



Bektashism during the Greek Occupation (1913–1916) in the Gjirokaštër Region and the Diary of Grandfather Ali of Gjirokaštër

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Abstract

This article examines the role of Bektashism in the Gjirokaštër region during the Greek occupation of 1913–1916, with particular attention to the historical significance of local tekkes and the testimony preserved in the diary of Baba Ali of Gjirokaštër. By situating Bektashi activity within the broader national and political developments of the early twentieth century, the study explores how religious institutions contributed to the preservation of cultural identity and national consciousness during a period of conflict and territorial contestation. Drawing upon historical narratives, memoir accounts, and documentary references contained within the article, the research highlights the function of tekkes such as Zalli, Hajdëri, and Melan as centers of spiritual guidance, education, and patriotic mobilization. The actions of prominent clerics—including Baba Selimi and Baba Ali Tomorri—demonstrate the integration of religious authority with political engagement, particularly through support for Albanian independence, protection of communities, and resistance to occupation policies. The Greek occupation resulted in the destruction of religious property, persecution of clergy, and displacement of local populations. Nevertheless, the persistence of Bektashi networks and the rebuilding of institutions reveal a pattern of resilience that underscores their societal importance. Baba Ali's diary provides valuable primary insight into violence, propaganda, and demographic manipulation during the occupation, contributing to a deeper understanding of regional experiences. The study concludes that Bektashi institutions served as vital agents of social cohesion and national preservation, reinforcing the intertwined nature of faith, identity, and political agency in modern Albanian history.

Gjirokaštër Bölgesinde Yunan İşgali Döneminde (1913–1916) Bektaşilik ve Gjirokaštër'li Büyükbaba Ali'nin Günlüğü

Özet

Bu makale, 1913-1916 yılları arasında Yunan işgali sırasında Gjirokaštër bölgesinde Bektaşiliğin rolünü incelemekte olup, özellikle yerel tekkelerin tarihsel önemi ve Gjirokaštërli Baba Ali'nin günlüğünde yer alan tanıklıklara odaklanmaktadır. Bektashi faaliyetlerini yirminci yüzyılın başlarındaki daha geniş ulusal ve siyasi gelişmeler bağlamında ele alan bu çalışma, çatışma ve toprak mücadelesi dönemlerinde dini kurumların kültürel kimliğin ve ulusal bilincin korunmasına nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu araştırmaktadır. Makalede yer alan tarihsel anlatılar, anı kayıtları ve belgesel referanslardan yararlanan araştırma, Zalli, Hajdëri ve Melan gibi tekkelerin manevi rehberlik, eğitim ve vatanseverlik hareketi merkezleri olarak işlevini vurgulamaktadır. Baba Selimi ve Baba Ali Tomorri gibi önde gelen din adamlarının eylemleri, özellikle Arnavut bağımsızlığının desteklenmesi, toplulukların korunması ve işgal politikalarına direnç gösterilmesi yoluyla dini otoritenin siyasi katılımı bütünlüğünü göstermektedir. Yunan işgali, dini mülklerin tahrip edilmesine, din adamlarının zulüm görmesine ve yerel halkın yerinden edilmesine neden olmuştur. Bununla birlikte, Bektaşi ağlarının devamlılığı ve kurumların yeniden inşası, toplumsal önemlerini vurgulayan bir direnç örüntüsünü ortaya koymaktadır. Baba Ali'nin günlüğü, işgal sırasında yaşanan şiddet, propaganda ve demografik manipülasyon hakkında birincil bilgiler sunarak bölgesel deneyimlerin daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Çalışma, Bektaşi kurumlarının sosyal uyum ve ulusal korunmanın hayati aktörleri olarak hizmet ettikleri ve modern Arnavut tarihindeki inanç, kimlik ve siyasi etki arasındaki iç içe geçmiş yapıyı pekiştirdikleri sonucuna varmaktadır.

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Introduction

“Love for the Fatherland is closely tied to faith.”— Prophet Muhammad

The article presents a chronological overview of historical events and facts. It provides information about the functioning of Bektashi lodges in Southern Albania and their role in the struggle for independence. The article summarizes how Bektashi lodges and dervishes functioned as centers of Albanian patriotism, their activities, organization, and their role in spreading patriotic ideas.

The role of Bektashi tekkes and dervishes in the Albanian nationalist movement is so significant and influential that it is beyond dispute. From the very beginning, the development of Albanian Bektashi literature and, in a sense, the creation of the Albanian alphabet has been among the foremost issues (Sülçevsi, 2025, ss. 157-175). In this regard, the activities of the Frasheri brothers in the political, linguistic, literary, religious, and cultural spheres are significant, and the initial seeds of these activities were sown under the influence of the dervishes at the Bektashi tekke (Dibra, 2025, ss. 71-96; Harizaj, 2025, pp. 133-142). Another important development on the path to Albanian patriotism and nationalism was the convening of the unity congress in Prizren (Gashi, 2025, ss. 77-98). The planning and execution of the Prizren meeting were also facilitated by the Bektashi tekke and its dervishes (Afmataj, 2025, ss. 97-109).

The mission undertaken by these tekkes was the result of the Prizren League, founded by the Albanian nationalist faction represented by Abdül Frasheri. Frasheri traveled to southern Albania to open new branches of the League and established contact with the Bektashi tekkes there, which were sympathetic to nationalist ideas. In this way, he sought to bring the Bektashi tekkes in the region into the union and succeeded. As a result, the tekkes in the region acquired an Albanian nationalist character. This character, forged during the struggle for independence against the Ottomans, was maintained even after Albania's separation from the Ottoman Empire to prevent Greece from encroaching on Albanian territory (Bozbora, 2007, s. 193).

The contribution of the Albanian Bektashi tekke and dervishes to Albanian patriotism and national awakening emerged following the Greek occupation of Albanian territories, the killing of innocent people, and the destruction of places of worship that accompanied the occupation. Naturally, due to the atrocities committed during the Greek occupation, the Bektashi tekkes, along with their babas and dervishes, provided political, religious, literary, and economic support, and also organized the Albanians to resist and fight against the occupation.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Bektashi tekkes were banned and the dervishes were expelled from them; as a result, Bektashi babas and dervishes, led by Salih Niyazi Baba, were forced to leave the Republic of Turkey and immigrated to the Republic of Albania. The Bektashi tekke and its dervishes have held congresses at regular intervals to seek answers to the challenges faced in each era and to propose solutions.

The Bektashi babas and dervishes, who organized the Albanians against the Greek occupation and attacks and provided and financed all necessary logistics, also contributed to the growth of the literature on this subject. Baba Receb's unique work (1970) on Bektashi tekkes and dervishes is, without a doubt, the primary source on Bektashi tekkes and babas in Albania. Elsie (2020), on the other hand, has recently prepared a study that compiles and synthesizes the information provided in the literature regarding Albanian Bektashi tekkes and dervishes. A comprehensive study evaluating all of these works, including the aforementioned ones, was conducted by Doja (2008).

Over the past two centuries, the Bektashi tekkes and dervishes of the Gjirokastër region have played a pioneering role in shaping the history of Albania and the Albanian people. Although the Bektashi tekkes were closed and their revenues confiscated during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II, they continued to exist despite the bans and, through a new organizational structure, managed to reunite all the tekkes and Albanians. During the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire,

the Bektashi lodges and dervishes in the Gjirokaštër region, through their efforts and dedication, ensured the survival of the Bektashi order in the face of the events unfolding in the Balkans. During the Greek attacks, which were marked by unforgettable and tragic events, the struggle of the tekkes and dervishes in this region played a leading role in the Albanian resistance and also provided significant assistance in protecting the families of the innocent victims who were unjustly killed. In this regard, this article examines the Bektashi tekkes and dervishes of the Gjirokaštër region and evaluates the subject through brief information, reflecting its state as it appears in memories within a short historical span.

It has been determined that a total of 43 tekkes were built in the Gjirokaštër region (Kavalçalan, 2021, s. 193). This article discusses four of these tekkes. These four tekkes played a pivotal role in rallying the tekkes and dervishes, even during the period when Bektashi tekkes were banned under the Ottoman Empire. These four tekkes, which played a significant role in the Albanian national awakening, also took a leading role in organizing, protecting, and providing aid to Albanians during the Greek occupation.

Bektashism in the southern Albanian regions is the outcome of historical circumstances that align with the broader factors influencing its spread throughout all Albanian-inhabited territories. Bektashi clerics stand with dignity among the constellation of National Renaissance figures. Within this context, the spiritual leaders of the Zalli Tekke, particularly Baba Ali Plaku and Baba Selim, as well as those of the Mesi Tekke (Baba Zenel) and the Hajdëri (Shtuf) Tekke (Baba Hajdar), hold a distinguished place (Shyqyri, 2003, ff. 261-277).

They contributed to the Tanzimat uprisings, to the establishment of Albanian clubs and schools, and to the sheltering and sponsoring of armed bands defending the national cause. Even during the period of Independence, the babas and Bektashi tekkes of the Gjirokaštër region supported and blessed the raising of the flag and the statehood of Albania.

The tekkes became shelters for patriotic groups that fought against Ottoman gendarmes, Greek andartes, and the Austro-Hungarian army in the early 20th century, especially during the years 1912-1918. Mihal Grameno (1925, pp. 129-138) writes:

"Baba Selimi encouraged and financed the founding of the patriotic club 'Liria' of Gjirokaštër in 1908, whose members included several of the baba's disciples such as Hasan Xhiku, Shemsho Hajro, Haxhi Shaplllo, Ahmed Poshi, and others."

The tekkes also played a key role in organizing the National War of Vlora in 1920. Historian Abas Ermenji (2001, f. 11) defines the patriotic character of Baba Selim by comparing him to the most distinguished Bektashi clerics, stating:

"Baba Selimi was one of the purest figures of Albanian nationalism, for he loved Albania with the same feelings and thoughts that Baba Alushi had for the nation."

Even during the democratic movement of 1920-1924, the Bektashi leaders of Gjirokaštër, such as Baba Qamil of Melan and Baba Sulejman of the Hajdëri Tekke, were aligned with the Fanolist movement. During the Second World War, the patriotic spirit of the Bektashi clergy again came to the forefront. It was Baba Selimi who sheltered Bule Naipi and Persefoni Kokëdhima.

During the Greek occupation of 1913-1916 (Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shek, 2018, ff. 34-36), Baba Selimi emphasized the national ideal through the following expression (Baba Rexhepi, 1970, f. 307):

"We must have full faith and conviction in the great word of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who said: 'Love for the Fatherland is closely tied to faith.' This saying applies precisely today, for since we lack our free Homeland, we cannot fulfil our religious duty and pray to God as we should. This must serve as proof and convince us that without a Homeland, religion cannot be upheld. They are two things bound to one another!"

In the Gjirokaštër region functioned the following tekkes: the Zalli Tekke, the Hajdëri (Shtuf) Tekke, the Mesi (Baba Zeneli) Tekke, and the Melan Tekke.

Evliya Çelebi (2003, ss. 280-286), who traveled throughout Albania for about ten years (visiting Ergiri/Gjirokastër in 1672), provides information about the tekkes in Ergiri and its surroundings and mentions that there were three tekkes. He also adds to his observations that the people are affiliated with the Ahl al-Bayt.

The Tekke of Tepelenë refers to the Demir Han Tekke; that of Përmet refers to the Tekke of Baba Xhafer; while the tekkes of Gjirokastër include: the Zalli Tekke, the Tekke on the Shtuf Hill, where the foundation stone dated 1630 was found, and the Mesi Tekke (the Tekke of Baba Zenel). According to Baba Rexhep (1970, ff. 288-289), the first cleric to bear the rank of *Gjysh* (Grandfather) was Asim Baba (1780-1796), who also constructed the new Zalli Tekke in Gjirokastër.

1. The Zalli Tekke

The tekke that has guided the Bektashi faith in the Gjirokastër region has been the Zalli Tekke. Despite the relatively differing dates concerning its foundation, one may conclude that the Zalli Tekke was founded by Baba Asim as a central seat (*Gjyshatë*) in the 18th century. Its construction was a necessary undertaking to address the needs of the large number of believers who required a fully developed religious institution.

This construction may be viewed as the outcome of a preparatory phase that began with Bektashi missionaries in the 14th century and intensified with the arrival of the Janissaries (early 16th century), who themselves professed the Bektashi faith.

Historical documents over the centuries indicate that the Zalli Tekke was led by the following babas (Shyqyri, 2004, ff. 121-129):

Baba Asimi, Baba Hasan Turku, Baba Ali Gega (Plaku), Baba Haxhi Jahaj, Ibrahim Baba Turku, Baba Hysen Elbasani, Baba Haxhi Ali Haqi, Baba Selim, Baba Ali Tomorri, Baba Sherif Canometi, Baba Ibrahim Kuka, Abedin Baba, Baba Neki Levani, Baba Haxhi Salia, Baba Besnik, Baba Sadik, Baba Abdul, and most recently Baba Skënder.

Likewise, dozens upon dozens of dervishes and myhyb have served in this tekke. Among the dervishes whose names are recorded are:

Dervish Muhamet Golemi, Dervish Rexhep Beqiri, Dervish Esat, Dervish Barjam, Dervish Shazivar, Dervish Shahin, Dervish Hysen, Dervish Hasan (Liap), Dervish Safet, Dervish Zenel, Dervish Muharremi, Dervish Xhafer Zhapokika, Dervish Shahin Progonati, Dervish Ali, Dervish Llacja, Dervish Mikel, and others.

Some of these dervishes later became babas in other Bektashi tekkes, such as:

Baba Hasani, who travelled to Mecca on foot and returned to the Zalli Tekke after six months, later receiving authorisation to open the Tekke of Picar.

Baba Hodo served at the Memaliaj Tekke.

Baba Qamil was one of the leading figures who founded the Melan Tekke and was among the Albanian patriots of the 1920s (Kordha, 2001, ff. 97-105).

Greek annexationist ambitions brought about tragedies beyond human imagination in southern Albania (*Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shek*, 2018, ff. 142-159). With the responsibility of the Mayor of Gjirokastër and the concern of a patriot, Hysen Hoxha, a signatory of the Act of Independence, wrote to Ismail Qemali on 26 December 1912 (Hoxha, 1982, ff. 275-276):

"The enemy, with great force, has returned and occupied Saranda once again. The force stationed in Delvinë is insufficient. We have now been officially informed that the defensive detachment (*myfrezeja*) stationed in Kuç has been ordered to move toward Delvinë by the shortest route. Therefore, to safeguard that frontier, we beg you to issue orders for appropriate reinforcements to be sent. From among the people of Gjirokastër, all those capable of taking up arms are departing tonight for Delvinë. We are in urgent need of your assistance..."

The Balkan Wars and the Conference of Ambassadors provided Greece with the greatest

opportunity to annex Albanian territories. Yet greed pushed it further, for, as the saying goes, *"appetite grows with eating."*

Until March–April 1914, Greece masked its presence in Albania through the so-called "Government of Northern Epirus." At that moment, the Greek government saw Italy's violation of Albanian independence (1913) as a golden opportunity. Thus, it immediately deployed its regular army into southern Albania. Both sides understood that the time had come for a shift in their bilateral strategies in Albania. By September 1914, Greek troops had reached Berat. Athens feared Italy and:

"...to avoid any possible reaction from Italy, Athens attempted to present the annexation of Southern Albania as carried out through the 'will' of the population of this region, and even why not, with the blessing of the Albanian government." (Dushku, 2012, f. 348).

Journalist Veli Hashorva writes in his memoirs that (AQSH, Fund 143, File 918, f. 8):

"The Greeks did not consider the Muslim inhabitants of Gjirokastër to be Albanian, but Turkish."

When Greek troops occupied Gjirokastër, they sought to arrest Baba Selimi. According to researcher Robert Elsie (2020, f. 189):

"After failing to achieve their aims peacefully, the Greeks resorted to force, first by destroying the Zalli Tekke in Gjirokastër and then attempting to kill the erudite leader of Albanian Bektashism, Baba Selim."

But the Baba escaped through the back door. Only an elderly dervish, Dervish Sulo Kuka, remained that he could not walk. He stayed with a few servants. The Greeks beat him so severely that he remained bedridden for days and died from the pain, multiple wounds, and internal hemorrhage. Baba Rexhep (1970, ff. 305-306) writes:

"The Greeks entered the tekke, looted all possessions and stripped it bare. They kept it and used it as a military barracks for three and a half years, destroying it entirely, leaving no doors or windows, burning them as firewood in their hearths. They seized all livestock: sheep and goats, poultry, and all large animals (cows, oxen, calves, as well as mules, horses, and mares) numbering in the thousands."

Baba Selimi took refuge in his sister's home in the Cfakë neighborhood. The house transformed into a small tekke, a sanctuary for intellectuals and notable personalities of the time. The condition of the tekkes and their clergy was dire. They became shelters for military formations and Greek andante paramilitary groups, even after the formation of the Zografos government.

Greek troops withdrew from southern Albania in October 1916 (Histori e popullit shqiptar 2007, p. 84), driven out by Italian–French forces that met in Ersekë on 17 February 1917 (Histori e popullit shqiptar, 2007, 96). Yet even then, they played the "Northern Epirus" card and the Zografos government, doing everything possible to give the movement a semblance of legality (Histori e popullit shqiptar, 2007, pp. 60-64).

Even during this period, Bektashi institutions and clerics faced violence and persecution from the so-called "Sacred Companies" and Greek andartes, whose aim was the annexation of southern Albania to Greece. Baba Rexhep (1970, f. 306) writes:

"When the autonomy of Zografos was proclaimed in Gjirokastër, and the Greek government pretended to withdraw its army, the armed band of Çerçiz Topulli, stationed in the mountains of Picar and Shtëpëz, believed that the Greek army had indeed departed and that only the ruffraff of the autonomy remained. With this belief, the band intended to attack and liberate Gjirokastër. But through secret messengers who travelled back and forth, the Baba sent word to Çerçiz that this was nothing but a maneuver of the Greek government."

After the Greek troops withdrew from Gjirokastër in October 1916, the local believers rebuilt the tekke. Baba Rexhep (1970, f. 307) records:

"It is worth noting that, to clean the Tekke, which had been completely fouled by the Greeks during their three-year occupation, hundreds of women from Gjirokastër came forward. They washed, painted,

and cleansed it thoroughly for days on end. The Baba greatly praised these ladies for the service they rendered.”

2. The Shtuf Tekke or the Hajdërie Tekke

This tekke bears several names: Teqeja Hajdërie (Shyqyri, 2006, f. 166), in honor of Baba Hajdari; Teqeja e Shtufit¹, after the hill on which it stands; and Teqeja e Baba Manes (Sulejmanit), in honor of Baba Sulejmani.

Its founder was Mustafa Babai, in the year 1824. The clerics who directed this tekke were:

Baba Mustafa (1824–1830)

Bejtash Baba (1830–1843)

Baba Selim the Elder (1843–1849)

Kalander Ismail Baba (1849–1859)

Kapllan Baba (1859–1869)

Hajdar Plaku (1869–1879)

Baba Hajdar Kardhiqi (1879–1904)

Baba Sulejman (1905–1934)

Baba Sejfulla Kuka

Baba Zenel Gjoksi

Baba Ibrahim Kuka,

and today it is directed by Baba Skënder.

The Second Bektashi Congress, held in July 1924, was organized in this tekke (Shyqyri, 2004, p. 49). The tekke has endured destruction multiple times, by the Turks, the Greeks, and the Italians. In 1904, after Baba Hajdar and his seven dervishes were arrested, Dervish Sulejman Kardhiqi, Dervish Latif Gjirokastra, Dervish Hysni Kardhiqi, Dervish Barjam Kosturi, Dervish Shaqo Plesati, Dervish Kaman Smkthina, the Turks destroyed the tekke in 1905. However, the believers rebuilt it one year later. In 1914, the Greek army seized the tekke, and in 1916, it destroyed it completely. The clerics sought refuge in Kardhiq, among the relatives of Baba Sulejman. The believers, together with Baba Sulejmani, rebuilt the tekke once again. The tekke was later visited by Fan S. Noli in 1923 (1924, f. 1). It was converted into a hospital in 1946 and was destroyed in 1967. During these years, the following clerics served:

Baba Ibrahim Kuka

Dervish Shaqir Muhameti

Dervish Muharrem Matushi

Dervish Myftar Maliqi

Dervish Esat Rakipi

Dervish Shahin Ruhin

Hysen Lazarati

Muhamet Golemi and others.

It was reopened in 2003 by Baba Haxhiu, and today it is served by Baba Skënder.

3. The Melan Tekke

The Melan Tekke was founded in 1869 by Baba Ali Haqi of the Zalli Tekke (Baba Rexhepi, 1970, f. 299). It was directed by Baba Sejfulla Kuka from 1870 to 1907. From 1907 to 1943, the tekke

¹ https://sq.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lista_e_teqeve_bektashiane_n%C3%AB_Shqip%C3%ABri

was led by Baba Qamil. Baba Qamil personally witnessed the genocide carried out by Greek andartes and the Greek army. He and his dervishes were expelled from the tekke and fled to Tepelenë (Levan and Shalës). The tekke was reopened in November 1916, when the Italian army arrived in Gjirokastër.

Clerics who later directed the Melan Tekke include:

Baba Qamil

Dervish Adil Islami (director 1943–1950)

Baba Bajram Bënça (1950–1963)

Dervish Kasëm Goxhaj (1963–1967)

The tekke was reopened in 1996 by Baba Sherif Canometi, who appointed Baba Neki Levani (Caushi) to serve there. Since 1998, the tekke has been directed by Baba Skënderi, who continues to lead it today. In 2003, Dervish Myrtezai arrived and continues to serve today as the Baba of this tekke.

4. The Tekke of Baba Zejnel Abedin Gjoksi

This tekke was founded in the final quarter of the 19th century. Its founder was Baba Zejnel, who had previously served in the Frashër Tekke. He later came to the Zalli Tekke, and after a conflict with several of its dervishes, requested from Baba Ali "a place where he could live." (Elsie, 2020, f. 196). Thus, the Tekke of Baba Zejnel was established. During the Greek occupation, the Tekke of Baba Zejnel was seized by Greek forces. It ceased functioning in 1953 (Baba Rexhepi, 1970, f. 300).

One of the most prominent figures of Bektashism was Baba Ali Tomorri. Throughout his life, he used several surnames: Tomorri, Vari i Prishtës, Prishtta, Kulmaku, Gjirokastra, Turabiu, Tepelena, and others. However, his true family name was Skëndi.

In a document signed by Gjysh Ali Gjirokastra on 29 October 1945, he states (A.Q.GJ 1945, file 166, f. 19):

"I am the son of Abaz from Shalsi of Tepelena, Ali Abaz Skëndi."

He was initiated in the Prishtta Tekke, after completing his studies at the Zosimea School (Ioannina). He is known as the organizer of the first two Bektashi congresses and as the secretary of the First Congress, held in Prishtta, 4–17 January 1921. During the Greek occupation, he was forced to flee to Cairo. He is remembered as a publisher, writer, patriot, and Bektashi mystic, a cultivator of the most distinguished national values (Baba Rexhepi, 1970, ff. 367–373). He was executed by the communist regime on 14 January 1948 in Gjirokastër. Baba Ali left behind a diary describing the Greek atrocities of 1913–1916, which forced him to leave his homeland and flee to Cairo. Other babas and clerics also emigrated with him, such as Baba Meleq Shëmbërdhenji, Baba Kamber Prishtta, and others (Baba Rexhepi, 1970, f. 346).

On this occasion, we cite several lines from a letter that Baba Ali sent to the Minister of Defense of Greece on 20 March 1914. The letter was published in the newspaper "Liria e Shqipërisë." With notes of irony, the cleric wrote:

"I thank you for the discipline and the strong and humane law you have bestowed upon your brave, winged army! Here I tell you, illustrious and exalted General, for year upon year, since your liberating army came to Epirus, we have lived so well that we remain forever pleased and grateful! Seeing myself and my brethren ruined, our houses reduced to ashes and dust, with only the four walls remaining, and this year with more graves than any previous one, we know well that God, the Lord, with all His prophets and saints, knows how grateful we are to you! ...When your army arrived, it inquired about me (ah, if only they had caught me), ...and I thank you especially from the depths of my tranquil heart." (A.Q.GJ, 1921, file 101, f. 15).

The issues of the Greek genocide against the population and the Bektashi tekkes of Albania are addressed extensively by Baba Ali in his diary (A.Q.GJ, 1921, file 101, f. 16–54). The diary covers the years 1912–1944.

"October 1912."

"The Balkan–Turkish war erupted. Greek armed bands funded by Athens and the 'Ethniki Eteria' organization sought to sow terror in the villages of Dropull, intending for every misdeed committed there to be attributed to the Albanian people. But at that time, the band commanded by Sali Vranishti crushed the satanic movement of the 'Ethniki Eteria' and restored tranquility to the villages of Dropull. At the same time, Hysen Hoxha, mayor of Gjirokastër, with extraordinary and courageous resistance, intervened and did not allow Ottoman authorities to harm the Orthodox minority brothers."

"November 1912."

"The Greek army of Karl Kostandini, having broken the Ottoman army along the borders of Allasonja and Grebena, rushed into the Korçë district and committed atrocities. First and foremost, it killed and slaughtered people, and it wiped out the village of Tukol, erasing it entirely from the face of the earth. Despite this, Karl Kostandini's army pushed deeper and deeper into Albanian lands. The proclamation of Albania's independence in Vlora did not please this army in the least. It tightened its siege of Ioannina, hoping to clear the way to Vlora in order to topple Ismail Qemali's flag. In these regions, Kostur, Florina, Konicë, Grebena, Kozani, Thessaloniki, the Christian population was uprooted by the Greeks and tortured simply for not speaking the Greek language; for speaking Albanian, their mother tongue."

"February 1913."

"Even before Ioannina had fallen into Greek hands, Çamëria, Saranda, Delvina, Gjirokastër, Tepelena, Libohova, Përmeti, Këlcyra had raised the flag of Albanian independence. As soon as Ioannina fell, the Greek army entered these regions, took down the Albanian flag, and declared these lands as Greek. When a relative of Karl Kostandini came as far as Përmet, the imperial Greek army had placed on the festival arches painted signs with the words: 'embros dhiadhoqi is Avlona qe is Verati (Berati)'. Meanwhile, the Great European Powers had not recognized Albania's independence and neither in Vlora nor in Berat was the Greek army welcomed."

"The imperial Greek army advanced as far as the borders of Skrapar and the slopes of Gllava. Korçë and Gjirokastër, with their surrounding regions, began to revolt. But the Greek army unleashed the most horrifying barbarities to suppress this revolt."

"March 1913 – March 1914."

"The Greek imperialists, in order to forcibly and coercively retain the districts of Korçë and Gjirokastër, left no stone unturned. First, they disarmed the people through unspeakable forms of violence. The people, united as never before regardless of faith or creed, struggled desperately to hide the remaining weapons left by the Ottoman army.

The poor people suffered greatly, striving at any cost to preserve these weapons to defend their honor, their lives, and their freedom from a new occupier—the Greek imperialism in its full extent."

"The satanic Greeks attempted to transport Greek families from the Mora region of Greece into the districts of Korçë and Gjirokastër. The Greeks carried out this operation because they had no trust in the indigenous Orthodox Albanian families. The International Border Commission was to pass through these transplanted families; they would cry out that they were Greeks and wished to remain under Greek rule..."

"However, this plan was exposed scandalously, to their great shame, because the people of Ersekë and Leskovik were ready to inform the commission of this great deceit of the Greek Megali Idea. As the commission had no means to deprive Albania of its rightful territories, it assigned these regions to Albania."

"During 1914, the prisons of Ioannina and of the Ionian Islands and Crete were filled with Orthodox and Muslim Albanians..."

Conclusion

Although there are more than thirty Bektashi tekkes in the Gjirokastër region, this article focuses on four of them: the Zalli Tekke, the Hajdëri (Shtuf) Tekke, the Mesi (Baba Zeneli) Tekke, and the Melan Tekke. These four tekkes continued their activities during the period of persecution that followed the closure of Bektashi tekkes. By maintaining the interest and support of Bektashi-affiliated communities, they also played a leading role in Albanian unity. Naturally, these four tekkes were

involved in and organized various activities among the Albanians even before the Greek occupation. Consequently, the article demonstrates that these four tekkes were influential not only during the Greek occupation but also in the period following it.

The history of Bektashism in the Gjirokastër region during the Greek occupation of 1913–1916 demonstrates the inseparable relationship between religious institutions, national identity, and resistance in southern Albania. The Bektashi tekkes functioned not only as centers of spiritual life but also as hubs of cultural preservation, patriotic organization, and social solidarity. Through the activities of figures such as Baba Selimi, Baba Ali Tomorri, and other clerics, these institutions fostered the protection of Albanian language, education, and national consciousness, particularly in times of political instability and foreign intervention.

The occupation period revealed the vulnerability of these religious centers to violence and destruction, as evidenced by the devastation of the Zalli Tekke and the persecution of clerics and believers. Nevertheless, the rapid rebuilding of tekkes and the continued activity of their leaders illustrate the resilience of the Bektashi community and its supporters. The diary and correspondence of Baba Ali further enrich this historical narrative, offering firsthand testimony of occupation policies, population suffering, and ideological resistance grounded in both faith and patriotism.

Ultimately, the events analyzed in this study highlight the broader historical role of Bektashism as a mediator between spiritual devotion and national responsibility. The endurance of its institutions and leaders under adverse conditions underscores their contribution to the preservation of collective memory and national identity in Albania. This legacy remains significant for understanding both religious history and the socio-political development of the region.

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