



## Research Article

# The Gallipoli War in Albanian cultural memory: Press, scholarship, school textbooks, and folk songs

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### Abstract

One of the well-known wars that took place during the period of the First World War is the War of Çanakkale, also known in the literature as the Gallipoli War. As is widely known, this war was fought between the Entente Powers on one side and the Ottoman Empire, supported by the Triple Alliance, on the other. In this war, on both sides, several different peoples from various countries of the world also took part. Among the peoples who responded to the call to fight were those from the Balkans, particularly the peoples who were part of the Ottoman Empire. Albanians, as a Balkan people and as a people who were part of the Ottoman Empire until 1912, were among those who responded in considerable numbers to the call for this war. Despite the fact that more than 100 years have passed since this event took place, it is still present in the memory of Albanians. Based on the above, through this presentation we aim to highlight how this war is perceived today among Albanians, specifically how it was presented in the press of the time, how it is treated today by Albanian scholars, how this event has been preserved in folkloric aspects, whether it is presented in Albanian history school textbooks, and so on.

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## Introduction

One of the important wars of global character that took place during the period of the First World War is undoubtedly the War of Çanakkale, also known as the Gallipoli War. The Ottoman Empire, together with Austria-Hungary and Germany on one side, were fighting against Britain, France, and Russia, along with other forces from various states that had come to assist both sides.

Many peoples from different parts of the world became part of this significant war. From the European continent as well, several peoples joined this war on both sides. Among the many European peoples who participated in this war, Albanians also took part on the side of the Ottoman Empire. This event, of global significance and which occurred more than a century ago, has been preserved in the memory of the Albanian people, particularly through folklore.

This event has also drawn the attention of Albanian scholars, both those who lived in the past and those who currently live in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Montenegro.

Through this written contribution, our aim is to present the attention that the Albanian press of the time gave to this war, the positions of Albanian scholars regarding this event, how this war has been treated from the perspective of folklore, and the extent to which it has been presented in school history textbooks.

The treatment of this topic includes several dimensions:

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- First, the aspect of presenting this war in the Albanian press of the time;
- Second, the scholarly aspect, where the views of our scholars expressed in their writings are presented;
- Third, the dimension of how this war is addressed in Albanian history school textbooks, with particular emphasis on the textbooks used by Albanian students in Albania and Kosovo; and
- Fourth, the folkloric dimension, where emphasis is placed on the treatment of this war through folk songs, some of which are still sung among our people today.

### The Causes of the Development of the War of Çanakkale

Before the First World War, the warring states had calculated that the Ottoman Empire would remain neutral. However, in the spring of 1914, two issues troubled the Ottoman state and inevitably pushed the country to align itself with the Triple Alliance in the First World War. The first was that the Aegean islands had been occupied by Greece during the Balkan Wars, and the second was Russia's attempts to bring the historical straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles) under its control. In this regard, Russia pressured the British and French governments to place Istanbul and the straits under their control.<sup>3</sup>

The Allied states sought to bring the war to an earlier end by subduing one of Germany's allies, namely the Ottoman Empire. They believed that by capturing Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, and bringing the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles straits under their control, they would secure a safe supply route of food and military provisions for Russia. Therefore, they chose the Dardanelles Strait as their first target.<sup>4</sup>

The plan envisaged the capture of Istanbul by passing through the Dardanelles Strait. Large-scale naval attacks, carried out by British and French ships, began in February 1915. Particularly as a result of the bombardments from 19 February to 25 February 1915, the commander of the Ottoman troops of the Fortified Zone, Cevat Çobanlı, gave the order to withdraw. The largest attack took place on 18 March 1915. However, when the ships of the Entente fleet struck the mines that the Ottoman army had previously placed in the strait, the fleet suffered considerable losses and was forced to abandon the naval operation.<sup>5</sup>

When the Entente Powers realized that they could not reach Istanbul by sea, they decided to carry out a land operation and landed at five points in the south of the Gallipoli Peninsula at dawn on 25 April 1915. However, the Entente Powers failed to capture the Gallipoli Peninsula due to the strategic defense of the Ottoman forces, which were also supported by the forces of the Triple Alliance. After these attempts, the Entente forces carried out a third landing at Suvla Bay on 6 August 1915 in order to support the forces on the coast. The general assaults carried out by the British and ANZAC<sup>6</sup> forces were unable to break through the Ottoman defenses. Following all these developments, the British, ANZAC, and French forces withdrew from the Gallipoli Peninsula in December 1915.<sup>7</sup>

According to one source, the Allied forces lost 213,980 soldiers, while the Ottomans and their allies lost around 120,000 soldiers. According to another source, the Ottoman forces lost about 200,000 soldiers, including 55,000 martyrs, 100,000 wounded, 21,500 who died from diseases, and 10,000 missing, while the losses of the Entente forces were approximately 330,000, including 55,000 dead, with the others being wounded or captured.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Semiz, Y. (2003). 18 Mart 1915 Çanakkale Deniz Savaşı: Sebepleri, gelişimi ve sonuçları (The Naval Battle of Çanakkale on 18 March 1915: Causes, development, and consequences). *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (13), 221–236.

<sup>4</sup> Yetişgin, M. (2015). Çanakkale savaşları: Nedenleri, sorumlusu ve önemine dair yaklaşımlar (The Gallipoli wars: Approaches to their causes, responsibility, and significance). *Çanakkale Araştırmaları Türk Yılığ*, 13(18), 1–35.

<sup>5</sup> Şahin, E. (2009). Kronolojik Çanakkale savaşları tarihi (3 Kasım 1914–9 Ocak 1916) (Chronological history of the Gallipoli Wars, 3 November 1914–9 January 1916). *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 117.

<sup>6</sup> This name refers to the soldiers from Australia and New Zealand who participated in this war.

<sup>7</sup> Şahin, E. (2009). Kronolojik Çanakkale savaşları tarihi (3 Kasım 1914–9 Ocak 1916) (Chronological history of the Gallipoli Wars, 3 November 1914–9 January 1916). *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 130.

<sup>8</sup> Yetişgin, M. (2015). Çanakkale savaşları: Nedenleri, sorumlusu ve önemine dair yaklaşımlar (The Gallipoli wars: Approaches to their causes, responsibility, and significance). *Çanakkale Araştırmaları Türk Yılığ*, 13(18), 12.

### The Presentation of the War of Çanakkale in the Albanian Press of the Time

One of the Albanian newspapers of the time that was published in Shkodër and that reported on the War of Çanakkale was *Zani i Shkodrës*.<sup>9</sup> From a content perspective, it appears that the news in this newspaper concerning the Montenegrin occupying troops and some of their policies in Shkodër occupied a considerable amount of space.

Without going into a detailed analysis of the newspaper's content, we have focused only on those reports that presented the War of Çanakkale. It is among the Albanian newspapers of the time that reported most extensively on this war.

In the first issue of this newspaper, it was written about the losses suffered by the British in this war, and according to the newspaper, the total number of soldiers and officers killed exceeded thirty-eight thousand:

“According to the news of the fallen English soldiers, given by Minister Asquith in Parliament, the English have lost around Çanakkale, both on land and at sea, up to the first day of July, 496 officers killed, 1,134 wounded, 92 missing; 6,927 soldiers killed, 23,542 wounded, and 6,445 missing. In total, officers and soldiers: 38,536.”<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, one month later, this newspaper informed the Albanian-speaking reader that the allies, without specifying which allies were being referred to, were winning.<sup>11</sup>

The newspaper dated 5 August reported that, according to information received from the captain of the steamer *Rumeli* from Thessaloniki, who had seen at sea near Çanakkale ten steamships carrying thirty thousand French and British soldiers preparing to land near the hills of Çanakkale. Another report, according to a London newspaper, confirmed “that in these last days of the battles in Gallipoli the Turks have lost 10,000 men killed and wounded.”<sup>12</sup>

On 7 August, it was reported that fierce fighting was taking place in Çanakkale and that the French forces had pushed the front line forward.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Sir Hamilton is quoted as stating that the British forces and their allies had carried out surprise attacks in Çanakkale against the Ottoman troops, where they had achieved success.<sup>14</sup> In this regard, it was reported that the British and French forces had captured the Akçi Babu fortress. It was also reported, according to a notice published by the newspaper *Tribuna*, which was published in Rome, that Italy had reached an agreement with Britain, France, and Russia to act jointly in Çanakkale.<sup>15</sup> By mid-August, the news was dominated by the successes of the British and French forces together with their allies in Çanakkale.<sup>16</sup> “In Çanakkale”<sup>17</sup>, “Fighting in Gallipoli”<sup>18</sup>, “In Gallipoli”<sup>19</sup>, “Victories of the Allies in Çanakkale”<sup>20</sup>, “Losses and the Wounded in Çanakkale”<sup>21</sup>, “In Çanakkale”.<sup>22</sup>

For the month of September, the newspaper begins with information from London about this war, reporting on the land advances of the French against the Ottoman forces and their allies.<sup>23</sup> Also for the month of September, in almost every issue we encounter news related to Çanakkale. “In Çanakkale.”<sup>24</sup>, “New Operations in Gallipoli”<sup>25</sup>, “Victories of

<sup>9</sup> A political and social newspaper in the Albanian language, partly also in Serbian and Italian. It was published in Shkodër four times a week during the period of the second Montenegrin occupation, as a continuation of the newspaper *Besa shqiptare*. The first issue appeared on 29 July 1915 and it ceased publication within the same year after issue number 61. Fevziu, B. (2005). *Histori e shtypit shqiptar 1848–2005* (History of the Albanian press 1848–2005). Onufri, p. 165. The director of the newspaper was Dom Ndoc Nikaj.

<sup>10</sup> “Damet e Hinglizve n’Çanak Kalaa” (The Losses of the English in Çanakkale). (1915, July 29). *Zani i Shkodrës*, no. 89–1, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> “N’Çanak Kalaa” (In Çanakkale). (1915, August 3). *Zani i Shkodrës*, no. 92–4, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 5). No. 93–5, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 7). No. 94–6, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> “Luftime n’Çanak Kalaa” (Fighting in Çanakkale). (1915, August 12). *Zani i Shkodrës*, no. 96–8, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 14). No. 97–9, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 19). No. 99–11, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 21). No. 100–12, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 21). No. 100–12, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 24). No. 101–13, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 24). No. 101–13, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 26). No. 102–14, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, August 26). No. 102–14, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> “T’ndeshuna n’Çanak Kalaa” (Clashes in Çanakkale). (1915, September 2). *Zani i Shkodrës*, no. 105–17, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, September 4). No. 106–18, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Zani i Shkodrës*. (1915, September 9). No. 108–20, Shkodër, p. 3.

the Allies in Çanakkale”<sup>26</sup>, “The General Offensive in Çanakkale”<sup>27</sup>, “French News: Fighting in Çanakkale”<sup>28</sup>, “Strong Preparations for Çanakkale”<sup>29</sup>, “Italians Do Not Go to Çanakkale”<sup>30</sup>, “The Allied Powers in Gallipoli”<sup>31</sup>.

In the month of November, we find an article that explains how some states, due to debts they owed to the warring states, had sent soldiers to fight. In this case, they had sent soldiers against the Ottoman forces and their allies in Çanakkale, where according to the press, “many princes who were under tribute, although they had no obligation to help, voluntarily sent the best parts of their armies to Çanakkale.”<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, on 20 November, the newspaper reported on submarine warfare carried out by both sides in the Sea of Marmara.<sup>33</sup> After 20 November, the news in this newspaper spoke with even greater intensity about Çanakkale, such as: “Lord Kitchener on Gallipoli.”<sup>34</sup>, “War in Çanakkale”<sup>35</sup>, “In Çanakkale”<sup>36</sup>.

The last reports of this newspaper regarding the War of Çanakkale are dated 20 December, under the title “War in Çanakkale,” where it states:

“30 November and 1 December passed with heavy artillery fire from both sides. The French artillery caused great damage to the Turks. The weather, which had previously been very harsh, became milder during these last days.”<sup>37</sup> In the same issue of this newspaper, there is another report titled: “In Çanakkale, battles with bombs and dynamite are taking place.”<sup>38</sup>

### Albanian scholars on the War of Çanakkale

At the beginning of this subsection, it should be emphasized that this war and the participation of Albanians in it began to be mentioned by some Albanian scholars after the 1990s. In our view, particular attention was given to this event by Albanian researchers starting in 2015, when its 100th anniversary was being commemorated.

In 2015, one of the television stations in North Macedonia produced a documentary titled “Çanakalaja e shqiptarëve” (Çanakkale of the Albanians). In this documentary, as can also be seen from the title, the participation of Albanians in this war is addressed.<sup>39</sup> As far as we are aware, this is the first documentary film produced by Albanians that discusses the participation of Albanians in this war. In this documentary, scholars from North Macedonia speak, such as Prof. Dr. Nebi Dervishi and Prof. Dr. Skender Asani. The documentary also includes appearances by historians from Turkey, such as Ebubeker Sofuoğlu, who presents his views on the role of Albanians in this war.

In 2015, the scholar Nebi Dervishi also made a written contribution regarding the participation of Albanians in this war.<sup>40</sup>

From the documentary film, from published writings, and from various discussions conducted about this war and the role of Albanians in it, one question that arises is common: *What prompted Albanians to respond in such a massive way to the call to fight in 1915 in Çanakkale, when it is known that the Ottoman Empire had withdrawn from these lands in 1912?* It should be clarified that the majority of Albanian territories, after the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire, fell

<sup>26</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, September 11). No. 109–21, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, September 14). No. 110–22, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, September 16). No. 111–23, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, September 23). No. 114–26, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, September 25). No. 115–27, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, September 25). No. 115–27, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, November 13). No. 137–49, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, November 20). No. 140–52, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, November 20). No. 143–55, Shkodër, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, December 5). No. 144–56, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, December 11). No. 145–57, Shkodër, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, December 20). No. 147–59, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Zani i Shkodrës. (1915, December 20). No. 147–59, Shkodër, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> TV Dokumentar. (2015, December 11). *Çanakalaja e shqiptarëve* (Çanakkale of the Albanians) [Documentary, Part 1]. National Television Alsat M. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQVil8wL9XITV> Dokumentar. (2015, December 11). *Çanakalaja e shqiptarëve* (Çanakkale of the Albanians) [Documentary, Part 2]. National Television Alsat M. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKBpk3lIteY>

<sup>40</sup> Dervishi, N. (2014). Pjesëmarrja e shqiptarëve në luftën e Çanakalësë (24 prill – 8 gusht 1915) (The participation of Albanians in the War of Çanakkale, 24 April – 8 August 1915). In *Lufta e Parë Botërore 1914–1918* (Scientific conference, 11 September 2014) (pp. 104–113). ITSHKSH, Shkup.

under Serbian and Montenegrin occupation.<sup>41</sup> This occupation was also accompanied by various massacres against the local population, a part of which was forced to leave their lands and settle mainly in what was then Turkey.

In this regard, based on our research conducted so far, it appears that Albanian scholars hold several viewpoints concerning the departure of Albanians to this war.

The first view states that they were mobilized by Serbian forces, with the aim of carrying out the ethnic cleansing of the country. This view is supported by the Albanian scholar from North Macedonia, Prof. Dr. Nebi Dervishi.<sup>42</sup> Besides this scholar believes that around 35,000 Albanians took part in the Battle of Çanakkale.<sup>43</sup>

The scholar Prof. Dr. Skender Asani, also from North Macedonia, believes that Albanians were forced to be mobilized by the Serbs for their interests during this period, and as a better alternative between mobilization for the Serbian and the Ottoman forces, Albanians chose mobilization to assist the Ottoman forces; therefore, they were mobilized in large numbers for the Battle of Çanakkale.<sup>44</sup> Also, in presenting this war and the role of Albanians in this period, we have the contribution of the scholar Prof. Dr. Ardian Muhaj from Albania, who writes that many Albanian youths were voluntarily mobilized within the Ottoman forces in this war, because they did not wish to be mobilized into the Serbian forces that were fighting against the Austro-Hungarian forces<sup>45</sup> And, as is known, the Austro-Hungarian forces were allies of the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Çanakkale and at the same time were also allies of the Albanians. However, the scholar Prof. Dr. Ardian Muhaj is of the opinion that the voluntary participation of Albanians in this war created space for Albanians in Kosovo to count on the support of the new Turkish state, whose foundations were in fact being laid during this war.<sup>46</sup>

Prof. Dr. Hasan Bello, a scholar from Albania specialized in Albanian–Turkish relations during the years 1912–1939, believes that one of the reasons for the voluntary mobilization of Albanians in this war was the response to the call of the Sheikh-ul-Islam of that period for a holy war during those years. This call came as a result of the fatwa proclaimed by the Sheikh-ul-Islam on 23 November 1914.<sup>47</sup> This view suggests that, despite the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from Albanian territories in 1912, the voice of the Sheikh-ul-Islam and other leaders of the Ottoman Empire continued to be heard by a considerable part of the Albanian population.

### **The presentation of the Battle of Çanakkale in history school textbooks**

In this regard, we have consulted several history textbooks from which Albanian students in Albania learn, as well as Albanian-language history textbooks used in primary and secondary schools in Kosovo.

In Albania, we examined several history textbooks used in secondary schools. In those textbooks, nothing is written about this event.<sup>48</sup>

As for the Albanian-language history textbooks in Kosovo, we have consulted the textbooks of lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools. From the eighth grade to the twelfth grade, the history textbooks in the Albanian language in Kosovo teach about the First World War. In order to make this clearer, we present those school textbooks of Kosovo in which the First World War is discussed.

<sup>41</sup> Fitim Rifati, Kosovo during the First World War 1914–1918, Institute of History, Prishtina, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> (shih nga 9: 35 min).TV Dokumentar, “Çanakkalaja e shqiptarëve”, National Television Alsat M, Pjesa e pare, 11 Dec 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQVi8wL9XI>, (hulumtuar, më 20 janar 2020).

<sup>43</sup> (see from 19:10 min). TV Documentary, “Çanakkalaja e shqiptarëve” (Çanakkale of the Albanians), National Television Alsat M, Part One, 11 Dec 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQVi8wL9XI>, (accessed 20 January 2020).

<sup>44</sup> (see from 16:40 min). TV Documentary, “Çanakkalaja e shqiptarëve” (Çanakkale of the Albanians), National Television Alsat M, Part One, 11 Dec 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQVi8wL9XI>, (accessed 20 January 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Ardian Muhaj, “The Battle of Çanakkale and the Complex Albanian and International Context,” <https://kulturatv.com/2020/03/18/beteja-e-canakalese-dhe-konteksti-i-nderlikuar-shqiptar-e-nderkombetar/>, (accessed 20 April 2020).

<sup>46</sup> Ardian Muhaj, “The Battle of Çanakkale and the Complex Albanian and International Context,” <https://kulturatv.com/2020/03/18/beteja-e-canakalese-dhe-konteksti-i-nderlikuar-shqiptar-e-nderkombetar/>, (accessed 20 April 2020).

<sup>47</sup> Hasan Bello, Albanian–Turkish Relations 1912–1939, QSA-IH, Tirana, 2015, pp. 114–115.

<sup>48</sup> Muzafer Korkuti, Petrika Thëngjilli, Gazmend Shpuza, Fatmira Rama, Xhelal Gjecovi, Dilaver Sadikaj, Ana Lalaj, History of the Albanian People 12, School Book Publishing House, Tirana, 2000, pp. 167–183; Beqir Meta, Muharrem Dezhgju, Xhevair Lleshi, History of the Albanian People 12 (For the Gymnasium with Social and General Orientation), UEGEN Publishing House, Tirana, 2009, pp. 147–196; Menduh Derguti, Ledia Dushku, Ferit Duka, Sonila Boçi, History 11, Alba Publishing House, Tirana, 2017, pp. 90–119; Petrit Nathanaili, Bashkim Vrekaj, Fatmiroshe Xhemalaj, Ilirjana Kaceli, Vojsava Kumbulla, History 11, Filara Publishing House, Tirana, 2020, pp. 88–125.

In the history textbook of the eighth grade, Chapter 10 is titled: “The First World War.”<sup>49</sup> In the history textbook of the tenth grade, Chapter 7 is titled: “The First World War and the October Revolution.”<sup>50</sup> In the history textbook of the eleventh grade, Chapter 6 is titled: “The First World War.”<sup>51</sup> In the history textbook of the twelfth grade, there are several titles in which the First World War, its developments, and its consequences are discussed.<sup>52</sup>

Also in the Albanian-language history textbooks in Kosovo, although the First World War and its consequences are discussed, the Battle of Çanakkale, as one of the bloodiest battles of this period and with massive participation of Albanians, is not mentioned at all.

In this regard, we contacted the scholar from Tirana, Dr. Ilirijana Kaceli, who is a specialist in Albanian–Turkish relations during the years 1912–1939 and a co-author of a history school textbook in Albania that is still in use today, in order to obtain her opinion on whether the Battle of Çanakkale should also be included in the history textbooks of Albania and Kosovo. She is of the opinion that it should, considering the historical and geopolitical importance of this war.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Battle of Çanakkale in Albanian folk songs**

After the Ottoman Empire withdrew from the Balkans, most Albanian lands remained outside the borders of the Albanian state and under Serbian-Montenegrin occupation. The first thing the new regime wanted to do was to empty the Albanian lands and begin a massive ethnic cleansing. By torturing people, they forced them to migrate to various places outside the Albanian territories. People who did not want to migrate and leave their lands began to go into the mountains, and thus the kachak movement began, which had notable activity in several regions of Kosovo.

The regime wanted to suppress this movement, and in order to achieve this it aimed to distance people from their past; therefore it began to create a gap between the elite and the broader masses.

Albanians used more suitable ways to keep their past and traditions alive, and these paths passed through folklore. They continued to sing folk songs. Among these folk songs is the one sung by our rhapsodists with the theme of Çanakkale.

The Albanian language began to be written relatively late, therefore it was preserved more as a spoken language. For this reason, people began to attach importance to folk songs, epic poetry, and stories. Folk songs preserved the history of events, and this can be observed from the songs that have been sung. For example, there are hundreds of folk songs, such as Sulltan Mahmuti, Qemal Pasha, Oso Kuka, Çanak Kalaja, the League of Prizren, etc., which relate to a historical event or to a protagonist. For this reason, people tried to remember their past through folk songs.

Folk songs about Çanakkale were first encountered after the 1920s. People who had been in the Battle of Çanakkale, those who survived this war, when returning to their homeland brought their memories with them. Many young people who survived this war, when they returned to their homes, spoke about what had happened, and naturally there were songs and melodies sung there that they brought with them.

Many folk songs were sung about the war in Çanakkale, while the most well-known version is the song “Çanak Kalaja.” According to the information we have gathered, Habib Kukiqi was the first to sing this song. There are several rhapsodists who say this. According to Hysen Shala,<sup>54</sup> Habib Kukiqi was a well-known rhapsodist who composed and sang many songs, among which was also the folk song about Çanakkale. Another well-known rhapsodist who heard this song from Habib Kukiqi and later sang it in many places was Isuf Kadishani (1884–1986), otherwise also known as Cuf Kadishani.

Since Habib Kukiqi was able to read and write, he wrote the lyrics of songs inspired by many works. Perhaps he wrote the words of this song based on what he had heard from people who participated in this war. Another possibility is that

<sup>49</sup> Fehmi Rexhepi, Frashër Demaj, History 8, School Book Publishing House “Libri Shkollor”, Prishtina, 2015, pp. 145–165.

<sup>50</sup> Jusuf Bajraktari, Fehmi Rexhepi, Frashër Demaj, History 10 (Gymnasium of Mathematics and Informatics – Gymnasium of Natural Sciences), School Book Publishing House “Libri Shkollor”, Prishtina, 2007, pp. 89–98.

<sup>51</sup> Fehmi Rexhepi, Frashër Demaj, History 11 (Language Gymnasium), School Book Publishing House “Libri Shkollor”, Prishtina, 2004, pp. 81–87.

<sup>52</sup> Jusuf Bajraktari, Arbër Salihu, History 12 (General Gymnasium), School Book Publishing House “Libri Shkollor”, Prishtina, 2005, pp. 168–185.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Dr. Ilirijana Kaceli, Prishtina, 17 June 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with the rhapsodist Hysen Shala, Drenas, 24 March 2020.

Albanian soldiers may have written it during the war in Çanakkale. The music and style of singing belong entirely to the region of Kosovo. This can be understood later when we hear the first recorded version. Unfortunately, we do not have any recordings from Habib Kukiqi or from Cuf Kadishani, but it was Sali (1919–1987) and Feriz Krasniqi (1924–1999) who learned it from Cuf Kadishani and made this folk song known to the wider public.

Since artists of that time worked under difficult conditions, they always memorized the lyrics of songs, and each artist knew hundreds of songs by heart. According to Hysen Shala, Cuf Kadishani learned the folk songs Çana Kalaja as well as Oso Kuka from Habib Kukiqi while accompanying him at weddings and gatherings.

Perhaps it was only these songs that helped Albanian fighters, who had fled from the regime of that time and had taken refuge in the mountains, to forget the difficult conditions. Among these fighters there were also well-known rhapsodists who sang. The meeting places of people and fighters were the odas, where folk songs were sung.

This version of the song has been performed by many artists so far. The second version is the folk song Çanakkale translated from Turkish. The second version began to be sung much later.

For a closer look and a comparison between the two versions, one stanza from both songs will be presented together with the musical notes:

In Çanakkale inside, I set out from Istanbul. Oh, blessed mother, where are you sending me, towards the enemy, Oh, for all our young men, aman.<sup>55</sup>

Çanak Kalaja

Figure 1. Musical notation and lyrics of the Kosovo folk song “Çanak Kalaja”<sup>56</sup>

The second version.

In Çanakkale inside, the mirror of the bazaar. Oh brother, I am going towards the enemy, lament for all our youth, alas.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Muharrem Gashi, Salih and Feriz Krasniqi, Folk Songs II, published by “Faik Konica”, Prishtina, 2007, p. 98.

<sup>56</sup> Muharrem Gashi, Salih and Feriz Krasniqi, Folk Songs II, published by “Faik Konica”, Prishtina, 2007, p. 97.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1UsgnrJu-s> (accessed 10 March 2020).

## Çanakkale İçinde

do re re re do si do la sol la la si do la la sol sol

5  
la la la la sol lab sol fa mi fa mi fa sol lab sol fa mi

8  
re fi mi fa sol fa mi sol mi mi re re

**Figure 2.** Musical notation of the Turkish version of the song “Çanakkale İçinde”<sup>58</sup>

As can be seen from these two examples, the singing and the music show that they are two different folk songs, but there are still similarities. The first version is usually sung in the regions of Kosovo, and the structure of the song belongs to those regions.

The second version, as is known, is sung in Turkey. The second version is more common among Albanians living in Turkey. The second version is also used in the documentary mentioned above.

The first version of the folk song Çanakala has been performed by many rhapsodists since the 1920s. It has remained a very well-known folk song that continues to be performed. We will mention some of them. The performance by Sali and Feriz Krasniqi, which is the first recorded version and the most well-known one. Likewise, today we also have the performance of this song by the Bajra brothers.<sup>59</sup>, followed by the performance of Jashar and Idajet Sejdiu.<sup>60</sup>

Although more than 100 years have passed since this event, this war still exists in the folkloric tradition among Albanians. In our opinion, the reason why this war still exists in the memory of Albanians is that they did not see these songs merely as an art form; for them, this was a way to preserve their past and their history.

In history books, not only is there a lack of information about the Battle of Çanakkale, but there is also little information about other events. For this reason, we usually learn about them from folk songs.

Thus, if for this event we have not had written contributions from our scholars for more than a century, the people have managed to preserve this event in their memory only thanks to the spiritual connection nourished through art:

“Until now in Kosovo, folklore and national tradition, despite its shortcomings, has been more objective than the so-called ‘official science’, because historiography in most cases was in the service of the victor, or even of orientations and positions manipulated in various forms and ways. Historical memory successfully resisted these pressures; if not to the extent that it should have, it still remained in a form that can be used, of course with caution and critical scrutiny, complementing the horizon of the science of history in both synchrony and diachrony. Moreover, historical memory

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.kolaynota.com/canakkale-icinde-do-re-mi-notalari/>, (accessed 10 March 2020).

<sup>59</sup> “Vellezerit Bajra Cane kalaja prej Stambolli”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4E88oqoeM9o> (accessed 10 March 2020).

<sup>60</sup> “Jashar & Idajet Sejdiu – Canekala,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Q7RIU5YRc> (accessed 10 March 2020).

had and still has a number of its own characteristics that historians had and must take into consideration.”<sup>61</sup> – among other things, concludes the researcher Izber Hoti.

### Conclusion

The Battle of Çanakkale was among the bloodiest battles during the First World War. The participation of Albanians was undoubtedly massive, and they played an important role in it.

Albanians, understandably only a small segment, were first informed about the events of this war through the press of the time. The aforementioned newspaper, which we have examined in this study, refers to this war as the Battle of Çanakkale or Gallipoli. In almost every issue of this newspaper there are news reports about this war. It is clearly observed that the news related to the advances of the British, French, and Russian forces dominate in this newspaper. Nevertheless, the presence of at least one news item about this war in every issue, and in some cases even two news items in a single issue, indicates that this newspaper paid attention to this event. The news published in this newspaper about this event were also taken from British, French, Italian, Bulgarian, and other newspapers. It should be emphasized that in this newspaper, despite the considerable participation of Albanians in the Battle of Çanakkale, Albanians are not mentioned.

Albanian historians are convinced that the participation of Albanians in the Battle of Çanakkale has not been sufficiently addressed. Albanians in this war were mainly under the command of the 19th Division of the Turkish army, which was led by Mustafa Kemal.

The main debate among Albanian historians concerns what prompted Albanians to mobilize massively for this war, considering that the Ottoman forces had withdrawn from these territories in 1912. In this regard, according to our research so far, three views dominate:

- The first is that Albanians were forcibly mobilized by the Serbs, who had occupied most of the lands where Albanians lived and aimed at the ethnic cleansing of these regions.
- The second is that they did not want to be mobilized with the Serbian forces against the Austro-Hungarian forces. A considerable part of the Albanian lands had been occupied by the Serbs, and Albanians did not want to mobilize with Serbian forces, because the Serbian forces were fighting against the Austro-Hungarian forces.
- The third is that they were massively mobilized as a result of the long presence of the Ottoman Empire in these territories. Thus, they responded to the call of the Sheikh-ul-Islam for a holy war. In a certain way, they felt themselves to be citizens of this empire, despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire had withdrawn from these lands.

As for the Albanian-language history textbooks, both in Albania and in Kosovo, it must be said that this war is not mentioned at all. In our opinion, considering the historical importance of this war and the massive participation of Albanians in it, this event should at least have a place in a few lines within some teaching unit when discussing these years.

### Summary

One of the wars that happened between 1915-1916 is the Battle of Çanakkale, which is also known as the Battle of Gallipoli. As it is known, in this war on one side were England, France, Russia, and on the other side there were the Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungary, and Germany. One of the most important facts for our research is that many people of different nationalities from different countries of the world participated voluntarily in this war on the side of the Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungary, and Germany. Among the volunteers who responded positively to the call and participated in this war were the peoples of the Balkans, especially from places that were part of the Ottoman Empire. The Balkans and Albanians who were part of the Ottoman Empire till 1912, and even though Albanians were not part of the Ottoman Empire any more after that year, they were among volunteers who answered the call for war participation.

<sup>61</sup> Izber Hoti, “Historical Memory in Llap, Gallap and Shalë of Bajgora on the Anti-Ottoman Uprisings at the Beginning of the 20th Century,” *Albanologji*, no. 1, IAP, Prishtina, 2011, p. 74.

Although more than 100 years have passed since the war has happened, still this war exists in the memory of Albanians. One of the reasons why this war still exists in the memory of Albanians is the folklore aspect and its impact. Even nowadays songs about Çanakkale continue to be created by composers and singers, and due to this fact they are transmitted from generation to generation and always kept in the memory of people.

In this study, we will investigate how this war is perceived by Albanians in folklore today, whether this war is presented in the history textbooks of Albanians, and whether this war is included in the academic work of Albanian writers. In this study it will be answered to many questions, and some of these questions are as follows: whether there is a difference in perception between the public (usual people) and intellectuals regarding the Battle of Çanakkale during and after communism. If there is a difference, what are the reasons for it? And on the other side, why this war still exists in folklore?

The methods that will be used in this research are comparative and analytical methods, and the sources used to support the study are songs about the Battle of Çanakkale sung by Albanian singers, and the textbooks and published studies in Kosovo's scientific journals.

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(2025) *Mevzuat Değişiklikleriyle Geleneksel Kosova Ailesinin Yabancılaşma Riski* (The Risk of Alienation of the Traditional Kosovan Family Due to Legislative Changes)

(2025) *İnsanın Kutsalla İlişkisinde Dehumanizasyon Krizi* (The Crisis of Dehumanization in the Human Relationship with the Sacred)

- (2025) *Birey ve Toplum Arasındaki Bir Yapı Olarak Ailenin Ortadan Kalkması* (The Disappearance of the Family as a Structure Between the Individual and Society)
- (2024) *Deizmi: Besim apo Arsyetim?* (Deism: Belief or Reasoning?)
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- (2013) *Ortam ve Kimlik* (Environment and Identity)

In addition to his academic work, Shala is an active translator of philosophical and theological literature from Turkish into Albanian, contributing to the enrichment of Albanian scholarly discourse and making classical and contemporary thought more accessible to a wider academic audience.

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