

# State of the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church after 1990

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**Özet:** Enver Hoca dönemi sonrası Arnavutluk'da yeniden bir dini canlanma faaliyeti başladı. Arnavut Ortodoks Kilisesinin yeniden yapılanması konusunda ilk adım Yunan Ortodoks Kilisesinden geldi. Ancak bu, Arnavut Ortodokslara yardımdan ziyade onları Helenleştirme amacına yönelik bir yapı arz etmekteydi. Bu bağlamda başpiskopos Anastas Yanullatos devreye sokuldu. Ancak bu, Arnavut Ortodoksları arasında ciddi rahatsızlıkların da sebebi oldu

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Arnavutluk, Otesefal Ortodoks Kilise, .Ortodoksluk, Yunan Ortodoks Kilisesi.

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From the year 1990, major political changes took place all over the World, especially in the Soviet Union and in the Balkans, which affected start of changes in other aspects of society as well. For many nations this period represents the transfer period from one system to another. In fact, it represents transfer from local and national mentality to the global one, hence, from a communist (monist) system into a democratic one. In comparison to communism, democracy was proved to be more favorable for the reli-

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gious life. In a word, religion and in general religious activities reappeared in the democratic system. On the other hand, in global aspect, it is the time when first steps for change from modern into postmodern times occur. From a period when religion was ignored to a period when religion plays important role in every day life of the society. Postmodern times are characterized with a very important phenomena and that is the globalization<sup>1</sup>, which includes two major facts. Firstly, it wants to dominate whole world politically, economically and socially. Secondly, globalization intends to increase the influence, dependence and mutual relation between states and societies all over the world. Mutual dependency, which is growing with the globalization, continuously makes ones life dependent on decisions and news that are coming from far places. In the beginning of the XXI century even developed and powerful countries had to deal with the issue of the mutual dependency. National states, which have fixed borders, are forced to deal with the unlimited influence of communication's technology, peoples move, deteriorations and regional conflicts, international associations/organizations and other economical problems. Therefore we

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<sup>1</sup> Main pretenses of those ones that oppose the globalization, according to professor Aydin are: globalization follows a dictatorial road of capital and bosses, where the profit is consider as main value, expenses as worship and people are consider as clients/buyers. Globalization, together with a venue concept of developed social states, venues the felling of social responsibility. Actors of economic globalization are willing to make their game bigger till that grade where they don't have time to think about negative impact that this might have in the civil society. It is pretended that globalization is a process that we can't stop and stand in front of it. If this pretense is true, than there is no other solution except everyone demeaning to this system? Which means that people don't right of speech and self decision, in contrary they are facing the expression "don't oppose because we step on you". Globalize economy according to some theologian, is preparing a harmful secularism for the religious feeling and moral, because spiritual force it is blocked in this case. We shouldn't forget that global action/deeds can create big ethical wound. (Mehmet Aydin, *Kuresellesmeye Genel Bir Bakis*, p.13-20 and M.A. Muqtedir Han, "Glokal " Siyasete Kimlik Insasi, *Globallesme Bir Aldatmaca Mi?*, *Inkilab*, Istanbul, March 2002, p. 94; Bryen S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism*, London and New York, 1994, p. 77-78; Qani Nesimi, *Në dobi apo në dëm të njeriut*, *Vepra*, nr. 55, Shkup, 2003).

can not say religion remained unaffected in all this process, but to the contrary, not that was only affected but also played its role in these global changes.<sup>2</sup>

In Albania, such a reappearance and rouse took part after fall of the communist system<sup>3</sup> of Enver Hoxha. Those few mosques and churches that had survived from such a barbaric system returned back to life<sup>4</sup>, they vivified and religious activities were orga-

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<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Erdogan, "Siyaset ve Hukuk Perspektifinden Kuresellesme", *Kuresellesme*, Ufuk Kitapları, İstanbul, 2002, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Communist ideology, namely the Enverian one, based in antireligious principle, did not ban only everything related to religion, but even nationalistic ideas and the ideas which supported keeping alive the strong and historical tolerant feeling of Albanians, tried to portray as atheistic and antireligious. Hence, concerning Pashko Vasa's expression "*Skicë e mendimit politik shqiptar*-The religion of Albanians is Albanianism", Feraj says that this expression doesn't come out of Enver Hoxha's atheism. Firstly, says Feraj, in Vasa's poetry there is an urge to put national identity above religion. This urge can be found among the majority of nationalists of other nations and is not something characteristic for Albanians only. However, the urge for a hierarchy of identities, i.e. putting national identity above the religious identity doesn't logically mean atheism. Secondly, in Vasa's poetry the common urge of all Albanians nationalism in a multi-religious environment is expressed. But nor the urge for tolerance doesn't mean atheism. (see Husamedin Feraj, *Skicë e mendimit politik shqiptar*, LogosA, Shkup, 1999, p. 280).

<sup>4</sup> Albanians who live in Albania and Kosovo as Albanian states and in Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece as parts of the nation and in Diaspora as emigrants, belong to the two biggest monotheistic religions: Islam and Christianity (Catholics and Orthodox). At the end of XIX century and beginning of XX century Albanians made up the vast majority of the population in the four provinces of Shkodra, Kosovo, Bitola and Janina, out of which, 1.305.080 were Muslims, 109.592 – Catholics and 232.020 Orthodox. Similar situation we have even today, where 70% of the Albanians are Muslims, 20% - Catholics and 10% Orthodox. (See Nathalie Clayer, *Islam, state and society in post-Communist Albania, Muslim identity and the Balkan State*, ed. Hugh Poulton and Suha Taji-Farouki, London, 1997, page 117; Charles and Barbara Jelovich, *The establishment of the Balkan National States 1804-1920*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1993, pages 222-223; Kristaq Prifti, *Diversiteti fetar dhe uniteti kombëtar te shqiptarët*, Studime historike 1-2, year LV (XXXVIII), ASHRSH, Instituti i historisë, Tirana 2001, page 25; Kristaq Prifti, *Popullsia muslimane shqiptare në Ballkan në fund të shek. XIX dhe në fillim të shek. XX*, *Feja, kultura dhe*

nized there again. Those few clergymen that managed to survive such harsh period returned to their religious obligation in mosques and churches (either catholic or orthodox). Books, brochures, magazines, newspapers and other writings started being published again, which during monist system were locked in archives, state and private libraries.

Restoration and construction of new worshipping places started. Religious high schools and faculties were opened.<sup>5</sup> Religious life started to be organized in every aspect. This development was supported not only by believers of different religions from Albania but as well from other countries where there was a freedom of religion. Among the aid that was coming to Albania, beside those which had pure religious purpose, there was also aid with political background and assimilation culture.

First aid for Orthodox Albanians came from Greek Orthodox Church, i.e. Greece. Greek aid wasn't only for religious purpose, but it included its old/fossilized Anti-Albanian ambitions. Hence the activities of Greek priests in Albania seemed to have the aim of Hellenizing Albanians rather than helping them. For example, the aim of the arrival of the Greek priest, Sebastianos in Albania was by preaching liturgy in Greek language, to teach the Greek to the Albanians and to convince them that the Greek language is the language of the orthodox religion. This policy of Sebastianos failed<sup>6</sup> because the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (AAOCh) was already autocephalous. It is known that AAOCh had autocephalous status since 1937, and was independent from Fanar Patriarchy<sup>7</sup> and other orthodox churches. No other orthodox church can interfere in the internal affairs of another autocephalous church, and can not appoint archbishop instead of it. In

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*tradita fetare te shqiptarët*– International symposium held in Prishtina on 15, 16, 17 of October 1992, Prishtina 1995, p. 161).

<sup>5</sup> Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy, St. Vlash-Durres, <http://www.orthodoxalbania.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Sherif Delvina, *Pa pavarësi fetare nuk ka pavarësi kombëtare*, Tirana, 1998, p.14.

<sup>7</sup> It is about administrative independence and not about dogmatic independence from the Fanar Patriarchy.

case a church accepts such orders from outside it puts in a risk its autocephalous status. In that case this church can't be called autocephalous but autonomous. That is why Sebastianos' policy was in contradiction with church regulations. Such policy and aim of Sebastianos can be clearly seen at the appeal that he made to the Greek Prime Minister Micotakis, where according to Greek newspaper "Elefteros" printed on 12 August 1992 is quoted: "It is a shame stopping the entrance of the three Greek bishops that Fanar Patriarchy appointed for the Orthodox Albanians".<sup>8</sup> The same priest, in the same newspaper appeals again to the Prime Minister Micotakis by saying: "Respond by force to Albania's provocation".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Delvina, Delvina, *Pa pavarësi fetare nuk ka pavarësi kombëtare*, , p.14.

<sup>9</sup> Albanians have been allies of the Ottoman Empire. The Orthodox world (Slavic and Greek) as it acts now, has used different methods in order to ruin this alliance and friendship between Albanians and Ottomans. One of the methods of ruining this friendship has been the incitement of local wars (uprisings) against the Ottoman State. In his "Kujtime" (Memories), Eqrem Beu talks about a document from the Greek Parliament Library, which is a decision of the so called Labëria Assembly (18 March 1847) led by Mahmut Bej Vlora, Abdyl Bej Delvina and Myslim Gjonlekaj, in which the Greek Prime minister Koletis is called to support the "Greek-Albanian Kingdom", where Greeks and Albanians would be autonomous from each other. This document was signed by 44 renowned Albanian figures, out of which only 5 were orthodox. But, Koletis could not persuade, neither his colleagues, nor the Greek Parliament about the status that Albanians were supposed to get. Direct fighting was another method which was used and afterwards blaming the other side, i.e. blaming the Albanians for the turmoil. As an example, during the Krime war, Serbs, Montenegrins and Greeks persecuted with the deepest hatred the Albanians from Niš and its vicinities, south of Montenegro and Janina region. (Eqrem Bej Vlora, *Kujtime 1885-1925*, SHLK, Tirana, 2003, p. 153-154). It is important to mention that Greece was not involved in the war of 1877-1878, but its units continued to carry out military actions within the Albanian land. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1878, the Greek Andarts, led by two Orthodox Albanians, Greek-Albanian Colonel Pangallos and Major Spiro Milo, from the region of Himara, disembarked in Saranda (Santi Quaranta) between Butrint and Lëkurs village and conquered the coast. They were driven out and dispersed by Albanians. But, the unfortunate end of the Krime War for the Ottoman Empire, especially the Saint Stefan peace conditions forced the Empire to give up from a big part of Albania and Balkans. The east part of Albania was given to Bulgaria while the north-east and Kosovo was handed

In this article he goes even further by mentioning the expansionist ideology the so called "Megalo ideas"<sup>10</sup> (the idea of forming Great Greece), with these words: "Even Epir's stones tell that is t all Greece until river Shkumbin"<sup>11</sup>". From here can be clearly seen Sebastianos' aim and desire.<sup>12</sup>

According to Albanian orthodox believers, August the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1992, is of great importance and takes an important place in the history of the Albanian Orthodox church. At this time AAOCh had its lawful revivification. After the communist times, Albania did not lack only priests, but religious literature as well. After this transition, orthodox Albanians, managed to have, for the first time, their archbishop. Albanians believers did not elect the new archbishop named Anastas Yanullatos but he was brought and nominated from outside. According to newspaper "Ngjallja", which is published by AAOCh and it is dominated by Yanullatos supporters, some gaps and needs of the church started to be filled. But beside Yanullatos supporters, there were people who opposed his coming. Those who were against the coming Yanullatos, according

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over to Serbia. All this dreadful threat accelerated even more the awakening of the Albanian national awareness. The anti-Albanian propaganda of the Greeks and Slavs had its influence even in the center of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul. Therefore the autonomy asked from the Empire by the Albanians was not granted. The intrigues of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchy as well as the 'friendly' warnings of the Russian Ambassador in Istanbul had also a great influence. (Eqrem Bej Vlora, *Kujtime 1885-1925*, SHLK, Tirana, 2003, p. 158-159, 166).

<sup>10</sup> "Megalo idea" is Hellenic political idea, which aims at creating a Great Greek state by damaging neighboring countries, i.e. Albania. Fanar Orthodox Patriarchy in Istanbul supports this idea as well. Similar ideas could be found in Serbian-Slavic-orthodox ideas. In 1844, the minister of Serbia by name Grashanin was the first to make public the plan which later became the base of Serbian politics know in history as "Naçertanie" (The project), according to which Serbs as Greeks wanted to create the Great Serbo-Slavic state, which will restore the middle age empire of Tsar Stefan Dushan. Both programs had chauvinist character and expressed expansionist aspiration of the Greek and Serbian bourgeoisie. (See *Historia popullit shqiptar*, II, ASHSH, Toena, Tirana, 2002, p.102)

<sup>11</sup> Shkumbin is a river in the northern part of Albania.

<sup>12</sup> Akt që u bë baza e rimëkëmbjes së vryllshme të kishës sonë, *Ngjallja*, August 1999, p. 1-2.

to the newspaper "Ngjallja", did not want progress and development of the Albanian Orthodox Church.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, Yanullatos' opponents, didn't act like that because they were against him, but because Yanullatos himself did not respect and was against the status of AAOCh from 1929.<sup>14</sup> Concerning Yanullatos' acceptance, Albanians orthodox were divided into two groups: those who thought that his election was canonic and the others who thought that he was anti-canonic. The first group, according to who Yanullatos' election was canonic, based their opinion on the decisions that were taken in the third congress of AAOCh in 1950 under Enver Hoxha's dictatorship. In this congress the criteria for the priests, bishops and archbishops to be of the Albanian origin, to speak the Albanian Language and to be Albanian citizens was removed from the statute. In the previous statute of the second congress, held in Korça in 1929, was the following article: "Archbishops, bishops, regional assistants of bishops, secretary general of the Synod, assistants of the archbishops and other bishops should have Albanian blood, speak the Albanian language and have Albanian citizenship".<sup>15</sup> This statute was changed by communist administrators, and it wasn't accepted the statute of AAOCh from 1929.

Yanullatos' supporters, those who think that his election was canonic, glorify and greet the work he is doing in Albania. For example if we take a look at the newspaper "Ngjallja", it can be clearly seen that there are positive articles about Yanullatos, and articles that try to respond to different articles that critique him in different newspapers.<sup>16</sup> The same as Yanullatos pretends that he is

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<sup>13</sup> Akt që u bë baza e rimëkëmbjes së vullshme të kishës sonë, p. 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> An interview of Kastriot Dervishi with father Nikolla Marku, Bota Sot newspaper, 30 May 2000, p. 19

<sup>15</sup> Statuti i Kishës Orthodhokse Autoqefale të Shqipnisë, Korça 1929, article 16.

<sup>16</sup> A denial-protest to editors of "Republika" newspaper, from "Ngjallja", February 1996, p. 10.

the one who revived the Orthodox Church, there are people in Albania who think the same and compare him with apostles.<sup>17</sup>

The opinion of Yanullatos' opponents, which is the second group of Albanian orthodox believers, is based in statute of AAOCh from 1929, which is recognized from Fanar Patriarchy and other orthodox churches. According to other churches, it can not be imagined, that the head of an autocephalous church, such as the Albanian Orthodox Church, to be appointed an archbishop from some other orthodox church. Otherwise, if a church accepts such an appointment it can't be longer considered as autocephalous but remains autonomous. Therefore, the fact that Yanullatos is the head of AAOCh, shows clearly that such an act is against the statute of Albanian Church.

The group which considers Yanullatos as anti-canonic does not recognize the statute of AAOCh prepared in 1950. About that statute, Delvina says the following: "On the page four of the newspaper "Ngjallja", in the article "Which statute they accuse us that we do not follow?", among other things, Sotir Plaku reminds us that the statute of 1950 is still in force". This statute, says Delvina, suits to Sotir Plaku, Aleko Dhima, Dhimitër Beduli and his company, because it is missing the article 16. The author, says Delvina, shows that article 16 was against any Albanian coming from Diaspora, even against Noli<sup>18</sup> himself, who, according to him, did not have

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<sup>17</sup> Delvina, p. 13

<sup>18</sup> Fan Stilian Noli was born on 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1882, in Edrene, Turkey. During 1900- 1903 he goes to Greece to continue his studding in the faculty of philosophy, which he stopped due to financial reasons. In year 1904, he worked in Egypt as a teacher of Greek language. Noli published his writings in the Albanian newspapers like "Drita", "Kombi", "Dielli", "Vatra", and among many articles and translations he translated Sami Frashëri's writing "Albania, what it was, what it was and what is going to be". In 1908, in USA he becomes the president of Albanian Orthodox Church. From 10 June 1924 until 24 December 1924, after the Democratic Revolution in Albania, he becomes the Prime Minister of Albania. The last 30 years of his life, he lived in Florida, USA, where he died in 13 March 1965. Noli spoke many Balkan and worldwide languages. He wrote and translated many books. (*Historia e letërsisë shqiptare*, Dhimitër Shuteriqi, Rilindja, Prishtina 1989, p. 483- 490). When Hysamedin Feraj talks about Noli, he



the Albanian citizenship at that time. According to the writer of the article, in order to be elected as archbishop, Noli fulfilled only the criteria of the language and the blood, but not the citizenship criteria. Maybe the writer of the article, says Delvina, did not know that Noli was getting pension from King Zogu, and King Zogu never took away citizenship from any Albanian.<sup>19</sup>

It could be seen that the group which supports Yanullatos accepts the statute approved in 1950, because it suits them when proving their thesis, regardless if is canonic or not. Only in this way Yanullatos' election can be legitimate. Otherwise, in Albania, Yanullatos can not stay and act neither as bishop nor as archbishop, but only as assistant bishop.

Yanullatos, in parallel with his supporters, says that the statute of 1929 has lost its power anymore, but the statute of 1950 is canonic and legitimate, and this one is in accordance with the new conditions of the church.<sup>20</sup>

According to my opinion there is a paradox in the opinion of Yanullatos and his supporters. If you once say that the communist system which dominated in Albania after the World War II was against the religion, manipulates it and bans it and afterwards you say that the III Congress of AAOCh which was held in 1950 under

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says that: "Noli sometimes was pan Balkanic, sometimes republican, sometimes communist, meaning once he preferred labor-village republic the next time he preferred parliamentary republic". He portrays Noli as Pro-Russian, Pro-Greek and Pro-Serb. Noli has also said that: "Reunion of Albanian territories is luxury for Albanians and Çamëria is internal affair of Greece". He was very close to Russians on religious and political aspect. The Russians, who were in dispute with the Greek Church, recognized the Albanian Church. On the other hand, in Albania Noli was propagating the achievements of Russia under Bolshevik regime. Noli did this after he requested to have friendly and diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Feraj portrays Noli also as an activist who was against active participation of Kosovars in the political life of Albania. Feraj says that it was Noli that politically killed Bajram Curri and physically killed King Zogu. After that Noli wrote a beautiful elegy about Bajram Curri. (Husamedin Feraj, "*Skicë e mendimit politik shqiptar*", Logos-A, Shkupi, p.175- 181).

<sup>19</sup> Delvina, p.13.

<sup>20</sup> Delvina, p.13.

the dictatorship of Enver Hoxha, is legitimate and canonic, you are in contradiction with yourself, so its a paradox. If congress would be considered legitimate and canonic then the communist state should not be considered as an enemy of the religion. But, since the religious enmity of the communist state is obvious, then every thing that was done regarding religion at that time, is either flaw or against the religion.

While, concerning the appointment of Yanullatos, weather it is canonic or not, it is clear from the legislative aspect that his appointment is anti-canonic. I would like to emphasize another important issue. It is true that Yanullatos introduced good things to AAOCh in organization, finance and administration. If he would have done that in form of help and as a strong supporter for the sake of religious ideals and not for carrier, anti-Albanian and anti-canonic purposes, then I would think that every thing would have been okay.

Concerning this issue, it also said that, even though all the religions were banned, violence that was used from the communist regime of Enver Hoxha, was not the same against all religions. The violence used against Catholics and Muslims wasn't wielded against Orthodox.<sup>21</sup>

Petrit Bidoshi says that Yanullatos came in Albania after the Greek chauvinist Sebastianos, from a country he should not have come. He was appointed to come to Albania from the Istanbul Patriarchy. Therefore the Synod and the secretary Alekso Dhima are anti-canonic. Bidoshi also mentions Yanullatos saying: "I am here temporarily, to revive the Orthodox Church."<sup>22</sup>

Bidoshi also tells us for some illegitimate activities that the council of the church is conducting under Yanullatos' leadership. Just for illustration, we will mention the following:

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<sup>21</sup> Feraj "Skicë e mendimit politik shqiptar", p. 350.

<sup>22</sup> Petrit Bidoshi, Kisha Autoqefale Shqiptare dhe problemet e saj të sotme, 70 vjet Kisha Autoqefale Ortodokse Shqiptare, Simpozium Tirana 1992, Tirana, 1993, p.76.

- Orthodox Church, i.e. its patristic element eliminated the patriotic element that played the leading role in opening and reactivating orthodox churches in Tirana and Durrës after the fall of communist regime.

- It refused the offer of Romania, Bulgaria and USA for preparation of the students, and preferred only the Greek offer.

- Those who have worked for the Albanian Orthodox Church were not appointed as priests in Albania. So those who were working in Elbasan and were against Yanullatos were told that if they would not be baptized and appointed from the central church, then they will appoint themselves on their own.

- Even though Albanian orthodox families were promised aid, such an aid never came.

- Beside this, a list of the Orthodox Albanians from the south who converted to Greeks was sent to Geneva. Yanullatos and his supporters never mentioned Kissi, Xhuvani, Banushi who are known as bishops of the Orthodox Church.

- Yanullatos never criticized the Greek chauvinist opinion that Greece is until river Shkumbin. According to Bidoshi, the worst behavior and out of any church normative, is disrespect of the article 16 of the AAOC statute from 1929, which was recognized by Fanar Patriarchy in 1937.<sup>23</sup>

Nomination of Yanullatos from Fanar Patriarchy for Archbishop of the Albanian Orthodox Church was strongly criticized by Albanian orthodox patriots and the truth was revealed. For that purpose two Albanian orthodox representatives visited Yanullatos and asked him not to accept this function because it will harm the AAOC. Even though they were promised that such a thing will not happen, it happened with a special ceremony. Yanullatos was declared archbishop. After this event the number of his opponents increased. Election of Yanullatos for archbishop was celebrated by a small group of supporters while the opponents protested by

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<sup>23</sup> Bidoshi, p.76

shouting the slogans: “Fan Noli”, “Papa Kristo Negovani”, “The church is Albanian church”, “Church is ours”, “Yanullatos out of Albania!” Because the protest was getting bigger, the ceremony could not take place in the church, but it was held in hotel.<sup>24</sup>

Yanullatos’ supporters try to describe this event in different way. Some of them say that appointment of a Greek as the head of the Albanian church doesn’t bring any harm to Albania, and further say: “Since Europe will not accept any state to change its borders, that can not happen in Kosovo as well!”.<sup>25</sup> In Albania could exist such ideas for border change, but time will tell that it’s going to be very hard to implement it.<sup>26</sup>

The above mentioned reason can’t be taken as true, because in Albania does not exist only Orthodox Church, but there is the Muslim Community to which majority of the population belongs, then the Catholic Church, temples and other religious organization and fractions. Based on the above mentioned theory, does these communities needed to bring leaders from abroad, since they lacked staff (talking about 1992)? Here one side is wrong. Certainly, Orthodox Albanians that support Yanullatos are wrong. If in each group we would have had a leader from abroad, then Albania would not be considered independent. But the well known slogan “In independent state independent church” is an inevitable principle of Orthodox Albanians from the beginning, used by Albanian Church until it got its independence.

This was not only in the interest of Orthodox Albanians, but in the interest of Albania as well. Anastas Yanullatos had entering permission to Albania given by the then president of Albania, Mr. Ramiz Alia.<sup>27</sup> When Yanullatos, was elected for archbishop of

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<sup>24</sup> Bidoshi, p.77-78

<sup>25</sup> Bidoshi, p.78

<sup>26</sup> On the question addressed to Kristofor Beduli “Why exactly Yanullatos was elected for Archbishop?” the publishing editor in chief in AAOC in 1999, I got the answer “Because there was no one else, we chose him”.

<sup>27</sup> Abdi Baleta, *Shqiptarët përballë shivinizmit serbo-grek,*, Tirana, 1995, p. 306.

AAOCh, president of Albania was Mr. Sali Berisha<sup>28</sup>, who accepted Yanullatos as temporary archbishop. Even though he was considered to be a temporary archbishop, it is not known until when this situation will last.

After long lasting negotiations between AAOCh, Albanian authorities and Fanar Patriarchy, the Holy Synod of AAOCh was formed in 1998. The Synod consisted of four persons headed by Anastas Yanullatos, archbishop of Tirana.<sup>29</sup>

At the moment AAOCh is divided in two groups, one with center in Tirana and the other one with center in Elbasan, i.e. the ones that support Yanullatos and the others who oppose him.



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**Abstract:** After fall of the communist system of Enver Hoxha, there appeared the reappearance of religions and religious bodies. First aid for Orthodox Albanians came from Greek Orthodox Church. The activities of Greek priests in Albania seemed to have the aim of Hellenizing Albanians rather than helping them. The new archbishop, Anastas Yanullatos was brought and nominated from outside. His nomination was strongly criticized by Albanian orthodox patriots.

**Key Words:** Albanian, Autocephalous Orthodox Church, Orthodoxy, Greek Orthodox Church

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<sup>28</sup> Delvina, p. 59 and 68.

<sup>29</sup> *The Holy Synod*, <http://www.orthodhoxalbania.org/>; *Kalendari Orthodhoks* 1999, AAOC, Tirana, 1999, p. 4-5.