

**The Viennese scholar who almost became King of Albania:
Baron Franz Nopcsa and his contribution to Albanian studies**

by
Robert Elsie

On 26 April 1933, the *Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna published the following article:

*Bloody drama in the Singerstrasse.
Scholar commits murder and suicide.*

"As we have already reported, the fifty-five year old lecturer Baron Franz Nopcsa shot his longtime secretary, the forty-five year old Albanian Bayazid Elmas Doda, yesterday morning in his fourth-storey apartment in house No. 1 of Singerstrasse 12 and then committed suicide at the desk of his study by shooting himself through the mouth. The autopsy showed that the secretary received two gunshot wounds at almost the same spot on his left temple and that these bullets went right through his skull and came to rest in the polstering on the back of the armchair.

Nopcsa seems to have prepared the deed carefully. A number of sealed messages of farewell were found, as were a sealed will addressed to a Viennese lawyer and a few other documents. That material motives may also have been involved can be deduced not only from testimony from his maid, who had not received her salary for four months and from the fact that Franz Nopcsa, who was devoted to his books and collections, had been planning to sell off his extensive library containing many a unique volume.

... a letter to the police, "The motive for my suicide is a nervous breakdown. The reason that I shot my longtime friend and secretary, Mr Bayazid Elmas Doda, in his sleep without his suspecting at all is that I did not wish to leave him behind sick, in misery and without a penny, because he would have suffered too much. I wish to be cremated."

Thus ended the life of Baron Franz Nopcsa of Felsöszi (1877-1933), one of the most prominent researchers and scholars of his day. Nopcsa was born the son of a family of Hungarian aristocrats on 3 May 1877 at the family estate in Szacsal (Sacel) near Hatzeg in Transylvania. He was able to finish his schooling at the Maria-Theresianum in Vienna with the support of his uncle and godfather, Franz von Nopcsa, who was head master of the court of the Empress Elisabeth. The perhaps decisive event of his younger years took place during an outing near Szentpéterfalva in 1895. There he and his sister Iona discovered some fossilized bones belonging to a dinosaur, which he sent to the geologist and palaeontologist, Professor Eduard Suess in Vienna. From graduation in 1897 to 1903, Nopcsa studied under Suess at the University of Vienna, which was a leading centre of palaeontological studies at the time.

Nopcsa developed quickly into a talented scholar himself. On 21 July 1899, at the age of twenty-two, he held his first lecture at the Academy of Sciences in Vienna on *Dinossaurierreste in Siebenbürgen* (Dinosaur remnants in Transylvania) and attracted much attention with it. He is considered one of the founders of palaeophysiology, in particular because of his internationally renowned studies on reptile fossils. Well known were his hypotheses on the 'running proavis,' on the warm-bloodedness of pterosaurs, and on the significance of a number of endocrine processes which he considered to have had an important influence on the evolution and extinction of dinosaurs. Not all of his theories were accepted at the time, but they did succeed in advancing

and stimulating a wide range of fields of palaeontology. Equally important were Nopcsa's achievements in the field of geology, for example, his research into the tectonic structures of the western Balkan mountain ranges, where he defended some rather unusual theories.

In later years, he also became one of the leading Albania specialists of his times. His publications in the field of Albanian studies from 1907 to 1932 were concentrated primarily in the fields of prehistory, early Balkan history, ethnology, geography, modern history and Albanian customary law, i.e. the *Kanun*. His early works such as *Das Katholische Nordalbanien* (Catholic northern Albania), Budapest 1907, *Aus Šala und Klementi* (From Shala and Kelmendi), Sarajevo 1910, and *Haus und Hausrat im katholischen Nordalbanien* (House and household in Catholic northern Albania), Sarajevo 1912, and *Beiträge zur Vorgeschichte und Ethnologie Nordalbaniens* (Contributions to the prehistory and ethnology of northern Albania), Sarajevo 1912, contain a myriad of fascinating observations, even though from a modern perspective the material may not always seem well organized. In his later years, when he had settled down and was no longer travelling in the Balkans, he produced ambitious works of sounder scholarly quality. Among the best known of these are *Bauten, Trachten und Geräte Nordalbaniens* (Buildings, costumes and tools of northern Albania), Berlin and Leipzig 1925, and, in particular, the 620-page *Geologie und Geographie Nordalbaniens* (Geology and Geography of northern Albania), Öhringen 1932, which may be considered the *magnum opus* of the Albanological studies he published during his lifetime.

The list of Nopcsa's publications includes over 186 works, primarily in the three above-mentioned fields of palaeontology, geology and Albanian studies. At least fifty-four of these works are related specifically to Albania.

Nopcsa's early death, however, left some important works unpublished. The scholarly works of a palaeontological nature from his estate were donated to the British Museum in London. The Albanological part of his estate went to his colleague, the equally renowned specialist in Albanian studies, Professor Norbert Jokl (1877-1942) of Vienna. In a letter written on 24 April 1933, the day of his death, Nopcsa gave Jokl a list of the manuscripts he was leaving him and asked him to contact Count Paul Teleki in Budapest to arrange for their publication. For financial reasons, these major works were never published at the time. Since Jokl's murder at the hands of the Nazis in early May 1942, the Albanological manuscripts have been preserved in the Manuscript Division of the Austrian National Library in the Hofburg in Vienna.

Five manuscripts from this estate are of particular significance. Firstly is the 510-page study *Albanien: die Bergstämme Nordalbaniens und ihr Gewohnheitsrecht* (Albania, the mountain tribes of northern Albania and their customary law), Ser. nov. 9392, which has fortunately been published recently, in part at least by Fatos Baxhaku and Karl Kaser in their book *Die Stammesgesellschaften Nordalbaniens, Berichte und Forschungen österreichischer Konsuln und Gelehrter, 1861-1917* (The tribal societies of northern Albania, reports and research by Austrian consuls and scholars, 1861-1917), Vienna, Cologne & Weimar 1996. Secondly, mention must be made of his *Religiöse Anschauungen, Sitten und Gebräuche* (Religious views, habits and customs), Ser. nov. 9393, a 242-page study of Albanian folklore, of which the first fifty-eight pages are unfortunately missing. Thirdly are the *Gedichte des Colez Marku, 1895-1932* (Poems of Colez Marku, 1895-1932), Ser. nov. 11912, a 110-page volume of modest German verse containing 160 poems. Fourthly is the 36-page fragment of a *Dialektstudie* (Dialect study), Ser. nov. 11918, of the northwestern Geg dialect of Shkodra. Last but certainly not least are the as yet unpublished memoirs of Baron Nopcsa under the title *Reisen in den Balkan* (Travels in the Balkans), Ser. nov. 9368, which are currently being preparing for publication.

The five-part monograph 'Travels in the Balkans,' often erroneously known as Nopcsa's

diary, consists of 456 typed and partially handwritten pages which the author went through several times with corrections. Indeed there are corrections in ink of five different colours. It can be assumed that Nopcsa began writing his memoirs before the end of the First World War. He compiled them from the notes made in the diary books he kept with him during his Balkan travels and which until recently were considered lost. I had the good fortune in 1990 of finding seven original volumes of these diaries, six on Albania and one on Bulgaria, in the National Library in Tirana. They contain copious notes, pencilled landscape drawings, travel route sketches, and calculations of travel expenditure, a total of 2,700 pages in the Albanian volumes alone, which date from 1905 to 1913.

These seven octavo volumes, with presumably many other works from Nopcsa's library, were offered for sale after the author's death by the antiquarian bookshop Buch- und Kunst-Antiquariat Heinrich Hinterberger in the Hegelgasse 17 in Vienna for 150 Swiss francs and found their way into the collection of Albanian writer and politician Mid'hat Bey Frashëri (1880-1949), also known as Lumo Skendo. Mid'hat Bey, who is said to have possessed the largest library in Albania at the time, some 20,000 volumes, served as leader of the anti-Communist resistance movement *Balli Kombëtar* during the Second World War, and as such was forced to flee the country for southern Italy when Enver Hoxha took power in Albania in 1944. He left behind his famous library, which was confiscated by the new Communist authorities and which eventually found its way into the newly created National Library, forming the core of the Albanian studies department. It need not be mentioned to anyone who knew Communist Albania that the pre-war collections of the National Library were available to very few scholars during the long years of the dictatorship.

Nopcsa's memoirs, as recorded in the manuscript 'Travels in the Balkans,' comprise a twenty-year period from 1897 to 1917, when the author turned forty. In a letter to Jokl on 8 October 1928, Nopcsa tells us that he had lost his 1918 diary, which explains the sudden end to the memoirs in 1917. The memoirs seem to have been completed around 1929, at the time when Nopcsa had been planning to publish them. Indeed, the Stadium Press in Budapest had offered to publish a Hungarian translation of the memoirs and Kálmán Lambrecht, later appointed librarian at the Geological Institute in Budapest, was appointed to do the translation and subsequently to get the publisher's approval for Nopcsa's innumerable last-minute changes, something which was even more difficult. After much ado, the publisher withdrew his offer and, as such, negotiations for an edition of the German-language original broke down, too. The memoirs thus remained unpublished in manuscript form for the next seven decades.¹

In the first section of the memoirs, entitled *Studien und erste Reisen, 1897-1905* (Studies and initial travels, 1897-1905), we encounter the young baron in the wild northern Albanian mountains for the first time, in a region which few foreigners had ever glimpsed... and survived. On his return from Greece after finishing his doctorate at the University of Vienna in the summer of 1903, Nopcsa travelled from Skopje via Prizren right through the heart of the Albanian Alps to Shkodra in order to visit the Austro-Hungarian consul there, Baron Bornemisza Gyula. His first days in Albania began with a truly Albanian experience:

"From Skopje I thus set off for Prizren. There I was given three zaptiehs for the trip to Shkodra. I spent the first night in the han of Brut and, having departed at the break of dawn the next morning, I was shot at from close range out of some bushes on the right hand side at a bend in the road. The bullet went right through my hat and grazed my

¹ cf. Tasnádi Kubacska 1945, p. 275-277, Robel 1966, p. 135-136.

head, but did not injure me. I leapt off my horse, sought shelter and wanted to fire back, but was unable to catch sight of the criminal. At that moment, I had the very unchristian feeling of being a hunter laying in wait to shoot game. My Mannlicher Karabiner, equipped with a field-glass, which I had kept loaded in my saddle had thus been of no use to me at all. The rest of the journey, from the Vizier's Bridge to Shkodra, passed without event."

Subsequent travels in the northern Albanian mountains went off better and Nopcsa learned to love the country and its headstrong tribes. He gives us the following description from his first major research trip in the summer of 1905:

"I was deeply impressed by an episode which occurred in the Cem valley near the Tamara Bridge in Kelmendi country. I had asked for a glass of water at a house but, instead of water, the head of the household, whom I did not know at all, gave me a bowl of buttermilk, which I drank to the very last drop. I had just finished drinking when the brother of the homeowner, also unknown to me, happened to come home. As it was evening by this time and he was tired from his long journey, he asked to have some buttermilk. All that he found of course was an empty bowl. When the owner of the house told him who had drunk all the buttermilk, he was not upset, as one might have expected, but rather happy and relieved that I had reached the house before he had, because his family had thus been spared the shame of letting guests depart without having offered them something to eat."

It was not simply for personal and scholarly reasons that Nopcsa spent much of his time in northern Albania at the beginning of the century. He was also active in politics, often to the great bother of the Austrian foreign ministry. During the so-called Annexation Crisis of 1908-1909, Nopcsa was involved in the preparation of an 'action in Albania' to be undertaken against Serbia and Montenegro. Before and during the first Balkan War in 1912 he interfered actively in Austrian foreign affairs and took part in the First World War as a volunteer in Albania. In 1916, Nopcsa was commander of a company of Albanian volunteers, which was, however, soon dissolved when Austria-Hungary conceded defeat in the Balkans.

Of particular historical interest are Nopcsa's notes on the Albanian Congress of Trieste in 1913 and on the selection of a European noble to become the crowned head of the newly independent principality of Albania. I quote here at length from the memoirs:

"From 27 February to 6 March (1913) I took part in the Albanian Congress of Trieste. This congress was a strange affair. The Albanian throne was vacant in the spring of 1913 and Albanian affairs were under the direction of Ismail Qemali who had first met with Berchtold in Budapest at the home of Excellency Hadik Janos and had then journeyed to Vlora, entrusted by him and with his support. There he formed the provisional government of the newly founded Albanian state. As a long-term friend of the Greeks and as their paid agent, he also promised to facilitate their occupation of Janina if he remained head of Albania. It is obvious that Ismail Qemali wished to remain at the head of the provisional government because such positions usually bring in a lot of money. Less obvious was the fact that Berchtold, after a tête-à-tête with Ismail Qemali, was convinced that he could outmanoeuvre the Albanian leader. And of course he failed. I was easily able to foresee that Ismail Qemali would betray Albania to Greece because Stead had told me much about Qemali's relations with Greece in 1911 and because the

writer Alexander Ular, author together with Enrico Insabato of the book *'Der erlöschende Halbmond'* (The waning crescent), Frankfurt 1909,² had revealed to me a number of details about Ismail's conduct as Governor of Tripoli. When Berchtold asked me what I thought of Ismail Qemali two weeks after he had founded the provisional government, I said to him quite literally, "Ismail Qemali is an ass." Ismail Qemali's betrayal of Albania was confirmed to me completely by Eqrem Bey Vlora, who was himself the son of the Albanian ambassador in Vienna, Sureja Bey, and the nephew of Ismail Qemali. I do not know what the Greeks intended to do with Ismail Qemali once they had occupied Janina. Perhaps they wished to proceed according to the old saying, "The Moor has done his duty, the Moor may now depart." At any rate, intensive propaganda campaigns were being waged in Europe on behalf of the various pretenders to the Albanian throne while the provisional government was being headed by Ismail Qemali, who was open to bribery, though only with large sums of money.

Albert Ghica, who had been a pretender to the Albanian throne himself, had managed to interest the Duke of Montpensier³ in the Albanian throne. He ceded his 'rights,' which were recognized by no one as a matter of fact, to the duke and began to campaign on his behalf in exchange for an appropriate remuneration. Montpensier easily won over the miserly Fazil Pasha Toptani and a number of other Albanians, and thus arose the plan to have Montpensier proclaimed King of Albania at the Congress of Trieste. Montpensier was at the same time to break through the Greek blockade and take possession of Vlora and of Ismail Qemali. Because our Monarchy, in view of Montpensier's relatives, was expected to resist this choice, it was shown to be expedient for the Albanian Congress to be supported by Austria-Hungary. A decision was then taken to hold the congress in the Monarchy in order to lay a real diplomatic cuckoo's egg. As a strawman for convoking the conference, skilled use was made of the kind, but dumbwitted Stefan Zurani, who suspected nothing. Curani was naive, ambitious and well viewed at the foreign ministry, and out of pure vanity claimed to the foreign ministry that he himself had had the idea of convoking the Albanian Congress in Trieste. Since the foreign ministry enjoyed the idea of Albanians in the Monarchy demonstrating on behalf of their country, the plan was accepted and supported by Vienna. Aside from the Albanians themselves, the Italo-Albanians also turned up at the congress, and with them came Marchese Castriota from Naples with all of his sons. Also present was Albert Ghika, Baron Dungern, who was a university professor and historian from Czernowitz, two Christian-Socialist Members of Parliament, Count Taaffe and Mr Panty from Vienna, as well as the Rome correspondent of the *'Reichspost,'* Cavaliere Mayerhöfer, and myself. I brought with me Dr Leo Freundlich, a former Socialist Member of Parliament from Vienna who, at the very moment Albania became 'in,' had skillfully founded the periodical *'Albanische Korrespondenz'* and was now on about 'imperialist power politics.' Hasan Arnauti was in Trieste, too, as my private detective. The press was represented by various newspapers. Also in Trieste was a certain Mr Jovo Weis from Belgrade who, it was said, wanted to sell rifles to the Albanians at a price of 90 crowns a piece, but who in reality was a Serbian agent.

² Alexander Ular & Enrico Insabato: *Der erlöschende Halbmond. Türkische Enthüllungen* (Literarische Anstalt, Frankfurt 1909).

³ Ferdinand François Bourbon Orléans-Montpensier.

Representing the Austrian Government was Makavetz, a calm, intelligent and energetic figure who never lost his composure. After welcoming ceremonies the first evening, Marchese Castriota was chosen as honorary president of the congress and Faik Bey Konitza⁴ was elected chairman. Hilë Mosi⁵, Fazil Toptani and Dervish Hima⁶ were also elected to the chair. The nomination of Konitza was not to the liking of Ghika since, when the latter was on the point of bringing up the issue of candidates to the Albanian throne, his old rival Faik prevented him from doing so. In order to have an ace in his hand, Ghika, who like many a Romanian had a long career as an impostor behind him, had cunningly succeeded in getting control of Ismail Qemali's retarded son. Before the congress started, he travelled to Nice, where the Qemali family resided in virtual poverty, and, as Qemali himself was unable to attend, invited the son Tahir to the Albanian Congress in Trieste at his own expense, or, to be more precise, at the expense of Montpensier. Since Tahir did not have a penny to his name and had to have everything, even his cigarettes, bought for him by Ghika and as such could not do anything without Ghika or his representative, he had virtually become Ghika's prisoner. What Ghika intended to do with Tahir only became clear at a later date...

Since the many Italo-Albanians attending the congress were becoming over-bearing with their Italian-language speeches, I had myself introduced at the opening by Faik as an old friend of the Albanians. I had but a few minutes to think of my reply, mounted the podium and held a spontaneous speech in Albanian. With the exception of Kral and a few other Austro-Hungarian and Italian consuls, I don't think many a central European would be in a position to repeat that feat.

All in all, there was nothing but hot air at the congress, aside from a dispute between the Vlachs and Albanians, during which the little nation of Vlachs, not even officially born yet, gave substantial proof of its fanaticism and Balkan megalomania, and from a further clash between the chairman Faik Bey Konitza and the rather crooked Nikolla Ivanaj,⁷ who endeavoured unsuccessfully to challenge the authority of the chairman simply in order to draw attention to himself. The day before the congress was to end, I therefore felt compelled to call Faik Bey Konitza aside and inform him that the congress had as yet done no work at all and that the least one could expect from a political congress was a resolution. Faik agreed and I dictated to him a resolution which the congress was to telegraph to all the Great Powers the next day. The matter was attended to within half an hour, and the next day, Faik presented the document to the congress as a resolution. After a debate on the position of the Vlachs at the congress and in a future Albania, which Faik overcame in favour of the Albanians by presenting the Vlachs more or less with an ultimatum, the resolution was accepted and, as such, my text was sent to the Great Powers as the congress resolution.

During the congress, Cavaliere Mayerhöfer learned from Tahir, the son of Ismail Qemali, that Montpensier was preparing a putsch. He informed me, but aside from this

⁴ Faik Bey Konitza (1875-1942), Albanian publisher and patriot.

⁵ Hilë Mosi (1885-1933), Albanian poet and patriot.

⁶ Dervish Hima (1873-1928), Albanian publisher and patriot from Struga.

⁷ Nikolla bey Ivanaj (1879- ca. 1948), Albanian publisher and writer from Montenegro.

no one else found out, not even *Freundlich* and *Dungern*. The two of us informed *Makavetz*, who told the foreign ministry. All necessary countermeasures were prepared. *Ghika*'s plan to bring the throne question up at the congress had failed, but another coup was in the making since *Montpensier* disposed of a yacht ready for sail. We spent two days in *Trieste* waiting to find out what *Vienna* thought of *Montpensier*'s candidacy, in particular in view of his relationship with the *Archduchess Maria Dorothea*. The *Albanians*, among whom *Faik Bey*, began to ask us how they should react to the candidacy. I said to them on my own behalf, "In a hostile manner, for I do not believe that *Montpensier* is a candidate for *Vienna*." In the end, the reply arrived, confirming my suspicions. We were now free to act against *Montpensier*. As it happened, the *Viennese Members of Parliament* were holding a banquet for the congress at the *Palace Hotel*. I interrupted a pause in the conversation by saying in an audible voice, "I hear that *Montpensier* wants to become King of *Albania* and that proclamations have already been printed! Does anyone of the gentlemen here happen to have one in his pocket? You know, gentlemen, I am a great collector of printed material on *Albania*." Tremendous surprise and a stunned silence. *Fan Noli*⁸ forgot himself, drew a proclamation out of his pocket and gave it to me. *Montpensier*'s secret was divulged. That evening the proclamation was in the mail on its way to *Berchtold*. Our worries were less now, but not done away with entirely.

The next day there occurred a dramatic moment at the congress when rumours suddenly began to fly that a messenger from the *Provisional Government of Albania* had arrived in *Trieste* from *Vlora*. A few minutes later a tall, but stooped and awkward-looking old man, exhausted from his journey, was conducted into the hall, causing great commotion. It was the *Albanian minister, Kristo Meksi*. He had arrived straight from *Vlora*. There was frenetic applause, the atmosphere was electric. *Faik* turned pale for he realized that the chair had now lost all influence over the congress. It was now the *Provisional Government* that was in the chair. He did not know what message *Meksi* had brought with him. If *Meksi*, as a result of some secret agreement as an emissary of the *Provisional Government in Vlora*, were to proclaim the *Duke of Montpensier* as King of *Albania*, he would certainly be elected. I sat down next to the representative of the *Austrian Government, Makavetz*, and said, "You know, if *Kristo Meksi* proposes *Montpensier* as a candidate, we are lost because he will be proclaimed unanimously." *Makavetz* remained externally calm but every hair on his head was raised. He was prepared to let the scandal happen and to end the congress. *Kristo Meksi* began to speak. He conveyed to the *Albanian Congress* the best wishes of the *Provisional Government* and informed those present that the members of the *Government* were all well. Then, without even realizing what decision was in his hands, he left the podium to the frenetic applause of the auditorium. The storm had passed. We realized that *Ismail Qemali* had not yet been informed of *Montpensier*'s plan.

Now it was simply a matter of freeing *Tahir* from the clutches of *Ghika*. A coincidence facilitated our plan. *Ghika* did not wish to pay *Tahir*'s hotel bill and had turned to others to solve the problem for him. As such, an *Albanian patriot* soon made his appearance. I believe it was *Mark Kakarriqi* or *Koci* who approached me and explained that *Tahir*, the

⁸ *Fan Noli*, also known as *Theofan Stylian Noli* (1882-1965), *Albanian politician, church leader and writer*. He was *Prime Minister of Albania* in 1924 and later founder of the *Albanian Autocephalic Orthodox Church*.

son of the president of the Albanian Government, was in financial difficulties. Knowing me to be a friend of the Albanians, the patriot asked me if I would be willing to assist by paying Tahir's debts, adding that, if the matter became known to the public, it would put Albania in a bad light. Tahir needed 500-600 crowns and, I was told, was too embarrassed to approach me directly. I declared myself willing to assist immediately and promised to pay his expenditures that very afternoon. At noon I dined with Tahir and Mayerhöfer and succeeded in making it clear to Tahir that he was being used as a tool and was in fact a hostage in Ghika's hands. His father in Vlora could be compelled to resign from the Provisional Government in favour of Montpensier in order to save his son's life. Tahir was of course dumbfounded and told me everything he knew, admitting, however, that he had no money to free himself from Ghika. I promised to arrange everything. I paid Tahir's hotel bill that afternoon and left enough money for his expenses until the next day. I later met the Albanian patriot who had demanded 500-600 crowns and told him that I had already paid Tahir's debts, but that he had made a mistake, the debt being a mere 190 crowns and not 500-600. An Albanian patriot was thus deprived of a sum of 300-400 crowns! I also invited Tahir to supper that evening and, in order to prevent him from talking to Ghika, who was staying at the same hotel, I got him drunk. At midnight I returned him reeling to his hotel where we met Ghika in the lobby. He understood what was going on and realized that he had lost out as far as Tahir was concerned. At my insistence, Tahir told him that he was leaving for Vienna, where he would be staying with me. All further contact between Ghika and Tahir was thus rendered impossible. The next morning I had Tahir's luggage picked up and he set off for Vienna, this time as my prisoner, and once again without a penny to his name. I put him up at a hotel and subsequently bought him a train ticket to Nice, gave him some travelling money and sent him back to his mother. The Austrian Foreign Ministry also sent Mrs Ismail Qemali a larger sum of money to help her with her financial difficulties, in order that such a problem not occur again. In order to describe the level of Tahir's intelligence, it is sufficient to note that he had been a Turkish naval cadet under Abdul Hamid. This tells it all. This was thus the extent of my involvement at the Albanian Congress of Trieste....

From Trieste I returned to Vienna, where I urged Berchtold to ensure that the recently created Albanian throne be occupied as quickly as possible because I foresaw the negative consequences of leaving it vacant for too long. He complained that he was unable to find a suitable candidate for the throne. There were in fact a good number of candidates. Foremost among them was Count Urach of Württemberg. An Egyptian prince, Ahmed Fuad, and the son of the Marchese Castriota of Naples had also made their candidacies known.

At this moment I resolved to take a step which could easily have made me a laughing stock and have put all my activities on behalf of Albania in a bad light. Nonetheless, I decided to go through with it. I informed Excellency Conrad verbally that I would be willing to join the list of candidates for the throne if the Foreign Ministry would support me and told him that, to have myself proclaimed King of Albania, I would simply need the one-time payment of a larger sum of money in order to buy the support of the so-called Albanian patriots which, as I learned from the Montpensier putsch, was no problem at all. Once a reigning European monarch, I would have no difficulty coming up with the further funds needed by marrying a wealthy American heiress aspiring to royalty, a step which under other circumstances I would have been loath to take. I was sure of the support of the inhabitants of the northern part of the country in view of the stance I had

taken in the years 1910 and 1911 and Vienna could expect to overcome any difficulties caused by Ismail Qemali who was being supported by Berchtold...

My candidacy may have been ridiculed in competent circles. Be that as it may, I grew disgusted a few weeks later and withdrew from all further activities concerning Albania. Some of those in the know said that I only did so because my highfalutin plans had not come about. I for my part gave as my reason [for withdrawing my candidacy] that the Albania created by the Conference of London was a stillbirth. I did not even attempt to contradict the slanderous allegations which my opponents revelled in, because I knew that events to come would prove to be my best defence. The collapse of the Albanian State in 1914 showed that I was right to get off the sinking ship in time in 1913. My only 'mistake' was to have recognized what was to come long before my opponents did. Prince Wied⁹ ascended the Albanian throne while the Conference of London was still underway...

Soon after the Albanian Congress I resigned from the Albanian committee because of the borders set forth by London, and withdrew from all further political activity..."

Such was Nopcsa's role at the Albanian Congress of Trieste and his short-lived candidacy to the Albanian throne. Much has been written and published on the life and work of Baron Nopcsa such that there is no need at this juncture for a detailed biography of his life before and after the Balkan War. Instead, reference may be made to a number of books, in German and Hungarian, devoted to Nopcsa's life and times. The first attempt to survey Nopcsa's life, his publications and his influence was made by András Tasnádi Kubacska in his Hungarian-language *Nopcsa Ferenc kalandos élete* (Budapest 1937), which appeared in a German version as *Franz Baron Nopcsa* (Budapest 1945). Tasnádi Kubacska centred his writings on Nopcsa as a scholar of natural science and less as an Albanologist and public figure of the times. He endeavoured to portray Nopcsa as positively as he could and, as such, lacked the requisite objectivity and distance. The German version of his biography contains not only a useful bibliography of necrologies and newspaper articles on Nopcsa published between 1920 and 1938, but also Nopcsa's correspondence with Friedrich Baron Huene, Lucas Waagen, Ludwig von Lócsy and Kálmán Lambrecht. The first comprehensive bibliography of Nopcsa's works was published in a necrology by Kálmán Lambrecht entitled *Franz Baron Nopcsa, der Begründer der Paläophysiologie, 3. Mai 1877 bis 25. April 1933* (Franz Baron Nopcsa, the founder of palaeophysiology, 3 May 1877 to 25 April 1933), which appeared in the *Paläontologische Zeitschrift* 15 (1933) shortly after the baron's death. The main source of information on Nopcsa's life and work is and remains, however, the monograph *Franz Baron Nopcsa und Albanien, ein Beitrag zu Nopcsas Biographie* (Franz Baron Nopcsa and Albania, a contribution to Nopcsa's biography), published by Gert Robel in the series *Albanische Forschungen* in Wiesbaden 1966. This critical and informative work is based upon the Vienna manuscripts which are in the process of being published. Robel deals not only with Nopcsa's important contribution to the study of Albania but also with his activities on behalf of the Albanian question as well as with the general political situation in the Balkans before, during and after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. Nopcsa was a keen, though not always objective observer and commentator of events in the Balkan Peninsula in the early twentieth century. Much of his memoirs are put into a more objective context and made more understandable by Robel. Finally, mention must also be made of the recent bibliography *Franz Baron von Nopcsa, Anmerkungen*

⁹ Wilhelm, Fürst zu Wied (1876-1945).

zu seiner Familie und seine Beziehungen zu Albanien (Franz Baron von Nopcsa, notes on his family and his relations to Albania), Vienna 1993, by József Hála of Budapest.

Baron Nopcsa has been lauded and held in high esteem as a scholar. As a human being, however, he is much more difficult to grasp. This is particularly true in his memoirs. Nopcsa writes little of his closest human relations and most intimate emotions. His memoirs reveal only indirect and probably unwanted references to his homosexuality, for instance his early love for the young officer Louis Drašković (1879-1909) and his long-term intimate relationship with his Albanian secretary Bajazid Elmaz Doda (ca. 1888-1933) who died with him. Apart from such ambivalent references, the author withholds all his emotions and intimate concerns from his writings.

Robel draws the following conclusion about Nopcsa the man: "If we look back upon Nopcsa's life, we can observe the many and extremely diverse aspects in his being, including many a contradiction. His ingenious intuition was in stark contrast to his inability to understand and appreciate the motives of others; his insensitivity and egoism were in contrast to his devotion to the Albanians, his critical intelligence to his emotional bias."¹⁰ Indeed Nopcsa does not always appear congenial or likeable to the reader. He was constantly driven by a craving for recognition and prestige, was often irritable and arrogant and on occasion openly anti-Semitic. Some of these traits may be understandable in view of his background and milieu, but many of his motives and reactions remain difficult to fathom.

Tasnádi Kubacska and Lambrecht devoted their attention to Nopcsa primarily in his capacity as a scholar and scientist. Robel on the other hand, who is sparing in his use of praise, underlines Nopcsa's significance as an Albanologist.

Sixty-five years since the death of Baron Nopcsa and after decades of advanced Albanological research carried out in Vienna, Munich, Berlin, Rome, Cosenza, Palermo and Saint Petersburg, and of course in Tirana and Prishtina too, one can only agree with the following quotation:

*"His death, which was mourned by his friends and regretted by his colleagues, was not a loss for palaeontology and geology alone. His two great manuscripts on Albania which contained important ethnological material disappeared after his death and have remained unpublished up to the present day. This is all the more regrettable because no one else who lived in Albania for a longer period of time than so vividly recorded and noted what he experienced there. Nopcsa, with his almost ingenious curiosity, collected and noted everything he came across in that country. The loss of his diaries is a major tragedy. He had the privilege of experiencing the 'old' Albania before the country was touched by 'civilization' and before the old order with its customs and traditions had disappeared. The combination of intellectual curiosity, the gift of observation and eminent diligence which he possessed, made him destined like no one else to record and pass on his visions of this 'old' Albania. The difficulties of the age only enabled him to accomplish this task in a fragmentary manner. The unended manuscripts alone suffice to give him a place among the greatest scholars of Albanian studies."*¹¹

¹⁰ Robel 1966, p. 161.

¹¹ Robel 1966, p. 137, 162-163.

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4. *Bemerkungen zu E. Barbarichs Arbeit 'Albania'*. Mitteilungen der Kais. Königl. Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien, Vienna, 50, 8 (1907), p. 424-428.
5. *Das katholische Nordalbanien. Eine Skizze von Dr. Franz Baron Nopcsa. Anhang: Geographisch-geologische Resultate*. Földrajzi közlemények, Budapest, 35 (1907) 56 p., Tab. I.
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10. *Archäologisches aus Nordalbanien*. Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und Hercegowina, Vienna, 9 (1909), 2, p. 82-90.
11. *Aus Šala und Klementi. Albanische Wanderungen*. Zur Kunde der Balkanhalbinsel 1, Reisen und Beobachtungen 11, Sarajevo (1910) 115 p.
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15. *Die Autonomie Albaniens*. Das Vaterland, 13. Juli 1911.
16. *Geology of Northern Albania*. Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society, London, 67 (1911), Proceedings, p. XCIV.
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20. *Zur Geologie von Nordalbanien, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Tektonik*. Zeitschrift der deutschen Geologischen Gesellschaft. Monatsberichte, Berlin, 63.4 (1911), p. 189-191.
21. *Zur Stratigraphie und Tektonik des Vilajets Skutari in Nordalbanien*. Jahrbuch der Kais. Königl. Geologischen Reichsanstalt, Vienna, 61 (1911), p. 229-284, Tab. XII-XXIV.
22. *Beiträge zur Vorgeschichte und Ethnologie Nordalbaniens*. Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und der Herzegowina, Vienna, 12 (1912). p. 168-253.

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