tregtisë së Sanxhakut të Shkodres me Republikën e Venedikut gjatë shek. XVIII", ne *Buletini i Universitetit të Tiranës*, Shkencat Shqiptare, nr. 1; Ibid. 1967b. "Te dhëna të reja mbi ekonominë feudale të Pashallëkut të Shkodres në shek. XVIII", ne *Studime Historike*, nr. 4; 1957. "Te dhëna të reja mbi Shqipërinë e Mesme dhe të Jugut sipas dokumenteve të shek. XVIII", *Buletini i Shkencave Shqiptare*, nr. 2; Ibid. 1961b. "Te dhëna të reja rreth tregtisë së Pashallëkut të Shkodres me Venedikun gjatë shek. XVIII", ne *Buletini i Universitetit shtetëror të Tiranës*, nr. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Zija Shkodra. 1966. "Problemi i tregut shqiptar në shek. XVIII", ne *Buletini i Shkencave Shqiptare*, nr. 3; Ibid. 1962. "Roli dhe pozita e veçantë e esnafit të tabakeve gjatë sundimit turk", ne *Buletini i Shkencave Shqiptare*, nr. 1; 1972. *Esnafet Shqiptare (shek. XV-XX)*, Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave të R. P. të Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë.

<sup>32</sup> Traian Stoianovich. 1960. "Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 234-313; 1992-1995. *Between East and West: The Balkan and Mediterranean Worlds*, 4 volumes. New York: Aristide D. Caratzas.

exports from Shkodra to Venice in the early modern period. Additionally, Saraçi provides pertinent information regarding taxation and other financial aspects of commerce with Venice, employing quantitative data to elucidate the entire process thoroughly and systematically.<sup>33</sup> In the same way, Özgür Oral, in his Ph.D. dissertation, studied the Adriatic trade between the Ottomans and Venetians between the years 1763 and 1794. In this research, it is possible to see the important role of Shkodra as a commercial city and manufacturing center. In the thesis, Oral displays custom records, all the products, and their quantity that were exported or imported from Ottoman ports in the Adriatic Sea, including Shkodra and Durres. The references included provide critical information regarding the commercial activities of the Bushatli family and their associates.<sup>34</sup>

Scholars working on the Middle Eastern regions during the early modern period have produced important regional studies that can help understand the broader picture of the Ottoman provinces. Beshara Doumani adopted a bottom-up approach to the developments in the Ottoman Nablus Jabal region and emphasized the autonomy these regions enjoyed.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, Abraham Marcus analyzed the society of eighteenth-century Aleppo by analyzing the different groups that were before invisible. In his social history, the author grasps the characteristics of this important urban center before modernity, criticizing the application of notions like pre-modern or traditional society. Both historians have demonstrated the high intensity of the urban dynamism that took place in these famous cities of the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>36</sup>

Historians from the Balkans, similar to their colleagues in Ottoman regional studies, adopted a revisionist approach by focusing on specific cities. They challenged the nationalist historiography that emphasized a ‘national’ struggle against the ‘Turkish’ conquest during the Ottoman period. In Bulgaria, Rossitsa Gradeva produced groundbreaking work that provided a different perspective on the Ottoman era in the country. In her research on Vidin, she highlighted the role of various social and political groups in the rise of Osman Pasvanoglu, a local powerholder contemporary with the Bushatlis. Additionally, Gradeva conducted other case studies on Sofia and Hacıoglu Pazarcik, utilizing kadi court registers for her analysis. Furthermore, Svet-

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<sup>33</sup> Alvin Saraçi, *Tregetia Adriatike e Shkodres me Republiken e Venecies ne Shekujt XVII-XVIII*, Tirane: Akademia e Studimeve Albanologjike, Instituti i Historise, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Özgür Oral, *Osmanlı Venedik Ticari İlişkileri (1763-1794)*, Doktora Tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Beshara Doumani. 1995. *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>36</sup> Abraham Marcus. 1989. *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press.

lana Ivanova examined the elite class in Ottoman Bulgaria and their status within society.<sup>37</sup>

Greek historiography has significantly advanced in the exploration of the Ottoman period. Notable scholars, such as Antonis Anastasopoulos, have conducted in-depth analyses of Ottoman towns during the eighteenth century. Anastasopoulos's research employs Ottoman court records to provide insights into the social and political dynamics of Karaferye (Veroia) in contemporary Greece. He emphasizes the factionalism that arose from the competition among local powerholders for dominance and examines the central government's approach to addressing these conflicts.<sup>38</sup> However, the factionalism in this case is not as structured and continuous as in the case of Shkodra, and it just relates to a specific conflict between notables.

The Ottoman Balkans received particular attention in scholarship conducted in North America, where historians produced significant studies for the Balkans in general or for its specific regions. Among these scholars, Bruce McGowan came forward with his thesis of the 'Age of *Ayans*' when describing the developments of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ottoman empire. He was a prominent historian who systematically analyzed the *ayans*, identifying them as a group of provincial power holders. This group included the Bushatlis of Shkodra, who emerged as the dominant authority in the Ottoman provinces during this era. They exerted control over the region's economy and administration, effectively diminishing the influence of the central authority, which had experienced a decline in its grip on these territories due to a process of decentralization. According to the author, the rise of these power holders had detrimental effects on the Ottoman Empire, as it significantly weakened both the administrative and financial structures of the state.<sup>39</sup>

Halil İnalcık articulated a binary framework of centralization versus decentralization to analyze Ottoman governance during the period characterized by the emergence of notable figures. He interpreted this rise of local notables as indicative of a decline in the authority of the central state. The author characterizes the clas-

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<sup>37</sup>Rossitsa Gradeva, 2008. *War and peace in Rumeli: 15th to beginning of 19th century*, Istanbul: ISIS Press; 2004. *Rumeli under the Ottomans, 15th-18th centuries: institutions and communities*, Istanbul: ISIS Press. Svetlana Ivanova, "Varoş: The Elites of the Reaya in the Towns of Rumeli, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries, in I. Pappe and M. Ma'oz (eds), *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from Within*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris. 1998.

<sup>38</sup>Antonis Anastasopoulos, "Lighting the Flame of Disorder: Ayan Infighting and State Intervention in Ottoman Karaferye, 1758–79." *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (2002). Ibid, "The Mixed Elite of a Balkan Town: Karaferye in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century." In *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. id., 259–68. Rethymnon, Greece: Crete University Press, 2005.

<sup>39</sup>McGowan, Bruce, "The Age of the *Ayans*." In *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, 658–72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

sical age as a period marked by centralization, in contrast to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when provincial governors and local notables engaged in rebellion, thereby usurping power from the central government.<sup>40</sup> This shift in authority contributed to a crisis within the state. His approach was later adopted by other historians, like McGowan.

However, in her edition of *Cambridge History of Turkey*, Suraiya Faroqhi offers a critique of the perspectives presented by İnalçık and McGowan regarding the decentralization process in the early modern Ottoman Empire. Faroqhi contends that while significant transformations occurred within the empire, the central government's presence and its administrative mechanisms continued to exert considerable influence in the provinces. Faroqhi contends that in the sixteenth century, despite İnalçık's emphasis on centralization, the Ottoman government continued to depend on local actors for the effective administration of the provinces. Although there was a notable transfer of power from the central government to regional authorities, this transition played a crucial role in incorporating distant regions into the framework of Ottoman local governance. This dynamic is eloquently illustrated in the works of scholars such as Fikret Adanır and Dina Khoury, who explore how local powerholders were able to extend the reach of the central authority, thereby enhancing the administrative and political cohesion of the empire.<sup>41</sup>

Ali Yaycıoğlu's book *Partners of the Empire* offers a comprehensive image of the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire. In this work, the author underscores the emergence of regional powerholders and their critical role in the governance of provinces under the central government. Yaycıoğlu articulates the negotiation process that occurs between these two entities and details the transition from a vertical hierarchy to a more horizontal and participatory framework. In this evolved structure, the local elite actively collaborates with central authorities, facilitating a more cooperative administration. Furthermore, the author contests the relationship between provincial notables and the imperial center as framed within center-periphery discussions. In place of this conventional perspective, he proposes a comprehensive approach that examines the Ottoman imperial structure and its various components in a holistic manner.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration." In *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, 27–52. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977).

<sup>41</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi (ed.), In *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603– 1839*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The crisis of the Ottoman Order during the Age of Revolutions*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016.

Likewise, Ariel Salzmann's analysis examines the function of local notables in the provincial economy and assesses how tax farming contributed to the incorporation of local elites within the imperial framework.<sup>43</sup> Karen Barkey's analysis of the eighteenth century posits that the Ottoman state implemented a pragmatic approach by facilitating the integration of provincial notables into governance through negotiated agreements and shared authority. This innovative governance model emphasized provincial networks in place of a strict central hierarchical structure.<sup>44</sup> All these revisionist scholars emphasized the transformation of the Ottoman entity into a horizontal empire. This dissertation will serve as an extension of the existing critical literature. Through a micro-study of eighteenth-century Shkodra, it aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the construction of provincial order.

## 1.4 Research Aims of the Thesis

This dissertation offers a thorough exploration of Shkodra as a focused micro-study, situated within the broader landscape of contemporary critical literature on provincial studies. Its primary objective is to illuminate how a nuanced micro-level analysis uncovers the intricate layers that shape the province, revealing the dynamic interactions between these influences and the province itself. Additionally, this research aims to clarify the mutual influence between Shkodra and its diverse dimensions, enhancing our comprehension of the province and the larger dynamics operating within provincial settings. Recent advancements in provincial studies have substantially deepened our understanding of Ottoman governance by scrutinizing the intricate complexities that characterize provincial power structures. In this context, rather than seeing the empire simply as a centralized authority imposing its will on distant territories, this micro-study of Shkodra uncovers a complex web of interactions among both local and imperial actors. This analysis elucidates the complex layers of power dynamics at play, emphasizing not only the intricate relationships between the provinces and the central government but also the subtle internal struggles and alliances that influence the fabric of local society. This viewpoint enhances the understanding of the Ottoman Empire's governance, highlighting the importance of local agency within the larger imperial framework.

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<sup>43</sup>Ariel Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited: Privatization and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire." *Politics & Society* 21, no. 4 (1993): 393–423.

<sup>44</sup>Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Ibid, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

This thesis examines the principal issue regarding the origins of factionalism and disorder that emerged in Shkodra in the first half of the eighteenth century. To elucidate this matter, I will analyze the changes in the provincial administrative system of the Ottoman Empire during this period and their implications for a district center such as Shkodra. In the process of appointing governors from the central government, it became crucial for the appointed candidate to receive endorsement from the local actors in order to effectively execute his responsibilities. The factions functioned as a mechanism for powerholders to consolidate their authority within the region, subsequently leading to competition for the governorship seat. I will illustrate the processes and phases that resulted in the acquisition of governance by the various factions and their respective leaders. In this context, I will elucidate how Shkodra and its political structures became integrated within the framework of the horizontal empire.

The factionalism in Shkodra created favorable conditions for external actors to interfere and become a significant factor in the political landscape of the province. The Catholic tribesmen of the Highlands, like most tribal entities, were marginalized and out of the Ottoman socio-cultural influence. During the period of factional conflict, the leadership extended invitations to utilize their capabilities for military purposes, recognizing their inherent warlike characteristics. They played a significant role in the last battle that ultimately secured victory for the Bushatli and the tanners' faction. Consequently, the tribesmen became an integral component of the political landscape in Shkodra. In this context, I will delineate the methods utilized by the faction leadership to recruit the tribesmen into their military forces, as well as the subsequent impact that these tribesmen exerted on the province.

Moreover, I analyze Venetian interference as an external entity concerning its trade and regional interests in Shkodra. The vicinity and the close commercial ties to Venice were important factors in the economy of the province. Before the emergence of factions, Venice's capacity to engage in the administration and local governance of Shkodra was significantly limited. The emergence of factionalism, however, transformed this situation. The governance structure evolved from a vertical model to a horizontal one under the influence of the factions, thereby creating favorable conditions for Venice's involvement. In this context, political developments significantly influenced the economic policies of Venice in the Adriatic region. This interrelationship has given rise to a regional dimension in the provincial politics of both Shkodra and Venice, which I endeavor to elucidate in this study.

The conflict between Venice, Ulcinj, and the Barbary corsairs from North Africa exemplifies an important Mediterranean interaction that significantly impacted the

provincial governance of Shkodra. The use of the coastal town of Ulcinj as a base for the Barbary corsairs, along with its governance by Shkodra, intensified the rivalry into factional strife. In addition to the local entities in Shkodra, including artisan guilds, merchants, and provincial landlords, the dynamics of factionalism also facilitated the involvement of external actors, such as tribes, corsairs, and foreign powers. The dissertation seeks to identify the principal actors involved and analyze their interrelationships, thereby illustrating the mechanisms through which the provincial network is established.

In the final segment of my analysis, I will delve into the case of Bushatli Mehmed to explore the complex processes underlying the emergence of an *ayan*. By situating this phenomenon within the broader historical context, I will illuminate the specific social, political, and economic conditions that contributed to his rise. Furthermore, I will identify and elaborate on the mechanisms that facilitated this development, providing a comprehensive understanding of how such figures ascended to prominence during a specific period. From his emergence as the leader of the tanners' faction to his ascension to the governorship of Shkodra, this analysis will elucidate how local sociopolitical dynamics, in conjunction with various imperial, regional, and Mediterranean influences, facilitated the rise of the Bushatlis, as the dominant authority in the province of Shkodra. Furthermore, this discussion will examine how the Bushatlis influenced these layers by establishing a distinct set of local circumstances, thereby creating their own provincial order.

## 1.5 Sources and Methods

This dissertation will primarily rely on a comparative analysis of Ottoman, Italian, and Albanian sources, which will serve as the principal references for understanding the emergence of power structures in Shkodra and the subsequent formation of the regional order. The Ottoman archives located in Istanbul house a wealth of primary sources that primarily document significant political events, governmental appointments, and important local occurrences recognized by the administration. Italian sources primarily comprise reports authored by Venetian officials who served in Shkodra or its surrounding provinces. These reports meticulously detail the political developments of the region and provide insightful information regarding economic matters. Chronicles and memoirs authored by Catholic clergy provide comprehensive accounts of significant events and influential figures within the region. Given that Shkodra had a substantial Catholic population, it emerged



as a prominent destination for numerous priests who traveled to the area to conduct religious services. The Albanian sources predominantly draw from translations of the aforementioned materials. These sources include documents from the Albanian State Archive, personal correspondence from notable historical figures, and oral narratives that were subsequently transcribed.

### 1.5.1 The *Mühimme Defters*

The *mühimme* served as the official registers utilized by the Ottoman Empire to document the copies of edicts issued after the sultan's approval on significant matters determined during the imperial council sessions.<sup>45</sup> They are crucial archival sources that will be used to illuminate different topics in the province of Shkodra.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the *mühimme* offers a chronological account of nearly every year about Shkodra, addressing administrative matters and significant local developments within the political landscape. Concerning the development of power structures and the emergence of factions in Shkodra, these documents contain the earliest references. The focus of these sources encompasses a broad range of topics, spanning from local incidents and developments to international issues that inform the governance of Shkodra. They include appointment orders that delineate the prominent figures within the provincial administration. This information is essential for understanding the governance dynamics of Shkodra and how these dynamics evolve. provide valuable insights into how the center comprehended factional conflicts, as well as relevant information regarding the participants involved. Nevertheless, by following these records, I intend to examine the dynamic changes in the relationship between the provincial governance of Shkodra and the imperial center when and after the local power structures were consolidated. This analysis aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involving the horizontal shift between local powerholders in Shkodra and the central government. Subsequently, these sources will be utilized to analyze the relationship between the Bushatlis and the central authority across various historical periods.

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<sup>45</sup>For a detailed explanation of these registers, see: Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, "Mühimme Defteri", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt. 31, pp. 519-522.

<sup>46</sup>The archival reference of the *mühimme* registers: B.O.A. A.DVNSMHM.d. Apart from the archival material, I shall make use of transcriptions in master thesis: Betül Naci, '147 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri'nin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirmesi (S.1-156)'. Yayınlanmamış Master Tezi. Bingöl Üniversitesi, 2022.; Özlem Seçkin, '111 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri'nin 508.-709. Sayfalarının Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirmesi'. Yayınlanmamış Master Tezi. Artvin Çoruh Üniversitesi, 2020; Leyla Toraman, '128 numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli Mühimme Defteri', Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Fırat Üniversitesi, 2005.

### 1.5.2 The Venetian Consular Reports

The archival sources of Venice contain detailed reports concerning events in the province of Shkodra, reflecting the cautious stance adopted by Venetian authorities regarding matters that could potentially jeopardize their commercial interests and political stability. These reports are from the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*, derived from the vice consuls stationed in Shkodra and the chief consuls in Durres.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, the *bailos* in Istanbul contributed dispatches to Venice, detailing the conflicts between the governors of Shkodra and the central government, particularly when such confrontations threatened to disrupt the commercial equilibrium in the Adriatic Sea. The consular reports encompass the timeframe from 1733 to 1800. The lack of documentation from the early years of the eighteenth century hinders our ability to acquire information regarding the formative stages of faction development. Nevertheless, these sources provide valuable material for comprehensive analysis in the social, economic, and political domains concerning the province of Shkodra.

The consular reports are categorized into two distinct groups. One of these groups comprises the cargo manifests of ships that depart from the docks in Shkodra and Durres. In this section, I do not intend to incorporate quantitative data; however, it is noteworthy that these manifests include the names of merchants from Shkodra, along with their surnames and any applicable titles they may possess. will provide valuable insights into the merchant class of Shkodra and their social backgrounds, as they constituted a significant element of the factions. The second group pertains to the reports submitted to the Venetian authorities concerning political, social, and various other local or regional developments in Shkodra. I utilize them to elucidate the relationship between Venice and the administration of Shkodra, specifically concerning Venetian trade policies, issues of piracy, and regional political dynamics.

Lastly, these sources contain personal information regarding the influential figures and households in the region. Consequently, I intend to employ this information to elucidate the local network among prominent figures in Shkodra as well as in the surrounding provinces. In contrast to the *mühimme* records, the Venetian reports offer more comprehensive insights into local political dynamics and present a greater level of precision concerning the actual ruling parties in Shkodra. The text outlines how Venetian diplomacy and agents exerted influence and authority in the region, detailing the various strategies they utilized for this purpose.

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<sup>47</sup> Archivio di Stato di Venezia (shortly, A.S.Ve), Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Lettere di Consoli di Scutari, b. 744-5.

### 1.5.3 Chronicles

This category comprises the primary chronicles and memoirs written in Italian that are referenced in this work. The memoirs of Priest Erasmo Balneo represent a significant primary source concerning the factional conflict and the emergence of the Bushatlis.<sup>48</sup> However, they also pose certain methodological challenges for analysis and interpretation. Although Balneo's initial encounter with the Bushatli family occurs by chance, he ultimately becomes a significant figure in their lives. His memoir provides a comprehensive account of the factional conflicts and pivotal battles involving the Bushatlis. Furthermore, it highlights his important role as a mediator, facilitating an alliance between the Catholic tribesmen and the tanners. His close affiliations with the Venetians indicate a potential role as either their spy or a mediator between the Bushatlis and the tanners' faction. The works of Injac Zamputi encompass significant excerpts from an anonymous chronicle authored by Catholic clerics in Shkodra. They provide firsthand observations of significant political events occurring within the region.<sup>49</sup>

### 1.5.4 Albanian Sources

This compilation primarily encompasses the collection and translation of primary sources into the Albanian language. The principal collector, Hamdi Bushati, a descendant of the Bushatli family, has meticulously gathered an array of local sources for his monographs concerning the history of Shkodra. The collected materials range from personal correspondence to oral traditions.<sup>50</sup> Injac Zamputi, in collaboration with fellow researchers, has undertaken the translation of a collection of primary sources from the Albanian Archives, rendering them from Italian and Ottoman into Albanian.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>At Zef Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatli te Shkodres (At Erasmo Balneo)* [The Friar of the Bushatli Pashas of Shkodra (Pater Erasmo Balneo)], Shkoder: Botimet Franceskane, 2017.

<sup>49</sup>Injac Zamputi, *Il settecento Veneziano e l'Albania, Tesi di Laurea*, Trieste: Universita di Trieste, 1941.

<sup>50</sup>Hamdi Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet: Tradite, Ngjarje, Njerez...* (Shkodra in the Years: Tradition, Events, People...) Vol. I. (Shkoder: Shtepia Botuese Idromeno, 1998). Ibid, *Shkodra dhe Motet: Tradite, Ngjarje, Ngjarje...* Peme Gjenealogjike Familjesh Shkodrane (Shkodra in the Years: Tradition, Events, People... Genealogical Tree of Families in Shkodra) Vol. II. (Shkoder: Shtepia Botuese Idromeno, 1999).

<sup>51</sup>Injac Zamputi et al. *Burime te Zgjedhura Historine e Shqiperise* (Selected Sources on the History of Albania) Vol. III, (Tirane: Universiteti Shteteror i Tiranes, 1961).

### 1.5.5 Ottoman Appointment Registers

The following is a set of transcribed, published registers derived from the Ottoman archives. These documents meticulously outline the appointments within each Ottoman province over a designated period. I employ these sources to analyze the appointment patterns in the province of Shkodra, thereby gaining insights into the evolving dynamics of governance throughout the eighteenth century. Furthermore, these sources frequently include the names of governors and, at times, their household affiliations, which facilitates a deeper understanding of the appointment mechanisms and the variations in tenure periods.<sup>52</sup>

## 1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters, along with an introductory chapter that outlines the purpose and scope of the study. Following the introduction of the study, the second chapter examines factionalism within the broader context of the Ottoman provincial landscape. It includes a comparative analysis of the Shkodra case alongside other documented instances of factionalism. The third chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the factions, examining their primary socio-economic and political components. Subsequently, the focus shifts to external actors, elucidating the various layers that characterize factionalism in Shkodra. The fourth chapter examines the upheaval within the province, highlighting the onset of factional conflicts, the key participants involved, and the subsequent domination of local politics by these factions and their leaders. The final chapter covers the conclusion of factionalism and the ascendance of the Bushatli family as the dominant authority in Shkodra, as well as the establishment of their provincial order.

In the second chapter, I explore a definition of factionalism and its place in the Ottoman Empire, starting from the imperial court and moving to the provinces. The primary aim of the initial section of this chapter is to demonstrate established case studies from various provinces, wherein factions played a significant role in local political dynamics. Furthermore, I will examine the relevant literature about the provinces, detailing the case studies that demonstrate the significant role of factionalism in local political dynamics and the key actors involved. In this discussion, I

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<sup>52</sup>Fahameddin Başar, *Osmanlı Eyalet Tevcihatı (1717-1730)*, (Ankara: TTK Yayınları, 1997); Uğur Ünal, XVIII. yüzyılda Osmanlı Bürokrasisi: Merkez ve Taşra Yöneticileri 1756-1792: 16 Numaralı Tahvil Defteri (Ceviri yazı-görüntü), ed. Abdullah Sivridağ. İstanbul: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, 2019.

examine how historians have characterized these events from local perspectives and analyze the position of the central government in these conflicts. Next, I analyze the position of factions in the wider Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century and how these factional politics affected the social order in the provinces. In the second part of the chapter, the analysis transitions to the vibrant city of Shkodra, where a comparative examination reveals both the distinctive features and shared traits of its factional dynamics relative to those of other provinces. This in-depth investigation delves into the sociopolitical backgrounds that shape these factions, as well as the characteristics of the principal actors involved, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex political landscape in which they operate. The concluding section of the chapter analyzes the historical development of Shkodra, including its suburbs and hinterland. This analysis seeks to offer an exploration of the spatial dynamics inherent in the factional conflict, while also examining the complex interplay between factionalism and the territorial division of Shkodra. Moreover, it aims to investigate how the established territorial delineations may have played a role in facilitating the consolidation and formation of the two distinct factions, thereby shaping the course of the conflict in this region.

The third chapter delves into the complex emergence of the factions by conducting a thorough examination of their foundational socio-economic groups. It places particular emphasis on the artisan guilds, notably the tanners and tailors, from which the factions derive their names. Additionally, it tries to explore the factors that facilitated the transformation of artisan guilds into political leadership entities. It will analyze this phenomenon from local, regional, and broader Ottoman perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances involved. The following analysis focuses on the influence of prominent local households that undertook essential military and political leadership roles, thereby shaping the intricate dynamics within the various factions. This examination brings to the forefront the key players who played pivotal roles in these power structures. Primarily, it highlights the traditional military-administrative households, which emerged as the central figures in this multifaceted landscape. The tanners were led by the Yusuf-beg-zades, along with their cadet branch, the Bushatlis, and the Mahmud-bey-zades. The leadership of the tailors was held by the Çavuşzades, a lesser-known household whose power stemmed from the urban community of Shkodra. In the following discussion, I will examine the merchants of Shkodra, elucidating the emergence of this mercantile class, the historical context of the leading families involved, and the significant role that this socio-economic group played during the factional conflicts. The next three subsections analyze the involvement of external actors in the factional conflicts of Shkodra, thereby illuminating the various dimensions of the

region's socio-political dynamics. The transition of Venice's role from a commercial partner to an active participant in the local politics of Shkodra, particularly in the context of the emergence of factionalism within the region. Ulcinj developed as a significant commercial hub and a center of piracy for the Barbary corsairs, which had considerable implications for the Adriatic Sea and instigated intense rivalry with the Venetians. Hence, the implications of this rivalry on regional trade dynamics and maritime security, as well as its influence on the local power balances in Shkodra shall be analyzed. The final subsection discusses the political rise of Catholic tribesmen in local politics, following their involvement in factional strife and their ability to alter power balances among the contenders.

The fourth chapter begins by analyzing the political and socio-economic landscape in Shkodra prior to the emergence of the various factions. This overview explores the potential factors contributing to the emergence of factionalism, including long-term wars, social crises, and demographic shifts. I contend that at the turn of the eighteenth century, local powerholders began to assertively demand and negotiate for the position of governorship. In this context, the earlier emergence of tailors and tanners as factions are discussed by using Ottoman records to analyze the characteristics, circumstances, and historical figures involved. This development represented a significant increase in the influence exerted by local entities. In response to prevailing circumstances, these entities established strategic alliances and utilized force to pursue their objectives. The following subsections will examine the dynamics between local powerholders and the governance framework of Shkodra. This analysis will elucidate how the rivalry surrounding the governorship shaped the social and political dynamics within the region. Furthermore, it will underscore the considerable challenges presented by various regional actors, as well as the intricate relationship with the Ottoman imperial center and its influence on governance and local authority in the area. The final two subsections analyze the involvement of the factions of tanners and tailors in the competition for the governorship of Shkodra and the conflict between their leading households. Moreover, the nuanced interactions between influential external actors, specifically Venice and Ulcinj, will be examined in detail, along with their significant effects on the intricate local power dynamics. This exploration aims to illuminate how these relationships shaped and redefined the balance of power within the region.

The final chapter examines the conclusion of factionalism in Shkodra and the subsequent rise to power of the Bushatli family. It will detail the strategies and methods employed by Bushatli Mehmed to secure victory over his rivals and to attain the governorship of Shkodra and the creation of a provincial order. The following discussion will address three significant phases in the formation of the Bushatli order, each rep-

representing a crucial step in its development and influence. In the first, local policies are examined in the context of the conclusion of the factional war. The dissolution of the factions by Bushatli Mehmed and the subsequent assertion of his authority in the city represents a significant turning point in the political landscape of Shkodra. This stage concluded with the acquisition of the governorship seat by leveraging local support and the strategic mediation of influential figures within the Ottoman provincial administration. The second phase covers the consolidation of the Bushatli authority within the Shkodra district, examining their interactions with regional actors such as Venice and addressing the challenges posed by the central authority to their position. It elucidates the reasons behind the Bushatli family's success in effectively managing governmental pressures concerning their relinquishment of the governorship of Shkodra. The final phase concerns the power consolidation of the Bushatlis and the establishment of their regional order. To provide a comprehensive understanding of this development, I will elaborate on the two fundamental factors that the Bushatlis relied upon in their strategic approach. This initial approach involved leveraging social networking to establish alliances with local stakeholders and key figures within the central government. Secondly, during periods of crisis, the Bushatlis engaged in negotiations with the Ottoman state, wherein they typically requested rewards in exchange for their services. These rewards often consisted of financial resources and administrative positions that empowered the Bushatlis to extend their authority across various districts, thereby establishing their zones of influence and regional order.

## **2. FACTIONALISM IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: CENTER AND PROVINCES**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers a comprehensive analysis of factionalism, with an emphasis on the definitions provided by historians engaged in regional studies. It also explores the various approaches employed to understand the emergence and significance of factionalism within the context of the Ottoman provinces. By utilizing a comparative framework in the analysis of the case of Shkodra, I seek to address the following inquiry: What were the circumstances that fostered factionalism? How can we understand the emergence of the factional groups? What are the similarities between factionalism in Shkodra and those of other towns, and how does the Shkodra case differ from present studies on the different provinces? To shed light on these questions, this chapter will examine Ottoman factionalism as a political phenomenon evident in both the central authority and the provinces. Next, I will proceed with a comparative analysis of the case of Shkodra with other established examples. Finally, I will analyze Shkodra's historical topography and urbanization process; examining these aspects is essential for understanding the territorial dimensions of factionalism. By analyzing the district units and their significance during periods of factional conflict, we can gain valuable insights into the complexities of the region's historical landscape.

### **2.2 Ottoman Factionalism**

Factionalism emerged as a prominent political phenomenon in the early modern Ottoman Empire, attracting considerable attention from historians engaged in the study of this era. By definition, factionalism refers to the making of two or more



groups competing for political dominance and resources.<sup>53</sup> It can also occur when significant ideological differences exist among people within an organization. In some cases, social identity as ethnic or socio-economic background tends to be a divisive factor that characterizes the competing factions. Furthermore, the personal ambitions of individuals with major influence and power can fuel competition within a group, leading to factional conflict.<sup>54</sup> In this context, it is possible to distinguish two main types of factionalism in Ottoman historiography. The first is central factionalism, which focuses on the factional rivalry inside the Ottoman dynasty and the pasha households in Istanbul. The second - and one of the main themes of this thesis - is provincial factionalism, which, as the name suggests, concerns the power struggles of local power holders in the urban-rural areas of the Ottoman provinces.

### 2.2.1 Central Factionalism

Central factionalism is related directly to the internal struggles within the imperial palace and the increasing influence of the *harem*<sup>55</sup> in the succession process. According to Daniel Goffman, the beginning of this factional rivalry occurred during the reign of the Suleiman I, when he decided to include the imperial *harem* inside the Topkapı Palace. This increased the role of the imperial wives and mothers within the imperial household as they began arranging marriages of imperial daughters with statesmen. Thus, for the ambitious pashas who wanted to become part of the ruling family, they had to rely on the alliances with the imperial wives rather than the Sultan himself.<sup>56</sup> In the seventeenth century, the role of imperial women as power brokers increased significantly with the end of fratricide among the male contenders of the Ottoman dynasty. However, this development led to a continuous factional crisis inside the palace as the royal mothers competed among themselves for their sons' succession and fate.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jane Hathaway. 'Bilateral Factionalism in the Ottoman Provinces'. In *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire: Halycon Days in Crete V: A Symposium Held in Rethymon*, 10–12 January 2003. Edited by Antonis Anastasopoulos. (Rethymnon: University of Crete Press, 2005): 31-38.

<sup>54</sup> For an in-depth theoretical framework regarding factions and a comprehensive socio-political analysis of factionalism see: P. N. Rastogi, "Anatomy of Factional Conflict", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (March 1967): 17-20; Edmund H. Mantell, "Factional Conflict through the Generations: Theory and Measurement", *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (Oct. 1991): 409-413.

<sup>55</sup> *Harem* refers to the place in the imperial palace which was reserved only for the women and the members of the Sultan's household.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, New Approaches to European History 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 63–64.

<sup>57</sup> Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, Studies in Middle Eastern History (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993): 24.

During the second half of the seventeenth century, the vizier and pasha households emerged as contenders for political power in the central government by appointing their clientele to important offices. This resulted in the weakening of the imperial household's position in the decision-making processes regarding state affairs and changed the form of central factionalism, as the rivalry was among the vizier households.<sup>58</sup> For historians of the Ottoman Empire, these changes were signs of a fundamental transformation in how the government operated. The ruling elite went into a process of civilianization since the military class pashas were replaced by 'efendis-turned-pashas'<sup>59</sup> who could access state positions relying on patron-client networks through influential households.<sup>60</sup> Despite the rise of vizier and pasha households, the imperial household remained at the center of state affairs. The competing households' links with the ruling family through marriages of Ottoman princesses ensured their loyalty to the imperial household. On the other hand, factionalism was used by the Sultan's household to control ambitious viziers and pashas.<sup>61</sup>

### 2.2.2 Provincial Factionalism

In the early modern period, factionalism became a visible phenomenon with divisive and confrontational tendencies throughout urban and rural areas in the Arab-speaking provinces, Anatolia, and the Balkans. It should be noted that not every conflict or rivalry among local powerholders is to be treated as a case of factionalism. At the same time, it was a wide inclusive condition encompassing all segments of provincial society, from elites to common people. It tends to emerge during social, political, and demographic crises. Although the specific characteristics of factions varied depending on the context and period, there were common elements that made factionalism identifiable. The most important factor was the awareness of belonging to a faction, sometimes expressed through symbols or rituals. Secondly, generally, it had a dichotomous nature with two rival factions that divide society

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<sup>58</sup>Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, 'The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683–1703: A Preliminary Report', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94 (1974): 438–47; Carter V. Findley, 'Patrimonial Household Organization and Factional Activity in the Ottoman Ruling Class', in *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071–1920)*, ed. Osman Okyar and Halil İnalcık (Ankara, 1980): 227–35; Jane Hathaway, 'Households in the Administration of the Ottoman Empire.' *Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları/Journal of Turkish Studies*, Cilt 40, Aralık 2013.

<sup>59</sup>Norman Itzkowitz. 'Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Realities', *Studia Islamica* 16 (1962): 73–94.

<sup>60</sup>Rifa'at 'Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany, 1991): 41; Carter Vaughn Findley. 'Political culture and the great households.' In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol.3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1838*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, 65–80. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 67–71.

<sup>61</sup>Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 121.; Madeline C. Zilfi. 'Muslim Women in the Early Modern Era.' In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1838*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, 135–56. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 145.

and compete for political and economic dominance. Lastly, the longevity of the faction was not limited to an individual or a household.<sup>62</sup>

The issue of provincial factionalism in Ottoman historiography has been examined through various empirical studies from different regions. Additionally, the methodology and queries posed regarding the appearance of this development in the provinces have yielded different results for the researchers. In early examples, factional strife in the Levant cities of Aleppo and Damascus was depicted as a political clash between the local elite (*ashraf*) and the Janissaries, who were military troops stationed in the provincial garrisons. For some historians like Boldman and Rafeq, this factional strife was a sign of the decline of Ottoman authority in Arab provinces during the eighteenth century and the resistance of the local Arabs against the Ottoman rulers.<sup>63</sup> Subsequently, other scholars, including Karl Barbir and Abraham Marcus, presented differing viewpoints on this matter. They contended that the discord between the *ashraf* and janissary factions originated from competition for access to local resources and prominent administrative positions. This argument shifted the focus from a localized perspective to an imperial understanding of the socio-economic conditions that facilitated the emergence of these factions.<sup>64</sup>

It appears that this type of factionalism, where the dominant groups are the *ashraf* and the janissaries, was also present in other provinces. Consequently, it is of great significance to comprehend why the factional set-up was configured around these two socio-religious and military entities. The *ashraf* or *sadat* in theory was an exclusive class officially recognized by the central authorities and regulated by the imperial institution of *nakibüleşraf*.<sup>65</sup> However, during the early modern period, wealthy and influential individuals fraudulently obtained the status of *ashraf* through forgery and bribery. Membership in this group afforded its members social

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<sup>62</sup>Jane Hathaway. 'A Mediterranean Culture of Factions? Bilateral Factionalism in the Greater Mediterranean Region in the Pre-Modern Era.' In Gabriel Piterberg, Teofilo Fabian Ruiz, and Geoffrey Symcox, Braudel Revisited: The Mediterranean World, 1600-1800, UCLA Center/Clark Series 13 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010):54-75; Hülya Canbakal. 'Political Unrest in Eighteenth-Century Aytanb'. In Antonis Anastasopoulos, Institouto Mesogeiakōn Spoudōn (Rethymnon, Greece), and Hidryma Technologias kai Ereunas (Greece), eds., *Political Initiatives "from the Bottom up" in the Ottoman Empire: Halcyon Days in Crete VII, a Symposium Held in Rethymno 9-11 January 2009* (Halcyon Days in Crete (Symposium), Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2012): 33-58.

<sup>63</sup>Herbert L. Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760-1826*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963); Abdul-Karim Rafeq. "Changes in the Relationship between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Syrian Provinces from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries." In *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, 53-73. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press): 63-65.

<sup>64</sup>Karl K. Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1708-1758* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ Press, 2014); Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>65</sup>The imperial institution of Nakibüleşraf is responsible for overseeing and maintaining records of the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. This institution grants the right of *ashraf* to individuals who can provide the necessary credentials of their lineage. See: Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, "Nakibüleşraf", TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/nakibulesraf> (13.11.2023).

and economic advantages and guarded them against state impositions.<sup>66</sup> After barriers were lifted, individuals from varied backgrounds who shared interests with the *ashraf* upper class were also welcomed into the group. With a significant increase in membership, as in the case of eighteenth-century Aleppo, the *ashraf* emerged as an organized political group with its own military units.<sup>67</sup>

Conversely, the Janissaries were delegates of central power and an essential component in the regional administrative framework. Appointed to safeguard the order in the provinces, they were answerable only to Istanbul. Like the *ashraf*, the janissaries had financial advantages and freedom from external involvement. After the sixteenth century, with the central government's control over the provinces loosening, the janissaries emerged as a political group aiming to dominate the province by manipulating their 'privileges', status, and military prowess.<sup>68</sup> The janissary status was sold or granted to a significant number of influential people for financial gains and recruitment of members to strengthen the power of the faction. This brought them against local powerholders and rival groups like the *ashraf* in Damascus, Aleppo, and Aytanb causing a polarization of the society.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, in regions like Adana and Crete, the janissaries kept their power firmly established and were not opposed by any other local faction. The power struggle in these regions occurred between janissary officers, who competed for the role of the provincial notable.<sup>70</sup> An additional instance in which the janissaries were involved and acted as a faction took place in the town of Tokat, located in Anatolia. In this context, the factional strife within urban centers was less pronounced than in the cities of the Levant.<sup>71</sup>

Jane Hathaway made an invaluable addition to the studies of provincial factionalism when she articulated the concept of 'bilateral factionalism' while studying the

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<sup>66</sup>Hülya Canbakal. "On the 'Nobility' of Provincial Notables" In *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos, 39–50. Rethymnon, (Greece: Crete University Press, 2005): 40-41.

<sup>67</sup>Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity*, 61–62.

<sup>68</sup>Yannis Spyropoulos, "Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th C.)." In *Halcyon Days in Crete IX: Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*. Edited by Marinos Sariyannis. (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2019): 450–452.

<sup>69</sup>Bruce Masters. 'Aleppo's Janissaries: Crime Syndicate or Vox Populi?' In *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faruqi*. Edited by Eleni Gara, Mustafa Erdem Kabadayı and Christoph K. Neumann. (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2011): 160-162. Hülya Canbakal. 'Political Unrest in Eighteenth-Century Aytanb'. In Anastasopoulos, Institutouto Mesogeiakōn Spoudōn (Rethymnon, Greece), and Hidryma Technologias kai Ereunas (Greece), *Political Initiatives "from the Bottom up" in the Ottoman Empire*, 39.

<sup>70</sup>Aysel Yıldız. Janissaries and Urban Notables in Local Politics: Struggle for Power and Factional Strife in the Late Eighteenth-Century Anatolian Town of Adana. *Histories* 3 (2023): 1–18.

<sup>71</sup>The case of Tokat was treated in the dissertation of Yüksel Duman "Notables, Textiles and Copper in Ottoman Tokat, 1750–1840", 33-44.

Faqari-Qasimi power struggle in early modern Egypt. It referred to a political culture that was dominated by only two factions dividing the society into two parts just like the *ashraf* and the janissaries did in Aleppo or Aytanb. However, the peculiarity of this example is that the origins of Faqari-Qasimi rivalry predated the Ottomans. With the conquest of Egypt this bilateral factionalism was influenced by the Ottoman political culture. In this regard, the author emphasizes the possible impact of the Janissary culture due to the presence of common symbol and rituals displayed during ceremonies.<sup>72</sup> The region of Maraş saw the same kind of factionalism, with the pre-Ottoman local elite of the Dulkadirs, assisted by the *ashraf*, competing with the Beyazidlus faction, created by the Ottoman sultan, and backed by the janissary corps.<sup>73</sup>

Provincial factionalism became a struggle that the state attempted various methods to either neutralize or, at the very least, control it through the appointing of governors.<sup>74</sup> The Ottoman government was aware of the ‘factions’ in the provinces and used the specific word of *fırqa* in the official documents. This term can be translated as faction or a party depending on the period.<sup>75</sup> The fact that this term is also mentioned in local primary sources indicates that contemporary observers were aware of the factional strife and social changes happening during their time.<sup>76</sup> Another reason for the awareness was the social impact it caused in the provinces. The difficult socio-economic situation combined with the conflicts ‘encouraged’ the people from different segments of society to become part of the factions altering the social structure of the provinces.

### 2.2.3 Factional Politics and Social Order in the Provinces

Factional groups began to take shape in the Ottoman provinces due to a complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors. The various policies and measures adopted by the central government to address the complex challenges of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were fundamental catalysts for the development of provincial factions. The persistent and excessive taxation imposed upon the population created a considerable financial burden, resulting in tensions

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<sup>72</sup>Jane Hathaway. ‘Bilateral Factionalism in the Ottoman Provinces’, 31-38.

<sup>73</sup>Canbakal, ‘Political Unrest in Eighteenth-Century Aytanb’, 39.

<sup>74</sup>Dick Douwes, *The Ottomans in Syria: A History of Justice and Oppression* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000): 50.

<sup>75</sup>Canbakal, Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions: Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen*, 27-28.

between the people and the authorities. On the other hand, the accessibility of tax farming, administrative offices, and various resources to different segments of society fostered intense competition among these groups.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, diverse social, economic, and military groups would coalesce around prominent leaders, ultimately transforming into distinct factions. Factionalism developed into a crucial organizational framework within provincial society, serving as a means for diverse groups to unite and advocate for their collective interests. This dynamic allowed these communities not only to safeguard their rights and resources but also to engage effectively with governmental authorities, thereby facilitating negotiations that addressed their specific concerns and needs.<sup>78</sup>

The central government's inability to enforce direct governance in the provinces resulted in a centrifugal process, whereby local powerholders began exercising autonomous control over both the urban economy and administration. In each of the case studies referenced above, every faction endeavored to secure its respective interests, motivated by the prospect of political influence and the potential for economic benefit. As a result, rivalries flourished, leading to a dynamic and contentious landscape where alliances were formed and fractured in pursuit of dominance. Competition among the groups or their conflicts with the central authorities led to the disruption of the social order in the provinces. Ultimately, the Ottoman authorities strategically harnessed the existing local factionalism within the provinces. By doing so, they aimed to diminish the influence of powerful leading groups that could challenge central authority. This approach not only served to consolidate control but also introduced a nuanced layer to the interactions between the central government and peripheral regions, significantly altering the traditional dynamics of their relationship.<sup>79</sup>

A conflict can only manifest when there are at least two influential entities with differing characteristics capable of mobilizing various segments of the population to advocate for their respective interests. The main groups that appear in these case studies are the janissaries and the *ashraf*, who divide the urban societies into two factions. The *ashraf* represented the urban elite, among them merchants and craftsmen of the 'prestigious' trades like silk weavers or dyers. In contrast, the janissaries

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<sup>77</sup>Linda Darling, "Public Finances: The Role of the Ottoman Centre." In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 123-129. Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700*, 19-63; Duman, "Notables, Textiles, and Copper in Ottoman Tokat 1750-1840", 34-35.

<sup>78</sup>Hathaway, *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>79</sup>For the case of Damascus see: Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus 1723-1783*; Karl Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1708-1758*; Linda Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*; In Anatolia, see: Canbakal, 'Political Unrest in Eighteenth-Century Aytanb'; Duman, "Notables, Textiles, and Copper in Ottoman Tokat 1750-1840".

who emerged from the garrisons took on the role of representatives for marginalized groups originating from rural areas. This development marked a significant shift in the dynamics of power and representation, bridging the gap between the rural populace and the city's established institutions.<sup>80</sup> In this scenario, the main reason for the socio-political crisis among the two prominent groups was the involvement of the janissaries in trades and artisan guilds.<sup>81</sup> Eventually, this fostered conflicts of financial and political interests with the *ashraf* and the guild leaders who saw the janissaries as 'outsiders' wanting to challenge the rules.

Nevertheless, the janissaries managed to put down roots in the local economy and society. Despite their successful entry into urban space, factionalism continued to manifest prominently and visibly across various divisive layers. Spatial divisions were established within the urban environment for the factional members. Thus, factionalism had also become associated with territorial dimensions in the city.<sup>82</sup> Another division was also seen among guilds, as the factional membership was higher in certain artisan groups. In Aleppo, *ashraf* were more present among tanners, while the janissaries constituted the largest group in the butchers' guild.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, as the janissaries were allied with the tribesmen, their artisanal occupation was influenced by this. Apart from being butchers, they were active renderers of sheep fat, and workers in wool guilds.<sup>84</sup> This shows how factionalism at that period had evolved into a significant political and socio-economic factor in the urban framework.

In Damascus, the factionalism had a different dynamism when compared to Aleppo. Although there were groups of *ashraf* and janissaries, factionalism was mostly made through the localized janissary group (*yerliyya*) and the imperial troops that were sent by the central government. The factions were created among these two groups, who would attract allies among the population of Damascus. Furthermore, for each janissary group, the central government appointed different aga, which shows the presence of the Ottoman state in provincial factionalism.<sup>85</sup> In order

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<sup>80</sup>Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600–1750* (New York: New York University Press, 1988): 47.

<sup>81</sup>On the involvement of the janissaries into trades and artisan guilds, thus their transformation into a social group in the Ottoman capital and provinces, see: Onur Yıldırım, "Transformation of the Craft Guilds in Istanbul", *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring 2001), 57; Cemal Kafadar, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman İstanbul: Rebels without a Cause?" in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, ed. Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Center for Turkish Studies, 2007): 116-119; Marcus, *Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century*, 89.

<sup>82</sup>Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 161-163.

<sup>84</sup>Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, 47.

<sup>85</sup>Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus, 1723-1783*, 25-32; Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1708-1758*,

to exert its authority in Syria, the government made direct support to the al-Azm family, who were appointed governors of Damascus. Nevertheless, the new political realignment in the center following the revolt of 1730 affected the position of the al-Azm family, which lost their patrons in the imperial capital and consequently the position as governor of Damascus.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, despite this family regained their status as the leading family in the region by creating around themselves a strong political faction which was made up of the most prominent socio-economic, religious, and military groups.<sup>87</sup>

Ultimately, factionalism in the Ottoman provinces during the early modern period emerged as a significant political instrument and organization for the local population. It was created through solidarity, patron-client relationships, and share of common interests among various socio-economic and political groups. Its function relied on its ability to create opportunities for influential individuals and groups to secure a share of political, social, and economic power. Although defeating the rival faction was an important milestone in the pursuit of the objective, negotiation with the imperial authorities was essential to get recognition of the legitimacy of the action. Additionally, in the process of negotiation, the winning faction portrayed itself as the voice of the whole society rather than a part of it. This enabled it to establish its form of legitimacy, but one of local context.

### 2.3 Factionalism in Shkodra: A Comparative Perspective

When compared with the other cases studied in the other Ottoman provinces, the factionalism taking place in Shkodra has both similarities and differences. The limited availability of primary sources and literature about the factional strife in Shkodra results in many gaps that hinder a comprehensive understanding of this historical phenomenon. Additionally, from a regional perspective, there is a notable lack of studies on Balkan cities facing similar factional struggles. Such instances have consistently been observed in Arab-speaking regions and cities throughout Anatolia, drawing the interest of numerous scholars who have undertaken examinations of these phenomena. Historians engaged in the study of provinces of the Levant, Egypt, and Anatolia relied on a diverse array of primary sources drawing

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89-97.

<sup>86</sup>Rafeq, *Ibid.*, 106-107.

<sup>87</sup>Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, 31-32.



from both local and central origins.<sup>88</sup> Still, there is significant material that offers valuable insights into the factionalism of Shkodra, elucidating its distinct characteristics and inherent dynamism. Moreover, this comparative analysis aims to elucidate how socio-economic, political, and topographical conditions, alongside various powerholders, have influenced the dynamics of factionalism in Shkodra.

In contrast to other cities, Shkodra was integrated into the Ottoman administrative system at an earlier stage than the Arab-speaking provinces as it was conquered before them. When this occurred, the city suffered a total eradication of its urban demographic and organizational framework due to the war and the hostilities in the aftermath.<sup>89</sup> Shkodra's urban topography and identity in the following years were constructed according to Ottoman norms.<sup>90</sup> Thus, its physical and social framework changed fundamentally from its pre-Ottoman period.<sup>91</sup> From the seventeenth century onward Shkodra reached a considerable demographic size and became an important commercial hub and administrative center of the district (sandjak) bearing its name. Eventually, socio-economic and military-administrative groups were consolidated and became visible in the urban landscape of Shkodra.<sup>92</sup>

The Ottoman conquests from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century in Anatolia and the Arabic-speaking lands exhibited a more seamless integration into the state administrative framework in comparison to the Balkan region. This was because the Ottomans were an Islamic Empire, and although the cities were linguistically and culturally different, the common religion played an important role.<sup>93</sup> Although Ottomans made important changes in these regions' administrative systems, the social structure remained the same. Among these regions, those close to the Anatolian heartland were integrated successfully into the Ottoman provincial administration,

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<sup>88</sup>The gap regarding the primary sources is considerable when making a comparison of what the scholars examining the other Ottoman provinces relied on and those on Shkodra. In my view, the most significant gap in the narrative of Shkodra during the eighteenth century is the absence of court records and local chronicles, which are essential components in other provincial studies.

<sup>89</sup>This Ottoman conquest and the restarting of the urbanization process for Shkodra is explained in the next subsection.

<sup>90</sup>Regarding a definition and description of an Ottoman city, see: Gilles Veinstein, "The Ottoman Town (Fifteenth–Eighteenth Centuries)," in *The City in the Islamic World*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli, and André Raymond, vol. 1, Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 1: The Near and Middle East, vol. 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 205–217.

<sup>91</sup>The Ottomans conquered Shkodra from Venice, but from the Venetian period nothing remained from the urban setting apart from the castle's restoration.

<sup>92</sup>Evliya Çelebi was among the first to make a societal categorization of Shkodra, hence he divided them into: fishermen, the military group, merchant class, artisans, scholars and ulema, and vintners, see: Dankof and Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions*, 40–41.

<sup>93</sup>Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Klasik Çağ (1300–1600)*, çev. Ruşen Sezer. (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003): 38–39.

compared to those far away.<sup>94</sup> However, the most significant development was in the urban centers, and new economic and social groups that were associated with the Ottoman political culture emerged.<sup>95</sup> Among the groups that subsequently established themselves as prominent factions were the janissaries.

Shkodra, both from a societal and administrative standpoint, was wholly developed as a result of Ottoman influence. However, in terms of economic development, urban cultural dynamics, and demography, it could not hold a comparative status against cities such as Aleppo, Damascus, Mosul, Antep, or Cairo. This represents one of many reasons for the emergence of factions firstly within these cities. The cities mentioned exhibited a more prolonged and uninterrupted period of urban development, characterized by stability and growth, when compared to Shkodra, which experienced a less consistent urban setting over time. Secondly, the emergence of groups that were not associated with the local social and urban realities paved the way for the creation of opposition groups ‘local’ versus ‘Ottoman’, for example in the case of Aleppo and Damascus this was quite visible. The *ashraf* represented the local urban socio-economic groups and, through patronage and a network of alliances, were later transformed into a political faction against the janissaries, who, in certain ways, represented the Ottoman establishment.<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, factionalism in these places appears to have taken shape earlier, somewhere at the end of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the *ashraf* faction in Aleppo succeeded in transforming into a faction only in the eighteenth century.<sup>97</sup> The same also goes for the janissaries of Damascus, who were divided into the *yerliyya* (local) and *kul* (imperial) groups.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, the Faqari and Qasimi factions of Egypt seem to have experienced the same process as the other examples but in a different way. In this case, there was a bilateral factionalism, that had also a ‘local’ and an ‘imperial’ divisive nature and connection to the factions in the Ottoman capital. However, the Faqari and Qasimi factions had adopted some pre-Ottoman identities from previous historical factionalism dating back to the Classical Islam period. Ultimately, the social and political characteristics

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<sup>94</sup>Bruce Masters, “Semi-autonomous forces in the Arab provinces.” In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*: vol. 3, *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 186.

<sup>95</sup>Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire Mosul, 1540-1834*, 14.

<sup>96</sup>Abdul-Kareem Rafeq’s work but he puts too much emphasis on this kind of division turning it from an ‘Arab’ localism to a ‘Turkish’ Ottoman struggle, see: Rafeq. “Changes in the Relationship between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Syrian Provinces from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries.”, 63-65.

<sup>97</sup>Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700*, 141.

<sup>98</sup>Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus 1723-1783*, 25-30.

of the two competing factions were intricately influenced by the distinctive realities of the early modern Ottoman Empire. This period was marked by unique dynamics, including complex power structures, cultural interactions, and shifting allegiances, which profoundly impacted the behaviors and motivations of each faction.<sup>99</sup>

In the context of Shkodra, the dynamics of factionalism and the principal actors involved exhibit significant differences. The presence of factions within the city was first documented in 1722.<sup>100</sup> Before this date, there are no references to such factions in contemporary sources. Contrary, to the other cases, there were no previous examples of factions or powerful groups that had been embroiled in such conflict in Shkodra or in the adjacent regions. Furthermore, the most significant difference was that these factions were crystallized around artisan guilds of tanners and tailors, thus named according to them.<sup>101</sup> The scarcity of sources makes it challenging to follow up on the process of how the factions of tanners and tailors came to be in Shkodra. Nevertheless, their emergence in the eighteenth century set Shkodra aside when compared to the known cases in other Ottoman provinces, where the competing factions of janissaries and *ashraf* had been present in the political scene even earlier. The emergence of these two groups in Shkodra can be attributed to the socio-political conditions and the local actors that prevailed during the Ottoman period.

The political division in Shkodra was characterized by distinct spatial dimensions as well. The guilds of tailors and tanners resided in different parts of the city. The tailors together with most of the other guilds were located in the commercial urban part which can be called the ‘new town’. Here the faction’s powerbase and most of their ally members were found. For the Tanners’ their workshops and supporters were located in the older settlement of Shkodra, thus the ‘old town’.<sup>102</sup> In examining the spatial dimension, one can identify two possible perspectives: either factionalism instigated the territorial division of Shkodra, or a pre-existing territorial division contributed to the consolidation and formation of these two factions. Additionally, the socioeconomic strengthening of these two guilds could have occurred through *yamak* relationship<sup>103</sup> with other artisan guilds that were associated with their trade.

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<sup>99</sup>Jane Hathaway, ‘Bilateral Factionalism in the Ottoman Provinces’, 35-36.

<sup>100</sup>The first recorded instance of factional conflict in Shkodra between the tanners and tailors is found in the Ottoman *mühimme* (important affairs) registers, dating back to late September or early October 1722, see: BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722)).

<sup>101</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722)).

<sup>102</sup>This topic is addressed comprehensively in the subsequent subsection that examines the urbanization of Shkodra and its historical topography.

<sup>103</sup>This kind of relationship is when an influential artisan guild takes under its influence other guilds and artisan groups that are related to its trade, see: Suraiya Faruqi, *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople*

Consequently, the tailors may have exerted an influence on the artisans located within the commercial district, akin to the impact that the tanners had in the ‘old town’.<sup>104</sup>

The spatial dimension of factionalism provides valuable insights into the essential characteristics that distinguish a faction. This examination reveals how location and spatial relationships contribute to the formation and evolution of factional entities. In this context, the tailors exemplify a newly established urban elite composed of merchants and artisans while the tanners had a power base in the rural landscape of Shkodra. Among the two factions, the tanners emerged as the more aggressive group, demonstrating a tendency to assume the attackers’ role in most instances. Furthermore, the location of the assaults and clashes between the two sides was the marketplace of Shkodra, where commercial activities took place and most artisans’ shops were situated. The tailors governed the economic landscape and wielded considerable power, leveraging their wealth to impact social and political dynamics in the marketplace area. By launching assaults in this critical space, the tanners aimed to undermine the tailors’ economic influence and challenge their sociopolitical standing within the city. Following these intense clashes, the tanners would often retreat to their designated quarters or find refuge in the nearby rural settlements, carefully evading potential repercussions from local authorities. This interplay of aggression and retreat further exemplified the intricate relationship between factionalism and the spatial dimensions of power within Shkodra.<sup>105</sup>

The conflict between urban and rural groups emerged as a defining characteristic in many of the previously discussed cases across various provinces in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century. In the Arabic-speaking provinces<sup>106</sup> where factional disputes were prevalent, the local elite known as *ashraf* played a prominent role, embodying the interests and influences of the urban population. Their position reflected a sophisticated and established network of social and political power within the cities. Conversely, the janissary faction, which consisted of military garrisons stationed in the outskirts, relied on the support of the rural political establishment.

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*Under the Ottomans.* (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2009): 74.

<sup>104</sup>The dominance of certain guilds over other artisan groups is very visible in many cases throughout Albanian-speaking regions, in this regard see: Zija Shkodra, *Esnafet Shqiptare (Shek. XV-XX)*. On the *yamak* relationship and its importance among the guilds and urban economy, see: Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700*, 232.

<sup>105</sup>During their first appearance, the Tanners hid in the town of Bushat when trying to escape the authorities’ punishment, thus showing a connection with rural political establishments, see: BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280, (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722)).

<sup>106</sup>In the case of Egypt, the factions of Faqari and Qasimi had their rural tribal counterparts, thus there was not an urban versus rural forces case like in Aleppo or Damascus, see: Hathaway, *The Tale of Two Factions*, 74.

This rural base represented a distinct socio-political entity, fostering a connection between military authority and agrarian interests, thus highlighting the complex dynamics between urban and rural populations in these regions.<sup>107</sup> This urban versus rural clash was a predominant feature in almost all the above-mentioned cases in the other provinces, especially during a time when demographic movements from rural areas to urban centers were present everywhere in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>108</sup>

Ultimately, a crucial element of factionalism in Shkodra pertains to the distinctive political leadership attributes inherent to each factional group. The leaders of each group were drawn from prominent military-administrative households that emerged after the Ottoman conquest of the province of Shkodra. These influential families had established themselves as key regional players, and their power significantly increased throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a result, they wielded considerable authority and played a pivotal role in shaping the political landscape of the area during this period. The remarkable features and defining attributes of each significant household serve to greatly enhance our understanding of the underlying essence of the faction to which they are related. The Çavuşzades household, affiliated with the tailors' faction, was located within the commercial district of Shkodra. This positioning illustrates the source of their wealth and sociopolitical influence in the region. The leaders of the Tanners' faction were notable figures belonging to two prominent families: the Mahmud-bey-zades from the town of Peja, and the Yusuf-beg-zades from Bushat, situated in the southern lowlands of Shkodra. In contrast to the Çavuşzades, who held sway in the urban center, these households sourced their power and wealth from the expansive rural landscapes where they owned extensive tracts of valuable land.<sup>109</sup>

## 2.4 Historical Topography of Shkodra

In this subsection, I will focus on the topography of Shkodra from a historical aspect that begins with the Ottoman conquest of the city at the end of the fifteenth.

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<sup>107</sup>Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions*, 6; Suraiya Faruqi, "Rural Life," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faruqi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 376–379. Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 60; Aysel Yıldız, 'Janissaries and Urban Notables in Local Politics: Struggle for Power and Factional Strife in the Late Eighteenth-Century Anatolian Town of Adana', 7.

<sup>108</sup>Jane Hathaway. 'A Mediterranean Culture of Factions? Bilateral Factionalism in the Greater Mediterranean Region in the Pre-Modern Era.' In Gabriel Piterberg, Teofilo Fabian Ruiz, and Geoffrey Symcox, *Braudel Revisited: The Mediterranean World, 1600–1800*, UCLA Center/Clark Series 13 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010): 67–71.

<sup>109</sup>The topic of the household shall be illustrated as a separate sub-section in the next chapter.

The study aims to shed light on the urbanization process that the city experienced by looking at the changes regarding the arrangements of natural and artificial features of the area. Hence, the evaluation of geography in combination with the human agency in Shkodra will also help to recreate the environment in which significant events took place in the eighteenth century. In this context, the conflict between the Tanners and the tailors also exhibited a spatial dimension, as urban neighborhoods and rural areas were distinctly divided between the two factions. In this sub-chapter of the thesis, the primary sources utilized include travelers' accounts, which are complemented by the visual data generated during the Ottoman period. Although the visual data predominantly originates from the nineteenth century, it offers a significant perspective on the landscape of Shkodra, which, during that period, remained largely unchanged from the previous century.

Figure 2.1 In this map is given the position of Shkodra from the Adriatic Sea perspective



Figure 2.2 Through the Buna River, Shkodra could had access to the Adriatic Sea. This was only possible by small boats



#### 2.4.1 Shkodra in the Sources

The first accounts about Shkodra in the late fifteenth century belong to the Venetians and focus on the Ottoman siege and its consequences for the city and the vicinity. Fior Jonima, a Venetian representative of Shkodra, wrote about the Ottoman military campaign in central and western Albania. He described the condition of the settlements during and right after the Ottoman conquest.<sup>110</sup> In the same period, the historian Giorgio Merlano di Negro wrote the book *Bellum Scodrenese* (War of Shkodra). Although the focus of the work was the siege of the castle of Shkodra, the author also gave essential topographic references to the area while explaining the maneuvers of Venetian forces during the battles. In addition, from the geographical aspect, Merlano recorded the toponyms of various places in

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<sup>110</sup>Fior Jonima. 1470. *Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Governatori delle pubbliche entrate, registri multorum* B. 145 (vol. 35), 13r-v; reprinted in Oliver Jens Schmitt: *Das venezianische Albanien (1392-1479)*, Munich 2001, p. 646.

the region of Shkodra.<sup>111</sup>

In the same style, Marino Barlezio (Marinus Barletius) published his version of the siege of Shkodra in 1504. Differently from Merlano, the accounts of Barlezio include eyewitness accounts making the book even more reliable than the other contemporaries. Hence, he offers more precise information related to the topography of Shkodra. Firstly, Barlezio provides a particular illustration of the city, the rural area, and its history. Secondly, he narrates in detail the movements and the positioning of the Ottoman and Venetian troops in the wide area around the castle. When doing this, the author references these places which constituted the city of Shkodra with its suburbs.<sup>112</sup> Still, in the sixteenth century, an anonymous report related to the defense of Ulcinj in 1570 was found. According to historians, from its content, this work might belong to a Venetian official of Kotor who was familiar with the region as he explained the ways of navigation near Shkodra.<sup>113</sup>

Apart from the written texts, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, prominent cartographers created astonishing maps illuminating the area's topographic features. Regarding Shkodra, the Venetian cartographer Giovanni Francesco Camocio (1501-1574) was among the first who draw a map by highlighting both settlements and the geographic characteristics of the region. In addition, he carefully wrote the names of most of them, which helps us understand the written descriptions of contemporary travelers in later periods.<sup>114</sup> Giuseppe Rosaccio (1530-1620) is another Venetian geographer who created a map of northern Albania's coastal parts, including Shkodra. Although the style resembles Camocio's work, the map of Rosaccio has fewer details.<sup>115</sup> Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522-1592)<sup>116</sup>, in his many diplomatic journeys on behalf of the Habsburg Empire, created a map of Shkodra akin to the Venetian cartographers.<sup>117</sup> Vincenzo Coronelli mapped the Adriatic coast in the seventeenth

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<sup>111</sup>Georgius Merula Alexandrinus.1474. *Bellum Scodrense*. Translated by Robert Elsie, printed in Venice.

<sup>112</sup>Marin Barleti, *Rrethimi i Shkodrës* (translated by Henrik Lacaj). Tirana: Universiteti Shtetëror, 1962.

<sup>113</sup>Injac Zamputi (ed.): *Dokumente të shekujve XVI XVII për historinë e Shqipërisë, vëllimi 1 (1507-1592)*, (Tirana 1989): 273-288.

<sup>114</sup>Giovanni Francesco Camocio. 1574. *Isole famose porti, fortezze, e terre maritime sottoposte alla Ser.ma Sig.ria di Venetia, ad altri Principi Christiani, et al Sig.or Turco, novamente poste in luce*, Βενετια, alla libreria del segno di S.Marco.

<sup>115</sup>Giuseppe Rosaccio.1598. *Viaggio da Venetia, a Costantinopoli: per mare, e per terra & insieme quello di Terra Santa, da Gioseppo Rosaccio, con brevità descritto, nel quale, oltre à settantadui disegni, di geografia e corografia si discorre, quanto in esso viaggio si ritroua, cioè : città, castelli, porti, golfi, isole, monti, fiumi è mari : opera utile à mercanti, marinari & à studiosi di geografia*, Βενετια, Giacomo Franco.

<sup>116</sup>The drawing style implemented by Busbecq resembles both Camacio and Rosaccio. In fact, Busbecq was educated in Venice, where he probably adopted the mapping methods of the Italian geographers.

<sup>117</sup>Avgerii Gislennii von Busbeck.1664. *Vier Sendschreiben der Türkischen Bottschaft, welche von dem Röm. Keyser Ferdinand dem I. an Solimann, damaligen Türkischen Keyser ihm aufgetragen worden: Darinnen viel politische Lehren, lustige Geschichte, philosophische Discursen, und was sich sonst denkwürdi-*



century, including Shkodra and its hinterland.<sup>118</sup>

In 1610 Shkodra was visited by Marino Bizzi, the Catholic archbishop of Bar sent by the Vatican to gather information about the ecclesiastical structures in northern Albania as conversion to Islam became worrying for Papal authority. The report contains various knowledge about the geography of Shkodra, the location of settlements, the main religious buildings, and the demographic composition in the region.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, the Venetian official Mariano Bolizza wrote a report focusing on the topography of Shkodra and the region's demography. His description also includes the number of houses in different city areas. Just like Marino Bizzi, the Vatican sent Stefano Gaspari to report the condition of the Catholic population in the district of Shkodra. Hence, the apostolic visitor wrote regarding the itinerary by mentioning the names of essential settlements, including the number of inhabitants.<sup>120</sup>

On the other hand, the Ottoman primary sources generally do not offer such descriptions regarding early modern Shkodra. The most important description of the city and its surroundings comes from the seventeenth-century traveler Evliya Çelebi. He went there in 1662 and wrote a detailed description of Shkodra during a period when the Ottoman authority was consolidated, and the city turned into an important urban center. It can be assumed that most of the monuments that Çelebi saw in his journey probably made it even into the later period. Although exaggerations are present in most of his descriptions, the importance of this work still is beyond dispute.<sup>121</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the Ottoman archival sources offer a central insight into the topography of Shkodra in this period. Among the wide variety, the *defters* from the General Directorate for Foundations<sup>122</sup> will be used for this purpose because they include permission regarding the construction of charitable and

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*ges zugetragen, ordentlich verfasst. Denen beygefüget eine Beschreibung seiner absonderlichen Reis, von Constantinopel nach Amasien: Ein Bedenken von Anstellung und Fortsetzung des Türkenkriegs: Samt des Türkischen Abgesandten Relation, in Frankfurth vor den Reichsständen, Νυρεμβεργη, Michael und Friederich Endtern, p. 848.*

<sup>118</sup>Vincenzo Coronelli. 1688. Repubblica di Venezia p. IV. Citta, Fortezze, ed altri Luoghi principali dell' Albania, Epiro e Livadia, e particolarmente i posseduti da Veneti descritti e delineati dal p. Coronelli, Venice.

<sup>119</sup>Injac Zamputi. *Relacione mbi gjendjen e Shqipërisë veriore dhe të mesme në shekullin XVII*. vol. 1 (1610-1634), (Tiranë, 1963).

<sup>120</sup>Stefano Gaspari. *Relazioni delle Diocesi di Serbia, Pulati, Scutari, Sapa, Alessio, Durazzo e Antivari del 1671*, in: Hylli i dritës, Shkodra, 6 (1930).

<sup>121</sup>Robert Dankoff and Robert Elsie *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid)*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000).

<sup>122</sup>Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi.

religious buildings. In these records, it is possible to see the continuous demand for mosques or masjids to be built in Shkodra, and that is related to the embrace of Islam by the local people.<sup>123</sup> Secondly, the memoir of Pater Balneo – a Franciscan priest - which describes Shkodra and the household of the Bushatli family in the second of the eighteenth century, also gives information about settlements or buildings at that time. Hence, in his journey, Balneo mentioned the condition and location of the churches, especially the monuments built by the Bushatlis.<sup>124</sup>

A considerable group of primary sources of Shkodra and its topography are from the nineteenth century. This period witnessed two main cultural and intellectual trends that affected the Ottoman Balkans. First, the Philhellenism movement at the turn of the nineteenth century was embraced by British intelligentsia who traveled to Greece from different directions. Secondly, the Balkans became a research attraction for German and Austrian scientists. In this context Shkodra was visited by travelers of different backgrounds and purposes from both groups Geographers, anthropologists, artists, and diplomats made their way to Shkodra and wrote down their impressions and descriptions of the city using the latest scientific methods developed in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, apart from a considerable number of written sources, with the introduction of photographic devices, the first photos offered a visual perspective of Shkodra.

The first half of the nineteenth century was characterized by continuous migration of ‘admirers’ of Greece, among them the British travelers who fiercely supported Greek independence from the Ottomans. However, a few of these men of letters also visited other parts of the Balkans, including Shkodra. David Urquhart, a leading diplomat, visited Shkodra in 1831 on his way to Istanbul. He stayed for ten days in the city, describing some of the prominent landmarks in the area.<sup>125</sup> In 1848, the artist and author Edward Lear visited Shkodra as an official guest of the English vice-consul of Shkodra. During his stay, apart from the written depiction, Lear drew the city from the western location.<sup>126</sup> Lastly, William Wingfield was another English traveler who traveled on the Adriatic coast in 1853 and wrote down descriptions during his stay in Shkodra.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>VGMA. HRF. D. Rumeli, Elif, no. 1172, 1185.

<sup>124</sup>At Zef Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatli te Shkodres (At Erasmo Balneo)* [The Friar of the Bushatli Pashas of Shkodra (Pater Erasmo Balneo)], (Shkoder: Botimet Franceskane, 2017).

<sup>125</sup>David Urquhart, *The Spirit of the East, Illustrated in a Journal of Travels through Roumeli During an Eventful Period* volume 2, (London: Henry Colbourn, 1838): 198-212.

<sup>126</sup>Edward Lear. *Edward Lear in Greece: Journals of a Landscape Painter in Greece and Albania*, (California: William Kimber, 1965).

<sup>127</sup>W. F. Wingfield. *A Tour in Dalmatia, Albania, and Montenegro, with an Historical Sketch of the Republic of Ragusa, from the Earliest Times Down to its Final Fall*. (London: Richard Bentley, 1859): 150-165.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Austro-Hungary and Germany increased their attention in the Balkans and tried to topple the Russian influence. Under these circumstances, scholars of different fields studied geography and the people of the Balkans. Shkodra, an important city on the Adriatic's eastern coast, became a popular point of interest for these researchers. Although there is a long list of them, only a few that provide more information about the historical topography of Shkodra will be mentioned. Amy Boue was a German Austrian geographer who visited Shkodra probably in 1836 and wrote a topographical description of the city at that time.<sup>128</sup> On the other hand, there is Johann Georg von Hahn regarded as the father of Albanian studies due to his works on Albania's culture, language, and history. He is known to have traveled around most of the places where Albanians lived and made several studies about these regions.<sup>129</sup>

Accompanying Hahn in his journey was Josef Székely, an Austro-Hungarian photographer who took the first photos of Shkodra in 1863. The main photos were taken from the fortress, the highest peak close to the city. Although photographic devices became popular just recently, the photo of Székely is very professional and illustrates the urban conditions of Shkodra in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>130</sup> Baron Alexandre Degrand, the French consul of Shkodra, from 1893-1899 created a rich collection of photos regarding northern Albania. His work is also impressive because, during his stay, he described in detail the part of the city and the area around it.<sup>131</sup> In the same period, an official photo collection was made during Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign. The photos related to Shkodra provide a clear view of the inner parts of the city, like the bazaar and old town.<sup>132</sup> Lastly, the German printing house Purger & Co. produced colored postcards from many countries, including Albania. The cards about Shkodra show in small detail the main parts of the city and the suburbs.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ami Boué. *Recueil d'itinéraires dans la Turquie d'Europe. détails géographiques, topographiques et statistiques sur cet empire*, (Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1854).

<sup>129</sup> Johan Georg von Hahn. *Studime Shqiptare* (Albanian Studies), (Tirana: IDK 2007).

<sup>130</sup> His photos are available on the website of Austrian national archives: [www.bildarchivaustria.at](http://www.bildarchivaustria.at).

<sup>131</sup> Jules Alexandre Théodore Degrand. 1901. *Souvenirs de la Haute-Albanie*. Paris: H. Welter Editeur.

<sup>132</sup> These photos can be found at the website of Istanbul University Library in the section of Abdulhamid II's photograph collections.

<sup>133</sup> This collection is available through the website of Robert Elsie.

### 2.4.2 The Castle and the Old Town

The castle is situated on a rocky hill, thus being the most prominent landmark of Shkodra and the starting point of its main urban settlements. The rivers Buna, Kiri, and the Drin intersect in its southern and western parts, creating a water barrier that provides natural protection and fertile land near the riverbanks. Therefore, to create a connection with the southern lower lands it is essential to have bridges in the south on the Drin and in the west on the river Buna. North of the castle is a flatland suitable for urban development, and towards the northwest begins the coastline of the lake of Shkodra. On the east, the terrain becomes hillier, dividing the northern plain with the southern lowland of the riverbanks.<sup>134</sup> This geographical feature had a crucial role in the urban evolvement of Shkodra from the late Middle Ages until the second half of the nineteenth century when the city evolved only in the northern fields.

During the Venetian period, the castle was fortified, and the wall was raised high making its siege and conquest difficult. Furthermore, Marino Barlezio points out that in the fifteenth century, the city of Shkodra was composed of the citadel inside the castle and the settlements in the fields around it.<sup>135</sup> Thus, the Ottomans managed to take control of the lower part of the city quickly, but they faced difficulties when they tried to capture the castle in the 1470s. Only through an extended blockade and the surrenderer of the Venetian garrison, did the castle fall to the Ottomans. Following the conquest, Shkodra experienced two drastic eventful changes related to its urban development. Firstly, the settlements around the castle were destroyed due to the pillage of the troops.<sup>136</sup> Secondly, Shkodra lost considerable human resources as the people who managed to survive the battle immigrated to Venice.<sup>137</sup>

After the Ottomans took the castle, the first thing they did was to convert the Saint Stephen church that was inside into a mosque that was named after the Sultan Mehmed II. Furthermore, it maintained its function as a military base as before and as the official seat of the Ottoman governor in the district of Shkodra.<sup>138</sup> Due to

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<sup>134</sup>von Hahn, *Studime Shqiptare*, 136.

<sup>135</sup>Barleti, *Rrethimi i Shkodrës*, 38-42.

<sup>136</sup>Georgius Merula Alexandrinus, *Bellum Scodrense*, passim; Fior Jonima, *Archivio di Stato di Venezia*, 646.

<sup>137</sup>Barlezio at the end of his work emphasizes the great welcoming of the citizens of Shkodra by the Venetian authorities after the city was conquered by the Ottomans, see: Barleti, *Ibid*, 153-157.

<sup>138</sup>In the Ottoman sources the castle is named after the city of Shkodra but in the Slavic and Italian sources appears the name Rosafat, which is a city in modern Syria. This connection is due to the presence of a monastery in the riverbank of Buna, built in honor of the saints Sergius and Bacchus martyrs from Resafa.

Figure 2.3 The city of Shkodra was formed around the castle where the seat of sandjak governor was found



the narrow perimeter, inside the walls, there were no houses, only military barracks, warehouses, and weaponry. Evliya Celebi in the seventeenth century, mentions these features of the castle in his journey to Shkodra.<sup>139</sup> In the eighteenth century, the priest Balneo was a close person to the governor, underlining the exact characteristics of the castle. He mentions a graveyard behind the mosque, the dungeons, cannon foundry, and the hidden underground passages. According to Balneo, the governor of Shkodra stayed inside the wall for a short time, and later he would move to his palace situated down from the castle, in the main part of the city.<sup>140</sup> The castle retained its functions until 1874 when an explosion of gunpowder destroyed most of the walls. In the 1900s it was almost abandoned, and the military logistics moved to Mount Tarabosh.<sup>141</sup>

The first urban settlement of Shkodra during the Ottoman period emerged in the

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<sup>139</sup>Robert Dankoff and Robert Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid)*, 33.

<sup>140</sup>Pllumi, *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>141</sup>Machiel Kiel, *Ottoman architecture in Albania, 1385-1912*, (İstanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture Creation Date, 1990): 230.

eastern and southern parts of the castle, and it was regarded as the main town as one of the two parts that would make up the great city in the early modern and later periods. In the Italian and Latin sources, there is a mention of the emergence of this new neighborhood, which started from the eastern entrance of the castle and spread south until the riverbank of the Drini River.<sup>142</sup> The maps created by sixteenth-century cartographers and travelers emphasize the castle as the prominent landmark of Shkodra and the settlements adjacent to the south on the riverbank. Hence, this shows that the urbanization started from east-south to advanced later to the castle's north. According to the Ottoman registers, in the first recording related to the district of Shkodra in the year 1485, the number of households was 97, in 1528 it went to 162, and in 1570-1 it became 244 households.<sup>143</sup>

In the seventeenth century, the priest Mariano Bolizza wrote in his report that Shkodra had 400 houses and a thousand men in arms.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, when Evliya Çelebi travels to Shkodra fifty years later, he uses the name of *varoş* for the old town of Shkodra and gives an approximate number of 1800 houses all being Muslim.<sup>145</sup> During the next century, with the spread of the Tanners' guild and socio-economic influence, the main town began to be called *tabakhane*, or the Tanners' neighborhood. On the west of the castle towards the north, the commercial part of the city began to be known as *terzihane* or the tailors' neighborhood. According to the Armenian geographer Incician, in the late eighteenth century, Shkodra had 25 quarters, of which 20 were in Terzihane, and the other five were in the Tabakhane neighborhood. This significant change was related to environmental factors and the new urban shift after the 1770s,<sup>146</sup> which led to the slow departure from the old town, initially by distinguished families and later by the general population. Consequently, after the second half of the nineteenth century, the 'old town' lost its socio-economic importance and was transformed into a peripheral quarter of Shkodra.<sup>147</sup>

However, in 1836 the main town was attacked by the central forces due to the

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<sup>142</sup>Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir a l'histoire des croisades au XV e siècle*, Vol. IV, (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1902): 227.

<sup>143</sup>Kiel, *Ibid*, 226-227.

<sup>144</sup>R. Elsie: *Early Albania, a Reader of Historical Texts, 11th - 17th Centuries*, 130-169.

<sup>145</sup>Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682). Robert Dankoff and Robert Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000): 33.

<sup>146</sup>This development began to take place after the factional strife ended and the Bushatli household was the leading power in the region. As the old town was on the bank of the Drini River, there were constant floods which had a negative impact on the lives of the inhabitants. Secondly, due to the hills around, the urbanization of this part of the city was very difficult.

<sup>147</sup>P. L. Inciciyan, "Osmanlı Rumelisi: Tarih ve Coğrafyası", translated by H. D. Andreasyan. *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, II-III, (Istanbul, 1974): 71.

opposition of the town against the centralization policies of Istanbul.<sup>148</sup> After this event, the Tanners' neighborhood lost prominence and it did not recover. Hence, in the nineteenth century, the commercial part of the city, or the 'new' town, situated on the west side of the castle along the lakeshore became the main center of Shkodra. Edward Lear pointed out in 1848 that the southern part of the castle, which used to be the old town, was turned into ruins and desolate. He also emphasizes that the commercial part of the city, made up of the grand bazaar and the dock with the customs office on the lakeside, was a periphery of the city of Shkodra. For Lear, the center of the city and the prominent landmarks were found in the lowland north of the castle and between the lake and the river Kiri.<sup>149</sup> This urban transformation of Shkodra can be seen in the postcards made by the German printing house Purger & Co.

Figure 2.4 This is a view of Shkodra from the southern side. It is possible to see the Lead Mosque and the Tanners' quarter. This was drawn by Edward Lear



The eighteenth century was the period when Shkodra reached its peak as a commercial and cultural center. This occurred during the rule of the Bushatli household from 1757 to 1831. Their palace, although no longer standing, was situated in the main town, at that time named after the guilds of the tanners.<sup>150</sup> In the factional strife between the factions of tanners and tailors, the arrival of Mehmed Pasha in the Tanners' neighborhood marks the turning point in the conflict as his side won the war. Many construction works were completed during his time, altering the urbanization process in Shkodra. Firstly, he restored an old madrasah above the Tanners'

<sup>148</sup>Johan Georg von Hahn. 2007. *Studime Shqiptare* (Albanian Studies), pp. 136-140.

<sup>149</sup>Edward Lear. 1965. *Edward Lear in Greece: Journals of a Landscape Painter in Greece and Albania*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>150</sup>Balneo, Ibid, 33.



Figure 2.5 The 'old town' of Shkodra and its castle. At the left corner is the Lead Mosque. This picture was produced by Purger & Co. (late 1900s)



neighborhood near the road connecting the two parts of the city. Secondly, in the center of the main town near the riverbank of Drini, he built the Lead Mosque which, was built like the sultanic mosques of Istanbul. This mosque symbolized the power of the Bushatli household and their ambition of rulership in the whole region.<sup>151</sup>

In 1768, Mehmed Pasha built a five-arch bridge on the river Drini. This grand monument connected the district of *Bahçellek* or the Gardens with the main town. The Gardens, according to the German Austrian geographer Ami Boué, were an integral part of the main town despite being separated by the river. Furthermore, as the name indicates, the houses had extensive gardens with fruits and vegetables. Although a peaceful district, Boué mentioned the high walls of the houses and the presence of places for the fireguns.<sup>152</sup> The houses were mostly owned by the wealthy elite from the center of the city, who wanted to escape from the crowds and needed tranquility. Secondly, according to David Urquhart, when a plague appeared inside the city, the elite of Shkodra moved to the Gardens to avoid being infected. During his stay there, Urquhart mentions the staying of Mustafa Reşit Pasha when the

<sup>151</sup> According to the Franciscan friar, Mehmed Pasha even sent his architects to Istanbul so that they could had an idea of how to build his mosque.

<sup>152</sup> Ami Boué, *Recueil d'itinéraires dans la Turquie d'Europe. détails géographiques, topographiques et statistiques sur cet empire*, 167-170.



Figure 2.6 The Old Town during the eighteenth century was dominated by the anners' guild, later named after them. When the guild transformed into a faction, this part of Shkodra became its powerbase



central government and the governor of Shkodra confronted each other.<sup>153</sup>

### 2.4.3 The New Town: Commercial District and Suburbs

Situated on the northwestern side of the castle, the commercial district of Shkodra began to take shape immediately after the Ottoman conquest. Together with the old town on the east side, they were the two parts that made up the city of Shkodra. Until the seventeenth century, the eastern side developed faster; however, later the commercial district had more consolidated urbanization and became known as the new town in the nineteenth century. The starting point of this part of Shkodra was the dock near the bridge over the river Buna, which is believed to have been built right after the castle's surrender in the late fifteenth century. The maps of Italian geographers and Busbecq have a bridge drawn on the river. Buna flows and connects both the lake and the city to the Adriatic Sea, favoring commerce with foreign states. It is for this reason that a dock and a customs building were also constructed near the bridge where the river outflows from the lake, enabling the

<sup>153</sup>David Urquhart, *The Spirit of the East*, 333-334.

control of trade and tax collection for the merchandise coming to Shkodra from the Adriatic Sea. Although it is difficult to determine the exact period when the dock and the customs building were erected, it can be assumed that it must have been in the sixteenth century.

The bazaar is north of the bridge, which probably emerged in the same period as the dock and the customs building. Artisans of different professions had their workshops in this district, and after the sixteenth century, their number grew steadily. Evliya Çelebi gives the number of 500 shops and mentions fish markets as well because the lake of Shkodra has many fish weirs.<sup>154</sup> In the seventeenth century, following the increase of commercial and artisan activities, a new neighborhood was established which at that time was known as *Yeni Mahalle* or the new neighborhood but later its name changed to *Tophane*. It was situated inside the northern lowland between the lake and the river Kiri.<sup>155</sup> This neighborhood became the nucleus for the new town and together with the old district southeast of the castle, they were the two parts that made up the city of Shkodra.

Figure 2.7 The customs building of Shkodra and the bridge of River Buna



During the eighteenth century, the urbanization in this part of Shkodra surpassed the old town, and the main reason was the increasing trade activities in the Adriatic Sea. The bazaar was enlarged, and so was the district of Tophane from which new neighborhoods began to emerge. As new settlements were built in the direction northeast of Tophane, the neighborhoods Perash and Xhabie were created.<sup>156</sup> In this period, the factional conflict between the factions of tailors and tanners took

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<sup>154</sup>Evliya Çelebi, *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>155</sup>Alvin Saraçi, *Tregetia Adriatike e Shkodres me Republikën e Venecies ne Shekujt XVII-XVIII*, (Tirane: Akademia e Studimeve Albanologjike, Instituti i Historise, 2018): 56.

<sup>156</sup>*Ibid*.

Figure 2.8 View of the commercial center of Shkodra from the castle



place, which created havoc in the city. As mentioned above, the 'old town' was the stronghold of the tanners; it took their name, just like the new town with the bazaar, and Tophane began to be known as the tailors' neighborhood. However, as von Hahn explains in his book, even if the new town was the powerbase of the tailors, their residing place was in the bazaar, in its northern part between Tophane.<sup>157</sup> Although the tanners under the leadership of the Bushatlis won the war, they put an end to the conflict between the two districts and united Shkodra in a single entity. This event consequently made possible the further development of the commercial part and the new town, which later became the modern city of Shkodra.<sup>158</sup>

In the bazaar, some essential landmarks are worth mentioning, even though they have ceased to exist. Apart from the customhouse and the dock, in this quarter, there is a considerable number of mosques and masjids from different periods. Çelebi, for instance, mentions the mosques of Bayezid II at the end of the bazaar and that of Müftü near the docks.<sup>159</sup> During the Bushatlis (1757-1831) period, a library and a madrasah were built near the lakeside towards the north of the bazaar. In addition, in 1807-1808 they constructed a *bedesten* which was made of 64 shops right in a central location. Nevertheless, the total number of shops in the late nineteenth century was more than three thousand.<sup>160</sup> Lastly, from the demographical perspective, the settlements in the old town and the commercial district were inhabited until the late eighteenth century only by Muslims. Later, the places where Catholics lived would integrate as the new city spread towards the north and east.

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<sup>157</sup>Von Hahn, Ibid, 140.

<sup>158</sup>Zija Shkodra, *Qytetet Shqiptare Gjate Rilindjes Kombetare*, (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave, 1984): 186.

<sup>159</sup>Evliya Çelebi, Ibid, 33.

<sup>160</sup>Zija Shkodra, Ibid, 173, 186.

#### 2.4.4 The Making of the Neighborhoods and Suburbs of Shkodra

This sub-section will trace the development of the neighborhoods and suburbs of Shkodra. Due to the changes in the urban structure of Ottoman Shkodra, the composition of its suburban area was also affected depending on the period. There are three timeframes regarding this development. First, from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the old town in the southeastern part of the castle was regarded as the city's center. It was the beginning point of the urban settlement, and it appears as a continuity of the pre-Ottoman periods, for which von Hahn even references Roman times.<sup>161</sup> Secondly, in the eighteenth century, the commercial district together with the new town became of equal importance as the old town. This is mainly due to the rise of the wealthy merchant class and artisanal production and manufacture. For this period, the city had a bipartite form, in which both parts had a collaborative and antagonistic relationship. Lastly, starting in the nineteenth century, the new town rose and replaced the old district in the southeast to create the modern city of Shkodra, a uniform urban structure.

Figure 2.9 This was the commercial part of Shkodra, which was known as the New Town together with its suburbs



In the first timeframe, it isn't easy to define a place as a suburb part of Shkodra. The main reason is that the settlements in the vicinity of the old town or the commercial district were of rural origin and had little intercourse with the urban center. Therefore, the suburban zones began to emerge and consolidate after the seventeenth century. Hence, with the increase in commercial activities and the craft guilds' artisanal production, the city experienced an urban expansion as people from

<sup>161</sup>Von Hahn, Ibid, 137.

rural areas settled in the new neighborhoods. Secondly, these rural settlements began to create economic and social relations, gradually transforming into suburbs of the city of Shkodra. Thirdly, from the demographical aspect, the marginalized Catholic population who mostly lived in these areas became an integral and essential factor in the city.<sup>162</sup>

In the lowlands north of the castle is the settlement of Rus, which in the seventeenth century had a population of forty houses, followed by Dobrançi (Dobraç) with fifty houses. Mariano Bolizza, in his report, wrote these statistics as he tried to register the number of Catholic households in the *sanjak* of Shkodra.<sup>163</sup> At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the population in these places increased, taking the form of a suburb. The suburb of Rus had a significant enlargement due to its closeness to the market and the new city. Moreover, it spread in the northern direction, and in 1763 it created the quarters of Dudas and Kiras.<sup>164</sup> When writing about these districts, priest Balneo refers to them as “periphery outside the city”, in other words, suburbs of Shkodra. Balneo was in Shkodra between the 1750s and 1780s, and he emphasizes how religious affiliation affected the city’s urban structure. He also mentions the newly created Catholic neighborhood of Kozena on the other side of the Buna River, which was in front of the new town but still regarded as a periphery. Hence, until then, the Catholics could live only in the suburbs of Shkodra, away from the “Islamic” urban settlement.<sup>165</sup>

This situation changed in the second half of the eighteenth century when the Bushatli household took the governorship of Shkodra with the help of the Catholic clan members. In exchange for their support of an alliance, Bushatli Mehmed Pasha vowed to protect their rights in Shkodra and allowed them to settle freely in the empty area near the city. Secondly, he also made investments like the bridge of Mes on the Kiri River in the northeast to connect the trade routes of the mountains with Shkodra.<sup>166</sup> In the nineteenth century, as the modern city of Shkodra spread in the northern lowlands, it incorporated the lands inhabited by the Catholics, changing the religious demographic ratio drastically. According to Boue, the Muslims were 16.000 while the Christians were 13.000, which meant a slight difference. Despite

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<sup>162</sup>Boue, Ibid, 16

<sup>163</sup>Robert Elsie, *Early Albania, a Reader of Historical Texts*, 130-169.

<sup>164</sup>Saraçi, Ibid, 56.

<sup>165</sup>Balneo, Ibid, 22.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid, 45, 74.

this, the Muslim factor continued to stand in a stronger position.<sup>167</sup>

During this time, the old town lost its importance, and after the 1830s it became more of a suburb of the modern city of Shkodra. This quarter was known by the name Tabakhane or Tanners' neighborhood. Due to continuous settlements in the hills east of Tabakhane, the new quarters of Ayazma and Tepe were formed and together with the Gardens on the other side of the Drini River were regarded as the southern suburbs of the city of Shkodra.<sup>168</sup> The Gardens in this aspect are an excellent example of a modern understanding of the suburb. As David Urquhart pointed out in his stay there, this place was used by the wealthy elite of Shkodra to "escape the crowded center'. This sentence affirms that the center was at a considerable distance, but still, the quarter was considered part of the city of Shkodra.<sup>169</sup>

#### 2.4.5 Hinterland of Shkodra

Moving outside the urban center and the suburbs, in the historical topography of Shkodra, the hinterland played an important economic, social, and political role. In the eighteenth century, these outer areas affected the urbanization process of Ottoman Shkodra through a combination of environmental and human agency factors. Understanding the hinterland means unearthing the local trade networks, human mobility, and political power. From this perspective, it is possible to see the dependency of the urban center on these fringes. On the other hand, with its social and political actors, the hinterland saw the city as a gateway to an imperial system that could provide them with economic opportunities and political legitimacy. Hence, the integration into the global market and the Ottoman state administration. However, the hinterland of Shkodra can be divided into three essential parts, defined by their share of common features and separated based on their impact on the city of Shkodra.

Firstly, there is the Buna riverbank and its plain, located between the Adriatic Sea and Shkodra Lake. This part of the hinterland is named after the river due to its vital importance as it connects the city of Shkodra with the Adriatic Sea, making the transportation of goods and people through its waters. Although many land routes passed through Shkodra, the riverway was the main commercial artery of the

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<sup>167</sup>Boue, *Ibid*, 170.

<sup>168</sup>Saraçi, *Ibid*, 57

<sup>169</sup>David Urquhart, *Ibid*, 133-4.

economy.<sup>170</sup> However, there was a logistic problem related to the navigation with galleys. After a certain point, the river's bed narrows; therefore, the galleys stopped at the dock in the village of Serzi (Shirq), and transportation continued through vessels or small boats. This carriageway was first recorded in an anonymous Venetian report in 1570.<sup>171</sup> In the eighteenth century, as the commercial activities with Shkodra and Venice increased considerably, the Venetians opened a vice-consulate and issued reports of commercial transactions on the name of Buna scale.<sup>172</sup>

Figure 2.10 Buna River and its plain



Apart from the transportation and commercial aspects, the hinterland of Buna River had a special place in the topography related to Shkodra. This can be easily seen in the maps prepared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In these drawings, the authors marked the religious monuments and the names of the Catholic settlements along the riverbank. Giovanni Camoccio (1574) and Vincenzo Coro-

<sup>170</sup>Saraçi, Ibid, 59-61.

<sup>171</sup>Injac Zamputi (ed.): *Dokumente të shekujve XVI XVII për historinë e Shqipërisë*, vëllimi 1 (1507-1592), p. 273, 288.

<sup>172</sup>Özgür Oral, 'Osmanlı Venedik Ticari İlişkileri (1763-1794)', Doktora Tezi, (İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2017): 53-56.



nelli (1688) offer a fine example of an early topographic work on the hinterland of Buna.<sup>173</sup> In addition, Italian travelers have given detailed information about the itinerary in the region. Mariano Bolizza (1614) wrote about the village of Shirq where the dock is found, but he emphasizes the church built in honor of the saints Sergius and Bacchus by orders of Queen Helen of the Anjou.<sup>174</sup> Later the apostolic visitor Stefano Gaspari (1671), when passing through the hinterland of Buna River, wrote down the number of settlements and religious institutions that were active or ruined.<sup>175</sup>

Figure 2.11 The map of the southern lowlands and the main settlements



The second part of the hinterland is the southern lowland of Shkodra, located between the Buna and Drini rivers. When the Ottomans conquered these regions in the late fifteenth century, they incorporated these lands into the timar system and distributed them among the members of the military class.<sup>176</sup> Evliya Çelebi, in

<sup>173</sup> Although there are differences in their methodology, both the maps created by the authors show accuracy for most of the region.

<sup>174</sup> Robert Elsie, *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Stefano Gaspari, *Relazioni delle Diocesi di Serbia, Pulati, Scutari, Sapa, Alessio, Durazzo e Antivari del 1671*, 605-613.

<sup>176</sup> For the first register regarding the timar system in Shkodra, see: Selami Pulaha, *Defteri i Regjistrimit*



his journey, describes the governor of Shkodra Yusuf-beg-zade Mehmed Pasha and mentions his origin from an old household since the late fifteenth century. Although the governorship seat was in the city, his household resided in the village of Bushat where his ancestral palace and most of his estates were located.<sup>177</sup> During the mid-eighteenth century, Mehmed Beg, a descendant of this house, settled in the old town of Shkodra. Later he was involved in the conflict of the factions in the city.<sup>178</sup> He won the war and became known as Bushatli Mehmed Pasha due to his origin in that village. Furthermore, he had other mansions in other parts of the southern hinterland, like in the village of Kozmac, where he settled after retirement.<sup>179</sup>

Lastly, in the hinterland of Shkodra, there are the highlands of Catholic tribesmen.<sup>180</sup> For most of the Ottoman period, they were marginalized and kept far from the urban center. These people were seen as a threat at first due to their aggressive nature and banditry activities. The geography of this part of the hinterland was not suitable for agriculture or urban settlement. Therefore, they acquired a clanship social system and had a semi-nomadic pastoralist way of life.<sup>181</sup> However, in the eighteenth century, these tribesmen were used as mercenaries by the Muslim elite of the lowlands of Shkodra. This led to their involvement in the socio-economic and political life of Shkodra linking this part of the hinterland to the urban center. The Catholic highlanders changed the power balances in the factional conflict by helping the Bushatli household. Among the tribes who allied with Bushatli Mehmed were the Hoti, Shkreli, Gruda, Triepshi, Kastrati, Reçi, and Lohe. Thus, due to their role in this confrontation, starting from 1757, they were allowed to settle in the city and politically remained an important regional actor.<sup>182</sup>

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*Të Sanzhakut Të Shkodrës i Vitit 1485*, (Tirane: Akademia e Shkencave e RP. të Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, . 1974)

<sup>177</sup>Evliya Çelebi, Ibid, 31, 46-47.

<sup>178</sup>Von Hahn, Ibid, 141.

<sup>179</sup>Balneo, Ibid, 35.

<sup>180</sup>A more detailed illustration of the emergence of the tribesmen as a political factor in Shkodra's socio-political landscape and their role in the factional strife during the first half of the eighteenth century is provided in the subsequent chapter.

<sup>181</sup>For the tribes in the highlands of Shkodra, see: Robert Elsie. 2015. *Tribes of Albania: History, Society and Culture*, (London: I.B. Tauris): 15-98.

<sup>182</sup>Balneo, 39.

Figure 2.12 The image is taken from the book of Robert Elsie on ‘Tribes of Albania’, p. 14. This map describes the location of each tribe in the Northern Highlands of Albania



## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter analyzed factionalism within the Ottoman Empire, focusing on case studies from the Arabic-speaking provinces, Anatolia, and the Balkans. Across various regions, factional organizations emerged, gaining substantial influence by attracting members from various socioeconomic and military backgrounds. As a result, these organizations significantly shaped the political landscape in their respective localities. Similarly, during the eighteenth century, the town of Shkodra experienced significant influence from the dominant factions of tailors and tanners, which played a crucial role in shaping the sociopolitical landscape of the area. In a manner akin to other provinces, Shkodra experienced societal and spatial polarization, characterized by distinct groups possessing their supporters within the population and delineated areas of influence both within the city and in its surroundings.

Shkodra exhibited characteristics that set it apart from other cases, particularly concerning the competing factions involved. In the cases analyzed, factions were established around local nobilities, military groups, or as continuations of earlier political organizations. In the context of Shkodra, these factions specifically formed

around the artisan guilds of tailors and tanners. These factions exhibit unique characteristics and interactions that differentiate Shkodra, thereby providing a valuable context for analysis and comparison. Moreover, the emergence of these sociopolitical groups, in this particular instance, transpired at a later period compared to the examples observed in other provinces. In Shkodra, leadership of the factional groups was predominantly held by members of local households. These individuals leveraged their political organizations to attain the position of governorship within the district, thereby consolidating power in their favor.

To deepen the understanding of factionalism in Shkodra, in this chapter, I conducted a thorough analysis of the urbanization process and spatial dimensions by reconstructing the historical topography of the town. This analysis contends that the nature of factionalism observed in Shkodra is distinct from that in other regions, attributable to the varying historical contexts surrounding their integration into the Ottoman Empire. In this regard, the urban landscape of Shkodra, with all its socio-economic and political actors, developed during the Ottoman period. In contrast, other cities that experienced factionalism had already an established urban core and a longer history of urbanization and civic organization. In Shkodra, the diverse groups comprising factions, artisan guilds, merchants, and local households developed as integral components of the social and economic landscape during the Ottoman period. In the subsequent chapter, I will conduct a comprehensive analysis of each faction and its members, with a focus on their intrinsic characteristics.

### **3. FACTIONS OF SHKODRA**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter investigates the emergence of factions and their defining characteristics, with a particular emphasis on the artisan guilds from which they originated. Initial attention will be directed toward the prominent figures associated with these factions, namely the established local households and merchants. Subsequently, the analysis will shift to external actors that played a crucial role in the factionalism of Shkodra, including Venice as a foreign power, as well as Ulcinj and its captains and corsairs. In conclusion, the evolution of Catholic tribesmen from marginalized groups into significant contributors within their respective contexts will be discussed. Through a comprehensive examination of the historical interactions among these actors, this study seeks to address the following questions: How did these factions emerge, and what roles did they occupy within the socio-economic and political landscape of Shkodra? What factors influenced the engagement of external actors?

#### **3.2 Crafting Factions: Guilds, Commerce, and Political Leadership**

In the first few decades of the 1700s, Shkodra was embroiled in a particular strain of factionalism that bore striking similarities to the factionalism that occurred in the other provinces of the Ottoman Empire. One noteworthy aspect of the discord among factions in Shkodra lies in the fact that said competing groups were, in fact, labeled according to artisan guilds. The tanners and tailors, two of the most significant guilds, emerged as the leading socio-economic players in the region at that time. Drawing in other artisan groups, merchants, and local powerholders, these guilds transformed into political factions that competed and confronted each other. The ongoing factional dispute significantly affected the local power dynamics

and the interaction between the central government and Shkodra province. This was due to factional clashes disrupting social order and central governors aligning with factions.

### 3.2.1 Tanners and Tailors

The earlier mentions of the factional clashes in Shkodra were recorded in the *mühimme* (important affairs) registers<sup>183</sup> with the matter being discussed by the imperial council in October 1722. According to District Governor Mehmed Pasha's reports, it seems that the tanners coming from Ulcinj<sup>184</sup> had attacked the bazaar of Shkodra and the tailor's group with a troop of three hundred men. Apparently, after the fight, these 'bandits' from the tanners went to hide in the village of Bushat<sup>185</sup> and were assisted by the locals. As a result of their perceived involvement in aiding the culprits, the governor, in collaboration with the local elite, proceeded to subject the villagers to a trial.<sup>186</sup> For over thirty years, the central authorities documented a range of events involving the tanner and tailor of Shkodra in their reports.

On the other hand, the Venetian vice-consulate<sup>187</sup> in Shkodra issued many reports on the region during the eighteenth century. Regrettably, the archives in the years 1706-1730 are absent due to the hasty departure of the consuls in the wake of the deteriorating Ottoman-Venetian conflicts that took place during that period.<sup>188</sup> Thus, it is hard to explain the years before the 1730s when the factions in Shkodra were already in conflict with each other. The factional conflict between tanners and tailors was first mentioned by the vice-consul Anton Douda in a report issued on October 19th, 1736. Like the Ottoman report of 1722, the clash of the two factions occurred in the city's bazaar. According to this report, the developments in Shkodra seem to have had an impact on Ulcinj as well, providing evidence of a strong corre-

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<sup>183</sup> *Mühimme defters* are the registers in which the Ottomans recorded the copies of the edicts they issued after obtaining the sultan's approval on important matters decided in the imperial council, see: Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, "Mühimme Defteri", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt. 31, pp. 519-522.

<sup>184</sup> Ülgün or Ulcinj is an important city-port in Adriatic Sea and part of the Shkodra district. It is located 26 km southwest of the city of Shkodra, Ulcinj also known as a famous hub of commerce and piracy.

<sup>185</sup> Bushat is a village with fertile land and inhabited by old households of military background. It located 11 km south from the city of Shkodra.

<sup>186</sup> BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722)).

<sup>187</sup> The Venetian vice-consulate in Shkodra was established in October 1706 due to increasing trade activities and political interests that the Republic of Venice had with the district, which was located at its border.

<sup>188</sup> Stavri Naçi, *Shqipëria e Veriut në Shekullin e XVIII: Letra të zev. Konsujve Venedikas të Shkodrës* [Northern Albania in the Eighteenth Century: The Letters of the Venetian vice consuls of Shkodra], Vol. I (1706-1756) (Tirane: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, 1967): 5.

lation between the two regions with respect to the factionalism between the tanners and tailors. Anton Douda the cause for this disorder and conflict in the district of Shkodra is due to the governor's absence and his deputy's incompetence.<sup>189</sup> In addition to the Venetian official sources, there is the memoir of Franciscan priest Balneo, he also gives some details regarding the characteristics of factionalism, but his records cover only the later phase of the factional conflict in the 1750s.<sup>190</sup>

Therefore, based on the primary sources, it can be concluded that a state of conflict and discord between the tanners and tailors surfaced in Shkodra during the early eighteenth century, specifically around the 1720s. It is of note that during the same period, cities in adjacent regions to Shkodra also experienced conflicts among artisan guilds. For example, in Tirana, the central government accused the artisans of disrupting peace and creating disorder as they challenged the local authorities.<sup>191</sup> In the city of Berat, the representatives of artisan guilds exerted pressure upon the local authorities concerning the adjudication of their members. The guilds requested that the authorities abstain from interference in the arbitration process.<sup>192</sup> Years later, a leader of the tanners' guild of Berat prevented the officials from collecting poll taxes, prompting the government to request his imprisonment.<sup>193</sup> Thus, as the eighteenth century progressed, the power and importance of artisan guilds grew, with their influence extending beyond just the urban settlement's socio-economic sphere and into matters of administration and politics.

The emergence of artisan guilds as prominent socio-political entities in Shkodra is fundamentally linked to the overarching trends observed during this period in urban centers within the Ottoman provinces. The surge in urbanization during this time was attributed to the growing commercial sector and the migration of individuals from rural areas in search of improved economic prospects and a safe living environment. With its access to the Adriatic Sea, Shkodra was well-positioned to capitalize on the strong demand for goods from the Ottoman Empire in European markets. Consequently, the city saw two key developments: rise in craft workshops and the emergence of an intraregional market serving the surrounding districts. Hence, in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the bazaar in Shkodra was estimated to

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<sup>189</sup>A.S.Ve, *Cinque Savi Della Mercanzia*, Consul of Scutari, letter of Anton Duoda. Dt. 19 October 1736.

<sup>190</sup>At Zef Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatli te Shkodres* (At Erasmo Balneo) [The Friar of the Bushatli Pashas of Shkodra (Pater Erasmo Balneo)], Shkoder: Botimet Franceskane, 2017.

<sup>191</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 132, 1289 (1137 L 10 (22 June 1725).

<sup>192</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 115, 259 (1118 R 10 (19 September 1706).

<sup>193</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 117, 706 (1124 R 20 (27 May 1712).

have around one thousand shops, as reported by Venetian consul Antonio Duoda.<sup>194</sup> According to researchers, there were a total of eighty crafts, which were further organized into thirty separate guilds.<sup>195</sup> It can be observed that skilled artisans played a significant role in shaping the economic conditions of Shkodra during the onset of factional strife.

Of all these groups of artisans and guilds, the tanners and tailors were the most prominent and influential actors in early modern Shkodra. A number of studies have focused on determining the underlying factors that contributed to the dominant nature of these two guilds in the empire during this time. The tanners for example were known all over the Ottoman Empire for their crucial role in the manufacturing sector due to the importance of leather as a raw material for other crafts and military equipment.<sup>196</sup> As for the tailors, it is known that in the eighteenth century, the textile manufacturing sector thrived, and Ottoman fabrics were exported to most of the Mediterranean.<sup>197</sup> In this period Shkodra also exported wool fabrics in great quantities mainly to the Italian city-states but also to other countries.

Nevertheless, taking a broader view, some researchers dealing with the history of Ottoman artisans highlighted two crucial elements that could have given the tanners a competitive advantage over other guilds. The first one, from a cultural and religious approach, is related to the possible connection of tanner's guild with Ahi Evran, a Sufi leader and founder of *ahi*<sup>198</sup> organizations. Due to his occupation as a tanner, Ahi Evran was posthumously acclaimed as a venerated saint by his fellow tanners. This assertion was made by the tanners in order to elevate their status and assert their superiority over other artisans as their saint was also the leader of

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<sup>194</sup> A.S.Ve, *Cinque Savi Della Mercanzia*, Consul of Scutari, letter of Anton Duoda. Dt. 19 October 1736.

<sup>195</sup> Zija Shkodra, *Esnafet Shqiptare [Albanian Artisans]*, (Tirane, Akademia e Shkencave te Shqiperise: Instituti i Historise, 1973): 122; Petrika Thengjilli, *Shqiptaret midis Lindjes dhe Perendimit [Albanians Between East and West] (1506-1750)*, (Tirane, Botimet Toena, 2003): 228.

<sup>196</sup> Zija Shkodra, 'Roli dhe Pozita e Veçante Esnafit te Tabake gjate Sundimit Turk [The Special Role and Position of the Leather Tanning Corporation at the Time of the Turkish Yoke]'. *Buletin i Universitetit Shtetëror të Tiranës / Seria shkencat shoqërore*. Vol. 16. 1, p. 37-53. (Tiranë: Universiteti i Tiranës, 1962); Suraiya Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople Under the Ottomans*. (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2009): passim; Miyase Koyuncu, 'Tanners in Ottoman Empire', *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 4/8 (Fall, 2009): 1747-1762. Onur Yıldırım, 'Osmanlı İaşeciliği ve Esnaf: On Sekizinci Yüzyıl İstanbul'unda Debbaglar' *Doğu Batı - 52 - Osmanlılar II*, 133-158.

<sup>197</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, "Declines and Revivals in Textile Production" in *Cambridge History of Turkey Vol. II, The Later Ottoman Empire (1603-1839)* ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, (Cambridge University Press, 2006): 388-390; Fikret Adanır, "Tradition and Rural Change in Southeastern Europe During Ottoman Rule" in *Balkans: History and Historiography*. (Istanbul: Eren, 2014): 78-79; Mehmet Genç, "Sanayi, Ticaret, Esnaf". In *Devlet ve Ekonomi*, Chapter III, (Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2014) 203-307.

<sup>198</sup> The ahis were spiritual brotherhoods of people embracing the chivalric virtues (*fütüvvet*) and the Islamic-sufistic way of thinking. Regarding *ahis* see: Ziya Kazıcı, "Ahilik", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ahilik>.

all *ahis*.<sup>199</sup> However, other researchers have concluded that Ahi Evran apparently had no connection with the tanners.<sup>200</sup> In addition, in the eighteenth century the Ottoman artisan guilds had lost their affiliation with the *ahi* principles. The place of the *ahi* father as the leading member of the guild shifted to the *kethüda* as the main representative of the artisans.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, myths regarding the tanners were recorded in Albania as well. Hence, according to local sources the money coming from the tanners had spiritual value or that people would swear on the tanner's *ocak*.<sup>202</sup>

The second viewpoint on the superiority of tanners, which holds more weight, is rooted in economic reasoning. Due also to the environmental circumstances, the tanner profession was spread all over the Ottoman Balkans. The presence of large numbers of livestock and water resources made possible the thriving of tanning. Consequently, after the Ottoman hold over these lands, the tanners were among the leading craftsmen to establish a foothold in the newly emerging urban center. For this reason, there are a vast number of toponyms that are related to tanners in the Balkan geography. Thus, there were districts, mosques, *tekkes*, bridges, fountains, and shrines named after them.<sup>203</sup> In Shkodra, the first settlement established following the Ottoman conquest known as the 'old town' starting from the eighteenth century was known as the tanners' district.<sup>204</sup> Furthermore, when looking at the number of workshops in various Albanian cities, the tanners were consistently ranked among the leading owners.<sup>205</sup>

Given the aforementioned illustrations, it is plausible to deduce that the tanners had considerable financial resources, enabling them to support numerous public edifices. The income seems to have stemmed from their notable manufacturing and commercial activity, especially in the eighteenth century. Hence, due to the great demand for leather from the local market and the European one, the tanners produced immense quantities of leather. Despite the difficulty in measuring the demands of the domestic market, a limited assessment of the European market can be accomplished through reports by Venice. From the ports of Shkodra towards

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<sup>199</sup>Koyuncu, *ibid*, 1749.

<sup>200</sup>Faroqi, *Artisans of Empire*, 28.

<sup>201</sup>Koyuncu *Ibid*, 1750.

<sup>202</sup>Zija Shkodra, "Roli dhe Pozita e Veçant...", 37.

<sup>203</sup>*Ibid*, 36.

<sup>204</sup>Regarding the topography of Shkodra, it is elaborated in the first chapter.

<sup>205</sup>Zija Shkodra, *Esnafet Shqiptare [Albanian Artisans]*, 62.



Venice, the consular reports show that one of the main products exported was leather. Even though it was not the first in quantity, leather was highly prized and brought in greater profits compared to other materials.<sup>206</sup> In addition to the consular reports, the general customs record of the Venetian state gives the quantity of leather exported from Albania, which there are those originating from Shkodra.<sup>207</sup>

It can be assumed that exports were one of the main sources of income for the tanners. However, from the primary sources in Albania, it is possible to see an interesting case regarding the relationship between the tanners and other artisans. Hence, in the early eighteenth century, in the city of Elbasan, in case of a quarrel between two furrier artisans, they were obliged to give a couple of lambs to their guild and the tanners. Furthermore, even in other disputes concerning other artisans, the tanners had the right to receive payments in terms of a tribute.<sup>208</sup> Apart from the economic aspect, these revenues come as extortion from other artisans to the tanners, which is evidence of the great socio-economic power of this guild. In the factional case of Shkodra the rise of the tanners as one of the main political actors in the region must have been primarily due to the cultural and economic power they amassed in previous centuries.

As for the tailors, compared to the tanners they are less studied, although regarded among the main craftsmen in the Ottoman artisan world. Nevertheless, according to secondary sources, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tailors accumulated significant wealth through commerce. This has been shown through the festivities of tailors' guilds in different parts of Albania.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, as shown in the guild's registers of Elbasan, the tailors could rely on the incomes of the *waqfs* that were granted to them by pious persons.<sup>210</sup> In Shkodra, the tailors' guild and their associated shops were located in the area known as the 'new town,' which featured a distinct quarter referred to as *terzihane*. This specific designation highlights the concentration of tailoring activities within that area. Situated next to the great bazaar of Shkodra, they became the leading guild for all the other artisan groups. Hence, in the 1720s the tailors just like their rivals created their zone of influence by attracting allies to withstand the tanners. It can be said

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<sup>206</sup>In these volumes there are the reports of ships exporting goods from Shkodra: Stavri Naçi, *Shqipëria e Veriut në Shekullin e XVIII: Letra të zëv. Konsujve Venedikas të Shkodrës* [Northern Albania in the Eighteenth Century: The Letters of the Venetian vice consuls of Shkodra] 2 Vols. (1706-1800), (Tirane: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, 1967).

<sup>207</sup>Oral, "Osmanlı-Venedik Ticari İlişkileri (1763-1794)", 265-273.

<sup>208</sup>Shkodra, *ibid*, 216.

<sup>209</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>210</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 165.

that the reason for the rise of the guilds of tanners and tailors as political factions in Shkodra is mainly due to their socio-economic and cultural precedence.

Another important factor to mention in the artisan guilds, especially for those in the Balkans, is their militia characteristics and participation in military campaigns. They also had procession orders, gathering places, and banners that differed according to the guild. In Shkodra the tanners and tailors relied on militia groups made up of people who were capable of fighting.<sup>211</sup> These men's tasks were to protect the guild and the interests of their artisans or to attack other artisan groups that might be of threat.<sup>212</sup> In this context, it is possible to understand the problems that might arise among the artisans like in the case of Shkodra. While making a comparison with the other cities in Albania that had conflicts involving the artisan guilds, the tailors and the tanners seem to have been on opposing sides.<sup>213</sup> However, what differs about the case of Shkodra is that the central authorities regard the sides as two *firka* or factions, which emphasizes the socio-political aspect of the conflict.<sup>214</sup>

### 3.2.2 The Old Households

The factional disputes of Shkodra saw the active participation of provincial and local notables, as recorded in primary sources from both the Ottoman and Venetian sides. In this context, I define the 'notables' which are actively part of the power struggle that affected the region. Firstly, the purpose of incorporating both terms, provincial and local, is to make a distinction between the notables who were native of Shkodra and those who came from adjacent provinces. Understanding the political and conflictual events of the first half of the eighteenth century among prominent factions requires careful consideration of this crucial distinction. Secondly, it is essential to note that the term 'notable' underwent a thorough (re)definition to appropriately match the context in which it is being placed. In addition, a categorization of the notables would clarify the main leaders of significant political influence from the old military households from those of lesser power. This will be uncovered by examining the origins and sources of political power within prominent households in the region.

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<sup>211</sup>The presence of militia among the artisans was present even in other regions, especially in urban uprising see: Faroqi, *Artisans of Empire*, 149-150.

<sup>212</sup>Shkodra, *ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>213</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 132, 1289 (1137 L 10 (22 June 1725); A.DVNSMHM.d. 115, 259 (1118 R 10 (19 September 1706)).

<sup>214</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 123 (1142 § 29 (19 March 1730)).

In the Ottoman Empire, notables or *ayans* are regarded as the elite of a specific region, consisting of people from varying social, economic, and political backgrounds who are conscious of their esteemed status in society.<sup>215</sup> According to Ottoman historians, the notables played a pivotal role in shaping the empire's socio-economic and political history during the early modern era. Starting from the 1960s, Albert Hourani was among the first scholars who introduced the term 'politics of notables' thus setting the framework regarding the works on the Ottoman notables. In his article, Hourani emphasized the political role of these influential individuals in mediating between the government and local people.<sup>216</sup> Following the framework set by Hourani, later scholars working on this period saw the notable or the *ayans* as the 'central figures' at a time of decentralization for the Ottoman empire. In this 'age of *ayans*' fiscal and administrative tasks were seized by the provincial elite who imposed their authority on the provinces.<sup>217</sup>

Although the approaches adopted by these authors in their portrayal of Ottoman notables were widely accepted in Ottoman historiography, there remain considerable criticisms and objections regarding them. Scholars, including Suraiya Faruqi, have brought up two key issues that challenge the portrayal of the long eighteenth century as a period primarily dominated by provincial notables. First, their impact on fiscal and administrative matters in the provinces was heightened, but they were still bound by the regulations established by the central government.<sup>218</sup> Second, while decline and instability were attributed to the central government, this was an efficient approach for governing the provinces in accordance with the circumstances of that era.<sup>219</sup> Ali Yaycıoğlu's book "*Partners of the Empire*", offers a significant re-examination of Ottoman notables, highlighting the structural transformation that occurred during the eighteenth century. Therefore, the Ottoman state's method of operation changed from a vertical decision-making model to a collaborative horizontal mechanism, allowing for the involvement of provincial notables in governing the

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<sup>215</sup>For a broader examination of the term 'elite' regarding Ottoman provinces see: Antonis Anastasopoulos "Introduction", *On the 'Nobility' of Provincial Notables* In *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos. (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 2005).

<sup>216</sup>Albert Hourani. "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," in *The Modern Middle East*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury, and Mary C. Wilson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 89.

<sup>217</sup>Halil İnalçık. "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration." In *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, 27–52. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977; Bruce McGowan. "The Age of the Ayans." In *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1, ed. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert, 658–72. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>218</sup>Suraiya Faruqi, "Introduction" In *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faruqi, 1–17. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>219</sup>*Ibid*, 11–12.

empire.<sup>220</sup>

In addition, Ottoman historians have worked to clarify the identity of these “intermediary” figures commonly referred to as *ayan* or notable. From a political standpoint, Hourani identifies three main groups of notable individuals: the religious elite (*ulema*), leaders of garrisons, and the “secular notables” - individuals or families who inherited political privileges from their ancestors.<sup>221</sup> Similar to Hourani, İnalcık stresses the significance of these three groups, but he also acknowledges the role of merchants and guild members within the provincial elite. In contrast to Hourani’s view of the exclusive political power held by these groups, İnalcık asserts that the rise of Ottoman notables is linked to their success in accessing state resources, gaining recognition from the central government, and obtaining official titles.<sup>222</sup> Lastly, to solidify and protect their social and political power notables had to rely on alliances with other members of the local elite and develop ‘patron-client’ relationships with influential figures from the central government.<sup>223</sup>

Regarding the notables of Shkodra, Ottoman archival documents and the reports from the Venetian consulate are the two main primary sources that will help identify them. Since these sources are considered official decrees, they primarily mention individuals who have been appointed as office-bearers or representatives of different socio-economic groups within the city. While this is the case for Ottoman sources, Venetian reports set themselves apart by including also detailed records of merchants involved in commercial deals with Venice.<sup>224</sup> These documents stand out, because, aside from names, they may contain the individual’s title and surname that corresponds with their family name. Hence, this creates an opening to explore the background of individual merchants, potentially uncovering details about their family lineage or the capital invested in their trade.

However, even with access to these primary sources, it is still difficult to ob-

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<sup>220</sup> Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016): 2

<sup>221</sup> Hourani, *ibid*, 89-90.

<sup>222</sup> Halil İnalcık, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration," in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, 36-37.

<sup>223</sup> Philip Khoury, “The Urban Notables Paradigm Revisited.” In *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 55–56, no. 1 (1990): 215; Engin D. Akarlı, “Provincial Power Magnates in Ottoman Bilad al-Sham and Egypt, 1740–1840.” In *La vie sociale dans les provinces arabes à l’époque ottomane*, ed. Abdeljelil Temimi, 3: 41–56. (Zaghouan, Tunisia: Centre d’études et de recherches ottomanes, morisques, de documentation et d’information, 1988): 42.

<sup>224</sup> Stavri Naçi, *Shqipëria e Veriut në Shekullin e XVIII: Letra të zev. Konsujve Venedikas të Shkodres* [Northern Albania in the Eighteenth Century: The Letters of the Venetian vice consuls of Shkodra] 2 Vols. (1706-1800), (Tirane: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësise, 1967); Zija Shkodra, *Dokumente mbi Shqipërinë në shekullin XVIII: Letra të konsujve venedikas të Durrësit* [Document on Eighteenth Century Albania: Letters of the Venetians consuls of Durres], (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave, 1975).

tain a comprehensive picture of the elite and notables of Shkodra. Albanian local histories can help tackle this issue, thanks to numerous collections of written and oral sources on the region gathered by historians and researchers focusing on the history of Shkodra. It is worth mentioning the significant contribution of Hamdi Bushati (1896-1983), who dedicated his research to compiling written documents and oral narratives about the region and its people. His research centers around information regarding traditional local households and noteworthy individuals who had a significant role in the socio-economic and political aspects of the region during the Ottoman period. The author, originally from Shkodra and connected to the Bushatli household, collected personal documents from descendants of old families and documented oral narratives from elders who were alive at that time.<sup>225</sup>

Based on a comparative examination of all these sources, the first group of notables that appear mostly are the governors appointed directly from the center. These individuals were members of the old military and administrative households that emerged in the district of Shkodra or the nearby provinces after the Ottoman conquest. Until the year 1730, the procedure for appointing governors was conducted consistently and without any notable incidents, as documented in the published Ottoman appointment registers. These records also contain appointments in the province of Shkodra. Though the names are provided, it is challenging to accurately determine their household affiliations.<sup>226</sup> However, a careful analysis of the sources makes it possible to determine the leading main families that greatly influenced the politics of the Shkodra during the first half of the eighteenth century. Also, their involvement in the factional conflict and leadership role within either the tanners or tailors factions.

Among the main houses were the Yusuf-beg-zades<sup>227</sup> who owned large agricultural estates south of the town of Shkodra with their power base situated in the town of Bushat. For this reason, they were also named *Buşatlar* (Bushatlis) by Evliya Çelebi during his visit to the governor Mehmed Pasha of Shkodra. The traveler acknowledged them as the leading house of Shkodra since the Ottoman conquest.<sup>228</sup> Even before Evliya, as seen from earlier sources, researchers have confirmed that members of this house wielded considerable influence in the region. Moreover, they

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<sup>225</sup>Hamdi Bushati. 1998. Shkodra dhe Motet: Tradite, Ngjarje, Njerez... (Shkodra in the Years: Tradition, Events, People...) Vol. I. Shkoder: Shtepia Botuese Idromeno; Ibid. 1999. Shkodra dhe Motet: Tradite, Ngjarje, Ngjarje... Peme Gjenealogjike Familjesh Shkodrane (Shkodra in the Years: Tradition, Events, People... Genealogical Tree of Families in Shkodra) Vol. II. (Shkoder: Shtepia Botuese Idromeno).

<sup>226</sup>Fahameddin Başar, *Osmanlı Eyalet Tevcihatı (1717-1730)*, (Ankara: TTK Yayınları, 1997): 41.

<sup>227</sup>This is the name Evliya Çelebi used to describe the house of Shkodra's governor in his visit in the year 1662, see: Dankoff, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions...*, 29,31,44.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid.

underscored that the family's beginnings can be attributed to noble locals who converted to Islam, perhaps to ensure the preservation of their privileges.<sup>229</sup> The peak of power for this family was in the 1690s when Suleiman Pasha<sup>230</sup> rose to the position of vizier and served as governor of the Shkodra district and Rumeli province during the Ottoman-Habsburg Wars (1683-1699).<sup>231</sup> Later, his son took his place as governor of Shkodra and oversaw the Venetian front in the Adriatic shore and Montenegro.<sup>232</sup>

At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Bushatlis were ousted as governors of Shkodra by the central government, and individuals from other influential families were appointed.<sup>233</sup> This resulted from the 'rotation policy' applied by the central authority to prevent the power consolidation of governors in a specific area. However, this household maintained its position as a significant actor in local politics through the sons of the late Vizier Suleiman Pasha.<sup>234</sup> They continued to be present in the Ottoman local administrative system through other important duties. This is confirmed by various orders from the center regarding individuals from Shkodra addressed as Suleiman-pasha-zades.<sup>235</sup> Furthermore, Mustafa Bey from the second generation, in the sources is the commander of the troops in the castle of Shkodra. The related *mühimme* document mentions that he is from the town of Bushat and that means he is probably the son of Mehmed Beg as shown in the genealogical tree of the family.<sup>236</sup> The name of Mustafa is also in the register of appointments, where is labeled as the son of Suleiman-pasha and the information that he had died in the year h. 1135 (1722/1723).<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Stavri Naçi, "Te Dhena te Reja rreth Prejardhjes se Familjes se Bushatllijve te Shkodres" [New Evidence relating the origin of Bushatli Family of Shkodra], *Buletini i Universitetit Shtetëror të Tiranës, seria për Shkenca Shoqërore, Vol. 3* (Tirane: 1961): 82.

<sup>230</sup> He was the grandson of Mehmed Pasha who Evliya Çelebi met during his voyage to Shkodra. A late descendant of this family, Mahmud Pasha left a genealogical tree which despite some minor mistakes is a noteworthy source on the history of the Bushatli household, see: A.Q.SH. Fondi 79, dosja nr. 39; Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osman V*, hz. Nuri Akbayar, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1993): 1542.

<sup>231</sup> Iorga, *Breve Historie de l'Albanie et du peuple Albanais*, 59-60.

<sup>232</sup> Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osman IV*, 1324; BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 108, 255-256 [29 C 1107 (4 February 1696)].

<sup>233</sup> Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 63-65.

<sup>234</sup> From the genealogical tree that was referred before it seems that Bushatli Suleiman Pasha had six sons and all of them possessed title like 'pasha' and 'beg'.

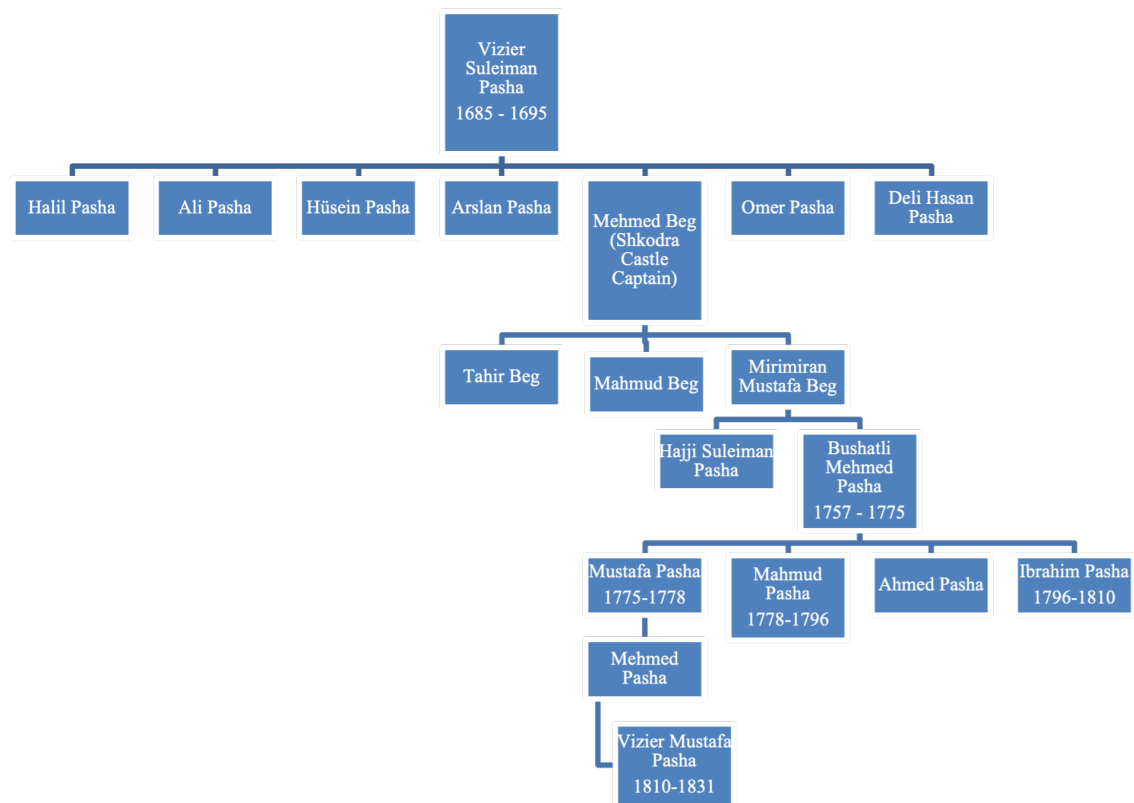
<sup>235</sup> Apart from Ömer Pasha who was already named Shkodra governor, other sons appear as well like Arslan Pasha, see: BOA İE.ML. 120, 11418 (13 B 1136 (7 February 1724)).

<sup>236</sup> Leyla Toraman, '128 Numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli Mühimme Defteri'. Yayınlanmamış Master Tezi, (Fırat Üniversitesi, 2005): 17; For the location of this excerpt in the archive: BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 128, 6 (8 B 1130 (7 June 1718)).

<sup>237</sup> Başar. *Osmanlı Eyalet Tevcihatı* (1717-1730): 300.

The possessions of the Bushatlis spread towards the southern part of Shkodra in the fertile lowlands of the district, such as the village of Barbullush. Regarding this village consisting of approximately fifty houses, a priest who visited it in 1638 noted that Barbullush was a farmstead (*çiftlik*), and the peasants were tenants who worked on the lands owned by the Bushatli lords.<sup>238</sup> In addition, the Bushatlis also owned the village of Kosmaç situated on the banks of the Drini river. It is probable that this village was a *çiftlik* as well and it was the property closest to the city of Shkodra.<sup>239</sup> However, by the mid-eighteenth century, the Bushatlis had a palace built inside the city. It was the son of Mustafa Beg, Mehmed, who moved together with his household from the town of Bushat to the old district of Shkodra also known as the tanners' quarter. The reason seems to be the need to be more closely involved in the urban politics of the time.<sup>240</sup>

Figure 3.1 The genealogical tree of the Yusuf-beg-zades starting with Vizier Suleiman Pasha. The years accompanying each individual denote their respective tenures as governors of Shkodra



<sup>238</sup>Naçi, "Te Dhena te Reja rreth Prejardhjes...", 75.

<sup>239</sup>Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatli te Shkodres (At Erasmo Balneo)*, p. 35.

<sup>240</sup>Ibid, 33; For a planimetric and architectural analysis of the palace, see: Gjerak Karaiskaj, "Pallati i Bushatllinjve ne Kalane e Shkodres (The Palace of the Bushatlis in the Castle of Shkodra)", in *Revista Monumentet*, (Tirane: BIMK, 2002): 44-45.

In the year 1701, the Bushatlis were removed from the post governorship of Shkodra, as the district was assigned to Hüdaverdi Pasha<sup>241</sup> member of the Mahmud-bey-zade family from Peja<sup>242</sup> who much like the Yusuf-beg-zades, belonged to an old military landowning household.<sup>243</sup> Despite the limited historical information about this house, the Mahmut-bey-zades or the Beyzades as they are known in the literature, like the Bushatlis, gained prominence during the Ottoman-Habsburg war (1683-1699) because of their role in the Serbian front.<sup>244</sup> Regarding the progenitor of this household, researchers believe that the Beyzades of Peja are descendants of the grand vizier Mere Husain Pasha.<sup>245</sup> They were later divided into two branches the Mahmud-bey-zades of Peja and the Dervish-bey-zades of Zadrima, south of Dukakin district.<sup>246</sup> In the 1730s the Beyzades stretched their rule in the region by obtaining both the governorships of Shkodra and Dukakin through the appointments of Hüdaverdi and Mahmud Pashas.<sup>247</sup>

In their efforts to seize control of the district following the 1720s, the Bushatlis and the Beyzades sought the support of the tanners' faction. On the other side, however, the faction of the tailors was under the leadership of Çavuşzades, which was also an old household of military-administrative origins. The available information regarding the origins of this family is limited, which suggests that they may have been of lesser significance when compared to the Yusuf-beg-zades or the Mahmud-bey-zades. Nevertheless, during the 1740s, the Çavuşzades attained a position of prominence under the leadership of the tailors. Their palace and headquarters were established in the tailors' quarter, which was one of the components of the new town area in Shkodra that also encompassed the dock and the bazaar. Additionally, they owned numerous properties in the northern part of the city, as evidenced by the

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<sup>241</sup>His appointment appears to have occurred in 1701, and until 1705 Hüdaverdi was acting governor of Shkodra district, see: Özlem Seçkin, '111 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri'nin 508.-709. Sayfalarının Transkripsyonu ve Değerlendirmesi'. Yayınlanmamış Master Tezi, (Artvin Çoruh Üniversitesi, 2020): 82; For the location of this excerpt in the archive: BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 111, 1858 (Evail ZA 1112 (mid-April 1701)).

<sup>242</sup>In Ottoman Turkish it is known as İpek and in Slavic languages as Pec in that period was the centre of Dukakin district. Hüdaverdi Pasha before Shkodra was governor of Peja his home region, see: Noel Malcom, *Kosovo: A Short History*, (London: Pan Books, 2002): 164-165.

<sup>243</sup>From the letters of Giovanni Bolizza, a Venetian commander who was sent to meet the pasha of Shkodra, he mentions Hüdaverdi as member of Mahmud-bey-zades family, see: Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet... Vol. II*, p. 451.

<sup>244</sup>Malcom, *Kosovo: A Short History*, 142-143.

<sup>245</sup>He became grand vizier twice in the years 1622 and 1623 until he was executed. The hypothesis is based upon the fact Mere Husain himself was from an old household of Peja where his pious foundations are found, see: Agron Islami, 'XVIII. Yüzyılda 'Kosova': Sosyo-Ekonomik Tarih'. Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi. (İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2021): 108 (n. 219-220).

<sup>246</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet... Vol. II*, p. 165.

<sup>247</sup>Subhî Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Târihi, Sâmi ve Şâkir Tarihleri ile birlikte 1730-1744*, haz. Mesut Aydınar, (İstanbul: Kitapevi, 2007): 267.



existing place names.<sup>248</sup> Venetian reports indicate that Çavuşzade household also owned estates near the river Buna, a region that is known for farming and *çiftlik*s.<sup>249</sup> However, despite these possessions in the rural areas, their support derived from the urban sociopolitical establishment in Shkodra, thus the tailors' faction.

The rise of Çavuşzades began with Suleiman Pasha, who in the year 1740 with the support of the tailors' faction became governor of Shkodra.<sup>250</sup> Apart from local assistance, they were also assisted by the *kaymakam* of Rumeli provincial district governor. Following Suleiman Pasha, other household members became governors of Shkodra and until 1756, the Çavuşzade and the tailors' faction were the main political forces in the district. Despite this, their reign weakened over time and became contested by their rivals from the tanners' faction. Initially, upon assuming the governorship of Shkodra, the Çavuşzades frequently participated in military operations on the eastern front during the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid dynasty from 1743 to 1746. Consequently, the Çavuşzades were at times replaced by central authorities due to the intricate local conflicts among Shkodra's factions. To tackle these challenges, the government opted to appoint individuals from other regional households who were not involved in the local politics of Shkodra. Despite this, the newcomers were rendered politically inert and were assimilated into the bilateral factionalism prevalent among all segments of the local society in Shkodra.<sup>251</sup>

### 3.2.3 A Class of Merchants

The development of early modern Shkodra saw the emergence of a merchant class, whose influence extended from the economic realm to the political arena. This appears to have been a result of increased regional commercial activities and overseas trade that began in the seventeenth century and continued beyond. Secondly, during this time, the market of Shkodra emerged as a major commercial hub through considerable artisanal production and a great volume of trade. Lastly, although Shkodra was not a port city, it still had an indirect exit to the Adriatic Sea through the navigable river Buna. Thus, attracting merchants from all over

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<sup>248</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet...* Vol. I, 182.

<sup>249</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Cons. di Scutari, let. di Anton Duoda Dt. 30 September – 3 October 1753.

<sup>250</sup>Betül Naci. '147 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri'nin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirmesi (S.1-156)'. Yayınlanmamış Master Tezi. (Bingöl Üniversitesi, 2022): 276-277. The archival reference: BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 147, 437-438.

<sup>251</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres...*, 50-58.; Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet Vol. II*, 451-454.

the region to bring their merchandise there. These factors allowed the merchants of Shkodra to amass great wealth and capital by trading both local and imported commercial manufacture and agricultural goods. Therefore, through their economic rise, the merchants of Shkodra became an important socio-politic player in the factional strife among tanners and tailors.

Determining an exact time frame for the emergence of the mercantile elite is a complex task. However, I posit that the establishment of the Venetian vice-consulate in Shkodra<sup>252</sup> in 1706 serves as a notable acknowledgment of the commercial strength possessed by these merchants. Consequently, it can be inferred that the merchant elite gradually consolidated its power throughout the seventeenth century. Venice had already a consulate in the port city of Durres that the merchants of Shkodra used to ship their goods. However, the increased influence of the French and Dutch commercial activities on the Adriatic coast made the Venetian authorities take measures to protect its economic interests.<sup>253</sup> In addition, there was also the threat of the Ulcinj corsairs which was a serious obstacle for commerce and the Venetian influence in the region. Therefore, not only did they open a vice-consulate in Shkodra but also appointed a Venetian subject that was of local origins.<sup>254</sup> Thanks to the reports prepared by the vice-consulate, the names, titles, and surnames of Shkodra merchants come to light and help us explore the formation of this class.

Historical estimates suggest that during the eighteenth century, Shkodra was home to a vibrant community of over eight hundred merchants, predominantly from the Muslim faith. In contrast, the Christian merchants accounted for less than twenty percent of this population. This estimate specifically pertains to those individuals actively involved in trade with Venice during the eighteenth century, reflecting the significant exchange of goods and cultural interactions between the two regions during that period.<sup>255</sup> Additionally, Venetian authorities granted special privileges to the merchants of Shkodra, giving them an advantage over their coun-

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<sup>252</sup>In the Venetian diplomatic system, *bailos* and after them, the consols were the higher representatives of Venice in foreign countries. Appointments came only from Venetian nobility, especially for the *bailos*, who were in charge mostly of diplomatic affairs and were located mostly in the capital cities like Istanbul. In the case of vice/consulate like the one in Shkodra, they had very limited authority and were responsible just for gathering information and preparing shipment reports. The vice consol of Shkodra though a Venetian subject still was of humble origin and was bound to the consol of Durres.

<sup>253</sup>Zija Shkodra. 'Problemi i tregut shqiptar në shekullin XVIII (Problems of the Albanian Market in the 18th Century)'. *Studime Historike* 20 (3):61–100. (Tirane: 1966); Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600-1800*. (Cambridge University Press, 1981): 20.

<sup>254</sup>Stavri Naçi, "Rreth tregtisë së Sanxhakut të Shkodrës në shekullin XVIII (Regarding the Trade of Shkodra Sanjak in the 18th Century)", në *Buletini i Shkencave Shoqërore të Universitetit të Tiranës*, Nr.1, (Tiranë: Universiteti i Tiranës, 1963).

<sup>255</sup>Shkodra. 'Problemi i tregut shqiptar në shekullin XVIII', p. 79.

terparts from central and southern Albania.<sup>256</sup> Even in secondary sources, authors have highlighted the emergence of the local mercantile class among the Ottoman Balkan population. Alongside the Ulcinj merchant maritime, they competed with other groups such as the Greeks and the Slavs, but ultimately, their commercial activities were confined to the Adriatic Sea.<sup>257</sup> Thus, it can be argued that the economy of Shkodra integrated into the expansion of the European market of the eighteenth century.

In Venice, the merchants of Shkodra were so well integrated that they had personal correspondents. Thanks to them, the commercial ties with the two cities were very solid and provided easiness in the transactions among the parties.<sup>258</sup> Their main task was to take the merchandise coming from Shkodra and sell it in the Venetian market. However, they proved to be essential even during critical cases when there were problems with the authorities or in case of death.<sup>259</sup> Generally, the Muslim merchant had family members as correspondents who lived in *Fondoco dei Turchi*<sup>260</sup> as seen in the document. However, there were cases when they had to rely on local Venetian correspondents like their Christian peers. In terms of commercial impact, through products like leather, wool, and wax the merchants of Shkodra were quite present in the economy of Venice.<sup>261</sup>

A considerable proportion of the mercantile elite of Shkodra, as seen from the Venetian reports, consisted of members from the military class. This is easily understood from the titles that these merchants used in the official documents. Hence, most of them had titles and epithets like *aga*, *beg* or surnames like *gianizzeri* (janissary) or *spahi*. I argue that they are probably the lesser notables that adapted to the changing socio-economic circumstances of the period, especially to the transformation of *timar* system at the expense of tax-farming and the spread of *çiftliks*.<sup>262</sup> Secondly, among the names, there are also members of *ilmiyye* class that have titles

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<sup>256</sup>Injac Zamputi, et al, *Burime te Zgjedhura Historine e Shqiperise (Selected Sources on the History of Albania)* Vol. III, (Tirane: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1961), document no. 196.

<sup>257</sup>Traian Stoianovich, 'The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Jun. 1960), p. 275.

<sup>258</sup>Maria Pia Pedani. 'A Culture of Trust: Ottoman Merchants and Venetian Notaries in the Early Modern Period'. In *Venetians and Ottomans in the Early Modern Age: Essays on Economic and Social Connected History*, ed. Anna Valerio. (Venice: Edizioni Ca'Foscari, 2018): 31-48.

<sup>259</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Letter of Pietro Angeli, vice consul of Shkodra, date. 6 of May 1730.

<sup>260</sup>It was a building used as residence by the Ottoman Muslim merchants until early nineteenth century. This was allocated by the Venetian authority as a measure for both protection and supervision of the merchants.

<sup>261</sup>Oral. Osmanlı-Venedik Ticari İlişkileri (1763-1794): 176, 267-270, 296-298.

<sup>262</sup>Stavri Naçi. 'Çështje te Çiftlikut Feudal ne Shqiperi ne shekujt XVII-XVIII (Issues of Feudal Çiftlik in Albania in the 17th -18th centuries)', *Buletini i Universitetit per Shkencat Shoqërore*, (Tirane:1960): 98-104.

*molla* and *effendi*. This shows that the urban elite of Shkodra was actively engaged in trade activities. Lastly, it should be emphasized that many individuals still cannot be categorized and that their family background remains unknown.<sup>263</sup> Among these individuals, there are also members of old military households who enjoyed considerable political and financial power in the region. They set themselves apart due to their strong connections with the great households that were mentioned in the previous sub-section. In addition, even though they were unable to attain important positions such as district governors, these influential merchant notables were still able to secure official tasks like tax collectors or *multezims*.<sup>264</sup>

According to the Venetian reports, the main traded products were artisan-manufactured goods, indicating that the mercantile elite had gained control of the city's manufacturing sector. Furthermore, the merchants of Shkodra were recorded as purchasing also agricultural estates for investment purposes. An excerpt from an eighteenth-century judicial court record in Shkodra contains documented transactions concerning the purchase of rural land by prominent merchant families. In this regard, there is the example of Gjyrezi merchant family<sup>265</sup> who bought lands near the river Buna and in the region of Ulcinj.<sup>266</sup> This reveals a distinct pattern of behavior among the merchant class, who are increasingly inclined to invest in and acquire agricultural land found in the rural landscapes. The primary rationale behind this phenomenon is to facilitate secure investment practices, particularly during a period when trade in the Adriatic Sea was susceptible to piratical activities, thereby rendering commercial endeavors highly precarious for merchants. This circumstance contributed to a process of 'gentrification' within the merchant elite, which may have been perceived as a threat by the established rural political elite. Consequently, this dynamic fostered a sense of alienation between the merchant class and the landowners in rural areas.

It is possible to claim that by the start of the eighteenth century, the mercantile powers had established economic dominance over both the city and rural areas of Shkodra. A letter to the Venetian authorities mentions the names of the city's 'piazza' leaders in connection to a dispute between two merchants from Shkodra. The word 'piazza' probably refers either to the commercial part of the city, the *bazaar*, or the community in general. Thus, Suleiman Beg Gradanik as head of

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<sup>263</sup> Stavri Naci. *Shqipëria e Veriut në Shekullin e XVIII: Letra të zëv. Konsujve Venedikas të Shkodrës [Northern Albania in the Eighteenth Century: The Letters of the Venetian v/Consuls of Shkodra]* V. I (1706-1756), V. II (1757-1802), passim.

<sup>264</sup> Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet* Vol. I, 105.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid, *Shkodra dhe Motet* Vol. II, p. 174.

<sup>266</sup> A.Q.SH. Fondi nr. 121, dosja nr. 3; Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet* Vol. II, 174.

the community followed by Haxhi Hasan Aga Kopliku<sup>267</sup>, Ahmed Aga Kethüda, Hajji Murat Efendi Kalfa, Hajji Bajram Cuiunzia, Hajji Halil Aga, Hajji Mehmed Rusi, Hajji Suleiman and others.<sup>268</sup> The Gradaniks were an old military originally household although they do not appear in the shipment reports it is difficult to know if they were directly involved in commercial activity.<sup>269</sup> Hasan Aga Kopliku and Mehmed Rusi are members of merchant families as seen from Venetian reports.<sup>270</sup> For the others, there is no information available.

This document indicates that until at least the 1730s, the mercantile elite of Shkodra was the primary socio-economic force in the city. It appears that their main stronghold was the 'new town', where the bazaar, dock, and Terzihane were located.<sup>271</sup> Even the Venetian consulate was located on that side of the city near the dock and the customs for easier preparation of shipment reports and monitoring of local political developments.<sup>272</sup> Hence, with the onset of the factional strife in Shkodra, the merchant class became directly involved by aligning with the tailors' guild and the Çavuşzades household all of them residing in the same part of the city.<sup>273</sup> The Gradaniks who were the officially known leading notables also allied themselves with the Çavuşzades and the tailors.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, the tailors faction formed as a result of alliances among key socio-economic, military, and political figures residing in the "new town".

On the other hand, there was the faction of tanners, led by the Bushatlis and Beyzades, great landowning households. They were allied with the tanners' guild and the other lesser notables. Although most of the mercantile elite sided with the tailors, among the tanners, there were merchants from prominent old military households like the Parruca<sup>275</sup> or members of the Rusi family, close associates with the Bushatlis.<sup>276</sup> This faction was based in the 'old town' part of Shkodra with

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<sup>267</sup>The Kopliku family was a landowning and a powerful mercantile household with many members mentioned in the Venetian shipment documents. They also were called 'Xhabia' from the word *câbi* meaning tax collector as they were responsible for the Zadrina region.

<sup>268</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Letter from the vice consulate of Shkodra, dt. 8 of April 1736.

<sup>269</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet Vol. II*, 164.

<sup>270</sup>Ibid, 205, 290.

<sup>271</sup>These can be seen in the maps that are in my first chapter.

<sup>272</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet Vol. I*, 101.

<sup>273</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 47.

<sup>274</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet Vol. II*, 164.

<sup>275</sup>Ibid, 227.

<sup>276</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 37.

the leading households located in the tanners' quarters. In addition, its power base included the southern hinterland which was under the influence of the Bushatlis and was known for its large agricultural estates. Consequently, in terms of economics, this confrontation can be interpreted as a clash between the urban artisan and mercantile forces and the 'agriculturalist' landowners of the old town and its surrounding regions.<sup>277</sup>

In the Ottoman documents, the first recorded clash between these two factions occurred when the tanners attacked the 'new town' and the bazaar. Their aim was likely to cause economic damage to the tailors rather than physical harm, with the merchants being particularly affected.<sup>278</sup> The same thing occurred fourteen years later, when again the tanners attacked the tailors, they went straightly for the Bazaar inflicting more material damages.<sup>279</sup> As demonstrated by these incidents, it is evident that the attacks on the Bazaar constituted a strategy employed by the tanners to inflict financial losses on the merchants, who constituted the primary group within the tailors' faction. Amid the factional strife, the merchants became the target of the governor of Shkodra, who had allied with the tanners and permitted the pillage of the bazaar, thereby inflicting severe damage upon them.<sup>280</sup> Consequently, in the course of factional conflicts, the merchant group appears to have been a consistent target for both political and economic reasons.

The mercantile elite of Shkodra throughout the first half of the eighteenth century had also to deal with the piracy problems caused by Ulcinj corsairs. The captains of Ulcinj established affiliations with both factions, creating ongoing difficulties for merchants and the Venetian authorities. Their vessels were frequently subjected to attacks by corsairs, which compounded the challenges faced by trade and maritime governance in the region. Since these ships carried the goods of Shkodra's merchants, their plundering caused economic losses and disruption of sea routes.<sup>281</sup> Even when the governorship of Shkodra passed to the Çavuşzade of the tailor faction, the merchants still faced problems due to the clashes occurring in the commercial area. In response to this, the merchants of the tailors' faction would suspend the transportation of goods from the dock, however, this solution caused a reaction from

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<sup>277</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 44-46.

<sup>278</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722).

<sup>279</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Letter of Antonio Duoda, vice consul of Shkodra, dt. 19 October 1736, p.2.

<sup>280</sup>BOA A. DVNSMHM.d. 153, 366 (1160 Ş 29 (5 September 1747).

<sup>281</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, p. 53.

the artisans and other merchants.<sup>282</sup>

Despite being the main players in the tailors' faction, the merchants of Shkodra did not always support the leading family of Çavuşzades. Thus, when the governor Çavuşzade Mehmed Pasha decided to punish a merchant at the request of Venetian authorities, it brought him against the mercantile elite of the city. Although the governor stepped back and did not arrest the merchant, still this caused a crack inside the faction.<sup>283</sup> Furthermore, Mehmed Pasha tried to maintain a neutral stance regarding the factional conflict between the tailors and tanners, which ultimately led to the empowerment of the latter. The governor's failure to quell the unrest in Shkodra resulted in significant financial losses for merchants and compelled them to seek a resolution. In the end, they shifted to the Bushatlis of tanners' faction who put an end to the strife and brought peace to the city.<sup>284</sup>

### 3.3 Venetian Turmoil: Maritime Struggles and Power Shifts in the Adriatic

The Republic of Venice was one of the key external factors involved in the factionalism of Shkodra, demonstrating a significant and proactive influence on the region's political and economic dynamics. In the eighteenth century, the once preeminent state and foremost commercial power in the Mediterranean faced a substantial decline. This deterioration compelled the state to 'retreat' to the Adriatic Sea, where it sought to reassert its authority through a combination of military action and diplomatic efforts. Venice's efforts to sustain its dominance in Adriatic trade were increasingly challenged by the rise of local maritime entities such as Ulcinj, behind whom there were the Barbary corsairs. Due to the strategic positioning of their bases in the coastal areas of the Shkodra district, Venice sought to influence the situation by backing the faction that best aligned with its interests. Consequently, leveraging factionalism as a tool to interfere in the local governance and eliminate possible risks arising from the region.

From the emergence of Venice as a Mediterranean power, which began to take shape from the late Middle Ages until the eighteenth century, the Adriatic Sea was seen as an extension of the Venetian Gulf. This perception was shared by both Venice

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<sup>282</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Letter of Antonio Duoda, vice consul of Shkodra, date. 5 June 1754.

<sup>283</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Letter of Antonio Duoda, vice consul of Shkodra, date 17 August 1754.

<sup>284</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 58.

and the Ottoman Empire, the latter of which applied the epithet "Venetian Sea" in its records. Venice itself considered the sea to be exclusive, accessible solely to its subjects (or "citizens") and foreign ships that complied with the tax obligations laid down by the Venetian government. The concept of the "Closed Sea" was a prominent subject of discussion among Mediterranean states, including the Ottoman Empire's claims to the Black Sea and Genoa's assertion of sovereignty over the Ligurian Gulf. While the Ottomans easily controlled all of the Black Sea coasts, the Venetians faced significant challenges due to the presence of various competing political forces in the Adriatic Sea. Nonetheless, they still managed to maintain such policies and a position of dominance for an extended period.<sup>285</sup>

During the period of Venetian dominance in the Adriatic Sea, a well-structured commercial network comprised of coastal cities was established, all operating under the authority of Venice. Through its colonies located on the western shore of the Ottoman-controlled Balkans, Venice secured a significant portion of the raw materials essential for its industrial activities. In this trade system, each colony played a vital role in the provisioning network that was expertly established by Venice to address its economic requirements.<sup>286</sup> Additionally, these cities functioned as designated quarantine stations for vessels arriving from the Mediterranean Sea, thereby prioritizing the environmental safety of the mother city. In contrast, these markets were essential for Venice's manufactured goods, facilitating their distribution through land routes within the Balkans to various destinations where demand existed. To facilitate and enhance the commercial exchange of goods between both sides of the Adriatic, Venice made significant capital investments and experienced considerable success in this endeavor at least until the seventeenth century.<sup>287</sup>

The prominence of Venice in the Adriatic Sea faced two significant challenges. The first was the emergence of other mercantile competitors that pursued opportunities to establish their presence in the Adriatic and capture a share of this lucrative trade zone. Among these rivals, Ancona experienced a significant expansion in its commercial influence during the sixteenth century, particularly in the cloth and

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<sup>285</sup> Maria Pia Pedani, *The Ottoman-Venetian Border (15th-18th Centuries)*, translated by Mariateresa Sala, (Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing, 2017), pp. 84-85; Stephen Ortega, *Negotiating Transcultural Relations in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Ottoman-Venetian Encounters*. (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), p. 138.

<sup>286</sup> The sentence 'all the good carried in the Adriatic must pass through Venice' sums perfectly the Venetian economic policy in the Adriatic Sea. For a detailed analysis on this topic, see: Fernand Braudel. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2 vols. Translated by Siân Reynolds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 128.

<sup>287</sup> Benjamin Arbel, "Venice's Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period", in *A Companion to the Venetian History, 1400-1797*, ed. Eric Dursteler, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 226-227.



leather trade.<sup>288</sup> Ragusa (Dubrovnik) emerged as a formidable competitor on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. Capitalizing on its position as a tributary city-state under Ottoman dominion, it successfully acquired a significant volume of raw materials originating from the Balkans, which were then utilized for trade across the Adriatic.<sup>289</sup> Despite shifts in the commercial dynamics of the Adriatic Sea and a partial decline in its hegemony, Venice continued to be the dominant political and economic power within the region. By strategically manipulating the newly established circumstances, Venice managed to turn the situation through thanks also to a collaboration with the Ottomans, thus strengthening their Adriatic trade network.<sup>290</sup>

The second significant obstacle that Venice encountered, which turned out to be exceedingly troublesome, was the ongoing threat posed by piracy in the Adriatic Sea. In the northern waters, there were the Uskok pirates from Senj<sup>291</sup>, a refugee population from various regions and ethnicities in the Balkans that engaged in piracy. Since the sixteenth century, they have acted as a catalyst for unrest by endangering transportation corridors in the Adriatic, thereby risking the safety of individuals and the trade goods belonging to both Venetian and Ottoman subjects.<sup>292</sup> The Uskoks enjoyed the support of the Habsburgs and were used as a Trojan horse to undermine the economic and diplomatic partnership between Venetians and Ottomans. Furthermore, this allowed the Habsburgs a claim over a small part of the Adriatic sea zone.<sup>293</sup> On the pretext that Venice was not able to provide security, the Ottoman Empire brought into the southern waters of the Adriatic Sea, the Barbary corsairs from the Northern African coast. From their bases in Vlora, they later moved to Durres and after that to the coasts of Shkodra districts, in the town of Ulcinj.<sup>294</sup>

The invasion of numerous corsair groups into the waters of the Adriatic Sea, combined with their remarkable proficiency in navigation and sailing, posed a formidable

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<sup>288</sup>Peter Earle, 'The commercial development of Ancona, 1479–1551', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., vol. 22 (1969): 35–37.

<sup>289</sup>Faruk Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550–1870: A Geohistorical Approach*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008): 51–55.

<sup>290</sup>Maria Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England, 1450–1700*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 70.

<sup>291</sup>Senj is a coastal city in modern Croatia. Starting from the sixteenth century it became a refuge place for population fleeing from the territories invaded by the Ottomans. After that, they began engaging in piracy activities and the loot was the main income that Senj had.

<sup>292</sup>Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992): 51–55.

<sup>293</sup>Alberto Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice, 1580–1615*. Translated by Janet and Brian Pullan. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967): 4–5.

<sup>294</sup>*Ibid*, 16–32.

challenge to Venice's historical authority and supremacy in maritime affairs. Additionally, the coastal topography of the Adriatic Sea provided secure shelters for the pirate ships. Regarding the Uskoks and their piratical activities on the northern waters of the Adriatic Sea, it was still possible for Venice to neutralize them due to their vicinity with the Venetian heartland. Moreover, the Uskok's main target was the Ottomans, and their religious mission was to serve "Christianity" by fighting the infidels. Later, Venice effectively employed this situation to its benefit, working alongside the Habsburgs to oppose the Ottoman presence on the Adriatic shore.<sup>295</sup> The approach demonstrated effectiveness in the northern Adriatic Sea; however, on the southern coast, the Barbary corsairs, aided by the recently organized Ulcinj fleet<sup>296</sup>, confronted the Uskoks and attacked the ships belonging to the Venetians and Habsburgs. This situation engendered significant turmoil and instigated a continuous shift in the power dynamics of the Adriatic Sea, thereby disrupting established order and adversely affecting both maritime navigation and commercial activities.<sup>297</sup>

### 3.3.1 Twilight of an Empire: Venice in Transition

The political instability in the Balkans and the Adriatic Sea ultimately prompted a coalition between the Venetians and the Habsburgs against the Ottomans. Venice's engagement in the Holy Alliance against the Ottomans initially demonstrated considerable success, as the coalition secured a decisive victory. In the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, the Venetian Republic successfully expanded its territory in the Dalmatian region and acquired Morea. This strategic acquisition allowed Venice to establish a significant foothold in the Ionian Sea.<sup>298</sup> The aforementioned victories were ephemeral, as the Ottomans subsequently achieved a decisive victory over the Venetians in the conflict that occurred between 1714 and 1718. The defeat permitted the Ottoman Empire to reclaim the majority of territories lost to the Republic of Venice, including the region of Morea, as stipulated in the 1718 Treaty of Pas-

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<sup>295</sup>Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj*, 176-177; İdris Bostan, *Adriyatik'te Korsanlık: Osmanlılar, Uskoklar, Venedikliler 1575-1620*, (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009): 97-100.

<sup>296</sup>Bostan, *Ibid*, 58. The Ulcinj fleet and their piratical activities are treated in my next subsection in a more specific way.

<sup>297</sup>Braudel. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 130; Alan G. Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea: A History of Barbary Corsairs*, (London: Reaktion Books LTD, 2012): 98-99; Malcolm, *Agents of Empires*, 328.

<sup>298</sup>Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 410-411.

sarowitz. Nevertheless, this became the last confrontation with the Ottomans.<sup>299</sup>

Conversely, for the Habsburgs, their achievements in the conflicts against the Ottomans allowed them to solidify their strategic position in the Adriatic Sea. However, this was done at the expense of Venice, which saw a potential rival that could contest its political and economic supremacy within the Adriatic region.<sup>300</sup> The dominance of Venice in the Adriatic Sea was characterized by two primary components: military power and commercial activity. In the eighteenth century, the Republic of Venice experienced a decline in military power, even though it maintained a significant maritime fleet. Eventually, the Habsburgs adeptly recognized the advantageous situation created by the weakening of the Venetian military, leading them to effectively expand their political power and authority throughout the region. Furthermore, the Habsburgs declared Trieste and Fiume as free ports which resulted in a heavy blow for the Venetian Adriatic trade policy. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, various European powers, including France and England, commenced operations in the Adriatic Sea, engaging in naval confrontations without obtaining the consent of Venice.<sup>301</sup>

From a broad perspective, there was a noticeable decline in military power and commercial strength for Venice. This decline can be attributed to the new economic challenges that began to emerge in the latter half of the seventeenth century and continued into the eighteenth century. The gradual withdrawal from the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, resulting from territorial losses to the Ottomans and the substantial financial resources allocated to military confrontations, significantly impacted the financial stability of Venice. Furthermore, financing the maritime empire, which encompassed various military garrisons in addition to the navy, imposed a substantial burden on the Venetian economy.<sup>302</sup> The revenues generated from commercial activities and taxation experienced a decline due to the disruptions in Mediterranean trade, as the Portuguese and Dutch effectively supplanted existing market dynamics by accessing luxury goods, such as spices and silk, through newly established oceanic trade routes. This capital loss from the Mediterranean trade

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<sup>299</sup>William H. McNeill, *Venice: The Hinge of Europe, 1081-1797* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974): 221.

<sup>300</sup>Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, 378.

<sup>301</sup>Prior to the eighteenth-century, the Adriatic Sea was perceived by many powers of the time as part of the Venetian Gulf, thus all entering in its water had to obey the Venetian laws. This included the prohibition of the warships and the entrance of commercial vessel only through official permission from Venetian authorities. See: Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 417-418; Arbel, "Venice's Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period", 228.

<sup>302</sup>Luciano Pezzolo, "The Venetian Economy." In *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797*, edited by Eric R. Dursteler, (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 269; Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, pp. 65-69.

forced the Venetians to ‘retreat’ to the Adriatic Sea as the income did not cover the expenses needed for the protection of commercial interests.<sup>303</sup>

Venice underwent a significant socio-economic transformation characterized by notable changes in the investment patterns of its population, particularly among the middle and upper classes. Starting from the seventeenth century, the capital holders in Venice began to leave the mercantile trade, and instead of commerce, they shifted their investment into land acquisition. Nobility, particularly affected by ongoing conflicts and their detrimental impact on commerce, started acquiring estates in the rural areas of Venice, leading to their evolution into a landed aristocracy.<sup>304</sup> Nonetheless, this economic transition ought not to be perceived merely as a sign of decline; instead, it should be understood as a strategic response to the significant shifts in political power dynamics that emerged during the Early Modern period in Europe and the Mediterranean Sea. The Venetian Republic acknowledged its military and commercial limitations and consequently redirected its attention and resources toward the Adriatic Sea.<sup>305</sup>

### 3.3.2 Venetian-Shkodra Connection: Factionalism, Piracy, and Diplomacy

In the eighteenth century, Venice allocated most of its resources to securing the Adriatic Sea against piracy and safeguarding its political and economic interests from rival competitors. Following the neutralization of *the Uskoks of Senj* and their subsequent removal from the Dalmatian coast, Venice was able to restore order to the northern Adriatic Sea.<sup>306</sup> Nevertheless, in the southern waters, the alliance between Barbary corsairs and the city of Ulcinj posed a significantly greater challenge for the Venetian authorities. Their status as Ottoman subjects and the logistic issue made Venice spend considerable resources to fight them. Apart from Venice, the subjects from other states that sailed in the Adriatic Sea became targets of these corsairs. In order to address this issue, Venice engaged in diplomatic efforts and collaborated with other affected states to exert pressure on the Ottoman authorities. The objective was to neutralize the corsairs operating from Ulcinj and to eradicate

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<sup>303</sup>McNeill, *Venice: The Hinge of Europe, 1081-1797*, p. 143; Ortega, *Negotiating Transcultural Relations in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, 62; Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, 78-79.

<sup>304</sup>Jan De Vries, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976): 26-27; Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, 416.

<sup>305</sup>Pezzolo, “The Venetian Economy”, 267-269.

<sup>306</sup>Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj*, 289-297.

the presence of Barbary pirates in the Adriatic Sea. Despite the inclusion of this issue in the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, the Ottomans failed to fulfill the demands.<sup>307</sup>

Even after the signing of the treaty, Ulcinj's corsairs continued to engage in illicit activities, as they continued to violate the regulations enforced by the central government. The local authorities had been ineffective in applying pressure on Ulcinj, which falls under the administration and jurisdiction of the Shkodra governorate. The governor of Shkodra received orders to prevent the Ulcinj seamen from sailing and constructing boats; however, he was unable to effectively exercise his authority in that region.<sup>308</sup> Therefore Ulcinj together with the Barbary corsairs roamed free in the Adriatic Sea and engaged in piratical activities. Consequently, the commerce and transportation operations of Venice, as documented in the reports from the Venetian consul in Shkodra, experienced significant disruptions. These interruptions resulted in considerable material and financial losses.<sup>309</sup> In addition to issues related to piracy, the city of Venice confronted the alliance between the captains of Ulcinj and the city of Ancona. This led to the shift of the merchandise of Shkodra away from the Venetian market.<sup>310</sup>

While Ulcinj's maritime power may not have matched the scale and strength of Venice, it demonstrated the ability to resist Venetian dominance in the Adriatic Sea beginning in the seventeenth century.<sup>311</sup> Historically, Ulcinj was recognized as a refuge for pirates; however, its primary sources of revenue were derived from transportation services and trade activities. This sudden rise brought Ulcinj and Venice against each other many times. Especially during the eighteenth century, the two parties engaged in confrontation. In a show of power, Ulcinj's captains and merchants, who dealt with the slave trade, would even display captured Venetian slaves in the market of Venice.<sup>312</sup> The difficulty in dealing with Ulcinj's issue of employing force made Venice adopt a different approach. Although Venice has diminished in its military power, it retained a considerable and experienced bureaucratic framework, opting for diplomacy rather than confrontation.

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<sup>307</sup>Maria Pia Pedan, "Beyond the Frontier. The Ottoman-Venetian Border in the Adriatic Context from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries". Bues, Almut (ed.), *Zones of fractures in Modern Europe*. (Wiesbaden, 2005): 54

<sup>308</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 131, 1098 (10 Ca 1136 (5 February 1724).

<sup>309</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 4 Agosto 1733.

<sup>310</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 2 Settembre 1733.

<sup>311</sup>Stoianovich, *The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant*, 273-275.

<sup>312</sup>Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 166.

In the case of Ulcinj, they relied on the pragmatic planning and solution of the Venetian vice-consul of Shkodra, Antonio Duoda. He created connections with the local actors that were rising in the political landscape of Shkodra. Among these actors were the merchants and artisan guilds, who were devastated by the piratical activities of the Ulcinj corsairs. Given that their primary market for goods was located in Venice, they allied with Venetian authorities against the Ulcinj threat. This brought the tailors' faction and their leading household, the Çavuşzades politically close to Venice. Consequently, both sides desired to establish order and security within the regions to facilitate uninterrupted commerce and optimize revenues. The positive response from the Vice Consul of Venice in Shkodra regarding support for the tailors, along with his requests directed at the authorities in Venice and the Bailo in Istanbul, demonstrates both political interference and support.<sup>313</sup>

Ultimately, the Venetians successfully neutralized the Ulcinj influence in the Adriatic Sea without resorting to physical confrontation. This achievement was the result of a strategically devised plan that effectively utilized the political situation in Shkodra in the aftermath of the factional clashes. The bilateral nature of factionalism allowed the Venetians to interfere and get rid of Ulcinj's problem even for a short period. Additionally, there existed an economic layer for this collaboration with the Çavuşzades and the tailors' faction. The merchant group of Shkodra dealing with commerce in Venice was composed of more than eight hundred individuals, which for that time was a considerable number.<sup>314</sup> The supply of essential goods to Venice played a significant role in trade dynamics, which is why the establishment of trade routes in the Adriatic Sea was advantageous for both parties involved.

Aware of the situation, Ulcinj sought to follow the same strategy as Venice by engaging in a diplomatic war targeting the faction of tailors and the Çavuşzade household. They shifted to the tanners' faction and succeeded in removing the Venetian allies from the governorship position. The Venetian response came quickly, as the Consul of Shkodra managed to inform the bailo in Istanbul to mediate for the Çavuşzades as that was in the interest of Venice.<sup>315</sup> Thanks to the intermediation of Venice and the local pressure from the local element in Shkodra, the tailor faction, and the Çavuşzades maintained control of Shkodra until 1750s when in the scene appeared Bushatli Mehmed Beg. The Venetians consistently upheld their commitment to their allies, prioritizing the interests of Venice in their policy decisions. The decision made by the Çavuşzades to ally with Ulcinj resulted in the estrangement of

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<sup>313</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 6 Settembre 1740.

<sup>314</sup>Shkodra, *Problemi i Tregut Shqiptar*, 79.

<sup>315</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 1 Settembre 1742.

the merchant class, which was subsequently followed by Venetian retreat from the support given to the tailors' faction.<sup>316</sup>

### 3.4 Commerce and Piracy: The Rise of Ulcinj Maritime Fleet

Ulcinj, in the framework of this narrative, is notably distinguished for its special significance, which arises from its connections to Shkodra and the relationship it maintains with the Adriatic Sea. The role it played in the ongoing factional disputes between the tanners and the tailors was notably marked by a shifting pattern of alliances, which, at certain critical instances, had a substantial effect on the distribution of power among the rival groups. In this regard, Ulcinj's political dominance and influence can be attributed to the significant financial resources it acquired through commercial trade and maritime piracy. In addition, from the seventeenth century onward, its fleet operating in the Adriatic Sea became comparable in both quantities and might be like that of Venice and its neighboring states. This section will explore the development of Ulcinj into a key commercial center and piracy stronghold, highlighting its influence on the local political dynamics of Shkodra during periods of factional turmoil.

Before coming under Ottoman control, Ulcinj was incorporated into the Venetian maritime domains referred to as '*stato da mar*,'<sup>317</sup> which featured a compact coastal town with a formidable fortress that complicated any attempts at conquest. In the course of the Cyprus War (1570-1573) against Venice, the Ottomans successfully claimed victory, gaining control of Cyprus Island and other Venetian territories like Ulcinj.<sup>318</sup> Following the conquest, Ulcinj was incorporated immediately into the Ottoman provincial administrative system as part of the Shkodra district. The majority of the town's inhabitants were Albanians who resisted the authorities during the early period of Ottoman control. The rebellions were easily controlled, and as the people of Ulcinj vacated the area post-conquest, the Ottomans settled new groups in the town. Eventually, the city's landscape changed as new public buildings were erected through investments from the Ottoman government. Due to the strategic position of Ulcinj on the Adriatic coast, the center fortified and strengthened the

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<sup>316</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 65-70.

<sup>317</sup>It was one of the three subdivisions of the Venetian state, which includes the the overseas possessions.

<sup>318</sup>Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 154-155; Admir Adrovic, "16. Yüzyılda Karadağ'da Osmanlı Deniz Üsleri", Unpublished MA Thesis, (İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2017): 64.

castle for military purposes.<sup>319</sup>

The various investments and the newly emerging socio-economic frameworks established by the Ottomans effectively stimulated the urbanization of Ulcinj, fostering an environment ripe for growth and development. As a result, the town's religious landscape began to shift in the seventeenth century due to the rapid advancement of the Islamization process. At the same time, the town became a significant commercial hub in the Adriatic Sea. This led to the emergence of the local merchant class. They were supported by the native fleet which was made up of different ships and vessels built in the shipyards of Ulcinj.<sup>320</sup> The shipbuilding activities during this period were not exclusively directed towards trade or transportation; rather, Ulcinj seamen and their captains gained considerable notoriety for engaging in piracy within the Adriatic Sea. Thus, in the seventeenth century, Ulcinj gained its place as an important maritime actor for the Ottoman corsair world.<sup>321</sup>

### 3.4.1 New Masters of the Seas: Ulcinj and the Barbary Corsairs

The shift of Ulcinj into a notable center of piracy and a town of corsairs can be largely attributed to the significant influence of the Barbary corsairs,<sup>322</sup> who played an essential and transformative role in this historical transition. This process began following the conquest of Ulcinj, as the Ottoman fleet attacked the Venetian possession in the Adriatic Sea between the years 1570 and 1573 using the Barbary corsairs.<sup>323</sup> Additionally, the naval campaign succeeded in ending Venice's control over the Adriatic Sea, which was referred to as the 'Venetian Gulf' even by the

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<sup>319</sup>Maksut Dz. Hadzibrahimovic, "The History of Ulqin Piracy Under the Ottoman Rule", *Balkanlar'da Osmanlı Mirası ve De er-i Hâkânî*, C.1, Ed. A. Temizer-U. Özcan, (İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2015): 373-374.

<sup>320</sup>Ibid.

<sup>321</sup>Emrah Safa Gürkan, *Sultan Korsanları: Osmanlı Akdenizi'nde Gazâ, Yağma ve Esaret*, 1500-1700, (İstanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2018): 374.

<sup>322</sup>Originating from the northern African coastline, the Barbary corsairs were recognized by the Ottoman naval and were known for their involvement in piracy and battles at sea against the adversaries of the Ottoman state. They were mostly from the three provinces or regencies of Tunisia, Algiers, and Tripoli. For more information regarding the Barbary Corsairs and their rise as a significant maritime power in the Mediterranean see: Alan G. Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea: A History of Barbary Corsairs*, London: Reaktion Books LTD, 2012. In Ottoman sources, the name used for these regions and their naval forces was 'Garp Ocaklar', which was also part of the *devşirme* system and were regarded as *kapıkulu* or 'slaves of the Porte'. For a detailed description of the 'Garp Ocakları', see: Atilla Çetin, 'Garp Ocakları', *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt 13, 382-386.

<sup>323</sup>For the Ottoman naval operation in the Adriatic during the Cyprus War, see: Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empires Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015): 157-161.



Ottomans during that period.<sup>324</sup> As the dominance of Venice waned, shifts in the balance of power allowed the Barbary corsairs, who were then based in Vlora,<sup>325</sup> to extend their activities further into the Adriatic Sea. This expansion presented a substantial threat to the economic and political interests of Venice.

Eventually, the Barbary corsairs succeeded in establishing new refuge locations along the coast of Ulcinj allowing them to navigate deeper into the Adriatic Sea. Over time, these corsairs sought to recruit the local populace, integrating them into their piracy operation or just to serve as crew members of their vessels. In theory, this practice was the same as the landless peasants who would be employed as mercenaries or become bandits.<sup>326</sup> Ulcinj experienced a similar scenario, where the harsh landscape and lack of suitable agricultural land led the community to try their luck with the ships that were docked near the coast. The financial aspect of piracy established a significant relationship between the Ulcinj people and their corsairs. Hence, following their maritime exploits and acts of piracy, the corsairs would share their loot with the needy inhabitants of Ulcinj.<sup>327</sup> In return, the town's community offered them shelter and supplies. In this undertaking, the local authorities in Ulcinj played a significant role by engaging in direct collaboration with the corsairs.<sup>328</sup>

Starting in the seventeenth century, Ulcinj possessed a well-established fleet consisting of around 150 vessels. The ships engaged in attacks on non-Ottoman vessels in the Adriatic Sea for plundering, with a particular emphasis on Venetian targets. These actions led to conflicts between local authorities in Ulcinj and the Ottoman government concerning the piracy activities conducted by their subjects. To maintain good diplomatic relations with the Venetians, the Ottomans issued several decrees requiring representatives from Shkodra and Ulcinj to curb the piracy of corsairs, though the results were not indecisive.<sup>329</sup> Venice faced a dual threat from Ulcinj, stemming from acts of piracy and the obstacles it created for trade in the

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<sup>324</sup>İdris Bostan, *Adriyatik'te Korsanlık: Osmanlılar, Uskoklar, Venedikliler 1575-1620*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009): 23-24.

<sup>325</sup>Vlora was an important maritime base for the Barbary corsairs and the Ottoman navy for their expeditions in the Adriatic Sea. Its location at the entrance of the Adriatic Sea and being the closest point to the Italian peninsula made it a continuous target for the Venetians and other anti-Ottoman actors in the region. After Ulcinj and Bar were captured the Barbary corsairs would take refuge there but their primary base remained Vlora's coast. For the role of Vlora as a maritime base, see: Bostan, *Ibid*, 36-40.

<sup>326</sup>Gürkan, *Sultanlar'ın Korsanları*, 369.

<sup>327</sup>Adrovic, "16. Yüzyılda Karadağ'da Osmanlı Deniz Üsleri", 75.

<sup>328</sup>Robert Mantran, "XVII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Doğu Akdeniz'de Ticaret, Deniz Korsanlığı ve Gemiler Kafileleri", *Belleten*, C. 52, S. 203, (Ankara:1988): 690.

<sup>329</sup>Suraiya Faroqi, *Another Mirror for Princes: The Public Image of the Ottoman Sultans and Its Reception*, (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2009): 256; Hadzibrahimovic, "The History of Ulqin Piracy Under the Ottoman Rule", 375; Bostan, *Adriyatik'te Korsanlık*, 44.

Adriatic Sea. The fleet of Ulcinj began transporting goods from various Ottoman ports, throughout the Adriatic Sea, thus rivaling the Venetian vessels. Consequently, most of the goods that used to be sent to Venice were transported to other competitor state cities, like Ancona, or Ragusa.<sup>330</sup>

Ulcinj's maritime fleet collaborated mostly with the local element, thus being a significant factor in the rise of the Muslim merchant's presence in the Adriatic trade. Additionally, they were known to have extended commercial activities even further in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>331</sup> In addition to its naval forces, the town of Ulcinj had a significant population of traders, who played a crucial role in boosting the local economy. Venetian records indicate that during the eighteenth century, approximately 150 to 200 merchants from Ulcinj engaged in trade activities in Venice.<sup>332</sup> Consequently, Ulcinj managed to become a powerful regional actor in the Adriatic Sea and developed into a semi-autonomous entity that not only the governor of Shkodra but also the Ottoman central government had difficulties in exercising control over it.

### 3.4.2 The Untamed Captains of Ulcinj

From the late seventeenth century onward, the corsairs from Ulcinj turned into a major issue for ships navigating the Adriatic Sea and, at times, the Mediterranean Sea. Particularly for Venice, conditions had escalated negatively, making it the most heavily affected by the piracy perpetrated by the corsairs of Ulcinj. Over three hundred vessels bound for Venice were raided by the corsairs of Ulcinj, which highlights the state of affairs at that time. Furthermore, they would strike at vessels associated with dominant naval states such as Spain, England, and France, leading to a complicated diplomatic scenario for the Ottoman government.<sup>333</sup> For the Ottoman authorities, the Ulcinj issue was a double-edged sword. While a fleet was necessary to protect the Adriatic possessions from Venetian attacks during wartime, on the other hand, it was practically impossible to control the corsairs.

Ulcinj's military capabilities encompassed not only its naval fleet; the castle was also home to various garrisons assigned to safeguard the town against potential ex-

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<sup>330</sup>Naçi, "Rreth Tregtise se Sanxhakut te Shkodres me Republiken e Venedikut Gjate Shekullit XVIII", 15.

<sup>331</sup>Traian Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant", 273-275.

<sup>332</sup>Shkodra, 'Problemi i Tregut Shqiptar ne Shekullin e XVIII', 79.

<sup>333</sup>Melik Seletli, "18. Yüzyılda Adriyatikte Korsanlık: Ülgün Örneği". Yayınlanmamış Master Tezi. (İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2023): 20-23.

ternal threats. In his 1662 observations, Evliya Çelebi documented that the soldiers of the castle not only fulfilled their roles on land but also acted as naval troops, engaging in piracy as corsairs.<sup>334</sup> This shows the clear connection between the castle captains, who are officially appointed by the central government, and their involvement in piracy. In addition, it is reasonable to claim that the distinct military units from both ground and maritime domains collaborated as a single force and were favored by the inhabitants of Ulcinj. The local solidarity exhibited by various social groups within the town was transformed into a robust collective identity, which played a crucial role in facilitating the political and military consolidation of Ulcinj.

Nevertheless, this became a later challenge for the Ottoman authorities. The actions of various captains and individuals from Ulcinj created disturbances for the local inhabitants, necessitating intervention from the central administration. Moreover, the actions of Ulcinj's captains included aggressive strikes against the district governor's properties, which constituted a direct affront to the governance of Shkodra.<sup>335</sup> Since the governor of Shkodra could not effectively tackle the problem, the government entrusted the provincial governor of Rumeli with the responsibility of examining the coastal fortresses, including Ulcinj. The initiatives aimed at controlling the rebellious captains proved ineffective, as they continued their prior behaviors.<sup>336</sup> During wartime, particularly when the Ottoman Adriatic coastline required safeguarding and the state was engaged in battle, the corsairs of Ulcinj roamed freely.

In the Ottoman-Venetian War (1714-1718), the conquest of Ulcinj became one of the main aims of Venice. Due to continuous disruptions to its trade by corsairs, Venice sought every possible means, both military and diplomatic, to annex Ulcinj and finally put an end to piracy in the Adriatic Sea. Ultimately, Venice would be unsuccessful in its conquest endeavor as it suffered a decisive defeat by the Ottoman troops in the region.<sup>337</sup> However, at the treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, Venice effectively established a provision that outlawed the piratical endeavors of the corsairs operating in Ulcinj. Under the obligations of the treaty, the Ottoman leadership released directives that outlawed shipbuilding and called for the eradication of boats in Ulcinj. The implementation of such a task was entrusted to the local authorities of Shkodra. Despite the efforts exerted by the central government, the captains of Ulcinj persisted in their maritime pursuits. They employed the flags

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<sup>334</sup>Dankoff & Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions*, 51.

<sup>335</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 108, 1554-1558 (20 M 1108 (18 August 1696).

<sup>336</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 108, 1682 (29 S 1108(27 September 1696).

<sup>337</sup>Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi IV*, 124.

of Barbary corsairs, thereby expanding their piratical activities further throughout the Mediterranean region.<sup>338</sup>

### 3.4.3 Choosing Sides: Ulcinj Amidst Factions of Shkodra

Following the Treaty of Pasarowitz , the pressure on the population of Ulcinj by the local and central authorities began to increase. Eventually, this prompted a response from the leading military groups in the town, who viewed these interferences as detrimental to their economic and naval power. The first reaction came after the local authorities of Shkodra arrested a notorious captain named Pasho Hasan<sup>339</sup>, who apparently enjoyed a considerable influence among the military leadership of Ulcinj. His imprisonment at the castle of Shkodra triggered a harsh retaliation by the captains of Ulcinj, who sought to save him. For this purpose, the faction leaders of the tanners and tailors were both paid and tried to help Pasho Hasan escape from the prison.<sup>340</sup> This occurred in 1730, in the second appearance of the factions of Shkodra and during a time when their influence had not encompassed the whole society.

In the initial unsuccessful attempt to rescue Pasho Hasan, both factions were involved. However, in the subsequent attempt, only the tanners mobilized to assist the group from Ulcinj.<sup>341</sup> This alliance between the tanners' faction and the leadership of Ulcinj was primarily influenced by their shared antagonism towards the governorship of Shkodra; therefore, their collaboration stemmed from a mutual foe. In contrast, this example illustrates how external factors, such as the captains of Ulcinj, strategically employed these factional structures to advance their objectives in the mission to rescue one of their own, thereby exerting their influence. This implication of Ulcinj's leadership in the local politics of Shkodra did not have a considerable impact but it sure created disorder in the city. Consequently, the matter drew the attention of the central government, which ultimately stipulated that the appointment of a governor would depend on his capacity to address the Ulcinj issue effectively.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>338</sup>Maria Pia Pedan, "Beyond the Frontier. The Ottoman-Venetian Border in the Adriatic Context from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries". Bues, Almut (ed.), *Zones of fractures in Modern Europe*. (Wiesbaden, 2005) 54; Seletli, "18. Yüzyılda Adriyatikte Korsanlık: Ülgün Örneği", 40-49.

<sup>339</sup>The character of Pasho Hasan will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, which illustrates the factional clashes in Shkodra.

<sup>340</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 128 (20 Ş 1142 (10 March 1730).

<sup>341</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 177 (20 N 1142 (8 April 1730).

<sup>342</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 138, 408 (10 R 1148 (12 October 1731).

When the Çavuşzade household, from the tailors' faction, took power in Shkodra, following the appointment of its leader, he managed to bring under control Ulcinj, forcing them to sail only through approved permissions from the local authorities. Due to this success, the Çavuşzades and the tailor faction gained the support of Venice as Ulcinj's corsair were perceived as a mutual threat. Eventually, the merchants of Shkodra, who constituted the most influential group within the tailors' faction, were among those advocating for intervention against the corsairs.<sup>343</sup> Although this did not mean the shift of Ulcinj to the tanners group at that time, still this put them against the governorship of Shkodra run by the tailors. In an effort to undermine the authority of Çavuşzade Yusuf and destabilize the tailors' faction, they provided support for a member of the tanners' faction, facilitating his ascension to the governorship of Shkodra.<sup>344</sup>

However, the Çavuşzades and the tailors' faction returned ahead of the Shkodra governorship. The very existence of Ulcinj as a threat to the trade and navigation in the Adriatic Sea made Venice interfere with the reappointment of the Çavuşzades, as only they were able to tame the captains of Ulcinj. Conversely, the Çavuşzade were also making use of the situation by forcing the Venetian to lobby at the Ottoman capital on their behalf.<sup>345</sup> Nonetheless, this partnership based solely on neutralizing the Ulcinj issue would break up due to a change of political realignment in Shkodra. In light of the new circumstances and the rivalries among the households for the governorship seat, the Çavuşzades were forced to an alliance with Ulcinj's leadership. The decision led to an immediate and unexpected setback, as it became clear that Venice and Ulcinj could not be in the same group. The merchants' group within the tailors' faction is likely to have reacted negatively to this decision, as their interests and objectives were aligned with Venice.<sup>346</sup>

The final battle between the tanners and tailors saw Ulcinj's leadership allied with the latter. As the Çavuşzades had lost most of their inner and outside support, they were defeated by the Bushatlis and the tanners faction. Following the successful resolution of factional conflicts in Shkodra, the Bushatlis proceeded to the town of Ulcinj, where they employed intimidation tactics to compel the local population to discontinue their involvement in piratical activities. In the end, Ulcinj had to surrender to the requests of the Bushatli leaders and accept the authority of the

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<sup>343</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 6 Settembre 1740, p. 2.

<sup>344</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 1 Settembre 1742. Naçi, 'Te Dhena te Reja Rreth...', 86.

<sup>345</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 9 Ottobre 1748.

<sup>346</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 57.

Shkodra governorship. In the years that followed, Ulcinj emerged as a crucial ally for the Bushatlis, playing a significant role in their various commercial endeavors. This partnership not only strengthened their economic activities but also enriched their trade networks, significantly influencing the region's commerce.<sup>347</sup>

### 3.5 From Marginalization to Regional Influence: The Catholic Tribes of Highlands

One of the most significant developments during the early modern period in Shkodra was the emergence of the Catholic tribesmen as a crucial local actor within the political landscape. Initially regarded as a marginalized group by the military-administrative authorities, this population later experienced a significant rise due to the evolving circumstances of the period. Political clout among the tribesmen emerged primarily from two significant factors: their population expansion and the active recruitment by local notables during wartime, leveraging their inherent combative nature. The tribesmen had an active role during the factional strife in Shkodra. As an external actor, they would shift alliances among tanners and tailors according to financial and political interests. In the decisive encounter between the rival factions, they inflicted crucial damage, thereby ensuring the success of the Bushatlis and the tanners.

Nonetheless, the tribesmen of the highlands do not represent the whole Catholic community of Shkodra. From both a social and geographical standpoint, the population was segmented into three main groups: the residents of urban areas, the agricultural communities in the lowlands, and the highland tribes. The conquest of the region by the Ottomans triggered a substantial migration of the urban population to Venice, ultimately resulting in the ruin of Shkodra's urban environment. In contrast, it is essential to point out that the Catholic demographic situated in the rural landscape, which includes both the lowlands and the mountainous Highlands, was affected to a considerably lesser extent by the circumstances at hand. Especially the tribesmen, who were favored by the harsh terrain remained out of the influence sphere of the Ottomans at least until the late seventeenth century.<sup>348</sup>

In the sixteenth century, when the urban setting of Shkodra began to re-emerge under Ottoman rule, the Catholic subjects were first kept outside the city. During

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<sup>347</sup>Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, pp. 49-50; Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 74-75.

<sup>348</sup>Frasheri, *The History of Albania: A Brief Survey*, 86-89; Kiel, "İşkodra", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 433.

the subsequent centuries, Shkodra experienced significant economic growth which accelerated the urbanization process.<sup>349</sup> This development led to the expansion of the city, fostering a much more cosmopolitan urban structure. As the older part of Shkodra was more resistant to this change, the commercial zone, where the market and the artisan workshop were located, prospered and became more inclusive of people from various backgrounds. As a result, many affluent Catholics, particularly powerful merchants and distinguished individuals like the Duoda family, who acted as Venice's vice-consuls, began to inhabit the newly formed neighborhood of Tophane.<sup>350</sup>

### 3.5.1 Struggles of Identity: Tribal Society and the Ottoman Integration

Venetian archival records suggest that a considerable number of Catholics settled in Shkodra had surnames that can be traced back to tribal identities. This occurrence was not merely a coincidence; rather it illustrates a significant trend where individuals from historically isolated tribes began migrating to the Ottoman urban centers. Eventually, a number of these families gradually converted to Islam, which is evident from the fact that the name is distinctly Muslim while the surname is of tribal origins. Therefore, as these individuals moved to the cities and began to engage with a broader societal framework, integration fostered the Islamization process.<sup>351</sup> When analyzing the migration patterns to Shkodra of these individuals it is essential to highlight their geographical location, which is surrounded by mountains on three sides. Nonetheless, the relocation from tribal regions to urban centers did not take place on a large scale and was a minor phenomenon.

Despite this, the tribesmen would still visit Shkodra for trade activities. The market in the city presented significant financial opportunities for the economically disadvantaged highlanders, who regarded it as a vital source of income and access to goods that were not available in their regions. The tribesmen faced significant agricultural challenges because of the difficult terrain and mountains, which led them to embrace a lifestyle that was semi-nomadic and focused on pastoralism. Hence, their livelihoods were contingent upon the practices of husbandry and the

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<sup>349</sup>Fischer & Schmitt, *A Concise History of Albania*, 68.

<sup>350</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet*, V. I, 149-160.

<sup>351</sup>In the Venetian reports of the vice Consulate of Shkodra, the manifests cargo of the eighteenth century contains names and surnames of the merchants sending merchandise to Venice. Surnames deriving from well-known tribes like: *Berisha*, *Kastrati*, *Rrjolli*, *Suma*, *Shala*, *Shkreli*, *Lohja*, *Shoshi* are present. The religious background of these individuals is majority Muslim and minority Catholic, which shows how urbanization had a direct impact in the Islamization process in the Balkans.

management of livestock, which served dual purposes of providing alimentation and trade. Consequently, they were the main providers of wool for Shkodra's market.<sup>352</sup> The great volume of wool is reflected in Shkodra's exports to Venice, therefore making it the main provider of this commodity.<sup>353</sup>

The perspective of city inhabitants, regardless of religious affiliation, held a negative view of the tribesmen, which stemmed from the latter's social and economic conditions. Various primary sources, consisting of ecclesiastical accounts, Venetian reports, and Ottoman documents, thoroughly highlight the infamous activities that have been associated with the population inhabiting the Highlands. These include a significant degree of cultural stagnation, widespread banditry, life insecurity, and a rigid tribal organization that hindered any potential social advancement and development.<sup>354</sup> Additionally, due to their mobile nature, these tribes would be spotted raiding regions far from their homeland. This issue represented a persistent challenge for both the settlements and the Ottoman authorities, who encountered ongoing difficulties in restraining the movements of these tribes.<sup>355</sup>

The rise of the Albanian tribal community and its societal characteristics emerged as a consequence of the Ottoman takeover of the territory, spanning from the late fifteenth century to the eighteenth century. As the Ottomans tried to extend and impose their authority in the northern areas, the population retreated to the mountainous areas to avoid the new conquerors. Their organization was based on a patrilineal kinship system that spread through the male line. In addition, throughout a certain historical period, various families with the same lineage would progressively transform into a unified clan or tribe, establishing themselves within a designated territory.<sup>356</sup> The topography of the northern Albanian Highlands was a critical factor in the emergence and consolidation of tribal society. Its geographical features significantly shaped social structures and dynamics within the region. Therefore, the tribes were distanced not only from the Ottoman world but also from each other, as the rugged landscape complicated their ability to communicate.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>352</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet*, V. I, 277.

<sup>353</sup>The graphics created by Özgür Oral in his work on the Ottoman – Venice commerce shows also this trend, see: Oral, "Osmanlı – Venedik Ticari İlişkileri (1763-1794)", 176.

<sup>354</sup>Robert Elsie, *Early Albania, a Reader of Historical Texts, 11th - 17th Centuries*, (Wiesbaden 2003): 130-169; Injac Zamputti (ed.), *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë (1623-1653)*, (Sankt Gallen & Prishtina 2015): 67-72.

<sup>355</sup>Noel Malcolm, *Rebels, Believers, Survivors: Studies in the History of Albanians*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020): 30.

<sup>356</sup>Fischer & Schmitt, *A Concise History of Albania*, 74-75; Berit Backer, *Behind Stone Walls: Changing household Organization among the Albanians of Kosovo*, (Peja: Dukagjini Balkan Book, 2003): 59.

<sup>357</sup>Elsie, *The Tribes of Albania*, 9.



Nevertheless, the tribes in the highlands would not be cut off entirely from the world. Due to their affiliation with the Catholic religion, they were visited throughout the Ottoman period by priests who were sent there to help the highlander communities resist the process of Islamization. The Catholic population in the city of Shkodra, as well as in the surrounding rural villages, experienced a more effective ecclesiastical organization under the guidance of the Vatican. As for the tribal societies in the highlands, due to the difficulties posed by the terrain, they were assigned to missionary volunteers. The Catholic tribesmen were divided into what is called three missionary zones: Mission of Kastrati, Upper Gruda, and Hoti. In these designated regions, the essential responsibility for overseeing the processes of religious education and the act of preaching was assigned to the Franciscan Order.<sup>358</sup>

Yet, it is important to note that the missionary initiatives directed towards the Catholic tribesmen were not merely intended for the promotion of religious intentions and purposes. There was a political dimension under propaganda which was financed and supported by powerful Catholic states like Venice, the Vatican, and the Habsburgs that aimed to use the combatant nature of the tribesmen against the Ottomans. According to reports by the Vatican's priests, agents sent by these states were racing among themselves to exert influence over the tribes.<sup>359</sup> Additionally, the Habsburgs sought to acquire 'protecting power' status over the Catholic subjects residing in the Ottoman Empire during the negotiations of the Treaty of Karlowitz; however, they were unable to achieve this objective.<sup>360</sup> Ultimately, the tribal chiefs of the highlands, due to the confessional relationship through the Catholic church and bribes received by agents, fought against the Ottoman and created continuous disorder. Therefore, they were used as a divergent factor when the Catholic powers needed them.<sup>361</sup>

The Ottoman Empire experienced numerous defeats at the hands of Christian states. During various conflicts, Catholic tribesmen incited insurgency in the territories adjacent to the front lines, thereby compromising the integrity of the Ottoman defensive positions. As a result, the Ottomans intensified their pressure on the Catholic tribes, who retaliated by pillaging and attacking both rural and urban settlements, leading to widespread disorder in the region.<sup>362</sup> To prevent such assaults

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<sup>358</sup>Lika, *Dioqeza e Shkodres Gjate Shek. VXIII*, 18-19.

<sup>359</sup>Zamputi, Naçi, and Shkodra, *Burime te Zgjedhura 3 (Selected Sources)*, 107-108.

<sup>360</sup>Abdükadir Özcan, "Karlofça", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt. 24, 506.

<sup>361</sup>Skender Anamali et al., *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, 579-581.

<sup>362</sup>Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History*, (London, NY: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 16; Valentini, 'Il Settecento Veneziano e l'Albania Turca', 34; Zinkeseisen, *Osmanlı Tarihi V*, 329.

and to neutralize the tribesmen factor in the Highlands, the Ottoman authorities applied different strategies. First and foremost, border posts known as *palanka* were built near the tribal territories to stop the attacks.<sup>363</sup> If this approach was ineffective, exile punishment was imposed on tribes that were particularly troublesome and difficult to control. Nonetheless, the Ottoman authorities, after applying the exile punishment offered the tribal leaders the opportunity to go back to their territories, either through negotiations or by converting to Islam.<sup>364</sup>

On the other hand, starting from the late seventeenth century, the local notables adopted a different approach to the tribesmen issue. The governors of Shkodra and Dukagjin, whose jurisdictions encompassed the Highlands, initiated a response to the practices employed by Catholic states by enlisting local tribesmen for military campaigns. By strategically utilizing the shared local identity and paying the tribal leaders, they effectively engaged the highlanders to support the Ottoman army in its military campaigns against Christian states. This tactic seems to have developed independently by local notables, without any direction or influence from the central government. This can be understood by the Ottoman observers at the front as they recorded their surprise upon seeing the governors of Shkodra and Dukagjin arriving with ‘infidel’ soldiers among their ranks.<sup>365</sup>

The engagement of Catholic tribesmen in the military campaigns, facilitated by local notables, served to align them more closely with Ottoman influence and promoted their integration within the broader socio-political framework. Eventually, the central government also initiated policies designed to expedite the integration of the tribesmen, drawing inspiration from the actions of its governors. For this purpose, it began granting official titles to the chiefs of the tribal communities in the Highlands. Among the titles given, *bayraktar* and *voyvoda* were known to have been used among the tribe leaders. As a result of these official titles, the chiefs of formerly isolated tribal societies assumed the role of intermediaries between their communities and the Ottoman authorities.<sup>366</sup> As a result of the strategies employed by both central and local authorities, the Catholic tribes of the Highlands began to assimilate into the Ottoman polity, thereby emerging as a significant factor in the political landscape of Shkodra.

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<sup>363</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 111, 1858 (10 Za 1112 (18 April 1701).

<sup>364</sup>Anamali et al., *Historia e Shqipërise*, 584.

<sup>365</sup>*Zübde-i Vekâyi'ât*, 490; Râşid Mehmed Efendi and Çelebizâde İsmâ'il Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, 462.

<sup>366</sup>Michael L. Galaty, ‘Blood of Our Ancestors: Cultural Heritage Management in the Balkans’, in *Contested Cultural Heritage Religion, Nationalism, Erasure, and Exclusion in a Global World*, ed. Helaine Silverman, (New York: Springer, 2011): 120; Backer, *Behind Stone Walls*, 59.

### 3.5.2 Tribesmen Among Factions of Shkodra

In eighteenth-century Shkodra, the Catholic community presence in the city experienced significant growth. However, they faced marginalization from certain segments of the Muslim population that harbored negative sentiments towards them. The confessionalism issue was the main factor that fueled the enmity among the two groups especially when the Ottoman state was at war against the Christian states. During the period of the factional strife, the tribesmen made their appearance in the city of Shkodra by murdering the governor, Mahmud-bey-zade Mahmud Pasha through a plot in the *Tophane* neighborhood in May 1739. Historical accounts from that period suggest that the governor of Shkodra implemented oppressive measures against the Catholic population residing in rural and Highland regions. Thus, the primary motivation behind their actions may appear to be a vendetta in response to the offenses they committed.<sup>367</sup>

There is a strong possibility that the tribesmen were recruited by Mahmud Pasha's enemies, who viewed him as an obstacle to their interests. It is noteworthy that the assassination of Mahmud Pasha coincided with the ascendance of the Çavuşzade and tailors' faction in the local political landscape of Shkodra. Moreover, the collaboration of a local Muslim notable with the Catholic tribesmen, coupled with the occurrence of the incident within the influence zone of the tailors' faction, serves to strengthen this argument.<sup>368</sup> However, the initial participation of the tribesmen alongside the tailors should not be generalized for all the tribal communities in the Highlands. As mentioned above there were numerous tribes that lived isolated from each other, therefore this act was limited to a small group of Catholic tribesmen. Yet, this early example demonstrates that the highlanders, once a marginalized group, became integrated into the political dynamics of eighteenth-century Shkodra.

The opportunity for the Catholic tribesmen to strengthen their social and political presence arose during the 1750s, a time when factional strife had plunged the city into disorder. In the context of the ascendance of the Bushatli household within the tanners' faction, Franciscan priest Erasmo Balneo played a pivotal role in mediating an alliance between Vuk Frangu, chief of Hoti tribe, and Bushatli Mehmed Beg. The pact was made on monetary promises and for religious 'tolerance' to be granted to the Catholics of Shkodra.<sup>369</sup> Following the arrangements between both

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<sup>367</sup>Zamputi, *Il Settecento Veneziano, e l'Albania Turca*, 80.

<sup>368</sup>Ibid.

<sup>369</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 38-40.

sides, Mehmed requested the involvement of other tribes from the Highlands for his mission. In the memoirs of Priest Balneo, the *voyvoda* of the Hoti Tribe, Vuk Frangu mentioned the possibility of calling the tribes of *Shkreli*, *Kelmendi*, *Triepshi*, and *Gruda*.<sup>370</sup> This shows the presence of a network between the tribes despite the difficult topography. The initiative may have been established in response to the necessity for collaboration and a sense of tribal solidarity in the face of pressure from the Ottoman Empire.

Ultimately, the final battle between the two factions was determined by the Catholic tribesmen, who allied with the tanners and the Bushatlis, inflicting a disastrous blow on the tailors and their leaders, the Çavuşzades.<sup>371</sup> Although Mehmed Beg terminated the factions of the Bushatlis, he still maintained a very strong and positive relationship with them. Furthermore, due to their warlike characteristics, the Bushatli recruited them into their army. Additionally, they granted fertile lands to the tribesmen as a token of ‘appreciation’ and also to have them always ready when needed.<sup>372</sup> In contrast, the alliance established by the tribal leaders with the official representatives of the Ottoman states not only strengthened their political position but also offered a significant means of legitimizing their authority within their communities.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to provide a comprehensive exploration of the nature and socio-political dynamics of factionalism in Shkodra. The rise of factions centered around the artisan guilds of tanners and tailors seems to stem from the significant economic and social power these groups have accumulated over time. In comparison to other documented cases in different urban centers, where guilds attempted to influence the political landscape but were unsuccessful, Shkodra stands out. The success of the tanners and tailors in forming effective factions is attributed to their ability to include a diverse range of urban and rural groups. This illustrates the complex interplay of sociopolitical identities and economic interests in the region.

Among the various societal groups in Shkodra, the old military-administrative households, and the merchants, known for their economic influence, stand out as

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<sup>370</sup>Ibid, 39.

<sup>371</sup>Ibid, 44-45.

<sup>372</sup>Ibid, 63.

the most powerful and influential actors in local politics. As a result, I allocated dedicated subsections to thoroughly examine these two distinct groups. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the various characteristics inherent to the old households and the merchants, particularly in the context of their respective factions, I uncovered significant sociopolitical disparities. The tailor's faction emerged from a series of strategic alliances formed among influential socio-economic, military, and political figures who resided in the 'new town'. In contrast, the power base of the tanners and their associated groups was situated in the 'old town'.

Essentially, the tailors served as representatives of the urban forces, which were led by the Çavuşzade household. Their power and authority were deeply rooted in the urban economy and the associated social networks that supported it. The notable presence of merchants within the faction, along with their considerable influence, highlights the mercantile identity that characterizes the tailors. The tanners served as representatives for the interests of the rural factions, primarily led by the influential Yusuf-beg-zades and Mahmud-bey-zades. These distinguished landowning families wielded considerable power and economic influence, which stemmed from their extensive agricultural estates and established connections within the rural establishments. In an economic context, this confrontation can be analyzed as a conflict between urban artisans and mercantile interests, juxtaposed against the 'agriculturalist' landowners of the 'old town' and the rural forces.

During the period of factional conflict in Shkodra, three external actors emerged as significant influencers: the Republic of Venice, the corsairs of Ulcinj, and the Catholic tribesmen from the Highlands. These entities had a considerable impact on the dynamics of the conflict. Their allegiances were not fixed; rather, they evolved in response to the changing landscape of local political relationships and power struggles, adapting to the swiftly shifting allegiances and interests of various factions involved in the conflict. The conflict between Venice and the corsair from Ulcinj introduced a new dimension to the situation, thereby integrating the factional disputes in Shkodra into the broader context of Mediterranean politics. Lastly, the catholic tribesmen from a marginalized community in the hinterland have emerged as the final participants in the factional conflict. This development has facilitated their entry into local politics, allowing them to assume a significant role in the political landscape. In the fourth chapter, I will provide a detailed analysis of how the factions functioned within Shkodra and how they contributed to the realignment of political alliances and power structures.

## 4. A REGION IN TURMOIL

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to illuminate the circumstances of the period before the factions' appearance and the socio-political situation in Shkodra during the clashes. It describes their impact on society and their implications for the relationship between local and central authorities. Furthermore, local powerholders emerged within the political landscape of Shkodra, presenting challenges to the existing authorities. They represent the interests of different groups, from Ulcinj's seamen to the old households on the rural side. Another important issue treated in this chapter is the power shift in the governance of Shkodra. In 1739, the tailors' faction, under the leadership of the Çavuşzades, successfully attained the office, signifying a notable victory for local urban authorities. However, this event began the competition between the two factions over the governance of Shkodra.

### 4.2 Shkodra Before the Factions (1690-1720)

According to the sources, Shkodra city and district had been experiencing widespread instability before the factions emerged.<sup>373</sup> The situation arose from a complex interplay of internal and external factors that upset the region's delicate political and socio-economic equilibrium. During this period, the governors of Shkodra encountered several challenging issues that required significant efforts. Compelled by the central government, they attempted to fulfill their obligations but struggled to achieve definitive solutions to the problems. The governors of Shkodra were thrust

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<sup>373</sup>Naçi, "Mbi gjendjen Politike ne Sanxhakun e Shkodres Gjate Çerekut te Dyte te Shek. XVIII, Gjer ne Ardhjen ne Fuqi te Mehmet Pashe Plakut" (The Political Situation in Shkodra Sandjak Through the Second Quarter of the XVIII Century), 42-48.

into the midst of warfare during the extensive conflicts of 1683-1699 against the Holy League<sup>374</sup>, and subsequent confrontations with Austria (1717-1718), Venice (1714-1718), and Russia (1710-1711).<sup>375</sup> Internally, the region of Shkodra experienced a series of uprisings. First, from the Christian tribes, and second, from common people reacting to high taxation and oppression by the local notables.<sup>376</sup>

The presence of Shkodra governors in these military campaigns is also connected to the district's proximity to the Habsburg front and its border with Venice through the Montenegro region. On the other hand, the area was exposed to direct attacks from enemy armies, therefore, in such circumstances, the central government would grant wider executive power to the governor. In the campaigns against the Habsburgs and Venetians during the late seventeenth century, Suleiman Pasha from the Yusuf-beg-zade household together with his sons rose as capable commanders and governors of Shkodra.<sup>377</sup> Following the defeat of Venetian forces and the suppression of the local riots of the Christian tribes in Shkodra, Suleiman Pasha was appointed also as the provincial governor of Rumeli.<sup>378</sup> Interestingly, the chronicler Siladar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa in his work *Zeyl-i Fezleke* describes how Ismail Ağa, a man of the Grand Vizier, went to 'Beşat'<sup>379</sup> where the palace of Suleiman Ağa was found. He read the imperial decree granting him the title vizier and to his son Omer the district of Prizren.<sup>380</sup>

Following his elevation, Shkodra played a crucial role in the Ottoman efforts against the Venetians and Habsburgs. Numerous orders coming from the center urged the governors and notables of adjacent districts to mobilize under the leadership of Suleiman Pasha, who would later be given the title vizier. Therefore, most of the western districts of Rumeli province like Ohri (Ohrid), Avlonya (Vlora),

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<sup>374</sup>İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi, III. Cilt, I. Kısım: II Selim'in Tahta Çıkışından 1699 Karlofça Andlaşmasına Kadar*, (Ankara: TTK Yayınları, 1995): 478. Kahraman Şakul, *İkinci Viyana Kuşatması: Yedi Başlı Ejderin Fendi*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2021): 162.

<sup>375</sup>Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 41. Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged*, (London, NY: Routledge, 2007): 83.

<sup>376</sup>Stavri Naçi, 'Mbi Gjendjen Politike ne Sanxhakun e Shkodres Gjate Çerekun te Dyte te Shek. XVIII Gjer ne Ardhjen ne Fuqi te Mehmet Pashe Bushatliut [Regarding the Political Situation in the District of Shkodra During the Second Quarter of the XVIII Century Until the Arrival in Power of Bushatli Mehmed Pasha]'in *Buletini i Shkencave Shoqërore të Universitetit të Tiranës*, Nr. 3, (Tiranë: 1961): 46-47.

<sup>377</sup>From the *mühimme* records, it is possible to see the presence of Suleiman's sons in the military campaigns between the years 1688-1696, see: BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 98, 148 (29 S 1100 (23 Dec 1688); BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 108, 255 (1107 C 29 (4 Feb 1696).

<sup>378</sup>Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi, III. Cilt, I. Kısım*, 478.

<sup>379</sup>It is the town of Bushat because the convoy of Ismail Ağa has passed through the river of Drin and there is no other place whose name is close to the 'Beşat'.

<sup>380</sup>Nazire Karaçay Türkal, "Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyl-i Fezleke," Unpublished PhD Diss., (Marmara Üniversitesi 2012): 1029-1030.

Prizren, and İlbasan (Elbasan) were under the direct supervision of the governor of Shkodra. The responsibility of coordinating the deployment of soldiers, enrolling recruits, managing military resources, and overseeing administrative functions fell under Suleiman Pasha's jurisdiction.<sup>381</sup> In addition to the Pasha of Shkodra, the historical records indicate the ascent of Mahmud Pasha from the Mahmud-bey-zade household in Dukagjin. He held the position of governor for both the Dukagjin district and the Prizren district. During the same campaign, he was appointed commander of Rumeli troops and given the title vizier.<sup>382</sup> Together these two governors played a crucial role in the retaking of Vlora from the Venetians.<sup>383</sup>

An intriguing aspect of Vizier Suleiman Pasha's strategy during this was the utilization of Christian tribesmen in campaigns against the Habsburgs and Venetians. The Ottoman chroniclers referred to this, indicating a lack of approval towards the involvement of non-Muslim troops at the time. Moreover, there was no mixing among these two groups of soldiers indicating the strong dividing role of religion during the war.<sup>384</sup> This can be seen as a strategy by the governor to weaken the influence of the Catholic Christians in the Shkodra district. Historically, the Ottomans frequently faced uprisings from non-Muslim tribes when launching military campaigns on the Western front.<sup>385</sup> Thus, these military campaigns demonstrated that the local native leadership was more effective in mobilizing troops and managing resources. Nevertheless, owing to their services, these longstanding military administrative households located locally capitalized on the circumstances to solidify their control at the expense of the central government.

In the same manner, the central government would withdraw its support in case of mistakes or incompetence. As a result, Vizier Suleiman Pasha fell out of favor in 1695 as he was accused of 'creating problems' in Belgrade during the campaign.<sup>386</sup> This led to a shift in power dynamics in favor of Mahmud-bey-zades of Dukakin, who assumed the roles of Shkodra governor and commander of Rumeli forces in the conflict.<sup>387</sup> However, Suleiman Pasha still managed to hold the position of the

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<sup>381</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 98, 675-677-678-692-694-695. These reports are recorded through May 1689.

<sup>382</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 98, 158 (1100 S 29 (23 Dec 1688)).

<sup>383</sup>Defterdâr Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekâyi'ât (1656-1704)*, prepared by Abdülkadir Özcan, (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1995): 377. Uzunçarşılı, *ibid*, 546.

<sup>384</sup>*Zübde-i Vekâyi'ât*, p. 490; Râşid Mehmed Efendi and Çelebizâde İsmâ'il Âsım Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid ve Zeyli*, vols. I-III, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan, Yunus Uğur, Baki Çakır, and Ahmet Zeki İzgeör, (İstanbul: Klasik, 2013): 462.

<sup>385</sup>Thengjilli, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, 266-267; Anamali et. Al., *Historia e Shqipërise*, 579-580.

<sup>386</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 105, 527 (25 B 1106 (11 March 1695)).

<sup>387</sup>The Hasan Pasha of Mahmud-bey-zades appears in the records as the governor of Shkodra, see: BOA



provincial governor and had important duties during the war. After resolving the issues with the central government, he continued fulfilling his duties in the imperial army until the end of the campaign. Additionally, his son was appointed as the governor of Shkodra, thus reclaiming regional political influence from the Mahmud-bey-zades.<sup>388</sup>

During this time, Vizier Suleiman Pasha and his household had a direct clash with the military leadership from the castles of Ulcinj and Bar<sup>389</sup> which were part of Shkodra district. From Ulcinj, the *dizdar* (castle warden) Ibrahim, along with the aga of the *gönüllüyan*<sup>390</sup> (volunteers) troops Oruç, the aga of the *kale-i zir* (lower castle), and from Bar the aga of the *yerli* (local) janissaries<sup>391</sup> Ahmed was accused of attacking the estates and the people of Vizier Suleiman Pasha. Despite the separate issuance of the reports by the authorities, it is quite possible that these individuals were operating together as a faction against the governor. This attack occurred when the vizier and his troops were engaged in military campaigns, hence providing a perfect opportunity for the aggressors. Nevertheless, the central government treated this incident as a severe one that needed an investigation from a high official like the *kapıcıbaşı* (imperial gatekeeper) who was ordered to find and punish the culprits.<sup>392</sup>

The motives behind this attack on Suleiman Pasha, a vizier and military leader in the Ottoman army, and on his son Omer Pasha, who governed Shkodra, are unclear. Nonetheless, examining the characteristics of the three assailants offers valuable insight into understanding the evolving dynamics of local politics and its

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A.DVNSMHM.d. 105, 528 (25 B 1106 (11 March 1695).

<sup>388</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 108, 255 (29 C 1107 (31 Jan 1696).

<sup>389</sup>Bar is a coastal city located in today Montenegro approximately 20km far from Ulcinj. In the Ottoman period, it was part of Shkodra district.

<sup>390</sup>These voluntary troops were recruited from the locals and through this system, they could become members and were paid salary from the central government. Same examples were present even in other parts of the empire, see: Nuri Adıyeke “Girit’te Askeri ve Toplumsal Bir Kurum: Yerli Yenigeriler-Gönüllüyan Zümresi”, in xv. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara: 11–15 Eylül 2006. Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2010), vol. IV, part 3, 1611–1612.

<sup>391</sup>Starting from the seventeenth century, the recruitment system of the janissaries became corrupted and lost its traditional characteristics. This made possible the entrance of ‘outsiders’ which in provinces meant usually the local people. Together with the descendants of the janissaries of *kul* origin, these were called *yerli* or *yerliyya* in the Arab province and typically answered to the local governor. However, the center still used to send a contingent of janissaries, who were under the jurisdiction of their aga in Istanbul and were labeled as *kapı kulu* or *dergah-ı alı* in the documents. Both the two groups enjoyed the same legal rights and status, sometimes they were to be present in the same city which could result in conflict although not always. For more case studies regarding this issue, see: İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından: Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. I (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1943): 329–331; Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus: 1723–1783*, 26–28; Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus:1708-1758*, 90; Bodman, *Political Faction in Aleppo: 1760-1826*, 73–76; Antonis Anastasopoulos & Yannis Spyropoulos ‘Soldiers on an Ottoman Island: The Janissaries of Crete, Eighteenth-Early Nineteenth Centuries’ in *Turkish Historical Review* 8 (2017): 11.

<sup>392</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 108, 1554–1558 (20 M 1108 (18 August 1696).

participants. In principle, as leaders of castle troops, Ibrahim, Oruç, and Ahmed Aga were to answer to the governor of Shkodra but instead they assaulted their properties and palace. This shows that the military system in the provinces had been compromised as commanders of troops dealt with robbery and plundering. In addition, administrative control over the *kaza* (subdistrict) of Ulcinj and Bar of Shkodra was nearly non-existent due to the rebellious officials in charge of the castles. Therefore, the central government ordered the Rumeli chief commander to start an inspection regarding the castles of the Shkodra district and to take measures to prevent further incidents.<sup>393</sup>

Following the treaty of Karlowitz in January 1699,<sup>394</sup> Shkodra was affected by the agreements especially with Venice regarding the cession of some territories as part of its districts.<sup>395</sup> In the process of defining borders with Venice,<sup>396</sup> the Ottoman authorities directed the governor of Shkodra to prevent any piracy activities that could jeopardize the peace negotiation between the two states.<sup>397</sup> After the wars ended and the external threat subsided, the governorship of Shkodra started asserting its authority over the castles and rebellious commanders who sought to cause disorder in the region. The coastal line from Bar to Ulcinj was particularly for maintaining internal stability and securing the border against the Venetians. Ultimately, the faction originating from Ulcinj and Bar, which initiated an assault on the estates of Vizier Suleiman Pasha and stirred civil unrest, was swiftly apprehended. Consequently, the appointed governors effectively subdued their leaders promptly.<sup>398</sup>

As the administrative and defensive units of Shkodra were brought back to the control of the governorship, the state successfully restored its authority in the region. Furthermore, the appointments of the governors continued without any local obstacles or opposition. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the governors of Shkodra were chosen from different regional origins. Moreover, the governor's tenure was

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<sup>393</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 108, 1682 (29 S 1108(27 September 1696).

<sup>394</sup>After more than fifteen years of wars against four major powers of Europe at that time, the Ottoman Empire was defeated and had to cede considerable territories from the Balkans and north of the Black Sea. However, it managed to recover considerable parts of the land that had been conquered by the Holy League forces and thrust diplomatic dominance during the treaty meetings. Regarding the treaty and the process see: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi, III. Cilt, I. Kısım*, 585-595

<sup>395</sup>Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi IV*, 231.

<sup>396</sup>Although Shkodra was near the border, its leadership was let out of this process as the central government assigned this task to the provincial governor of Bosnia. Regarding this topic see: Doğan Güner, "Karlofça Antlaşması Sonrası Osmanlı-Venedik Sınırının Teşekkülü ve Kapıcıbaşı Osman Ağa'nın Mektupları (1699-1701)", *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2021 Güz (35), 319-348, passim.

<sup>397</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 110, 2795 (29 Ş 1110 (2 March 1699).

<sup>398</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 111, 526 (20 R 1111 (15 October 1699).

typically restricted and subject to a rotation mechanism to prevent the governor from amassing political power over the central authority. Thus, as seen from the *mühimme* and *tevcih defters* (register of appointments) until 1730 the governors of Shkodra held tenure from one to five years. Some have been re-appointed for a second time or given tenure on specific conditions. Regardless, the origin of Shkodra's governors remains unknown.<sup>399</sup> However, in the case of Hüdaverdi Pasha, it can be inferred from certain markers that he was affiliated with the house of Mahmud-beyzades.<sup>400</sup> He began serving as governor of Shkodra in approximately April 1701<sup>401</sup> and held the position until May 1706, which was considered a lengthy term during that time.<sup>402</sup>

The prolonged stay can be associated with the internal issues that arose immediately after the lengthy conflict. Firstly, the dissolution of the timar system, in favor of tax-farming and *chiftliks*, had a significant impact on the socio-economic dynamics of the provincial people. Through these two institutions, the local notables or *ayans* influence increased immensely leading to their consolidation as a mediatory group between the center and the provinces. Their financial and political empowerment was undertaken at the expense of the peasantry.<sup>403</sup> In Albania, there was a clear presence of financial and social oppression with most of the provinces in a state of constant revolt, though termed as 'banditry' in primary sources. It represented how this transition took place in the provinces with the notables imposing violently their authority.<sup>404</sup>

Secondly, the disorder during that time was also attributed to the actions of the governors appointed by the central authority. Since a good portion of their incomes dried up during this time, they began finding 'new' sources through taxation of the subjects.<sup>405</sup> In our case, the governors of Shkodra appear to have been accused of over-taxation and collection of taxes out of their jurisdiction. Although officially recognized as a crime with potential penalties, the government chose to issue warnings

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<sup>399</sup>Başar, *Osmanlı Eyalet Tevcihatı* (1717-1730), 41-42.

<sup>400</sup>Süreyya Mehmed, *Sicill-i Osmani C. III*, 685-686.

<sup>401</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 111, 1858 (10 Za 1112 (18 April 1701).

<sup>402</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 115, 63 (10 S 1118 (24 May 1706).

<sup>403</sup>McGowan, *Economic life in Ottoman Europe*, 64; Salzmann, 'An Ancien Régime Revisited', 404-405; Yayıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 95-96.

<sup>404</sup>Naçi, 'Mbi Gjendjen Politike ne Sanxhakun e Shkodres... ', 46.

<sup>405</sup>İnalçık, 'Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700', pp. 317-319; McGowan, *ibid.*, p. 58.

without implementing additional measures.<sup>406</sup> After Hüdaverdi Pasha, the following governors seem to have had a better relationship with the center. Therefore, in the reports issued by the capital, there was no evidence of malpractice or accusations of extortion.

Lastly, another internal problem that characterized this period was the struggle against the pastoral tribes in the highlands of Shkodra. The nomadic lifestyle of these clans had always caused disorder among the settlements in the rural areas. Governors of Shkodra were often instructed by the center to provide a permanent solution to the problem. Nevertheless, due to their perpetual movement and aggressive tendencies, the Highlander clans posed a significant challenge. The primary measure to halt their incursions on the settlements was building *palanka* (border outpost) near their region.<sup>407</sup> Moreover, there were cases in which troublesome tribes would be forcibly pushed away into exile. In these cases, the exile was not permanent because later they were allowed to return either based on conversion<sup>408</sup> or through negotiation as in the case between the Kelmendi tribe and Governor Hüdaverdi Pasha.<sup>409</sup>

The issue concerning the Highlander tribes is intertwined with a dimension of confessionalism due to their adherence to Catholicism while living in a state that officially followed the Islamic faith. In matters of religious services, the tribesmen relied on support from Rome, which dispatched priests to the highlands. However, in the wars of the late seventeenth century, the priests sent to the regions where the Catholic clans dwelled were agents in service of the Habsburgs and Venetian interests.<sup>410</sup> In a way, it can be said that the highlanders were used as a tool to obstruct the Ottoman advance into the fighting places. Therefore, the Ottomans suffered immensely from fighting on the fronts and having to deal with the attack from the rear coming from the tribesmen. Due to their harsh mountainous geography, punishing them through military expeditions was a difficult task. Only after wars, the center could finally deal with them even without a clear solution.

Less than fifteen years later, Shkodra was involved directly in the wars against Venice (1714-1718) and the Habsburgs (1716-1718). Although the outcomes of these

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<sup>406</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 114, 537 (20 Z 1114 (7 May 1703).

<sup>407</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 111, 1858 (10 Za 1112 (18 April 1701).

<sup>408</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 112, 275 (20 B 1113 (21 December 1701).

<sup>409</sup>Anamali et al., *Historia e Shqipërise*, 584.

<sup>410</sup>After defeating the Ottomans in the siege of Vienna, the Habsburg forces managed to advance inside Macedonia. This was made possible thanks to the support of the Christian population, particularly the Catholic tribesmen, who, under the leadership of agents/priests, also served as auxiliary forces for the Habsburg commanders. For more information regarding this topic see: *Historia e Shqipërise*, 579-581.

Table 4.1 List of the appointed governors between the years 1685-1730

<b>Governorship of Shkodra</b>	<b>Appointment Period</b>
Yusuf-beg-zade Suleiman Pasha	December 1685 – 1695
Omer Pasha (mutasarrıf) son of Suleiman	Last mention February 1696
Zeynelabidin Pasha	First mention as governor on 21 July 1699
Mahmud-bey-zade Hüdaverdi Pasha	9-18 April 1701 – May 1706
Timur Halil Pasha	In May 1706 after the death of Hüdaverdi
Hüseyin Pasha	At the turn of 1707
Ömer Pasha	End of 1708
Arslan Pasha	September 1712
Kurt Mehmed Pasha	First mention 1718
Bayram Pasha	Early January 1719
Arslan Pasha	March 1720
Bayram Pasha	November 1720
Arslan Pasha	December 1721
Bayram Pasha	April 1722
Berat Ocak-zadelerden Mahmud Pasha	January 1723
Arslan Pasha	October 1723
Hasan Pasha	February 1726
Kurd Mehmed Pasha	September 1726
Ebu Bekir Pasha	January 1727
Şahin Mehmed Pasha	July 1728
Numan Pasha	October 1729
Ali Pasha (deputy of Numan Pasha)	March 1730 (acting governor)

confrontations were an improvement for the Ottoman central state compared to previous encounters, the responsibilities of the governorship of Shkodra remained consistent. These responsibilities included the defense of the border against the Venetians and the provision of soldiers for the Austrian front. Even in this case, the Catholic element of Shkodra Highlands supported the Venetians against the

Ottoman forces.<sup>411</sup> In addition to them, the tribes of Montenegro with the assistance of Venice rebelled against the Ottomans. Due to the vicinity of Montenegro to the Venetian territories, they were able to enter there and use the shelter against the Ottoman expedition. Moreover, the leadership of Montenegro aimed to manipulate the support coming from the foreign state to separate from the Ottomans.<sup>412</sup>

Following all these occurrences, the governors of Shkodra got involved immediately as the order in their district was disrupted. With the support of the other district and the Bosnian governor, they went against the rebellious tribesmen.<sup>413</sup> Venetian representatives in the cities of Shkodra<sup>414</sup>, Ulcinj and Bar were expelled from the country.<sup>415</sup> Thus, during the war, the harshest confrontation with the Venetians was the sieges of Ulcinj and Bar which shows the importance of these two cities for dominance in the Adriatic Sea. However, the governor of Shkodra, Kurd Mehmed Pasha managed to defeat the land forces of Venice including the rebellious Highlander tribes. Following this triumph of the governor, the Ottoman *kaptan-ı derya* (admiral) secured the coast by pushing away the Venetian fleet. Until the start of the peace negotiations, the governor of Shkodra was in control of the district.<sup>416</sup>

After the war, on the 21st of July 1718, the belligerent states signed the Treaty of Passarowitz putting an end to the conflict. Even in this case, the governor of Shkodra had crucial responsibilities regarding the border definition process, especially when problems arose regarding specific parts of the district.<sup>417</sup> However, the surprise in this treaty was the mention of the first Ulcinj piracy issue. This shows how dangerous the piracy activities of the seamen of Ulcinj had become for the Venetians.<sup>418</sup> During the war, their role in securing the coast against Venetian vessels was crucial, weakening the sieges on the castles of Bar and Ulcinj. Even though

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<sup>411</sup>Valentini, 'Il Settecento Veneziano e l'Albania Turca', 34.

<sup>412</sup>Zinkeseisen, *Osmanlı Tarihi V*, 329; Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain*, 142-144.

<sup>413</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 122 – 145, 196 (10 Ca 1126 (23 June 1714)).

<sup>414</sup>The reports of Venetian consul of Shkodra are missing even before the war which means that they were warned by the authorities in Venice in advance. The lack of these reports regarding the period 1710-1730s creates a gap regarding the local politics in the area.

<sup>415</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 120, 1050 (29 Z 1126 (6 December 1714)).

<sup>416</sup>Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi IV*, 124.

<sup>417</sup>Uğur Kurturan, 'Pasarofça Antlaşması'na Göre Yapılan Sınır Tahdit Çalışmaları ve Belirlenen Yeni Sınırlar', *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Cilt 11, Sayı 55, (Şubat 2018), 294; Güner Doğan, 'Osmanlı – Venedik Egemenliğinde Balkanlar ve Dalmaçya Kıyıları: Savaş, Diplomasi ve Sınır (1691 – 1721)', Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, (Hacetepe Üniversitesi, 2016), 217.

<sup>418</sup>Özgür Oral, "Pasarofça Antlaşmasında Korsanlık Meselesinin Ele Alınışı ve Deniz Sınırı Uygulamaları", *Harp ve Sulh: 300. Yılında Pasarofça Antlaşması Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, (Milli Savunma Üniversitesi, İstanbul 2019), 152-154.

the Ulcinj seamen and their vessels were a crucial factor in challenging the Venetian naval power in the Adriatic, they had been troublesome for the Ottoman central authorities. Due to the attacks of Ulcinj corsairs on merchant ships and in order to prevent them from violating the treaty terms, the Ottoman government issued an order that stopped them from making ships and attacking Venetian vessels, and the task of securing these terms was given to the governor of Shkodra.<sup>419</sup>

### 4.3 Clash of Factions in the City

The factions appeared in the years following the conclusion of the war between the Ottomans and the combined forces of Austria and Venice in 1718. In the *mühimme* registers, a report regarding a clash between tanners and tailor's factions was recorded at mid-*Zilhicce* 1134 H (Sept-Oct 1722).<sup>420</sup> This suggests that these two factions had already existed before the specified date, but determining the precise time of their emergence is difficult because of the scarcity of primary sources. The same thing can be said about the process and critical events that led to the formation of the two factions. Despite the limitations, it is still possible to generate some hypotheses through an analysis of the information that is accessible. By closely examining the individuals, space and time, and the socio-political context, one can gain important insights into the essence and characteristics of this factional discord.

A letter concerning this incident was forwarded to the central authorities by Mehmed Pasha, the governor of Shkodra.<sup>421</sup> This document addresses a significant event: an attack initiated by the tanners' class (*debbağ zümresi*) in the marketplace (*bazar*) of Shkodra. The attackers engaged in the pillaging of shops and the quarters inhabited by tailor craftsmen. Importantly, the report designates the tanners as a *zümre*, categorizing them as a distinct social class, while the tailors are referred to as *hırfet* indicating an artisan group and highlighting only their craftsmanship. This distinction implies that the tanners not only initiated the offensive but also transitioned from a collective of craftsmen to a socio-political organization. During the assault, the tanners mobilized three hundred armed men and advanced into the

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<sup>419</sup>Hüsnü Yücekaya, "Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerine Göre Osmanlı-Venedik Ticareti" *Journal of History School*, 56, 16-17.

<sup>420</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722)).

<sup>421</sup>He is probably the same Kurt Mehmed Pasha who defeated and protected the coast from the Venetian troops during the war of 1714-1718.

city's commercial district. The encounter ultimately culminated in the deaths of eight individuals, with an additional fifteen people sustaining injuries from both sides.<sup>422</sup>

The next day after the incident, the tailors' guild, ulama, and the notables made an official complaint against the tanners. Subsequently, their guild leadership was called to the judicial court to stand before the judge and address the crimes committed in the market. During the court proceedings, the tanners' guild gave away the name of twenty tanners by addressing them as *eşkıya* (bandit). However, only two were apprehended and brought before the court. As the remaining individuals fled, it prompted the authorities to exile their families and burn their residences and properties as punitive measures. Additionally, the tanners made a vow (*nezr*) of ten thousand *kuruş* that they would not let the return of the escaping culprits.<sup>423</sup> It appears that the tanners' faction had limited influence and was not very powerful in the initial stages of the conflict and the factional divisions in Shkodra lacked significant societal support.

Concerning the tanners' culprits, it is noteworthy that they sought refuge in Bushat. The town's representatives acknowledged providing shelter to the bandits in their area; however, the culprits managed to escape capture. Similar to the tanners, a sum of ten thousand *kuruş* was pledged to ensure that the culprits were kept away from Bushat and denied any form of assistance. Moreover, the governor of Shkodra was tasked with capturing the bandits if they returned or were apprehended. Nonetheless, if they continued causing trouble and were not arrested, the money pledged by the parties concerned would be confiscated. Furthermore, it was decreed that no individual would be allowed to carry weapons in the city of Shkodra and the town of Bushat.<sup>424</sup> Regarding the 'no-weapon' issue, all representatives since the beginning pledged to renounce arming while being inside the city, there was a great emphasis on this matter by the central authorities towards the governor of Shkodra.

A noteworthy clue in the report was the involvement of Bushat and its people in the conflict as part of the tanners' faction. This small town south of Shkodra was the powerbase of the Yusuf-beg-zade household, it was from there that Suleiman Pasha ascended to the highest levels of the Ottoman military and administrative system. After he and his sons, there were no other members of the family who appeared to

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<sup>422</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722).

<sup>423</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722).

<sup>424</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1280 (1134 Z 20 (1 October 1722).



have been appointed as governors of Shkodra.<sup>425</sup> However, most of his sons obtained official titles which means that they remained part of the administrative system.<sup>426</sup> Although difficult to suggest a direct connection, members of this household have always been present in the local politics of Shkodra. Therefore, the culprits from the tanner's faction finding shelter in Bushat was no mere coincidence and this occurring without the knowledge of the Yusuf-beg-zade was not likely to happen.

Nevertheless, before the first clash between the tanners and tailors, in the *mühimme* records of the year 1717, there is a mention of Mustafa Beg, captain of Shkodra castle who was from the town of Bushat.<sup>427</sup> Regarded as a bandit, he was accused of pillaging the Zadrina valley which is adjacent to Bushat with his associates since the year 1120 H. (1708-1709). According to the report, Mustafa was commanding a group of 180-armed people and among them, there were other notorious figures as well. Even though most of them had been imprisoned and their properties confiscated, they had managed to escape and continue the same way as before. In the end, the local authorities were ordered to stop the activities of these men, put them under trial, and imprison them in the castle of Durrës.<sup>428</sup> In both instances, the involvement of Bushat's leadership during these incidents prominently demonstrates the considerable influence that the surrounding hinterland has had on the central district. This relationship highlights how the dynamics of power and decision-making were linked between the outlying regions and the administrative center, illustrating the broader socio-political interactions at play.

As for Mustafa Beg of Bushat, from the title he possesses and the duty as castle captain, it appears that he must have had a strong family background. Nevertheless, based on various examinations regarding Bushat, the only powerful family with strong connections to the Ottoman military and administrative system were the Yusuf-beg-zades.<sup>429</sup> Mustafa Beg was a member of this household and most probably the son or the grandson of Vizier Suleiman Pasha. In the genealogical tree of the family is also possible to make the connection among the successors following the

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<sup>425</sup>The names of many governors of Shkodra between the years 1706-1717 coincided with the names of Yusuf-beg-zade Suleiman Pasha's sons. However, to prove that they are his descendants is difficult because if true, they would have written as Suleiman-pasha-zade in front of their names.

<sup>426</sup>Naçi, 'The Dhena te Reja...', 86.

<sup>427</sup>Leyla Toraman, '128 numaralı ve 1717-1718 Tarihli *Mühimme* Defteri', Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, (Fırat Üniversitesi, 2005): 17. The archival reference is: BOA A.DVNSMHH.d. 128,6 (10 B 1130 (9 Haziran 1717)).

<sup>428</sup>Ibid.

<sup>429</sup>Naçi, 'Pashalleku i Shkodres...', 63-65.

line of the vizier and his sons.<sup>430</sup> Although the first impression while analyzing the text is that of a ‘bandit’ who used to be the captain of Shkodra castle, it is not convincing. Nonetheless, these activities like the clash of the factions and the case of Mustafa Beg of Bushat can be interpreted as signs of changes in the political sphere in the region.

Following the clash of tanners and tailors, Mustafa Beg of Bushat reemerges again in the records, this time with his brother Mahmud. They were accused of disrupting the order by attacking the bazaar. In the text, both brothers are labeled as *şaki* (bandit), and with a group of armed men, they went further assaulting even the judicial court of Shkodra. This serious incident caused the mobilization of the local leadership to take measures against Mustafa and Mahmud of Bushat. Secondly, the *nezr* (vow) money was to be extracted and delivered to the *başmuhasebe* (chief accounting) since Mustafa Beg continued his unlawful activities.<sup>431</sup> Lastly, this case was written three times consecutively, for each a new name of a notorious bandit was added like Pehlivan Mustafa, Çoban Gırcar, and Yusuf Mehmed. For them, the central authorities ordered immediate capture and imprisonment.<sup>432</sup>

In this case, however, the reason for this uprising by Mustafa Beg was to acquire by force the position of governor of the Shkodra district. According to a separate account, issued a couple of months later, he persistently corresponded with the imperial capital for a year and a half, expressing his desire to become the governor of Shkodra. However, due to negative responses from the center, he continued attacking the market and the town but was eventually pushed out of Shkodra. After trying again, Mustafa and Mahmud were again repulsed by the leadership of the city. During this time, they even went as far as kidnapping the people of the governor, thus performing acts of vengeance. Therefore, the central authorities ordered the punishment of the two brothers and their associates. Unfortunately, the end of this subject matter about the two brothers from the Yusuf-beg-zade household due to lack of sources remains unknown.<sup>433</sup>

Nevertheless, the incident presents a valuable and informative perspective on the intricate dynamics of local politics in the city of Shkodra. Regarding the governorship of Shkodra, someone attempted to seize it by force for the first time, as appointments were typically made directly by central authorities without any

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<sup>430</sup>Ibid., ‘The Dhena te Reja...’, 86.

<sup>431</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 131, 198 (20 Ca 1135 (26 February 1723).

<sup>432</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 131, 198-199-200 (20 Ca 1135 (26 February 1723).

<sup>433</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 131, 392 (30 B 1135 (6 May 1723).

recorded opposition from a third party. In addition, the attack on the judicial court symbolizes a direct challenge to the central government and one of its most sacred institutions. In the year 1717, Mustafa Beg found himself embroiled in accusations of banditry and pillaging, acts that suggested malevolent intentions. However, a closer examination of his motives reveals a more complex ambition: he sought to attain the governorship of Shkodra. To achieve this goal, Mustafa Beg strategically utilized violence and discord as instruments to capture the attention of the central authority. By creating a crisis, he aimed to manipulate the ensuing situation to his advantage, thereby advancing his political aspirations.<sup>434</sup>

In 1722, the conflict between the tanners and the tailors transpired within the context of Mustafa Beg's ambitious pursuit of the governorship of Shkodra. While there is no explicit reference to him or the Yusuf-beg-zades in this particular matter, it would be imprudent to dismiss the possibility of a correlation as mere coincidence. Indirectly, there are significant connections worthy of consideration. Notably, the involvement of Bushat in harboring the tanner bandits, alongside their assaults on the market and the city center of Shkodra, constitutes crucial evidence that needs examination. Ultimately, both factions were operational in a similar manner during the same timeframe and within the same locality. Consequently, one may assert that the tanners and the political leadership of Bushat, represented by the Yusuf-beg-zades, were allied and acted in concert. Nevertheless, if the tanners and Mustafa Beg of Bushat are indeed related, what factors prevented them from securing the governorship or, at the very least, overcoming the opposition posed by the prominent figures in the city of Shkodra?

The resolution to this inquiry can be identified within the context of factionalism and its characteristics during the relevant period. At that time, factionalism appeared to be in its nascent stages, confined to a limited segment of society in Shkodra. The tanners' guild seemed to be on the verge of evolving into a faction prior to the tailors; however, their influence within the city was minimal and primarily manifested in the surrounding regions. When summoned to provide testimony at the judicial court, the representative of the tanners' guild complied with the judge's directives, even delivering two of the bandits. This behavior suggests that the faction was neither fully consolidated nor sufficiently powerful to assert its will in Shkodra. In contrast, Mustafa Beg, despite his affiliation with an established and distinguished military lineage, lacked the requisite support to compel the central authority to confer upon him the governorship.

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<sup>434</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 131, 392 (30 B 1135 (6 May 1723)).

### 4.3.1 The Tale of Pasho Hasan

In the 1720s, the region of Shkodra was subject to numerous incidents; nevertheless, the central authority maintained its influence over the district by making appointments according to its discretion. From the factions' emergence to the banditry scattered throughout the district, the governors of Shkodra encountered continuous challenges that disrupted the established order. In the records, banditry had spread so far as to threaten the *chiftlik* estates owned by the notables. However, due to the mountainous terrain and the tower-houses,<sup>435</sup> the governors faced difficulties in overcoming such problems.<sup>436</sup> Another issue that comes again insight is Ulcinj with its rebellious castle captains and seamen. In the end, the situation had aggravated so much that the government appointments were made on the specific condition of bringing order to Shkodra and Ulcinj. This clue shows the immense pressure under which the governors had to complete their duties.<sup>437</sup> Among many threats, Pasho Hasan stands out as someone who 'succeeded' in drawing the attention of the central authority and creating chaos for the people in the regions of Shkodra.

The available information regarding Pasho Hasan is primarily derived from the *mühimme* records. These reports indicate that he served as a captain in Ulcinj and was a member of the castle's garrison. Pasho Hasan was infamous for his engagement in various unlawful activities, including kidnapping individuals, plundering residential properties, and committing murder. Despite attempts by notable figures within the community to counsel him and persuade him to cease such violent conduct, Pasho Hasan persisted in his criminal behavior, thereby instigating significant unrest in Ulcinj. Ultimately, due to the ongoing complaints from both citizens and castle officials about his actions, this unruly captain was apprehended and incarcerated in the castle of Shkodra.<sup>438</sup> Notably, it was the bands of tanners and tailors that were mobilizing to aid him, as per the authorities' story that they were no different from Pasho Hasan in their criminal activities, and had their guild leaders compromised by his bribes.<sup>439</sup>

The tanners and tailors reappeared in local political affairs after a seven-year

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<sup>435</sup>In the northern Albania, where Shkodra district was also located, the people in the mountainous areas-built houses that look and have the same function as a tower. These buildings provide not only shelter but also are used for defensive purposes.

<sup>436</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 131, 67 (30 C 1135 (8 January 1723)).

<sup>437</sup>Başar, *Osmanlı Eyalet Tevcihatı (1717-1730)*, 41. From this appointment register, in two following years, the centre tried to grant the governorship of Shkodra to Hasan Pasha (15 C 1138 (19 January 1726)); and to Mehmed Pasha (13 M 1139 (10 September 1726) but the second one was not finalized.

<sup>438</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 128 (20 Ş 1142 (10 March 1730)).

<sup>439</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 128 (20 Ş 1142 (10 March 1730)).

absence in Ottoman records. The excerpt indicates that both groups were enlisted to collaborate in facilitating the escape of Pasho Hasan from his confinement in the castle of Shkodra. This action represented a direct challenge to both central and local authorities, as it involved a clear defiance of established laws.<sup>440</sup> Over the years, both the tanners and the tailors' factions experienced significant growth in their number and influence, ultimately establishing themselves as prominent sociopolitical entities within the city and countryside of Shkodra. An official report corroborates this transformation, indicating that a majority of the population had become *mütegallibe* (rebels) and had divided into two *fırka* (factions): the tanners and the tailors. Furthermore, the report notes that the primary supporters of these factions predominantly originated from rural areas and were actively involved in activities related to plundering and banditry.<sup>441</sup>

In addition, the main target or the center of the attacks coming from the factions was directed to inner Shkodra (*nefs-i İskenderiye*). Starting with the judicial court, then to the other public buildings, pious foundations, and places of worship, all of these were raided by the factions. During these events, Numan Pasha was officially the governor of Shkodra but in practice, it was a certain Ali Pasha acting as his deputy was in charge of ruling the district.<sup>442</sup> As the situation escalated, the government issued orders to the adjacent district governors to aid Numan Pasha against the bandits and the troublemakers in Shkodra. These commands underscore the high level of internal strife within the city and its outskirts, prompting the governor to depend on external backing to restore order.<sup>443</sup> Nevertheless, it could be argued that the political landscape saw a shift towards dominance by the tanners and tailors' factions starting in 1730 as their influence permeated throughout society.

In the long run, the governors appointed by the center, although in restricted circumstances managed to repel the factions by capturing and punishing some of their leaders. However, these were limited successes that did not have a permanent effect in neutralizing the activities of the tanners and tailors. The reports contain various names of the participants and leaders of these factions:

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<sup>440</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 128 (20 Ş 1142 (10 March 1730).

<sup>441</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 123 (29 Ş 1142 (19 March 1730).

<sup>442</sup>Ibid. The governorship of Shkodra was given as *arpalık* to Numan Pasha, which means that the incomes from the duty of the governor were given to him. However, in theory, he was not obligated to be present in Shkodra as long, as there was a deputy in his place. Regarding the *arpalık* model in the Ottoman administration, see: Orhan Kılıç, 18. *Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Osmanlı Devleti'nin İdari Taksimatı: Eyalet ve Sancağ Tevcihatı*, (Elazığ: Ceren Matbaacılık, 1997): 37-38.

<sup>443</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 124 (29 Ş 1142 (19 March 1730).

‘Eşkiya başı’ (leader of bandits) Hasan, former leader of the tanners Hajji Dervish, ‘Maktul’ (executed) Arslan Pasha’s *kethüda* (deputy) Ismail, tailors’ *kethüda* Sarı Ahmed, tanners’ *kethüda* Mehmed, Ibrahim, Yaronice(?), Bokobaroc(?), Kushosh(?) and his brother Ajishosh(?), Hasan Kurd, ‘Maktul’ Arslan Pasha’s *mühürdar* (seal-keeper) Husein, Boko and his nephew Ibrahim, Terzibaşı (tailors’ head) Suleiman and his brothers Mehmed and Yusuf, Debbagbaşı (tanners’ head) Ali and his brother Mirto, Haydar the tanner, *Yiğitbaşı* Hasan Kurd (tanner), tailors’ *Yiğitbaşı* Mu’tâd Kurd, Tano. . . (?), Mustafa, Hajji Yusuf, Mustaza Abdal, Kuyumcu (jeweler) Murtaza, Hajji Osmanoglu. . .’

As can be seen, most of these names are related to the guild organization and have titles that correspond to a specific position or occupation. Therefore, it is possible to see individuals from other craftsmen groups like the jeweler Murtaza. Among the individuals identified as culpable, two associates of Arslan Pasha, the former governor of Shkodra who was executed on charges of malpractice, were also involved. This underscores the inclusivity of the factions, regardless of their backgrounds. Eventually, the center ordered Numan Pasha to capture the names on the list and to extinguish both the organization of tanners and tailors, however, in the end, the governor was unsuccessful.<sup>444</sup>

Even though the report above includes the names of many significant members of the factions, still there exist gaps related to the occurrences following the story of Pasho Hasan. Following the failed attempt to escape through the help of both factions, in the second one through the efforts of the tanners, Pasho Hasan got out of prison and ran away.<sup>445</sup> Apart from the men of Arslan Pasha, in the scene appears Oruçoglu Ahmed Pasha<sup>446</sup> from the castle of Ulcinj.<sup>447</sup> In the next document, the central authorities make a direct accusation of the tanners faction as the main culprit in the events of Pasho Hasan. They emphasize the need to punish all the people who surrounded the castle of Shkodra and attacked the janissaries there leading to the escape of the prisoner. Nonetheless, this case also confirms that alongside the guild members, the Ulcinj military leadership and the men of Arslan Pasha, former governor of Shkodra were part of the tanners’ faction.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>444</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 123 (29 Ş 1142 (19 March 1730).

<sup>445</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 177 (20 N 1142 (8 April 1730).

<sup>446</sup>He is probably, the son of Oruç, former *aga of kale-i zir* (lower castle) of Ulcinj, who in 1690s together with the other captain of Ulcinj went to the city of Shkodra plundering the estates of Vizier Suleiman Pasha from the Yusuf-beg-zades from Bushat town.

<sup>447</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 136, 177 (20 N 1142 (8 April 1730).

<sup>448</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 137, 157 (10 L 1142 (28 April 1730).

### 4.3.2 Treacherous Governors

Although the conclusion of Pasho Hasan's tale is uncertain, his presence in the reports issued by the central authorities was instrumental in covering information about the factions. Starting from engaging in violent banditry activities, to being imprisoned in the castle of Shkodra, and eventually embarking on daring escape adventures, the captain of Ulcinj emerged as a prominent figure in the local political landscape of the district. Within the tanners' faction, the names of Arslan Pasha and his trusted associates, in conjunction with his fellow captains from Ulcinj, were frequently referenced in official documents. As a former governor of Shkodra, Arslan Pasha received his initial appointment on October 16, 1726, which was subsequently extended on two occasions.<sup>449</sup> However, even before this, Arslan Pasha had served as governor of Shkodra several times, thus leaving a mark in the local administration.

Regarding his family background, the information is scarce and not very clear but, in the register of appointments and various reports of *mühimme* records, his name was written as Ömer-paşa-oğlu Arslan Pasha. Hence, he was known to be Ömer Pasha's son; nevertheless, there is no mention of his household or origin, leading to a notable uncertainty. Due to these gaps, it is necessary to examine the information and make assumptions based on what is already known.<sup>450</sup> For example, his men were in the faction of tanners which tells that Arslan Pasha belonged as well or was close to them. In addition, it also means that he was most likely of local origin and his father as well. The only Ömer Pasha known from Shkodra was the son of Vizier of Suleiman Pasha from the Yusuf-beg-zades household; together they ruled as governors during the wars of 1690s.<sup>451</sup> In addition, as mentioned before the Yusuf-beg-zades' powerbase and place of origin was the town of Bushat, which at the same time was associated with the faction of tanners.

Allegedly, Arslan Pasha was put to death by the central government for charges of banditry, disobedience, and abuse of power during his tenure as the governor of Shkodra. After, his execution, the authorities ordered also the capture of his relatives and associates, probably due to their participation in the unlawful activities of Arslan Pasha.<sup>452</sup> After, executing him, the center appointed a certain Hasan Pasha,

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<sup>449</sup>Başar, Ibid, 41.

<sup>450</sup>Ibid. BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 131, 957 (29 Ra 1136 (29 January 1726)).

<sup>451</sup>Among the sons of Suleiman Pasha there is an Arslan Pasha as well, thus, brother of Ömer. Eventually, the members of this household tend to put the names of fathers and brothers most of the time. For the genealogical tree of the Yusuf-beg-zades, see: Naçi, 'Te dhena te reja...', 86.

<sup>452</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 133, 1067 (20 M 1139 (17 September 1726)).

who at that time was governor of *Karlılı*<sup>453</sup> and *Ağrıboz* (Euboea).<sup>454</sup> However, before even moving to Shkodra, he passed away and in his place was appointed Mehmed Pasha, governor of *İnebahtı* (Lepanto). From the instructions given to him by the authorities, there is significant emphasis on disorder and the seriousness of the situation in Shkodra. Therefore, Mehmed Pasha was ordered to leave a deputy in the Lepanto district and to head immediately with his household and troops to his new station.<sup>455</sup>

The main tasks of the new governor were to first bring order and peace to the city and region of Shkodra. For this purpose, the authorities wanted Mehmed Pasha to capture and punish the people close to Arslan Pasha as the main culprits for the events. In addition, he was advised to carry out these instructions by relying also on the support of the local notables, thus creating an alliance with the leadership of Shkodra. However, in case of failing to capture the culprits, the government suggested Mehmed Pasha the selling of all their properties including the families. The relatives of the culprits were to be sent to Ulcinj and from there to Morea, where they were to be settled in different parts of the region. Moreover, in case of capturing the fugitives, the governor was to send their heads to the capital otherwise all the people of the district would pay sixty thousand *guruş* as *nezr* (vow) to the central treasury.<sup>456</sup>

The level of success attained by Mehmed Pasha and subsequent governors remains uncertain; nevertheless, it appears that substantial advancements were not made as is seen in the case of Pasho Hasan. Therefore, since the death of Arslan Pasha in 1726 until 1730 when his men continued opposing the authorities with Pasho Hasan under the faction of tanners, Shkodra was still in a situation of chaos. Governors designated by the central authorities either proved inadequate in ensuring order or demonstrated a lack of zeal for the assigned role. The governors' lack of success can be ascribed to the overwhelming power that the factions had accumulated at that moment, resulting in the governors being rendered ineffective. Additionally, the involvement of the Ulcinj military leadership and an expectable opposition of locals for the governors who were not from Shkodra should be considered as well.

Nevertheless, Numan Pasha, during the incident with Pasho Hasan, achieved significant success by neutralizing and eliminating him as a threat to Shkodra. Fol-

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<sup>453</sup>It was a district (sanjak) located west of Lepanto and its territories were located in between the gulfs of Arta and Patras, today modern Greece.

<sup>454</sup>Başar, *Ibid*.

<sup>455</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 133, 1067 (20 M 1139 (17 September 1726).

<sup>456</sup>*Ibid*.



lowing a year of effort, the governor eventually achieved a certain level of enforcement of his rule in the district, while also effectively pacifying the factions. He even went deeper into the factionalism issue by targeting the guild organization of tanners and tailors. Numan Pasha got involved directly by interfering in their inner affairs regarding the position of the respective *kethüdâs*. By taking advantage of the situation, he requested a bribe otherwise threatened the guilds with eliminating the organizations and exiling their members. Furthermore, he even put them under *nezir* (vow) for a sum of fifty thousand *kuruş*. However, the central authority immediately intervened by ordering its governor to nullify these unjust actions against the guilds and the people of Shkodra.<sup>457</sup>

#### 4.3.3 Beyond the Stories of Rebellious Governors and Bandits

The case of Pasho Hasan and Mustafa Beg of Bushat are important examples in describing how the local politics of Shkodra evolved during the eighteenth century. A new political realignment through the factions permitted individuals of influence to challenge the central authorities or even to bargain a position in the Ottoman administration system. In this historical period, individuals from the lower social classes such as peasants and urban residents took on a significant role in the power struggles between provincial and central leadership. However, it is crucial to understand that these occurrences did not happen randomly, but rather in a dynamic relationship with policies implemented by the central government that have influenced the provinces. As a result, understanding the events related to the defiant governors or the individuals labeled as 'bandits' by the authorities necessitates an integration of the macro and micro levels.

Apart from the image of a 'troublemaker' and a bandit, Pasho Hasan was foremost a captain of Ulcinj castle and, thus, a member of the Ottoman military and administrative class. Therefore, explaining his unlawful activities as mere plundering and robbery without a particular aim or agenda would only capture half of the truth. The challenge posed to the central government and local authorities was a direct response to the policies enforced by the imperial capital on Ulcinj post the Pasarowitz treaty in 1718.<sup>458</sup> Due to their piracy activities in the Adriatic Sea, the Ulcinj corsairs and their vessels were causing continuous problems for other states

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<sup>457</sup>BOA C. BLD. 113, 5650 (9 R 1143 (22 October 1730).

<sup>458</sup>As mentioned before the Ulcinj piracy issue became a particular subject for the Ottomans in the talks among the states of Venice and the Habsburg. This shows the great threat that the seamen of Ulcinj were posing not for the commerce and safe navigation in the Adriatic Sea. Regarding this topic, see: Oral, "Pasarofça Antlaşmasında Korsanlık Meselesinin Ele Alınışı ve Deniz Sınırı Uygulamaları", 152-154.

with which the Ottoman Empire had agreements. Venetian subjects suffered the most from the attacks of Ulcinj seamen, therefore most of the complaints to the Ottoman authorities came from Venice.<sup>459</sup> Following territorial losses in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Adriatic trade zone became its main source of income.

Moreover, subjects from other states suffering attacks from Ulcinj's corsairs also made their complaints to the Ottoman authorities. The states of France, Britain, Habsburg, and Netherlands through their representatives send official complaints in Istanbul.<sup>460</sup> In response to intense diplomatic pressure, the Ottoman capital immediately instructed Shkodra's governor to bring the seamen and military forces of Ulcinj under control and put an end to their unlawful activities. To prevent a major diplomatic crisis that could potentially lead to a new conflict, the central government took strong action against Ulcinj. As a result, severe punishments would be imposed on anyone involved in piracy, and their vessels would be destroyed. Additionally, authorities banned the construction of new ships on the shores of Ulcinj and ordered the dissolution of the *kayıkçı ocağı* (boatmen's organization).<sup>461</sup>

It can be argued that this heavy pressure on the Ulcinj people might have triggered a strong opposition to the policies of the center. After all, the vessels and boats were not only used for piracy but also trade and transportation, therefore, they were an important source of income for the town's inhabitants. The same goes for captains from Ulcinj's castle, like Pasho Hasan, who under these circumstances decided to express their opposition towards the government's policies by rebelling. It was no surprise, the considerable support he enjoyed from the local elements in the Shkodra district during his unlawful activities. Even during his adventurous escape attempt, the help received from the tanner's faction indicates a general discontent towards the policies of the government.

Even in the case of Arslan Pasha being executed on orders of the central authorities, the accusations of 'banditry' should be examined, considering the Ulcinj crisis as well. As governor of Shkodra, he received commands on neutralizing the piracy element and preventing the shipbuilding activities on the shore of Ulcinj following

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<sup>459</sup>In the Venetian archives there are various documents in Ottoman and Venetian languages that contain information regarding the piracy problem in the Adriatic and Mediterranean Sea. For the documents in Ottoman language see: Zeynep Çaylı, 'Osmanlı-Venedik İlişkileri ve Venedik Devlet Arşivi "Carte Turche" Defterleri Kataloğu (1702-1720)', Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, (Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi, 2023), passim; For the Venetian Italian sources, see the collection of the Venetian consul reports from the coastal cities of the Adriatic in the Venetian State Archives, in the catalogues on '*Cinque Savi della Mercanzia*'.

<sup>460</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 130, 1113 (10 Ş 1134 (26 May 1722)).

<sup>461</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 131, 1098 (10 Ca 1136 (5 February 1724)).

piracy attacks on Ragusan and British vessels.<sup>462</sup> Arslan Pasha possibly might have been easily collaborating with the Ulcinj opposition element which resulted in his demise. This can be explained by the presence of his men alongside the Ulcinj captains as members of the tanners' faction during the save of Pasho Hasan. In addition, the organization of this local opposition or reaction to the central government was formed through networks of violent<sup>463</sup> regional powerholders that shared the same goals and mutual interests.

#### 4.4 The Households of Dukakin in the Politics of Shkodra

Numan Pasha managed to suppress the factionalism in Shkodra by neutralizing the guilds of tanners and tailors. Even though for a short period, the governor was successful in restoring order in the district, especially in the city where clashes between the two factions would take place. After him, in the year 1730, the center appointed Mahmud Pasha from the Mahmud-bey-zades<sup>464</sup> from Dukakin district, who used to rule Shkodra before and competed with Yusuf-beg-zades from Bushat.<sup>465</sup> However, at that moment, the local identity heavily influenced the competition for control of the district, putting the Beyzades at a disadvantage as they were seen as outsiders by the local population. Concerning the Yusuf-beg-zades of Bushat, although they are regarded as natives of Shkodra, they appear to have lost favor with the central government during the 1730s. Consequently, they were unable to attain sufficient power to contend for the governorship position. Nevertheless, the rivals of the Beyzades for the governance of Shkodra would emerge from the Dukakin district as well, they were the Gjakova<sup>466</sup> (Yakovalı) household.<sup>467</sup>

Beyzade Mahmud Pasha was appointed governor of both the Shkodra and

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<sup>462</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 132, 1303 (29 Z 1137 (8 September 1725).

<sup>463</sup>On the term of 'network of violence' as a framework in understanding the role that the 'violent men' and 'bandits' held on the economy and governance in the Ottoman provinces, see: Tolga Esmer, 'Notes on a Scandal: Transregional Networks of Violence, Gossip, and Imperial Sovereignty in the Late Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2016;58(1): 104–105.

<sup>464</sup>The Mahmud-bey-zades were the main branch of the historically ruling household of the Dukakin district with their seat located in the city of Peja (İpek). Due to the emergence of individuals from other branches, I shall use their primary family name Beyzade.

<sup>465</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet*, V.II, 451.

<sup>466</sup>They were an old military household located in the city of Gjakova (in Turkish Yakova) from where they also got the name. After the Beyzades whose powerbase and main residence was in *kaza* of Peja (İpek), the Gjakova family was the second most powerful military and political actor in Dukakin district.

<sup>467</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 47-48.

Dukakin districts by the authorities due to the importance and difficulties that these two regions presented. The historical problems with the *agas* of Ulcinj and their unlawful activities in the sea and on land continued to be the main agenda for the new governor. Although negotiations were carried out among the military leadership and the notables of Ulcinj still the results were the same. The governance of Shkodra was given to Mahmud Pasha apparently under his request and on the condition that he would restore order in the region.<sup>468</sup> Another important issue was the critical situation with the Shoshi and Shala tribes<sup>469</sup> that were rebelling against the authorities mostly due to the poll tax (*cizye*). Their uprising judging from the reports of the central government was widespread and the geographical difficulties posed also a challenge. Nonetheless, Mahmud Pasha overcame these tasks and managed to restore order in the districts.<sup>470</sup>

Following a diplomatic crisis in 1730 between the Ottomans and the Safavids, the latter launched a full-scale attack on the Caucasus and Western Iran territories. The Ottoman response was to engage the closest garrisons to the Safavid border, however, due to passive policies, Sultan III. Ahmed and his government faced significant opposition until they were overthrown by Patrona Halil<sup>471</sup> in October of the same year. Safavid leadership experienced the same thing when Nadir Khan took advantage of his dissatisfaction towards Shah Tahmasp and deposed him. In his place, Tahmasp's son sat on the throne, but Nadir Khan was the one ruling the empire. To strengthen his position as commander and state leader, he attempted to push the conquest campaign further into the Ottoman land, in Iraq lands.<sup>472</sup> As a response, the Ottoman state under Sultan I. Mahmud acted immediately. After eliminating Patrona Halil and his men, the new monarch mobilized the troops from all the provinces to the eastern front.

Mahmud Pasha as a district governor was called to participate in the eastern front together with his men. In the *mühimme* registers, there are many reports on the orders addressed to the governor of Shkodra about joining the military campaign.

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<sup>468</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 138, 408 (10 R 1148 (12 October 1731).

<sup>469</sup>These two Catholic neighboring tribes resided in a mountain range that bordered Shkodra and Dukakin districts, thus creating unrest in both regions. Regarding the history of these two tribes, see: Elsie, *Tribes of Albania*, 115-132.

<sup>470</sup>BOA AE.SMHD.I. 195, 15289 (15 L 1144 (6 April 1732).

<sup>471</sup>The passiveness of the government regarding the Safavid front was one of the main reasons that triggered the revolt of Patrona Halil. For more information regarding the revolt see: Abdi Efendi, *Abdi Tarihi: 1730 Patrona ihtilali hakkında bir eser*, yay. Faik Reşit Unat, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014); Münir Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı (1730)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1958); Abdülkadir Özcan, "Patrona İsyanı." TDVIA. vol. 34. (Istanbul: TDV, 2007), 189-192.

<sup>472</sup>Stanford Shaw, "Iranian Relations with the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 7, Cambridge University Press-2008, pp. 301-305.

According to them, Mahmud was to contribute with a thousand riflemen (*tüfenkli*) and cavalry, and to move through the Gallipoli strait in the direction of Bagdad.<sup>473</sup> Although the central government issued multiple instructions to Mahmud Pasha and his peers in the region, there was a general hesitation by the governors to use their resources in a campaign against the Safavid. This neglect was noticed by the center, therefore, Mahmud like the others received threatening messages from Istanbul regarding the delay of his troops in the front.<sup>474</sup> Eventually, Mahmud Pasha carried out the order and made his contribution to the military campaign.

In addition to financial expenditures, governors were primarily concerned about the possibility of their positions being seized or reassigned by the central authorities to rival factions. This issue became particularly prominent in Shkodra, where it frequently disrupted administrative stability and negatively impacted social order. The Beyzades adeptly mitigated this concern by leveraging their influence with central authorities to support the endorsement of other members of their household as deputies. For instance, Hüdaverdi Pasha was appointed governor of Shkodra while Mahmud was engaged in a military campaign.<sup>475</sup> It is noteworthy that an official appointment did not necessitate the physical presence of the governor at the governorship seat. For the Beyzades, whose power base traditionally resided in Peja within the Dukakin district, the mere official designation as governor of Shkodra sufficed. This administrative framework within the provinces occasionally led to ambiguity regarding the actual authority governing the district.<sup>476</sup>

There were notable instances, particularly in Shkodra, where the governor remained absent from 1735 to 1738.<sup>477</sup> During this period, a deputy was appointed to manage governance responsibilities; however, this approach ultimately failed to produce favorable outcomes. On the contrary, this situation was utilized by various influential local actors, who saw it as an opportunity to increase their power in the region.<sup>478</sup> For the *agas* of Ulcinj, the presence or not of the governor did not constitute an obstacle to their piracy activities. Even when Beyzade Mahmud Pasha was

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<sup>473</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 139, 576 (29 N 1145 (15 March 1733)).

<sup>474</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 140, 1071 (29 N 1147 (22 February 1735)).

<sup>475</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 142, 267 (10 L 1148 (23 February 1736)).

<sup>476</sup>In the *mühimme* records there are names of different individuals that are mentioned as governor of Shkodra. Nevertheless, in other types of registers, it is possible to see contradiction regarding the appointees and their dates as governor of Shkodra.

<sup>477</sup>Starting from the year 1730, the Venetian vice consul of Shkodra would return to his office as the diplomatic relations between the Ottomans and Venice improved significantly. Thus, the reports issued from Shkodra to the Venetian authorities are an essential primary source as the vice-consul was a direct witness to the occurrences taking place in the city.

<sup>478</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 48.

in Shkodra, they just carried on just the same way. Especially, when the center's attention was focused on the eastern campaign, Ulcinj's unruly *agas* enjoyed almost an independent status. They even went further by murdering the castle warden (*dizdar*) of the Ulcinj.<sup>479</sup> The central authorities responded to the rebellious *agas* by sending the provincial governor of Bosnia to punish them. His campaign was successful as not only Ulcinj but most of the coastal areas of Shkodra's district were brought under the control of the authorities.<sup>480</sup>

#### 4.4.1 A Headache for the Venetians

Despite all the measures and efforts used, Ulcinj continued to be a thorn in the flesh not only for the Ottomans but also for the Venetian authorities. As their trade zone was focused on the Adriatic Sea, the Ulcinj corsairs and the *agas* kept on attacking the Venetian vessels. However, the detailed reports of Shkodra's consol offer a more precise understanding of the Ulcinj problem from the Venetian perspective. Though piracy remained a particular issue, for Venice a major threat came from the trade of the Ulcinj seamen. Their trade into other port cities of the Adriatic like Ancona was perceived as a threat to the Venetian commercial hegemony in their *mare nostrum*<sup>481</sup> policy. The second concern for Venice was the relationship between the corsairs of Ulcinj and the Barbary<sup>482</sup> pirates. Due to this alliance, the Ulcinj coast became also a shelter for the corsairs and pirates coming from Algeria or Tunisia. Venice would pressure the Ottoman authorities constantly through its consuls to neutralize both Ulcinj commercial activities and the presence of the northern African Corsair in the Adriatic Sea.<sup>483</sup>

The Ottoman policy concerning the commercial zone of the Adriatic Sea appeared to be advantageous for the Venetians. The continuity of trade was vital for the Ottoman economy, as it generated substantial revenue. Consequently, it became imperative to uphold order along both the coast and waters of the Adriatic. Addi-

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<sup>479</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 138, 408 (10 R 1144 (12 October 1731).

<sup>480</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 138, 427 (20 R 1144 (22 October 1731).

<sup>481</sup>At the turn of the eighteenth century and following the wars against the Ottomans, Venetians experienced considerable territorial and financial loss that was reflected in her status as a major commercial player between East and West through the Levant. Despite this, Venice tried to protect the Adriatic commercial zone, thus making sure the trade would only through its ports. On the Venetian policy during the eighteenth century, see: Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, 351.

<sup>482</sup>They mean the *garp ocakları*, that were a maritime organization created by the Ottomans which functioned like the *kapıkulu* recruitment system. The main task of this organization was to protect the Ottoman coast and take part in the naval conflicts. During the eighteenth century, the captains began to get involved in commercial activity and would act almost independently avoiding Venetians central control.

<sup>483</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 4 Agosto 1733.

tionally, significant concern arose from the tendency of local customs authorities to impose excessive taxes on foreign merchants. In response, the central government issued warnings to the customs officials in Shkodra and Ulcinj, emphasizing the necessity to collect only the toll tax (*selamet akçesi*) and the standard three percent customs tax, following the established treaties.<sup>484</sup> However, despite the order issued by the Ottoman authorities in April 1733, a couple of months later, the Venetian vice-consul complained against the local customs officers of Shkodra who repeatedly collected more taxes than normal. He extended his efforts by communicating with the Venetian *bailo* stationed in Istanbul, who in turn requested the officials in the capital to resolve the issue.<sup>485</sup>

The central authorities responded positively to the request of the *bailo* and issued a definitive order about the protection of the Venetian merchants' rights against the local customs officers. Nonetheless, as the vice-consul Duoda reveals the governor of Shkodra at that time, Kurd Mehmed Pasha of Gjakova<sup>486</sup> left for his hometown before receiving the decree. Although the pasha left a deputy to oversee the administrative matters in Shkodra, still he lacked the strength to impose his authority. Under these circumstances, a local notable, Suleiman Aga, with the duty of customs officer became one of the most influential individuals even more than the deputy. He was constantly exploiting the Venetian merchants by taking more taxes than he should. According to Douoda, Suleiman Aga tried to do the same even with the local merchants.<sup>487</sup> These examples show how delicate the power balances in Shkodra were at that time, and how local notables were able to easily challenge the governorship.

#### 4.4.2 The Era of Plots, Conflict, and Disorder

The Ulcinj subject was certainly a 'popular' topic for the authorities in the capital, yet finding a permanent solution remained a gruelling task. Although the seamen, the *agas*, and castle captains received regular complaints and direct threats for their disobedient stance, still it did not stop them. In addition, their sheltering of the Barbary corsairs forced the government to order the castle captain Veli Aga to interfere and remove them from the coast of Ulcinj. The assignment led to

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<sup>484</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 139, 658 (20 L 1145 (5 April 1733).

<sup>485</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 2 Settembre 1734, p. 2.

<sup>486</sup>Member of the Gjakova household, Kurd Mehmed Pasha had been very successful in the wars against the Venetians (1714-1718), in addition, he was appointed as governor in various districts in Rumeli.

<sup>487</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 2 Settembre 1734, pp. 1-2.

the untimely deaths of Veli and his nephew, who were murdered in the town as part of a scheme by their adversaries who were allies of the corsairs. According to the Venetian consul, Ibrahim Pasha, the governor of Shkodra, was commanded by the central authorities to immediately head for Ulcinj and, if deemed necessary, penalize the entire town. Together with the support of Shkodra's locals, the governor successfully took over the town and captured the rebels *agas*. He insisted that the Ulcinj's authorities hand over five specific individuals who had been involved in the plot against Veli Aga, along with a payment of forty thousand *kuruş*, to ensure they would not repeat their unlawful actions.<sup>488</sup>

For the merchants and the craftsmen of Shkodra, the piracy activities of Ulcinj threatened the commercial relationship with Venice. Ultimately, the primary destination for most of Shkodra's goods was the Venetian market, emphasizing the necessity of controlling the *agas* of Ulcinj. Even the consul Duoda faced financial difficulties due to the minimal trade activity between Venice and Shkodra as he emphasized in his reports. Furthermore, the year 1736 was marked by the spread of the plague which kept away the commercial ships coming to Shkodra.<sup>489</sup> Under these circumstances, the situation became difficult for the people in the city especially when the governor was absent as he was called to take part in the military campaign against Russia. Beyzade Hudaverdi Pasha<sup>490</sup> under the orders of the central authority moved to Bender<sup>491</sup> where after joining with the commander, they would fight the Russians who allied with Austria and declared war on the Ottomans.<sup>492</sup>

In a similar fashion to previous instances, local notables in Shkodra sought to exploit the opportunity created by the governor's absence and the government's involvement in the conflicts. Regarding the deputy governor, as outlined in Consul Duoda's record, he could not enforce the order in the district, leading to a series of clashes. Factional strife gripped Ulqin, as a group of former *agas* who supported the presence of North African pirates along the coast, and those who remained loyal to the central government. The city of Shkodra experienced renewed unrest as the long-standing factions of tanners and tailors resurfaced, sparking tensions and discord among the populace. On the 8th of September 1736, after the confrontation

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<sup>488</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 2 Settembre 1734, 2-3.

<sup>489</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 11 Aprile 1736, 1.

<sup>490</sup>His name is not mentioned by the consul Duoda as being present during that time as governor, therefore most probably Hüdaverdi might have received the official appointment but chose to stay in another place.

<sup>491</sup>It was a castle located in modern Moldavia, which at that time was near the Russian front.

<sup>492</sup>Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi IV, 253-254.



of the two groups in the bazaar, eight died and twelve were injured.<sup>493</sup> The unrest spread also in the highlands, where the Catholic tribes of Shkreli and Kastrati<sup>494</sup> clashed with each other which resulted in the death of thirty-three people, and fifty-five wounded.<sup>495</sup>

From the perspective of the Venetian vice-consul Duoda, the absence of a strong and capable governor was the main reason for the disorder present in the region. By February 1737, the conflicts in Ulcinj, the city of Shkodra, and the Highlands had resulted in the death of four hundred people. Interestingly, in his analysis of the situation, he mentions the *emins* of the customs as the ones infringing on the treaties and exploiting the present unrest. On the other hand, Duoda praises the *Comandati Passa* (governor)<sup>496</sup> for being more righteous in respecting the treaties and successful in imposing order.<sup>497</sup> The *emins* of the customs in this context can be regarded as the local notables of Shkodra whose financial power and political influence were increasing at the expense of the centrally appointed governor from the great military households. As a result, it could be argued that the local component of Shkodra was in the process of evolving into a cohesive group with its political agenda.

The same situation existed for the Ulcinj's local *agas*, who since the beginning of the eighteenth century acted as a semi-autonomous entity inside the Shkodra district. From the reports of Consul Duoda, almost in each of them sent to Venetian authorities, the Ulcinj question was always mentioned. Neither the Venetian diplomatic pressure nor the imperial decrees from the center could stop their illegal ventures. Even though Duoda highlights the incompetence of the deputy governor, the triangle Shkodra-Venice-Istanbul was not able to put under control Ulcinj. Especially when the war between the Ottomans and Austria was taking place, the central government was forced to let the Ulcinj's *agas* freely as a measure to counterattack the rebellious Christian highlander in the Montenegro region. These tribes were used as a diversion by the Austrian agents to weaken the Ottoman flanks.<sup>498</sup> These events underline the role of the local ecclesial leaders like Patriarch Arsenije of Peja

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<sup>493</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 19 Ottobre 1736, 1-2.

<sup>494</sup>The tribes of Shkreli and Kastrati were located in the northern part of Shkodra district. These were neighboring tribes, hence probably the conflict might have initiated a territorial dispute, which was a common *casus belli* at that time, see: Elsie, *Tribes of Albania*, 68-78, 81-89.

<sup>495</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 19 Ottobre 1736, 1-2.

<sup>496</sup>Here he means the centrally appointed governors, who were of military background.

<sup>497</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 23 Febraio 1737, 2.

<sup>498</sup>*Ibid.*, data 23 Ottobre 1738.

and the archbishop of Bar, who got involved directly in organizing the rebellion of the tribes.<sup>499</sup>

Following the sudden uprising of the Christian tribes, in November 1738 Beyzade Mahmud Pasha was reappointed governor of Dukakin and Shkodra. During this assignment, he held also the title vizier given as a reward for his successes against the Austrians in Kosova and Nish.<sup>500</sup> As the rebellions could undermine the result of the war, Mahmud Pasha was given the task of immediately moving to Shkodra and imposing order.<sup>501</sup> After returning to the governorship post, Mahmud began a punishing campaign against all the rebelling Christian tribes in the highland regions. The brutality displayed by Beyzade Mahmud in suppressing the insurgency harmed the governorship of Shkodra's relationship with the Christian element in the district. These acts ultimately led to the governor's demise, as he was mercilessly murdered in the center of the city by a group composed mostly of Catholic highlanders. Interestingly, there exists a record written, probably by a Catholic priest<sup>502</sup> about the day when Beyzade Mahmud was assassinated:

“On 5 February 1739

A memory to be kept in mind till the day of the judgment, how Beyzade Mahmud Vizier of Peja was murdered by Abdullah-aga-oglu Mehmed Aga with the highlanders. They murdered him because he was like the second Attila and wanted to destroy the human generation, annihilate the Christian faith, he wanted to decapitate the brothers the priests, and destroy all the churches, and because he ordered the taking of the benevolent Father Angelo of Pult to martyrize him. The blessed God did not tolerate this tyranny, that he wanted to do to the human generation. On Thursday he went to the bathhouse of Tophane to take a bath, after that, he mounted the horse with his hunters to go to the palace of Ali Culli. The highlanders waited for him near the house of Taft (Davut?) Mescaia, in the middle of the street they shot him with the riffles and later took out the swords from the sheaths and chopped him like an animal. . . .”<sup>503</sup>

This excerpt from the chronicle provides crucial evidence of the intense conflict between the Christian population and the authorities, particularly concerning the

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<sup>499</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 48.

<sup>500</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 145, 266 (20 Za 1150 (1 March 1738).

<sup>501</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 145, 1069 (10 Ş 1151 (23 November 1738).

<sup>502</sup>This chronicle was found by the scholar and historian Injac (Ignazio) Zamputi in the archives of Vatican when was doing research for his thesis. In his references this primary source is taken from the catalogues of Shkodra Archbishop.

<sup>503</sup>Zamputi, *Il Settecento Veneziano, e l'Albania Turca*, 80.

elimination of Beyzade Mahmud Pasha. Not only the governor of Shkodra but also an official with the vizier rank, still this did not stop the highlanders from taking revenge against him. On the other hand, with the concentration on the minor particulars in the text, a more profound understanding of local politics from a confessional perspective can be achieved. Hence, the Christian community in Shkodra was transformed from a marginalized group into a cohesive entity, demonstrating the ability to respond in an organized manner and assert its political influence in the district. Due also to the increased missionary activities from Venice and Austria through the Vatican's ecclesial system, the Christian highlanders could be used as a social diversion and military 'tool' against the Ottoman. Consequently, priests and chieftains from these tribes emerged as intermediaries between their communities and the Ottoman administration or the foreign states with a common religion.

In relation to the issue of factionalism in Shkodra, while there is no direct textual reference to this, it is noted that the Beyzade household would later align itself with the tanners' faction. However, from a retrospective analysis, it can be reasonably inferred that they may have been associated with this faction during the incident in question. The presence of Mehmed Aga, who led a group of Catholic highlanders, raises significant questions regarding whether the death of Beyzade Mahmud was exclusively due to his treatment of Christians in the region or if other circumstances contributed to this event. Given his status as an Ottoman official, it appears improbable that Mehmed Aga would oppose a vizier governor solely based on the aforementioned reasons. Furthermore, the assassination transpired in a bathhouse situated in the Tophane quarter, an area within the influence of the tailors' zone. Accordingly, it can be posited that the elimination of Beyzade Vizier Mahmud Pasha was influenced by the ongoing factional strife in Shkodra.

#### 4.5 The Rise of Çavuşzade Family

Following the death of Beyzade Mahmud Pasha, in May 1739 the governorship of Shkodra was granted to Çavuşzade Suleiman Pasha. At that time, he was in the retinue of the provincial governor of Bosnia Vizier Ali Pasha, and was given the task of *muhafız* (defender) of the region from the Austrians. Due to the continuous unrest in Shkodra, the central government ordered him to move instantly to the city and punish all those who were responsible for the assassination of the previous governor.<sup>504</sup> However, in exchange for this post, Suleiman Pasha was asked to

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<sup>504</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 145, 1848 (20 S 1152 (29 May 1739).

contribute with two thousand soldiers on the Bosnian front and they would enter serving Vizier Ali Pasha.<sup>505</sup> After the appointment was finalized, Suleiman Pasha was the first among the Çavuşzades who would become governor of Shkodra, and after him, other family members followed.<sup>506</sup>

As the origins of the family are not known, it was again Çavuşzade Suleiman who was the first member mentioned in the Ottoman primary sources. In this document, he was sued by the Christian community of Zadrina village for a sum of forty-five sacks of *akçe*, in March 1739. Nonetheless, because he was tasked with joining the military expedition against the Austrians, Suleiman's case was postponed until after the war. Hence, he received orders to join Vizier Ali Pasha of Bosnia's service along with his fifteen hundred soldiers.<sup>507</sup> Çavuşzade Suleiman is referred to as *İskenderiyeli* in both the document and the appointment decree, suggesting that he and his family were natives of Shkodra. In addition, his ability to mobilize military troops up to two thousand shows that the Çavuşzades were a family of wealth and great influence in the region. Their palace location in the tailors' district and later involvement in the factional strife is evidence of the strong local support they enjoyed.<sup>508</sup>

The arrival of Suleiman Pasha as governor brought essential changes in the district of Shkodra. The foremost issue was the Ulcinj question because as always, the corsairs and the *agas* did not stop their usual activities in the sea. Supported by the local element, Çavuşzade Suleiman was able to bring them under control and limit their navigation in the Adriatic Sea. Instead, he forced the Ulcinj vessel to sail only after obtaining permission from the authorities and getting guarantee papers.<sup>509</sup> Moreover, the central government even assigned him the task of accompanying and securing the voyage of the Austrian ambassador, who was heading to the Ottoman capital to negotiate the peace treaty between the two states.<sup>510</sup> Even though he provided a short period of stability in the district, Çavuşzade Suleiman was murdered in May 1740 while serving as governor for less than a year.<sup>511</sup>

After the untimely passing of Çavuşzade Suleiman Pasha before the arrival of the

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<sup>505</sup>BOA C.DH. 276, 13778 (29 S 1152 (7 June 1739).

<sup>506</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet V. II*, 451-454.

<sup>507</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 145, 273 (20 Za 110 (11 March 1739).

<sup>508</sup>Bushati, *Shkodra dhe Motet V. I*, 182.

<sup>509</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 6 Settembre 1740, 2.

<sup>510</sup>BOA AE.SMHD.I. 257, 20906 (10 M 1153 (7 April 1740).

<sup>511</sup>BOA AE.SMHD.I. 251, 20469 (15 S 1153 (12 May 1740).

delegation, Gego Mahmud-paşa-zade Ali Pasha<sup>512</sup> was appointed to take his place and also entrusted with the responsibility of escorting the Austrian ambassador.<sup>513</sup> Ali Pasha was an experienced military official, who had proven himself on many fronts and as governor in various districts.<sup>514</sup> However, his presence in Shkodra was not welcomed by the locals as he was not able to maintain order like Çavuşzade Suleiman. After he escorted the Austrian ambassadors through the region, some people from Ulcinj<sup>515</sup> went as far as to try murdering Ali Pasha. It seems that the governor lacking support from the local elements was not able to impose his influence on the district. For this reason, the unrest in Shkodra restarted as Ulcinj and the tribal groups began to disrupt the order in the region.<sup>516</sup>

#### 4.5.1 Struggles for Power: The Çavuşzades and Their Adversaries

Shkodra's local elites, close to Çavuşzade Suleiman, wielded their economic and sociopolitical power to ensure the appointment of a governor who would serve their interests within the local administrative framework. Eventually, they were also able to limit the authority of undesirable governors like Ali Pasha or Beyzade Mahmud. The impact of this new political realignment in Shkodra became obvious after Ali Pasha the new governor appointed Yusuf Pasha, brother of Çavuşzade Suleiman. Following the steps of the brother, the new governor used all his power to consolidate the rule of law in Shkodra. The first target was again Ulcinj's *agas* and corsairs, whose illegal activities were put to an end.<sup>517</sup> Consequently, there was a substantial growth in the scale of Shkodra and the maritime trade along the coast, resulting in the eventual resumption of Venetian ships importing goods after a long absence.<sup>518</sup>

However, despite the successes and the local support while governing Shkodra, Çavuşzade Yusuf faced strong opposition from the military leadership of Ulcinj. His policies had a negative financial impact on the *agas* and their reputation in the

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<sup>512</sup>Not to be confused with the Mahmud-bey-zades of Peja, the family of Ali Pasha was from Prizren district of Kosovo region. From this household emerged many governors who served in various districts mostly in the Rumeli province.

<sup>513</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 147, 585 (10 Ra 1153 (5 June 1740).

<sup>514</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 145, 1980 (10 C 1152 (15 September 1739).

<sup>515</sup>In the Venetian report it says nothing regarding the names or their background.

<sup>516</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 6 Settembre 1740, 1-2.

<sup>517</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 1 Settembre 1742.

<sup>518</sup>This increase was reflected in the cargo manifest issued by the Venetian consulate of Shkodra during the years 1741-1742.

district. Nonetheless, they were aware that compared to the other governors, the Çavuşzades supported by the elite of Shkodra were too strong for a direct challenge. Nevertheless, it appears that the measures taken by the Çavuşzade governor were taken harshly by a group of people who sent complaints to the central authorities. The government requested an investigation because they received petitions about Yusuf Pasha being both just and cruel at the same time.<sup>519</sup> In addition, as shown in Venetian consulate reports, the leadership of Ulcinj also sought to discredit Yusuf Pasha in the imperial center through their connections and diplomatic channels. Therefore, an organized opposition against the Çavuşzade came to being by their enemies in the region. Eventually, he was discharged and in place was appointed Suleiman-paşa-zade Deli Hasan Pasha<sup>520</sup> from the Yusuf-beg-zade household of Bushat.<sup>521</sup>

The sudden emergence of the Yusuf-beg-zades within the political landscape of Shkodra should not be regarded as a mere coincidence or solely attributable to the Ulcinj factor. The Çavuşzades garnered local support, primarily from the tailors' faction, which represented only a segment of Shkodra's society. Consequently, it is likely that, after the ousting of Beyzade Mahmud Pasha and the subsequent ascension of the Çavuşzades, the existing political balance in the region was disrupted. This disruption likely elicited a response from the tanners' faction, resulting in the re-engagement of the Yusuf-beg-zades in local governance. The return of the Yusuf-beg-zades, following a significant period of absence, to the position of governor in Shkodra indicates that they may have been monitoring the emerging resistance against the Çavuşzades, viewing it as an opportunity to reclaim influence. Nevertheless, this abrupt shift in the political dynamics of Shkodra, characterized by the newfound competition between emerging households and established entities, is likely to heighten competitive tensions and escalate factional discord within the community.

The victory over the Çavuşzades did not last for long. Despite the lack of information on the specifics of their return to power in Shkodra, Yusuf Pasha is documented as the governor in a consul report from June 30, 1743. This shows that in less than a year the Çavuşzades were able to retake the governor's seat despite the opposition side. In addition, Yusuf Pasha managed to put under direct control of the local authority Ulcinj's seamen, who like during the time of Çavuşzade Suleiman were

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<sup>519</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 148, 948 (10 M 1155 (17 March 1742).

<sup>520</sup>Naçi, 'Te Dhena te Reja Rreth... ', 86.

<sup>521</sup>Ibid. data 1 Settembre 1742.

to sail only through official permission and guarantee papers.<sup>522</sup> Furthermore, the Çavuşzades seem to have a close client-patron relationship with influential figures from the grand vizier's circle in the imperial center.<sup>523</sup> Without strong connections in the capital, their legitimization over the governorship of Shkodra only through local support would have been difficult to maintain while having to compete with houses like the Beyzades of Peja or the Yusuf-beg-zades of Bushat.

As the situation in Shkodra was being stabilized, the Ottoman government was having problems on the Eastern front with Nadir Shah of Iran. The confessionalism issues revolved around the status of the Holy Cities within the Ottoman Empire as Iran exerted pressure to secure official recognition of the Jafari sect by advocating for a special place for it in the Kaaba.<sup>524</sup> In addition, Nadir Shah began the military mobilization towards the Ottoman border and sent men to negotiate the surrendering of Bagdad and Erzurum to the respective governors. The Ottoman responded by supporting a Safavid prince as a contender for the throne of Iran, but this move proved to be unsuccessful. In light of these movements, the Ottoman state finally declared war on Iran on September 23, 1743.<sup>525</sup> As the Ottomans mobilized the military resources, the governors like in the case of Çavuşzade Yusuf were commanded to join the campaign against Iran even before the declaration. The governor of Shkodra was ordered to enter the service of Diyarbakir's seraskier.<sup>526</sup>

#### 4.5.2 Shkodra Under the Çavuşzades Household

Due to the delicate situation in Shkodra, Yusuf Pasha tried to drag the departure to the front as long as possible. However, the imperial center through a threatening decree warned the governor of Shkodra about the consequences if he disobeyed the orders. Prior to his departure, he formally appointed his nephew Muhtar as an Ottoman Pasha, a decision facilitated by the support of the grand vizier, Ali Pasha.<sup>527</sup> The Venetian consul described Ali Pasha as a 'protector' of the Çavuşzade

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<sup>522</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 30 Giugno 1743.

<sup>523</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 29 Settembre 1743.

<sup>524</sup>Shaw, 'Iranian Relations with the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', 308.

<sup>525</sup>Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi IV/1*, 301-303.

<sup>526</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 150, 335 (20 B 1156 (9 September 1743).

<sup>527</sup>During that period, the only Grand Vizier known as Ali Pasha was Hekimoğlu. He held the position three times: from March 1732 to July 1735, then from April 1742 to October 1742, and lastly from February 1755 to May 1755.

family, indicating the prominent role he played in this appointment.<sup>528</sup> Eventually, Yusuf appointed Muhtar Pasha as a deputy, thereby safeguarding the household's interests by delegating the governorship to his nephew until his eventual return.<sup>529</sup> In addition, Yusuf Pasha sent letters to the Venetian authorities promising to protect the interests of Venice in the district of Shkodra as long as he remained governor. Openly, he requested the support of the Venetian lobby in the Ottoman capital, so that his rulership over Shkodra would continue without any inner or external obstacles.<sup>530</sup>

Judging from the rhetoric used by the Venetian vice-consul, the frequent praising done to the Çavuşzades in his reports shows the sympathy for this family. The extent of Venice's direct support for this family in Shkodra is not explicitly stated in the sources. However, the policies enacted by the Çavuşzades were aligned with the interests of Venice. The actions taken to neutralize the Ulcinj threat, which predominantly targeted Venetian subjects navigating the Adriatic Sea, the prohibition of North African corsairs seeking refuge in the coastal areas of Shkodra, and the safeguarding of Venetian subjects during their visits to the region, all served to advance the interests of Venice. Yusuf Pasha's correspondence, in which he sought assistance from the Venetian element in Istanbul to enhance their interests in the region, underscores the ongoing and meaningful communication between the two parties. During the reign of the Çavuşzades in Shkodra, the region experienced a substantial increase in exports, as merchandise made its way to Venice in greater quantities than ever before.<sup>531</sup>

Çavuşzade Muhtar Pasha, like those before him, upheld strict policies to ensure peace and order within the district. Even though significant concerns were posing a threat to the previous achievements, still he managed to effectively address and overcome them. Like always the primary task for Muhtar was keeping Ulcinj under control, which he succeeded thus continuing the good relationship with Venice. With the increasing prominence of Christians in Shkodra's society in terms of economics and politics, he endeavored to forge a stronger bond with them for support. Moreover, he became an intermediary between the provincial pasha of Bosnia and

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<sup>528</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 29 Settembre 1743.

<sup>529</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 29 Settembre 1743.

<sup>530</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 6 Novembre 1743.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid. This increase in Venetian imports from the scale of Shkodra can be seen in the cargo manifests issued by the consulate office between the period August 1741 to June 1744.



the highlanders of Kuçi tribe<sup>532</sup> and managed to stop the conflicts among them.<sup>533</sup> Despite his achievements, the enforcement of the Çavuşzades' rule through coercion and the backing of their supporters effectively established a sense of tranquillity and safety yet failed to diminish the strength of the opposing forces.

Eventually, the order got challenged by the tanners, thus restarting the factional strife inside the city of Shkodra. The names mentioned as culprits for causing the unrest were the sons of Ismail Aga the tanner and their relative Mehmed Aga.<sup>534</sup> Similarly like in the previous cases, these men from the tanners' faction attacked the bazaar and the docks of Shkodra creating a situation of turmoil. Muhtar Pasha appeared to struggle in managing and addressing the incident that transpired in the heart of the city. For this reason, the central government appointed Kurt Mehmed-paşa-zade Abdullah Pasha from Vlora<sup>535</sup> as governor to neutralize the troublemakers, who sought to disrupt the peace in Shkodra. After his arrival, all the criminals who looted the city's commercial areas were pursued, resulting in the execution of five of them and the burning of their houses as punishment.<sup>536</sup> Even though Abdullah Pasha completed the assignment successfully, he was called to the military campaign in the east to enter the service of Yeğen Mehmed Pasha in Kars.<sup>537</sup>

The immediate departure of the pasha towards the front shows that he had no intention to settle and get mixed in the local politics of Shkodra. Instead, after Abdullah Pasha departed, the "people of the city" selected Ebu Bekir Beg, the son of Çavuşzade Suleiman, as their leader, as detailed in vince-consul Duoda's report. The 'people of the city' referred to by him are the influential individuals and the supporters of the tailors' faction backing the Çavuşzade, who had the power to control the local political landscape by selecting the deputy-governor.<sup>538</sup> Nevertheless, compared to his predecessors, Ebu Bekir Beg struggled to maintain peace and impose authority in the district. In a major conflict between the Pastrovici,<sup>539</sup> who

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<sup>532</sup>They were a tribe in the region of Montenegro that moved throughout district of Shkodra and sometimes would plunder Bosnia as well.

<sup>533</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, p. 50.

<sup>534</sup>Ibid.

<sup>535</sup>He was the son of Kurt Mehmed Pasha of Gjakova household, at that time he was governor of Vlora district.

<sup>536</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 3 Aprile 1745.

<sup>537</sup>İzzi Süleyman Efendi, *İzzi Tarihi (Osmanlı Tarihi 1157-1165/1744-1752)*, hz. Ziya Yılmaz, (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2019): 82.

<sup>538</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 3 Aprile 1745.

<sup>539</sup>They were a tribe living in the Venetian dominions around the bay of Kotor known by the name of *Albania-Veneta*. The Pastrovici lived close to the Venetian-Ottoman border, their possessions stretched from Budva to Bar.

were Venetian subjects, and the Ottoman subjects from the city of Bar, the situation escalated so much that it became a diplomatic issue. Çavuşzade Ebu Bekir proved to be powerless as a deputy governor since he could not do anything to solve the situation occurring in his district.<sup>540</sup>

Although vice-consul Duoda's intervention tranquilized the relationship of Bar local authorities with the Venetian subject, still the circumstances in the region were far from good. In the bazaar of Shkodra, the artisans organized patrols with armed men to protect the place from being looted or attacked by the bandits.<sup>541</sup> In a manner reminiscent of Shkodra, the circumstances in other districts were similarly concerning. The region experienced widespread unrest and disorder, exacerbated by the insubordinate tendencies of the local leadership. In response, the central authorities commissioned a punitive campaign led by Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha, a former grand vizier, to restore order and stability. Following the execution of some local notables in the region, the leaders of Elbasan and Berat took refuge in Shkodra. Interestingly, after the army approached Shkodra, Çavuşzade Muhtar Pasha intervened because Abdullah Pasha was close to his household.<sup>542</sup> Thus, the Çavuşzades enjoyed not only the support of the local element in the city but were well integrated within the imperial network at the capital.

Ebu Bekir was replaced by Muhtar Pasha who proved to be more competent in administering the district. However, towards the end of 1746, the circumstances took a turn for the worse with Ulcinj's sailors and military leaders once again creating unfavorable conditions in the area. The corsairs from Libya and Tunisia anchored in the port of Ulcinj and at the Buna River entrance that leads to the city of Shkodra. On the other hand, the appearance of the North African corsairs in the Adriatic alerted also the Venetian authorities. By pressuring through their consul in Shkodra, in the end, they managed to get them out of Ulcinj's coast.<sup>543</sup> In light of persistent conflicts, the central government has decided to reinstate Çavuşzade Yusuf Pasha, the former governor known for his competence as governor. However, his return would mark a new stage in the factional strife in Shkodra.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 11 Agosto 1745.

<sup>541</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 25 Settembre 1745, 2.

<sup>542</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 28 Agosto 1746, 2.

<sup>543</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 20, 26 Settembre; 7 Ottobre 1746.

<sup>544</sup> BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 152, 1233 (29 L 1159 (14 November 1746)).

## 4.6 The Great Houses in Factional Conflicts

With the return of Çavuşzade Yusuf Pasha, contrary to the expectations of local and central authorities, the political situation in Shkodra took a turn for the worse. The tanners' faction under the leadership of the Yusuf-beg-zades clashed and rose again to challenge the Çavuşzades for the governorship seat. Suleiman Beg, son of Halil Pasha<sup>545</sup> led a skirmish against Governor Yusuf Pasha, though a minor clash occurred it resulted in the death of ten people for each group.<sup>546</sup> In an Ottoman report issued a year and a half later, the same incident was mentioned and according to it, Suleiman attacked the palace of Çavuşzade Yusuf setting it on fire.<sup>547</sup> The reasons that made the tanners and Suleiman Beg attack an official governor who also has experience in the military and administrative subjects are not very clear. It is possible, that Çavuşzades position and that of their allies in Shkodra might have got weaker or that during that time the tanners could have perceived themselves as stronger. In the end, Yusuf Pasha remained in his post as their enemies could not overthrow them. However, this event marked the beginning of a conflict that would embroil numerous households in a bitter struggle, leading to a decade of turmoil across the entire region.

This challenge was not taken well by Yusuf Pasha, who sought to reciprocate and began to neutralize the opposition, the tanners' faction. These confrontations between the two factions shattered the order that the Çavuşzades with great efforts managed to achieve. After more than fifteen years, the factionalism of Shkodra made a reappearance in the Ottoman reports. Nevertheless, in the document issued in June 1747, the central authorities highlighted the 'uninterrupted' factional division in the city of Shkodra between the tailors and tanners. Due to the social and material damage of this ongoing factionalism, the government requested an end to the hostility between the two sides. If failed to comply with the orders, the government threatened to send an army to punish all the participants in the conflict.<sup>548</sup> The awareness of the government regarding the social and political circumstances in Shkodra is evidence of the gravity of the situation in the district. Moreover, the complaints sent by the subjects to the imperial capital might as well have provided

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<sup>545</sup>From the genealogical tree of the Bushatlis, Halil Pasha was one of the sons of Yusuf-beg-zade Vizier Suleiman Pasha. In the Ottoman sources, he was given various governorships and in official reports was addressed as 'Sülo-paşa-zade' Halil. However, Suleiman Beg is not the son but the nephew of Hasan Pasha also having the nickname 'Deli'.

<sup>546</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 2 Gennaio 1746.

<sup>547</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 335 (10 Ş 1160 (17 August 1747).

<sup>548</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 60 (20 R 1160 (29 June 1747).

the authorities with the needed information on the matter.

In addition, the names mentioned in this report are well-known, for example, ‘tanner’ Ismail Aga in the first list of participants fifteen years ago, however, in this conflict are his sons Ali and Ibrahim. Interestingly, the first name for the tanners’ faction is that of a certain Mehmed Push (?), who appears to be among the leaders. The surname may be a distorted version of Bushat; thus, the mentioned Mehmed most probably was from the Yusuf-beg-zades household. Eventually, like his father Mustafa Beg who tried to take the governorship by force in the 1720s, Mehmed also got involved in the factional strife for the same purpose. On the other side, from the tailors’ group only Çavuşzade Yusuf’s name was given, however, the addressing to him is quite important. He was considered to be *yerlû* meaning native or local of Shkodra and as a member of the tailors, Yusuf Pasha did not behave equally favoring his faction which led to his discharge from the position of the governor.<sup>549</sup>

#### 4.6.1 The Central Government and the Factions

In his place, the central government appointed Abdi Pasha<sup>550</sup> who was commanded to put an end in a carefully to the factionalism in Shkodra and also to try moderately disbanding the factional structures.<sup>551</sup> During his tenure, Abdi Pasha faced strong opposition from Çavuşzades and the tailors’ faction, who tried to neutralize the new governor and prevent him from asserting his authority in the region. Yusuf Pasha together with his nephews caused unrest in Shkodra and even assaulted the state institutions like the governorship building and the court. In addition, the Çavuşzades removed the judge and other civil servants from their posts to replace them with their men. Yusuf Pasha went to great lengths by personally overseeing the trials and even taking on the role of the judge himself. Abdi Pasha demonstrated his incapacity to challenge the supremacy of the tailors’ faction, which guided by the Çavuşzades, caused his total disempowerment in governance matters.<sup>552</sup>

This information was recorded in a report addressed to the Rumeli provincial

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<sup>549</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 60 (20 R 1160 (29 June 1747).

<sup>550</sup>In the Albanian literature he is considered as the being from the Gjakova household but by the name Abdullah Pasha. The Venetian sources give his name as the Ottomans, Abdi Pasha which leaves a gap regarding his family origins. In Mehmed Süreyya’s work *Sicill-i Osmani*, there is an Albanian Abdullah Pasha who served in 1746-1747 as *beylerbeyi* of Shkodra. However, the central government issued an appointment of Abdullah Pasha in March 1749 as governor of Shkodra with the nickname Kurt Mehmed-paşa-zade, see: BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 154, 113 (10 R 1162 (29 June 1749). This means that Abdi Pasha and Abdullah Pasha are different persons.

<sup>551</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 60 (20 R 1160 (29 June 1747).

<sup>552</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 335 (10 Ş 1160 (17 August 1747).

governor Yayha Pasha. He received the assignment to restore order and authority in Shkodra and to break the influence of the factions. Nonetheless, according to the perspective of the central authorities, Yusuf Pasha along with his nephew Muhtar Pasha, were exploiting this situation of turmoil to enrich themselves through looting. In addition, in the document, there is an emphasis on the manipulation of both factions by Çavuşzades for their interests. The authorities instructed Yayha Pasha to take measures by preventing the heads of the tailors and tanners' guild from becoming an *ayan*, thus keeping them far from the local institution where they could influence the political landscape of Shkodra. Moreover, the men of these factions wandering around the city armed disturbing the common people constitutes a serious problem for the social order. The provincial governor had to punish those who would threaten public safety and take *nezir* (vow) from the guilds.<sup>553</sup>

Meanwhile, Yahya Pasha was to directly intervene in Shkodra with his troops and create a loyalist armed group from the locals as a countermove against the 'bandits' from the factions. Furthermore, the government requested the collection of all the taxes like poll tax (*jizya*), tithe, *avarız* (temporal) tax, and other extras taken in time of war. As for Çavuşzade Yusuf Pasha, the center wanted from him the release of the captives and the belongings of a Venetian captain murdered by the pirates from Ulcinj.<sup>554</sup> The ship of the captain was taken down by the Ulcinj's seamen, his family and belongings inside were taken by the Yusuf Pasha. According to the Ottoman laws, these materials of the Venetian captain had to be submitted to the state treasury, however, the former governor of Shkodra seized them for himself. Thus, Yahya Pasha was ordered to bring order and provide peace in the region by subjugating the factions and the Çavuşzades, who at that time were unofficially ruling the district.<sup>555</sup>

On the other hand, Abdi Pasha sought to find his solution concerning the tailors' faction and the Çavuşzade threat. Hence, he allied with the tanners' faction eventually balancing the political powers in Shkodra. This maneuver enabled Abdi Pasha to expand his authority and reinforce his standing as governor by assuming

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<sup>553</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 335 (10 Ş 1160 (17 August 1747)).

<sup>554</sup>In the Venetian reports, there are more details regarding this incident. The Venetian Captain Grilo while sailing under the French flag was attacked by the Ulcinj pirates, who murdered him and seized the ship. On the ship, there was the captain's family and his material possessions like money and jewelry. Grilo was apparently from Perast, a region part of the Venetian possession in Kotor Bay, therefore his people took revenge by murdering six Ulcinj seamen causing strife among the two populations. In addition, this case was addressed also in the Ottoman capital, for which the Rumeli governor was informed about the implication of Yusuf Pasha in this story. Interestingly, the wealthy relatives of the Grilo bribed some persons close to the place where the captives were imprisoned eventually helping them escape to Perast. For more information on this story, see: A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 15 Giugno 1747.

<sup>555</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 335 (10 Ş 1160 (17 August 1747)).

control over the administrative powers. Nevertheless, instead of imposing order and peace as requested by the government, Abdi Pasha decided to follow the example of the Çavuşzades. He assaulted the bazaar and quarter of the tailors as a way of avenging the challenge they posed to him previously. After that, the pasha seized the collected taxes from the region that were supposed to be submitted to the state. In addition, he specifically aimed at the traders and plundered their goods, leading to widespread dissatisfaction directed towards him. According to the complaints of the merchants, Abdi Pasha had given them surety that the men from the tanners would not touch them, however, on the contrary, they were assaulted and the goods taken violently by the bandits.<sup>556</sup>

The merchants through the support of Shkodra's kadi addressed this injustice and oppression by Abdi Pasha to the central authorities. The tanners' men did not stop with the merchants, they even pillaged the bazaar, the docks, and the storehouses containing the goods. Their target proves that in this conflict, the merchant class was mostly part of the tailors' faction and, therefore, their main financial supporter. Nonetheless, due to the severity of the circumstances, Yahya Pasha was assigned to investigate all these occurrences and prepare a report concerning the factional strife between the tanners and tailors.<sup>557</sup> In particular, the case of Abdi Pasha is a remarkable example of understanding the role and the functionality of a faction membership when the society is in a state of political factionalism. Before he moved to the tanners, Abdi Pasha was incapable of completing the tasks that were required of him as a governor. On the other hand, the Çavuşzades leading the tailors dictated the rule undisturbed in Shkodra. Only after allying with the tanners Abdi Pasha was able to impose his authority and rulership on the region. But what place did he have in the tanners' faction? Was he a leading figure or just a stunt performer in the story?

It appears that Abdi Pasha was in a mutual agreement with the tanners' faction as both sides needed each other to stand and resist the tailors' influence. In practice, Abdi Pasha was an officially appointed governor who possessed legitimized authority from the imperial center. Thus, tanners saw him as the right person to curb the power of the tailors and overthrow the Çavuşzades. From Abdi's perspective, the only way he could survive as Shkodra's governor was to make connections with a segment of society. Due to the bilateral nature of the factionalism in the city, it was easy for him as there was only one alternative against his enemies, and they were the tanners. Even though both sides seemed to benefit from their relationship, the

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<sup>556</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 335 (10 Ş 1160 (17 August 1747).

<sup>557</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 335 (10 Ş 1160 (17 August 1747).

inquiry arises: who truly wielded authority within the tanners' faction? None other than the Yusuf-beg-zades of Bushat, who since the 1720s were always attempting to overcome the political dominance of the Çavuşzades and the tailors.

Although, in the Ottoman sources Abdi Pasha and the tanners were accused of various crimes and counted responsible for the unrest in Shkodra, in the Venetian reports there is no mention of any wrongdoing or misgovernance. This is probably due to a policy of vice-consul Duoda who wanted to keep on good terms with any appointed governor of Shkodra to later use the good relationship for his benefit. Abdi Pasha managed to arbitrate the conflict between the Venetian subjects Perast and the people of Ulcinj, in addition, he sent a letter of recommendation for Consul Duoda<sup>558</sup> to Venice's authorities. The tanners held the governorship of Shkodra until the end of November 1746 as seen from consular correspondence.<sup>559</sup> After that Abdi Pasha was dismissed by the center due to the malpractice during his tenure as governor of Shkodra and the disorder he caused in the city.

Ultimately, the Ottoman government reinstated the Çavuşzades and Yusuf Pasha as governor by conditioning him to provide order and to bring peace to the district. In addition, he was commanded to put an end to the banditry taking place in Shkodra, protect the subjects, and punish those who would get into unlawful activities.<sup>560</sup> He began imposing order, especially concerning the maritime trade because Ulcinj's corsairs and its *agas* again assaulted the Venetian vessels and disrupted their imports from the scales in Shkodra. Yusuf Pasha even renounced the commissions given to him by the Ulcinj's corsairs for every shipload just to maintain good relationships with Venice. In addition, he also repulsed a military expedition of neighboring governors sent by the Rumeli governor.<sup>561</sup> In practice, the Çavuşzade returned to power by continuing with their previous policies, protecting the interests of the local notables, taking the Venetian authorities by their side, and imposing order and peace even through harsh measures.

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<sup>558</sup> During this time, Consul Duoda tried to get the consular rights over the port of Shkodra. In administrative terms, he was a vice consul dependent on Durres' consulate and possessed only the right to send reports about the political situation in the region or prepare cargo manifests for the Venetian authorities in exchange for small commissions. Duoda had no legal or jurisdiction power over the port of Shkodra for this reason he tried to use all his connections in order to succeed in his plan.

<sup>559</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 26 Novembre 1747.

<sup>560</sup> BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 562 (29 L 1160 (3 November 1747).

<sup>561</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 5 Dicembre 1747.

#### 4.6.2 Governance at Odds: The Beyzades vs. Çavuşzades

However, in his return to Yusuf Pasha to the governorship of Shkodra, he did not calculate well the relationships with the central authorities. In the past, the Çavuşzade enjoyed considerable support from the government through patron-client relations with some powerful statesmen in the imperial capital. Consequently, after a short period of return, they were to be replaced by Hudaverdi Pasha from the Beyzades of Peja, appointed in May 1748 as the new governor of Shkodra.<sup>562</sup> The Beyzades returned to rule Shkodra nine years after the assassination of their member Mahmud Pasha, the cousin of Hudaverdi Pasha. The new governor maintained a hostile stance against Çavuşzade probably due to the suspicion of their implication in the plot against Beyzade Mahmud.<sup>563</sup> Following his arrival, Hudaverdi began reinstating the order by eliminating the rebel troublemakers starting with Ibrahim Aga, son of Ismail Aga of the tanners.<sup>564</sup>

This impulsive nature of the governor despite his intention of imposing discipline in the city prevented him from grasping the reality of the local politics in Shkodra. Contrary, to Abdi Pasha who after realizing that he could not withstand the pressure of the Çavuşzades, and tailors' faction immediately aligned himself with the tanners'. Even though his tenure as governor did not last long, still he was able to overcome the opposition against him through the support of the tanners' faction. In the case of Hudaverdi, he could not rely on tailors as they supported the Çavuşzades, enemies of the Beyzade, thus the only option he had was the tanners. However, by executing one of the main figures of this faction, the new governor made a 'political suicide' that made him lose any possible support from the population of Shkodra. In these circumstances, Hudaverdi Pasha was only normally the governor of the district, unable to impose his authority.

On the other hand, Çavuşzade Yusuf dictated the politics of Shkodra with the backing of the tailors' faction and the local support. He intervened in a diplomatic matter between the Ottomans and Venice after the pirates of Tripoli kidnapped a wealthy Venetian subject in the river Buna. Even the *agas* of Ulcinj denounced this crime to the governor of Tripoli, as the responsibility for those waters fell on them. This incident caused a rift between the pirates from North Africa and the Ulcinj seamen, who threatened to close the ports to them. On the other hand, the *agas* and captains from the castle of Ulcinj distanced themselves from their fellow

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<sup>562</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 1022 (20 Ca 1161 (18 May 1748).

<sup>563</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 18 Giugno 1748.

<sup>564</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 9 Ottobre 1748.



seamen. Yusuf Pasha turned the situation in his favor by going against his allies from Ulcinj to gain the support of the Venetian authorities. He even proposed to the central authorities a decree to annihilate all the pirate vessels anchored on the Ulcinj coast and asked Consul Duoda<sup>565</sup> to mediate with his superiors in Venice and especially with the *bailo* at the Ottoman capital.<sup>566</sup>

The initiatives undertaken by Yusuf Pasha did not yield the anticipated outcomes. In March 1749, the central authority appointed Kurt Mehmed-paşa-zade Abdullah Pasha of Gjakova<sup>567</sup> as the new governor, replacing Hudaverdi Pasha. Abdullah Pasha was a relative of Ali Pasha, the former governor of Shkodra; however, his tenure was notably brief due to the influence exerted by the Çavuşzades. In an unexpected turn of events, Yusuf Pasha was assassinated near Podgorica by local sipahi, who were adversaries of his.<sup>568</sup> This paved the way for the arrival of Abdullah Pasha of Gjakova in Shkodra. In a twist of fate, the first task was the investigation into the murder of Çavuşzade Yusuf, who, had he been alive, would have challenged Abdullah Pasha's authority.<sup>569</sup> The relations between the pasha of Gjakova and the people of Shkodra deteriorated after the confiscation of merchants' goods as a punishment to the city for non-payment of taxes to the central authority. This was probably an act of revenge for the murder of one of his men by in his private room. After these events, Abdullah Pasha appealed to the government about the impossibility of governing Shkodra and the necessity of a punitive campaign against them.<sup>570</sup>

Under the leadership of Çavuşzade Muhtar Pasha, the local population rose against Abdullah Pasha and forced him to flee from the Shkodra fortress, so he fled to his hometown of Gjakova. However, after arriving there he took revenge by executing the merchants who were close to the Çavuşzades. In addition, he confiscated their merchandise to later sell it for his profit.<sup>571</sup> Despite his efforts, Muhtar Pasha did not become governor because the center decided to appoint Ethem Pasha from the Beyzades of Peja creating tensions between the governorship and the local

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<sup>565</sup>Yusuf Pasha explained to Duoda that he could also write a letter to the *bailo* and the Venetian authorities, however, he was afraid that the central government would perceive these acts in a 'negative' way.

<sup>566</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 9 Ottobre 1748.

<sup>567</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 154, 113 (10 R 1162 (30 March 1749).

<sup>568</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 9 Maggio 1749.

<sup>569</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 154, 310 (20 B 1162 (6 July 1749).

<sup>570</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 18 Agosto 1749.

<sup>571</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 4 Dicembre 1749.

population who supported the Çavuşzades.<sup>572</sup> Learning from the mistakes of his relative Hudaverdi Pasha, Ethem Pasha aligned himself with the tanners' a move that balanced the political and social powers between the two sides. This measure protected him from Muhtar Pasha, who, as the leader of the tailors' faction, could not easily eliminate his rival at that point.<sup>573</sup>

However, in Gjakova, Abdullah Pasha decided to clash with the Beyzade household as a response to their increasing influence in the region by possessing the governorship of both Shkodra and Dukakin. He first provoked the Beyzades by closing the trade route that passed from Gjakova in the direction of Shkodra. The aim here was to financially weaken Shkodra as most of the goods exported from its ports were coming from the regions of Kosova. Abdullah Pasha hoped that this action would turn the population against the Beyzade governors. However, the Beyzades under the leadership of Hudaverdi and Ethem Pashas inflicted a heavy defeat on the Gjakova household.<sup>574</sup> Following the defeat of Ali Pasha and Abdullah Pasha, the Beyzades consolidated their power in Shkodra and the region of Kosova becoming among the strongest household in the province of Rumeli.

For Ethem Pasha the victory was essential, especially concerning his authority in the city of Shkodra. After that, the support from the local population increased beyond the tanners' faction. By liberating the trade routes, he attracted to his side the merchant class of Shkodra who the most influential social and financial group in the tailors' faction were. Eventually, fearing the increased power of the Beyzades in two districts and losing the support of locals in Shkodra, the Çavuşzades decided to act. Thus, on June 15, 1751, Muhtar Pasha led a large military force<sup>575</sup> against the Beyzades and attacked the quarter of the tanners. However, he was defeated by the tanners and Ethem Pasha was confirmed as the leading political figure in Shkodra.<sup>576</sup> This was the first clash in which the attackers were the tailors and the first time when the tanners' neighborhood was attacked.

As the Beyzades got the upper hand in the political landscape of Shkodra and were a consolidated military force through the support of the tanners' faction, they decided to push forward by eliminating permanently the Çavuşzade threat. Thus, through a conspirative scheme, Ethem Pasha assassinated his rival, Muhtar Pasha.

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<sup>572</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 4 Dicembre 1749, p. 2.

<sup>573</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 54.

<sup>574</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 11 Settembre 1750.

<sup>575</sup>The number of twelve thousand given in the chronicle found by Giuseppe Zamputti is exaggerated given the period and the human resources in the region.

<sup>576</sup>Zamputti, *Il Settecento Veneziano e L'Albania Turca*, 81.

He made the local authorities and Shkodra's notables believe that this act was made following an imperial decree. However, after the supporters and members of the Çavuşzades learned that it was a plot designed by the governor. Consequently, they retributed in the same way with a plot that ended with the assassination of Ethem Pasha, his brother, and close men.<sup>577</sup> The death of the leaders of each household represented a great loss concerning the leadership of the factions. Furthermore, these sudden assassinations left a political vacuum in Shkodra which other great households could take advantage of.

Table 4.2 The Appointment list for Shkodra, covering the years 1739 to 1751, which includes the names of the governors, their households, and the factional affiliation

<b>Governorship of Shkodra</b>	<b>Appointment Period</b>
Beyzade Mahmud Pasha	Mid1730 – May 1739
Beyzade Hüdaverdi Pasha (Deputy)	February 1736
Tailors' Faction Çavuşzade Suleiman Pasha	End of May 1739 – May 1740
Gego Mahmud-paşa-zade Ali Pasha	May 1740 – September 1742
Tailors' Faction Çavuşzade Yusuf Pasha	September 1742 – December 1742
Tanners' Faction Sülo-paşa-zade Deli Hasan Pasha	December 1742 – June 1743
Tailors' Faction Çavuşzade Yusuf Pasha	30 June 1743 – June 1749
Çavuşzade Muhtar Pasha (Deputy)	September 1743 – April 1745
Çavuşzade Ebu Bekir Beg (Deputy)	April 1745 – August 1746
Çavuşzade Muhtar Pasha (Deputy)	August 1746 – November 1746
Tanners' Faction Abdi Pasha	June 1749 – November 1749
Tailors' Faction Çavuşzade Yusuf Pasha	3 November 1746 – May 1748
Beyzade Hüdaverdi Pasha	May 1748 – March 1749
Kurd Mehmed-paşa-zade Abdullah Pasha	March 1749 – December 1749
Tanners' Faction Beyzade Ethem Pasha	December 1749 – September 1751

For the Beyzades the situation escalated quickly, from being the leading household

<sup>577</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 22 Settembre 1751.

of Shkodra and Dukagjin to the brink of losing everything. After the death of Ethem and his brother, Hudaverdi remained the main leader of the family but even he was facing considerable challenges from the Gjakova household who was keeping the trade routes passing through Kosova closed. The people of Shkodra and the merchants suffered from the absence of merchandise from trade and also the ongoing factional conflict that disrupted the social and economic order in the city.<sup>578</sup> The tanners' faction, on the other hand, with the retreat of the Bezyades, lost strong leadership. Even the interference of the central government through official appointments never occurred, probably due to the inability of the foreign pasha to grasp the political realities of Shkodra.

## 4.7 Conclusion

In the initial section of this chapter, I sought to provide a comprehensive analysis of the socio-political and administrative landscape in the district of Shkodra, focusing on the period preceding the emergence of factionalism. This exploration aimed to uncover the underlying circumstances and contributing factors that may have laid the groundwork for the rise of the factions. By delving into the dynamics of local power, governance, and Ottoman state affairs, I aimed to shed light on how these elements intertwine to facilitate the emergence of factional groups. The military campaigns between the Ottoman Empire and European states during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were critical in disrupting the socio-economic order and reshaping the political power dynamics among local groups and prominent individuals. In addition, the strategic location of the Shkodra district, situated close to the frontlines of conflict, played a crucial role in amplifying the turmoil that enveloped the region and contributed to an atmosphere of unrest and uncertainty among the local population.

By concentrating on the emergence of the factions, I aimed to elucidate their characteristics during the initial phase, utilizing *mühimme* records from archival sources as the basis for my analysis. The findings indicate that the tanners established a faction earlier than their counterparts, with support emerging not only from the 'old town' but also from rural areas. In the early 1720s, the influence of both factions was markedly constrained, rendering them incapable of effectively challenging the local authorities. However, during the period from 1726 to 1730, the tanners and tailors in Shkodra experienced a resurgence, resulting in a significant increase

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<sup>578</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 30 Giugno 1752.

in their influence, as documented by historical records. These factions successfully forged alliances and expanded their social networks beyond Shkodra by incorporating prominent local figures, including governors and captains from significant coastal towns such as Ulcinj. The interregional development was a response to the pressure policies of the Ottoman Empire within the provinces. These policies prompted local powerholders to mobilize factions to oppose the authorities.

The concluding sections of the chapter examined the period from 1730 to 1752, a time that signified a new phase in the factionalism of Shkodra. The historical households contended for the governorship, each representing distinct factions. The Çavuşzades from the new town secured the allegiance of the tailors, while the tanners established alliances with various households from the surrounding rural areas. This dynamic illustrates the complex array of interests and rivalries that defined the conflict. The competition between these forces served as a pivotal moment in the sociopolitical landscape of Shkodra and significantly contributed to the disruption of power balances within the region. In the context of governance, various factions were utilized by local powerholders to facilitate their rise to the administrative center of the governorship of Shkodra. Individuals appointed by the central government, who originate from outside these factions, frequently encounter political marginalization or find it necessary to forge alliances with them.

## **5. THE REGIONAL ORDER OF THE BUSHATLI HOUSEHOLD**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on three main themes. Firstly, there is the end of factionalism following the victory of the tanners' faction. What factors contributed to Bushatli Mehmed's victory, and what strategies did he implement to achieve this success? Furthermore, how did he subsequently engage with the factions after winning? The next part deals with measures and policies implemented by the Bushatlis in their quest to consolidate power in Shkodra. Furthermore, following the acquisition of substantial authority in the region, the nature of its relationship with the central authority is illustrated. In conclusion, this chapter presents an analysis of the regional order established by the Bushatlis. Through an approach grounded in political economy, this analysis elucidates the negotiation processes involving both local and central elements, which contributed to the emergence of the Bushatlis as influential power magnates.

### **5.2 End of the Anarchy in Shkodra**

The loss of the respective heads of the factions disrupted the political balances in Shkodra, causing serious unrest and socio-economic turmoil throughout the district. At least until the end of January 1753, the situation appeared to have been so unstable that the appointed governors could not even make it to the governance seat.<sup>579</sup> This suggests that the government's authority over the provincial administrative structure could no longer be enforced without the involvement of the local component. Consequently, the factions within Shkodra commenced a reorganiza-

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<sup>579</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 20 Gennaio 1753.

tion of their leadership structures by replacing prior leaders. This process was more straightforward for the tailors' faction, as they had consistently resided within the Çavuşzade household, enabling them to select a family member who could effectively safeguard their interests. Among the various potential candidates, Çavuşzade Mehmed, the son of Muhtar Pasha, was selected to assume leadership of the faction. While there is limited information regarding the selection process and the specific timing of this decision, it is documented that in March 1753, Muhtar-paşa-zade Mehmed was appointed as the new governor of Shkodra. This appointment also signified the return of the governorship to the tailors' faction.<sup>580</sup>

This assignment can be attributed to the connections between the Çavuşzades, and influential agents present in the imperial center. Moreover, it is possible that the Ottoman government perceived the tailors' faction as being more approachable for negotiations and mutual understanding in contrast to the tanners. It should be noted that the tailors enjoyed most of the support from the urbanite elite, thus their mediation with the central authorities might have been crucial during this process. Furthermore, the Çavuşzades obtained the leadership of Shkodra's community<sup>581</sup> through Governor Mehmed Pasha's cousin Abbas Beg, who was regarded as an influential figure. However, by relying too much on his position, Abbas Beg caused a serious conflict as he detained a well-known local merchant from Shkodra. According to the sources, the imprisonment was unjust and without any reason, thus causing a division between the tailors' faction and the Çavuşzades.<sup>582</sup>

The seemingly advantageous position for the Çavuşzades and the tailors turned into a conflict. Although Mehmed Pasha was the official governor of the Shkodra district recognized by the state, Abbas Beg was the one dictating the politics in the city, leading to a family clash between the two. Even before the merchant's arrest, the two cousins had a tense relationship contributing to the conflict's beginning.<sup>583</sup> Most probably have been due to the appointment of Mehmed instead of Abbas as governor of Shkodra. In addition, there was gossip regarding the wife of Abbas Beg, who was from the family of Vizier Suleiman Pasha Yusuf-beg-zade from Bushat. According to Consul Duoda, being from this old household, she was very ambitious and pushed her husband to become Pasha and governor of Shkodra.<sup>584</sup> Given these

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<sup>580</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 155, 1994 (29 L 1166 (14 March 1753).

<sup>581</sup>In the Venetian report, the term *Capo del Popolo* used to describe Çavuşzade Abbas must be related to his position as the leader of the commercial quarter of Shkodra, where the power base of the tailors' faction was found.

<sup>582</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 4 Settembre 1753.

<sup>583</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 4 Settembre 1753.

<sup>584</sup>This is interesting evidence even though the two factions were competing and clashing with each other,

conditions, Mehmed Pasha decided to confront Abbas Beg and his allies to solidify his power, both within the household and the tailors' faction, as well as in his role as governor.

On September 22, 1753, Mehmed Pasha, by relying on the support of his maternal household the Gradanik<sup>585</sup> led an attack on Abbas Beg's palace in Shkodra, forcing him to surrender. Eventually, Abbas retreated to the Çavuzades' household estates at the Buna River shore and ceased to be a threat to his cousin. With this decisive victory, Mehmed Pasha avoided an inner division inside the faction that might have led to the weakening of the tailors against their rivals. Moreover, he was reconfirmed as governor of Shkodra in October, right after the conflict ended, which reflects the support he enjoyed in the imperial center.<sup>586</sup> However, the clash inside the tailors' faction did not escape the attention of tanners, who by inviting the Beyzades of Peja and the Gjakova household reignited the factional conflict in Shkodra. The reconciliation of two great houses of the Dukakin district and their enmity against the Çavuşzade brought them together into an alliance.<sup>587</sup>

Therefore, the tanners' faction managed to turn the power balances in the region to their side. As the Beyzades sought revenge for Edhem Pasha, the same situation was for the Gjakova household whose member Abdullah Pasha was expelled from Shkodra while being its governor by the Çavuşzades. Through the support of the tanners' faction, Beyzade Mehmed Aga and Abdullah Pasha of Gjakova mobilized six thousand troops to attack the quarters of the tailors inside the city. In October 1753, the combined forces of the Triple Alliance moved from the tanners' quarter towards the tailors' areas where the battles took place. Hence, until March 1754, as neither side was becoming victorious, they decided to make a cease-fire agreement.<sup>588</sup> This was done most likely to prevent economic and societal damage in the city. Nonetheless, the most affected group from these factional conflicts were the merchants, who suffered immense financial damage. They even went as far as to withdraw from the market and store all the merchandise, causing a drop in the

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still there were intermarriages among the leading households. The woman mentioned here had been the wife of both the sons of Çavuşzade Suleiman who died making her a widow. She probably married Abbas Beg, a cousin of her late husbands to maintain a high status in the family. Hence, her encouragement for the husband to become Pasha and governor. Even Consul Duoda perceived this as personal ambition and pride from the wife of Abbas Beg, see: A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 30 Settembre – 2 Ottobre 1753.

<sup>585</sup>The information on the origins or background of this household is scarce, however, in the Venetian sources one of its members Suleiman Beg was the 'head of the community'. This means that they were probably an old military landowning household that also took part in commercial activities.

<sup>586</sup>Mehmet Hakim Efendi, *Hakim Efendi Tarihi (Osmanlı Tarihi 1166-1180/1752-1766)*, hzr. Tahir Güngör, ed. Ziya Yılmaz, (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2019), 64.

<sup>587</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 56.

<sup>588</sup>Ibid.



exports from Shkodra.<sup>589</sup>

After the ceasefire agreement the economic situation stabilized, however, the tensions between the factions continued to threaten peace in the city. The failed attempt by the Beyzades and Gjakova household to conquer the tailors' places resulted in the retreat of their forces in the tanners' quarter. For Abdullah Pasha of Gjakova, it was the third time that the Çavuşzades expelled him from Shkodra but in the end, he managed to return.<sup>590</sup> In July 1754, the central government issued an official appointment for Abdullah Pasha, thus shifting the power balances on the tanners' side.<sup>591</sup> However, the tailors' faction reacted immediately by challenging the new governors and the central authorities, who did not enjoy anymore the support of the government. From the perspective of Consul Duoda, the restart of the factional strife was a misfortune for the region and the trade of Venice, who imported a considerable amount of goods from Shkodra's ports.<sup>592</sup>

As the center chose Abdullah Pasha, the tailors' faction and the Çavuşzades mobilized their forces and went into action. Nevertheless, rather than a confrontation with an official appointee, they chose political pressure and prevented the new governor from completing his tasks. For this mission, as shown in the reports issued by the Ottoman authorities, he had the support of his family including Abbas Beg, and Haydaroglu Suleiman who was labeled a bandit by the same authorities. Their main attempt was to obstacle the tax collection and the administrative functions of the local authority. Eventually, Abdullah Pasha was left without any executive power as governor of Shkodra. The report was sent to both the provincial governor of Rumeli Vizier Yayha and Abdullah Pasha. Both of them were ordered to capture the rebels and to exile them in a distant region. In addition, they were instructed to force the *nezir* (vow) on the local population as a punishment for supposedly support given to Çavuşzades.<sup>593</sup>

From November 1754 until February 1755, neither the local nor the provincial authorities could arrest the fugitive Çavuşzades. This forced the imperial center to put pressure on by sending a representative to the Rumeli governor. His duty was to negotiate with the Çavuşzades and the other faction leader, hence ending the

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<sup>589</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 5 Giugno 1754.

<sup>590</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 57.

<sup>591</sup>Mehmet Hakim Efendi, *Hakim Efendi Tarihi*, 143.

<sup>592</sup>For the Antonio Duoda, rather than the bloodshed during the conflict, his main concern was related to the commission for each cargo-manifest issued by him. As fewer vessels visited Shkodra ports, the income of Consul Duoda would dwindle, see: A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 10 December 1754.

<sup>593</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 156, 847-848 (29 M 1168 (15 November 1754).

anarchy in Shkodra. The proposal stated that if they ceased their illicit actions, the consequence would be solely banishment; however, if they persisted, they would face a severe punishment.<sup>594</sup> Despite the efforts implemented by the central government, the Çavuşzade and the tailors' faction continued to exert significant influence over the political landscape of Shkodra, remaining unchallenged by Abdullah Pasha or the provincial governor, Vizier Yahya Pasha. Nevertheless, when compared to previous years, the Çavuşzade had lost much of their support outside of Shkodra. Ultimately, their leadership would be threatened not by an imperial expedition, but surprisingly from within the city, by a charismatic leader emerging from the ranks of the tanners' faction.

### 5.2.1 The Rise of Bushatli Mehmed Beg

Abdullah Pasha of Gjakova retreated to his hometown unable to resist the pressure coming from the opposing forces in Shkodra. Despite their reduced influence, the Çavuşzade and tailors' faction rallied the discontented Ulcinj agas to their cause against the governor.<sup>595</sup> In truth, the new political landscape effectively isolated Abdullah Pasha to the point where he was incapacitated in his efforts to exercise control over Shkodra, ultimately creating a void in power within the city. Under these circumstances, the tanners' faction changed their leadership policies, from alliances with households outside Shkodra to a turn at their previous leading family, the Yusuf-beg-zades from Bushat. Considered as one of the oldest houses in Shkodra, they were overshadowed by the Çavuşzades for much of the mid-1700s. Also, with the Beyzades and the Gjakova households joining forces with the tanners, they likely had to let go of a part of their position within the faction.

Among the many members of this household, Mehmed Beg emerged as the new leader of the tanners. Although the information regarding his ascendance to the leadership of the faction is limited, the first appearance of Mehmed Beg is mentioned in a Venetian report issued on June 25, 1755. During the clashes among the factions, he prevented the loading of the goods from the docks of Shkodra that were destined for Venice.<sup>596</sup> Nevertheless, Mehmed Beg was active even during the 1740s when in an Ottoman report next to his name was written 'Push(?), probably his native

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<sup>594</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 156, 1078 (20 R 1168 (3 February 1755).

<sup>595</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 57.

<sup>596</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 24 Giugno 1755.

town's name of Bushat but written in a distorted way.<sup>597</sup> He was the son of Mustafa Beg among the main leaders of the tanners when they were in the early stages of formation as a political faction. Mustafa was the grandson of Vizier Suleiman Pasha, the most prominent figure of the Yusuf-beg-zades.<sup>598</sup> Hence, Mehmed Beg inherited his father's position and status within the faction.

At that time Mehmed Beg and the tanners were not strong enough to overthrow the Çavuşzades and the tailors. However, luck would have it that the center appointed as governor of Shkodra Omer Pasha of Kavaja<sup>599</sup>, who was close to Mehmed Beg.<sup>600</sup> In July 1755, Omer Pasha was ordered to move from his previous position as governor of Elbasan to bring peace and stability to the district of Shkodra. He was instructed to approach the problems in the new district carefully due to the delicate situation in the area. The new governor was asked to stop the oppression of the local notables, to secure the wellbeing of the subjects, and not to ask for 'gifts' from local people.<sup>601</sup> For Omer Pasha, the main challenge in terms of imposing its authority in Shkodra were the Çavuşzades and the tailors' faction. Therefore, it was crucial to remove them from the political landscape to create a secure setting for Omer Pasha and his associates.

In December 1755, through an imperial decree, the new governor of Shkodra assaulted the Çavuşzades and their allies. The clash resulted in a decisive victory for Omer Pasha, who successfully drove his enemies out of the district. The initial step he took involved igniting the mansions belonging to Çavuşzade Mehmed, his relative Abbas, and those of the Gradanik family.<sup>602</sup> However, the expulsion of the Çavuşzades and their allies did not mean a definitive end. Although pushed outside the city of Shkodra, they continued to resist the authorities and put up a considerable fight against their rivals. These actions forced the government to order harsher measures from Omer Pasha and the provincial governor of Rumeli. Despite their initial defeat, the tailors' faction was still active in the city, therefore

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<sup>597</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 153, 60 (20 R 1160 (29 June 1747)).

<sup>598</sup>Mustafa Beg named Mehmed after his father, who was among the sons of Vizier Suleiman Pasha. There is not too much information related to the father of Mustafa except that he was the captain of the Shkodra castle. For the detailed genealogical tree of the Yusuf-beg-zades, see: Naçi, 'Te Dhena te Reja Rreth...', 86.

<sup>599</sup>It is a city located in the middle of Albania's western coast. Thanks to its location near the port city of Durrës and the fertile land, Kavaja's notables became very wealthy during the eighteenth century.

<sup>600</sup>Omer Pasha was a member of the Kavaja household named after the city where they were originally from and where most of their estate was located. Mehmed Beg's daughter Kayo Hanım was married to Bostanci Ibrahim Aga of Kavaja, nephew of Omer Pasha.

<sup>601</sup>Mehmet Hakim Efendi, *Hakim Efendi Tarihi*, 287; BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 157, 400 (10 L 1168 (18 July 1755)).

<sup>602</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 11 Dicembre 1755.

the Çavuşzades still enjoyed considerable support in the area. Aware of this fact, the imperial center tried to punish also the city of Shkodra through monetary fines, in the hope that the Çavuşzades would surrender and go into exile to Golos.<sup>603</sup>

As the Çavuşzades and their allies were struggling against provincial authorities, the tanners under the leadership of Bushatli Mehmed Beg seized the opportunity to consolidate their power within the city. Thanks also to the alliance with Omer Pasha, governor of Shkodra, they sought to fight the main supporters of their enemy. On the other hand, Mehmed Beg was appointed as *mütesellim* (deputy governor) by Omer, which demonstrates the level of collaboration the two figures had with each other. The first target was Ulcinj's *agas*, who had lately joined forces with the tailor faction. Following them, Mehmed Beg and Omer Pasha exerted significant pressure on the urban population, particularly targeting the area where the Çavuşzades and their supporters held influence. However, as shown in the Ottoman report, the measures of their campaign against the tailors and Çavuşzades were considered exaggerated by the central authorities. Eventually, they were ordered to restrain from the excessive use of violence against the population, and the governor of Vlora was assigned to investigate the complaints addressed to Bushatli Mehmed and Omer Pasha.<sup>604</sup>

During this period, Çavuşzades and their allies were rallying in Ulcinj to attract supporters in their quest to return to power in Shkodra. The central government tried to prevent this by sending warnings to the administrative leadership of Ulcinj concerning sheltering and providing support to the rebellious Çavuşzades. Judging from the report, the names of Ulcinj's castle captains were highlighted, which gives hints of a supposed collaboration between the two sides.<sup>605</sup> Additionally, the *agas* of Ulcinj send complaints against Omer Pasha and Bushatli Mehmed Beg accusing them of injustice and oppression. As a result, the ruling authority asked for an investigation into the allegations and for a delegate from the governor to appear in court.<sup>606</sup> These legal proceedings restrained Omer Pasha and Mehmed Beg from finishing their mission, thus annihilating permanently their rivals. The complaints sent from Ulcinj give the impression of a well-devised strategy by the Çavuşzades and their allies to prolong their resistance to the pressure being exerted on them.

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<sup>603</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 157, 837 (10 Ca 1169 (11 February 1756). I believe that Golos here is the city of Volos in modern Greece. Interestingly, the exile destinations from the region of Shkodra were mostly in the southern lands of Rumeli province.

<sup>604</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 158, 177 (29 Ş 1169 (29 May 1756).

<sup>605</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 158, 234 (29 N 1169 (18 June 1756).

<sup>606</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 158, 266 (20 L 1169 (18 July 1756).

Eventually, the Çavuşzades plan worked and in October 1756, they entered by force in Shkodra. According to the report of Consul Duoda, Çavuşzade Mehmed returned from the imperial capital, where he obtained an amnesty regarding his previous crimes. Additionally, the exile penalty was rescinded, rendering Omer Pasha and Bushatli Mehmed Beg's efforts ineffective.<sup>607</sup> The arrival of Çavuşzades in the city strengthened the tailors' faction, thus resulting in the starting of the factional strife. On the other hand, due to a successful diplomatic and legal scheme, Omer Pasha had been removed from the post of Shkodra's governor.<sup>608</sup> The new circumstances turned the power balances on the tailors' faction side. As for the tanners and Bushatli Mehmed Beg, their supremacy in the political landscape faded after the Çavuşzades returned to Shkodra. Despite this, the power balance between the factions was so close that the conflict persisted until one side gained a significant advantage.

### 5.2.2 Sacred Duty Amid Conflict: Memoirs of a Priest

The arrival of Priest Erasmo Balneo<sup>609</sup> in Shkodra coincided with the return of the Çavuşzades to Shkodra. His first observation of the city was that the place was divided into two factions, tailors and tanners and that every person he met belonged to either side. Hence, the polarization of the population through bilateral factionalism reached every segment of society. For this reason, the clash among the groups affected the majority of the subjects in the region. The priest attributed these factional divisions to the Muslim population in the city of Shkodra. In this regard, he highlights the presence of a religious fanatic element amidst the fighting groups that targeted the Catholic subjects of Shkodra, thus threatening their lives.<sup>610</sup> Thanks to the memoirs of Balneo it becomes possible to grasp a closer perspective on the political development in the region, as well as the multiple layers of factionalism.

Although he had simply planned to travel through the city, Priest Balneo found himself becoming the personal physician to Bushatli Mehmed's ailing son after being recommended by the merchant Haydar Aga Rusi.<sup>611</sup> Together with his companion

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<sup>607</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 30 Ottobre 1756.

<sup>608</sup>Ibid. In his place, a certain Suleiman Pasha was appointed governor of Shkodra. During the arrival of the Çavuşzades, the new governor was not in the city.

<sup>609</sup>According to the story written by him, Balneo was appointed to serve as a priest in the region Hoti tribe, and during his journey, he was accompanied by their chieftain Vuk Frangu.

<sup>610</sup>Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 31.

<sup>611</sup>The Rusi were among the wealthiest and most influential merchant families in Shkodra. In the Venetian cargo-manifest members from this family are recorded exporting goods from Shkodra's docks to Venice.

Vuk Frangu, they became guests of Mehmed Beg in his palace<sup>612</sup> situated at the tanners' quarters. Mehmed Beg as a faction leader requested help from both the priest and the chieftain of the Hoti tribe. His main target was to gain the support of the Catholic highlanders, who were known for their warlike characteristics which made them a valuable military asset. They accepted this request of Bushatli Mehmed but in exchange demanded wider religious freedom for the Catholics of the city and in the rural regions. Consequently, Mehmed agreed to their demands, and by doing so, he obtained the support of the Catholic tribes from the Shkodra and Dukagjin highlands.<sup>613</sup>

However, the assistance of the Catholic tribesmen needed a considerable amount of financial investment that Mehmed Beg did not possess. Thus, he once more requested Pater Balneo to serve as a go-between with the Venetian merchants, enabling him to trade his goods and use the profits to compensate the tribesmen for their services. The priest agreed to act as a middleman; through his connections in Venice, he would help the Bushatlis.<sup>614</sup> Mehmed Beg also acknowledged the fact that the failure to give the highlanders the money they needed could lead to them raiding the city. Nevertheless, he also knew that their alignment with the tanners' forces would shift the power balances to his advantage. Despite the risk, the Bushatli Mehmed Pasha sent his close friend Haydar Aga Rusi and the chieftain Vuk Frangu to the highlands to negotiate the partnership and alliance with the Catholic tribes.<sup>615</sup>

### 5.2.3 The Final Showdown

Two weeks after the departure of Mehmed Beg's delegates, the factional conflict in Shkodra was ignited following the clash between the factions of tailors and tanners. The strategy employed by Bushatli Mehmed significantly altered the balance of military power, as the tribesmen allied with the tanners successfully defeated the tailors. In the records of Balneo, the first to be eliminated was the head of the tailors, Hasan Aga Shoshi. Next, they moved to the palace of Çavuşzade Mehmed,

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<sup>612</sup>Mehmed Beg built his palace in the tanners' quarter and moved there from the town of Bushat for this reason he got the nickname 'Bushatli'. Even though Mehmed was from Yusuf-beg-zades household, he and his successors were known as the Bushatli family. The palace of the Bushatlis was located on a hill near the Shkodra castle, where the seat of governorship resided.

<sup>613</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 38-40.

<sup>614</sup>The dialogues recorded by Priest Balneo between him and Bushatli Mehmed raise many questions regarding the true nature of this relationship. For instance, as a Franciscan priest, Balneo is too involved with the mediator assignments, which gives him an image of an agent rather than that of a 'man of faith'. Secondly, his connections with Venice are suspicious, or his entrance in the close circle of the Bushatli family at a time when they were among the most powerful political figures in the region.

<sup>615</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 38-40.

where they set it on fire but without killing him.<sup>616</sup> For three days, the tanners and around two thousand Catholic tribesmen pillaged the quarters of the tailors giving a lethal blow to their faction.<sup>617</sup> This last assault probably occurred somewhere at the end of 1756 or the beginning of 1757, however, after that the bilateral factionalism in Shkodra came to an end, and the only ruler was Bushatli Mehmed Beg.

Apart from his charismatic leadership and crafty diplomacy, various factors affected the result of the struggle between the two factions. From the Çavuşzades perspective, their influence inside the tailors' faction due to Mehmed Pasha was diminished. His lack of authority and willingness led to a failure in protecting the interests of the various groups within the faction, notably the merchants who had to sometimes protest against Çavuşzade Mehmed to shield their peers from retribution. Even though the merchants were not punished, still this caused a deterioration of the relationship between the Venetian authorities and them. The joining of the Ulcinj agas to the tailors' faction was not welcomed by Venice which suffered from their piracy activities. Even the Ottoman authorities had their share of problems with Çavuşzade Mehmed due to his rebellious nature.

These circumstances 'localized' too much the Çavuşzades, who lost almost all of the external support resulting in their political weakening. As for the tanners, they managed to rival the tailors' and increase their influence through the successful policies and alliances forged by Bushatli Mehmed Beg. The involvement of Haydar Aga Rusi as an ally of the tanners' leader can be understood as a reflection of a slow change within the merchant community of Shkodra moving away from the tailors' faction. Although strong supporters of the Çavuşzades and an influential element in the tailors' faction, still they were aware of the heavy toll that the factional conflict brought on commerce. Thus, the merchant came to realize that the disorder was a greater enemy than the opposing faction. In Bushatli Mehmed they saw a potential leader who could quell anarchy causing the region's impoverishment.

The strategic alliance formed with the Catholic tribesmen from the highlands of Shkodra represented a pivotal move by Bushatli Mehmed, significantly contributing to his success against the tailors' faction. Following the Ottoman conquest, the Catholic population in Shkodra had been marginalized and effectively excluded from local political affairs. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Catholic population emerged as a significant power, assuming an increasingly critical role in

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<sup>616</sup>The reason given by Balneo is that of 'chivalric code' from Bushatli Mehmed, who after seeing his rival fight remarkably although outnumbered decided to just imprison him rather than execute him. However, the true reason may lie in the fact that Çavuşzade Mehmed remained an Ottoman official and the absence of an imperial decree would have caused the Bushatlis problem later on with the central authorities.

<sup>617</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 44-47.

both demographic dynamics and military affairs. This period marked a notable expansion of Catholic influence, as it intertwined with broader societal developments and military campaigns, thereby shaping the political landscape of the Shkodra's hinterland. The assassination of Beyzade Mahmud Pasha, the governor of Shkodra, in 1739 by a group of tribesmen represents a significant turning point in the political landscape of the region. This event highlighted that ignoring the Catholic community was no longer an option. By using the priests as a mediator agent, the Bushatlis successfully gained the support of the Catholic tribes and by using their warlike nature, they managed to annihilate with a single strike the tailors' faction. Another reason behind Mehmed Bey's approach to the Catholic elements in the region was probably to use them in diplomatic negotiations with the Christian states.

### 5.3 The New Governor of Shkodra

Following the decisive victory over the tailors, Bushatli Mehmed became the sole ruler of Shkodra. Eventually, he started a violent punitive campaign against the remaining loyal elements of the Çavuşzades in the city of Shkodra. During these actions, the Bushatlis did not hesitate to target individuals associated with the tanners who opposed the severe methods and policies that were being implemented.<sup>618</sup> Among the old known local households, the Gradaniks were one of the main targets, due to their family bonds with Çavuşzades and the prestige of being former leaders of the community. For this reason, Mehmed Beg pillaged most of their estates in Shkodra. To escape from the retaliation, these influential families took refuge in distant cities. Nevertheless, to avoid a challenge by them in the future, the Bushatli forces tried to reach and eliminate them permanently. At the end of this campaign, many of these families including the Gradaniks ceased to exist.<sup>619</sup>

#### 5.3.1 The Town Crier's Proclamation

After the Bushatlis cleansed Shkodra from the former enemies and their allies, they immediately began to impose order and peace by providing a secure envi-

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<sup>618</sup>During the final assault, when Mehmed and his Catholic tribesmen allies pillaged the estates of the Çavuşzades, the mufti of Shkodra Ismail Aga Tabak (tanner) opposed him on using of the 'infidels' to oppress his own people (Muslims). The Bushatlis then, set on fire the house of the mufti which was also sheltering members from the tailors' faction. This case shows that there existed a religious dimension in the politics of Shkodra, between a dominant Muslim presence in the city and the increasing Catholic influence. For more information on this case, see: Pllumi, *Fratë i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 45.

<sup>619</sup>Bushat, *Shkodra dhe Motet V*. II, 164.



ronment for every subject. According to Priest Balneo, Mehmed Beg announced through a town crier (*tellal*), the recognition of religious freedom for the Christians and approved their settlements near the city. This served as a means of conveying gratitude to the Catholic tribesmen who supported him in his conflict against the Çavuşzades.<sup>620</sup> Another crucial issue regarding the economy of Shkodra was the commercial activities and the functionality of the ports for exporting goods. The financial stability of the city and its residents was compromised as a result of the inability of merchants and artisans to practice their trades amidst the wars. Therefore, the Bushatlis reopened the trade routes and threatened those who would attack the caravans or the merchants.<sup>621</sup> These measures were introduced by Mehmed Beg with the dual purpose of revitalizing Shkodra's economy and gaining the favor of the city's merchant community.

Lastly, Mehmed Beg informed the people of Shkodra of the dissolution of the tanner and tailors factions. Although, the words said by the town crier referred only to respective guilds, still the meaning behind it was that Bushatli Mehmed Beg was at that moment above every socio-political organization in Shkodra. Moreover, he underscored the privilege of both guilds to exercise their expertise and engage in commerce without restrictions on their chosen locations.<sup>622</sup> These statements addressed in the city of Shkodra reflected the vision of the Bushatlis regarding their plan to become the sole rulers in the region. The presence of the factions could later in the future provide an opportunity for a rival household to emerge and challenge the Bushatlis. To avoid such a situation, the factions of tanners and tailors reverted to their original status as the artisan guilds.

Moreover, the purpose of eradicating the political dimension of the tanners and tailors was to forestall any future clashes that could revive previous turmoil. It also had a calming effect on the social environment in the region due to a prolonged period of factionalism that had led to a significant level of politicization within society. Despite the resolution of factional conflicts in Shkodra, the two artisan guilds sustained a highly effective organizational system and retained their status as the most influential socio-economic entities in the city.<sup>623</sup> It can be argued that the victory of Bushatli Mehmed signifies a new shift in the political landscape of

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<sup>620</sup>Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 45. Although Balneo mentions such an issue in his memoirs, still it should be treated carefully because as a Catholic priest, he might have treated the role of the tribesmen in the victory of the Bushatlis in a very subjective way. Apart from the old Catholic families of Shkodra, the settlement inside the city for the newcomers was prohibited.

<sup>621</sup>Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 45.

<sup>622</sup>*Ibid*, 46.

<sup>623</sup>Both the tanners and tailors guilds' militia would take part in the coming years as auxiliary troops in the army of the Bushatlis during their expandatory campaign in other adjacent regions.

Shkodra, from a two-party system to one-man rule. The foundation of his legitimacy as a ruler within the local context was not rooted in his prowess in defeating rivals but in his provision of social order and peace for the populace in the district.

### 5.3.2 The Appointment of Bushatli Mehmed Beg

In a short period, Bushatlis consolidated its position within the city of Shkodra by removing any possible threat that could turn into an obstacle in the future. Nonetheless, in the other parts of the districts, other problems were occurring. In particular, the Ulcinj agas and seamen exploited the factional conflict and the absence of governance to carry out various assaults on commercial and civil ships in the Adriatic, extending their attacks towards the Libyan coast. It was mentioned by the central government that the corsairs of Ulcinj would make their way to Tripoli,<sup>624</sup> where they would receive a naval flag from the local authorities to plunder foreign ships that fell under the protection of the Ottoman state. Furthermore, these corsairs attacked also the port city of Durres, which was an important commercial center hosting various consulates of foreign states. The occurrences placed the Ottoman government in a challenging position, especially concerning the protection of foreign nationals in its territory and upholding the terms of its treaties with other states.<sup>625</sup>

This matter was to be handled by the governorship of Shkodra, which since the factional conflict was without an official governor. Instead, Mehmed Beg was acting as a deputy governor running administrative affairs. However, he also was disturbed by Ulcinj and Tripoli corsairs' illicit operations at sea, as they did not align with the Bushatlis' policies of promoting trade under safe circumstances. Hence, as long as these corsairs sailed in the seas, no foreign or local merchant vessel would trade in the ports of Shkodra. For this reason, the central government appointed Vizier Ismail Pasha<sup>626</sup> as the governor of Shkodra ordering him to take the post and to solve the problems related to the unrest in the region.<sup>627</sup> The imperial authorities

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<sup>624</sup>One of the three provinces constituting the *Garp Ocakları*, at that time Tripoli was an important center of piracy and Ottoman navy against enemies in the Mediterranean Sea. The corsairs of Tripoli used Ulcinj as a foothold for their activities in the Adriatic Sea. The same did the corsairs of Ulcinj, who would sail in the Mediterranean Sea by using the coast of Tripoli for piracy operations.

<sup>625</sup>BOA DVNSMHM.d. 159, 357 (20 Ş 1170 (10 May 1757).

<sup>626</sup>Ismail Pasha was a member of the Velabishti household from the city of Berat, at that time part of the Vlora district. He managed to create a zone of influence around Berat, which was an important commercial center with a considerable number of merchants. They were visitors of port cities like Shkodra and Durres, thus solving the piracy issue for Ismail Pasha, apart from the duty as governor was essential also for his subjects from Berat. For more information see: Thengjilli, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, p. 280.

<sup>627</sup>BOA DVNSMHM.d. 159, 43 (10 Ca 1170 (31 January 1757).

instructed the newly assigned governor on dealing with the Ulcinj seamen issue. The main suggestions revolved around preventing the pirates from getting on the boats and for the governor to show no leniency towards those who defy the commands.<sup>628</sup> Although these decrees were dispatched across the initial six months of 1757, the exact timing of Ismail Pasha's arrival in Shkodra and the assumption of governance to carry out the commands remains uncertain.

Table 5.1 The following table presents a comprehensive list of the official appointments concerning the governorship of Shkodra. It includes the names of the appointees, the duration of their service, their respective factional affiliations, and the deputies under their authority

Governorship of Shkodra	Appointment Period
Tailors' Faction Çavuşzade Mehmed	March 1753 – July 1754
Tanners' Faction Abdullah Pasha of Gjakova	July 1754 – July 1755
Omer Pasha of Kavaja <i>Tanners' Faction Bushatli Mehmed Beg (Deputy):</i>	July 1755 – March(?) 1757 29 May 1756 – March(?) 1757
Vizier Ismail Pasha of Berat <i>Tanners' Faction Bushatli Mehmed Beg (Deputy):</i>	March(?) 1757 – June 1757

However, according to the memoirs of Priest Balneo, Mehmed Beg dealt personally with the corsairs of Ulcinj even before the arrival of Ismail Pasha. He met with the *agas* and captains (*reis*) in the Gulf of Valdanos, where the base of Ulcinj's fleet and the North African Corsair was situated. The seamen were given a stern ultimatum by Bushatli Mehmed, who threatened them with severe punishment should they persist in their assaults on trading vessels along the district's coastline. There, a consensus was reached by both parties concerning the piracy activities occurring in the Adriatic Sea and their decision to engage in cooperation with each other. Ulcinj's captains agreed to halt their piracy activities in exchange for the right to trade in the port of Venice. In addition, Bushatli Mehmed asked them to build two ships for his personal use.<sup>629</sup>

Vizier Ismail Pasha arrived in Shkodra, right after Bushatlis had settled things with the Ulcinj's leadership. Two differing perspectives exist regarding the relationship between the two individuals, one who has been formally designated as the gov-

<sup>628</sup>BOA DVNSMHM.d. 159, 451 (20 N 1170 (8 June 1757).

<sup>629</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 49-50.

ernor and the other who effectively controls the district. According to the account predominantly derived from oral traditions, Bushatli Mehmed and the appointed governor<sup>630</sup> were at odds with each other. Through intimidation and threatening behavior, the Bushatlis forced him to abandon the post of governorship.<sup>631</sup> The second version comes from Priest Balneo, who describes the events differently. In his accounts, Bushatli Mehmed approach towards the new governor was amicably and respectfully. As the narrative goes, the pasha, impressed by the order and calmness in the district, praised Mehmed Beg for his accomplishments and suggested him to the central authorities for the governor position.<sup>632</sup>

The dissolution of the two factions orchestrated by Bushatli Mehmed represented a pivotal moment in the political dynamics of Shkodra. Before this event, these factions wielded considerable influence over the sociopolitical landscape, often serving as a means to attain the governorship or, at times, overshadowing centrally appointed governors who declined to ally with them. Following their victory over the Çavuşzades, the Bushatlis established themselves as the predominant authority in the region by systematically eliminating rival households and potential threats to their power. Consequently, these developments rendered the factions unnecessary as instruments for exerting control over local politics and for gaining access to the governorship. As a result, they were effectively removed from the political sphere of Shkodra. Nevertheless, securing the governorship remained an essential strategy for legitimizing their authority and managing local governance. In this context, Bushatli Mehmed sought to achieve this objective through negotiation with the governor, who showed no interest in Shkodra.

The second version presented by Priest Balneo appears to be the most precise representation of the truth. As for the name of the governor, which is absent in both narratives, it appears in the Ottoman sources. The reports issued by the central authorities do not say anything regarding when Ismail Pasha arrived or how he was received by the local representative of Shkodra, Bushatli Mehmed. However,

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<sup>630</sup>The name of the governor does not appear in the oral sources, surprisingly even in the memoirs of Priest Balneo, who was a direct witness of the events there is no mention of the name.

<sup>631</sup>This version is transmitted by G. J. von Hahn and by Hyacinthe Hecquard, both giving almost the same story. It is not sure Hecquard took it from Hahn, or if he just recorded the same oral sources that were available at that time in Shkodra. According to the story, the new governor was received by Bushatli Mehmed and his Catholic tribesmen troops. As they were instructed to be half-naked during the meeting, when the pasha asked Mehmed about their situation, he emphasized the poverty and savagery of the region and its people. When the governor went to sleep the highlanders threw to the roof stones, as message that they wanted gifts for accompanying him. Although he gave them money, they did this continuously to intimidate and disturb him. In this way Mehmed ‘imprisoned’ the new governor inside Shkodra castle, until the governor quit and gave a recommendation to the central authorities to appoint the Bushatli in his place. See: Hahn, *Albanesische Studien*, 98; Hecquard, *Histoire et description de la Haute-Albanie ou Guégarie*, 434-435.

<sup>632</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, 51-53.

it gives hints about a possible collaboration between Ismail Pasha and Mehmed in consolidating the order and discipline in the district. According to the excerpt, Çavuşzade Mehmed Pasha was imprisoned due to his unlawful behavior. In addition, hundred fifty houses related to the tailors' and more than fifty from the tanners' factions were dislocated from their quarters due to their implication in the factional strife. Furthermore, an amount of twenty-five thousand *guruş* was extracted from the population as a punishment, and another twenty-five were registered to be collected in case of repeated support to the rebels.<sup>633</sup>

This decree issued at the end of June 1757 is the first known document in which Bushatli Mehmed appears to be officially an appointed governor of Shkodra.<sup>634</sup> Based on Balneo's story and the Ottoman document, Ismail Pasha handed over the governorship to Bushatli Mehmed, probably aware of his influence and power in the region and knowing the impossibility of challenging him. Thus, by successfully asserting his authority through force, negotiation, and careful planning, Mehmed was able to obtain official recognition from the central authority and consolidate his legitimacy as ruler of Shkodra. In addition, through agents he created a network of collaborations with important local and regional actors. Vizier Ismail Pasha was one of the most influential figures at that time, and to gain his support Bushatli Mehmed paid a large sum of money. On the other hand, the intermediation of Priest Balneo<sup>635</sup> with the Venetian authorities must have favored the rise of Mehmed Pasha.<sup>636</sup>

### 5.3.3 A Zealous Governor

After his official assignment as governor, Mehmed Pasha focused on protecting order and peace in the district. In addition, he tried to complete the commandments zealously to maintain good relations with the central authority. Despite successful dominance in Shkodra, the Bushatlis were aware of the challenges in controlling a region that was keen to sudden incidents. Among them, the Ulcinj issue has become a chronic problem for a long time. Although, the Bushatlis had settled things with the native captains, still corsairs coming from North Africa attacked ships in the Adriatic Sea. However, thanks to the collaboration with the native

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<sup>633</sup>BOA DVNSMHM.d. 159, 560 (10 L 1170 (28 June 1757).

<sup>634</sup>BOA DVNSMHM.d. 159, 560 (10 L 1170 (28 June 1757).

<sup>635</sup>Throughout the memoirs of Balneo, there is a constant mention of 'close friends' in Venice, who are contacted by the priest whenever Mehmed asks for support or help concerning trade. This evidence shows that Priest Balneo most probably acts as a Venetian agent inside the Bushatli household.

<sup>636</sup>Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatllinj*, passim.

seamen of Ulcinj, these corsairs were captured and their ships together with the equipment were destroyed.<sup>637</sup> The Venetian Consul, Duoda in his reports to the Venetian authorities highlights the achievements of Mehmed Pasha fighting piracy and punishing anyone breaking the rules. Hence, Venice viewed the suppression of the Ulcinj seamen as a valuable service that the new governor could provide for their benefit.<sup>638</sup>

The policies implemented by Mehmed led to a significant uptick in trade between Venice and Shkodra, enhancing the relationship between the Bushatlis and Venetians. Basically, from both sides there was mutual interest in play. For the Venetians, the absence of piracy in the Adriatic Sea had a direct effect on its imports of raw materials from the Ottoman Balkans. On the other hand, the Bushatlis needed political support from Venice, and from an economic perspective, they were aware that the majority of their income came from exports to the Venetian market. Consequently, the Bushatlis' efforts to strengthen their control in the area and the subsequent economic growth of Shkodra city, which had suffered significant damage during the civil conflicts, were closely linked to Venice. Mehmed Pasha considered it imperative to preserve these ties; occasionally, the governor of Shkodra was unhesitant in penalizing merchants proven to have transgressed according to the Venetian authorities.<sup>639</sup>

Furthermore, Mehmed Pasha took part in a punitive campaign against rebel bandits Suleiman Çapar and Koçu Ibrahim. Originally from *Margaliç* (Margariti)<sup>640</sup>, they pillaged various places in the district of *Karlı-ili* district. By gathering a considerable number of followers, the two leaders became a serious threat to the peace in the mentioned regions. Due to the difficulty for the local authorities in neutralizing them, the central government appointed Vizier Ismail Pasha of Berat.<sup>641</sup> As an ally of Bushatlis, Mehmed Pasha went to assist the vizier in this task. Although he departed from Shkodra to Missolonghi by using the Ulcinj's ships, due to the weather, Mehmed made a stop in Durres port and from there continued by land.<sup>642</sup> The Bushatlis' involvement alongside Ismail Pasha, beyond their role as an Ottoman governor, underscores the significance of forming partnership connections

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<sup>637</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 14 Agosto 1757.

<sup>638</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 28 Agosto 1757.

<sup>639</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 10 Settembre 1757.

<sup>640</sup>It is a village located in the region of Epirus in modern Greece. At that time, Margaliç was part of the Delvine district.

<sup>641</sup>BOA C. ZB. 68, 3377 (29 Z 1170 (14 September 1757).

<sup>642</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 3 Ottobre 1757.

and mutual support with influential local leaders.

#### 5.3.4 Return of Old Enemies and the Court Battles

In less than a year after taking over the governorship of Shkodra, the Bushatlis managed to assert their authority in the city and effectively extend their control over the rural areas. While they were focused on this project, the Çavuşzades, who were previously in exile and enemies of Mehmed Pasha, took advantage of this to regain strength and organize an army to confront him. The head of the family, Çavuşzade Mehmed managed to escape from the imprisonment and with a group of armed men launched an attack in the city of Shkodra. With two hundred troops, he burned down the house of Dervish Beyzade Ahmed in the Tophane quarter and continued assaulting the people. Consequently, the Çavuşzades confronted the night watchmen (*ases*) of the city which resulted in casualties for both sides.<sup>643</sup> Although this incident disrupted the peace, still it had a limited impact as the attacking side received no support from the local population.

The policies implemented by Bushatli Mehmed Pasha concerning the dissolution of factions were successful for two primary reasons. First, by eliminating these factions, the Bushatlis established themselves as the principal power holders within the district and the key political decision-makers in local administration. This strategic maneuver enabled Mehmed Pasha to exercise comprehensive control over the sociopolitical landscape of Shkodra. Second, factions function as structured organizations in which members collaborate to achieve common objectives while seeking to influence the decision-making process. The presence of such organizations can create opportunities for individuals or groups to challenge the authority of the Bushatlis. Nevertheless, through the dissolution of these factions, Bushatli Mehmed effectively averted this potential challenge, as reflected in the inability of the Çavuşzades to garner support in Shkodra.

Following the dissolution of the tailors' faction, the Çavuşzades struggled to secure support even from their traditional power base in the commercial area of Shkodra. Aware of this, the Çavuşzades avoided a direct armed confrontation against the Bushatlis. Besides the disproportion of power, they feared that by attacking Governor Mehmed Pasha, the center might punish them severely. Instead, the Çavuşzade chose to use legal tools and submitted an official complaint against the Bushatlis to the imperial authorities. The charges were about the time when the Bushatlis

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<sup>643</sup>BOA DVNSMHM.d. 160, 162 (20 R 1171 (1 January 1758).

at the head of the tanners and the Catholic highlanders attacked and defeated the Çavuşzades and the tailors in a single blow. According to the accusers, the current governor and his family plundered and sacked the estates of the Çavuşzades and murdered innocent people. They highlighted the suffering of the subjects under the rule of Bushatli Mehmed.<sup>644</sup>

This report containing the summary of Çavuşzades' complaint was sent to the Rumeli provincial governor, el-Hajj Hasan Pasha. It appears that the situation of Shkodra had been analyzed carefully by the central authorities. As shown in the document, they were aware of the events in Shkodra the factional clash between tailors and tanners, and the role of the Bushatlis and Çavuşzades at that time. Furthermore, the center also knew how the Bushatlis took hold of the governorship post and their alliance with Vizier Ismail Pasha. However, they perceived Mehmed Pasha's rise to power from a positive perspective and argued that the order and tranquility he had brought to the city should continue, regardless of the circumstances. The authorities acknowledged the success of Bushatli Mehmed in dissolving the factions that had caused continuous damage to the subjects. Eventually, they saw the complaint of the Çavuşzades as an attempt to discredit Mehmed Pasha and as a means to take revenge on him.<sup>645</sup>

The Bushatlis would face another complaint from a certain Haydar, who was a nephew of Mustafa Shkodra's mufti, and of Ahmed Aga, who was according to the accuser murdered by Mehmed Pasha and his brother Suleiman Beg. This report was presented to the central authorities by the kadi of Shkodra, Seyyid Osman. After bringing together all the evidence and listening to the witnesses, the court concluded that in this whole story, the Bushatlis were innocent. For instance, the kadi emphasizes the constant implication of the deceased mufti and his relatives in unlawful activities and participating in several conflicts in the city. Moreover, in the latest conflict, there was a mutual clash between the night watchmen and the attackers. Therefore, from this declaration of the night watchmen, Bushatli Mehmed and his brother Suleiman were not involved, and the main culprits for the incident were the mufti and Ahmed Aga as they were the first to assault the night watchmen.<sup>646</sup>

This case represents another example of the diplomatic war that the rivals of the

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<sup>644</sup>BOA A. DVNSMHM.d. 160, 231 (30 Ca 1171 (9 February 1758).

<sup>645</sup>BOA A. DVNSMHM.d. 160, 231 (30 Ca 1171 (9 February 1758). In light of these findings, the central authorities issued a directive to the provincial governor, emphasizing the need for a thorough and confidential investigation into the matter at hand.

<sup>646</sup>BOA AE.SMST.III 299, 23884 (22 C 1171 (3 March 1758).



Bushatlis were implementing to antagonize them with the imperial center. Although the kadi emphasized the similarity of the mufti's actions with those of Çavuşzades, he does not directly connect the two groups in this incident.<sup>647</sup> However, the language employed by the kadi indicates a potential suspicion regarding a relationship between the two groups, suggesting that they may be cooperating in their efforts against the Bushatlis. Eventually, after failing to defeat their rival through the Ottoman judiciary system, the Çavuşzades returned to their aggressive policy and started pillaging the city of Shkodra and the nearby areas. This event was recorded again by the kadi Seyyid Osman, who informed the central authorities about the occurrences and also suggested another exile and monetary penalty to the Çavuşzades.<sup>648</sup>

The last report sent to the central authorities regarding the trial of Bushatlis following the complaint of different groups was sent by the former provincial governor of Rumeli, Hasan Pasha. He concluded that Mufti Mustafa and his brother were responsible for many crimes and that their death came as a result of their fault. In addition, Hasan Pasha confirmed that both of the two groups were directly related and, in an alliance, together against the Bushatlis. On the other hand, he suggested an exile punishment to be given to the Çavuşzades for their crimes and a monetary penalty.<sup>649</sup> This verdict not only reconfirmed Bushatli Mehmed as governor of Shkodra, but it also saved them from a possible punishment from the government. However, judging from the reports submitted by different local and provincial officials, the Bushatlis enjoyed a very positive reputation, and their order was acknowledged by the imperial center.

#### **5.4 Testing the Order: The Central Government and Bushatli Mehmed**

With the removal of the Çavuşzade and their allies from the city of Shkodra, the Bushatlis consolidated their hold on the governorship post, thus becoming the sole rulers in the district. Although the city and the towns were easily controlled, still certain castles and remote areas in the district tended to disrupt the order in the region. Therefore, Mehmed Pasha tried to prevent the emergence of such cases and focused on imposing authority on the hinterland. This was also related to his policy on economic revival which was mainly related to commercial activities. Maintaining

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<sup>647</sup>BOA AE.SMST.III 299, 23884 (22 C 1171 (3 March 1758).

<sup>648</sup>BOA AE.SMST.III 299, 23888 (2 B 1171 (12 March 1758).

<sup>649</sup>BOA AE.SMST.III 53, 3848 (2 B 1171 (24 April 1758).

the security of the trade routes was essential for fostering trade and ensuring a steady flow of products from the hinterland and neighboring regions to the market and docks of Shkodra. In addition, good relationships with foreign trade partners were also crucial to making these transactions possible.

#### 5.4.1 A Loyal and Obedient Servant of the State

The first issue that Mehmed Pasha had to deal with was the castle of Spuž<sup>650</sup> and its captain, Abdullah Pasha. Together with his brother Sinan, he would engage in banditry and plundering in the *kaza* of Podgorica. In addition, they provoked the Montenegrin tribes in that region causing a conflict that escalated into war.<sup>651</sup> An important trade center with a mixed population of Muslims and Montenegrin Christians, Podgorica had always been part of the Shkodra district. Furthermore, trade routes passing through it towards the city of Shkodra made its location crucial for the control of central areas of the region.<sup>652</sup> For this reason, Mehmed Pasha influenced behind the scenes the situation had Abdullah Pasha removed from duty as castle captain of Spuž and later had him and his brother exiled.<sup>653</sup>

Even after the two troublemakers left Podgorica, the Montenegrins continued their uprising against the local authorities. Living in the mountainous region of Shkodra, they had caused disorder, especially during times of war, as they were manipulated by Venetian or Habsburg authorities. In this case, the reasons for their unrest relied on the pressure exerted by local elements and the central government. This pressure was financial regarding the tax collections especially *jizya* as the Montenegrin tribes were Christians. However, the harsh geography of agricultural production and the semi-nomadic lifestyle of the tribes often made the procedure of collecting taxes a challenge for the local governors.<sup>654</sup> In this context, Bushatli Mehmed Pasha also faced difficulties because contrary to his Catholic tribesmen allies, the Montenegrin were Orthodox Christians.

The central authorities were focused on the matter of Montenegrin tribes and

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<sup>650</sup>It is a small town in modern Montenegro, north of Podgorica. In Ottoman Turkish, the name was *İşpuzi* and was a *kaza* center part of Shkodra district. At that time was also near the border between Bosnia province and Shkodra, this later would cause direct clashes between respective governors.

<sup>651</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 160, 811 (30 Za 1171 (5 August 1758).

<sup>652</sup>Roberts, Real of the Black Mountain, p. 22; Kiel, "Podgorica", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* C. 36, (Istanbul: 2007): 306-307.

<sup>653</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 160, 811 (30 Za 1171 (5 August 1758).

<sup>654</sup>Robert, *Ibid.*, 13, 107-108. The author gives a general perspective regarding the difficult relationship between the Ottoman authorities and the Montenegrin tribes about the tax collection subject.

their resistance to paying jizya. On the other hand, the governor of Shkodra tried to use this issue for his political agenda. Therefore, as the Ottoman center was having difficulties in levying taxes from the tribes residing in the districts of Shkodra and Dukakin, Bushatli Mehmed made a bold move and officially requested to join both districts under his governorship. Hence, in April 1759 he sent a petition signed by the local elite of the Shkodra district, in which they showed support for this decision. The request was made due to the disorder caused by these tribes, their disruption of peace, and the ongoing challenge of collecting taxes from them. Through the petition, Bushatli Mehmed offered his services for solving these problems in exchange for the district of Dukakin.<sup>655</sup>

For the central government, this request was refused as this move was against the administrative rules regarding the appointments in the provinces. Instead, the authorities suggested collaboration with the provincial governor of Bosnia regarding the rebellious tribes of Montenegro and from other regions.<sup>656</sup> Therefore, the first attempt to acquire the neighboring district of Dukakin failed. This move from the Bushatlis was also a direct challenge to the leading household of Dukakin, the Beyzades. Before the official demand for merging the two districts, Venice's vice Consul in Shkodra mentioned a dispute between Beyzade Kahraman Pasha and Bushatli Mehmed over the region of Zadrime<sup>657</sup>, part of the Dukakin district. According to the Venetian report, the Bushatlis wanted to occupy and join the region of Shkodra. On the other hand, Kahraman Pasha opposed this because Zadrime was officially part of the Dukakin district.<sup>658</sup>

Even for the central authorities the dispute between the two pashas had reached a dangerous point. To restore calm, the government quickly got involved by alerting the governors and stopping any direct conflict between them that could have jeopardized the peace in the region.<sup>659</sup> In addition, the center ordered the Kahraman Pasha to join the Ottoman forces in the protection of Hotin castle and provided him with the needed resources to feed his soldiers.<sup>660</sup> This was also probably a measure to keep him occupied and far from the Bushatlis of Shkodra. Eventually, Kahraman Pasha did not follow the order and was later dismissed from his position as governor

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<sup>655</sup>BOA AE.SMST.III 49, 3522 (18 § 1172 (16 April 1759).

<sup>656</sup>BOA AE.SMST.III 49, 3522 (18 § 1172 (16 April 1759).

<sup>657</sup>Dukakin district was in a crescent-shaped or sickle bordering Shkodra from south to the west. Zadrime was the most fertile region of the district and was located on the southern border with Shkodra.

<sup>658</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 14 Febraio 1759.

<sup>659</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d.. 161, 353 (20 N 1172 (17 May 1759).

<sup>660</sup>BOA C.AS. 1130, 50149 (29 N 1172 (26 May 1759).

of Dukakin due to his misconduct and participation in the pillaging of the Prizren region and the oppression of its people.<sup>661</sup> Nonetheless, in the end, Bushatlis failed to secure control over the Zadrina region, and Beyzade Kahraman was unable to retain his position as governor of Dukakin.

As the situation between the rivals calmed down, Bushatli Mehmed Pasha focused on expanding his influence throughout the region and creating good relations with the Venetian state. In his first years as governor of Shkodra, Mehmed Pasha transformed the Ulcinj fleet by removing its piracy elements and eliminating the connection with the pirates from North Africa. Furthermore, he limited the activities of Ulcinj to commerce and transportation only in the designated regions. Regarding the legal disputes between the subjects of both countries, the governorship of Shkodra welcomed the participation of a Venetian representative in the process. Through these measures, Bushatli Mehmed tried to gain political support from Venice and its representatives in the Ottoman capital.<sup>662</sup> The relations between the two sides became so close that Venice's highest representatives of commercial affairs, *cinqe savi alla mercanzia* (five wise men on trade) sent gifts to Bushatli Mehmed.<sup>663</sup>

Apart from diplomatic interests, the Bushatlis used the fleet of Ulcinj for their mercantile activities. The first mention of their involvement in commerce through merchant agents was in July 1762.<sup>664</sup> Moreover, Mehmed Pasha had his nephew appointed *emin* of Shkodra's customs, which was under the tax-farming system owned by the Bushatlis.<sup>665</sup> As a result of the effective governance and maintenance of peace by the leader of Shkodra, there was a notable surge in the economic prosperity of both Shkodra and its surrounding areas. In addition, the merchants, craftsmen, and landowning notables profited from the fresh financial opportunities offered by the Bushatli household, thus bringing them into closer proximity. In a span of five years as governor, Mehmed Pasha succeeded in becoming a significant figure for every segment of Shkodra society, and an essential partner for the Venetian state.

In terms of their connection with the central government, the Bushatlis made a conscious effort to maintain a positive rapport and adhere to the directives, provided that it did not jeopardize their position. The initial challenge faced by Mehmed Pasha emerged when the imperial authorities mandated him to address the actions

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<sup>661</sup>BOA AE.SMST.III 287, 23030 (5 L 1172 (1 June 1759).

<sup>662</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>663</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 24 Dicembre 1761.

<sup>664</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 30 Luglio 1761.

<sup>665</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 23 Giugno 1761.

of Ismail Pasha of Berat, the former vizier and governor of Vlora. Ismail Pasha had been accused of misconduct, bribery, and the oppression of the populace within the Yanya district.<sup>666</sup> Although an old ally of his, Mehmed Pasha obeyed the request, and with his troops, he was part of the army sent to the city of Berat where Ismail was located. Nonetheless, the army composed of ten thousand men stationed in the valley of Elbasan did not engage in battle as probably Ismail Pasha escaped.<sup>667</sup>

Ismail Pasha played a pivotal role in the Bushatlis' emergence as the dominant force in Shkodra by recommending Mehmed to the central authorities for the governorship. However, this did not stop the governor of Shkodra from going against him by the order of the central authorities. This particular case exemplified how the region's political dynamics were subject to constant change, with various complex factors playing a role in shaping alliances or partnerships. The Bushatlis, who had been clients of Ismail of Berat, swiftly became part of the punitive campaign against their former patron in less than two years.<sup>668</sup> Alongside them, other great regional households participated in this quest not only because of the call of duty but also to obtain further privileges from the center. Eventually, this example serves as evidence of the ability of the central authority to exert its power and rule over the provincial administration.

#### 5.4.2 The Center's Appointee versus the People's Choice

Following a thorough execution of the responsibilities given by the center, a positive connection existed between the government and the Bushatlis. Consequently, for his services, Mehmed Pasha managed to obtain another tenure as governor of Shkodra, thus being at the same office for more than four years.<sup>669</sup> Considering the period and the Ottoman administrative system of provinces, the tenure of the Bushatlis was a long one that no matter the services or accomplishments soon or later had to be transferred to another individual.<sup>670</sup> Even though the Bushatlis had

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<sup>666</sup>Keleş, 'Avlonya Sancağı Mutasarrıfı Vezir Arnavut İsmail Paşa (1751-1764)', 220.

<sup>667</sup>BOA A. AMD. 13, 29 (23 Ra 1173 (14 November 1759)).

<sup>668</sup>To demonstrate their obedience and zealousness to the imperial authorities, the Bushatlis went as far as capturing the closest man of Ismail Pasha and imprisoning them. All of these efforts were made with the sole intention of using good deeds to obtain offices and favors from the center. Regarding the capture and praise of Shkodra governor, see: BOA A.DVNSMHM.d.. 162, 193 (20 R 1174 (29 November 1760)).

<sup>669</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d.. 162, 314 (20 C 1174 (27 January 1761)).

<sup>670</sup>When comparing the tenures of the other governors in the districts of Rumeli provinces, Bushatli Mehmed Pasha has maintained the governorship of Shkodra for quite a long period. In the Ottoman *tahvil* (appointment) register number 16, which covers the second half of the eighteenth century, there is significant data regarding the assignments for each administrative unit in the Ottoman state. For more details see, Uğur

made significant contributions and provided services to the state, soon or later they were required to transfer control of Shkodra's governorship to another appointee. Eventually, the center in September 1762 appointed Omer Pasha, former governor of Hotin as the new governor of Shkodra instead of Mehmed Pasha.<sup>671</sup>

Even though officially the position of governor was transferred to someone else, Bushatli Mehmed continued to act as a representative of Shkodra and its community until the arrival of Omer Pasha. According to reports from Venice, there was worry and concern among officials, particularly the vice-consul Duoda, about the return of past issues that could negatively impact Venice's interests in the area. Thus, the removal of Mehmed Pasha was transmitted to the authorities in Venice by Duoda as a negative development for the state. Essential issues between the governorship and Venice, like the punishment of the bandits attacking Venetian ships or financial transactions were suspended. In addition, Duoda summarizing a meeting with Bushatli Mehmed underlines the impossibility for the pasha to make any authorization with his tenure over.<sup>672</sup>

However, Ömer Pasha himself did not go to Shkodra, instead, he appointed a deputy (*mütesellim*) called Halil Pasha to oversee the administrative affair on his behalf. Like the Venetians, even the locals of Shkodra perceived the removal of the Bushatlis as a negative event for their interest. According to Duoda, after the arrival of the deputy, the people opposed him and managed to expel him from the city, thus showing their support for Mehmed Pasha, the former governor.<sup>673</sup> Ultimately, it was anticipated that there would be a response from the population of Shkodra since the memories of the previous chaos and factional conflict were still recent for them. Despite the harsh measures and policies in the beginning, it seems that the population widely embraced the Bushatlis' regime, and the strategies implemented by Mehmed Pasha were seen as successful over five years.

To understand better the events in the Venetian report, it is essential to look at the Ottoman sources following the dismissal of Bushatli Mehmed. There was a complaint and accusation towards the former governor of Shkodra regarding an

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Ünal, *XVIII. yüzyılda Osmanlı Bürokrasisi: Merkez ve Taşra Yöneticileri 1756-1792: 16 Numaralı Tahvil Defteri (Ceviri yazı-görüntü)*, ed. Abdullah Sivridağ (İstanbul: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, 2019): 50–104.

<sup>671</sup>Ibid., p. 74. In the register, after Mehmed Pasha was reappointed later regarding the reasons for his removal from the post of Shkodra governorship was written 'due to certain necessities it was given to another...' (bi-hasebi'l-iktizâ âhara verilmişidi).

<sup>672</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 20 Settembre 1762.

<sup>673</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 16 Ottobre 1762. The there is a gap in the report because, Duoda does not define who are the 'people' apparently opposing the new governor. In addition, the part when he says that the 'new deputy was expelled by the population' it is ambiguous.

incident involving the deputy governor Halil Pasha. According to the text, the Halil Pasha's estates and palace were plundered and burnt by the orders of Bushatli Mehmed, who then was ordered to appear in the provincial court of Manastır<sup>674</sup> before the governor of Rumeli, Vezir Ali Pasha.<sup>675</sup> Thanks to this document, it is possible to apprehend the gaps present in the report of vice-consul Duoda, especially regarding what he meant by 'population of Shkodra' and how 'they expelled' the deputy-governor, Halil Pasha. As a result, it is evident from the report that Bushatli Mehmed is the one pulling the strings in the background to counter anyone challenging his directives.

Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean that there was no support from locals towards the Bushatlis. The actions of Mehmed Pasha suggest that he may have sought to demonstrate dissent among specific segments of the population close to him to prompt the central authorities to reverse their decision. In addition, from the Ottoman document, it looks like the expulsion of Halil Pasha rather than a spontaneous act of the people, was a result of a direct assault by Mehmed Pasha for which he was even accused directly by imperial authorities. These facts missing in the Venetian reports are evidence of the alliance between Duoda and the Bushatlis. Describing these illegal actions to the authorities in Venice could have put Mehmed's support with them at risk. Eventually, the direct concern of Venice's representative shows how intertwined the interests of both sides were.

The narrative reveals the involvement of additional participants and actors operating behind the scenes. According to Duoda, an Ottoman princess, who is the sister of Sultan Mustafa III,<sup>676</sup> played a significant role in the dismissal of Bushatli Mehmed. Moreover, the Venetian vice-consul highlights the connection of Hasan Aga, brother of Ulcinj castle's warden (dizdar)<sup>677</sup> with the princess and his lobby against Mehmed in the Ottoman capital. Hasan Aga's efforts to create conflict between the Bushatlis and the central government have raised alarms for Mehmed

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<sup>674</sup>It is a city in modern North Macedonia with the name of Bitola. In the Ottoman period was known as Manastır and it used to be an important administrative, economic, and cultural center. During the time of these events, it was the seat of the provincial governor of Rumeli. Regarding the city of Manastır, see: Kristaq Prifti, "Manastır", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt 27, 562-563.

<sup>675</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d.. 163, 158 (20 Ş 1176 (6 March 1763).

<sup>676</sup>In his report, Duoda does not mention the name of the Sultan's sister, and since there were many, it is difficult to tell who the princess behind the removal of the Bushatli Mehmed was. Nevertheless, at that time Esma the Eldest and Zeynep Sultan were known to have tax farms and estates in the regions of Western Rumeli.

<sup>677</sup>The name of Hasan Aga's brother was Ismail, and both were residents and assigned to the castle of Ulcinj. Hasan, in his role as head artilleryman (*topçubaşı*), and Ismail, as the overseer of Ulcinj castle, were previously charged with misconduct, abuse of authority, and the theft of ammunition which they sold to the Venetians. Regarding this case, see: BOA C. AS. 552, 23178 (17 L 1175 (13 March 1762)).

Pasha, who may have been worried about the potential for a punitive expedition.<sup>678</sup> However, instead of waiting the Bushatlis struck back by attacking not only the deputy governor but also Hasan and his brother Ismail Aga in Ulcinj by plundering their properties.<sup>679</sup> Although Mehmed Pasha was called to answer for these accusations before the Rumeli governorship court, he fearing a punishment did not go there.<sup>680</sup>

The course of the events regarding the conflict between the Bushatlis, Hasan Aga, and the central authorities remains obscure. Despite the harsh accusations leveled against him in March 1763, Mehmed Pasha was reinstated as the governor of Shkodra on April 24th of the same year.<sup>681</sup> Although there is a lack of information about the specific changes that occurred within less than two months, it is still possible to speculate on potential scenarios that influenced the relationship between the central authority and the Bushatlis. Foremost, there exists the chance that Venice might have interfered in mediating on behalf of Mehmed Pasha. The main evidence comes from the first report submitted by Duoda to the authorities in Venice, where he mentioned the dismissal of Bushatli Mehmed. Within the text, the vice-consul underlined the necessity of supporting Mehmed's re-assignment and proposed seeking the assistance of the *bailo* of Istanbul to mediate with the Ottoman authorities if required.<sup>682</sup>

Beyond the good relations forged in the first years of Bushatlis' governance with the Venetian, the truth was that Mehmed was essential for the protection of their interests in Shkodra and the Sea. After the dismissal, the judicial procedures against Ottoman subjects from the district of Shkodra were suspended causing serious damage to Venetians. The same was with the Venetian subjects who were to be judged but had to wait until the new governor would arrive.<sup>683</sup> Although not mentioned in the reports, there was the issue of Ulcinj's seamen, who without the hold of a strong governor could restart their piracy activities, thus attacking the Venetian vessels like before. The last concern, which was likely the most critical, involved the settlement of the loans that Shkodra's merchants had to pay back to the Venetian subjects.<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>678</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 16 Ottobre 1762.

<sup>679</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d.. 163, 158 (20 § 1176 (6 March 1763).

<sup>680</sup>There is a lack of information in the Ottoman archives or the consulate reports of Venice in Shkodra regarding the result or continuation of the trial or conflict between the two sides.

<sup>681</sup>Ünal, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Bürokrasisi*, 74.

<sup>682</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 20 Settembre, 16 Ottobre 1762.

<sup>683</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 20 Settembre, 16 Ottobre 1762.

<sup>684</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 4 Marzo 1762. This could be regarded a



In the given circumstances, Venice's backing of the Bushatlis was entirely justifiable, considering Mehmed Pasha's demonstrated value to their interests.

Moreover, there is the possibility that the central authority may have altered its approach to Bushatli Mehmed and the decision concerning the appointment. After all, the district of Shkodra before him had been characterized by turmoil, factional strife, and unmanageable by various governors. The Bushatlis were the sole individuals who effectively established and maintained order, as well as efficiently administered resources and services to both the local populace and the central government. Their removal from the post of Shkodra and replacement by another figure nonrelated to the region served as a test for both the center and Bushatli Mehmed. Upon reappointing Mehmed, the central authorities acknowledged the unrest that arose immediately after his dismissal, indicating their awareness of his significance in maintaining peace.<sup>685</sup> The government recognized that the rotation system of governors was no longer viable for regions like Shkodra. Concurrently, the Bushatlis acknowledged their substantial influence, empowering them to resist central authority.

Eventually, the policies issued by the Bushatlis during their five years as governor of Shkodra proved to be very successful. From the elimination of the possible rivals in the city to the dissolution of the two factions, Mehmed consolidated his position as the absolute power holder in the district. The official appointment of another individual by the center and the easiness of the neutralization by the Bushatlis were a result of his local policies. With no political organization like the faction, neither the center nor the new appointee could rival or challenge Mehmed Pasha. On the other hand, he used local support to oppose those who threatened his order. Even in dealings with the Venetians, Mehmed displayed astuteness, leveraging the debts owed by Shkodra's merchants to Venetian subjects as a diplomatic instrument to secure their consistent support. In conclusion, the Bushatlis and their order were indispensable to the local population of Shkodra, as well as to foreign partners, and most notably, to the Ottoman government.

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personal tactic by Bushatli Mehmed to indirectly use the debts of the merchant of Shkodra, his subjects, as to 'ransom' the Venetian for diplomatic support.

<sup>685</sup>BOA AE.SMST.III 310, 24886 (20 L 1176 (4 May 1763).

## 5.5 Social Network and Negotiations: The Path Towards Regional Order

Following the reappointment of Mehmed Pasha, the Bushatlis consolidated their hold on the Shkodra district, eliminating and removing any possible rival who could potentially threaten their rulership. Despite the lengthy duration of their tenure, their governorship position was revalidated in May 1765, thereby extending their reign as the primary authority for eight years in a row.<sup>686</sup> The governor of Shkodra's confidence was bolstered by successfully overcoming challenges from the central government, leading him to strategically plan to extend his influence beyond the district's borders. However, in this quest, the Bushatlis chose to act prudently and avoid direct conflicts that might bring them against central authorities. Therefore, instead of violent means or power demonstration, they sought to expand their influence through social networks created through a wide process of negotiation with other regional notables, and the most important alliances in the imperial center.

### 5.5.1 Politics of Sharing: The Mukata'a of Durres

In the context of the ascendance of the Bushatli family and their initiatives to expand their influence on the south, the *mukata'a* of Durres emerged as a pivotal instrument in accomplishing this objective. This administrative and fiscal unit, situated within the Ohrid district, enabled the Bushatli family to extend their reach effectively and assert control, thereby facilitating their influence over the territories under the jurisdiction of the *mukata'a*. For the Bushatlis, the *mukata'a* served as more than merely a source of financial income; they regarded it as a strategic tool for political advancement. Firstly, the ownership of this *mukata'a* by an Ottoman princess, provided the Bushatlis with a unique opportunity to cultivate a client relationship with a member of the Sultanic household. Secondly, the presence of local notables as *mültezims* allowed for the formation of alliances that would further expand their sphere of influence. Lastly, by employing the *mukata'a* of Durres as a fiscal-political instrument, the Bushatlis were able to exercise authority and intervene effectively in the affairs of the Ohrid district.

One of the first important duties outside the district for Bushatli Mehmed was overseeing the sultanic estates (*hassa*) in the town (*kaza*) of Ishem.<sup>687</sup> These estates

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<sup>686</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 164, 980 (10 Z 1178 (31 May 1765)).

<sup>687</sup>Ishem or in Ottoman İşim is a village in modern Albanian, which is located on the northern coast of

belonged to Zeynep Sultan<sup>688</sup>, daughter of Ahmed III and sister of Sultan Mustafa III. According to the order sent to the Rumeli governor and Mehmed Pasha, a group of local bandits led by Zotoğlu Zeynel had interfered in these estates by pillaging and extorting the incomes. In addition, they had seized the taxes that were meant to be sent to the central treasury. Consequently, the governors were asked to capture and punish the bandits and also to retrieve the goods that were taken by them.<sup>689</sup> Bushatli Mehmed Pasha would receive a second order, just three months later, in which it was reminded of the importance of completing the assigned task.<sup>690</sup> Although there is no record regarding the result of this task, still it serves as an example of the ways used by the governors like Mehmed to create links and alliances in the imperial center. In this case, there was the possibility of giving service to a member of the Sultanic household, which could provide him later with considerable political support.

For Mehmed Pasha the *mukata'a* of Durres represented as a significant source of income through tax-farming. Furthermore, under its jurisdiction was the port of the Durres, at the time one of the main ports in western Rumeli, and it was used frequently by the merchants of Shkodra.<sup>691</sup> This large estate covered most of the western coastal plain in modern Albania, starting from Lezha (Leş) until Vlora.<sup>692</sup> According to the observations of the Venetian Consul of Durres, the *mültezims* of the *mukata'a* of Zeynep Sultan were from her close circle in Istanbul and they would send their emins (deputy) only to the cities of Durres and Kavaje.<sup>693</sup> As for the other tax units inside the *mukata'a*, they were leased to local notables, who acted as sub-contractors. Durres and Kavaje were important as they had ports and were considered 'free ports' for the exports of agricultural goods.<sup>694</sup>

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Durres. In the Ottoman time, it was part of the great *mukataa* of Durres who at that time was owned by various Ottoman princesses.

<sup>688</sup> Artan, 'Royal Weddings and the Grand Vezirate: Institutional and Symbolic Change in the Early Eighteenth Century', 362.

<sup>689</sup> BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 164,1152 (20 Ra 1179 (6 September 1765).

<sup>690</sup> BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 164,1413 (29 C 1179 (13 December 1765).

<sup>691</sup> Especially during the period of disorder, the merchants of Shkodra for security purposes would use the port of Durres. Moreover, the city port had consulate representatives from France, the Netherlands, Ragusan, and lastly Venice. Although Venice opened the consulate later than the other states, it managed to successfully obtain a larger share of the export goods. See: Cristian Luca, "The Dynamics of Commercial Activity in the Ottoman Port Durazzo during the Consulate of Zorzi (Giorgio) Cumano (1699-1702)", ed. Markus A. Denzel, Jan de Vries ve Philipp Robinson Rössner, *Small is Beautiful? Interlopers and Smaller Trading Nations in the Pre-Industrial Period*, (Stuttgart, 2011): 177-179.

<sup>692</sup> Naçi, "Rreth tregtise se Sanxhakut te Shkodres me Republikën e Venedikut".

<sup>693</sup> These coastal regions were part of the Ohrid district (*sancak*).

<sup>694</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di L. A. Fontana, data 24 Febraio 1769.

To get inside the affairs of the *mukata'a* of Durres, Mehmed Bushatli allied with Kaplan-bey-zade Ibrahim Beg of Kavaje<sup>695</sup>, who was the main figure for the tax units in Kavaja and Durres.<sup>696</sup> He became the son-in-law of Mehmed Pasha, by marrying his daughter Kaya Hanım.<sup>697</sup> Eventually, this allowed the Bushatlis to directly get involved in the political and economic affairs in the districts of Ohrid and Elbasan where most of the fiscal units of Durres *mukata'a* were found. Due to the considerable size of the tax farming, Kaplan-bey-zade Ibrahim had to rely on the collaboration of other notable households like the Bargjini of Tirana, and the Toptan-zades of Kruja. After negotiations with the *emins* of Durres, the tax units of Durres *mukata'a* were distributed mainly to Kaplan-bey-zade Ibrahim, his associate Ibrahim Beg Bargjini, and Mehmed Beg of Kruja.<sup>698</sup>

However, these results left Tahir and Ismail of Toptan-zade family outside the tax-farming enterprise, thus causing the creation of two rival groups competing with each other. On one hand, there was the group of Kaplan-bey-zade Ibrahim who was backed by the Bushatlis, and the other one of Toptan-zades who enjoyed the support of Ohri Ahmed Pasha, a close client of Zeynep Sultan. Ultimately, the Toptan-zades violently responded to this exclusion by causing unrest and disorder in areas part of Durres' *mukata'a*. Even though they aimed to tarnish the reputations of the Bushatlis and Ibrahim Kaplan-bey-zade, the Toptan-zades ended up being guilty and were ordered into exile as punishment. Nonetheless, with the help of close associates, Zeynep Sultan forgave the offenders on the condition that both parties would cease their rivalry and refrain from causing any further issues that could jeopardize the functioning of the tax-farming operation.<sup>699</sup>

At the conclusion, the sequence of events proved favorable for the Bushatlis, enabling them to gain a solid foothold in the political and economic sphere of the Ohri district. Without resorting to an armed conflict, Mehmed Bushatli managed to extend his influence beyond the borders of his district. In this regard, the marriage of his daughter to Ibrahim Beg turned into a socio-political contract that bound him

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<sup>695</sup>In the Albanian literature, the notables of Kavaje were named *Alltuni* probably from the Turkish word *altın* (gold) which gives a hint about their wealth. Ibrahim Beg was the most famous member of the household who invested in and built various public buildings in the city of Kavaje. Nevertheless, their main sources of income consisted of tax collection and *chiftliks* in the region of Kavaje and Durres.

<sup>696</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di L. A. Fontana, data 24 Febbraio 1769. In the Italian sources, it is not given the Ottoman version of the function that Ibrahim Beg had in the tax-farming of Durres. However, it seems that he enjoyed an important administrative position according to the Venetian Consul at that time.

<sup>697</sup>She was known to have in possession many estates throughout the plains of Kavaje and Durres. In addition, Kaya Hanım is among the few wives of notables from the regions of Albanian about whom there exists a *vakfiye*, see: VGM, Defter no. 989, 65.

<sup>698</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 89.

<sup>699</sup>*Ibid*, 89-90.

to the regional order of the Bushatlis. Moreover, Mehmed Pasha understood the potential that tax farming held, seeing it as a fiscal strategy as well as an administrative tool, which allowed him to exert indirect control over the internal dynamics of another district. To prevent any potential issues in Shkodra, he exerted all his influence to appoint his nephew as *emin* (deputy) of the *mukata'a* of Shkodra's customs.<sup>700</sup> This allowed the Bushatlis to maintain all the fiscal and administrative mechanisms in the district and prevent any interference or emergence of any threat against them.

### 5.5.2 A Merchant Governor and Rivalry with the Venetians

In the beginning, the order created by Bushatlis helped Venice to strengthen its position in western Rumeli. The pacification of Ulcinj corsairs and the protection of the Venetian subjects' interests in Shkodra fostered commercial activities between the two sides. Venice gained the most advantage in this context, as its traders and shipowners profited significantly from the affordable goods and the fees collected for their transport. Nevertheless, Bushatli after extending its influence through the south including the port of Durres began to shift his attention to the Adriatic Sea commercial zone. Realizing his power and importance as a commercial partner of the Venetians, he approached the Ottoman authorities with a formal request for the Ulcinj ships and their captains to be allowed into the Gulf of Venice. The consul in Shkodra was the only one to refer to this situation, stressing in his report that meeting such a request would harm Venice's interests. He recommended the intervention of the *bailo* of Istanbul to prevent such a thing from taking place.<sup>701</sup>

There is a lack of information in the sources concerning the request and its outcome, indicating that the Ottoman imperial and Venetian authorities either declined or completely dismissed the demand.<sup>702</sup> The intention behind Bushatli Mehmed's request was a meticulously planned effort to increase his trade relations, reaching out to both Venice and other ports throughout the Adriatic Sea. For this purpose, he wanted to rely on the Ulcinj's large fleet which at that time was under his direct control.<sup>703</sup> Additionally, Mehmed Pasha planned to utilize the extensive network of

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<sup>700</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 2 Dicembre 1765.

<sup>701</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 9 Gennaio 1766.

<sup>702</sup> In the memoirs of Priest Balneo, apparently on the request of Bushatli Mehmed, he had the request sent to the Venetian authorities and was accepted. However, such a thing never occurs, thus exposing an important flaw in the narrative of Balneo, see: Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatli*, 50.

<sup>703</sup> Ardit Gjeli, "Between Rebellion and Obedience: The Rise and Fall of Bushatli Mahmud Pasha of Shkodra (1752-1796), *Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi*. (Istanbul Şehir Üniversitesi): 29, 60.

Shkodra's merchants, who had agents in every significant trading city. This large-scale initiative was developed by the Bushatlis not only for trade purposes but also to establish new diplomatic connections with other states, helping them avoid being solely reliant on Venice for political and economic matters. Even with a strategy in place, Bushatli Mehmed aimed to proceed cautiously to avoid inciting a diplomatic conflict with the Venetians that could jeopardize his initiative.<sup>704</sup>

Meanwhile, like his peers in the Balkans, Mehmed Pasha had invested considerable capital in the *chiftliks* by planting agricultural products that had high demand in the foreign market. Included in this group were the novel agricultural practices that emerged in the eighteenth-century Balkans, such as cotton, rice cultivation, and colonial-originated crops like maize.<sup>705</sup> Just for such purposes, the Bushatlis had ordered the building of ships in Ulcinj and with the native seamen, that would transport the merchandise to the important city ports like Ancona, Trieste, and Ragusa (Dubrovnik). In addition, together with Kaplan-bey-zade Ibrahim Beg and other close relatives, they would embark on the great Eastern Mediterranean trade. They would buy products like coffee, fruits, or yarn to later sell them to foreign merchants in the Adriatic ports.<sup>706</sup> Even though the Bushatlis were cautious in their actions to avoid straining relations with the Venetians, a situation of crisis ultimately emerged.

The action that created a rift between the Bushatlis and Venice occurred when Mehmed Pasha attempted to hinder the importation of grain by Venetian subjects from ports managed by his son-in-law. In the beginning, he ordered Ibrahim Beg to charge extra taxes for the Venetian merchants. Additionally, with his fleet from Ulcinj, Mehmed amassed all the grain from the Durres and Kavaja ports that were designated for Venetian vessels and then sold it at an elevated price to the cities of Ancona and Trieste. The initiative brought about major losses for the merchants in Venice, especially for Fontana, the Consul of Durres, whose income relied heavily on the fees collected from cargo lists. Aware of the strategy, Fontana complained to Ibrahim Beg that he would ask the *bailo* to discredit him to the imperial authorities and make him lose the administration of the *mukata'a*. Although the group of the Bushatlis removed the taxes and restored the previous conditions, still the Vene-

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<sup>704</sup>Although there was no significant conflict until July 26, still there was a coldness in the relations between the Bushatlis and the Venetians when compared to previously, see: A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Scutari, lettera di Antonio Duoda, data 26 Luglio 1766.

<sup>705</sup>Stoianovich, 'Land Tenure and Related Sectors of the Balkan Economy, 1600-1800', pp. 403-405; Virginia Paskaleva, "Osmanlı Balkan Eyaletleri'nin Avrupalı Devletlerle Ticaretleri Tarihine Katkı (1700-1850)". İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası 27, sy. 1-2 (Ekim 2011), 53.

<sup>706</sup>Oral, *Osmanlı-Venedik Ticari İlişkileri (1763-1794)*, p. 108. The reference comes from the Venetian consul of Durres: A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di L. A. Fontana, data 28 Febraio 1766. For a broader description of this commercial enterprise, see: Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 85-86.

tians lost a significant portion of their commercial and political influence against Shkodra.<sup>707</sup>

Despite capturing most of the trade of the western Rumeli from the hands of the Venetians, the Bushatlis did not stop there. Following the death of Vizier Ismail Pasha of Berat, a power vacuum arose in the district of Vlora regarding the governorship position. Additionally, due to his *mukata'a* possessions, there was a competition between various great households to obtain them by submitting official requests to the central government.<sup>708</sup> The Bushatlis wanted to take advantage of the circumstances, thus they also asked for the tax farming that stretched from the coasts of Kavaje to Vlora. Although they made a huge offer and sent bribes to the center, the Sultan retracted the tax farming. This decision prevented the Bushatlis from controlling all of the western coast of Rumeli province and saved the Venetian commercial interest in the region. Still, Mehmed Pasha carried on with his trade interference by buying goods that were supposed to go to Venetian ships, which negatively impacted the relations between the two sides.<sup>709</sup>

In the end, following the passing of Antonio Duoda, a diplomatic confrontation arose between the Bushatlis and Venice concerning the role of the vice-consul in Shkodra. Venice decided to appoint a Venetian that had no ties with Shkodra. In contrast, the Bushatlis requested the assignment of Andrea Duoda, nephew of the deceased consul who was also supported by the merchant class of Shkodra. Eventually, the Bushatlis reacted by providing two alternative arguments, the first asserting that the vice-consul of Shkodra had invariably been an Ottoman subject, and therefore, this should not alter. Lastly, they highlighted the challenge posed by the language barrier, explaining that Mehmed Pasha, unfamiliar with Italian, desired a companion who could speak Albanian.<sup>710</sup> Nonetheless, the Venetian authorities refused the request and sent their citizen to the city of Shkodra. Faced with the challenge presented by the Venetians, Bushatli Mehmed responded by expelling their choice.<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>707</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di L. A. Fontana, data 5 Marzo 1767; 2 Settembre 1767; 11 Febraio 1769.

<sup>708</sup>After the death of the tax farmer, the right of usufruct was taken from the deceased to be put again in the auction. For this see: Geng, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi*, 103-104. Regarding the wealth of İsmail Pasha of Berat, there is a summary of the records from his *muhallefat* (heritage) register, see: Keleş, 'Avlonya Sancağı Mutasarrıfı Vezir Arnavut İsmail Paşa (1751-1764)', 238-246.

<sup>709</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di L. A. Fontana, data 12 Agosto 1765.

<sup>710</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di L. A. Fontana, data 14 Giugno 1767.

<sup>711</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatli*, 64-65. According to Priest Balneo, the governor of Shkodra made a direct threat to the vice-consul and Venetian authorities.

At that time, under the leadership of the Bushatli household and their partners, Shkodra developed into a powerful political entity. It was made possible by the collaboration of all its significant socio-economic groups like the merchants, artisans, the seamen of Ulcinj, and the landed gentry. The collective unification of these actors stemmed from a shared local identity marker rooted in the region of their origin. Additionally, they acted as a unified body also thanks to the common economic interests that were delegated to the governor, Mehmed Pasha. This harmonic formation represented the core on which the foundation of the Bushatli order relied. In the vicinity of the focal point, households and minor dignitaries from the surrounding area would be integrated into supplementary strata via a purposefully constructed social framework, established through the practice of forging alliances. In the end, the challenge done to an old state like Venice underscored the successful outcome of this endeavor.

### 5.5.3 Bushatlis at War: Service, Negotiation, and Rewards

During their decade-long governance of Shkodra from 1757 to 1767, the Bushatli family effectively broadened their influence beyond the local area, establishing themselves as a significant regional force within the Ottoman Balkans and the Adriatic region. Their ability to impose their authority on the administrative functions of provinces with allied presence allowed them to counteract the central government's pressure. Despite their influence, the Bushatlis lacked the strength to confront the imperial authority directly, prompting Mehmed Pasha to maintain a submissive position. The Bushatli, while vigilant of potential challenges to their authority from competing factions in neighboring districts or the Ottoman government, encountered an unexpected primary threat originating from within their power base in Shkodra.

In the Montenegro region, part of the Shkodra district, the Orthodox tribes began to gather around a mysterious man called *Šćepan Mali* or Stephen the 'Little'. An impostor, he claimed to be the deceased Russian Tsar Peter III who died in 1762, probably murdered by the hand of his wife, Catherine II. Stephen was used by the Montenegrin elite as an opposition figure against Prince-Bishop Sava who lacked authority. Although the Russian envoy in Istanbul confirmed the death of the Tsar, still Stephen succeeded in taking power over Montenegro and causing disorder in the region.<sup>712</sup> Due to the popularity among the tribes near the Venetian dominion,

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<sup>712</sup>Stefan T. Filipovic, "Empires of all kinds collapse, but the Fake Tsars, they last forever." Modern and Contemporary Memories of Tsar Šćepan Mali (1767-1773)", Christina Jordan, Imke Polland (eds.) *Realms of Royalty New Directions in Researching Contemporary European Monarchies*. (Transcript Verlag, 2020), 131-133.



Venice saw Stephen as a threat and tried also to eliminate him through a plot but without success.<sup>713</sup> In January 1768, Bushatli Mehmed Pasha received orders from the center regarding the appearance of a ‘troublemaker’ among the Montenegrins. Later, he received instructions to assist the provincial governor of Bosnia in the military campaign against Stephen the ‘Little’.<sup>714</sup>

The army sent to oppress the Montenegrin uprising was led by the provincial commander (*beylerbey*) of Rumeli who was assisted by Bushatli Mehmed as second in charge. Using his position, the pasha of Shkodra made sure that the notables participating in this campaign would be those close to him, thus avoiding enemies like Beyzade Kahraman Pasha.<sup>715</sup> Even though the Ottoman army managed to defeat the Montenegrin tribes, still they failed to capture Stephen, who fled from the battlefield. The progress achieved by the forces in Montenegro was overshadowed by the outbreak of war with Russia, leading the Ottoman authorities to alter their focus to the preparation for the great conflict.<sup>716</sup> Regarding the case of Stephen, the Ottomans connected it with the Russian plan, however, it was not related.<sup>717</sup> Nonetheless, the central authorities after investigations accused the Patriarch of Peja and informed Bushatli Mehmed, as the region was under his jurisdiction.<sup>718</sup>

In October 1768, the Ottoman authorities announced their declaration of war against Russia, and in the months that followed, they commenced preparations for troop mobilization and the acquisition of resources required for the military campaign planned for the next spring. Imperial decrees were sent to the provincial notables throughout the empire regarding their participation and duties in the war.<sup>719</sup> The Bushatlis received instructions to prepare troops and move to the castle of Özi (Ochakiv)<sup>720</sup> and serve the commanders responsible for the defense.<sup>721</sup> However, like

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<sup>713</sup>Roberts, *The Realm of the Black Mountain*, p. 153.

<sup>714</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 166, 13 (10 N 1181 (30 January 1768); BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 19 (20 M 1182 (6 June 1768)).

<sup>715</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di Alfonso Penco, data 5 Luglio 1768.

<sup>716</sup>Roberts, *Ibid*, 155.

<sup>717</sup>Uzunçarşılı based on Tarih-i Vasıf describes this incident as initiated by the Russians, see: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi Cilt. IV/1*, p. 368.

<sup>718</sup>BOA C.DH. 286, 14266 (16 C 1182 (28 October 1768)).

<sup>719</sup>Regarding the circumstances and the events which led to this declaration and the aftermath, see: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi Cilt. IV/1*, 365-375.

<sup>720</sup>Located in today's Ukraine, on the northwestern shores of the Black Sea, Özi or Ochakiv was a crucial castle and military base for the Ottoman campaign in Eastern Europe. For the history of Özi during the Ottoman period, see: Temel Öztürk, "ÖZÜ", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt 34, İstanbul: 2007, 133-134.

<sup>721</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 167, 296 (10 Ş 1182 (20 December 1768)).

most of the provincial notables, Mehmed Pasha behaved with laxity and postponed the sending of troops to the front. For this reason, he was threatened with punishment in case of further disobedience by the center.<sup>722</sup> In the end, the Bushatlis mobilized 500 troops from their household (*kapı halkı*)<sup>723</sup> and 2000 as paid soldiers to be sent to the Russian front.<sup>724</sup>

For the governor of Shkodra, the reluctance to join the front was related mostly to the threats that might challenge his regional order. The absence of Bushatli Mehmed in the region could provide a chance for lesser notables to seize or plunder his properties. To eliminate any risks, Mehmed Pasha chose not to participate, using his health issues as a justification. Additionally, he suggested that his leave from Shkodra would ‘disrupt the order and cause unrest’ in the region. Mehmed’s notion of ‘order’ (*nizam*) might not align with the interpretation of the central authorities, but eventually, the request was approved by those in power. He designated his son Mustafa to command the troops stationed in Shkodra, after which Mustafa relocated to Özi Castle for further operations.<sup>725</sup> Due to the great need for soldiers, in this war, the imperial authorities had to accommodate the requests of provincial powerholders like Bushatlis.<sup>726</sup>

While the Ottoman authorities were focused on their conflict with Russia, Mehmed Pasha seized the opportunity to extend his influence and solidify his power in the western Rumeli region. His first target was the conquest of the Zadrime region, part of Dukakin district. Following the departure of Beyzade Kahraman Pasha, the governor of Dukakin, to the Russian front, the Bushatlis decided to invade the region. For this mission, Mehmed Pasha ordered his son Mustafa to assault Zadrime with the troops that were to join the Ottoman army at Özi. Nevertheless, Bushatli Mustafa and his troops managed to defeat the forces of Beyzade Hüseyin Beg and Tahir Beg.<sup>727</sup> After taking Zadrime, Mehmed returned to his previous

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<sup>722</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 167, 323 (29 Ş 1182 (8 January 1769).

<sup>723</sup>These troops were devoted and close men to the Bushatli household, a kind of personal standing army. For a detailed description, read: Mehmed İpşirli, ‘Kapı Halkı’, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt 24, Istanbul: 2001, 343-344.

<sup>724</sup>Hamit Karasu, “1768-1774 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı’nda Ayanların Rolü,” Unpublished PhD Dissertation, (Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi, 2021): 227. The list of the participant and their contribution to the military campaign are taken from the archival register: BOA TSMA.d, 108.

<sup>725</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 167, 438 (20 L 1182 (27 February 1769).

<sup>726</sup>From the data gathered by Karasu regarding the main providers of soldiers for the military campaign against Russia, the Albanian Pashas appear among the most important actors in this regard. This forced the central government to concede to this group, see: Karasu, *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>727</sup>This event was described in an anonymous chronicle which was found by Ignazio Zamputti. Additionally, in the same sources regarding the casualties from the Bushatlis, there are mention of the tanners and tailors victims. Thus, after the end of the factional conflict in Shkodra, there two guilds appear to have maintained their militia forces, however, both of them were fighting for the Bushatlis, see: Zamputti, ‘Il

plan, that of joining Dukakin in the district of Shkodra. The right moment came after Kahraman Pasha was executed for committing various crimes and mutiny on the frontier.<sup>728</sup> Consequently, the central government granted Bushatli Mehmed the Dukakin district.<sup>729</sup>

Although the Ottomans did not achieve their intended outcomes in the war, the Bushatlis found the circumstances favorable for redefining the political alignments in the region. Following the annexation of the Dukakin district, Bushatli Mustafa due to his successful efforts in battles against the enemy was given the title pasha and appointed as *mutasarrıf* (governor) of Üsküp<sup>730</sup> district.<sup>731</sup> The central authority's decision to grant such rewards was not solely based on the contributions of Bushatli Mustafa; instead, these 'gifts' served as a means to ensure that regional leaders like Mehmed Pasha remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire during periods of conflict or crisis. With the change of warfare, the armies were larger than before, thus forcing the state to rely on various provincial notables to provide the number of troops needed to deploy in the wars. This kind of service was one of the main factors that led to the rise of local notables, and their transformation into partners of the state.<sup>732</sup> The case of the Bushatlis illustrates this negotiation process, as after Mustafa was allowed to return to Shkodra, the government asked him to participate in the next campaign, but with a significantly larger force.<sup>733</sup>

The Ottoman forces suffered a devastating setback during the military campaign against Russia in the spring of 1770. Apart from losses on the Danube front, the Ottomans were caught by surprise in the Mediterranean Sea by the Russian fleet. Under the leadership of Admiral Orlov, the Russian fleet incinerated all the Ottoman ships that were anchored in *Çeşme* Bay.<sup>734</sup> This occurrence is regarded as one of the most disastrous moments in the history of the Ottoman Navy.<sup>735</sup> Additionally, by

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Settecento Veneziano', 82.

<sup>728</sup>The figure of Kahraman Pasha was used by Aksan as a case study regarding mutiny in the Ottoman army during the defense of Hotin against the Russians, see: Virginia Aksan, *Ottomans and Europeans: Contacts and Conflicts*, (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2004): 239-251.

<sup>729</sup>Naçi, *Pashalleku i Shkodres*, 95.

<sup>730</sup>It was a district part of the Rumeli province. Named after the city of Shkup located in modern North Macedonia, at that time it neighboured the capital district (*paşa sancağı*) where the provincial governor of Rumeli dwelled.

<sup>731</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 168, 419 (29 Ş 1183 (29 December 1769).

<sup>732</sup>Aksan, *An Empire Besieged*, 129-131; Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 65-67.

<sup>733</sup>BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 168, 538 (10 L 1183 (6 February 1770).

<sup>734</sup>It is located in today Izmir city, in western Anatolia coast.

<sup>735</sup>Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi Cilt. IV/1*, 400-401; For a more illustrative description of the *Çeşme* naval

using spies the Russians orchestrated a revolt in Morea (Peloponnesus) to disrupt the Ottoman military organization and force them to fight on many fronts.<sup>736</sup> However, this time, things did not go as planned for the Morean insurgents and the Russians. Due to the presence of various factions among the notables in the region and the lack of proper armament, the pro-Russian forces were defeated by Muhsin-zade Mehmed Pasha's troops.<sup>737</sup> In the Morea operation, the Bushatlis made their contribution by mobilizing ships and seamen from the coastal cities of Ulcinj and Bar. Eventually, Mehmed Pasha apart from the land forces found himself in charge of a fleet, thus contributing directly to the Ottoman navy in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.<sup>738</sup>

The governor of Shkodra, in recognition of his services and contributions to the Ottoman state, boldly submitted a direct petition to the central authorities, requesting various privileges for himself and his sons as a token of appreciation. This letter was sent to the Grand Vizier asking him to mediate on behalf of Bushatli Mehmed to the Sultan. The first request was the title of Vizier and the appointment to a province, as this would 'allow' Mehmed to protect the borders of the empire more efficiently. For his son, Mahmud Beg the title *mir-i miran* and the governorship of Shkodra to be transferred to him. Lastly, Mehmed Pasha requested the district of Elbasan for his other son (Ahmed), thus four districts and a province for the Bushatli household.<sup>739</sup> In light of the Ottoman state's circumstances, waging a large-scale war against a strong opponent like Russia while facing challenges on multiple fronts, they had no alternative but to respond to the appeals from regional authorities such as the Bushatlis.

Ultimately, the central government did approve the request of Mehmed Pasha but not in the way he wanted. Instead of a province, he received the district of Ohri which allowed him to consolidate the rule over central Albania and control the *mukata'a* of Durres and all the ports from Bar until Vlora. Additionally, Mehmed Pasha was named commander of the fleet, presumably the small contingent made

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battle, see: Ali R. İşıpek and Oğuz Aydemir, 1770 *Çeşme Deniz Savaşı: 1768-1774 Osmanlı Rus Savaşları*, (Istanbul: Denizler Kitabevi, 2010), 208-233.

<sup>736</sup>For a detailed description of these events based on the memoirs of Suleiman Penah Efendi, who was present at that time before and after the rebellion, see: Erkin Bulut, "The Life and Ideas of an 18th-Century Ottoman Bureaucrat: Süleyman Penâh Efendi and His "Order of the Climes", Unpublished MA Thesis, (Sabancı University, 2020): 44-52.

<sup>737</sup>Thomas Gallant, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 1768 to 1913: The Long Nineteenth Century*, The Edinburgh History of the Greeks EHG (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022): 6-10.

<sup>738</sup>Nagata, *Muhsin-zade Mehmed Paşa ve Ayanlık Müessesesi*, 52; BOA A.DVNSMHM.d. 168, 699 (20 Z 1183 (16 April 1770); C. BH. 19, 2129 (17 L 1184 (3 February 1771)).

<sup>739</sup>This document is found in the appendix part of the book *Pashalleku i Shkodres* written by Naçi. The author found the letter in the Bulgarian National Library 'Vasil Kolarov' today known by the name SS. *Cyril and Methodius National Library*, the old references are: Oriental Archive Collection, Session: Albania, Feudal Turmoil, documents of XVIII Century, the film no: 2596.

up of the ships from Ulcinj and Bar. Mahmud received the title pasha and was appointed governor of Shkodra. Mustafa Pasha was given the district of Elbasan but was removed from the governorship of Shkup (Üsküp). This information was recorded by the Venetian Consul of Durres to the authorities in Venice. The instant rise of the Bushatlis constituted a threat to Venice and the other notables in the region.<sup>740</sup> Regardless, it was undeniable that at that time, the Bushatlis represented the most powerful family and served as the main supporters of the Ottoman state in the Balkans during the 1770s.

## 5.6 The Bushatli Household: Power, Authority, Legitimacy

In order to deliver a thorough response to inquiries regarding the rise of the Bushatli family, an analysis will be conducted from two distinct perspectives. The first perspective, the micro viewpoint, will focus on the emergence of the household, its relationships, and its interactions with local socio-economic and political actors in Shkodra. The second perspective, the imperial approach involves a comprehensive analysis of the nature of the Bushatlis' interactions with the central government, with a specific focus on understanding their role and status within the extensive framework of the Ottoman imperial system. and the imperial viewpoint. For the first one, the local approach is directly related to the starting point of their rise, Shkodra. During the factional conflict, Mehmed moved from Bushat town and settled in the tanners' quarter inside the city of Shkodra.<sup>741</sup> In that setting, he built a palace<sup>742</sup> and organized his household, representing the initial phase of his political pursuits and the cornerstone of what eventually became a regional order.

Before delving into the examination of the Bushatli household, it is essential to understand the concept of a household and to situate it within the framework of contemporary academic research. Essentially, the household functioned as an extension of a grandee family, encompassing a considerable number of people who were at their service. These services included a wide range of activities, including

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<sup>740</sup> A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di Alfonso Penco, data 13 Febraio 1772; 29 Marzo 1772.

<sup>741</sup> There is no information regarding the exact period when Mehmed moved to the quarter of the tanners or when he had the palace built. According to the oral sources, he used the plague as an excuse to leave Bushat, and by making a deal with the tanners' faction, Mehmed moved to their neighborhood. Moreover, he built the palace at the flank of the hill and near the leading houses of the tanners' guild as a measure of protection. For more information regarding the oral sources in this regard, read: Bushatli, *Shkodra dhe Motet*, 62.

<sup>742</sup> About the description of the Bushatlis palace, see: Karaiskaj, "Pallati i Bushatllinjve ne Kalane e Shkodres (The Palace of the Bushatlis in the Castle of Shkodra)", 44-45.

both domestic tasks and military operations. The category of provincial households, which encompasses the Bushatlis, was formed by replicating the Sultanic household situated in the imperial center.<sup>743</sup> The formation of this entity was an endeavor that not everyone could undertake, as it was predominantly accessible to individuals associated with the Ottoman military class, either directly or indirectly. In her research, Hathaway identifies three categories of households found in the provinces: the residences of governors and those in administrative positions, the households of local grandees, and groups associated with military barracks.<sup>744</sup>

In the case of Mehmed, there is a possible combination of two important factors. The primary factor involves the ancestral background, which refers to the existence of the Ottoman cultural traditions and their persistence from earlier times.<sup>745</sup> Raised within the household of the Yusuf-beg-zades, he acquired understanding and experience related to this particular culture. The second factor, narrated exclusively by priest Balneo, revolves around the education that Bushatli Mehmed received at the ‘Sultanic’ school located in the Ottoman capital.<sup>746</sup> While the details of his life before Shkodra remain largely unknown, Mehmed’s departure from the town of Bushat represents a symbolic break from his ancestral household, enabling him to establish one of his own. Similar to his counterparts in other regions of the empire, he erected an opulent palace to accommodate his family and to serve as the hub of administrative operations. When analyzing the description of Priest Balneo in comparison to other provincial palaces in the Ottoman Empire, several structural similarities can be identified.<sup>747</sup>

Nevertheless, when Mehmed moved to Shkodra and established his household there, he did not possess any official title or office. This meant that in his beginnings, the Bushatli had no access to any official source of power that would have allowed him to exert authority in the city. In this context, Mehmed’s involvement in the tanners’ faction and the obtaining of the leadership provided him with the necessary

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<sup>743</sup>Jane Hathaway, *The Household: An Alternative Framework for the Military Society of Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Egypt*, *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie, Anno 18 (79), Nr. 1, *The Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (1999): 58-59. Yaycioğlu, *Parnters of Empire*, 69-71.

<sup>744</sup>Hathaway, *Ibid*, 59

<sup>745</sup>Bushatli Mehmed came from a line of various governors and officeholders in the Ottoman provincial administrative system. In the 1660s, Evliya Çelebi journeyed to Shkodra and encountered Mehmed Pasha, the governor of the Yusuf-beg-zade household from the town of Bushat, where their estates and palace were situated. Hence, throughout the century, the Yusuf-beg-zades were recorded as being important participants in the local politics of Shkodra.

<sup>746</sup>Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatli*, p. 80. In his memoirs, priest Balneo mentions this fact during a dialogue with Bushatli Mehmed, however, what he meant by ‘sultanic school’ and the ‘most prestigious’ in the empire is not for sure. If we consider the possibilities based on what was narrated, chances are that the school mentioned might be either *Enderun* or the *Birun* located in the Ottoman Imperial Palace.

<sup>747</sup>For different examples of provincial palaces built by local notables, see: Yaycioğlu, *Ibid*, 71-72.

power and authority to challenge the Çavuşzades for the seat of governorship. The intricate dynamics of factionalism in Shkodra led to the segmentation of society into two distinct socio-political groups. This division provided Mehmed with the opportunity to assert his leadership by aligning himself with and representing one of these factions. Although from the local aspect the Bushatlis by defeating the tailors and the Çavuşzades were the ruling power and authority in Shkodra, still they could legitimize this claim only through the official acquisition of the governorship seat by the central government.

In contrast to earlier governors, who served for a short duration before transitioning to other administrative positions, the Bushatlis stand out in their tenure. On the other hand, the primary objective of the central government throughout various historical phases was to maintain dominance and assert its influence over societal structures. The imperial center utilized the 'rotation system' as a mechanism to prevent the consolidation of power and authority among officeholders within the regions they served.<sup>748</sup> What made the Bushatlis unique was their ability to bring together various social and economic groups in the city along with marginalized communities in support of them. This support from the 'bottom' provided the necessary power and authority to claim the seat of the governorship of Shkodra and with that the legitimacy from both the population and the state.

### 5.6.1 Bushatli Mehmed and His Politics of Households

Following the establishment of their dominance in Shkodra, the Bushatlis leveraged the household framework to expand their influence into neighboring regions. The Bushatlis, being the most powerful regional force in terms of military strength and economic resources, were able to assert their dominance over other local leaders. Marrying their sons and daughters to other prominent households permitted them to create loci of power in other districts. On the other hand, this gave them the possibility to interfere in the inner issues of the other households. For instance, during a conflict between Kaplan-beg-zade Ibrahim with his brother Suleiman over *chiftlik* distribution, Bushatli Mehmed directly got involved in this matter concerning his son-in-law.<sup>749</sup> Additionally, when Ibrahim Beg passed away, Mehmed remarried his daughter to Suleiman as a measure to hold control over the house which controlled

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<sup>748</sup>Karen Barkey, 'In Different Times: Scheduling and Social Control in the Ottoman Empire, 1550 to 1650', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Jul. 1996): 463-464.

<sup>749</sup>*Burime te Zgjedhura 3* (Selected Sources), 223-224. This excerpt was taken from a collection of documents regarding Central Albania. The archival reference is, A.Q.SH. Fondi 124, Dosja 3.

the *mukata'a* of Durres.<sup>750</sup>

Another important local actor for the Bushatli in central Albania were the Bargjini of Tirana. To strengthen the ties with them, Mehmed married his son Mahmud with one of their daughters.<sup>751</sup> The collaboration between the Bargjini and the Toptan-zades was viewed unfavorably by the Bushatlis, who regarded the latter as adversaries of their authority. Consequently, through a carefully devised scheme, Mehmed succeeded in removing the heads of the Toptan-zades while they were visiting the Bargjini palace as guests. By taking this step, the Mehmed strengthened their control over the Bargjini and ensured they remained within the Bushatli's regional order.<sup>752</sup> However, as the Toptan-zades controlled the trade routes, the Bushatlis later changed their approach by offering them peace and restoring various estates that had been seized. After negotiations and efforts, both houses eventually managed to establish peace and the Bargjini were unfairly accused and blamed for the assassination.<sup>753</sup>

In the Dukakin region, which had been historically under the authority of the Beyzades, Mehmed tried to curb their power through a different approach. The Beyzades, much like the Bushatlis, in case of conflicts or services in campaign depended on military assistance of the Catholic highlander tribes residing in their district. The substantial presence of this group in the Dukakin region, coupled with their alliance with the native household, posed a significant challenge that demanded the attention of the Bushatlis.<sup>754</sup> However, these tribes lived in a harsh environment and the lack of agriculture due to the mountainous geography made them exposed to famine and poverty. Mehmed Pasha capitalized on these circumstances by offering the tribal chieftains fertile land in the sparsely inhabited southern territory. Additionally, by granting them religious freedom, he distanced them from the Beyzades and strengthened their ties to the Bushatli household.<sup>755</sup>

The instances mentioned above provide an alternative perspective on the ascendancy of regional authority figures like Bushatli Mehmed Pasha. Undoubtedly, the

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<sup>750</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di Alfonso Penco, data 13 Febraio 1772.

<sup>751</sup>As Mahmud was not aware of his infertility, he blamed his wife and murdered her although presenting it as an incident. To not antagonize the relations with the Bargjini family, he married her sister. Regarding this story, see: Gjeli, *Between Rebellion and Obedience*, 78.

<sup>752</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di Alfonso Penco, data 4 Ottobre 1771.

<sup>753</sup>A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di Alfonso Penco, data 25 Giugno 1772.

<sup>754</sup>Beyzade Kahraman Pasha played a pivotal role as the primary leader during the defense of Hotin, commanding a force of six thousand troops, predominantly composed of Catholic highlanders hailing from the Dukakin district. Regarding this topic see: Aksan, *Ottomans and Europeans*, 217.

<sup>755</sup>Pllumi, *Fрати i Pashallareve Bushatli*, 63.



foremost family of Shkodra was unrivaled in terms of both military and economic power. The attainment of their objectives through the extension of their influence into other regions was not exclusively reliant on coercive tactics, signifying the adoption of a multifaceted approach to their endeavors. The strategic implementation of the 'households' policy was revealed to be an integral component in shaping regional orders by provincial magnates like Bushatlis. Their objective was to forge alliances with lesser notables through a patron-client relationship, social contracts, and mutual interests, thereby consolidating their influence and power within the region. From the administrative perspective, this method applied by the Bushatlis proved to be more efficient than the governmental provincial institutions.

### 5.6.2 Vision of an 'Architect' and the Making of a Dynasty

The regional order that the Bushatli household created through the leading figure of Mehmed Pasha had also the support of different social, economic, religious, and political groups in Shkodra. Eventually, this wide zone of influence built through a complex social and political-financial network could not become possible solely by the efforts of a single person or household. On the other hand, all these communities from different backgrounds benefited from this enterprise started by Mehmed Pasha. The end of the disorder in Shkodra and the dispersion of the faction that brought peace to the region was perceived positively by the population. However, providing peace and discipline were the expected duties of any appointed governor from the central government. What the Bushatlis did that differed them from their previous predecessors was that they emerged through a 'bottom-up' initiative and represented the will of Shkodra's society.

Rather than limiting governorship duties, the Bushatli Mehmed set out on a large project by merging their interests with those of the communities in Shkodra. The nature of the relationship was mostly negotiated and consensual but, in some cases, also submissive. During their endeavor to extend the zone of influence in other regions, there are accounts of socio-economic groups of Shkodra that used to be enemies but were fighting for the Bushatlis. For instance, the guilds of tanners and tailors, once the dominant factions of Shkodra, fought together in the battle of Zadrima with their militias.<sup>756</sup> The merchant class reached its highest peak in commercial activities only after Mehmed rose to power as governor. Although the Bushatlis had their interests and capital invested in the trade, still the merchants of Shkodra based on the Venetian accounts were able to cover a good portion of the

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<sup>756</sup>Zamputti, 'Il Settecento Veneziano e l'Albania Turca', 82.

commerce between the Ottoman state and Venice.<sup>757</sup>

Even in the case of local actors who were not from the city of Shkodra but directly involved in the political and economic sphere like the Ulcinj corsairs and captain. Initially posing a danger to Venetian and regional traders in the Adriatic, the Bushatlis converted them into a trading fleet that benefited both themselves and the merchants of Shkodra.<sup>758</sup> Consequently, in the 1760s they came to dominate and rival the Venetian trade in the Adriatic Sea. On many occasions, Mehmed Pasha sought diplomatic and armed conflict to protect the interests of his subjects. Although, with Venice, the confrontation remains diplomatic, with other regional actors, the Bushatlis had resorted to armed conflicts.<sup>759</sup> Furthermore, the Bushatlis extended their commercial activities to the Eastern Mediterranean, thus amusing large amounts of capital that they used for different purposes.

The Bushatlis commissioned various architectural complexes including palaces, mosques, bridges, religious schools (madrasah), libraries, and even Catholic churches. Thanks to the implementation of this comprehensive infrastructural program, the cityscape of Shkodra experienced a profound change, reshaping its overall character and considerably enhancing its urban dynamics. This architectural patronage endeavor apart from civic functionality was used by the Bushatlis to reflect their vision of the new political order that was taking place at that time. The ‘Lead Mosque’ that was built during the time of Mehmed Pasha at tanners’ quarter is probably the best example, as its architecture differs from those built by other local notables.<sup>760</sup> As other contemporary mosques have a mixture of local architectural features, the Bushatlis built a miniature of the Sultanic mosques, as a symbol of their legitimacy and authority in Shkodra.

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<sup>757</sup>This can be easily seen through the data from the PhD thesis of Özgür Oral and the book Alvin Saraçi *Tregtia Adriatike e Shkodres me Republikën e Venecies ne Shekujt XVII dhe XVIII* (The Adriatic Trade of Shkodra with the Republic of Venice in XVII-XVIII Centuries). Additionally, based on the manifest cargos of the Venetian Consul in Shkodra, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the representatives of the merchants were not Venetian subjects anymore but were their peers from Shkodra.

<sup>758</sup>Stoianovich, “The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant”, 274-275.

<sup>759</sup>The conflict between the Bushatlis and the Toptan-zades apart from earlier cases of enmity, it started following the prevention of the Shkodra’s merchants through the trade routes near Kruja, see: A.S.Ve. CSM, Console di Durazzo, lettera di Alfonso Penco, data 25 Giugno 1772.

<sup>760</sup>Mehmed had local building masters sent to Istanbul for them to see and learn from the Sultanic mosques, see: Pllumi, *Frati i Pashallareve Bushatli*, 62-63.

## 5.7 Conclusion

The concluding chapter of the thesis examines three primary topics. The first topic pertains to the conclusion of factionalism in Shkodra. The final phase of the factional conflict, spanning the years 1742 to 1747, marked the emergence of Bushatli Mehmed as the leader of the tanners' faction and his confrontations with the Çavuşzades and the tailors. Ultimately, the Bushatli faction emerged victorious from this conflict. The success of the tanners can be attributed to the strategic approach employed by Bushatli Mehmed during his engagement with the tailors. Initially, he leveraged the prevailing economic difficulties and the defection of Ulcinj's corsairs to the tailors' side, which created discontent among the merchant class—an influential constituent within the rival faction—thereby drawing them to his alliance. Subsequently, through the mediation of Priest Balneo, he established a coalition with the Catholic tribesmen, thereby altering the military balance in favor of the tanners, which facilitated their swift victory over their adversaries.

The dissolution of both factions by Bushatli Mehmed represented a pivotal occurrence that fundamentally transformed the sociopolitical landscape of Shkodra. This action established the Bushatlis as the singular authority within the region, highlighting that these political organizations had been employed by local power-holders as instruments to enhance their societal influence and secure the position of governor. Moreover, distancing themselves from a particular faction enabled the Bushatlis to secure support and form alliances with a diverse array of socio-economic groups within Shkodra. The reduction of factionalism and the resulting turmoil contributed to establishing order, which was a critical factor in legitimizing the Bushatli authority in the perception of society. The conclusion of the factional conflict resulted in the dissolution of the territorial division between the 'new town' and 'old town,' thereby symbolizing the unification of the city of Shkodra.

The second topic addressed in this chapter was the rise of the Bushatli family to prominence through their governance of Shkodra. Bushatli Mehmed emerged as a significant figure in Shkodra, leveraging his connections with influential individuals to secure the position of governor. This strategic move served to formally legitimize his authority within the region. To accomplish this, he engaged in strategic alliances and established patron-client relationships with various influential figures. June 1757 marked the official beginning of the Bushatli rulership in Shkodra. From his official appointment until 1768, Mehmed implemented a policy aimed at centralizing power within the district. He adopted a compliant stance towards the imperial center, positioning himself as a pivotal figure in maintaining order and stability throughout

the province. The central authorities' failure to replace him as governor of Shkodra highlighted the effectiveness of the Bushatlis' local policies, which enabled them to effectively resist any potential external pressures.

The third topic explores the strategies and methods employed by Bushatli Mehmed in establishing a regional order. He utilized two key approaches. First, he leveraged social networks to forge alliances with local notables in other provinces, thereby expanding his sphere of influence. These relationships were founded on mutual financial and political interests, and in some cases, they were solidified through marriages between members of the households. He established strategic relationships with influential individuals within the imperial center as a means of safeguarding his interests and securing favors from the Ottoman government. Secondly, the Bushatlis effectively capitalized on the opportunities that arose during the military campaign, as the state depended on provincial power holders for essential financial resources and military troops. Between the years 1768 and 1774, which corresponded with the Ottoman-Russian War, the Bushatlis, like their contemporaries, successfully negotiated administrative positions and tax revenues in return for providing military assistance. This development resulted in the consolidation and dissemination of the Bushatli order throughout various districts.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This dissertation seeks to contribute to the growing scholarship on provincial order during the eighteenth century. This study complements the work of previous historians regarding the Ottoman provinces by illuminating the transitional process that led to the establishment of a new provincial order focusing on the case of Shkodra. By utilizing a micro-analytical approach in this Balkan town, I sought to demonstrate that these agents and occurrences developed and functioned within the dynamics of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, they were interconnected to the broader Mediterranean contexts of the eighteenth century. Its proximity to the frontier further enhances its significance, highlighting its role as a crossroads of interregional trade routes and considerable military strength.

I argue that factionalism developed as a significant political phenomenon resulting from the disruption of the traditional Ottoman provincial order. This disruption created a power vacuum that compelled local powerholders to compete for financial resources and administrative positions throughout the eighteenth century. The formation of alliances among these local powerholders and influential socio-economic groups with similar backgrounds led to the establishment of factions. These factions were utilized as instruments by prominent figures seeking to enhance their political power. Ultimately, factionalism arose from the newly established provincial order, which enabled local notables to collaborate effectively with the central government in the administration of the provinces.

This arrangement also provided a platform for individuals outside the Ottoman administrative system to engage in participatory activities and negotiate their power relationships with the state. It challenges the approach of earlier historians—whether examining communist-era Albania or broader Balkan historiography—with narratives of anarchy and disorder in line with the decline paradigm. In the context of Shkodra, factionalism denotes a phase of transformation that significantly influenced both urban and rural local entities during a period when the Ottoman Empire encountered essential alterations in its fiscal, administrative, and

military structures.

The artisan guilds represent a crucial element in the discourse surrounding factionalism in Shkodra. In comparison to other documented instances of factionalism in the Ottoman provinces, this particular case is noteworthy for how factions were explicitly designated and organized around the artisan guilds of tailors and tanners. Accordingly, this narrative does not encompass factions of local secular or religious nobility, nor does it include military entities such as the janissaries. The factors contributing to this characteristic in Shkodra are challenging to identify with precision due to the limited availability of sources. It is reasonable to assume that these two artisan guilds possessed significant economic wealth and prestige relative to their counterparts. In particular, tanners wielded significant influence across numerous neighboring regions and various provinces within the empire. Regarding the tailors, there was an increase in textile production linked to the demand generated by the domestic market.

Despite the limitations of the available sources, the case of factionalism in Shkodra underscores the role of artisan guilds as prominent actors in the conflict. This development highlights the significant transformation these guilds underwent over time. The expansion of the manufacturing sector in Shkodra as a result of the increased trade made the guilds the main socio-economic groups in the city. Additionally, their presence in continuous wars triggered a ‘militarization’ process enhancing their fighting abilities. The power vacuum following the weakening of the local governance and the disorder created in Shkodra permitted the guilds and their militia to assume patrolling roles in different quarters. Based on these observations, it is reasonable to conclude that, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the social and administrative roles fulfilled by artisan guilds were crucial in facilitating the emergence of the tanners and tailors’ factions.

Among the main groups that played a major role in the making of regional politics was the merchant class of Shkodra. Based on an analysis of the Venetian cargo manifests, the merchant class was comprised of two primary groups: individuals with civilian backgrounds and those originating or associated with the military class. Although the former group represented a substantial portion of the overall composition, it is the latter group that held the key positions of leadership and was responsible for making decisions. Shkodra’s development into a significant commercial center, coupled with its trade activities in the Adriatic, facilitated the growth and prosperity of the local merchant class. The capital accumulated during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries positioned them as the principal urban stakeholders in Shkodra. This financial foundation was instrumental in establishing

their dominance and influence within the city's socio-economic framework.

According to excerpts from court records in Shkodra, there existed a notable trend among the merchant class toward the acquisition of substantial land holdings in rural areas. My hypothesis posits that this development may have cultivated an adversarial relationship between the merchants and the rural landlords, who likely perceived it as a threat to their interests. From a comparative analysis, particularly when considering other prominent commercial powers of the period, such as Venice, it becomes apparent that there was a prevailing trend among the nobility and the middle class to withdraw from commercial ventures. This reduction in participation was largely attributed to the risks associated with piracy, thus investments were mainly focused on agricultural land acquisition. In this context, the behavior of merchants from Shkodra can be analyzed as a response to the trading conditions of the period, particularly regarding the safety concerns associated with transportation and commerce in the Adriatic Sea.

The tailors' guild, situated in the commercial district of the city's new area, established strategic alliances with both the merchant class and the artisan groups operating on this side of the city. Consequently, the tailors' faction cultivated a strong urban identity, as the primary participants were drawn from the commercial sector of Shkodra. Their political and military leadership was represented by the Çavuşzade household whose palace and estates were mainly from the new part of the city. On the other hand, the tanner's guild was located in the earlier settlement of Shkodra, thus the oldest part of the town. The availability of water resources, necessary for the tanning process, played a crucial role in determining the location of operations on that particular side of the city. The proximity to rural regions served as a significant factor that prompted local landlords to align themselves with the tanners' faction. It can be concluded that the factionalism observed in Shkodra, similar to that in other provinces, manifests a significant conflict between urban and rural powerholders.

Factionalism in Shkodra encompassed not only local dynamics but also extended to broader macro-level issues. One of these layers regarded the governorship seat of Shkodra. The conflict between factions and local authorities in the initial phase (1722-1739) of factionalism highlights the complexity of their relationship and the challenges faced by both provincial elements and the imperial center. Despite their conflictual nature, these factions were not in opposition to the state; instead, they aimed to establish their standing within the Ottoman governance framework. The cases of Pasho Hasan and Mustafa Beg of Bushat illustrate the evolution of local politics in Shkodra during the eighteenth century. This period saw a realignment of

political factions that empowered influential individuals to pressure central authorities and negotiate roles within the Ottoman administration.

After 1739, Shkodra underwent a significant transformation, witnessing the emergence of bilateral factionalism. This year represents a significant turning point, illustrating that two factions effectively disseminated their influence throughout society and successfully entered the district appointment system. The case of Abdi Pasha exemplifies the significance of faction membership within a politically fragmented society. Initially, he encountered difficulties in fulfilling his duties as governor due to the dominance of the Çavuşzades and the tailor faction, who effectively dictated authority and governed Shkodra without official sanction. Only after Abdi Pasha established a collaboration with the tanners was he able to effectively assert his authority and governance within the region. This example delineates the new provincial order and the integration of local elements within the administrative framework.

This development benefited the central government, as consolidating the tanners and tailors in the district allowed it to manipulate factions and local politics to serve its interests. This arrangement was preferable to the emergence of various belligerent factions, which could lead to unrest and instability. In a manner similar to other provinces, the existence of two well-structured entities facilitated the power-sharing and resource distribution for the imperial center. This process was instrumental in establishing a network among the leaders of the various factions within the Ottoman center. On the other hand, local actors played a vital role in the management of financial resources that belonged to influential figures in the imperial capital. Moreover, these local powerholders effectively oversaw administrative responsibilities, enhancing overall governance.

The Shkodra case study illustrates the strategies employed by Ottoman governance to manipulate and engage various factions effectively for its administrative objectives. It also shows the pragmatic and adaptive approaches of the imperial center in responding to the crises and challenges that arose in the provinces during the eighteenth century. This responsiveness reflects the success of the Ottoman government in maintaining its authority and coherence within its territorial holdings in a time of constant socio-economic and political dynamics shifting. On the other hand, while factionalism is perceived as a divisive phenomenon, it also embodies an inclusive aspect that facilitates the engagement of different socioeconomic groups. This includes influential urban and rural elites, as well as tribal leaders. Moreover, it contributed significantly to integrating marginalized communities that had remained outside the Ottoman cultural sphere for an extended period.



In the matter of governance system, factionalism provided a parallel structure that facilitated the ascent of local notables to positions of power. The new system superseded the traditional top-down approach to appointments, thereby rendering the previously employed rotation method utilized by the imperial center ineffective. Nevertheless, it should be noted that approval from the central authorities and the official granting of a governorship seat was still important to legitimize the rulership of the leading figures. Although this bottom-up initiative initiated a centrifugal process that challenged the imposition of authority from above, the existence of two competing factions still enabled the imperial center to retain control over the political landscape of Shkodra. Moreover, it facilitated the opportunity for the local socio-economic group to adapt their alliances in response to changing circumstances and shared interests. Hence, factionalism became a mechanism that facilitated the integration of the local element in the imperial system, and how the center related to the provinces.

The trade activities of Venice constituted a pivotal element in the broader dynamics of factionalism, thus positioning the Republic of Venice as a crucial player in the regional political landscape. Shkodra, as a district, was strategically positioned at the Venetian border and served as an essential region for the export of goods to Venice. This development established Venice as a significant commercial center for the merchants of Shkodra, who derived their wealth from trade activities with the Venetian marketplace. The factional conflicts, coupled with the assaults by the tanners' faction on the commercial district of Shkodra, severely hindered the flow of trade to Venice. Given the close relationship between the merchants of Shkodra and Venice, this disruption prompted Venetian support for the faction of tailors. The seat of the Venetian vice-consulate in Shkodra served as a center of diplomatic and negotiation between the local actors and Venice.

Lastly, the penetration of the Venetian-Ulcinj rivalry into the factions of Shkodra helped add a complex layer of Adriatic-Mediterranean dynamics to the existing factional tensions. The Ulcinj's alliance with the Barbary corsairs from the northern African coast significantly disrupted trade and compromised the safety of navigation in the Adriatic Sea. Venice, which suffered from these piratical activities was able to neutralize them through the support of a faction that followed an anti-piracy policy. Ulcinj was situated within the Shkodra district and functioned as a base for piracy conducted by the Barbary corsairs. The local governor held the authority necessary to mitigate their activities by exercising control over the coastal regions. This prompted Venice to interfere in the local politics of Shkodra in order to mitigate the influence of corsairs within the Adriatic region.

The threat of piracy posed by Ulcinj and the Barbary corsairs had been a concern for Venice even prior to the 1720s. Addressing this issue has consistently presented a significant challenge for the Venetian authorities in their attempts to resolve it through the Ottoman state. However, the success of Venice in neutralizing piracy activities emerged when they modified their strategy to engage with the local politics of Shkodra. Through the establishment of alliances with local actors and factions, Venice effectively shaped the competition for the governorship seat. This development illustrates the strategic capability of the factions and their leadership in leveraging external support from distant provincial actors and influential foreign powers, such as Venice. Through these alliances, the factions worked to enhance their positions and influence power balances in Shkodra. On the other hand, this analysis demonstrates that factionalism facilitated the involvement of diverse political entities in local governance policies that previously was unattainable.

The ascent of Bushatli Mehmed to the position of governor of Shkodra can be attributed to the dynamics of factional politics. His success in becoming leader of the tanners' faction was followed by a decisive victory over the rivals. Bushatli Mehmed's establishment of alliances with marginalized communities and discontented groups within the tailors' faction significantly contributed to his ascension as the leader of Shkodra. Establishing social order in a city affected by persistent conflict and economic decline served as the fundamental factors that enabled him to authenticate his authority at the local level, despite the absence of formal recognition from the central government. The dissolution of the factions represented a strategic action that enabled him to attain absolute power in the city while effectively neutralizing the emergence of potential rivals among local powerholders. The official appointment of Bushatli Mehmed was ultimately achieved through the establishment of patron-client relationships with influential individuals in both the central government and provincial authorities.

Another important instrument that Mehmed employed to expand its authority was tax farming. He utilized the mukata'a of Durres, owned by Ottoman princesses to establish alliances within the Sultanic household as a strategy to provide him with protection and further benefits. Secondly, he established strategic alliances with fellow contractors within the territories of the mukata'a to enhance and consolidate its influence in that region. In conclusion, the practice of tax farming in various districts allowed the Bushatlis to exert their influence without the necessity of controlling the local governance within those areas. This approach introduced a new political dimension to the local fiscal and administrative system during the eighteenth century.

The capacity of the Bushatlis, similar to that of their contemporaries, to offer assistance and services to the Ottoman state during periods of conflict constituted a significant factor contributing to their rise as power magnates. With the evolution of warfare, armies expanded in size, necessitating that the state rely on various provincial notables to furnish the required troop numbers for military engagements. In return for these services, rewards were provided in the form of administrative positions and financial resources, established through a negotiation process. The imperial center's need for soldiers and financial resources during prolonged wars compelled them to grant most requests from the Bushatlis, including governorships over various districts. Shkodra, along with various local social and economic groups, played a pivotal role in the establishment of this provincial order. This dependence on local notables was a significant factor in the ascendancy of these figures and their subsequent transformation into partners of the state.

From 1757 to 1775, Bushatli Mehmed held the position of governor of Shkodra, during which he successfully established a system of provincial governance. This order encompassed not only the district of Shkodra but also the adjacent regions, all managed under the oversight of his household. The systematic approach he employed to establish order involved the careful development of a social network characterized by a horizontal framework of alliances with prominent individuals in various districts. These connections were arranged through marriages, share of fiscal resources like tax-farming, debt, and patronage-clientship relationships. From a central perspective, the Bushatlis effectively established alliances within the imperial capital by employing bribery and actively engaging in the various factions among the statesmen. The integration of the Bushatlis into the dynamics of a larger imperial framework played a pivotal role in ensuring their sustained authority. This strategic alignment not only fortified their political standing but also facilitated their ability to navigate the complexities of governance and maintain influence over an extended duration.

This study illustrates that the Bushatlis depended on the collaboration of local entities in their efforts to establish provincial order. Merchants, artisan guilds, and the tribesmen of Shkodra, previously in conflict with one another, collaboratively united under the leadership of the Bushatlis to establish a provincial order that proved beneficial for all parties involved. The ascent of the Bushatlis had a significant impact on both the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas, resulting in a realignment of political power among maritime actors. Ulcinj and its maritime fleet were placed under the administration of the Bushatlis, who, after eradicating the piracy associated with the Barbary corsairs, significantly enhanced the flow of commerce by ensuring a secure environment for trade. Initially, Venice and other maritime states

extended their support to the Bushatlis, who emerged as a significant interregional factor contributing to social, economic, and political stability.

The Bushatlis maintained their position as governors of Shkodra until the year 1831, owing to their effective and gradual establishment of provincial authority through social networking and strategic alliances within the imperial center. However, their governance ultimately succumbed to the centralization policies implemented by Mahmud II. Nevertheless, this study could be further developed by delving deeper into the dynamics of the regional power held by the Bushatli household, which ruled Shkodra for 74 years. This family produced several influential figures who dominated the regional landscape of the Ottoman Balkans. What were the foundations of their power, and how did they maintain their authority across various parts of the province for such an extended period? A comprehensive exploration of these questions could illuminate other significant dynamics within the Ottoman provincial order at the turn of the nineteenth century.

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