

raphy and the institutions of their various inhabitants, and in particular, on political, economic and social life in North Africa.

Bibliography: Widmenstad, *Evangelia syriaca*, 1555, preface; Casiri, *Bibliotheca arabico-hispana*, Madrid 1770, i, 172 ff.; L. Massignon, *Le Maroc dans les premières années du XVI^e siècle, tableau géographique d'après Léon l'Africain*, Algiers 1906, 4-II, 32-69; A. Codazzi, in *Enciclopedia italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti*, Rome 1933, xx, 899; A. Mieli, *La science arabe*, Appx. I, Paris 1938; J. Dresch, *Léon l'Africain. Vers 1495-1550*, in *Les explorateurs célèbres*, Paris 1947, 100-1; tr. Épaulard, introd. (Ed.)

✕ LEON [see LIYŪN]

✕ LEPANTO [see AYNABAKHTI]

— LEPROSY [see DJUDHĀM, in Suppl.]

T LERIDA [see LĀRIDA]

✕ LESH (Ottoman لَش, from the Albanian, Italian Alessio), a minor port, military stronghold and administrative centre in northern Albania, 30 km. to the south of Shkodër/Scutari, which was part of the Ottoman empire between 1478 and 1912.

Lesh, the classical Lissus, is one of the oldest urban centres of the country. It is built on the banks of the river Drin not far from its estuary, and is overlooked by two isolated hills, each carrying the ruins of ancient fortifications. This setting largely determined the history and the function of Lesh; it was a military strongpoint in periods of danger and a harbour in more peaceful times. During antiquity, both hilltops and the lower town on the river were surrounded by an enormous wall, parts of which still survive. This large city was destroyed during the invasions of the Barbarians (592 A.D.), and never recovered again. Anna Comnena mentions Lissus in her *Alexiade* as a strong Byzantine fortress and as fairly well-inhabited. In the 13th century, Lesh was included in the Serbian state, together with Shkodër. During the dismemberment of the Serbian empire, after the mid-4th century, Lesh became a part of the minor Albanian principality of Dukagîn, but its lord ceded Lesh to the Republic of Venice in 1393. The citadel on the lower of the two hills (the old Acropolis on the higher hill had been left in ruins since classical times) was in ruins in the Venetian period. The Signoria decided only to rebuild the walls of the lower town on the river, which was done between 1404 and 1430. An enormous conflagration destroyed most of the settlement in 1440. In 1451 the new city wall was ready, partly paid for by Venice, partly by the local inhabitants.

In 1468 the famous rebel against the Ottomans and national hero of the Albanians, George Kastriot Skanderbeg, died in Lesh and was buried in the Gothic cathedral of St. Nicolas in the lower town, an event described in detail by the chronicler Marin Barletius. Ten years later, during Sultan Mehmed Fâtih's campaign against Shkodër (known to the Ottomans as Iskenderiyye), Lesh was captured and incorporated in the Ottoman realm. Before they fled with wives, children and property to the ships that were waiting in the river, the inhabitants of Lesh set fire to the city. The conquest is related by Tursun Beg in his *Ta'rikh-i Abu 'l-Fatih* and by Sa'd al-Dîn in his *Tâdj al-tawârikh*.

It was long before the ruined town recovered. At first, Lesh seems to have been included in the *sandjak* of Elbasan, but later (after 1485 and perhaps after the Venetian interlude) it was added to that of Iskenderiyye. In 1501, during Bâyezid II's short war with Venice, Lesh was taken by Venetian

forces, who kept it for a short period. When they retreated, they had the town walls destroyed. The Ottomans recaptured a totally wrecked town. They decided to rebuild the citadel on the hill, a site which offered better chances for defence than the place along the river. The work was finished in 928/1522, as is attested by a monumental Ottoman inscription—now preserved in the Lesh Historical Museum—which mentions the name of Sultân Süleymân, the date in numbers and in the form of a chronogram, and the name of the architect as Derwish Mehmed, the son of Skura. The latter must have been a member of the well-known Albanian noble family of that name.

In the first half of the 16th century, Lesh remained a small place. The İdjimâl defter no. 367 of 1530-6, preserved in the Başbakanlık Arşivi in Istanbul, mentions it as a village in the *liwâ'* of Iskenderiyye, having 144 households. The Mufaşşal defter T.K. 63 of the *liwâ'* of Dukagîn, preserved in the Tapu ve Kadastro Gen. Müd. in Ankara (fols. 5a-6b), from 999/1590-1 (dated by internal evidence), mentions Lesh as an urban settlement (*varosh*) in the *sandjak* of Dukagîn. The latter was set up in the thirties or forties of the 16th century and had Peç (Ipek) as its chef-lieu, although the *sandjak-begi* resided sometimes in Lesh. Western sources mention in 1553 a figure of 80 houses of Turks in the castle on the hill (which is called "Castel Nova"). The lower town (il-Borgo) is described as a predominantly Christian place. The latter developed slowly into a centre of trade.

In the thirties of the 16th century, a strong impetus to this function of the town was given by the Ottoman governor of Shkodër (later also in Thessaloniki and Prizren), Kukul Mehmed Beg of Prizren. At his expense, the caravan road through the mountains from Lesh to Prizren in the interior was safeguarded by a chain of caravanserais. Two of them were built in Lesh itself, together with 50 shops, which were part of the *wakf* property of Kukul Beg's foundations in Prizren and its surroundings.

The Mufaşşal defter T.K. 63 mentions that a part of the inhabitants of Lesh were "outside the old register", which means that they had moved in from elsewhere. They gained their living as workers in the harbour and had the Filuri status as concerned taxes and paid only a lump sum of 52 *akçes* yearly. The register mentions 141 Christian households of them and six of Muslims, all living in the newly-founded suburb of "Ishula" (Ishull Leshë) which was formerly a *mezra'a*.

In or around 1580, the old cathedral of St. Nicolas was confiscated by the Ottomans and turned into a mosque, this being reported in the visitation report of the bishop of Bar (Antivari) Marino Bizzi in 1610. In 1614 the open town is said to have numbered 500 Turkish (read: Muslim) households. Hâdjî Khalifa mentions Lesh as a part of the *sandjak* of Dukagîn and situated near the district of Zadrina, whose inhabitants were rebellious Albanians. Ewliyâ Çelebi visited Lesh in 1072/1661-2 on his way to Shkodër. At that time, Lesh was a *voyvodelik* in the *sandjak* of Dukagîn and the seat of the provincial administration of the area. In the castle, built on a steep rock, was a garrison under command of a *diz-dâr* and only a few houses of civilians. An Ottoman budget of the year 1079/1669-70 has 126 men as garrison for the "Castle of Lesh in the *liwâ'* of Dukagîn". The 17th century Lesh cannot have been very prosperous. Ewliyâ mentions that its houses were rather poor. The church-mosque was deserted in the