

= Battle of Torvioll =

The Battle of Torvioll , also known as the Battle of Lower Dibra , was fought on 29 June 1444 on the Plain of Torvioll , in what is modern @-@ day Albania . Skanderbeg was an Ottoman Albanian captain who decided to go back to his native land and take the reins of a new Albanian rebellion . He , along with 300 other Albanians fighting at the Battle of Ni? , deserted the Ottoman army to head towards Krujë , which fell quickly through a subversion . He then formed the League of Lezhë , a confederation of Albanian princes united in war against the Ottoman Empire . Murad II , realizing the threat , sent one of his most experienced captains , Ali Pasha , to crush the rebellion with a force of 25 @,@ 000 men .

Skanderbeg expected a reaction so he moved with 15 @,@ 000 of his own men to defeat Ali Pasha 's army . The two met in the Plain of Torvioll where they camped opposite of each other . The following day , 29 June , Ali came out of his camp and saw that Skanderbeg had positioned his forces at the bottom of a hill . Expecting a quick victory , Ali ordered all of his forces down the hill to attack and defeat Skanderbeg 's army . Skanderbeg expected such a maneuver and had prepared his own stratagem . Once the opposing forces were engaged and the necessary positioning was achieved , Skanderbeg ordered his forces hidden in the forests behind the Turkish army to strike their rear . The result was devastating for the Ottomans , whose entire army was routed and its commander nearly killed .

The victory lifted the morale of the Christian princes of Europe and was recognized as a great victory over the Muslim Ottoman Empire . On the Ottoman side , Murad realized the effect Skanderbeg 's rebellion would have on his realm and continued to take measures to defeat him , resulting in twenty @-@ five years of war .

= = Background = =

George Kastrioti Skanderbeg , the son of the powerful prince John Kastrioti , had been a vassal of the Ottoman Empire as a sipahi , or cavalry commander . After his participation in the Ottoman loss at the Battle of Ni? , Skanderbeg deserted the Ottoman army and rushed to Albania alongside 300 other Albanians . By forging a letter from Murad II to the Governor of Krujë , he became lord of the city in November 1443 . Hungarian captain John Hunyadi 's continued operations against Sultan Murad II gave Skanderbeg time to prepare an alliance of the Albanian nobles . Skanderbeg invited all of Albania 's nobles to meet in the Venetian @-@ held town of Alessio (Lezhë) on 2 March 1444 . Alessio was chosen as the meeting point because the town had once been the capital of the Dukagjini family and to induce Venice to lend aid to the Albanian movement . Among the nobles that attended were George Arianiti , Paul Dukagjini , Andrea Thopia , Lekë Dushmani , Teodor Korona , Peter Spani , Lekë Zaharia , and Paul Stres Balsha . Here they formed the League of Lezhë , a confederation of all of the major Albanian princes in alliance against the Ottoman Empire . The chosen captain (Albanian : Kryekapedan) of this confederation was Skanderbeg . The League 's first military challenge came in the spring of 1444 , when Skanderbeg 's scouts reported that the Ottoman army was planning to invade Albania . Skanderbeg planned to move towards the anticipated entry point and prepared for an engagement .

= = Campaign = =

= = = Prelude = = =

Ali Pasha , one of Murad 's most favored commanders , left Üsküp (Skopje) in June 1444 with an army of 25 @,@ 000 ? 40 @,@ 000 troops and headed in Albania 's direction . Having brought together an army of 15 @,@ 000 men (8 @,@ 000 cavalry and 7 @,@ 000 infantry) from the League of Lezhë , Skanderbeg exhorted to his soldiers the importance of the upcoming campaign . Orders were given for the distribution of soldiers ' pay and for religious services to be held .

Afterwards , Skanderbeg and his army headed towards the planned place of battle in Lower Dibra , which is thought to be the Plain of Shumbat , then called the Plain of Torvioll , north of Peshkopi . On the way there , he marched through the Black Drin valley and appeared at the expected Ottoman entry point . Skanderbeg had chosen the plain himself : it was 11 @. @ 2 kilometres (7 @. @ 0 mi) long and 4 @. @ 9 kilometres (3 @. @ 0 mi) wide , surrounded by hills and forests . After camping near Torvioll , Skanderbeg placed 3 @, @ 000 men under five commanders , Hamza Kastrioti , Muzaka of Angelina , Zecharia Gropa , Peter Emanueli , and John Musachi , in the surrounding forests with orders to attack the Ottoman wings and rear only after a given signal . While Skanderbeg was preparing his ambush , the Ottoman Turks under Ali Pasha arrived and encamped opposite his forces . The night before the battle , the Ottomans celebrated the coming day , whereas the Albanians extinguished all their campfires and those who were not on guard were directed to rest . Parties of Ottomans made approaches to the Albanian camp and provoked Skanderbeg 's soldiers , but they remained quiet . Skanderbeg sent out a scouting party to obtain information about the Ottoman army and ordered his cavalry to engage in small skirmishes .

= = = Albanian positioning = = =

On the morning of 29 June , Skanderbeg arranged his army for battle . Apart from the 3 @, @ 000 warriors hidden behind the Ottoman army , Skanderbeg left another reserve force of 3 @, @ 000 under the command of Vrana Konti . The Albanian army was positioned in a crescent shape curving inwards . They were divided into three groups , each composed of 3 @, @ 000 men . They were all placed at the bottom of a hill , with the intention of luring the Ottoman cavalry @- @ based army into a downhill charge . The Albanian left wing was commanded by Tanush Thopia with 1 @, @ 500 horsemen and an equal number of infantrymen . On the right wing , Skanderbeg placed Moisi Golemi in the same manner as Thopia . In front of the wings , foot archers were placed to lure the Ottomans in . In the center , there were 3 @, @ 000 men under the command of Skanderbeg and Ajdin Muzaka . One @- @ thousand horsemen were placed in front of the main division with orders to blunt the initial Turkish cavalry charge . An equal number of archers , trained to accompany the horses , was placed next to these horsemen . The main body of infantry , commanded by Ajdin Muzaka , was placed behind the archers .

= = = Battle = = =

After the army was marshaled , Skanderbeg would not permit the trumpets to give the signal for battle until he saw Ali Pasha advancing . After looking upon the Albanian army , the Pasha ordered his army to charge with one of the units ahead of the rest . The Albanian front line retreated ; Skanderbeg sent a body of horsemen to prevent the line from breaking and marshaled the retreating troops back to their places . Ali Pasha believed he had the Albanians trapped . The same situation occurred on the left wing and , when all were in their places , the army prepared for the main offensive . As it began , the wings were fiercely led on by Thopia and Golemi and pushed back the Ottoman wings . In the centre , Skanderbeg assaulted a selected battalion . When the proper signal was given , the 3 @, @ 000 horsemen hidden in the woods sprung out and charged into the Ottoman rear , causing large parts of their army to rout . The wings of the Albanian army turned towards the Ottoman centre 's flanks . Ajdin Muzaka , having charged the Turkish centre , was met by fierce resistance and the Turks continued to pour in fresh forces until Vrana Konti came in with his reserves and decided the battle . The Turkish army was surrounded . The Ottoman front ranks were annihilated except for 300 soldiers . Ali Pasha 's personal battalion fled although the commander nearly met his death .

= = Aftermath = =

Between 8 @, @ 000 to 22 @, @ 000 Turks died in the battle , while 2 @, @ 000 were captured . The Albanians were originally attributed to have lost as little as 120 men , but modern sources

suggest a higher figure of 40,000 Albanians dead and wounded . Skanderbeg remained quiet in his camp for the remainder of that day and the following night . Having addressed his troops , he directed his infantry to mount the captured horses . The spoils of the victory were abundant and even the wounded took part in the pillaging . Skanderbeg thereafter ordered a general retreat toward Krujë . Skanderbeg 's victory was praised through the rest of Europe . The European states thus began to consider a crusade to drive the Ottomans out of Europe . When Ali Pasha returned to Adrianople (Edirne) , he explained to the sultan that the loss should be attributed to his forces and the " fortunes of war " and not his generalship . The battle of Torvioll thus opened up the quarter-century war between Skanderbeg 's Albania and the Ottoman Empire .