


<p>Albania and the Albanians in the German Travel Literature</p>		<p>Literary and Cultural Studies</p> <p>Keywords: Albania, Albanians, German travel literature.</p>
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The data about Albania and Albanians in the travel literature date back to the sixteenth century with Arnold von Harff, who made a glossary of some words when passing through Albania. These data continued in the travel literature over the following centuries and finished in the XX century. Aspects, which describe the Albanian world, may be listed as follows: description of the nature, description of Albanian towns and villages, description of the Albanian character, and physiognomy of the Albanians. These include either clichés or realistic views. Another aspect is the description of customs, customary law, daily life, family, marriage, taboos, etc. Another aspect is the description of religion and superstition among Albanians. As a last aspect, I can mention here the descriptions and portraits of politicians, as well as descriptions of historical events.</p>		

INTRODUCTION

Albanians and Albania in the German artistic literature have been present since the early period, but I will write here¹ about the presence of Albanians and Albania in one specific literary genre, that is, travel literature. The data about Albania and Albanians in the travel literature date back to the sixteenth century with Arnold von Harff, who made a glossary of some words when passing through Albania. These data continued in the travel literature over the following centuries and finished in the XX century. But here, I will primarily focus on the period of the first half of the XX century because this period has many works of this genre. These works portray the Albanian world in various ways, with the authors emphasizing specific areas. Aspects, which describe the Albanian world, may be listed as follows:

- Description of the nature. Here I mean Albanian mountains, fields, relief, etc.
- Description of Albanian cities, small towns, and villages. These descriptions are either positive or negative.
- The text includes descriptions of the Albanian character and the physical appearance of Albanians. These include either clichés or realistic views of the authors.

Another aspect is the description of customs, customary law, daily life, family, marriage, taboos, etc. As an example, I can mention here the works of Baron Franz Nopcsa.

- Another aspect is the description of religions and faith and superstition among Albanians. As an example, I will mention here another work again, titled "Religious Outlook, Habits and Customs of Malcia e Madhe"²

¹ Ilir Marlekaj translated this article from Albanian into English, for which I am deeply grateful.

² Franc Nopça, *Pikëpamje fetare, doket dhe zakonet e Malcisë së Madhe*. Me disa veçanti nga krahinat e Zadrimës dhe nga Shkodra. Përkthyer nga Dr. Mihal Zallari. Përgaditja për botim dhe redaktimi: Dr. Edmond Malaj. Tiranë: Eneas 2012.

- Lastly, I would like to highlight the descriptions and portraits of politicians, as well as the accounts of historical events, which are found in Maria Amelie von Godin's book titled "From the New Albania—Political and Cultural-Historical Layout" (*Aus dem neuen Albanien: politische und kulturhistorische Skizzen*), published in 1913³

THE AUTHORS AND THEIR WORKS

Let me start with 1893, with the work of the German author Kurt Hassert, "Traveling Through Montenegro." Information About the Country and the People" (*Reise durch Montenegro nebst Bemerkungen über Land und Leute*), which provides data for the Albanians of the Northwest Territories, especially about the city of Shkodra. I will focus a bit on this work to give some information about Shkodra. Hassert, for the "Paris of the Albanians," as he calls Shkodra, had heard a lot during his travels in Montenegro, but when he arrived there through Buna, his disappointment was immense.

Dirty houses, narrow and dark streets, and a bazaar composed of two thousand stores (which, in fact, were barracks that were constructed in a simple way) and that could be reached by passing the Buna River via a bridge of 250 steps long that swayed, the entrance of which was guarded by Turkish soldiers (who could be seen everywhere in the city) and who would check the documents of those entering the city⁴, appeared before his eyes instead of a city with a beautiful oriental-Turkish view. This area enjoyed a vibrant movement, and although there were shops also inside the city, everything there was monotonous. When the author came to town, to his surprise, he saw on one side Western European-style homes, located in a broad way, while just a little distant from this was the Mohammedan quarter with narrow winding streets, high yard fence walls, and large wooden gates.⁵

Another characteristic, which caught the eye of the author, was also the numerous cemeteries located here and there, without any order, sometimes around a mosque, sometimes around a school, but sometimes also on the side of the roads. Surprisingly, during the cool evening hours in the city, the author also noticed Mohammedan women coming out of their houses, accompanied by eunuchs, who walked stately.⁶ Hassert also mentioned the armed Albanian highlanders who would visit the city and shoot any enemy they encountered without mercy, showing no concern for their own safety.⁷

³ Amelie von Godin, *Aus dem neuen Albanien: politische und kulturhistorische Skizzen*. - Wien 1913.

⁴ Kurt Hassert, *Reise durch Montenegro nebst Bemerkungen über Land und Leute*. Mit 30 Abbildungen nach den Aufnahmen des Verfassers und einer Karte. Wien, Pest, Leipzig: Harleben 1893, p. 218.

⁵ Ibid, p. 220.

⁶ Ibid, p.

⁷ Ibid, p. 221.

In addition to that, I can mention the work of author Heinrich Gelzer, “*From the Holy Mountain and from Macedonia.*” (*Vom heiligen Berge und aus Makedonien*)⁸ The travel might have taken place around 1902. Paul Siebertz is another author who wrote about Albania. His work entitled “*Albania and the Albanians: Portraits of Characters and Landscapes*” (*Albanien und die Albanesen: Landschafts- und Charakterbilder*)⁹ was published in 1910. Concerning 1913, I may individualize as titles the works of Hugo Grothe, “*Through Albania and Montenegro*” (*Durch Albanien und Montenegro*)¹⁰ and the work of Otto von Gerstner, “Albania” (*Albanien*).¹¹

The book titled “*The Siege of Shkodra (from 10 October 1912 until 22 April 1913)*” (*Die Belagerung von Skutari (10. Oktober 1912 bis 22. April)*)¹², which is a diary of Hortense von Zambaur, wife of Adolph Ritter von Zambaur, Consul General of Austria-Hungary in Shkodra) is worth mentioning here, mainly as an edition of 1914. This diary was about the events during the siege of Shkodra, from October 1912 until the first half of 1913, when the siege of Shkodra by Montenegrin troops also ended. The book, which was written in diary style because it was really a diary of the author, described the events during the months when Shkodra was surrounded by Montenegrin forces. The diary started on 10 October 1912 and continued until 22 April 1913. It provides comprehensive data regarding both the higher echelons of society and the rulers of Shkodra, as well as the city's population, who were experiencing famine and facing the risk of bombing from Montenegrin artillery during those months. The author provides evidence of people dying of hunger in the streets.

From 1920 to 1929, we have a number of other works, among which we can mention the works of Baron Franz von Nopcsa¹³, where he described his travels and memories. Moreover, beside those aspects, Nopcsa also provided complete studies related to daily life, customs, history of Albanians, especially the northern highlanders. As for the works of Nopcsa, the news for the readers is that the book titled, “*Religious Outlook, Habits and Customs of the Malcia e Madhe. Some Particularities of the Regions of Shkodra and Zadrima*”¹⁴, has come out of print in the year 2012. His other book, titled “*Tribes of the Northern Albania Highlands and their Customary Law*”¹⁵ has been printed a year later.

⁸ Heinrich Gelzer, *Vom heiligen Berge und aus Makedonien: Reisebilder aus den Athosklöstern und dem Insurrektionsgebiet*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1904.

⁹ Paul Siebertz, *Albanien und die Albanesen: Landschafts- und Charakterbilder*. Wien, 1910.

¹⁰ Hugo Grothe, *Durch Albanien und Montenegro*. München: Martin Mörike 1913.

¹¹ Otto von Gerstner, *Albanien*. Wien [u.a.]: Braumüller, Univ. Buch, 1913.

¹² *Die Belagerung von Skutari (10. Oktober 1912 bis 22. April)* Ein Tagebuch von Hortense von Zambaur, Gemahlin des k. u. k. Generalkonsuls in Skutari, Adolf Ritter von Zambaur. Berlin: Stilke 1914, p. 3. (Hereinafter quoted as: Zambaur).

¹³ F. Nopcsa, *Albanien: Bauten, Trachten und Geräte Nordalbaniens* / Franz Baron Nopcsa. - Berlin [u.a.]: de Gruyter, 1925. And Nopcsa, Franz: *Reisen in den Balkan: die Lebenserinnerungen des Franz Baron Nopcsa* / eineleitet, hrsg. u. mit Anhang versehen von Robert Elsie. -Prishtina: Dukagjini, 2001.

¹⁴ Franz Nopcsa, *Pikëpamje fetare, doket dhe zakonet e Malcisë së Madhe*.

¹⁵ Franc Nopça, *Fiset e Malësisë së Shqipërisë Veriore dhe e Drejta Zakonore e tyre*. Përkthyer nga Dr. Mihallaq Zallari. Përgaditja për botim dhe redaktimi: Akad. Asoc Marenglen Verli dhe Dr. Edmond Malaj. Tiranë: Eneas 2013.

From 1920 to 1929, we have several other works, among which we can mention the works of Baron Franz von Nopcsa.¹⁶ (*Kreuz und quer durch den slawischen Süden: Von Marburg bis Monastir und von Belgrad bis Buccari – Krainer Tage*), which provides data for the provinces of Dibra and Manastir.

With respect to 1930, we can finally mention the travel description of the author Friedrich Markgraf, titled, “The Mountains of Albania” (*In Albanien Bergen*). Dr. Friedrich Markgraf was private lecturer at the University of Berlin, and assistant in the Botanical Museum of Berlin-Dahlem. He came to Albania for scientific research regarding botanical flora of Albania.¹⁷ He traveled to the Albanian lands in 1924 and 1928. In his book, he describes many regions of Albania, starting with Durres and Tirana, and continuing with the provinces of North and South, down to Korça.

Friedrich Markgraf is an attentive observer, and his descriptions are very detailed. His work contains data from all areas, including descriptions of cities and villages. There is a detailed description of the people’s appearance along with their costumes, with a lot of information on the habits and mentality of Albanians during that period. Finally, the author, who was accompanied by a person named Dr. Pieper, left Albania by ferry, departing from Durres. When departing from the Durres coast, as he himself said, even though he was happy that he was returning home, he was still watching with silent sadness the signs of life of the country, where he had spent four burdensome but happy months¹⁸, disappearing from sight.

Out of his many descriptions, we are providing here an excerpt with data about Tirana of the 30s of the last century: “Its numerous green gardens have hidden the homes for so long that we came directly in front of them. Tirana is distinguished from other Balkan cities because of its many gardens. Only in the commercial center of this city are the houses built very close to each other, partially two-story ones. Additionally, every house is set apart, amid greenery. The yard is separated from the alleys with many curves by a high wall of clay blocks, which is covered by tiles above. This wall is interrupted by a tightly closed wooden gate, which has a knocker hanging on it.”¹⁹

I am now concluding my article on German travel literature regarding Albanians and Albania, hoping to have the opportunity to expand these studies in the future with additional data and information, and to publish it as a monograph.

¹⁶ Hermann Wendel, *Kreuz und quer durch den slawischen Süden: Von Marburg bis Monastir and Von Belgrad bis Buccari – Krainer Tage*. Frankfurt a. Main: Frankfurter Societätsdruckerei 1922.

¹⁷ Friedrich Markgraf, *In Albanien Bergen*. Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder 1930, p. VII.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 240.

¹⁹ „Ihre grünen vielen Baumgärten haben die Häuser so lange versteckt, bis wir mitten davor sind. Tirana hat nämlich vor anderen Balkanstädten den Vorzug, viele Gärten zu besitzen. Nur im Mittelpunkt der Handelsstadt, sind die Häuser eng aneinander gebaut, zum Teil zweistöckig; sonst liegt jedes Haus abgesondert im Grünen. Von der winkligen Gasse trennt das Grundstück eine Hohe Mauer aus Lehmklötzen, oben mit Dachziegeln, ununterbrochen von einem streng verschlossenen Holztor mit Klopfer.“ *Ibid*, p. 3.

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