

Aspects of Skanderbeg's Relationship with Alfonso V of Aragon



History

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Abstract

The rise of the Kingdom of Naples by Alfonso V, and the relocation of his court in the territory of the new kingdom, results in the establishment of the Aragonese dynasty in a new geographic position, next to the Balkan Peninsula. This moment coincided with the consolidation of the Ottoman rule and the emergence of a new military leader, who fiercely opposed through armed resistance the Ottoman conquests; that was George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. Skanderbeg and Alfonso had shared interests, and as a result a friendship and an alliance were born. The former's intentions were to make use of this alliance to protect his territories from the Ottoman conquest, and the latter's intentions were to expand his territories and create a Mediterranean Empire. This relationship will be crowned in 1451 with the Treaty of Gaeta, under which the two parties will be obliged to provide services to each other. The implementation of the treaty will continue until the death of Alfonso V in 1458, respectively, until after the death of Skanderbeg 1468. The alliance was built on the basis of common interests of the two leaders and the similar situation of the two countries.

1. The state of the sources

The relation between Skanderbeg and Alfonso V of Aragon, also known as the Magnanimous (1416-1458), is not entirely unknown, at least in general terms. The relation among these two figures is known due to the existing documentation in the archive of Aragon's Crown in Barcelona, where a considerable part of these documents are stored. The majority of this documentation is published by F. Trinchera, F. Cerone, V. Makushev and J. Radonić. In this area there are also some studies done in the early twentieth century by historians such as Pall F., N. Jorga, C. Marinescu, K. Hopf, J. Hammer, F.S. Noli, A. Gegaj, K. Frashëri etc., whose contribution will be mentioned on the following pages.

Considering that this relationship was indirectly discussed by the literature, it is the aim of this study to analyze in detail the relation of Alfonso V of Aragon and Skanderbeg in the mid XV century in the historic context, while being based on the published documents and the relevant literature.

Today, the archive of Aragon's Crown is among the largest and oldest national historical archives of Spain. There is a great variety of documents dating from the IX to XX century; documents of great interest not only for the history of Aragon that occupied the northwestern part of Spain, but also documents of great interest to the whole history of the Mediterranean world, including Albania.

All the documents during the Alfonso V era that relate to Albania and Skanderbeg (more than 40 documents from 1447 to 1457) exist in the books of the Chancellery, more specifically in the series that deal with external matters (*Curiae, Secretorum, Exercituum, Diversorum*). All of them are letters, orders or concessions issued by King Alfonso. They are not the originals that were sent to the recipients, but full copies that were registered and that hold their historical and judicial values (the only difference from the original being the shortened title of king and the date). On the other hand, the documents and letters received were not stored in the archive. Thus, there are no copies of the letters that Skanderbeg sent to Alfonso even though their existence is evidenced on references of the copies of the letters Alfonso sent to Skanderbeg (Pérez, 2009, 25-27). Therefore, considering the state of the documentation, our vision on the relationship of Skanderbeg and Alfonso V will necessarily be partial.

2. Skanderbeg and Alfonso's oriental politics

The first contacts between Skanderbeg and Alfonso V openly come out in the time of antagonisms that existed between Venice on one side and Alfonso V, the Duke of Milan, Filippo Maria Visconti, the Papacy and the Skanderbeg on the other. In the whirlwind of these confrontations the only thing Skanderbeg could do was to choose the best alliance which would serve his long-term interests. With his cold logics, he decided to lean towards the Pope and Alfonso of Naples. He deepened these relations since out of all the great powers of the time that were geographically closer, only these two seemed to be actively engaged with his target and objective, the crusade.

With this logic, Skanderbeg wanted to ensure the support from the Pope and from Alfonso considering the troubling situation with the Venetians. In this respect, it seems like he achieved his goal since in the spring of 1447, a few months before the open conflict between Skanderbeg and Venice, the Pope (Nicholas V) took the opportunity to publicly praise Skanderbeg and name him: *orthodoxae fidei fortissimus Athlete...* (Bullarium Franciscanum, 1929, 450; Noli, 1968, apéndice, n° 7). On the other hand the negotiations with Alfonso V had begun.

Alfonso of Naples had two main objectives that he wanted to achieve through Skanderbeg. First, it was to mobilize and engage him as a crusader against the Ottomans. Second, he wanted to help George Brankovic (who had territorial aims in Zeta) in his war against Venice through Skanderbeg. In the meantime, precisely in September 1447, Alfonso began also to deepen his relations with George Arianiti by giving him a symbolic gift worth 20 pieces of gold (Jorga II, 1899, 44).

However, Skanderbeg was shown to be cautious with the alliances against Venice. Alfonso V should have agreed to use Skanderbeg as long as both sides were simultaneously benefiting. In this case, not only Naples, but others would have also received the message that the Albanian prince was ready for alliances against the Ottomans only, and that the prince would not become a tool to solve the internal contradictions of the Italian states.

During the fall of 1447 a Catholic abbot, a relative of Skanderbeg, goes to Naples. He had orders from his leader to gather information from the Neapolitan court regarding the anti-Ottoman campaigns that were being led by Janos Hunyadi and the others. The information that was transmitted to Skanderbeg was mainly on the major issues of the crusade. It would be precisely due to these engagements that on December 14, 1447, Alfonso V and Skanderbeg would come into contact. The first documented piece of the relationship was a reply from Alfonso V to Skanderbeg's letter that was sent through Peter, Skanderbeg's ambassador in Naples (Panzic, 2009, 48-49). King Alfonso addresses Skanderbeg, with *illustri et potenti viro Georgio Castrioto alias Squenderbech, domino Croie provinciarumque Arbanie etc.*, and commends his struggle against the infidel Turks. In this paper, it appears that Skanderbeg had requested some specific boats (*triremibus vero*) from Alfonso; however, he says that he cannot provide him the military aid that was requested since the boats were currently in use. Nonetheless, as soon as the boats would come back to shore they would be sailing in Skanderbeg's direction. Even though Alfonso cannot help Skanderbeg militarily, he assures asylum and protection for him and his family in Italy in case the war does not go as planned with the Turks (Radonic, 1942, n° 16, 9-10). There is another document regarding this offer which is directed to the duke of Calabria, where it is requested of him to host the family of Skanderbeg in case of his death.

It seems that the person responsible for the close relation the Skanderbeg and Alfonso created was the Earl, Uran Altisfer. Kruja's famous defender, Earl Uranus, had led a number of sensational campaigns in the army of Alfonso V (Biemmi, 1756, 47). The relations between Alfonso and Skanderbeg became closer in 1448, at the time when both were fighting Venice from the two opposite sides of the Adriatic Sea. Their alliance was quite natural, since Turkey and Venice were their common enemies. Skanderbeg experiences with the Venetians were not pleasant. He had vainly sought the support of the Venetians in 1449 (Ljubic, 1890, 301-302; Radonic, 1942, n° 28, 18-19), he had proposed to have Kruja and himself under their protection of Venice; but, they had refused this offer. On the contrary, the Venetians had actually declared a bounty of 100 pieces of gold in compensation for: *anyone who would kill Skanderbeg by himself or through someone else* (Ljubic, 1890, 269-273).

After a five months siege of Kruja, in October 1450, Skanderbeg managed to make Sultan Murad II retreat from this fortified town. His name up until this event had rarely been mentioned in Europe; however, following this episode Skanderbeg's achievement reverberated across Europe. The Pope himself was enthused with the victory of the Christians, so he commanded that a fraction of the money gathered in the Dalmatian coastal cities in that jubilee year to be paid to the brave warrior, Skanderbeg.

Skanderbeg came out victorious from the battle of Kruja, but the situation in the nearby territories was only getting worse. There widespread destruction that was caused during the retreat of the Turkish army had to be mended. On the other hand, Skanderbeg was aware that he would have problems with the Turks long after this. For this reason, he saw the need to immediately prepare a defensive plan against the new Turkish attacks. Thus, on December 14, 1450, Skanderbeg traveled to Ragusa (Dubrovnik) holding the letters he had received from the Pope in order to more to get subsidies (Radonic, 1942, n° 34, 20). He even turned to the Republic of Venice for an alliance with a concrete offer of defending the *Christian Kruja*, but the senate once again rejected his offer (Noli, 1968, 107). In some way, the deconstructive politics of Venice towards Skanderbeg became a reason for him to seek more sustainable alliances over the Adriatic. At this time, since Skanderbeg could not make a coalition with Venice, Alfonso V takes the opportunity to formally *befriend* Skanderbeg. At this time, the best choice for Skanderbeg was to approach the greatest power contributing to the crusade, the king of Aragon and the Two Sicily's - Alfonso V - who had concrete plans for expanding his influence in the East and undermining the positions of Venice in the Balkans and the Adriatic.

This was the maximum outcome that Skanderbeg could get at this political moment. Alfonso V had gained a reputation as the bearer of the crusade against the Ottomans, and Albanian lands were the first line of defense against the Ottoman threat in the Adriatic for the Neapolitan. On behalf of this, he had just declared himself a Christian protector of the islands of both the Hospital of Rhodes and the kingdom of Cyprus (Setton, 1978, 99, not.73). This seemed the right time for the Italian leader to build a *de jure* relation with Skanderbeg and take Kruja under his protection. Kruja at this time was holding a significant position for the entire Christian world and in 1450 had already been proclaimed as an advanced Christian position in the western Balkans. Notwithstanding, the irreplaceable catalyst of Skanderbeg's relation with Alfonso was the Pope, who always intended to increase the number of the crusade partners.

On 25 March 1451, in a letter of Alfonso V addressed to the Pope, it is revealed that Alfonso was preparing to help Skanderbeg militarily and materially. On this letter it is mentioned that Alfonso responded to the call of Skanderbeg's messengers (the bishop of Kruja Stephen and the Dominican friar Nicholas de Berguci) who on their letter had written: *with tears in our eyes*

we seek support against the Turks, who with a great army will come back next April to once again siege the city... (Radonić, 1942, n° 37, 22-23). Out of this same document, it is revealed that Alfonso also seeks help from the Pope asking for his commitment in aiding Skanderbeg.

3. The Treaty of Gaeta (1451)

After a period of no evidence on the relation of Skanderbeg and Alfonso (14 December 1447 being the last document), the former's initiative to start negotiations with Neapolitans makes the documentation of this relation possible. On 26 March 1451, a document of great importance is revealed. This is the treaty for a sustainable relationship signed by King Alfonso and sent to Skanderbeg through his ambassadors in Naples, the bishop of Kruja and the Dominican friar, Nicholas de Berguci. The treaty, written partly in Latin and partly in Italian is titled: *Capituli inhiiti et firmati fra la serenissima maiesta de lo serenissimo signore don Alfonso re d'Aragona, de Sicilia citra et ultra farum, dal una parte, e lo venerabile patre in Christo domino Stefano episcopo de Croya et lo religioso maestro Nicola de Bergugi del ordene de Sancto Domeneco, oraturi et ambassiaturo de lo spectabile et magnifico Gorgio Castroto, signore de la dita citate de Croya e de soi parenti, baruni in Albania, de la parte altra* (Cerone, 1903, 172-173; Radonić, 1942, n° 38, 23-24).

Despite the fact that the treaty was signed on King Alfonso's name by his chief clerk, Arnaldo Fonelleda, it can still be inferred that the Argonese leader considered this relationship to be of utmost importance.

Through this act, Skanderbeg is considered an ally of Alfonso V. The terms of the treaty clearly show that this alliance was purely related to the bilateral interest of fighting the Ottomans. Almost all of the treaty's important clauses contain the condition under which any action to be undertaken should be to serve the *war against the Ottomans*. According to this treaty, the Kingdom of Naples would invest in the Albanian militarily (be that defense or offense) and, if the investment turned out successful, Alfonso V would receive the appropriate compensation. The terms also included the element of vassalage, but similarly to the compensation terms, the vassalage deal would be put into practice only if Skanderbeg came out of the war victorious.

It should be emphasized that Kruja privileges granted by Alphonse V, and certified in Naples on 19 April 1457, were privileges which had a long-standing tradition *ab antiquis imperatoribus* and date back to the time of the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus in 1153, to be reconfirmed after by the emperor of Nicaea, Johan Duke Vataci, and in 1255 by his son, Theodor Laskaris. This tradition was also followed by the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II in 1288, and similarly after him by Stephen Dusan of Serbia in 1343 (Thalloczy & Jireček, I, 1916, 131-132). Ultimately, the reconfirmation of these privileges from Alfonso V, as it can be noticed from the fragments of the document quoted above, are only a continuation of the arrangements that Albanian territories had had with previous rulers mentioned above, from Manuel Comnenus to Stephen Dusan. Therefore, the tribute specified on the treaty that was about to be signed was not an obligation that was being practiced for the first time in this city. Kruja had had some sovereigns, mentioned above, who had collected the ransom in exchange for recognition of the city's autonomy.

Years later, it is evidenced that the treaty was concealed since George Kastriot accepted the vassalage not only to Alfonso V, but also to his son, the heir to the throne - Ferdinand of Aragon (Radonić, 1942, n° 200, 121-122). When the oath was made, it can be implied that the condition that had to do with expelling the ottomans from Skanderbeg's land was met.

The *Treaty* was established with the idea of *preparing* the terrain for a crusade designed by Alfonso (Noli, 1968, 109). In such conditions, the treaty itself could serve as a guarantee for the institutionalized relations of George Kastriot with the crusade lead by Alfonso. Furthermore, Skanderbeg saw the Pope standing behind Alfonso, which was an additional guarantee for the realization of the project. Relating to this, only two weeks after the Treaty of Gaeta, the Pope, Nicholas V, included George Kastriot in a Plenary Indulgence of the Jubilee Year (*omnium peccatorum kuorum remissio plenaria*). With the decision of the Pope on that day (bulla)—April 13, 1451 to be specific on the section of *Albania*, Skanderbeg was honored for his heroic services to Christianity and because of this the Pope would consider any financial and material needs that he had (Setton, 1978, 102, not.82). In this indulgence, Skanderbeg was named the *Lord of Albania and Kruja (Domini et Croye Arbani)* and according to this document an indulgence of three years was granted to all those who, in cash or in person, supported Skanderbeg for his participation in the anti-Turkish crusade. In this way, the Pope cemented Skanderbeg's commitment to the crusade led from Naples, by raising him to the pedestal of the prominent figures of the time. The re-mentioning of Skanderbeg as *the lord of Kruja and Albania* strengthens the internal position of Skanderbeg as the leader of *Albania* and constituted a practical approach to making Skanderbeg the legal ruler of Kruja.

Thus, the support Skanderbeg got from the papacy and as the most prominent militarily leader in the Albanian lands made him famous not only in Europe, but also helped in strengthening his central governing powers towards other feudal lords in Albania. To further strengthen his position as a leader amongst the Albanian feudal lords, Skanderbeg in April 1451 made a strategic marriage with Donika (Gegaj, 1995, 56-57), the daughter of George Arianit. This marriage and the new relation of Skanderbeg with Arianit was praised by Alfonso V, who promised that he would soon make a similar treaty with Arianit as he did with Skanderbeg. In that same year, after a few months, Arianit sends an ambassador named Filip Pantello de Plezans to sign the treaty. This treaty was signed on 7 June 1451. Alfonso made similar treaties with other Albanian feudal lords such as Gjin Muzaka,

George Balsha, Pjetër Spani, Pal Dukagjini, Muzakë Topia, Pjetër of Himara, Simon Zenebishti and Karl Topia (Marinescu, 1923, 84, 87, 89; Noli, 1968, 109).

3.1 The implementation of the Treaty

The treaty of Gaeta between Skanderbeg and Alfonso of Aragon had practical implication and was effective up until the death of the latter in 1458, as attested by numerous documents that followed the signing of the treaty. Skanderbeg had an intense correspondence with Alfonso V, who seemed to be rushing the implementation of The Treaty of Gaeta. Two months later, on 23 May 1451, Alfonso suggests to Skanderbeg, that pursuant to the sections for the preservation and protection from Ottomans, he was sending: two officers, 100 infantry men, food and other supplements to keep them under the command of Bernard Vaquer—the royal delegate in charge of getting the Crown of the city of Kruja and for organizing the fights against the Turks. The detailed instructions that were given to the delegate (developed in *Castel Turris Octave*, May 23, 1451) are also recorded. For this venture, Alfonso notifies John Hunyadi as well. This was the first aid from Aragon to Kruja that was sent after the *Treaty*.

A year later (23 April, 1452) there is a notice for the appointment of Kruja's new governor (Viceroy), Ramon de Ortafa (Radonić, 1942, n° 45-46, 26-27, n° 52, 31-32), who remained there until after 1468 (Noli, 1968, 109). Letters sent from Naples on 24, 25 and 26 April write about the financial aid sent to Skanderbeg from the income of saltworks in Aragon. It can be evidenced from this correspondence that the letters sent from Naples are being addressed to Skanderbeg as well as to Ramon de Ortafas. The letters are written in double copies or are addressed to both simultaneously. It can clearly be inferred from these letters that Ramon de Ortafas had a special role and position in Kruja. He is trusted with a number of governing and defense duties, which is only natural since he was sent by the King of Aragon himself. The governor, while guaranteeing the security of Kruja and the preservation of Christianity, was also trusted with the duty of regaining territories from the Turks, and if possible gaining new ones. A copy of the governor's appointment is also stored in Latin and together with a letter from Alfonso to Skanderbeg written in Italian, where Alfonso informs about the arrival of the governor followed by a rich gift as a token of friendship" ... *and for siati Certo che de la nostra optima volunta Verso Vui, for lo vi mandamo dicto Misser Ramundo de una petzza broccato in signo de la grandissima affecciono portamo che vi ...* (Radonić, 1942, n° 55, 33).

But, Ramón de Ortafa was not the only man with the power. In the meantime, the commander of the castle, a Catalan, called Pere Scuderia, also arrives. He is tasked with the duty of the protecting the castle. He repaired the castle that was in poor condition, equipped it with arms and ammunition, and in the meantime also fortified a number of other zones of the country to withstand the Turkish attacks.

According to Marinesco, after each victory, Skanderbeg sent Alfonso loot, flags, horses and slaves he had earned and captured from the Turks in a sign of tribute. S.Noli, says that in the Neapolitan archives there is no trace of any tribute paid in cash by Skanderbeg. Instead, he received an annual pension of 1500 pieces of gold from Alfonso (Marinescu, 1923, 79; Noli, 1968, 109). It can be stated that as a sovereign, Alfonso had more responsibilities than privileges and rights in the Albanian lands.

The treaty was established with the idea of *preparing* the terrain for a crusade designed by Alfonso, a crusade which would never come into effect. Consequently, there was no insistence from the side of Alfonso on respecting every single aspect of the treaty; for that reason out of this treaty Skanderbeg profited more than Alfonso in a time when he needed it most.

Facing the common risk coming from the rapid ottoman expansion, after the conquest of Constantinople in May 29, 1453, Alfonso's and Skanderbeg's relationship with Venice mollified. For this purpose, Alfonso asked the Pope to banish from the church community Paul and Nicholas Dukagjini if they did not accept the authority of Skanderbeg. As an intermediary on this issue the Pope Nicholas V, appointed Paul, the bishop of Drishti.

On March 5, 1453, Skanderbeg urges King Alfonso (*through his ambassador, Ezop Zguri*), to send him a number of knights and infantry to intervene in Venice, in order to make Venice respect the agreement that was made with him. In response to this request, King Alfonso reminds the doge of Venice, Francesco Foscari, to regularly pay an annual of 1400 pieces of gold as was signed in the treaty. Additionally, he also reminds Francesco to not accept in his territories the fugitives and the enemies of Skanderbeg (Radonić, n° 62-63, 39-40). There is no existing evidence of the reply from Venice, but it is a fact that Skanderbeg was able to easily triumph over the Turkish expedition in Pollog, where according to M.Barleti, the army that was being led by Ibrahim Bey and Debrea was badly defeated (Barleti, 1983, 392-396).

In the meantime, on October 9, 1453, as a result of the soother relations with Venice, the interim governor of Lisus (*Alb. Lezha*), Peter Marcel, was ordered from Venice to accompany Skanderbeg to Rome and Naples. During his visit in Italy or through his ambassadors, Skanderbeg had suggested to Naples to start attacking the Turks in the castle of Berat. The sovereign of Aragon accepted the request of Skanderbeg and on May 22, 1455 he decided to send 1200 infantry men and 500 knights equipped with modern weaponry under the command of *Santo Garillo and Teseo Savello*. However, as a result of the Turkish treachery (during a time when they had requested an armistice), the negligence of the Albanian feudal lords and Neapolitan forces, the murder and betrayal of Muzak Topia, and the treachery of Moses Golem and Hamez Castriot (who joined the sides of the ottomans), the battle of Berate ended with the defeat of the Albanian forces and Aragon forces (Frashëri, 2002, 330-331).

On August 7, Naples received the message regarding the defeat in Berat, the news created an alarming situation since this meant that the Turks had appeared in the coast of Albania, where from they could reach the port of Brindisi in Italy overnight.

The causes that led to the defeat of Berat, made Alfonso of Aragon and Naples retreat and wait for a better opportunity to realize the implementation of his plan in the East. A major change in his plans was made with the arrival of the Spaniard—Callixtus III (1455)—on the papal throne; a pope recognized for making fundamental changes in Italian politics. He openly declared that the focus of the new papal policy would be the organization of crusade and the eviction of the Turks from the Balkan Peninsula.

On the other hand, when all the battles of the decennium that Skanderbeg had won are considered, the defeat in Berat seemed just like a bad dream. The victory in the battle of *Ujëbardhe* (Albulena) in September 1457 (Ibid., 339-352) seemed to have resurrected Alfonso's ambitions for the crusade. This victory against a strong Turkish army of around 60.000-80.000 men, is marked by history as the first victory of Skanderbeg as a defender of Christianity. He came out of this war with an undisputed reputation both domestically and internationally. Hence, on 23 December 1457, two months after the news of the victory had arrived in Rome, the pope Callixtus III titled Skanderbeg a *General of the Holy See in the war against the Turks* (Babinger, 1992, 152). On the other hand, the Pope also urged other European rulers to help Skanderbeg. Thus, on February 8, 1458, the Pope sent a letter to Alfonso V, through which he informed him that on the funds he had given to Skanderbeg and urged him to continue helping Skanderbeg as he had before.

The victory of Albulena gave Skanderbeg the opportunity to once again call for support in Naples, Rome, Venice, Ragusa, Hungary and some other Italian states for his war against Ottomans. The Albanian ambassadors that were sent called for the rulers of these countries to forget their old feuds and unite with the Albanians in the fight against the Turks. But, this time also they did not hear the calls of Skanderbeg; instead, they just sent some financial aid together with some felicitating messages.

During 1458 there were a lot of changes in the relationship between the Kingdom of Naples and Skanderbeg. On June 27, 1458 in *Castel dell'Ovo*, Alfonso V of Aragon dies at the age of 72. Along with Alfonso V, the dream of creating a Mediterranean Empire, crusades against the Turks and alliances with Skanderbeg also dead (Marinescu, 1923, 133; Noli, 1968, 120).

Even after the death of King Alfonso V in 1458, Skanderbeg requested to continue and strengthen the relationship with his son, Ferdinand I. The former decided to give military aid to King Ferdinand in the fight that had erupted between his opponents, who were barons of southern Italy. The latter had joined forces with the French prince *Rene d'Anjou*, who was claiming the throne of the Kingdom of Naples. From the other side, the Pope, Skanderbeg, and the duke of Milan came into support of King Ferdinand. They also constituted a powerful political bloc in Italy and were the main advocates of the idea of organizing an anti-Ottoman military campaign with the participation of many countries.

Thus, following the events that occurred after the death of Alfonso V, the old report and roles that previously existed between the King of Aragon and Skanderbeg had changed. While during the reign of Alfonso it was Skanderbeg who needed and received the help from Naples, now it was Skanderbeg that was helping King Ferdinand (Frashëri, 2002, p.360).

Albanian soldiers helped King Ferdinand militarily defeat his opponents. These actions contributed to the strengthening of Skanderbeg's relation with the Kingdom of Naples and its allies. After this military aid, on September of the year 1461, the duke of Milan - Francesco Sforza - writes to Skanderbeg: *we have the same obligation to your majesty, as does the majesty of Naples and we are increasingly getting closer in sharing the pleasures, needs and honors with you as a as we wood with a good and a cordial brother*. In recognition of this support, the King of Naples, Ferdinand I, awards Skanderbeg with an annual bonus of 1,200 pieces of gold and donates the important feuds of *Monte Saint Angelo* and *Saint Giovanni Rotondo* in Puglia to him. After the death of the Albanian hero, these properties were inherited by his wife and son, who were treated with royal honors from the Neapolitan court when they emigrated from Albania and settled to Italy. In 1464, Skanderbeg paid a visit to King Ferdinand to express his gratitude for the gifts above.

4. Conclusions

The data presented allow us to conclude that the factors behind the relation of Alfonso V of Aragon and George Kastriot Skanderbeg were the result of strategic and political interests of the Kingdom of Aragon in the Balkan Peninsula, and especially in the Albanian lands. Skanderbeg was a new valuable support to the king of Naples, Alfonso, who, as master of the Spanish coast, dreamed to extend his domination over the entire eastern Mediterranean basin, as he already had in the Western basin. The intervention of Aragon in the Albanian lands was completely logical because of the geographical proximity, on the one hand, and the fast pace of the Ottoman expansion on the other. If we take into account the fact that the eastern coast of the kingdom of Naples was located between Brindisi and Vlore, then, Alfonso's interest in the Albanian resistance, as a vanguard of the Ottoman conquest in the Adriatic, was very necessary. Thus, in self-defense, the kings of Naples helped Skanderbeg prolong his resistance and protect Albanians, which in a sense were a Neapolitan bridgehead.

On the other hand, for Albanians, the reason behind the vital friendship was the protection of their territories, which were directly exposed to Ottoman conquests. At a time when the support of Venice and of other Italian states was not secure, this relation with the Kingdom of Aragon was more than welcomed.

The links of interest between the two parties will be crowned with a treaty, which in historiography is called The Treaty of Gaeta between Skanderbeg and Alfonso of Aragon. This treaty was effective and efficient and served in establishing the relationship between Skanderbeg and Alfonso until their demise.

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