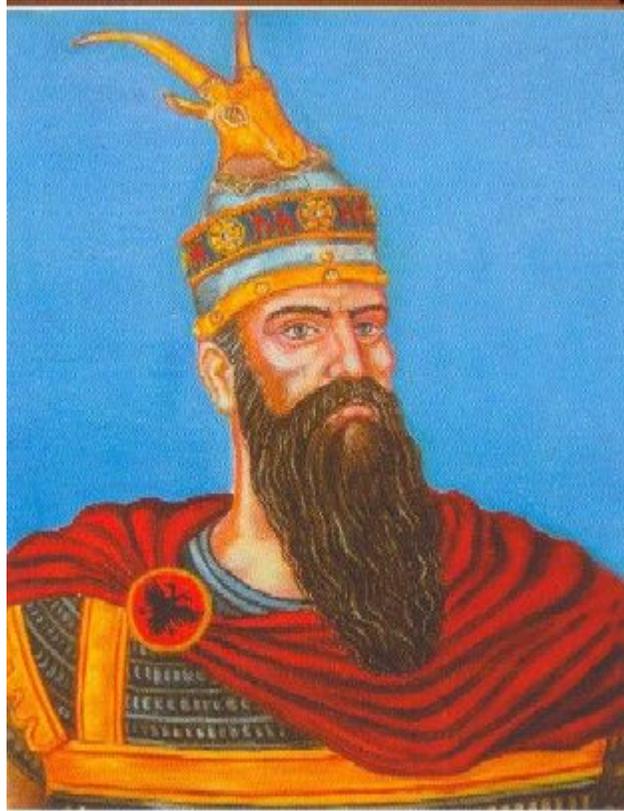


# Georgios Kastriotis

(Skenderbeis)



**GEORGIS KASTRIOTIS**  
called **SKENDERBEIS**.  
**ALBANIAN or GREEK?**

## - ORIGIN -

His grandfather was **Konstatninos Kastriotis (+ 1390)**, sovereign of Imathia and Kastoria (hence the name Kastoriotis / Kastriotis). The son of Konstantinos was **Ioannis Kastriotis**, the sovereign of Krougia (Kruja), and his wife was Voisava Tripalda, a Serbian woman. They brought to life 9 children: 5 daughters and 4 sons, the last one in the line being **Georgios Kastriotis (1404)**.

## - UPBRINGING and DEVELOPMENT -

During the reign of sultan **Murad II (1421-1451)**, in order to maintain his authority in Krougia, his father Ioannis is compelled to deliver his 4 sons as hostages, who will be brought up at the court in Adrianopolis (Edirne) and raised according to the Turkish habits. There, though they were Christians, they were converted to Islam. Appreciating the talents of **Georgios** (beauty, robustness, bravery), Murad II trains him with the successor to the throne, later Mohamed II, the conqueror of

Constantinople. Admiring his intrepidity, the sultan gives him the Turkish name "**Iskender Bey**", which means "**ruler Alexander (the Great)**".

However, the recollection of Krougia, the information of the death of his father first and, then, that of his mother, did not let him rest. On the first opportunity, he leaves the Turkish Army and **retakes his christian name Georgios**. He marries the daughter of Arianitos, Andronike Komnen, and **in 1443 starts the revolution** against the Turkish conqueror. He frees Krougia together with his 300 warriors and immediately enters its cathedral, chanting the "doxologia" to God (thanksgiving and glorifying hymn). He orders for the **double-headed eagle emblem** on a purple background flag, which was also the martial flag of the Byzantine empire, to be raised in all the castles. He used to wear **the ancient Greek Macedonian helmet with the double-horn**. A battle follows the other in order to keep free his province from tyrants. He **dies on 17 January 1468, at the age of 64 years old**, from a fever that was caused by malaria. He was buried in the Church of Saint Nicholas in the Alessjo (ancient Lissos). He was succeeded by his son Ioannis Kastriotis.

### - ETHNICITY -

The struggles of **Georgios Kastriotis** were those of an Orthodox Christian leader against the Turks in order to keep the province free. He was an Epirotan Greek, as irrefutably declare the following **Historical Sources** and trustful documents:

- **Marini Barletii, his first biographer from Skodra (beginning of the 16th century AD)**, calls him "Epirotan prince" and "Sovereign of Epirus", while in the entire biography he is referred to only as an Epirotan, but never as an Albanian.
- **Georgios Kastriotis himself addressing to the sovereign of Taranta, Ioannis Antonio**, revealing his origin and his genuine feelings, writes (**in Greek**, of course): "**my forefathers were Epirotans, from which Pyrrhos rose**, whom only the Romans could push back".
- Similarly, in **his letter to the Italian Ursini, from the year 1460**, he is referring to himself as to a descendant of the Epirotans, but not of the Illyrians.
- **He had Greek education and spoke the Greek language**. Consequently, **the letters he sent were written in the Greek language**, like that to King Alfonso, monarch of Aragon, Naples and Sicily.
- Moreover **the biographer of the Turkish Ali Pasha of Ioannina, Ahmet Moyfjt**, writes about Georgios Kastriotis: "in the year 1443 **the Greek sovereign Kastriotis** escaped from the Ottoman camp of Morava and went to the seat of his ancestors, in Krougia".
- **Italian, English and Swedish reports consider Georgios Kastriotis a Greek**. Thus **the Italian A. Salvi** in the tragedy of 1718 mentions him as a Greek (**Greco Georgios Kastriotis**). The **Englishman C. Randall in 1810** calls him "Greek Hero" (**Grecian Hero**), while **the Swedish Barrau initially and Rudbeck later (1835) consider Georgios Kastriotis a Greek**.
- **The book of the French historian Paganel ("Histoire de Scanderbey")**, which was published in Paris in 1855, writes about him that he was obviously a Greek.
- An Albanian admission of the Greek Epirotan origin of Georgios Kastriotis is **the Albanian stamp of 1968**, marking the celebration of 500 years from his death, which shows the cover of the book "History" of Barletii and which writes clearly that he was an Epirotan prince ("Epirotarum Principis"), but not Albanian or Illyrian. The cover writes: "HISTORIA DE VITA ET GESTIS SCANDERBEGI **EPIROTARUM PRINCIPIS**".
- **Danish Franz Jessen**, military correspondent of the Parisian newspaper "Le Temps", doubts about the Albanian origin of Georgios Kastriotis, stressing in his lecture: "The question is also, if this Georgios Kastriotis could be considered Albanian, since he was the son of **the Greek Ioannis Kastriotis** and of a Serbian princess".

