

**THE RELIGIOUS  
AND ETHNOGRAPHIC  
SYNTHESIS OF THE POPULATION  
OF SOUTHERN ALBANIA  
(NORTHERN EPIRUS)  
IN THE BEGINNING  
OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**

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BDiv., BA (Theology), MA (History of Nationalism)

**Introduction**

Albania was formed in 1912 when Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia defeated the Ottomans and expelled them from the Balkan Peninsula. Until then Albania had asked for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, but the Turkish defeat forced Ismail Kemal bey Vlora, a politician and prominent Albanian, to declare the independence of Albania on 28 November 1912. At the Peace Conference of London in 1913 the Great Powers recognized Albania as an independent state and asked from the Greek troops, which had occupied the southern part of the new principality, to evacuate the region. Right after the Greeks had begun to move their troops from the area a revolt broke out led by George Christakis - Zografos. The overwhelming part of the population of Southern Albania expressed Greek sentiment and demanded autonomy. As a result, in June 1914 the agreement of Corfu was signed and Southern Albania became an autonomous region. Greece repeatedly tried to annex Southern Albania, but the final delimitation of the Albanian-Greek boundaries in 1921 granted the region to Albania.

South's inhabitants were divided in two religious groups; the Muslims and the Orthodox Christians. Literally all the Muslims were Albanian-speaking, while the Christians were either Albanian or Greek or Vlach-speaking. There were also some other insignificant minorities of Gypsies, Jews and Slavs. The Greeks, who had aspirations for the region, based their claims on the religious division arguing that all the Orthodox were Greeks by sentiment, both Albanian and Greek-speaking. They believed that the Orthodox Christians did not desire to be members of a mainly Muslim Albanian State. On the other hand, the Albanians based their arguments on the nationalistic criterion. They argued that the South was Albanian and it had to be part of the new state, as the vast majority of the population there was Albanian-speaking.

Using statistical data from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and some comparisons of these data with previous and modern statistics we shall try to investigate the truth hidden behind these biased views. We shall divide our work in parts according to the periods we want to concentrate on. First we shall examine the reality in Epirus before 1908, when the succeeding revolts of the Albanians started taking place and we have the last statistical data produced by the Ottoman authorities. Then we shall examine the main period in question – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – in two parts: 1. 1908-1914, that is till the revolt of the Northern Epirotes and the start of World War I and 2. 1918-1921, that is till the final delimitation of the Albanian - Greek frontier line and the statistics of the League of Nations. Finally, we shall use some modern statistics in order to make some useful comparisons.

### **1. The Religious and Ethnographic synthesis of the population in Northern Epirus in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century**

The Albanian nationalism emerged in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and was 'incarnated' in the League of Prizren that was established in 1878 to oppose to the decisions of St. Stefanos Treaty and the Congress of Berlin<sup>1</sup>

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1. Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878-1912*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 31-38.



concerning the formation of the Balkan States. The Ottomans initially supported the movement, as they needed an opposition to the humiliating for them St. Stefanos Treaty<sup>2</sup> and to the Congress of Berlin. However, when the Congress of Berlin came to an end, they tried to break up the Albanian nationalistic movement, which was a problem for the stability of their multi-national Empire<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the League of Prizren constituted the first Albanian attempt to organize a nationalistic movement, to raise national claims and to spread nationalistic ideas among Albanians. It is fundamental to underline that the League identified all the regions with a majority of the Albanian-speaking population as Albanian<sup>4</sup>. This happened because of the various differences of the Albanian-speaking population.

Since the Albanians were mainly Muslims, they were satisfied with the Ottoman rule, as they were privileged citizens<sup>5</sup> with free access to the Ottoman administrative system. Central Albania's Muslims were fanatic and loyal not only to the sultan but also to their religion<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, North's inhabitants were divided in tribes ignoring nationalism and nationalistic movements while living with freedom on their highlands<sup>7</sup>. On

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2. Ibid., pp. 54-55. Apostolos Glavinias, *Το Αυτοκέφαλον της εν Αλβανία Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας επί τη βάσει ανεκδότων εγγράφων (The autocephalous of the Orthodox Church in Albania based on unpublished documents)*, (Janina: Institute for Studies on Ionian and Adriatic Region, 1978), pp. 28-29.

3. Ibid., pp. 27-28. Ramadan Marmulaku, *Albania and the Albanians*, (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1975), p. 24.

4. Skendi, pp. 44-45.

5. Henry Baerlein, *Southern Albania: Under the Acroceraunian Mountains*, (Chicago: Argonaut, 1968<sup>2</sup>), pp. 34, 36. Vandeleur Robinson, *Albania's Road to Freedom*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1941), p. 14. Ishmael Kemal bey, *The Memoirs*, (London: Somerville, 1920), pp. 365, 368.

6. As striking examples are mentioned the revolt of the central Albanians to the independent Albanian government (Basil Kondis, *Ο Ελληνισμός της Βορείου Ηπείρου και οι Ελληνοαλβανικές σχέσεις: Έγγραφα από το ιστορικό Αρχείο του Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών (The Hellenism of Northern Epirus and the Greek-Albanian Relations: Documents from the Historical Archive of the Greek Foreign Office)*, vol. 1, (Athens: Estia, 1997), pp. 27-28, Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 85-86) and their opposition to the establishment of an Albanian school in Elbasan by the nationalists (Vickers, p. 60).

7. Baerlein, p. 9. See examples of the way of thinking of the northern tribes in Mary Edith Durham, *High Albania*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1909), pp. 17, 183, 208, 254.

the other hand, the Southerners belonged to the Tosk tribe and they felt hostility against the other tribes having considerable differences with them mostly in their spoken dialect and the way of living<sup>8</sup>.

Consequently, the few nationalist intellectuals could not widely affect the way of thinking of the population<sup>9</sup>. This said, it becomes obvious why one of these intellectuals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Faik bey Konitza, believed that the Albanian people were not ready for independence<sup>10</sup>.

Only the Southerners remained Orthodox Christians and felt oppressed by the Ottomans. They joined the revolution of the Greeks in 1821 and fought against their Muslim, nowadays, compatriots; pashas and beys<sup>11</sup>. As a result, their criteria remained religious rather than national: the Muslims had a strong Homan sentiment while the Orthodox Christians a Greek one<sup>12</sup>. In this point, Greek State's nationalism took advantage of the fact that all the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire constituted the Roman group, i.e. 'Rum-millet', and named all the Orthodox Christians Greeks<sup>13</sup>, changing the international 'Romanity' to nationalistic 'Greekness'. In contrast to the way of thinking of the Albanian nationalists, the Greek ones based their nationalism on the common religion creating a religious nationalism.

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8. Baerlein, pp. 152-154. Robinson, p. 32. Sarandos Kargakos, *Αλβανοί, Αρβανίτες, Έλληνες (Albanians, Arvanites, Greeks)*, (Athens: J. Sideris, 2001<sup>3</sup>), pp. 185-186. Thanos Veremis, 'Η Ίδρυση του Αλβανικού Κράτους και οι Ελληνικές εδαφικές διεκδικήσεις (The Establishment of the Albanian State and the Greek Territorial Claims)', in Th. Veremis, Th. Kouloumbis, E. Nikolakopoulos (ed.), *Ο Ελληνισμός της Αλβανίας (The Hellenism of Albania)*, (Athens: J. Sideris – ELIAMEP, 1995), pp. 34-36.

9. Baerlein, pp. 9, 18, 21. Glavinias, p. 31.

10. Skendi, p. 181.

11. Glavinias, p. 27.

12. B. Kondis, *The Hellenism*, vol. 1, pp. 11-12.

13. Basil Kondis, *Greece and Albania, 1908-1914*, Thesis, (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1976), p. 15. Rev. George D. Metallinos, 'Σχετικά με τη σύγκρουση μεταξύ Ρωμαϊκής και εθνικής Ιδέας: Το αυτοκέφαλο της Εκκλησίας της Αλβανίας (About the Conflict between the Roman and the National Ideas: The Autocephalous of the Church of Albania)' in Rev. George D. Metallinos, *Ελληνισμός Μετέωρος (Hellenism in Suspense: The Roman Idea and the Vision of Europe)*, (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1992), pp. 337-338. Stephen G. Xydis, 'Modern Greek Nationalism' in Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer (ed.), *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, (Seattle – London, 1969), pp. 235-237.

This was the reality in Northern Epirus, the so-called nowadays Southern Albania, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The division of the population was according to religious criteria. The Muslims had the Ottoman identity as the believers of the Empire, whereas the Orthodox Christians constituted the oppressed elements feeling fraternity with their co-religionists. Thus, the Albanian nationalism had little effect on both the Muslims and the Orthodox, the latter being influenced more by the Greek religious nationalism.

Thus, before examining the 20<sup>th</sup> century's statistics, it is fundamental to analyze the synthesis of the population of Northern Epirus in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, just by the emergence of the Albanian nationalism and, as a result, in a very early stage. Statistical data from England, presented by E. G. Ravenstein as a scientific recommendation on 19 June 1877 and published in the 'Journal of the Statistical Society' in September 1877, will be used<sup>14</sup>. Unfortunately, the English statistical data provide not exact but approximate numbers of the population and they do not analyze its synthesis, for they take into consideration only the nationality in advance and they do not provide us with further details. They are based on the Ottoman administrative division in Villayets and Sanjaks<sup>15</sup> and they take into consideration both religious and linguistic criteria, a feature which makes them very important. We extract here (Table 1.1) only the part that concerns the Albanian South of nowadays, that is the two Sanjaks of Korcha – Villayet of Monastir – and of Gjirokaster – Villayet of Janina. Of course under the terms 'Northern Epirus' or 'Southern Albania' this division includes territories which belong nowadays to Greece or to F.Y.R.O.M. or even to other provinces of the Albanian State. For instance, in table 1.1 the number of the Christian population of the district of Korcha is reinforced by Slavs and Greeks, whose territories later passed in neighbouring countries and were not included in the Albanian State.

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14. FO 925/3206; Part 1, in Beytullah Destani, *Albania and Kosovo: Political and Ethnic Boundaries, 1867-1946*, (London: Archive Editions, 1999), pp. 43-52.

15. A Villayet was divided in Sanjaks and a Sanjak was divided in a number of smaller administrative units, the cazas.

Table 1.1 provides the number of the Muslims and the Figures concerning the nationality in advance. It is important, however, to analyze it further, so from table 1.1, emanate the figures presented below in table 1.2.

### SOUTHERN ALBANIA'S POPULATION

Sanjak	Population	Muslims	Percentage	Nationality in Advance	Population of the Nationality in Advance
Korcha	154,000	53,000	35	Albanian	119,000
Gjirokaster	282,000	132,000	47	Albanian	199,000

Table 1.1

Source: Destani, p. 49.

### THE ETHNOGRAPHIC AND RELIGIOUS SYNTHESIS OF THE POPULATION OF THE SOUTH

Sanjak	Korcha	Gjirokaster	Total
<b>Muslims</b>	53,000	132,000	185,000
<b>Percentage</b>	34.46%	46.81%	42.43%
<b>Orthodox</b>	101,000	150,000	251,000
<b>Percentage</b>	65.54%	53.19%	57.57%
<b>Albanians</b>	119,000	199,000	318,000
<b>Percentage</b>	72.27%	70.57%	72.94%
<b>Others</b>	35,000	83,000	118,000
<b>Percentage</b>	22.73%	29.43%	27.06%
<b>Total</b>	154,000	282,000	436,000

Table 1.2

From this more detailed table (1.2) it is clear that the Orthodox Christians were majority in both of the Sanjaks with a percentage of approxi-

mately 65% against 35% in Korcha and 53% against 47% in Gjirokaster. The Albanians used to be Orthodox with a Roman Catholic minority<sup>16</sup>. However, because of the Russo-Turkish Wars the Ottomans started to persecute the Albanians trying to make them Muslims by force<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, as it can be shown (Table 1.2) the Orthodox remained a significant proportion of the population in the South, where they were close to their Greek co-religionists. The Albanians constituted the vast majority of the population in Northern Epirus in a mean of 71.42%. However, because of the fact that the pro-Greeks could be found among the Orthodox Christians it is significant to produce another table to show the ethnographic synthesis of this religious group (Table 1.3).

As we can observe, the Albanians constituted a clear majority of the Orthodox population in the Sanjak of Korcha with a percentage of approximately 65% (Figure 1.1), while they were minority in Gjirokaster – approximately 45% (Figure 1.2). The overall percentage of the Albanians was about 53%. Apparently the statistical difference of the Albanians and the other Orthodox is minor. Apart from the Albanians, among the Orthodox population were Greek, Vlach and Slav-speaking people too<sup>18</sup>. Taking into consideration the fact that the Vlach-speaking people were mainly found in Korcha and the Slav-speaking ones in Starovo (Pogradets), in the Sanjak of Korcha<sup>19</sup>, it can be assumed that a great proportion of Gjirokaster's Orthodox Christians were Greeks, while their number in Korcha might be almost insignificant. If we want to understand the Albanian and the Greek claims, it is crucial to realize the fundamental importance of the Orthodox Albanians, as the right or the wrong of the claims of both sides depended on their attitude<sup>20</sup>. If the Or-

16. Skendi, p. 10.

17. Ibid., p. 11.

18. Leonidas Kallivretakis, 'Η Ελληνική Κοινότητα της Αλβανίας από την Άποψη της Ιστορικής Γεωγραφίας και Δημογραφίας (The Greek Community of Albania from the Point of View of Historical Demography and Geography)', in Veremis, Kouloumbis, Nikolakopoulos, pp. 31-33.

19. Ibid., p. 33. Stamatis Georgoulis, 'Η Ορθοδοξία στο Σύγχρονο Αλβανικό Κράτος: Ιστορική Ανασκόπηση (Orthodoxy in the Modern Albanian State: Historical Review)', in Veremis, Kouloumbis, Nikolakopoulos, p. 152.

20. Here can be added the same observation made by L. Kallivretakis in reference with modern politics. Kallivretakis, p. 41.

thodox Albanian-speaking people had a Greek sentiment, the Greek national aspirations would have been proved right, otherwise the Albanian nationalists were right in fighting the Greek claims. In this stage, very early for the Albanian nationalism, as it was shown, the Albanian-speaking Orthodox felt 'Romans' and drew their attention upon Greece as their liberator from the Muslim bondage.

### THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SYNTHESIS OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN POPULATION

Sanjak	Korcha	Gjirokaster	Total
Albanians	66,000	67,000	133,000
Percentage of Albanians	65.35%	44.67%	52.99%
Others	35,000	83,000	118,000
Percentage	44.67%	55.33%	47.01%
Total	101,000	150,000	251,000

Table 1.3

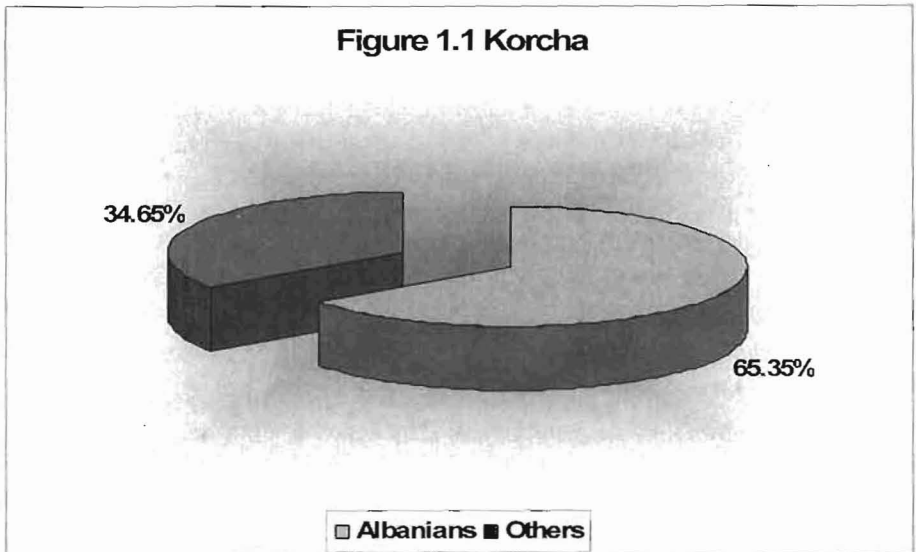


Figure 1.1: The Ethnographic Synthesis of the Orthodox Christian Population of Korcha, according to the English Statistics of 1877

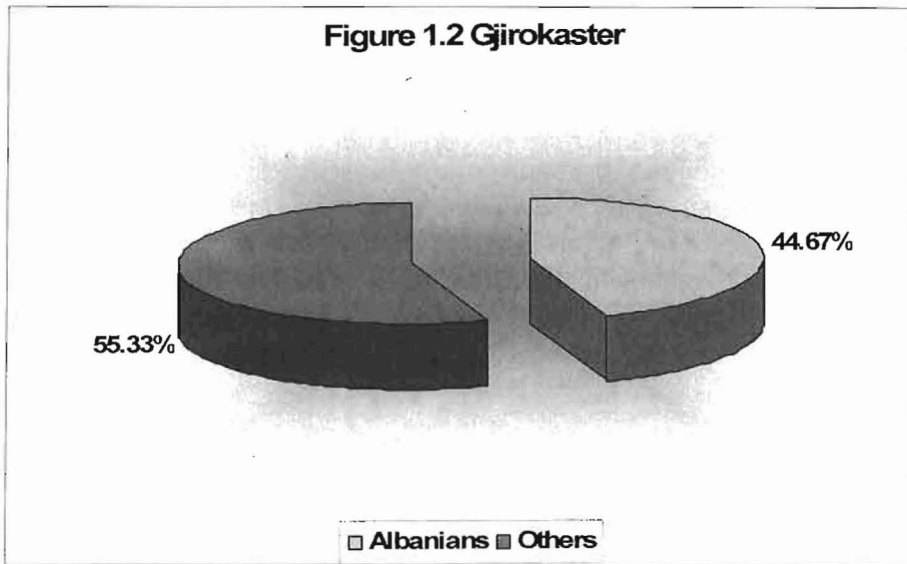


Figure 1.2: The Ethnographic Synthesis of the Orthodox Christian Population of Gjirokaster, according to the same statistics

## 2. The Synthesis of the Population of Northern Epirus

Following the situation described above about the various divisions of the Albanians it is clear that the idea that the Albanians revolted, starting from 1908, against the Ottomans for nationalistic reasons cannot be supported. The Muslims did such movements when their privileges were in danger by the centralistic system of the Empire. On the other hand, the Orthodox used to revolt on line with the other Orthodox Christians of the Empire, to be liberated from the Muslim - Ottoman yoke<sup>21</sup>. The Young Turks, a reformist movement of the Ottoman Empire which took administrative control after the revolution of 1908 and the restoration of the Ottoman constitution, considered the Albanians as the most loyal citizens and their natural allies in their reformist policy<sup>22</sup>. The Young Turks presented an ideology of the turkifykation of the Empire trying to sup-

21. Marmulaku, p. 21. Vickers, p. 56.

22. Kemal, p. 367.

press, even by force, every nationalistic movement in it, in order to turkify all its Muslim nations. That was the reason why they opposed the efforts of the Albanian intellectuals to inspire nationalistic ideas to the people. The intelligentsia met the Young-Turkish violent opposition to its efforts to establish Albanian-speaking schools<sup>23</sup>, to adopt the Latin alphabet<sup>24</sup> and, mainly, to gain their autonomy within the Empire with clear definition of the Albanian territories<sup>25</sup>. The Young Turks' insistent opposition to the demands of the Albanians has led to the exactly opposite result; it made nationalism become stronger and mature earlier<sup>26</sup>. As Ismail Kemal bey Vlora, the founder of the Albanian independence, has pointed out,

The savage obstinacy of the Young Turks in their attempt to absorb the nationalities had made our resistance inevitable and compelled us to fight for our national life<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, nationalism was much supported by the feeling of danger of the Albanian Muslims due to the expansion of the Balkan allies and the defeats the Turks suffered in the battlefields of the First Balkan War. They lost their territorial connection with the Empire and the idea of an autonomous Albania within it became impossible. Consequently, even the most pro-Ottoman Albanians and the most fanatic Muslims realized that the only potential solution to their problem was independence<sup>28</sup>. As

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23. Christo Anastas Dako, *Albania: The Master Key to the Near East*, (Boston Mass.: E. L. Grimes Company, 1919), pp. 125-126. Edith Pierpont Stickney, *Southern Albania or Northern Epirus in European International Affairs, 1914-1922*, Thesis, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1926), p. 17. Skendi, p. 18. Especially about the school of Korcha see Dako, p. 88. In this attempt the Young Turks were helped by the Orthodox Church which strongly opposed any nationalism and, consequently, the Albanian too; *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 52, 84.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79. Vickers, pp. 57, 59. Skendi, p. 363. The Albanians finally succeeded in their last goal, after many revolts, in the summer of 1912; Marmulaku, pp. 26, 28. Vickers, pp. 63-66. B. Kondis, *The Hellenism*, vol. 1, pp. 19-20. Glavinias, pp. 42-43, 45-46.

26. Vickers, p. 76.

27. Kemal, p. 368.

28. Robinson, p. 14.



an Albanian nationalist has pointed out, they ‘...took up the flag of Albanian “nationalism” only when they saw that the Ottoman Empire was collapsing’<sup>29</sup>.

In the South, however, the aim of the Orthodox Christians to abolish the Ottoman yoke created two groups: the nationalists, who wanted an independent Albania with religious equality, based on the common nationality<sup>30</sup> and the pro-Greeks, who desired either union with Greece or, later, autonomy of the South within the Albanian State<sup>31</sup>.

Korcha and its surrounding region, were affected by nationalism more than other regions, as some important nationalists, like the members of the Kyrias family, came from those places<sup>32</sup>. In contrast, other regions of the South, such as Gjirokaster<sup>33</sup>, Himara<sup>34</sup>, Delvin<sup>35</sup>, Leskovik<sup>36</sup> and Sarada<sup>37</sup> belonged to the pro-Greek category. It is important to mention here what will be analyzed later on, namely that Korcha is located in the East and the other territories, except for Leskovik, in the West of the Albanian South, divided by the Vjosa River.

## 2.1. The Ottoman Survey of 1908

In 1908, the year of the beginning of the Albanian revolts, we have the last survey of the Ottomans. We shall present here the statistics of 1908 concerning Northern Epirus, in connection with a work made by

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29. Kahreman Ylli, ‘The Revolution of June 1924’, *Albanian Notes*, no. 1 (May 1965), p. 24.

30. Baerlein, p. 79. Skendi, pp. 13, 126-128.

31. Stickney, pp. 154-156. Vickers, pp. 107-109. S. Skendi made the fundamental observation that the Albanians of the first category were mainly the emigrants in or from abroad, while the followers of the second way of thinking were the inhabitants of the South. Skendi, p. 174.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 207, 350-351, 353.

33. Glavinis, pp. 71-72.

34. B. Kondis, *The Hellenism*, vol. 1, p. 12. Baerlein, pp. 98, 100-101.

35. Vickers, p. 103.

36. Baerlein, p. 106.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Amadore Virgili. The Ottoman statistics separate the population according to the religious criterion. So, as far as Albania is concerned, there are two categories of people, the Orthodox Christians and the Muslims. Amadore Virgili proceeded in a further analysis of this survey by trying to identify the nationalities of the Orthodox population, taking into consideration the inhabitants' mother tongue (Table 2.1).

According to the Ottoman survey of 1908, the Orthodox Christians constituted a strong minority in Northern Epirus. The overall percentage of Orthodox Christians was about 47% against a 53%, which was the percentage of Muslims. It is fundamental to divide the observations made for this survey in two categories, in accordance with the geographical division of Northern Epirus in two districts separated by the Vjosa River. Thus, we have the Northwestern Epirus (nowadays Southwestern Albania) and the Northeastern Epirus (nowadays Southeastern Albania). The Ottoman cazas of Himara, Delvin, Tepelen and Gjirokaster belonged to the first part, while the rest of the Ottoman cazas (Leskovik, Korcha, Permet, Kolonia, and Starovo) belonged to the second district.

From the regions of Northwestern Epirus (Southwestern Albania) in Himara and Delvin the Orthodox Christians constituted the vast majority of the population (Table 2.1, Figure 2.1)<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, in Gjirokaster they constituted the majority, although the Muslims had a very strong minority (Table 2.1, Figure 2.1)<sup>39</sup>. Only in the caza of Tepelen the Muslims constituted the majority of the population in a 69.88% against 30.12% (Table 2.1, Figure 2.1). Thus, in this part of Northern Epirus the Orthodox Christians constituted a clear majority of the population: 51.78% against 48.22% (Figure 2.2).

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38. In Himara they were 7,248 (60.41%) and in Delvin 16,386 (75.04%).

39. The Christians were 21,094 (50.07%) against 21,032 (49.93%) Muslims.

**THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHNOGRAPHIC SYNTHESIS  
OF THE NORTHERN - EPIROTIC POPULATION IN 1908**

Ottoman cazas	Orthodox Christians				Muslims	Total
	Greeks	Albanians	Vlachs	Total		
Leskovik	6,100	2,624	0	8,724	4,584	13,308
Gjirokaster	13,178	7,916	0	21,094	21,032	42,126
Delvin	12,231	4,155	0	16,386	5,450	21,836
Himara	3,865	3,383	0	7,248	4,750	11,998
Tepelen	0	5,846	0	5,846	15,866	21,712
Korcha	0	43,800	1,214	45,014	53,919	98,933
Permet	0	7,121	1,600	8,721	9,265	17,986
Kolonia	0	5,037	0	5,037	9,644	14,681
Starovo	0	3,305	0	3,305	10,104	13,409

Table 2.1

Source: Nicholas J. Cassavetes, *The Question of Northern Epirus in the Peace Conference*, (New York: Pan-Epirotic Union of Northern Epirus – Oxford University Press, American Branch, 1919), p. 77.

In the Northeastern part of Epirus (nowadays Southeastern Albania) the situation was different. The Muslims constituted the vast majority of the population in the cazas of Starovo (nowadays Pogradets) and Kolonia (nowadays Erseka) with 10,104 (75.35%) and 9,644 (65.74%) respectively (Table 2.1, Figure 2.3). They also had a clear majority in the cazas of Korcha (53,919-54.50%) and Permet (9,265-51.51%) (Table 2.1, Figure 2.3). Only in Leskovik they constituted the minority of the population, for the Orthodox Christians were 8,724 constituting the 65.56% of the inhabitants against 4,584 Muslims (34.44%) (Table 2.1, Figure 2.3). Thus, on the contrary of the western part of the region, in the eastern one the Muslims were the ones who constituted a clear majority of 55.28% against 44.72% (Figure 2.4).

In order to make ethnographic observations it must be taken into serious consideration that the only criterion can be the linguistic one, which is the mother tongue of the inhabitants. Nonetheless, as it is going to be proved below, this criterion was a problematic one. Thus, this work will focus on general observations.

It is obvious that Albanian-speaking population existed in all the regions of Northern Epirus (Table 2.1). Greek-speaking people were located only in the cazas of Gjirokaster, Delvin and Himara, from the western part of Northern Epirus, and Leskovik, from the eastern. In all these cazas they constituted the majority of the Orthodox Christians (Table 2.1). Finally, there was a small minority of Vlach-speaking inhabitants in the cazas of Korcha and Permet. Surprisingly enough this survey does not include the Slav-speaking Orthodox population of the caza of Starovo. Thus, except for the cazas in which a Greek-speaking population was located, the Albanian-speaking people were always the vast majority of the Ottoman cazas. This observation agrees with the English statistic of 1877, in which Albanians were always the population in advance.

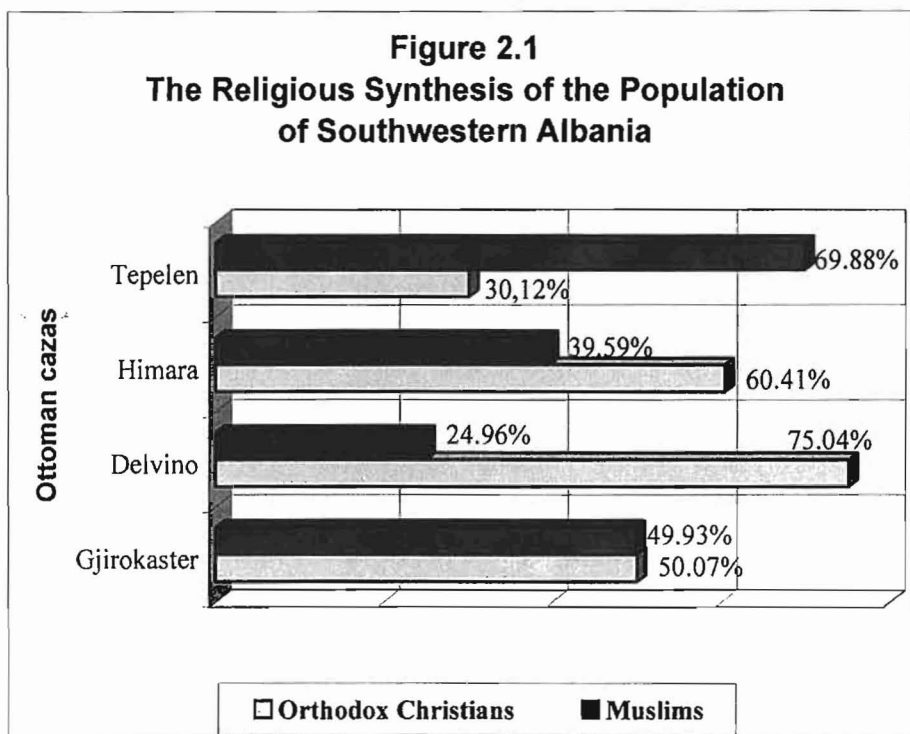


Figure 2.1

**Figure 2.2 The Overall Religious Synthesis of the Population of Southwestern Albania**

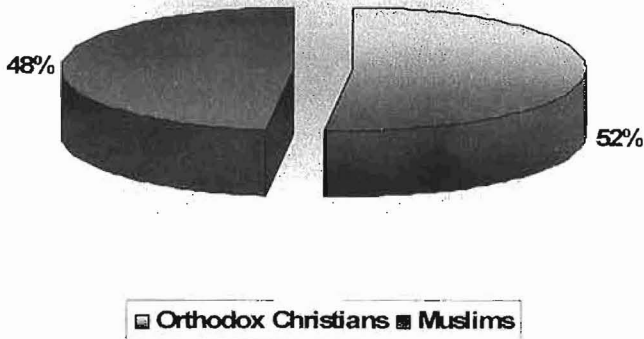


Figure 2.2

**Figure 2.3 The Religious Synthesis of the Population of Southeastern Albania**

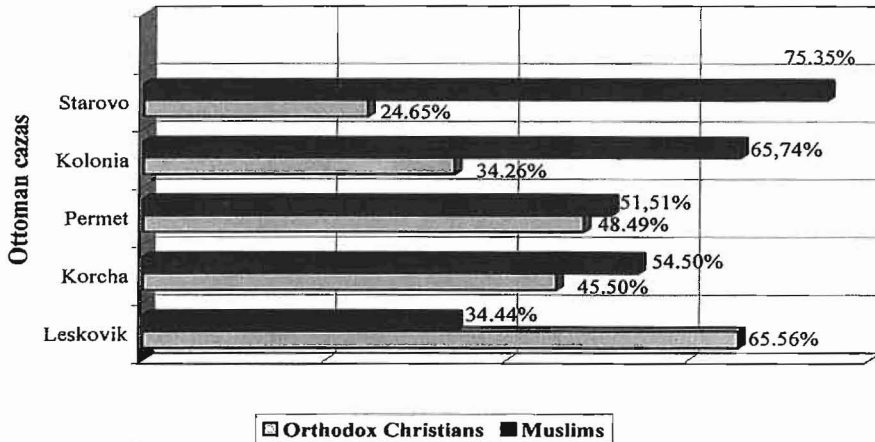


Figure 2.3

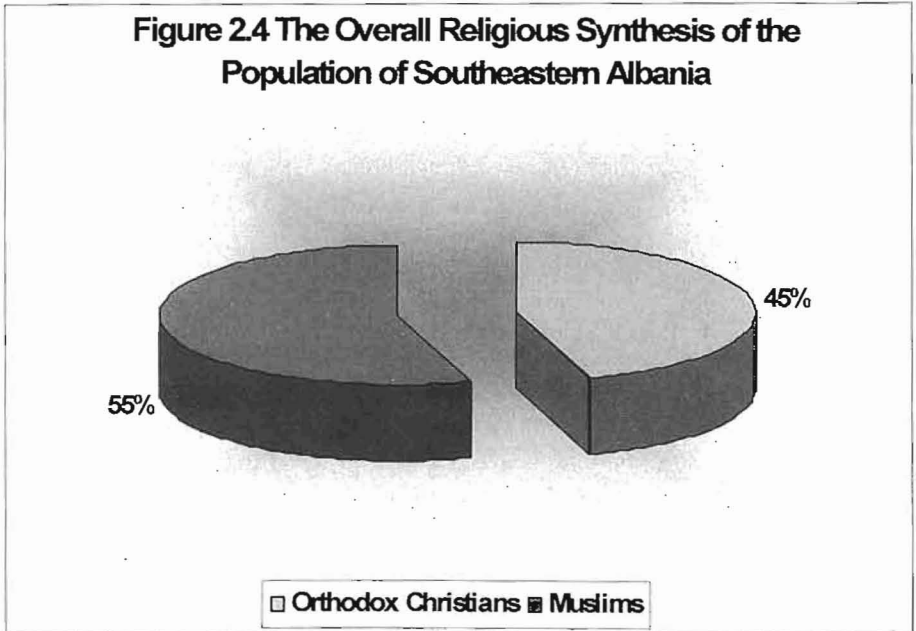


Figure 2.4

As a result, we conclude that the Orthodox Christians constituted the majority in the region west of the Vjosa River, with Gjirokaster as the main urban centre, whereas the Muslims constituted the majority in the eastern one, with Korcha as main town. Moreover, the Greek-speaking people were also located, in their vast majority, in the western part of the region and they were the strongest linguistic minority in Northern Epirus. The vast majority of the population was Albanian-speaking. There was also a small linguistic minority of Vlach-speaking people in the eastern part of Northern Epirus (Korcha and Permet). What is fundamental, nevertheless, is that the sentiment of the population is not countable. It has been stressed here that the Albanian nationalists were located mainly in Korcha and not in the rest of Northern Epirus. The Orthodox Christians, especially the locals, unlike the emigrants in or from abroad, had Greek sentiment, transferring the experiences of the Ottoman era. The Greek Foreign Office based its assertions on exactly this reality.

## 2.2. Classification of the population in Greek Statistics

The Greeks supported their claims on Southern Albania or Northern Epirus, as they call it, based on some statistics that they produced. They followed the same policy in the Conference of the Ambassadors in London in 1913 (Table 2.2) and in the Peace Conference of Paris in 1919 as well. Moreover, in order to prove the truth of their assertions they compared their statistics to the Ottoman of 1908 (Table 2.3).

The Greeks supported the opinion that Southern Albania should be yielded to them for specific historical and geographical reasons<sup>40</sup>. They also supported that the inhabitants of the South were Greeks by sentiment<sup>41</sup>. This argument of the sentiment was based on the common religion between the Greeks and the Orthodox population of the South. As a result, the Greeks considered all Orthodox Albanian, Vlach and Slav-speaking people of the South as ethnically Greeks. Thus, the comparison between the Greek and the Ottoman statistics (Table 2.3) is based on the fact that the Turks used to divide their subjects according to religious and not ethnic criteria. Explicitly, the terms Orthodox Christian and Muslim were changed into Greek and Albanian respectively.

The Albanians accused the Greeks of having the intention of misleading the Powers<sup>42</sup>. Although it was not completely wrong to identify Christians as Greeks and Albanians as Muslims, as it was described above with the Greek sentiment of the Orthodox Christian population of Northern Epirus, it did not apply to all the Christians of the South and mainly the nationalists of Korcha<sup>43</sup>. The Greeks did not ask for the sentiment of the people but used the distinction of religion for pure nationalistic reasons. The Empire's international reality of the near past of the

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40. For an analytical account of all the Greek arguments see Stickney, pp. 78-90. Vickers, pp. 91-93.

41. Dako, p. 169. B. Kondis, *The Hellenism*, vol. 1, pp. 11-13.

42. Dako, p. 177. Harry Hodgkinson, 'Edith Durham and the Formation of the Albanian State', in British Albanian Colloquium South East European Studies Association (Pembroke College, Cambridge 29-31 March 1994), *Albania and the Surrounding World*, (Bradford: Bradford University Press, 1995), p. 27. Robinson, pp. 32-33, 34, 36. Stickney, pp. 93, 98. Vickers, p. 92. Kallivretakis, pp. 31-33.

43. Stickney, pp. 148-149, 150-152.

region was used by the Greek nationalists who aspired to embody Southern Albania to Greece.

### GREEK STATISTICS OF 1913

Cazas	Greeks	Percentage	Albanians	Percentage	Total
Gjirokaster	20,016	51.90%	18,549	48.10%	38,565
Himara	6,188	78.65%	1,680	21.35%	7,868
Delvin	17,295	81.70%	4,645	18.30%	21,940
Korcha	33,911	51.57%	31,848	48.43%	65,759
Tepelen	6,093	75.80%	1,945	24.20%	8,038
Permet	10,825	61.80%	6,691	38.20%	17,516
Starovo			1,084	100.00%	1,084
Leskovik	6,455	61.78%	3,993	38.22%	10,448
Pogoní	5,185	100.00%			5,185
Kolonia	6,417	34.98%	11,925	65.02%	18,342
Total	112,385	57.71%	82,360	42.29%	194,745

Table 2.3

Source: FO 374/9 in Destani, p. 361

Comparing these statistics with the previous ones, we can observe some differences concerning the cazas of Leskovik, Delvin and Kolonia, which are, however, rather small and do not affect the percentages of the parts. In Gjirokaster and in Himara we can observe some important differences between the Ottoman (Table 2.1) and the Greek statistics (Table 2.2). In Gjirokaster we observe a small decrease of the Orthodox Christian – Greek for the Greeks – population. The decrease, nonetheless, of the Muslim one – Albanian for the Greeks – is so big that the majority of the population is clearly Greek – 51.90% (Table 2.2). Nevertheless, in the comparison of the Ottoman and Greek statistics (Table 2.3) the majority is Muslim (Albanian for the Greeks). Almost the same applies for Himara. The majority of the Orthodox (or Greeks) is bigger in the Greek statistics than it is in the Ottoman – 78.65% and 60.41% respectively (Table 2.2 and Figure 2.1 respectively). Again in the comparison shown in Table 2.3 things come to their natural status. Moreover, in



Tepelen the majority appears to be Greek in the Greek statistics (Table 2.2), whereas in the Ottoman ones the Muslim majority was almost absolute (Table 2.1). Unfortunately, the *caza* of Tepelen does not appear in the comparison (Table 2.3). The explanation lays in the original document. The Greek statistic does not include villages of these three *cazas*, especially of the Tepelen *caza*, which the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos had agreed to be granted to Albania<sup>44</sup>.

The differences that cannot be explained effectively enough are the ones concerning the regions of Korcha, Permet and Starovo. In Korcha the overall population appears less in the Greek statistics (Table 2.2) than in the Ottoman ones (Table 2.1) and the majority passes to the Greeks (i.e. Orthodox Christians). In Permet the overall population is almost the same, but the majority passes again to Greeks. Finally, in Starovo the Orthodox Christian population is vanished, as well as the Muslim, except for 1,084 people (Table 2.1). The absolute absence of the *cazas* of Permet and Starovo from the comparison (Table 2.3) does not help us to reach a result. The only possible assumption that can be made is that the Greeks reduced the number of the Muslim villages and increased the Christian ones, in order to present the data they wanted. Thus, they added Pogoni in their statistics (Table 2.2) in order to reinforce their arguments, although in all the proposals made by the Great Powers at that time, Pogoni was to be included to Greece any way. However this theory is just an assumption. The impressive decrease of the population of Starovo *caza* (Tables 2.1, 2.2) is maybe due to the fact that its villages, both Christian and Muslim, were granted to Serbia.

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44. Destani, pp. 359-361.

COMPARISON OF THE OTTOMAN STATISTICS OF 1908  
AND THE GREEK ONES OF 1913

Ottomans/1908		Greeks/1913		
Cazas	Albanians	Greeks	Albanians	Greeks
Gjirokaster	21,032	21,094	21,414	20,016
Himara	4,750	7,218	4,460	6,188
Delvin	5,350	16,386	4,645	17,295
Korcha	34,171	35,438	36,010	35,738

Table 2.3

Source: Destani, p. 361

Even from these biased statistics, however, we can come to the conclusion that the Orthodox Christians, Greeks according to the Greek Foreign Office, were gathered in their vast majority in the western part of Northern Epirus. Even though they constituted the majority in the overall of the population of the region in question something which opposes the Ottoman statistics, it is clear that the majority in the western part was 64.91% against 35.09%, whereas in the eastern part the majority was smaller with 50.91% against 49.09%.

### 2.3. Problems of classification in Albanian statistics

The Albanians supported their claims based on different statistics. Because of the complete absence of a state statistical service they used tables produced by Italians. The latter supported from the beginning the creation of an independent Albania against the Greek claims concerning the South.

The Albanians gave huge numbers to their own side calling almost all the people of the South Albanians (Table 2.4). The differences between the pro-Albanian statistics of 1913 and the Ottoman ones of 1908 (Table 2.1) can be explained in three ways: the Greeks were either massacred or expelled or almost vanished somehow from these statistics (Table 2.4). Since there are no historical data for the first two alternatives, the third seems to be the most possible. The authors of these biased statistics avoided asking people if they identify themselves as Albanians or

Greeks. In contrast, they used an 'objective' criterion; the linguistic one. This was a modern criterion<sup>45</sup>, as language was considered to be one of the most significant features of nationality<sup>46</sup>. The Albanian point of view is summarized in the following statement:

In the extreme south (the south of the nowadays Greek Epirus), there are Greek settlements, which do not number more than 60.000<sup>47</sup>.

### PRO-ALBANIAN STATISTICS OF 1913

Region	Albanians	Greeks	Vlachs	Bulgarians	Others	Total
Korcha	89,829		3,190	3,985	527	97,531
Starovo	35,142					35,142
Erseka <sup>48</sup>	24,211	400	389		29	25,029
Leskovik	14,035		723		714	15,472
Gjirokaster	40,570	229			131	40,930
Permet	28,903		2,371		7	31,281
Tepelen	29,666					29,666
Delvin	17,692	3,593			241	21,526
Himara	11,656				33	11,689
Total	291,704	4,222	6,673	3,985	1,682	308,266

Table 2.4

Source: FO 925/41160 in Destani, pp. 544-545

However, the linguistic criterion was not recognized as a particularly consistent one. According to a very smart observation,

45. Chekrezi, p. 114.

46. B. Kondis, *The Hellenism*, vol. 1, p. 13. See analytically the Albanian claims and arguments in the Peace Conference of Paris in 1919 in Turchan's statement FO 608/29, Destani, pp. 413-420. Stickney, pp. 92-103. For the relation of language with nationalism see Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19922), pp. 93-100. He summarizes his opinion by pointing out that '...ethnicity and language became the central, increasingly the decisive or even the only criteria of nationhood'. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

47. Dako, p. 5.

48. Erseka is the town found as Kolonia in the previous surveys.

An observer of Albanian sympathy who relied solely in language as a guide might pass through the countryside and find nothing but Albanians, where an observer of Greek sympathies proceeding in the same manner might find nothing but Greeks<sup>49</sup>.

Since the Greeks did not use the linguistic criterion, the statement above, rather mirrors the Albanians' arguments. The population can be characterized as bilingual<sup>50</sup>, for while women and children usually spoke only Albanian, the Christian Tosks belonged to the Orthodox Church in which only Greek was used. Both Muslim and Christian high social class spoke Greek very well for it was the language of culture and trade<sup>51</sup>. Moreover, the schools of Northern Epirus were Greek. In 1914 the autonomous government of Northern Epirus asserted that there were 360 schools with 22,595 pupils<sup>52</sup>. In Northern Epirus only one Albanian school existed in Korcha established in 1908 and protected by American protestant missionaries. The problems that the Committee for the delimitation of the Albanian-Greek boundaries faced in 1913 constitute a characteristic example. The English delegate, Lieutenant-Colonel Doughty-Wylie proposed the change of the criteria according to which they should take a decision, as the linguistic one was proved completely useless<sup>53</sup>.

Moreover, there were regions with strong Greek sentiment. The inhabitants of Himara, for instance, revolted against the Turks immediately after the First Balkan War had broken out, under the leadership of

49. Hilton E. Young, 'Northern Epirus: An Importunate Question', *The Contemporary Review*, vol. 115 (January-June 1919), p. 498.

50. The problem was not new for the Europeans. For the statistical problems that European State authorities faced by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of language see Hobsbawm, pp. 96-100. Especially for the confusion because of the adoption of language as criterion for classification in Austria - Hungary see *ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

51. Stickney, p. 3. Baerlein, p. 22.

52. Stamatis Georgoulis, 'Το καθεστώς των ελληνικών σχολείων από την ίδρυση του αλβανικού κράτους μέχρι σήμερα (The Status of the Greek Schools since the establishment of the Albanian State)' in Veremis, Kouloumbis, Nikolakopoulos, pp. 185-186.

53. Stickney, pp. 38-39. Baerlein, pp. 40-41.

their notable Spyromelios, declared their unification with Greece and created a flag with the Greek national colours blue and white<sup>54</sup>. Even after the agreement of Corfu – which was made to stop the revolt of the Northern Epirotes in 1914 demanding autonomy within the Albanian State – they refused to ratify an autonomous Northernnepirotic principality demanding union with Greece<sup>55</sup>. This so strongly Greek region appears without Greeks at all in the pro-Albanian statistics (Table 2.4, Figure 2.5).

Furthermore, except for Himara's example, Greeks do not appear at all in Leskovik (Table 2.4), although, according to Virgili's analysis of the Ottoman survey of 1908, there were 6,100 Greek-speaking people (Table 2.1). Finally, Greeks constituted a small minority in Gjirokaster and Delvin (Table 2.4), although they were a strong minority in Gjirokaster (13,178 out of 42,126 inhabitants) and the majority in Delvin (12,231 out of 21,836 inhabitants), again in accordance with Virgili's analysis (Table 2.1). The biased character of these statistics becomes obvious if its data are compared to the Albanian estimation of the Greek-speaking population in 1922. The pro-Albanian statistics concluded that the Greeks were 4,222 (Table 2.4), whereas the Albanians themselves estimated that they were about 16,000<sup>56</sup>.

The Vlach-speaking people appear to be reinforced in the pro-Albanian statistics. According to Virgili's analysis there were 2,814 inhabitants living in the cazas of Korcha and Permet (Table 2.1), whereas, according to the pro-Albanian statistics of 1913, there were 6,673 living again mainly in the cazas of Korcha (3,190) and Permet (2,371), with few more in Leskovik (723) and Erseka (389) (Table 2.4). Virgili's analysis is not proved trustworthy as far as the Vlach-speaking inhabitants are concerned. For instance, Metsovo, a region in which many people are Vlach-speaking even nowadays, appears without Vlach-speaking people at all<sup>57</sup>.

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54. Baerlein, pp. 95, 97.

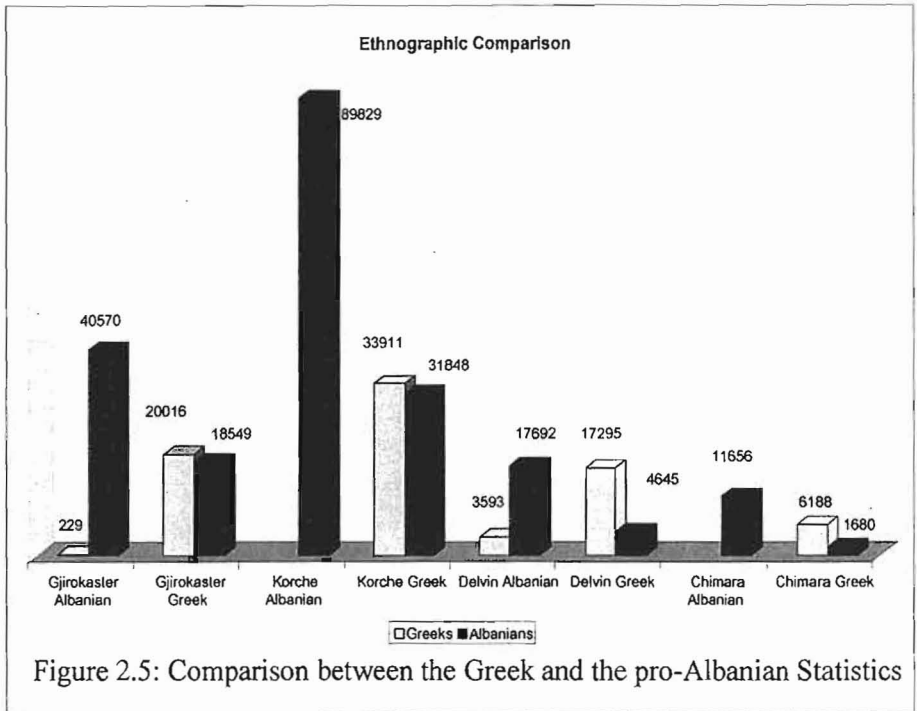
55. Konstandinos Skenderis, *Ο Βορειοηπειρωτικός Αγών, 1914 (The Northern Epirotic Struggle, 1914)*, (Athens: Konstandinoupolis Publications, 1929), pp. 139-140. B. Kondis, *The Hellenism*, vol. 1, p. 12.

56. Djafer bey Ypi to the League of Nations, 'Minorities in Albania', Geneva, 22 August 1922 in Basil Kondis and Eleftheria Manda (ed.), *The Greek Minority in Albania: A Documentary Record*, (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1994), p. 35.

57. Cassavetes, p. 77.

Thus, the pro-Albanian statistics of 1913 seem to be more 'objective', as far as the Vlach-speaking are concerned. However, in both cases the Vlach-speaking inhabitants were gathered in Korcha and Permet cazas. Furthermore, in the pro-Albanian statistics Slav-speaking people appear in the caza of Korcha, which do not appear in Virgili's analysis at all (Tables 2.1, 2.4).

The pro-Albanian statistics of 1913 aimed at the reduction of the number mainly of the Greeks, because the Greeks had national aspirations on the region in question. Even from these reduced numbers, however, the few Greeks appear to be mainly gathered in the western part of Northern Epirus: 3,822 out of 4,222 Greeks lived in this part (cazas of Delvin and Gjirokaster).



Consequently, the linguistic criterion was proved untrustworthy, as it could not describe the sentiment of the population. It is also true, however, that the political situation of the period with the Albanian revolts in progress, the Balkan Wars and the Greek and Albanian claims did not

permit people to express their sentiment freely<sup>58</sup> and the argument of the plebiscite<sup>59</sup>, supported by both sides, was nothing but propaganda.

The Greeks and the Albanians used different ways to classify people of Southern Albania. None of them took into account the sentiment of the inhabitants. Explicitly, the Greeks, on the one hand, even if they claimed that the decisions should have been taken according to this sentiment, simply renamed all the Muslims to Albanians and the Orthodox to Greeks. On the other hand, the Albanians considered all the Albanian-speaking people as Albanians, even the most fanatic pro-Greeks. Both sides had to support their claims and they did it by all possible means. The comparison of these two biased statistics shows clearly the difference of the two opinions (Figure 2.5). The Greeks believed that they were the majority in Korcha, Gjirokaster, Delvin and Himara, where the Albanians believed that there were no Greeks at all (Tables 2.1, 2.4, Figure 2.5). In this way the two sides tried to prove the right of their arguments and the wrong of the other's assertions.

#### 2.4. The Post-War Period (1918 and after)

The problem for the delimitation of the Albanian-Greek frontier line was one of the problems of the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. By the end of 1919 and the beginning of 1920 Greece seemed to win the case, for two memoranda came up. The first one (December 1919) gave the whole Southern Albania to Greece except for Korcha (see map, p. 33)<sup>60</sup>. The second in January 1920 gave the whole region to Greece<sup>61</sup>. The first of the Memoranda was something new. Usually the whole Southern Albania was given either to Albania or to Greece and the Powers who had taken part in the pre-War discussions had clear opinions. The British and the French wanted Southern Albania to be yielded to Greece, whereas

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58. Chekrezi, p. 114.

59. Stickney, pp. 86, 95-97, 103-104. B. Kondis, *The Hellenism*, vol. 1, p. 11.

60. Stickney, pp. 117-119. Kallivretakis, pp. 29, 45 (f. 12). Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Putto, *The History of Albania: From its Origins to the Present Day*, (London, Boston and Henley, 1981), pp. 167-169.

61. Stickney, pp. 119-120.

the Italians supported the Albanian claims. Nobody, until then, had separated the area in its western and eastern parts. The new element of the separation of the district in question in two parts was a proposal made by a new coming Power; the U.S.A. The Vjosa River was considered to be, according to the American delegate, a natural frontier separating the district in two parts: the Western and the Eastern one. As the delegate pointed out,

1. The construction of the road through Premeti to Valona<sup>62</sup> enables the districts of Koritza and of Argyrokastro<sup>63</sup> to be separated without economic injury.
2. In the district southwest of the Voiussa<sup>64</sup> River the majority of the population appears to be Greek in sentiment and political inclination and is naturally connected with Greece by relations of transportation and trade.
3. In the district northeast of the Voiussa River the majority of the population is Albanian not only by speech but also by national consciousness. No sufficient grounds have been adduced for severing from Albania this district, in which the consciousness of Albanian unity and the devotion to the Albanian cause are particularly, strong<sup>65</sup>.

This new contribution to the negotiations applies satisfactorily to the observations, which were made above on the English and Ottoman statistics, and it could form the base for a more objective solution to the question. This separation, which was forgotten ever since not only by diplomats but also by the bibliography on the matter, is also proved lately by L. Kallivretakis, who based his arguments on old geographers. According to them, the western part of nowadays Southern Albania was considered to be Epirus, whereas the eastern part was included either to

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62. Premeti is the Greek name for Permet and Valona the Italian for Vlora.

63. Koritsa and Argyrokastro are the Greek names for Korcha and Gjirokaster respectively.

64. The modern Albanians spell Vjosa Voiussa.

65. Report of the Committee on Greek territorial claims, Paris, 6 March 1919, in Destani, p. 424.



Macedonia or to Low Albania. It was always Vjosa River that defined the frontier line<sup>66</sup>.

Nevertheless, the negotiations followed another path. The Greeks lost the war against Turkey and they suffered the worst destruction in their history in 1922. Meanwhile, the Peace Conference came to an end without providing a solution to the problem. The Conference of the Ambassadors of the Entente Powers at Paris became responsible and came to a conclusion in November 1921 granting the whole region to Albania<sup>67</sup>. At the same time, one of the Powers having a pro-Greek behaviour until the Peace Conference of 1919, Great Britain, changed its policy, because of the fact that petrol was found in Albania and it wanted to control it by its own companies<sup>68</sup>. Moreover, the second pro-Greek country, France, sieged to support Greece because the anti-Entente king Constantine had returned to the Greek throne. As a result, Greece gravely wounded and without its former allies had neither the power nor the courage to support its claims<sup>69</sup>.

Moreover, it is significant to see the developments in Albania. Thus, the Muslim tribes were able to identify as enemies all those who had caused the fall of the Ottoman Empire and desired to expand, that is Greece and Serbia. As far as Northern Epirus is concerned, the enemy for the Muslims was Greece. The First World War reinforced this feeling even further. During this war (1914-1918) nowadays Albania was divided between Austrians, Northern and Central Albania (Shkonder, Tirana, Durres), Italians, Southwestern and part of Central Albania (Vlora, Berat, Gjirokaster), and French, who had occupied Southeastern Albania (Korcha). Thus, Northern Epirus was divided between Italy and France. Both of them followed the same policy of reinforcing Albanian

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66. Kallivretakis, pp. 26-33.

67. Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan recognized Albania as independent and sovereign State – Decision of the Conference of the Ambassadors, Paris, 9 November 1921. FO 93/117/1 – and guaranteed Albania's independence and integrity – Decision of the Conference of the Ambassadors, Paris, 9 November 1921. FO 93/117/2.

68. Vickers, pp. 15-17. Basil Kondis, *Εναισθητες ισορροπίες: Ελλάδα και Αλβανία στον 20ό αιώνα* (*Sensitive Balances: Greece and Albania in the 20th Century*), (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1994), p. 137.

69. Baerlein, p. 57.

nationalism mainly by closing the Greek schools and expelling the highest clergy and the notables who had supported the Greek claims<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, the French established an autonomous Albanian State in Korcha providing the local Tosks with the first opportunity to govern themselves<sup>71</sup>. In addition, after the Great War (1919-1925). 20-30,000 Albanian emigrants from the United States of America returned to Albania and especially to Korcha and its region. As a result, after the revolts of 1908-1912, the First Balkan War (1912-1913) and the First World War (1914-1918) Albanian nationalism was reinforced. The Muslims had become nationalists, many Greeks and pro-Greeks were expelled with the Orthodox higher clergy and their notables, education had been established in Albanian, many Greek schools were closed and, finally, the situation was completely different from that of 1908.

Apart from these developments that reinforced the nationalistic sentiment of the population of Northern Epirus, officially Southern Albania after 1921, what remained in power from the Ottoman past of the region were the religious differences. Thus, Dr. J. J. Sederholm, representative of the newly established League of Nations sent to examine the status of the religious and ethnic minorities in Albania, wrote very interesting, for their conclusions, reports with significant observations for the situation in Southern Albania. Thus, for him the Muslims of the region belonged mainly to the Bektashi sect,

...which is enlightened, somewhat sceptical and very tolerant towards other religions. If the Mohammedans of the south have any feelings against the Christians, it is more to be described as a feeling of class superiority than as religious fanaticism<sup>72</sup>.

70. Baerlein, pp. 52-53, 80. Chekrezi, p. 160.

71. Baerlein, p. 51. Chekrezi, pp. 159-160. Pollo - Putto, p. 175.

72. Dr. J. J. Sederholm to Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary – General of the League of Nations, 'Report by the Commission of Enquiry on its work from December 19, 1922 to February 1, 1923', Geneva, 6 April 1923. FO 371/8531 (and FO 286/838), C 699/211/90 and in Kondis – Manda, p. 41.

This feeling of class superiority, however, seemed to be very important for it caused a mistrust of the Muslims in the minds of the Christians based on the centuries of slavery of Orthodoxy and it was not going to '...disappear before the system is entirely changed'<sup>73</sup>:

There is no doubt that the dread and dislike of the Musulman still exists amongst these Christians, and they desire some guarantee that their religion and their rights will be respected in the future by the Musulman majority which surrounds them<sup>74</sup>.

This strong sentiment was reinforced by the anti-Orthodox policy the Albanian government adopted damaging the Christian trade of the south, increasing the taxes and trying to reduce the number of the Orthodox delegates in the Albanian parliament<sup>75</sup>. In the latter subject we shall come back again below.

On the contrary, the fall of the Ottoman yoke gave the opportunity to the Orthodox to take their revenge especially in 1914 with the North-epirotic struggle for the creation of autonomous Northern Epirus.

Passions are still so strong that these things might be repeated at any time if the rise of new conflicts be not prevented<sup>76</sup>.

As far as the linguistic criterion is concerned, Dr. J. J. Sederholm, followed the observations given above about the bilingual character of the population though he admitted that the main spoken language was the Albanian<sup>77</sup>, while the Greek-speaking population was gathered in the '...western part of the region in question'<sup>78</sup>.

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73. Ibid.

74. British Intelligence Secret Report, 'Present Attitude of the Orthodox Population of Southern Albania', Scutari, 4 April 1919. FO 608/29 in Destani, p. 434.

75. Sederholm to Drummond, 'Report by the Commission of Enquiry on its work from December 19, 1922 to February 1, 1923', Geneva, 6 April 1923. FO 371/8531 (and FO 286/838), C 699/211/90 and in Kondis – Manda, pp. 38 – 39.

76. Ibid., and in Kondis – Manda, p. 41.

77. Ibid., and in Kondis – Manda, p. 37.

78. Ibid., and in Kondis – Manda, p. 43.

About the question of the sentiment of the population he concluded that its free expression was a problem, for both sides had repeatedly tried to influence the population by illegal ways<sup>79</sup>. Moreover, there has been observed a dislike due to the anti-Orthodox measures of the Albanian government, which were mentioned above. The most interesting of them was the one of the delegates. According to this policy, strongly pro-Greek regions were divided and included in others with Muslim majority. Such an example is Himara, which belonged to the Ottoman Sanjak of Gjirokaster. The new government included it in the province of Berat, which was a mainly Muslim, region. Other Muslim regions were included in the province of Korcha in order to reinforce the Muslim element there<sup>80</sup>. This situation gave the opportunity to the Muslim government of Tirana to declare that the South was mainly inhabited by Muslims and to present this fact in statistical data (Table 2.5).

**ALBANIAN STATISTICS BASED  
ON THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1921**

<b>Province</b>	<b>Christians</b>	<b>Muslims</b>	<b>Total</b>
Korcha	40,000	80,000	120,000
Gjirokaster	68,000	57,000	125,000
Total	108,000	137,000	245,000

Table 2.5

Source: Djafer bey Ypi to the League of Nations, 'Minorities in Albania', Geneva, 22 August 1922 in Kondis – Manda, p. 34

Thus, the Muslims appeared to be a majority in the South: they were double in Korcha (66.67%) and constituted a considerable minority in Gjirokaster (45.60%). In overall they constituted a clear majority (55.92%).

Dr. Sederholm did not agree with such calculations and he proposed other more objective, according to us, statistics (Table 2.6), adding to the Albanian provinces the strongly Greek district of Himara and reducing

79. *Ibid.*, and in Kondis – Manda, p. 37.

80. *Ibid.*, and in Kondis – Manda, p. 39.

the number of the Muslim villages of Korcha. Thus, he concluded that the majority of the inhabitants of the South were Muslims but the percentage of the Orthodox Christians was much more significant than it appears to be in the Albanian statistics (Table 2.6). The comparison of these two theories is very interesting (Figure 2.6). The overall population of Orthodox Christians in the South was 108,000 inhabitants for the Albanians, whereas for Dr. J. J. Sederholm was 112,163 – about 4,000 people more. Moreover, the Muslims were 137,000, according to the Albanians, and 114,978 according to the League's Commissioner – about 22,000 less. The difference, according to Sederholm, is reduced from 29,000 to 2,815 inhabitants (Tables 2.5, 2.6).

#### STATISTICAL DATA PRODUCED BY THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Region	Christians	Muslims	Total
Korcha	45,250	54,900	100150
Gjirokaster	60,881	58,598	119,479
Himara	6,032	1,480	7,512
Total	112,163	114,978	227,141

Table 2.6

Source: Sederholm to Drummond,

Report by the Commission of Enquiry on its work from December 19, 1922 to February 1, 1923', Geneva, 6 April 1923. FO 371/8531 (and FO 286/838), C 699/211/90 and in Kondis –Manda, pp. 42-43.

According to Dr. Sederholm the Muslims were the majority in Korcha (54.82%) and the Orthodox in Gjirokaster (50.96%). If in this Orthodox population of Gjirokaster we add Himara the majority reaches the 52.69% of the population. Comparing these statistics with the Ottoman ones of 1908 and the English of 1877 and also taking into account the comments already made about them, we can observe only a small reinforcement of the Muslim population of the region of Gjirokaster. Except for that, the Christians are again majority in the western region of the Albanian South.

In order to understand the situation in Southern Albania better, we shall make some observations on historical facts. It is fundamental to un-

derline that the return of the emigrants from abroad mainly in Korcha district reinforced the 'nationalistic party' among the Orthodox population of the region. It was still small, as the locals were very slow in following their ideas; the modern nationalistic ideas based on the common language. The modern character of nationalistic ideas made young people to follow them. Dr. J. J. Sederholm also identified the 'pro-Greek party' which was very small in Korcha. The Finn Commissioner wrote that it constituted less than the one third of the population when he visited the town in 1922<sup>81</sup>. The followers of this party desired union with Greece and were old locals, who had experienced the Ottoman rule and the fraternity of the Orthodox Christians, and merchants with specific interests with Greece<sup>82</sup>.

These groups of people were identified by all the authors of either Albanian or Greek sympathies. The only difference was in the majority, as the Albanian or pro-Albanian authors claimed that the majority belonged to the nationalists, whereas the Greeks or pro-Greeks believed that it belonged to the pro-Greeks. However, the English diplomats added a new element. They observed that there was a third 'party', the largest one, which consisted of moderate people. This 'party' supported the annexation of their region by Albania, for it was affected by nationalism and felt Albanian. In this point it differed from the pro-Greek. Nonetheless, the moderates feared, like the pro-Greeks, that the Muslim majority of the State desired to dominate over the Christians. That is why the British diplomat in Albania Heathcote – Smith asserted that if the Muslims were to follow an oppressive policy towards the Orthodox Christians, the latter would turn to Greece 'as the lesser evil'<sup>83</sup>. This idea

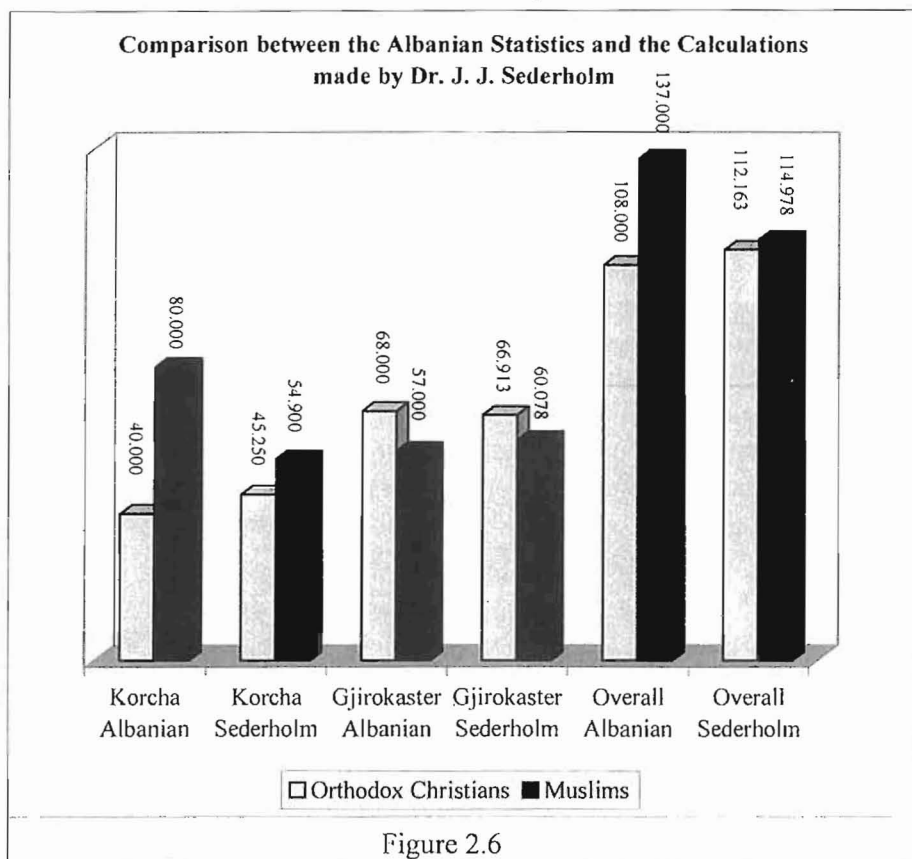
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81. The Commission of Enquiry to the Council of the League of Nations, 'General Report on Southern Albania', Geneva, 12 April 1922. FO 371/7329 (and FO 141/669/10), C 6071/735/90.

82. Harry A. Eyres, British Minister at Durres, to Earl of Balfour, 'Report on Southern Albania', Durazzo, 23 August 1922. FO 371/7330 (and FO 286/817), C 12535/818/90. Commission of Enquiry to the League of Nations, 'Report on Southern Albania', Tirana, 18 January 1922. FO 371/7328, C 2135/735/90.

83. Heathcote – Smith to Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, British Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'Report on the Movement for the Establishment of an Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Albania', Durazzo, 2 January 1922. FO 371/7328, C 506/506/90 and in Kondis – Manda, p. 33.

of theirs was expressed by the 'Manifesto of the Christians of Korcha', which demanded administrative autonomy of the South<sup>84</sup>.



If we take now into consideration that the Muslims constituted the majority in Southeastern Albania and we add to them the few nationalists of Korcha region, we can come to the conclusion that the vast majority of the population was Albanian nationalists opposing the Greek national aspirations. The moderates supported ideas of autonomy within the Albanian State. The purely pro-Greeks were very few.

84. Eyres to Curzon, 'Confidential Report on Albania', Durazzo, 18 March 1922. FO 371/5726, C 669/580/90.

In Southwestern Albania the nationalistic party was very weak, as the people from these regions used to emigrate mainly either to Constantinople or to Greece<sup>85</sup> and, therefore, nationalism was not so popular in their region. Moreover, it is important to underline that the Orthodox Christians constituted there the majority of the population and this was an element reinforcing their resistance against the Muslim authorities. The 'parties' which were more influential in Southwestern Albania were the moderates and the pro-Greeks.

The most important element appeared to be the moderate 'party'. On its attitude depended the just or unjust of the Greek claims on Southern Albania (Northern Epirus), especially in the Southwestern part of it, although the Greek Foreign Office never made this distinction. Due to the oppressive policy that the Muslim Albanian State adopted towards the Southerners, the moderates could be more inclined to the pro-Greeks. However, it is very important what only the British diplomats were able to realize. Describing the feelings of the population they underlined that the young people tended to be either nationalists or indifferent, whereas the old people tended to be pro-Greek:

...the older men are inclined to be anti-Mussulman and pro-Greek, the younger men indifferent or pro-Albanian nationalists.<sup>86</sup>

In addition, the Albanian governments after 1921 continued the policy of the French and the Italians as far as the Greek education was concerned. They were able to realise that as long as the Greek schools constituted the main education for the Southerners, Greek nationalism would be a permanent problem. Thus, they persecuted the Greek education by closing many schools, especially secondary ones, forbidding teachers from Greece to enter Albania<sup>87</sup> and appointing Muslim teachers

85. Glavinias, p. 71.

86. British Intelligence Secret Report, 'Present Attitude of the Orthodox Population of Southern Albania', Scutari, 4 April 1919. FO 608/29 in Destani, p. 434. See also Eyres to Balfour, 'Report on Southern Albania', Durazzo, 23 August 1922. FO 371/7330 (and FO 286/817), C 12535/818/90.

87. Sederholm to Drummond, 'Report by the Commission of Enquiry on its work from December 19, 1922 to February 1, 1923: The Enquiry in Southern Albania', Geneva, 6 April 1923. FO 371/8531 (and FO 286/838), C 699/211/90.



in regions entirely inhabited by Orthodox Christians<sup>88</sup>. In general, they permitted Greek schools only in rural regions purely inhabited by a Greek-speaking population and forbade them in urban centres and the rest of the rural regions of the South<sup>89</sup>. They also forbade the teaching of the Greek language especially in the secondary schools, and permitted it only in the first classes of the primary ones as foreign language<sup>90</sup>. Thus, the Albanians were able to drastically reduce the number of the Greek schools, as from 360 in 1914 remained only 10 in 1933<sup>91</sup>, when they were closed because of a relative law issued by the Albanian government<sup>92</sup>. This law remained in power until 1935, when the Albanians were forced to reopen them, due to a decision taken by the International Court of Hague<sup>93</sup>.

The tension of the young Albanian Orthodox Christians to be either indifferent or nationalists, together with the persecution against the Greek schools resulted in what T. Zavalani has pointed out:

The new Albanian Orthodox generation knew no Greek and showed little desire to accept Greek rule.<sup>94</sup>

This observation shows that the moderates tended to be pro-Greek because of the oppressive policy of the Albanian governments towards the Orthodox Southerners, but the young population moved progressively out of the Greek influence. The moderates turned to be either indifferent or nationalists and, in any case, against the Greek national aspirations.

The separation of the region in question in two districts that we had observed in the statistics appeared for first time in the contemporary negotiations and the bibliography in the American's delegate proposal on the Greek territorial claims. However, it passed without further examination, as all the interesting parts desired a solution for the whole region.

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88. B. Kondis, *The Hellenism*, vol. 3, pp. 21-22.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

90. S. Georgoulis, *The Status*, pp. 198-199.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

92. B. Kondis, *Sensitive Balances*, p. 155.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 157. S. Georgoulis, *The Status*, pp. 189-197.

94. T. Zavalani, 'Albanian Nationalism' in Sugar – Lederer, p. 85.

Thus, even in modern bibliography this American contribution has not been taken into serious consideration, although it could provide a more fair solution to the Northern Epirotic Question, and remains something new.

The developments during the First World War (1914-1918) reinforced the Albanian nationalism making the Muslims join it and the Christians to start being affected by it. The statistics made about religion in this environment proved that the Orthodox Christians constituted the majority of the population only in the western part of the region in question, i.e. Gjirokaster and its major district, where the Greek-speaking minority was also located.

Apart from the spoken language the people of Southern Albania was divided according to its feelings. In addition to the classic theory that there were two 'parties', namely the pro-Albanian nationalists and the pro-Greeks, we identified one more 'party', that is the moderates, which is a contribution based on the observations of the British diplomats in Albania. Furthermore, we have pointed out that in the regions in which the Orthodox Christians constituted the majority (Gjirokaster region) were more insistent on maintaining their Orthodox identity than in regions in which they constituted the minority (Korcha region). Finally, again with the help of the British diplomats, we pointed out that the anti-Orthodox State policy in Albania turned the older of the moderates to Greece, whereas the modernity of the nationalistic ideas and the absence of Greek education turned the young people either to indifference or to Albanian nationalism. This reality created a positive perspective for the region in question within Albania.

### **3. Some Modern Statistics**

Some more modern statistics can help us to support the truth of our observations. The reason that these statistics are considered to be significant is that after a number of years the sentiment of the population and the concept of nationality is clearer. Thus, L. Kallivretakis has observed that the Greek minority of Albania is gathered in the southwest of the Vjosa River region. He provides us with some analytical ethnographic

statistics from the years 1989-1991 but here we extract a piece of his work based on percentages rather than analytical details<sup>95</sup>.

### THE POPULATION OF THE REGIONS OF THE GREEK MINORITY

The Province of Sarada (60,000 inhabitants) – 1991

Greeks	41%
Vlachs	2%
Orthodox Albanians	21%
Muslim Albanians	23%
Chams <sup>96</sup>	13%

The Province of Gjirokaster (66,000) – 1989

Greeks	40%
Vlachs	12%
Orthodox Albanians	21%
Muslim Albanians	28%

The Province of Delvin (32,000) – 1991

Greeks	58%
Vlachs	6%
Orthodox Albanians	6%
Muslim Albanians	30%

Table 3.1

Source: Kallivretakis, p. 42<sup>97</sup>.

95. See all the analytical details of his in regions, towns and villages in Kallivretakis, pp. 51-58.

96. Chams are Albanian-speaking Muslims from Chameria, a region of Epirus that is a part of the modern Greek State.

97. According to the latest survey of 2001 in Albania a decrease of the population in these has been observed. In 1989 there were 154,141 inhabitants, whereas in 2001 there were 99,798, making a decrease of about 45%, due to migration. Instituti i Statistikes, Tirane, 04.02.2004, [www.instat.gov.al/](http://www.instat.gov.al/)

It is obvious from the percentages presented above that the Greek minority was largely gathered in the western part of the region in question constituting a strong minority among the other ethnic groups in a mean of 46.33% (Table 3.1). Albanian scholars reduce this proportion to 36.6% of the overall population of the region<sup>98</sup>. Greeks of Southwestern Albania (Provinces of Sarada, Gjirokaster and Delvin) constituted the 98% of the Greek population all over Albania, according to the Albanian survey of 1989, or the 82.2% according to the Albanian elections of 1991<sup>99</sup>. It is also significant to stress that Greeks constituted the 1.85% of the overall population of Albania, because from 3,182,417 inhabitants in Albania, Greeks counted 58,758 inhabitants, according to the Albanian survey of 1989<sup>100</sup>. However, Greek scholars believe that this number constituted an effort of the Albanian authorities to reduce the number of the Greek minority. L. Kallivretakis estimated the Greeks about 100,000 to 150,000 people, that is approximately the 3-5% of the overall population in Albania<sup>101</sup>. According to L. Kallivretakis' calculations, only in Southwestern Albania the Greeks numbered 69,560 inhabitants<sup>102</sup>.

Another observation is connected with the percentages concerning the Vlach-speaking people. In all the previous statistics we did not see Vlach-speaking inhabitants in Southwestern Albania. We saw them rather connected with the Ottoman cazas of Permet and Korcha. Moreover, according to the Albanian survey of 1989, the foreigners (Greeks, Slavs and Vlachs) in Albania were 64,816. If we take into consideration the fact that the Greeks were 58,758<sup>103</sup>, then the rest of the foreigners were 6,058. However, L. Kallivretakis, who worked only in Southwestern

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98. Arqile Berxholli, Sejfi Protopapa, Kristaq Prifti, 'The Greek Minority in the Albanian Republic: A Demographic Study', *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1994), p. 431.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 433.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 429.

101. Kallivretakis, p. 44.

102. In the region of Sarada the Greeks were the 41% of 60,000 inhabitants, i.e. 24,600 people. In Gjirokaster province were 40% of 66,000 inhabitants, i.e. 26,400 people. Finally, in Delvin province were the 58% of 32,000 inhabitants, i.e. 18,560 (Table 3.1).

103. Berxholli, Protopapa, Prifti, p. 429.

Albania, found about 11,040 Vlach-speaking people there<sup>104</sup>. Thus, according to investigations in the region by L. Kallivretakis, the Vlach-speaking population was considerably more in Albania than the official survey wanted to show, given that L. Kallivretakis' calculations do not include the regions of Korcha and Permet in which the Vlach-speaking appeared to be gathered in the statistics of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>105</sup>. A modern English scholar, Tom Winniffrith, has recently estimated that the Vlach-speaking people are approximately 200,000 all over Albania<sup>106</sup>. The explanation about the problematic information given by the official Albanian statistics is that in these statistics the Vlachs were not estimated separately, but they were considered Albanians, as 'in Albanian communist times they were not recognized as separate minority group'<sup>107</sup>. In this way the Albanians managed to reduce the number of the Greek minority in Albania, as many of the Vlach-speaking people used to have and still perform a Greek national sentiment<sup>108</sup>, and to albanise the rest of the Vlachs, as the pro-Romanian of them perform Albanian

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104. In Sarada the Vlach-speaking inhabitants constituted the 2% of the population, i.e. 1,200 people. In Gjirokaster constituted the 12%, i.e. 7,920 and in Delvin the 6%, i.e. 1,920 people (Table 3.1).

105. From the urban centres mentioned here the Vlach-speaking people appear to be gathered in 1996 in Starovo (nowadays Pogradets) and Korcha, as well as in Korcha, Permet and Gjirokaster districts. See relative map in Stephanie Schwandner – Sievers, 'The Albanian Aromunians' Awakening: Identity Politics and Conflicts in Post-Communist Albania', European Centre for Minority Issues Working Paper #3, March 1999, [www.ecmi.de](http://www.ecmi.de), p. iii.

106. Tom Winniffrith, *Shattered Eagles. Balkan Fragments*, (London: Duckworth, 1995), p. 68.

107. Schwandner – Sievers, p. 3.

108. It is significant to mention here that the idea that all the Orthodox Christians are ethnically Greeks is no more supported by the Greek Foreign Office, despite the different opinions expressed by Albanian (Berxholli, Protopapa, Prifti, p. 434) or Albanian-influenced authors (Schwandner – Sievers, p. 3). The Greek Foreign Office estimated them in 1989 in about 280,000 – about 8% of the overall Albanian population – considering Greeks even no Greek-speaking people, according to the national sentiment they perform. 'Greek Minority in Albania: American Hellenic Institute in Response to the State Department's of False and Misleading Census Data for the Greek Minority in Albania', [www.unpo.org/news\\_detail.php?arg=23&par=1060](http://www.unpo.org/news_detail.php?arg=23&par=1060) The State Department, before that, and other international organizations have accepted the wrong of the Albanian censuses. Thus, the accusation that the Greek State considers the Greeks 400,000 or even 500,000 is proved exaggeration aiming at the weakening of the Greek arguments. Besides, as it will be shown below, the Orthodox Christians number much more than 400-500,000 people.

national sentiment<sup>109</sup>. Officially they received the status of ‘linguistic minority’ by the Albanian government in 2003<sup>110</sup>. Thus, there is no official estimation of the Vlach-speaking population until now.

According to the latest Albanian survey of 2001 the Slav-speaking people are gathered in Korcha district, numbering 4,148 inhabitants. These people considered to be the ‘Macedonian’ minority of Albania<sup>111</sup>.

The Orthodox Christians now were also strongly connected with the southwestern part of the country. In the district of Sarada they constituted a majority of approximately 64% and in the districts of Gjirokaster and Delvin the vast majority of the population: 72% and 70% respectively<sup>112</sup> (Table 3.1). An overall of the Orthodox population of the South is given by S. Georgoulis. We extract from his approximate calculations the regions of the South.

#### THE ORTHODOX POPULATION OF SOUTHERN ALBANIA

Regions	Total	Orthodox	Percentage
Starovo	73,373	5,000	7%
Korcha	218,219	90,000	41%
Erseka	25,291	7,500	30%
Permet	40,419	16,000	40%
Tepelen	51,022	20,000	39%
Gjirokaster	67,392	50,300	75%
Sarada	89,459	62,000	69%
Total	565,175	250,800	44%

Table 3.2

Source: S. Georgoulis, *Orthodoxy*, p. 165

109. Schwandner – Sievers, pp. 5, 6-7, 9-10, 12-16.

110. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, ‘Albania: Elections; Judicial System and Independence of the Judiciary; Torture, Ill-Treatment and Police Misconduct; National and Ethnic Minorities’, [www.ihr-hf.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc\\_id=6151](http://www.ihr-hf.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=6151), 2003, p. 6. The Vlachs were originally recognised as a cultural group by the Albanian Ministry of Culture in October 1991, but not yet a minority. Schwandner – Sievers, p. 7. In Korcha exists a church in which the services are conducted in Vlach language. International Helsinki Federation, p. 9.

111. Instituti i Statistikes, Tirane, 04.02.2004, [www.instat.gov.al/](http://www.instat.gov.al/) See also International Helsinki Federation, p. 7.

112. See also S. Georgoulis, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 160-161.

As it is shown (Table 3.2) the Orthodox Christians constitute a significant minority in the South. In the western part (Tepelen, Gjirokaster, and Sarada) they were still (1990) the absolute majority – approximately 64%, although the largest Orthodox congregation in Albania seems to be that of Korcha with approximately 90,000 members – about 36% of the Orthodox Christians (Table 3.2). The district with the highest percentage was that of Gjirokaster with 74% - about 20% of Orthodox (Table 3.2).

In the large percentage of 64% of the Orthodox Christians of the South the population of Himara, which nowadays belongs to the province of Vlora, has not been taken into consideration<sup>113</sup>. If we do take this into consideration, we have to add about 9,400 people more – Muslims in Himara exist only in the village of Spile and they number about 1,000 people, while the total of the population of the Himara district is 10,404 inhabitants (Table 3.3). Therefore, the percentage of the Orthodox is slightly increased to approximately 65%.

#### THE POPULATION OF HIMARA DISTRICT

Villages	Population	Nationality
Village of Himara and Shen Mehill	1,595	Greeks
Spile	3,629	Greeks, Orthodox Albanians, Muslim Albanians
Vunos	555	Orthodox Albanians
Iliasi	124	Orthodox Albanians
Qeparo Posthme	854	Orthodox Albanians
Qeparo Siperme	461	Greeks
Kudhes	748	Orthodox Albanians
Pilur	532	Orthodox Albanians
Dhermi	1,550	Greeks
Palasa	356	Greeks
Total	10,404	

Table 3.3

Source : Kallivretakis, p. 53.

113. S. Georgoulis calculates the Orthodox population of Albania to approximately 775,000 people (S. Georgoulis, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 164-165). His calculations seem to be trustworthy as Miranda Vickers, a modern pro-Albanian English, and James Pettifer agree with him. M. Vickers – J. Pettifer.

It is interesting to make two significant, for us, observations. First, the Orthodox Christians in Southwestern Albania constituted, in the beginning of 1990s, the 65% of the population in the region, whereas in 1921 they constituted the 55%. Thus, the percentage has increased about 10% (Figure 3.2). On the contrary, the Orthodox of Korcha constituted, again in the beginning of 1990s, 33%, whereas in 1921 constituted 45%, making a decrease of 12% (Figure 3.1). Of course the decrease of the percentage from 1877 to 1908 (Figure 3.1) was due to the fact that regions of the Ottoman *caza* of Korcha exclusively inhabited by Orthodox Christians were included either in Serbia (nowadays F.Y.R.O.M.) or in Greece. However, both the increase in the Southwestern region and the decrease in the Southeastern one are connected with what it was stressed above, namely that where the Christians were majority could perform better their religious identity, whereas this was not the case in the region that they were minority. In Gjirokaster district the Orthodox Christians were able to resist better against the anti-Orthodox policy of the Albanian governments until 1939 and of the Italian occupiers until 1944 and against the anti-religious policy of the communist regime in Albania (1947-1990). This did not take place in Korcha district, where the policies described above resulted to a significant decrease of the percentage of the Orthodox population there. Moreover, we can claim that where the Orthodox Christians were affected by the nationalistic propaganda in Albania, i.e. Korcha district, their inclination was to lose their religious identity too. The propaganda against Greece was also propaganda against the Orthodox Church which was considered a vehicle of Greek nationalism.

Moreover, the number of the Greeks is also decreased, as there are no Albanian-speaking people declaring that they are Greeks. That means that there are no pro-Greeks any more. Greeks are located only in Southwestern Albania and, even there, constitute a minority. What was stressed above, about the nationalistic policy followed by the Albanian governments and about the British diplomats' observations concerning the Albanian Orthodox youth of 1920s, are proved correct. The perspectives then were positive for the Albanians and against the Greek claims in the region in question. This was also reinforced by the nationalistic anti-Greek policy followed by the communist regime in Albania.



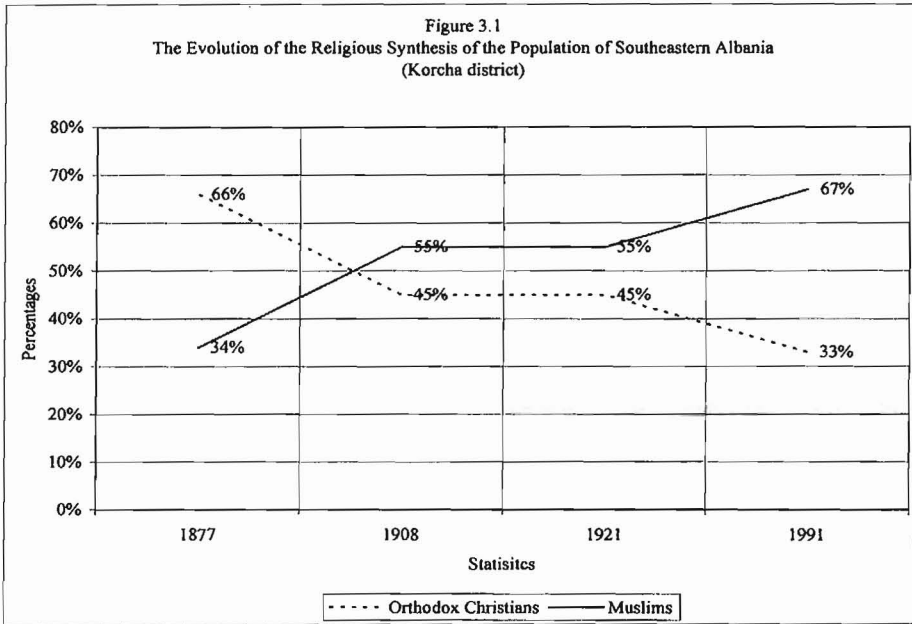


Figure 3.1

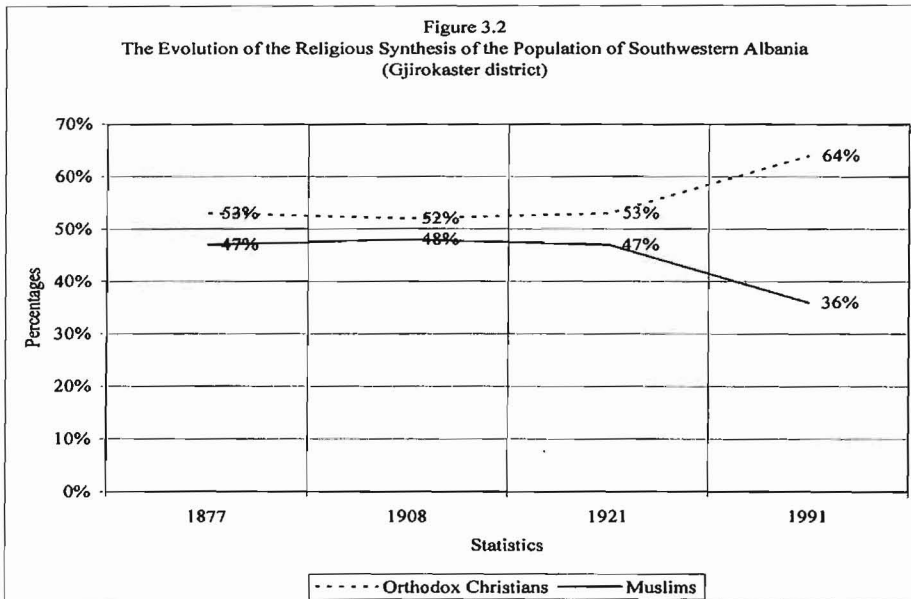


Figure 3.2

## Conclusions

Albanian nationalism was a movement which started from some intellectuals as a top-down one, rather than a popular demand. The people were divided religiously, which resulted in class differences stronger even than the religious ones, linguistically and tribally. On the one hand, the Orthodox Christians were devoted to 'Romanity', something that was used by Greek nationalism in order to prove the Greek character of Northern Epirus. On the other hand, the Muslims were devoted to the Ottoman reality. Thus, the nationalists, who tried to create nationalism based on the common language, despite the numerous differences among the dialects, had little effect upon them.

The Youngturkish policy for the turkification of the Ottoman Empire which led the nationalists to raise the revolts of 1908-1912, and the First Balkan War (1912-1913), which expelled the Turks from the Balkan Peninsula, led the Albanian-speaking Muslims to look upon nationalism as the only possible solution to their problem. Only the creation of an Albanian independent State could guarantee that they would remain in power.

The Orthodox Christians did not have the same reasons to support Albanian nationalism. They remained faithful to 'Romanity' asking union with Greece, the Orthodox State. Only the Orthodox Christians from or in abroad supported nationalism, as they were affected by the modern nationalistic ideas of Europe and the United States of America. Thus, the Orthodox Christians, either Albanian or Greek-speaking, supported, in their majority, the Greek claims at this stage of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, after the First World War (1914-1918) different developments led to reinforcement of Albanian nationalism. The occupation of Northern Epirus by Italians and French resulted to their support for nationalistic propaganda. They expelled important Greek or pro-Greek notables and the highest clergy, they closed many Greek schools and opened the first Albanian ones and, the French in Korcha, established an autonomous Albanian State under their protection. Moreover, the return to Korcha district of 20-30,000 Albanian-speaking Orthodox emigrants from the United States, where they were affected by nationalism, between the years 1919-1925, reinforced the nationalistic element there.

Thus, the Muslims had serious reasons of supporting the independence and integrity of Albania, Northern Epirus included. The Orthodox Christians mainly of Korcha district, started being affected by nationalism, whereas the Christians of Gjirokaster were more conservative, due to the fact that they used to migrate either within the Ottoman Empire or to Greece, where there was no possibility of following Albanian nationalistic ideas, as A. Glavinis has correctly pointed out. Only the religious, i.e. class, differences were still in power.

Among the Orthodox Christians there were not only pro-Greeks and pro-Albanian nationalists, but also, according to the acute observations made by the British diplomats, moderates. The latter were the most important element, for they constituted the biggest 'party'. On their attitude depended the right or wrong of the assertions of the two sides. They wanted the creation of the independent Albania, but they also desired religious – class equality, fearing the Muslim tension of domination over the Christians. Thus, they suggested autonomy of the South.

The policy followed by the Albanian State had an anti-Orthodox character and made the older moderates, again according to the British diplomats, to turn to Greece, whereas the young ones moved out of the Greek influence. Thus, the Greek claims became problematic after the First World War and especially after 1921, when the first organized governments appeared in Albania. In addition, the perspectives for the future were even worse.

Statistically, it was proved that the Orthodox people were the majority in Northern Epirus in 1877. The Albanian-speaking people constituted the majority in the whole region in question, while the Greek-speaking ones were gathered in the region west of the Vjosa River. In the Ottoman statistics (1908), the Orthodox Christians constituted the majority only in the western part of the region, where the Greek-speaking people were gathered. Thus, it was proved that the Albanian-speaking Orthodox inhabitants were the most important element for the right or wrong of the Greek claims on the region.

The Greeks believed that all the Orthodox were ethnically Greeks, something that was proved to be simplistic, and they produced statistics, reducing the number of Muslim villages, which they agreed to be granted to Albania. As a result, they were able to prove the Greek character of the region.

The Albanians believed that all the Albanian-speaking people were ethnically Albanians and they tried to reduce the number of the Greeks. It was proved, nevertheless, that their main criterion – the linguistic – was a problematic one. The religious – class differences made the Greeks be closer to the truth than the Albanians, before the Great War. Even for the biased statistics, however, of both Albanians and Greeks, it was proved that the Orthodox constituted a clearer majority west of the Vjosa River, where the Greek-speaking population was also mainly gathered.

This reality found its expression for first time in the proposal on the Greek territorial claims made by the American delegate in the Peace Conference at Paris (1919). He was able to see that the west of the Vjosa River region, with its Orthodox majority consisted of Albanian-speaking pro-Greeks and Greek-speaking people, performed a Greek sentiment and it could be united with Greece without opposing the popular feelings. In contrast, the region east of the Vjosa River, with its Muslim majority and the pro-Albanian nationalistic Orthodox element, could be granted to Albania again without harming the popular feelings. This proposal remained a dead letter and was forgotten by the bibliography on the matter. Only L. Kallivretakis, lately, was able to prove it further using old geographers. The same reality appeared also in the statistical estimations made by the League's Commissioner Dr. J. J. Sederholm.

The comparisons of these arguments with some more modern statistics proved their truth even further. In the beginning of 1990s the Greeks were fewer than in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but not as few as the Albanians wanted to show, due to the success of the nationalistic policy followed by the Albanian governments. The same period of time Orthodox Christians constituted the majority again in the west of the Vjosa River, where their percentage had increased comparing with 1922. This reality along with the decrease of their proportion east of the Vjosa River, proved the right of our assertions, namely that where the Orthodox were majority they could maintain their religious identity more effectively and where the Orthodox were affected by Albanian nationalism inclined to move out of their Church's influence.

The existence of Vlach-speaking people in the region west of the Vjosa River proved that they were spread in more regions than in the Ottoman cazas of Korcha and Permet. Moreover, their modern numbers

proved that the Albanians never told the truth about them and they are still trying to do the same. The reason is connected with the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Vlach-speaking people in those areas preserved a Greek national sentiment and they still perform it even nowadays. Therefore, what appears to be Vlach element in the Statistics from the beginning to the end of the 20th century is actually a Vlach-speaking element with a mainly Greek national sentiment.

Before closing, it is important to make some observations in the modern situation in Albania. Thus, Orthodox Christians there remain a significant minority – the second religious group after the Muslims in Albania – but there is no right any more for territorial claims on behalf of Greece. The Orthodox of the region need a spiritual head capable to show respect to the multi-lingual character of the Orthodox flock and to help it to rediscover the spiritual importance and ecumenicity of Orthodoxy. Anastasios, the Archbishop of Tirana and all Albania, is proved from the facts the right man for this difficult task.

