

The Civic Life and the Ancient Cities of South Albania in Archeological-Historical Point of view

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Abstract: *The south part of Albania has a significant archaeological wealth represented by the ancient cities and multi fortified civic centre. From the Keraune mountains in (Llogara) up to Kestrinoi (Vrine) was raised a series of castles, ancient towns and cities as the castle of Himara, Sopot, Kalivos, Vagalati, Selo, Lekli, Foinike city, Butroti, Antigone, Cuka Ajtojt, Onhezmi etc.. This southern region of Illyria has an individuality of its own culture and constitutes a strong bridge connecting the north and Illyrian civilization with Epirus and Hellenic in south. The genuine Illyria city in this area is formed by the end of the Vth century B.C mainly along the IVth century B.C. During the IIIrd – Ist century B.C. the completion of urban Butroti and Antigone, Foinike reached the highest excellence and an evident merchant development. Butroti was the center of Prasaibe's tribe that appears wider in written ancient tradition. Foinike which is the greatest civilization, got a political significance importance, becoming the capital of the Republic of Epirus in IIIrd century BC. Antigonea was the main civic center at Drinos Valley, Hrukea political site formed another unit in the koinoni – type, as part of the biggest koinoni that stems from their economic and political relations of these major cities with each other. The regions where were born and developed these larger Illyrian cities suffered a vigorous process of urbanization that came from the development of internal socio-economic relations which were established in antique market, and the contacts with a wider Illyrian-Hellenic areal.*

Keywords: ancient cities, fortification, antique tradition, koinon.

1. Introduction

The birth of the city and the ancient civic life in the north and south of Albania has followed much the same path but with the difference that it has been done a little earlier than in the north. Authentic city of south Illyria is formed toward the end of the fifth century B.C mainly during the IVth century according to Ugolini, represented by Butroti the IInd, the Foinike and Çuka of Ajtoi[1], they can now add and many other fortified civic centers like Karalibej, Qenurio, Kalivo, Vagalat, Malathre, Mallçan, Rips and even the Joniansea, the castle of Himara, Sopot and the residence of Hundësova.

Cities are located in the visible hills, well protected by walls, close to natural traffic routes. Their fortification is made with a higher technical level than pre-urban centers, are simple and plans related forms dictated by the terrain. Thick walls interrupted by angled curves, blocks websites are of larger size. Civic life mainly developed within the fenced area. After the middle of the fourth century during the third century, the process of urbanization, especially in the area where the Kaonia tribe lived entered the phase of its highest.

This is expressed by an intensive development of civic life, which lies in the Drino valley, where was born and developed as the main city Antigonea, surrounded by an array of other fortified civic centers: like Lekli castle, Labova the Cross, Melan and Selo, the last one raised up to V-IV century BC.

At the same time, in this region are grown and developed old towns, as the Foinike and Butroti, extending their constructions across public and private space protected. In this process of development and differentiation occurs in urban centers, where large cities are separated, as Foinike,

Antigone Butroti the category of secondary cities, as Ajtojt Peaks, Melanie and a range of castles that arise around them. Major cities occupy the central position in the area where were stretching on. City of Foinike with 55 ha area becomes the main center of economic, political and cultural news in pit area of Delvina, Antigonea with 47 ha area is the main settlement in the valley of Drinos and Butroti with 5 ha area is small in scope of stretching on, but was the main one in economic and cultural activity in Kestrina basin and beyond.

Sub-urban cities south of Illyria in this period appear to develop with urban structure, expressed in the separation of Acropolis from the down part of the city, the suburban setting of the agora, and the internal construction of the city, where urban principles apply advanced system orthogonal, as in Antigone.

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This corresponds to an urban development economic boom, largely a developed craftsmanship that relies on local production workshops working tools, weapons, pottery and works of art. In the Republic of Epirus (232-168) was placed in a large circulation coins, brass and silver, where for the first time spelled out and written the names of senior officials. The business of the city was based on expectations

coins on behalf of the civic community Antogonea, Foinike and Butroti, or other circulation coins of Epirus, Helene, Durrahu, Orikus and Macedonian [2] in these cities.

During IIIrd-Ist century BC, completing urban cities reaches the highest perfection, creating a new civic physiognomy, where civic life based on new concepts of time, takes perfect picture in its full development. The political organization of cities in this area has been supported in koinoni system, where Foinike, Butroti and Antigonea inspecting a fairly large territory guarded by a series of castles, thus adjusting this urban development.

2. Methodology

The methodology is basically empirical and also is being research in the territory of Butroti, today Butrinti. All is based on every archeological datas and ruins of this ancient city. The photos shown are the evidence of that research.

3. Butrinti (Butroti)

The ancient tradition and the city

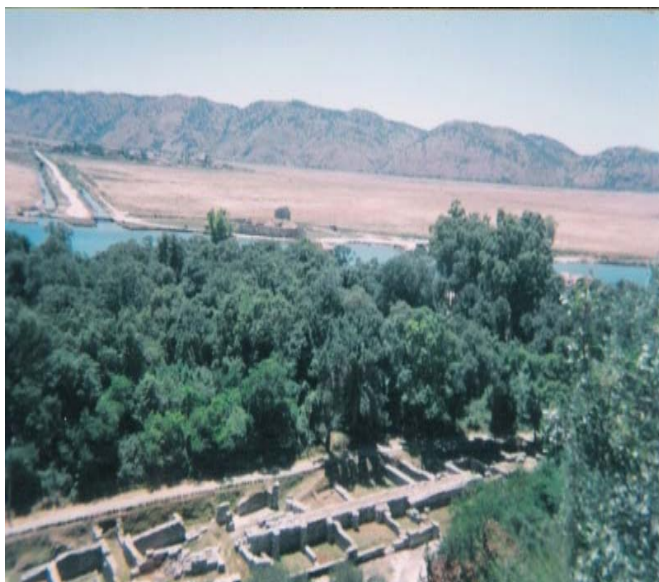


Figure 1

The oldest city established in the southern territory of Illyria, is Butrint or Butroti, center of the kaon tribe of prasaibes, which occupies the southeastern corner of Ksamili Peninsula, to the east is the lake (ancient Peledosi), in the south Vivarit channel, thus giving city and used the opportunity to Wharf (fig. 1). Butrint was established there by the beginning of the VIIth century B.C.

The last geographer of the VI-th century B.C. Hekateu of Mileti mentioned Butrinti and put it in the list of polis. Some authors have tried to follow the city's name origin. Thus, Stefan Byzantium says: "the city is called so after the name of its founder" [3], without giving any further explanation. But the Teukriof Kiziku gives us a second version, through this episode: "Aeneas (Enea), son in law of Priam, while sailing from Troy to the west, has made a sacrifice for his entry in Epirus. Wounded ox burst through the sea, entered

the in bay and came to the shore of a land where he fell over and died. "This he called it prophecy and the land gave the name" Buthrotos" [4]. Most authors identify the ancient Butrintas Troy of Epirus. According to Virgilit [5], Eleni, with Trojan names were called the fortress, the big gate and rivers. Castle Gate and two rivers-Skea, Seimois and Ksanthy, the last one according to Plato "The gods called Ksanthy, and the people Skamandër" [6].

City of Butrint mentioned even by Straboni, which says that "after Panormit port (Porto Palermo), the great Harbor Keraune among the mountains, then comes Onhezmi, against which is Korkyrës western coast, after Onhezmi comes Posidion boss (the boss ladder-top scale) and Buthroti further south, at the mouth of the harbor called Pelod, built in a place that is as peninsula. [7]"

Butrintis located and maritime routes of IIIrd century. In Tabula Pentigeriana (fig. 2) is given the distance of several miles centers, e.g:

Acroceraunia 33 stade

Foinike 41 "

Buthroto, 56" .

Butrinti is shown as a great middle path that starts from Ashdod in Aulona, Keraune, Foinike, Butroti to Nikopol. Butrinti, during his involvement in the composition of the state of Epirus, get its full character of a civic center, becoming a chamber absorbing the surrounding population, leaving the other center secondary position, as Kalivoja, 3 km in east of Butrinti.

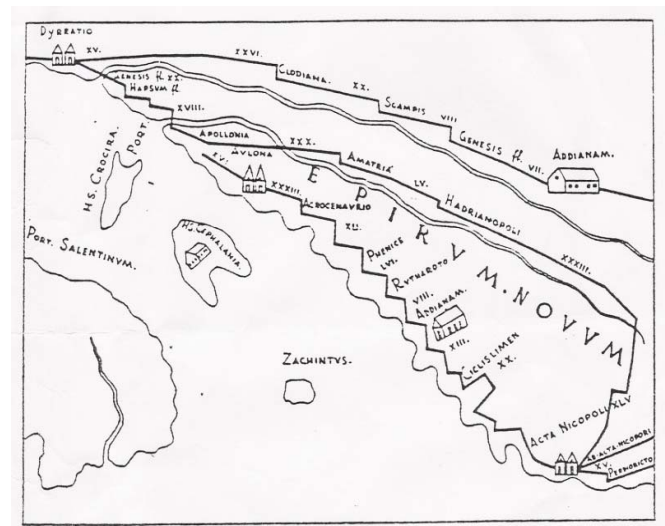


Figure 2

After the fall of the Ajakides Dynasty, in 232 BC the city is located in the new historical situation created by the wars of Illyrian-Roman and the conquest of Illyrians Foinike. After V.167, Butrinti become the center of the prasaibe's koinoni, with a number of dependent towns and castles, as Karalibej, Kalivo, Vagalat (fig. 3), Malathre (fig. 4), Çukë e Ajtoit, Katajtoi, etc. Let us refer further data of the ancient authors related to the fact of founding of the city of Butrinti. Dionysius of Alikarnas refuses to have been the founder of this city. For him, the Trojan Aeneas (Enea) was located on a hill near Butrinti, in which name would remain Troy.



Figure 3: The tower in the south-east side.



Figure 4

The city of Butrint existed, he says, before the Trojans came. According to Dionysius "Ankizi, coming by sea from Ambrakia, lands in Butrinti, port of Epirus, while Aeneas(Enea) with selected friends from Ambrakia goes on to ask the oracle of Dodona. There, he finds Eleni with other Trojans, and after sacrifice, Aeneas after four days of street reaches the Trojan fleet commanded by Ankizi, anchored in Buthrotum. Trojans leaving Butrint reached in a port Ankežēm called "[8] Dionysius concludes. Virgil fully accepts the establishment of the city by the Trojans. Speaking on a visit that Aeneas (Enea) makes Eleni, and says: " Aeneas (Aeneas) sailed along the coast of Epirus, came into the harbor of Kaonia and approached renowned city of Buthrotum" [9].

Further more Virgil's shows the astonishment of Aeneas (Enea) to the beautiful city that Eleni had raised, where designations were made the same Old Troy. But the city foundation by the Trojans finds no archaeological and architectural support. It is interesting that in historical and literary sources of ancient time did not find any evidence for the origin of the Hellenistic city. Butroti started life as a fishing village and later come and put the inhabitants of Corcyre (Korkyra).

Historical Data

The Legend of Butrinti foundation that can be linked to the origin of the royal dynasty of Neoptolemus- Molossoi, son of Achilles and the Trojan Hector's widow, Andromacha. They were born during Kestrina involvement, under Molossians, according to S. Dakaris, "it has happened about the first quarter of the IVth century B.C ¹⁰"It is interesting the

definition that gives Skylaks Kariandesi, who lived in the VI-Vth century B.C when he says: "Chaonians live in villages".

Even Thesprotian and Molossianstoo reside in villages. He seems cautious while mentioning data about small island Sason (Sazan), Oriku city, Keraune mountains , Dodona comes out to Ambraki from Hellada starts. According to him "in these areas are Kearune mountains, and nearby is a small island called Sason (Sazani), "[11]. So Butrint does not take place in its data recordings.

Likewise the pseudo data Skymnit, that lived from the mid-century IVth B.C. shown the same. Perhaps the latter has processed the data of sight, where Butrintiin VIth century. BC, couldn't have get a full view of the city. In its early life, was a fortified trading center, which speaks to the Corinthian imported ceramics, dated to the end of VIIth the century B.C. [12]N.G Hammond, non-mentioning Butrinti by Skylaksi, he connected with its independence, and by P. Cabane, "Butrinti at the time shouldn't have met Kaonia, butCorcian people of Corcyre (Korkyra)." [14]We actually used in ancient phrase "kata-komas "should not be associated with living in villages but with a different meaning, that of organizing the political-territorial units as federal ones or koinoni as it was known later on. Butrinti was included in the koinoni of Kaonian.

The city, at the time of Pyrrhus (Pirros) of Epirus, takes a socio-economic development and cultural monuments reflected through mobile and stationary. After the death of Alexander the IInd, in vv. 240 B.C. have started self-government leanings probably in Butrinti area and around it.

The tendency of prasaibe's territory separation from Kaonia, according to N.Ceka point of view, evidenced by the construction of the Dema's wall in the IIIrd century B.C[15]. Perhaps Foinike pressure through competition with Onhezmi and potential as main center of all Epirus after Vth century 232 B.C. pushes Butrinti more and more towards a broader independence.

After 200 BC, Butrinti takes a political matter not only become the center of the prasaibe's koioni, but also because of Theoront from Delphi stayed in Butrinti too. These religious and winner people of sports competitions found hospitality of people high political places, they frequented themselves. Roman conquest in 222 years B.C. and then Paul-Emilie destruction in the territory of Epirus after winning in Pidna vv.168 B.C did not affect the city of Butrint, because the elders pursued a policy Butroti as Roman support. Even after the year 148 B.C. when the mainland was included in the Macedonian province, Butrinti preserves its organization.

By middle of the Ist century B.C. we have a confrontation between her fragile independence that Butroti already has, and settlers, veteran Roman soldiers. As a result, the city lost its autonomy and passes in the 40 B.C. from Municipal organization in a colony. Interest of Rome in this area was born earlier this Polybius notes when speaking of presence of Italian traders in Butrinti.

During IInd-Ist century B.C. have the presence of a layer Butrotian slave, whose main activity was agriculture based on slave labor; (acts of freeing slaves in the theater of Butrint inscriptions). [16]

The return of Butroti into colonial city Roman was given the opportunity to the slave ownery to create large land holdings, latifunde, while native slave-owners to asset small plots of land and these were shrinking as the time goes by. Cicero wrote to Pompon Atiku who had created a great latifunde with land purchased in Butroti: "I am glad that you are satisfied with what you bought in Epirus. Can you, please describe your Amalteun, how is it decorated and what's its position"[17] speaking about villa in Malathre.

With the return of Butroti city in colony, much of the land that belonged to Buthrotians were given to Roman colonists and soldiers of Jul Caesar. Expropriation of properties around Butroti touched even Roman latifondist interests. In another letter Cicero wrote: "Since it became known that the lands were allotted to Buthroti soldiers, Atiku affected drafted a complaint that I have given to Caesar" [18]. We learn that Caesar issued a decree in favor of Buthrotian, but his death caused the problem to exceed consuls who "after being advised, decided in favor of Buthrotian" [19]. Butrinti managed to have its currency (coins) at the time of Augustus.

4. Foinike City (Phoenicia- Finiqi)

The ancient city of Foinike is found in the Delvina field-pit on a hill with a distinct placement to Vurgu field (Fig. 5), in the west and east. By south flows Bistricariver, while the

north is bordered by a city road Delvina-Saranda. City controls a fairly large territory.

In Greek geographer data Strabo, the city granted north of Butrint and a little distance from the sea[20], while Ptolemeo mention Foinikeas an inner city in Epirus, located in Kaoni [21]. Titus Livy, recalling Foinike, says that it was a city in Epirus [22]. In data of Prokop, Caesare talks about "the low field of Foinike was a total muskeg and the high field", referring to the fact says Ugolini that the Emperor Justinian moved the center of Foinike over the hill [23].

The city lies on the table and Pentingeriana, so the itinerary and Roman (the route Anthony), Phoenicia 41- stade²⁴. Over the hill where the city raised is found a neolithic era stone-hammer [25], which suggests thinking of a very early resident of this area. As regards the origin of the name and the founding of the city Foinike expressed views and opinions. H. Nepote thus explains the origin of the name of the city: "Kalia, son of Foinike (Finiqi) Molossoi successor, on a hill in the molos territory, would build a castle that, in memory of his father, he would call exactly Finiqi"[26]. This view is inconsistent with the data source, which does not consider Kaoniaas molos territory. Ugolini, starting from two coins found in 1926 at the Phoenicia (Finiqi), which seemed a palm branch, concludes that in Greek is called Foinike [27]palm branch.

A. GALANTI thinks: "City of Phoenicia (Finiqi) where the port Onhezmi in Kaoni, not far from the shore to see Corfu, where his name is probably a very old Emporio dealers and famous seafarers of the ancient world, of the Phoenician"[28]. To the same opinion is also V. Berard, who, based on onomastika linguistic science, says: "Phoenicia (Finiqi) City, located on the Epirus shore was a Phinico-libico port of that era " [29]. But the city has no external founder, he was born and developed as a result of conditions created in Kaoni since the fortifications of the Bronze Age and Iron.



Figure 5

City establishment has no exact date, approximately it must have occurred from the end of Vth century up to mid-IVth century B.C. Its setting as Polis is found in the list of Theorodakes, Epidauros Vth century B.C.360 and Argos. Vth century 330 BC. The City in its historical resources, as defined by Polybius is shown to us as "the richest, the most powerful and the most fortified of Epirus "[31]. In the IIIrd century BC the city acts as the center of Epirus League.

4.1 The City Along the History

Phoenicia (Finiqi) city has been of a great importance to see the whole economic, social and political life during the IIIrd – Ist centuries. In IVth century B.C Kaoni represented in Epirus through Foinike city. In the reign of Pyrrhus (Pirros), Foinike became the center of the union continued to play this role during the republic, after d. 232, where the Epirotes Koinoni has Foiniken metropolis [32].

Foinike city faced the strength Ardiana Illyrian kingdom, led by Queen Teuta. In 230 B.C, the capital of Epirus League falls into the hands of the Illyrians. "A truce of Illyrians with Epirotes turned the city back freedom, but not the slaves and booty"[33]- Polybius says.

In 205 B.C Foinike become a talk - center of peace between the Roman proconsul represented by P.Semproni and Philip Vth of Macedonia. From Polybius we learn that the talks also attended Athamania king, Amyndri, and other Epirote leaders and Akarnania. The peace made and took the consent of the Roman senate and temporarily brought calm in the region of Epirus around five years, then the conflict resumes again.

The city of Foinike Roman escaped the destruction of 167 B.C, as a result of political maneuvering in attitudes towards Rome and Macedonia. The city, according to Polybius was led by New Karopsi, who helped the Romans to break the resistance of the Macedonian army, which had occupied Vjosa gorge between the mountains Dhëmbel and Trebeshini. But his relations with Rome were not regular. This led to a judicial process, organized by Karopsi against a group of citizens, accused as traitors to the Roman case.

Even after the year 168 B.C, center of economical and political life continued to be focused primarily on Foinike, until 148 BC, but now under the direct control of Rome. The city, as a center of koinoni, a fact reinforced and by the mid-second century BC, in a list of Apollos temple found in Alexandria and another list of similar found in Delft, which says: "Cassander, son of Menesteos, was honored with a golden crown of Epirus League, who had Foiniken metropolis"[34]. Later the city, in the context of the disintegration of Epirote koinoni, the center lost function and continued his life under the new organization that implemented the Romans.

5. Antigonea

The city is located in the hill fortress of Jerma (fig. 6), near the village of Saraqinisht, Gjirokastra city today. The position of the city is prevailed over the surrounding area. Ptolemy gives the coordinates of the city location, Antigonea, 450 15', 390 10'. The city had a strong natural protection and control main road that ran through the Drino's valley. The city put its security even with the strong fortification walls and forts built along the valley. Thus, the castle of Lekli (fig.7) controlled the entries in Drino's valley from the north, while the Selo castle were controlling the penetration from

the south, that of Labova and Melan controlled the streets in the east.

City of Antigonea has a pale appearance in ancient written sources, perhaps from the fact that the disappearance of more data over Paul-Emilie destruction. Antigonea is mentioned only when events are held in Drinos area. Thus, Polibus [35] mentioned the straits of Antigonea in the surrounding area. Even Titus Livy, talking about the events of the war between Philip IInd of Macedon and the Romans, gives us the setting of Macedonian forces at the Antigonea gore. [36]

The city name also mentioned by Ptolemy[37] and Stefan Bizanti[38]; The first gives the coordinates of the Antigonea city, while S. Byzantium and says "Antigonea is a city of Kaonia and the citizens are named *antigonas*". Antigonea events are mentioned in the Illyrian kingdom attack on Foinike in vv. 230 B.C, where, according to Polibus[39], Illyrians coordinate the naval forces near Foinike with army forces commanded by Skerdilaidi, which, through the Straits of Antigonea reached Foinike.

Titus Livy while speaking for Roman - Maqedonian operations to v. 199 B.C, in Vjosa the middle areas mentions Antigonea Strait where, according to him, the Greeks called Stena. Livi[40] speaks about the Antigonea field, in fact there is nothing else than Dropulli areas. As a separate tribe presented in old Pliny datas are *antigonas* people, which says that "the mainland as a whole begins to Keraune mountains and includes Chaonian, Thesprotian, Antigonian people and Molossians"[41].

This separation Antigonian people from Chaonians may be as a result of their potential and great authority over a wide area as it was Drinos Valley, or perhaps Pliny has been clear for the extent of Kaonia. Regarding to the establishment of the city are presented different opinions, which today have taken a final shape. Some dedicate the city to Antigonea Gonati Maqedonia[42], others Pyrrhus of Epirus, who gave the name of his wife, Antigone, daughter of Ptolemy Sotero[43]. In Drinos valley the conditions were favorable for a wider urban development, a development that was greatly enriched the city building of Antigonea in the first half of the IIIrd century B.C. The Antigonea city arose at the time of Pyrrhus (Pirros) of Epirus. Based on these few data of ancient authors, many researchers tried to determine the location of Antigonea. The ruins along Drinos are visited by foreign travelers and researchers, as Martin Lik, Pukvil, Izambert, Han and later Ugolini [44] the Hamond[45]. The first excavations were made in S. Evangjeliu [46] in Jerma hill, on the eve of the First World War.

By tracer activity and Albanian archaeologists began their job. Thus, H. Ceka sought in the ruins of the Lekli fortress city[47], and supported the view that Hamond [48], E. Pajakovski [49] and Dh. Budina[50]. But between the years 1966-1970 the first excavations were undertaken in Jerma hill. The finding of fourteen bronze medical card[51] bearing the inscription Antigoneon, became more convincing argument that led excavations author of Dh. Budina to make a full determination that in these ruins is found the ancient Antigonea. Even in the valley of Drinos should be seen the

existence of a special koinoni as Antigonea, the capital center.



S. Byzantium speaking about the population and surrounding cities and antigonas people like Pliny. And the mention of Aout Strait and Antigonea field give a clear understanding of provincial autonomy with defined borders, where the Antigonea city has given name to all the area stretching away, all around her and the people of the province. This koinon has played a special role in Kaoni, through it were passing one of its main roads linking antiquity north areas and south up to Ambraki of Nikopol.



Figure 7: Tract wall on the southeast side



Figure 8: Ancient castle stone blocks reused

6. Conclusions

Civic Life in Ancient South-Southwest area of Southern Illyria was preceded by a period of important proto-citizens (VIIth-Vth century B.C.) where fortified settlements of that period served as embryos which were cities held on and urban life developed.

Large cities encouraged the development of many other civic centers thus creating political entity and independent as a relationship that was known as Federal koinon. Butroti centers and fortified castles formed prasaibe's koinoni around the area of Kestrina (Vrina today). Antigonea with its economic and political weight withdrew its dependence on all other ancient centers of Drino's valley. Foinike in Delvina field-pit functioned not only as the center of this basin but further more. During IIIrd century functioned as the capital center of Epirus League. These ancient cities with their economic, social and political realm contributed strongly to the whole Illyrian-epirot.

The ancient cities with their Economic, Social and Political realm Contributed strongly to the Whole Illyrian-epirot. The origin and development of this ancient civilization in southern Iiris took an important place in the tradition of historical writing, and today most of the definitions made in this period are put on strong and exact archaeological basis.

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Author Profile



Prof. As Dr Aleks Trushaj received Master of archeology in 2000 at the University of Tirana after being Ggraduated in University "Eqerem Çabej" Gjirokastra in 1986. In 1998, specialized at the University of Lecce (Italy) for "Archaeology and Ancient History." In 2004 completed a doctorate at the Department of History at the University of Tirana. Currently a lecturer at the University of Vlora "Ismail Kamal" in Albania. He holds the position of Dean of Human Sciences Faculty in University of Vlora, south of Albania.